

**Ninth Report
2007–2012**

Joint Working Group
between the
Roman Catholic Church
and the
World Council of Churches

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Receiving one another in the name of Christ



**World Council
of Churches**
Publications

NINTH REPORT, 2007–2012

Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches

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Contents

| | |
|---|-----|
| Foreword by the Co-Moderators | vii |
| I. Introduction | 1 |
| II. Growing Relationships of Trust | 4 |
| III. Collaboration between the RCC and the WCC | 9 |
| A. Faith and Order | 9 |
| B. Week of Prayer for Christian Unity | 10 |
| C. Mission and evangelism | 11 |
| D. Ecumenical cooperation among the youth | 13 |
| E. Ecumenical formation, Bossey | 14 |
| F. Inter-religious dialogue | 14 |
| G. Justice, peace, creation and human rights | 15 |
| H. International Ecumenical Peace Convocation | 15 |
| I. Ecumenism in the 21st century | 16 |
| IV. The Joint Working Group | 18 |
| A. Character and nature of the Joint Working Group | 18 |
| B. The work of the Joint Working Group 2007–2012 | 19 |
| C. Study documents | 21 |
| 1. Reception: A Key to Ecumenical Progress | 21 |
| 2. Be Renewed in the Spirit: The Spiritual Roots of Ecumenism | 23 |
| D. Reflections on Youth | 25 |
| E. Discussions on Migration | 27 |
| V. Prospects for the Future (2013–2020) | 29 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| VI. Members of the Joint Working Group (2007–2012) | 32 |
| VII. Appendices | 39 |
| A. Reception: A Key to Ecumenical Progress | 41 |
| B. Be Renewed in the Spirit: The Spiritual Roots of Ecumenism | 103 |
| C. The Church in the Life of Youth and Youth in the Life of the Church | 139 |

Foreword

“Receiving one another in the name of Christ”

We have chosen this motto for the Ninth Report of the Joint Working Group. It reflects the quality of our togetherness as a group and of our relationship as the two co-moderators. On our common journey during this mandate of the Joint Working Group between the 2006 WCC assembly in Porto Alegre (Brazil) and the 2013 assembly in Busan (Republic of Korea) we deepened our friendship and our mutual appreciation, the knowledge, wisdom and leadership of each other. It has been an honour and a privilege for us to lead this instrument of cooperation between the World Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic Church, a fruit of the Second Vatican Council. And we are grateful for the support that was offered by the representatives of the two parent bodies of the group, the WCC secretariat in Geneva and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity in Rome.

“Receiving one another in the name of Christ” was also chosen because a major piece of our work as a group has been a study on Reception of the results of ecumenical dialogues. We want to share through this study our sense of joy about all that could be achieved in past decades and our respect and gratitude to all who were involved in these endeavours. We hope that it can motivate students and younger scholars to continue this work because it has not been in vain as a faithful response to Christ’s prayer that all may be one (John 17:21). This is not just a task for scholars and experts. There are many ways to nurture and deepen the spiritual roots of ecumenism so that Churches and Christians discover how much

they share the same faith in Christ. The group wanted to underline this through another study document that accompanies the text on Reception.

This mandate of the Joint Working Group has now come to an end. The report will be presented to the forthcoming tenth assembly of the WCC. The report shows that one of the major assets of the Joint Working Group is not just the work that is done, but the relationships that are fostered and the many opportunities in both the plenary sessions and the meetings of the smaller executive for dialogue and shared analysis of the changing contexts of ecumenism and the life of the churches. We are grateful to those who created the Joint Working Group almost half a century ago and cherish its existence. We hope and pray that it will continue to strengthen relationships between the World Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic Church for the benefit of all who believe in Christ as our Lord and Saviour. In him we are reconciled with God and received as children and citizens of God's reign to come.

*Metropolitan Nifon
Archbishop of Targoviste, Romania*

*Archbishop Diarmuid Martin
Archbishop of Dublin, Ireland*

Co-Moderators of the Joint Working Group

I. Introduction

The Joint Working Group (JWG) has been a vital and effective instrument for fostering cooperation between its parent bodies, i.e. the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU) and the World Council of Churches (WCC). Following the *Decree on Ecumenism* of the Second Vatican Council (*Unitatis Redintegratio*) in 1964, the JWG was established jointly by the PCPCU (then the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity) and the WCC in 1965. Since then, the JWG has met regularly. It provides the space where the parent bodies discuss important topics affecting their relationships, and where their representatives share the experiences of their churches and talk about their common involvement in the ecumenical movement, as both the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) and the WCC are committed to the goal of the visible unity of the church.

The JWG has functioned as a worldwide working group with regional and local input. For the term from the ninth WCC assembly in 2006 in Porto Alegre, Brazil, to the tenth assembly in 2013 in Busan, Korea, each parent body appointed 18 members to the JWG, selected from different regions of the world, with varied pastoral and ecumenical experiences. The JWG met five times in plenary, led by two co-moderators. The co-moderators, representatives of the parent bodies, co-secretaries, and the Faith and Order director and the RCC consultant in the WCC mission team form an executive that meets twice a year. The executive oversees the work of the JWG between its plenary sessions and prepares the agenda and materials for them.

Starting to work only in 2008, the JWG made up for the delay by holding two plenary meetings in Geneva and Rome in 2008. In doing so, the JWG followed the suggestion made at the 40th anniversary in Bossey, that any future JWG should spend some time, particularly at the beginning of its mandate, in familiarizing itself with the structures of the parent bodies and building a sense of teamwork and of shared spiritual commitment.

Moving in the following years from Cordova, Spain (2009), to Saidnaya, Syria (2010) and Rabat, Malta (2011), the JWG undertook an “ecumenical pilgrimage,” encountering the reality of the churches in these countries and their ecumenical initiatives. In Cordova, the group was impressed by inspiring work on ecumenical formation and education, which are crucial for the future of the ecumenical movement. The friendship and hospitality among the three Patriarchs and other church leaders in Saidnaya, and their deep concern for migrants and refugees as well as for youth, left a mark on all JWG members who kept them in their prayers during the difficult times in Syria. In Malta, the group learned firsthand about the work of the churches for migrants and refugees coming across the sea from Northern Africa.

The group wants to express its sincere gratitude for all who hosted these meetings so generously and shared with the group their traditions of faith, their ecumenical experience and challenges, e.g. the Archdiocese of Cordova (Spain), the Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and all the East in Damascus (Syria), and the Archdiocese of Malta (Malta). At the invitation of the two co-moderators, the executive group met not only in Rome and Geneva but also in the archdioceses of Dublin (Ireland) and Targoviste (Romania).

Looking at the changing ecclesial landscape at the beginning of the 21st century and the challenges the churches are confronted with in their search for visible unity and a common witness to the world, the JWG realized already at the plenary meeting in 2008 in Geneva that there was a common interest of the parent bodies in deepening the fellowship of churches in the ecumenical movement and in ecumenical formation that builds on the fruits of ecumenical dialogue, engages young people, and is inspired by the presence of migrants who challenge false self-centeredness of communities and local churches. This was reflected in the choice of the themes for study and reflection: the studies on reception and the

spiritual roots of ecumenism,¹ and reflections on youth. The JWG also discussed the root causes and the impact of migration on the lives of people, communities and the churches.

This report outlines the activities of the JWG during these years and includes the two study documents and reflections on the role of youth. We offer these texts to the parent bodies and hope that they will be received by churches and Christians around the world, inspiring them in their own ecumenical journey. Our pilgrimage together as the JWG has enriched our spirituality and our understanding of ecumenism and further strengthened our conviction that we are called to be one in Christ.

1. Cf. also the two publications by H.E. Cardinal Walter Kasper. (2009) *Harvesting the Fruits: Basic aspects of Christian faith in ecumenical dialogue*. Continuum International Publishing Group, London/New York; (2007; first printing in 2006) *A Handbook of Spiritual Ecumenism*. New City Press, New York.

II. Growing Relationships of Trust

The JWG has not only fostered cooperation between the two parent bodies, but also contributed to growing trust and collaboration with other churches and ecumenical partners in the one ecumenical movement.

This is vital in the context of the rapidly changing ecclesial landscape, with the growth of Pentecostal and charismatic churches, the deep geopolitical shifts over recent decades, the devastating consequences of climate change and financial crises, conflicts concerning values and personal ethics, violence within and between different religious communities, and growing need for the accompaniment of Christian communities in conflict situations. These challenges demand that the churches renew their ecumenical commitment to a common witness and the search for the visible unity of the Church. In all of our efforts as the JWG the unity that Christ wills for his Church has been and will remain central.

Together, the Roman Catholic Church and WCC member churches have fostered relationships with evangelicals, Pentecostal and charismatic churches—not least through cooperation in the Global Christian Forum, but also through many other initiatives, e.g. the Centenary of the Edinburgh World Mission Conference in 2010, participation in the WCC-facilitated Joint Consultative Group with Pentecostals, cooperation in the Conference of the Secretaries of Christian World Communions (CWCs), the Joint Committee between CWCs and WCC, and the publication of the document *Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World: Recom-*

*recommendations for Conduct*¹ that was presented to the public by the WCC together with the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (PCID) and the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA).

The quality of relationships nurtured by the JWG encouraged the WCC to intensify its very valuable cooperation with the CWCs and to offer new spaces for churches and ecumenical partners beyond the WCC membership, both in reflections on ecumenism in the 21st century and in preparations for the forthcoming tenth assembly of the WCC in 2013 in Busan. In both cases, committees were formed that include as full members a broad spectrum of churches beyond WCC membership and ecumenical partners. In doing so, the WCC could build on the excellent cooperation with the RCC and increasingly also with Pentecostals in the Faith and Order Commission (F&O) and the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME).

What could have been a challenge became an opportunity for strengthening relationships: both the PCPCU and the WCC changed leadership during this mandate of the JWG. The Revd Dr Olav Fykse Tveit succeeded The Revd Samuel Kobia as general secretary of the WCC; Cardinal Kurt Koch followed Cardinal Walter Kasper as president of the PCPCU. Soon after he had taken office in Geneva in January 2010, The Revd Olav Fykse Tveit visited Cardinal Walter Kasper in Rome and met with Cardinal Kurt Koch later in the same year in the context of a visit to Rome that included a private audience with His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI. Both Pope Benedict XVI and The Revd Olav Fykse Tveit expressed their common concern for the visible unity of the Church as gift and calling of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.² Cardinal Kurt Koch visited the WCC in May 2011, underlining the irreversible commitment of the Roman Catholic Church to ecumenism.³

Major events during this ninth mandate of the JWG offered other opportunities for the deepening of relationships and common witness for the unity of the Church, for mission, and for peace in the world:

1. www.oikoumene.org/fileadmin/files/wcc-main/2011pdfs/ChristianWitness_recommendations.pdf.

2. www.oikoumene.org/en/news/news-management/eng/a/article/1634/pope-benedict-and-wcc-lea.html.

3. www.oikoumene.org/en/news/news-management/eng/a/article/1634/cardinal-koch-sounds-a.html.

- The WCC celebrated its 60th anniversary on February 17, 2008 with a prayer service in Geneva's Saint Pierre Cathedral and a plenary session of the Central Committee of the WCC in the Ecumenical Centre. His All Holiness Bartholomew I, the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, reminded those gathered for the service of the "three pillars" of unity, witness, and service on which the WCC was built. The Roman Catholic Church was represented by the secretary of the PCPCU, Bishop Brian Farrell, who brought the greetings of Pope Benedict XVI.

- The 100th anniversary of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (WPCU) in January 2008 became both a powerful sign for the shared commitment for the visible unity of the church and a reminder that ecumenism has its roots in the common prayer of Christians of different traditions as a response to Jesus' own prayer that his disciples may be one so that the world may believe (John 17:21). In recognition of the many years of joint preparations of the WPCU by the PCPCU and the Faith and Order Commission of the WCC, the WCC general secretary, The Revd Samuel Kobia, was invited to participate in the closing ceremony of the WPCU with the celebration of vespers in the ancient Basilica of St. Paul Outside-the-Walls, which was presided over by Pope Benedict XVI.⁴ It was a very precious moment of spiritual communion in prayer and worship in which the WCC general secretary addressed Pope Benedict XVI and those gathered for worship. This event and a private audience with Pope Benedict XVI, in which he encouraged a focus on reception, marked the first plenary meeting of the JWG in January 2008 in Rome.

- In the spirit of the 2006 WCC assembly's statement on ecclesiology, "Called to be the One Church," the WCC's Faith and Order Plenary Commission met in the Orthodox Academy of Crete in October 2009. Led by the moderator, His Eminence Metropolitan Vasilios of Constantia, together with guests and consultants, the members of the commission met the bishops, clergy and faithful of the local Orthodox dioceses, parishes and monastic communities of the Church of Crete. His All Holiness, Bartholomew, Ecumenical Patriarch, graced the first plenary session of the commission with his presence and delivered the opening address. The renewed relationship between Faith and Order and the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism was evident. Working groups addressed

4. www.oikoumene.org/en/news/news-management/eng/a/article/1634/pope-benedict-xvi-and-wcc.html?tx_ttnews%5Bcat%5D=120&cHash=fabdbbc44ab322a2288105d0173fce8f.

the ongoing studies of the commission on the Nature and Mission of the Church, Sources of Authority: Tradition and traditions, and Moral Discernment in the Churches.

- The preparations for the Centenary of the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh in 2010 were another occasion for cooperation. The preparatory group included a broad spectrum of Christian traditions aiming at building bridges within the mission movement that split after the International Missionary Council joined the WCC in 1961. Both the PCPCU and the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism of the WCC (CWME) pointed to the necessary link between mission and unity which had been so important for the organizers of the World Missionary Conference in 1910.⁵ The 1910 conference often is seen as the beginning of the modern ecumenical movement. It had been the origin not only of the International Missionary Council, but also of the Faith and Order and the Life and Work movements, i.e. of three of the classical streams of the ecumenical movement.⁶

- The WCC sent greetings to the 50th anniversary celebrations of the PCPCU in 2010, which included a symposium with keynote addresses by distinguished church leaders and ecumenists: Cardinal Walter Kasper; the Archbishop of Canterbury, The Most Revd Rowan Williams; and His Eminence Metropolitan John of Pergamon.

- The PCPCU sent a delegation to the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation in 2011 in Kingston/Jamaica (IEPC). The IEPC was the culminating event of the Decade to Overcome Violence (DOV) that began in 2001 as an initiative of the WCC.⁷ More than one thousand participants gathered in Kingston for this harvesting festival of the contributions made by churches and ecumenical partners to the DOV; the participants shared experiences of their own engagement for just peace, and encouraged each other to renew the churches' and their own commitment to nonviolence, peace and justice.

- In October 2011, the WCC general secretary, The Revd Olav Fykse Tveit, participated in the Assisi World Day of Prayer for Peace at the invitation of Pope Benedict XVI. Together with church leaders and

5. It is noteworthy that the new Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization was established in the year of the Edinburgh centennial.

6. www.edinburgh2010.org; <http://edinburgh2010.oikoumene.org/en/news/en/browse/1/article/4645/pope-benedict-xvi-sends-g.html>.

7. www.overcomingviolence.org.

representatives of other religions, The Revd Olav Fykse Tveit called on Christians to pray and to act for peace and reconciliation and not to allow the misuse of religion for the justification of violence.

- The WCC's Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME) held a pre-assembly mission event in March 2012 in Manila/Philippines. The theme of the event, "Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes," referred to the title of a new mission-affirmation that was discussed during the event and will provide a new basis for the future work of the CWME.

- The Catholic Church celebrated the 50th anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council on 11 October 2012 in the context of the Synod of Bishops on the New Evangelization and also marking the beginning of the Year of Faith. The Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I and the Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams participated in the celebration of the Mass in St. Peter's square. It was a remarkable moment when both of them went up to the Papal Altar and exchanged the Kiss of Peace with Pope Benedict XVI.

- Participation of PCPCU representatives in the Central Committee of the WCC and the Commissions on Faith and Order, World Mission and Evangelism, the Continuation Committee on Ecumenism in the 21st Century and the Assembly Planning Committee proved the mature level of mutual trust and cooperation. The same is true for the regular participation of representatives of the WCC in the Synods of Bishops and other important events in the life of the RCC. Cooperation continued at regional and national levels in similar ways. This became clearly visible during the sharing of JWG members at the beginning of each of the plenary sessions.

Another important dimension in the relationship between the Catholic Church and the WCC, almost on a day to day basis, has been and continues to be through Roman Catholic movements such as the Sant' Egidio Community and the Focolare movement. Both Prof Andrea Riccardi (Sant' Egidio) and Maria Emmaus Voce (Focolare) visited the WCC in 2007 and 2009. The WCC general secretaries participated regularly in the Sant' Egidio International Conferences for Peace together with a WCC president and other delegates. The general secretaries also visited the Focolare movement's headquarters in Rocca di Papa in 2007 and 2010.

III. Collaboration between the RCC and the WCC

A. Faith and Order

The Catholic Church became a member of the Faith and Order Commission (F&O) in 1968. Their excellent cooperation was sustained in the period from 2006-2013. During this period the longstanding PCPCU consultant to the Faith and Order Commission, Monsignor John Radano, took his retirement. Fr Radano was a significant support to the commission and a noted scholar of Faith and Order work. The F&O Commission was pleased to welcome his successor, Fr Gregory Fairbanks, in 2008.

During this period, F&O pursued three main study projects:

1. *Ecclesiology*. The F&O secretariat received more than 80 responses to the study document *The Nature and Mission of the Church* (Faith and Order Paper no 198, 2005). On the basis of the responses a restructured and shortened study text was drafted. The F&O Commission approved the text on *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* as consensus text in 2012 in Penang/Malaysia. It is for the first time since the 1983 text on *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (BEM) that the commission agreed on a consensus document.
2. *Sources of authority*. By looking at how churches use sources of authority, the commission tried to take a new approach to the complex questions concerning scripture and tradition. The study is progressing.
3. *Moral discernment in the churches*. Conducting case studies on controversial issues, the commission explored how churches arrive at their positions on moral issues. The study has raised high expectations given

the potentially church-dividing character of moral issues. A draft text was discussed by the commission. The study continues.

The document on *One Baptism: Towards Mutual Recognition* which had been elaborated by a previous standing commission was approved for publication.

The PCPCU representatives to the standing commission continued to make significant contributions to the work of F&O. Fr William Henn has been the principal drafter of the text on *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*. Fr Frans Bouwen gave important leadership as one of the vice-moderators of the commission, as well as the co-moderator of the study project on moral discernment in the churches. Professor Myriam Wijlens was a member of the sub-committee that proposed a restructuring of the commission. Fr Gregory Fairbanks was an observer at the United and Uniting Churches consultation in November 2008 in Johannesburg. Catholic members of the plenary commission made significant contributions to the 2009 meeting of the Faith and Order plenary commission. One of the keynote speakers was Sister Ha Fong Maria Ko. Fr Jorge Scampini presented a paper at a panel discussion on ecclesiology.

Roman Catholic participation in the 2008 meeting of the Ninth Forum on Bilateral Dialogues at Breklum, Germany was significant. The bilateral forum is convened by F&O on behalf of the secretaries of the CWCs. Roman Catholic participants were important contributors to the Breklum report, which affirmed visible unity as the primary goal of ecumenical dialogue, but acknowledged that there were differing stages to that goal depending on the ecumenical partners and the maturity of the dialogue. The interaction among different bilateral dialogues and with the multi-lateral level of ecumenical dialogue is acknowledged as a key concern for F&O. The Tenth Forum on Bilateral Dialogues met in 2012 in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, at a Roman Catholic retreat centre. The theme of the 2012 meeting, reception in the global South, was much shaped by Roman Catholic input.

B. Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

A significant area of ongoing cooperation between Faith and Order and the PCPCU is the annual production of the material for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (WPCU). During the centenary celebrations of the WPCU in January 2008, which already were highlighted in chapter II of this report, the Commission on Faith and Order and the Pontifical Council

for Promoting Christian Unity jointly received the “Christian Unity Award” from the Franciscan Friars of the Atonement at a ceremony at the Centro Pro Unione in Rome. Faith and Order and PCPCU staff began annual joint staff meetings to review the previous years’ process of preparing the texts for the Week of Prayer, as well as initiating changes and improvements for the future.

Topics of the WPCU for the years 2006-2013 are as follows:

- 2006 *Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them* (Matt. 18:18-20)—prepared with an ecumenical group in Ireland
- 2007 *He even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak* (Mark 7:37)—prepared with Christian communities in South Africa
- 2008 *Pray without ceasing* (1 Thess. 5:17)—prepared with churches in the USA
- 2009 *That they may become one in your hand* (Ezek. 37:17)—prepared with churches in Korea
- 2010 *You are witnesses of these things* (Luke 24:48)—prepared with churches in Scotland in the context of the Edinburgh centennial
- 2011 *One in the apostles’ teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread and prayer* (Acts 2:42-47)—prepared by Christians in Jerusalem
- 2012 *We will all be changed by the victory of our Lord Jesus Christ* (cf. 1 Cor. 15:51-58)—prepared by a working group of churches active in Poland
- 2013 *What does God require of us?* (cf. Micah 6:6-8)—prepared by a group from India

C. Mission and evangelism

Already the very first official report of the JWG in 1965 states: “There are possibilities of collaboration open to us in the mission field; these need to be analysed with care.”¹ Various forms of contact and working relationships have developed since then between the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME) of the World Council of Churches (WCC) and Vatican offices, dicasteries of the Holy See, and Catholic missionary orders.

The Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU) has continued to facilitate increasing Catholic collaboration with the work of

1. Reprint (1966) from *The Ecumenical Review* XVIII No. 2, p. 5.

the WCC's Mission and Evangelism Programme through the availability of Catholic mission experts as commissioners (one of them is also part of the CWME executive group) and, since 1984, of a full-time consultant based at the WCC in Geneva. During the period under review, this latter post has been occupied until September 2010 by Prof Dr Maria Aranzazu Aguado; at present the consultant is Prof Dr Annemarie Mayer. The role of the consultant includes participation in the CWME executive group and commission meetings as well as liaison with the appointed Catholic commissioners and with leaders of Catholic missionary congregations and missiologists. A series of visits was made by the Catholic consultant to both Catholic and Protestant missionary organizations in order to discuss common witness as practiced at both national and local levels. Under the coordination of the consultant, significant cooperation took place in the field of multicultural ministries, in contact mainly with ENFORMM, formerly INFORMM, the Ecumenical Network for Multicultural Ministry.

The CWME decided to engage in a process of developing a new WCC affirmation on mission and evangelism towards the next WCC's assembly in Busan (Republic of Korea) 2013. During its plenary meeting in Bangalore (India) in October 2008, CWME organized several working groups: one on "mission and spirituality," many times referred to as "transformative spirituality and mission," one on "ecclesiology and mission," and one on "evangelism." The three Catholic commissioners in the CWME have been actively involved in the general meetings and in the different working groups organized to carry on the study of specific issues in the mission field and to contribute to a new WCC mission statement. The Catholic consultant, as staff member of the WCC in the field, was in charge of the coordination of the working group on mission and spirituality. This has involved the preparation of a number of studies and encounters as well as the publication of articles in the *International Review of Mission*. The consultant coordinated also the work on mission and ecclesiology. The documents drafted by these working groups constituted the raw material for the new mission statement and were the basis of a pre-assembly mission event held in Manila (Philippines) in March 2012. A Catholic delegation comprising 18 people participated in this pre-assembly mission event. The draft mission statement *Together towards life: Mission and Evangelism in changing landscape*, which was agreed upon by the CWME in Manila, was approved by the WCC's Central Committee in September 2012 in Chania/Greece.

Catholic representatives contributed to the discussion on the necessary link between mission and unity both at Faith and Order and CWME meetings. In March 2009 a common meeting of the Faith and Order ecclesiology working group and CWME's working group on mission and ecclesiology was conducted in Berekfürdő (Hungary), since both working groups, from their specific perspectives and with their different accents, deal with mission/unity and church. The working groups of both commissions also include RCC members.

During this official mandate of the JWG the 2010 Edinburgh centenary celebration took place. While in 1910 no RCC delegates took part in the mission conference, in 2010 the PCPCU appointed a delegation of 12 members and was among the main organizing bodies of the study process and the conference in Edinburgh. One of the areas worth mentioning is the involvement of the RC consultant in the preparation of the Edinburgh 2010 Mission Conference. She was appointed by the PCPCU as its representative in the Edinburgh 2010 general council, and she was part of the study process monitoring group. Edinburgh 2010 made it possible to document, on all sides involved, the advances in the direction of a missiological rapprochement. The theme of Edinburgh 2010, "Witnessing to Christ Today," replaced the terminology of "evangelization," using instead "witness," a term recognized by Catholics and Protestants, Evangelicals and Pentecostals alike.

The year 2007 marked a renewal of CWME staff visits to Rome. A visit of a PCPCU delegation from Rome to Geneva is scheduled for February 2012. During this visit a consultation on the new mission statement will be held.

D. Ecumenical cooperation among the youth

Ecumenical cooperation among young people of various church traditions beyond WCC member churches and the RCC developed spontaneously over the last three to four years around the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity through electronic networking. Young people shared their creative ideas inspired by the material prepared jointly by the PCPCU and the WCC. These and other observations of similar initiatives motivated the JWG to suggest closer cooperation between the WCC ECHOS youth commission and Catholic Youth Organizations through the International Young Catholic Students (IYCS) that was represented in the JWG membership. The JWG document on *The Church in the Life of Youth and Youth in the Life of the Church* gives an

account of this cooperation that culminated in the organization of an ecumenical event at the World Youth Day in 2011 in Madrid, Spain.

E. Ecumenical formation

The PCPCU and the WCC have consistently cooperated in the work of formation of future ecumenists. The RCC was represented on the Commission on Ecumenical Formation and Education and subsequently the Bossey accompanying group. A Catholic professor, Fr. Lawrence Iwuamadi, continues to offer courses in Biblical theology at the Ecumenical Institute of Bossey. Two scholarships for the Ecumenical Graduate School are being financed by PCPCU. Every year the Bossey students and the WCC youth interns visit the Holy See for a week, aiming to experience in person the way the RCC is organized and to learn of its contributions to the one ecumenical movement. The groups usually are taking part in the general audience of the Pope and are visiting a range of dicasteries. They also visit the International Union of Superiors General; the Centro Pro Unione; the Waldensian Faculty of Theology; the Pontifical Universities; the Community of Sant'Egidio; the Focolare movement; and important places in the ancient city of Rome.

The network on Ecumenical Theological Education (ETE) also is cooperating with the Centro Pro Unione and some Catholic theological faculties. It is worthwhile to consider broadening the involvement of Catholic partners. ETE has made important progress in building linkages with Evangelical and Pentecostal partners.

F. Inter-religious dialogue

The Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (PCID) and the WCC project on Interreligious Dialogue and Cooperation can look back on many years of continuing exchange, both through regular visits to Geneva and Rome and through meaningful cooperation in various ways. Because of changes in leadership and staffing, visits have not been as regular as before, but still good working relationships have been maintained.

The letter titled *A Common Word*, issued by 138 Muslim leaders in October 2007, motivated the WCC together with the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue and representatives of CWCs to gather for an intra-Christian consultation on the Christian self-understanding in relation to Islam. The consultation was held in 2008 in Chavannes de Bogis.²

2. www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/interreligious-dialogue-and-cooperation/christian-identity-in-pluralistic-societies/christian-self-understanding-in-relation-to-islam.html

In June 2011, Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran, the president of the PCID, visited the WCC to launch the document *Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World: Recommendations for Conduct*³ that was issued following a five-year series of consultations among the PCID representing the RCC on the one side, and the WCC and its partner, the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) on the other. It was the first time that these bodies released a common document. The recommendations suggest practical ways of engaging in mission, while showing sincere respect for neighbours of other faiths. This document was distributed widely and sparked an important discussion on the methods of mission.

G. Justice, peace, creation and human rights

WCC projects on poverty, wealth, and ecology, on health and healing, and on peace and human rights, benefit from the expertise, cooperation and support of Caritas Internationalis, Franciscans International and others. There are many more opportunities for cooperation at regional and national levels. The Ecumenical Water Network, for instance, also involves representatives of the Catholic Bishops' Conference in Brazil, and the Latin American Episcopal Council. The WCC is extremely grateful for the dialogue with the Apostolic Nuncios both in Geneva and New York, which helps to strengthen the voice of the churches in the UN system regarding peace, disarmament and human rights.

A new initiative by the International Labour Organization (ILO) brings the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace and the WCC together with the Organization of Islamic Cooperation in an interreligious project on the ILO focus on decent work. The process started with conferences in Senegal, Chile and Ethiopia, and the publication of a handbook on convergences between the ILO mandate on social justice, decent work and religious traditions.⁴

H. International Ecumenical Peace Convocation

The International Ecumenical Peace Convocation (IEPC) in 2011 in Kingston (Jamaica) was already mentioned as a highlight during this mandate of the JWG. The PCPCU sent an official delegation that was

3. www.oikoumene.org/fileadmin/files/wcc-main/2011pdfs/ChristianWitness_recommendations.pdf

4. *Convergences : decent work and social justice in religious traditions: a handbook*. (2012) Geneva, ILO; www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/pardev/download/relations/ilo_convergences_en.pdf

led by Bishop Rodolfo Valenzuela Núñez, the Bishop of Verapaz (Guatemala). Among the thousand participants were many members of Pax Christi groups or Commissions on Justice and Peace. The Sant'Egidio community accepted the invitation to be part of the seminars on just peace. The Focolare movement participated with the Gen Rosso musical “Streetlight,” rehearsed and performed with fifty young people from a violence stricken neighbourhood in Kingston—an approach to violence that was developed by Gen Rosso in the project “Strong without violence.”⁵

The IEPC was the culminating event of the Decade to Overcome Violence (2001-2011). The event offered the opportunity for the sharing of experiences by many of those who had been contributing to the Decade. The PCPCU and Mennonite World Conference offered a statement, *A Mennonite and Catholic Contribution to the World Council of Churches' Decade to Overcome Violence*,⁶ based on the 2004 report of the international dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Mennonite World Conference *Called Together to be Peacemakers*.⁷ In Kingston, many workshops, seminars and plenary sessions were offered on the different dimensions of peace in the community, in the economy, with the earth and among peoples. The relationships between justice and peace and the proposal to move from just war theory to a shared commitment to just peace were intensely debated during the event. In the follow up to the event, IEPC participants will serve their churches as resource persons for initiatives to overcome violence and for peace.

I. Ecumenism in the 21st century

“The WCC and the Ecumenical Movement in the 21st Century” is both the name of a programme in the current WCC structure and the main concern and challenge this programme is addressing through the work of the Continuation Committee on Ecumenism in the 21st Century. The work involves issues of worship and spiritual life, church and ecu-

5. www.genrosso.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=blogcategory&id=0&Itemid=112&lang=en

6. *A Mennonite and Roman Catholic Contribution to the WCC's Decade to Overcome Violence*, in: WCC (ed), *The Ecumenical Review* 60, Geneva: WCC, 2008, pp. 333-344.

7. www.overcomingviolence.org/en/resources/documents/declarations-on-just-peace/contributions/from-confessional-bodies-councils/a-mennonite-and-catholic-contribution-to-the-wccs-dov.html

menical relations, women and youth. Taking up the constitutional task of the WCC to uphold the coherence of the ecumenical movement, the WCC has put far greater emphasis on building trust and relationships of mutual accountability and gift sharing between member churches and ecumenical partners.

A very important part of this has been close cooperation with the PCPCU in the context of the Conference of Secretaries of CWCs and the joint committee between WCC and CWCs, which has proven to serve the desired goal. The Catholic Church and CWCs sent representatives as full members to both the Continuation Committee on Ecumenism in the 21st Century and the assembly planning committee. One of the overarching objectives for the assembly is to serve the coherence of the ecumenical movement by being prepared together with WCC partners.

Mutual trust between the WCC, the RCC and CWCs also has been important for the advance of the Global Christian Forum (GCF), a broad platform that includes representatives of all major traditions of worldwide Christianity. During 2007-2012, several regional meetings were held, along with one global gathering in 2011 in Manado (Indonesia). The GCF has been and continues to be a vital and necessary initiative to nurture relationships of mutual trust and recognition, especially with Christians and churches that had been distant from the ecumenical movement.

IV. The Joint Working Group

A. Character and nature of the JWG

The JWG was founded in May 1965 by mutual agreement between the WCC and the RCC as an instrument of collaboration between the two partners. Its purpose, described in 1966, was to interpret the trends in the development of the ecumenical movement and “to explore possibilities of dialogue and collaboration, to study problems jointly, and to report to the competent authorities of either side.” Thus the JWG has an advisory function and serves as an instrument for promoting cooperation between the RCC and the WCC.

The decree *Unitatis Redintegratio* of the Second Vatican Council noted that the call to full visible Christian unity can be fulfilled only by the joint efforts of churches working together. The Joint Working Group has sought to play this role over the years, as well as that of calling the churches to recover and reaffirm the original vision and goal of the ecumenical movement. 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.”¹ The JWG has among its tasks the functions of initiating and helping to keep alive the discussion in the RCC and the member churches of the WCC of issues facing the ecumenical movement. It also assesses the current trends in the ecumenical movement with a view to offering recommen-

1. Cf. the collection of JWG mandates from 1966, 1975 and 1999 in the *Joint Working Group Between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches: Eighth Report*, Geneva: WCC, 2005, pp.34 ff.

dations to its parent bodies. As such, the JWG functions as a catalyst for ecumenical cooperation between the RCC and WCC member churches at different levels.

The JWG receives its mandate from its parent bodies—the WCC assembly and the PCPCU—every seven years. The structure and style of the JWG is meant to be flexible and adaptable to the changing needs and priorities of the JWG agenda. The JWG thus sets up sub-groups to study specific topics on its agenda. Some topics may require the participation of experts from outside the group who may contribute to the ongoing study. At the end of each mandate, the JWG prepares and submits to its parent bodies a detailed report on its activities. This report is examined by the parent bodies, who in the process of reception offer their observations, agree for its publication and distribution, and give further guidelines for the next mandate.

The 40th anniversary of the JWG was celebrated with a consultation in 2005 in Bossey, Switzerland. The consultation underlined that the very fact of the establishment and continued cooperation between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches for 40 years must be considered one of the significant achievements of the modern ecumenical movement. The slow but persevering establishment of a relationship in which the World Council of Churches and the Catholic Church have found in one another a trusted partner has been perhaps the most enduring achievement of the past four decades. In that sense, the JWG is itself an act and example of reception.

B. The work of the JWG 2007-2012

The “ecumenical pilgrimage” of the group followed during this mandate the footsteps of Saint Paul in Damascus, Malta and Rome. There is no better way to summarize the spirit and the work of this JWG than to refer to Saint Paul’s letter to the Romans 15:7: “Receive one another, therefore, just as Christ has received you....” The time together always was grounded in common prayer, Bible reading, and celebration, consciously strengthening the spiritual roots of ecumenism as a shared basis for common work.

The time for sharing information and experiences by individual JWG members and the parent bodies has been an important and fruitful element of every meeting. The sharing provided precious spaces to monitor and discern developments concerning the parent bodies and the ecumenical movement at local, regional and international levels.

This regular and structured exchange is conducive to building trust; to nurturing a quality of relationships that also allows participants to address difficult issues with mutual respect; and to nurturing common interest in the flourishing of the one ecumenical movement. The smaller JWG executive continued to be a very helpful instrument for the exchange of information, discussion of common concerns and the fostering of cooperation.

The importance of receiving the results of ecumenical dialogue, thus fostering a renewed commitment to ecumenism, surfaced in many ways in the reports of JWG members and of the parent bodies. The meetings of bishops with the PCPCU during their *ad limina* visits to Rome are just one example of important opportunities to draw attention to progress made in the past and to rekindle ecumenical commitment. In similar ways questions of ecumenical formation and the participation of youth continued to be included in the sharing. Migration moved centre stage in the observations of representatives from the Middle East and Asia as well as in reports by the co-moderators. The changing ecclesial landscape and cooperation in the Global Christian Forum were discussed at every meeting. Enriching experiences of interfaith dialogue and cooperation, and the difficult problems of religiously motivated violence, became ever more important in the times of sharing.

Responding to suggestions of the previous JWG presented in the *Eighth Report*, inspired by the spiritual life of the group and the sharing of its members, this JWG concluded that it should make a specific contribution to the issues of reception and the spiritual roots of ecumenism from the perspective of the unique body that it is. These two texts together are meant to be mutually enriching dimensions of a holistic response to Saint Paul's exhortation in Romans 15:7 which, therefore, was chosen as the motto for this ninth report of the JWG.

Compared to previous JWG mandates, the group introduced a new way of working with two sub-groups that explored opportunities for stimulating cooperation in the areas of migration and youth, two issues which greatly challenge all churches. The discussion on migration needs to continue. The group working on the role of youth in the church contributed a text to this report which is included as Appendix.

C. Study documents

1. Reception: A Key to Ecumenical Progress (Appendix A)

The current Joint Working Group has met during the time when the ecumenical world has celebrated the centenary of the 1910 Edinburgh World Missionary Conference, the event that gave birth to the modern ecumenical movement, as well as 50 years of the Second Vatican Council. These facts are reflected in the study on ecumenical reception in several ways.

The study is organized in five sections. Section I, entitled “Ecumenical reception: vital for achieving unity,” starts first by describing the fundamental importance of reception in the life of the church, giving some theological aspects involved in reception, and then, the meaning of ecumenical reception. It proceeds by inviting churches continually to receive the ecumenical movement and its results, “the achievements of a century of ecumenism,” into the life of the churches, and to build on those achievements as the ecumenical journey continues. The final part of this section sets the stage for the discussion to come by recalling that the JWG already has given much attention to ecumenical reception in the past, but asserts that the centenary is a special occasion on which to reflect more deeply on ecumenical reception and on the way a century of ecumenism has made a difference for the churches. All five sections end with “Learning points and recommendations” offered for reflection by the churches.

Section II describes the way ecumenical reception happens in the churches. After opening reflections on processes of reception, the rest of this section gives brief presentations describing the methods of ecumenical reception in fifteen Christian world communions, based on their experience and/or policy. The variety of approaches reflects differences in ecclesiology and illustrates the complexity of ecumenical reception.

Section III, the longest section, is titled “Overcoming the divisions of the past: reception promoting reconciliation.” It illustrates the way churches, through ecumenical reception, have taken some major steps toward overcoming those divisions. It starts by commenting on the new ecumenical context developed during the century of ecumenism since Edinburgh 1910, in which long separated Christians have increasingly recognized the degrees of faith they have continued to hold in common, despite centuries of division, and have begun to receive each other as Christians. With this new situation, the churches have been able to

engage in dialogue and to face together the causes of separation in the past. It describes ways in which three historic areas of division have been addressed ecumenically, and significant steps towards reconciliation have been taken. The first concerns divisions in the fifth century especially following the Council of Chalcedon (451). The second concerns the schism between eastern and western Christianity following 1054. The third concerns divisions in western Christianity during and since the sixteenth century, not only of the Reformation churches from the Catholic Church, but also between Reformation churches themselves. Detailed presentations of significant steps toward reconciliation and overcoming these divisions are given, although much more needs to be done to achieve full visible unity. The final part of this section presents ways in which the World Council of Churches and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity have been agents of reception.

Section IV shows that ecumenical reception also has been a struggle. Just as Part II gave concrete examples of reception processes, part IV shows concrete examples of reasons why reception processes can be a struggle.

Section V presents “Ecumenical formation: a key to ecumenical reception.” The Eighth JWG Report had stated that “greater effort is needed in the field of ecumenical formation” because “a new generation of Christians is sometimes unaware of the way things were and how much has changed in the decades since the founding of the WCC and since the Second Vatican Council.”² This present study has documented those changes, showing steps taken towards overcoming the divisions of the past, and the way ecumenical reception has helped foster and promote reconciliation. This section discusses the links between ecumenical formation and ecumenical reception, traces the JWG’s ongoing concern for ecumenical formation, and outlines some general principles of ecumenical formation, as well as programmes and guidelines to guide it.

The Conclusion of this study, in Section VI, is “An appeal to the churches” to recognize what has been achieved during a century of ecumenism, to continually support processes of ecumenical reception, and to renew their commitment to the quest for Christian unity.

Members of the JWG who agreed to serve on this study included The Rt Revd Dr Gregory Cameron, Deacon Dr Alexey Dikarev (as of 2010),

2. *Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches: Eighth Report 1999-2005* (2005) Geneva: WCC Publications, p. 29.

The Revd Canon Dr John Gibaut, Prof Dr Annemarie Mayer (from October 2010), The Revd Fr Luis Melo, S.M., The Revd Dr George Mulrain, Prof Dr Friederike Nüssel, Msgr John Radano, Dr Teresa Francesca Rossi, Fr Igor Vyzhanov (2006-2010), and The Revd Dr Tom Best (2006-2007). Dr John Gibaut and Msgr John Radano were asked to serve as co-convenors.

2. Be Renewed in the Spirit: The Spiritual Roots of Ecumenism
(Appendix B)

In response to the prayer of our Lord “that they may all be one..” (John 17:21) and motivated by Christ’s call for renewal of life and conversion of heart, the Joint Working Group initiated a project to reflect anew on the spiritual roots of ecumenism. The goal was twofold: to remind Christians of the spiritual impulse that has driven the ecumenical movement from its inception, and to consider fresh ways churches can nurture these spiritual roots by offering some practical recommendations.

Following an introduction, the text is divided into eight sections: basic terms, Biblical foundations, implications for prayer and liturgical practice, examples inspired by the saints, the power of transforming encounters, practical opportunities for churches with some recommendations to the parent bodies, a concluding summary, and suggested resources for further reading.

After defining the terms “spirituality” and “ecumenism” (words that popular culture often uses without sufficient clarity), this study explores the theological basis for spiritual ecumenism; considers practices of piety, prayer, and worship that nurture these spiritual roots; highlights how God in Christ through the Holy Spirit breathes new life into Christians through examples among the saints and transforming encounters with Christians of other traditions; and offers some concrete ideas for ways in which this spiritual foundation can be appropriated more fully in local settings.

The section on the theological basis for spiritual ecumenism is developed by using prayer as the chief organizing principle, because prayer is rooted in the Christian’s relationship with the Triune God, and with how Christians understand God and God’s will for unity. The section explores the use of prayer for unity both in personal piety and in liturgy, and it sees unity and diversity as two interconnected gifts that Christ gives the Church. The section concludes by stressing that unity is both gift and task, and that Christians live and work in enduring hope for the final vision of the people of God in harmonious relationship.

The section on implications for prayer and liturgical practice celebrates that Christians regularly pray for each other in a variety of ways, and that this is one of the fruits of the ecumenical movement. It specifically explores the use of ecumenical prayer cycles, the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, and the practice of common prayer beginning with the Lord's Prayer, which Christian churches hold in common.

The text gives examples of the impulse toward unity inspired by martyrs, saints, and living witnesses, and highlights an initiative to explore ways that the witness of martyrs can be a force for unity. This topic was developed jointly in a consultation by the Monastery of Bose and the Faith and Order Commission of the WCC.

In "the power of transforming encounters," the study explores ways that encounters with Christians from other traditions have been an inspiration that have propelled a deepened commitment to the quest for Christian unity.

The final section of the text offers practical recommendations to churches for ways that the spiritual roots of ecumenism can be manifested more fully. The text is grouped into five categories: (1) opportunities to pray together—placing more emphasis on ways participants can engage with each other during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, finding fresh ways to use the Ecumenical Prayer Cycle, encouraging ecumenical Bible study, and focusing on the impact of prayers for unity in liturgical settings; (2) opportunities for ecumenical witness—making use of ecumenical visitations to place a human face on the ecumenical movement, recognizing the power of witnessing by ecumenical leaders, and finding ways to foster ecumenical exposure to the young who have demonstrated some interest in ecumenism; (3) opportunities to offer ecumenical hospitality—on occasions of rites of passage, through attention to preparatory planning to show ecumenical hospitality, and by considering an intentional effort to involve Christians from different traditions in educational travel, focusing on the spiritual roots of ecumenism; (4) opportunities for programmatic engagement—through shared Bible study, careful attention to the ecumenical impulse underlying joint mission projects and other initiatives of community engagement; and (5) opportunities for ecumenical education—encouraging academic staff to draw intentionally and explicitly on the spiritual roots of ecumenism. Of particular note is the JWG recommendation that educational travel should be used as a means to involve Christians from different traditions in encounters dedicated to promoting dialogue and an exchange of spiritual gifts.

Members of the drafting team for this report included Dr Maria Aranzazu Aguado Arrese (co-convenor until 2010), The Revd Gregory J. Fairbanks, The Most Revd Felix A. Machado, The Revd Fr James Massa, Ms Margaret Naylon, The Revd Dr Kondothra M. George, The Revd Dr Henriette Hutabarat-Lebang, The Revd Diane C. Kessler (co-convenor), The Revd Dr Elisee Musemakweli, and His Eminence Metropolitan John Pelushi.

D. Reflections on youth

The Church in the Life of Youth and Youth in the Life of the Church (Appendix C)

The Church is an important part of young people's lives and their participation in the Church is an essential element of the life of the Church. The absence of youth in church communities threatens the vitality of the Church.

Because young people are one of the most dynamic sectors in every society and are at a crucial time in their lives, the Church has to find appropriate and creative ways to lead them to Jesus Christ. The churches need to stimulate discussions with and among young people in order to understand their experience and the richness of their faith. The contemporary world presents many challenges and at the same time opportunities to young people. They are exposed to the pressures of an increasingly global society. The JWG invites churches to be aware of the consequences of these pressures and the inevitable frustrations to which they can give rise. Young people live in the midst of the proliferation of information and communication technologies. These have a considerable impact on their lives, sometimes with negative consequences, affecting their relations, interests, priorities, passions and lifestyles. Communications technologies also offer positive opportunities that enable young people to communicate, network, and cooperate, giving a sense of global solidarity and motivation to work for church and society. Moreover, young people search for personal spiritual experiences and a relationship with God.

The challenges young people face have an impact on the way that they participate in the Church. Young people can be active members of parishes and congregations and youth organizations. Some may feel that the Church does not respond to their aspirations and modes of expression and, therefore, they may remain passive observers. This can lead to an uneasiness and sense of distance from the life of the Church. Therefore, the JWG invites churches to understand and respond to the complex

reality experienced by youth, and to be open to their needs and expectations as a key to develop, maintain, and nurture their sense of belonging to the Church.

The actions of young people in promoting Christian unity have been noticeable throughout the history of ecumenism. The JWG invites the churches to develop new ways of engaging young people in the work of ecumenism and to reflect on their perceptions of youth. It is necessary to appreciate young people in promoting Christian unity and to move beyond seeing them as passive recipients, but rather, as partners whose input is heard and valued.

For that reason the JWG opened a channel of communication with young people through specific resources that can be used in different places and churches. The three areas explored by the *Resources for Youth* are: 1) Believing (faith); 2) Belonging to the Church (baptism); 3) Living one's faith (discipleship). Each area was dealt with from three different perspectives: the Word of God, the early Christian witnesses, and the Church today. The resource materials were tested among Christian student groups, parish and congregational groups, as well as in schools. The collected responses addressed the role of faith in the lives of young people; explored what it means to belong to the Christian tradition and the role of the Church; and considered interaction with Christians from different traditions. The JWG encourages churches to use that tool as a starting point in young people's reflections on their own Christian traditions. The responses indicated that young people expect the Church to be active and involved in the contemporary world. The feedback shows that young people are open to different Christian traditions but are not aware of the role they could play in promoting Christian unity. The JWG encourages churches to consider how young people can participate more consciously and actively in ecumenical strategies for collaboration.

Members of the working group on youth included Ms Loucille Alcala (as of 2010), The Very Revd Archimandrite Dr Iosif L. Bosch, Ms Margareta Brosnan (until 2010), Ms Agnieszka Godfrejów Tarnogórska (convenor), and The Revd Msgr Juan Usma Gómez.

E. Discussions on migration

Realizing the mutual belonging to one another is the real calling in the movement and presence of migrants. Belonging to one another goes beyond the diaconal service for people in need; it is about sharing our common humanity and the gift of life that we all have received. Who is my neighbour? The existential context of migration reveals the deeper meaning of community and mutual belonging within a socially, culturally and often also religiously diverse people. Among Christians of different traditions and origins, the fellowship and the quality of the common life in Christ—communion—are at stake. As such, migration requires an ecumenical response.

The most recent statistics indicate that approximately 3% of the world's population are migrants according to the International Organization for Migration.³ There are 214 million international migrants, among them 106 million or 49% Christians.⁴ The journey and presence of people from other countries is at the origin of the wide mix of challenges, blessings and responses evoked in public debates on migration: from racist rejection to uncertainty to the full embrace as people sooner or later becoming citizens. Many uncritically held assumptions—including notions of a fixed culture or community—are being challenged by the arrival of migrants.

Both common and biblical history reveal that migration has been part of the life of human communities from the beginning, almost always involving change both for those moving and for those they join. Increasing globalization and mobility have added new dimensions to the phenomenon of migration. Mobility and plurality of identities are factors that now shape life in communities almost everywhere in the world. When

3. "Migration" is the movement of a person or a group of persons, either across an international border, or within a State. It is a population movement, encompassing any kind of movement of people, whatever its length, composition and causes. It includes migration of refugees, displaced persons, economic migrants, and persons moving for other purposes, including family reunification. (source: International Organisation for Migration, www.iom.int/jahia/Jahia/about-migration/key-migration-terms/lang/en#Migrant). The phrase "international migrants" refers to persons or groups of persons that are living for one year or longer in a country other than the one in which he or she was born.

4. March 2012 according to PEW Research Center's Forum on Religion and Public Life, *Faith on the Move. The Religious Affiliation of Migrants*, www.pewforum.org/Geography/Religious-Migration.aspx

people move, not only their personal identities are tested. Encounter with people of other faiths, convictions, and lifestyles also have a deep impact on the way collective and institutional identities are understood; they affect the individual's sense of community, belonging and loyalty, *paroikia*⁵ of a parish and church as well as the churches' relationship to the ecumenical movement as a whole. The formation and growth of migrant-led communities is an indicator of the chances and challenges this poses for ecumenical responses by the churches: how can the common service and witness to the one gospel be maintained, despite divergent articulations and versions of Christianity? From this perspective, mobility and the plurality of social, cultural and religious identities are to be addressed with and also beyond the immediate diaconal response to migration.

It is necessary to be attentive to the complexity of the socio-economic and political underpinnings of the public debate on migration, and, at the same time, to increase the awareness for constructive models of encountering the other. The shared humanity—in the fullness of its promise as in its vulnerability—and common baptism constitute the basis for ecumenical relationships between engagement with all migrants and with communities of Christian migrants and churches in the countries in which they seek acceptance. As members of the same body, they all share a responsibility for the entire body and all its parts. The issue will undoubtedly constitute a priority in ecumenical initiatives across-the-board for years to come. Faithful to each of our own ecclesial traditions, such a response must be open to the new realities.

Addressing the concerns of migrants needs also sensitivity to the effects of a negatively tainted public discourse on migration, also within Christian communities.

Members of the working group on migration included Archbishop Vicken Aykazian, Dr Youssef Kamal El-Hage, Chorbishop John D. Faris (convenor), The Revd Dr Benebo Fubara Fubara-Manuel, Dr Flaminia Dama Giovanelli, Ms Laurel Namhla Masinga, The Revd Dr Japhet Ndhlovu, and Sister Veronica de Roza, FMM.

5. The word parish derives from the Greek word *paroikia*—dwelling near one another, but also dwelling in a strange land.

V. Prospects for the Future (2013–2020)

The trust that is built through the structured and sustained form of cooperation of the parent bodies through the JWG is an important contribution to the coherence of the one ecumenical movement and the continuing search for the visible unity of the church. The JWG has been a space for open and constructive exchange, facilitating cooperation between different aspects of the life and work of the parent bodies, interpreting developments in both of the parent bodies and the wider ecumenical movement, and addressing common challenges and sensitive issues in an atmosphere of spiritual communion and friendship in Christ. Along with this ongoing cooperation, relationships between different programmatic areas of the WCC and the relevant dicasteries of the Roman Curia developed further during this period.

All these functions should remain central to any future JWG, independent of the size of the group or the duration of its mandate. Preparing for the 2012 WCC Central Committee meeting and the forthcoming assembly, the WCC governance group was reviewing all WCC related commissions and advisory groups regarding size, frequency of meetings and working methodologies, with the tendency to encourage the formation of smaller and at the same time more flexible bodies. The parent bodies will discuss these matters further and come up with a jointly developed proposal for the future.

Grateful for the opportunity of working together during this mandate, the JWG offers the following recommendations:

- Some of the insights of the consultation at the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the JWG have proven to be relevant beyond the present mandate. The next JWG will surely benefit if the first two plenary sessions again are organized in Rome and Geneva. More detailed and better knowledge of the two parent bodies by all members of the group will lead to a clearer understanding both of the tasks and the potential of the group.

- One concrete proposal for follow-up comes from the study group on *The Spiritual Roots of Ecumenism*. The group recommends exploring the possibility of a pilot project with the WCC Palestine Israel Ecumenical Forum and the Pontifical Council for Migrants and Itinerant People on pilgrimages to the Holy Land.

- The JWG did not conclude its discussion on migration. The importance of the issue for the churches merits fostering collaboration between the parent bodies on this issue.

- It will be necessary for the next JWG to reflect on new forms of working together, assessing and responding to the continually evolving global and ecclesial context. The JWG needs to feel the pulse of the ecumenical movement continuously, taking stock of the state of ecumenical relations, identifying strengths and weaknesses in actual ecumenical relations, setting priorities with measurable goals, and monitoring progress to determine whether goals have been seriously and consistently pursued.

- It was underlined that the Joint Working Group should not duplicate the work of the Faith and Order Commission. The Joint Working Group has a role to play in providing reflection on the ecumenical dimension of issues, and must decide whether it can make a particular contribution in a given area, perhaps more often by asking a specialized body to undertake a study than by organizing a study on its own.

- It might be good for the next mandate to explore other creative possibilities in response to the core mandate of the JWG. This might also strengthen the group for “being a challenge to the parent bodies by proposing new steps and programmes.” The following questions build on the work done so far, but also point to other tasks:

- How could the JWG function more practically as an agent of reception and a promoter of the spiritual rootedness of ecumenism?

- How can the new presence of diverse Christian communities in a given place as the result of migration become an enriching opportunity for the deepening of ecumenical relations in the context of a changing ecclesial landscape?

- In which ways can the JWG continue to encourage better and growing ecumenical cooperation and participation of young people, for instance in universities and at occasions like the World Youth Day?
- What can the parent bodies do together to foster inter-religious dialogue and cooperation?
- Are there more effective possibilities of strengthening relationships with those Christians who keep a distance from the ecumenical movement?

VI. Members of the Joint Working Group (2007–2012)

Representatives of the Roman Catholic Church

The Most Revd Diarmuid MARTIN

Co-Moderator

Archbishop of Dublin

Dublin, Ireland

The Most Revd Brian FARRELL

Secretary

Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity

Vatican City

The Revd Msgr Gosbert BYAMUNGU (until December 2011)

Co-Secretary

Official of the PCPCU for relations with the WCC

Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity

Vatican City

Prof Maria Aranzazu Aguado ARRESE (until August 2010)

Roman Catholic Consultant to the World Council of Churches; Commission for World Mission and Evangelism

World Council of Churches

Geneva, Switzerland

Ms Loucille ALCALA (2010–2012)

Programme Coordinator

International Young Catholic Students (IYCS)

Paris, France

Ms Margareta BROSNAN (until 2010)
Campaign Coordinator for Caritas Australia
Alexandria, Australia

Sister Veronica DE ROZA, FMM
Franciscan Missionaries of Mary
Singapore

Dr Youssef Kamal EL-HAGE
Associate Professor of Physics
Faculty of Natural and Applied Sciences, Notre Dame University-
Louaize
Zouk Mosbeh, Lebanon

The Revd Gregory J. FAIRBANKS (as of 2008)
Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity
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VII. Appendices

Appendix A

Reception: A Key to Ecumenical Progress

Appendix B

Be Renewed in the Spirit: The Spiritual Roots of Ecumenism

Appendix C

The Church in the Life of Youth and Youth in the Life of the Church

Appendix A

Reception: A Key to Ecumenical Progress

A JWG Study

Contents

INTRODUCTION

I. ECUMENICAL RECEPTION: VITAL FOR ACHIEVING UNITY

- A. Reception in the life of the church: yesterday, today and tomorrow
- B. Ecumenical reception
- C. Continually receiving the ecumenical movement and its results in the life of the churches
 - 1. *Receiving the achievements of a century of ecumenism*
 - 2. *Building on achievements as the ecumenical journey continues*
- D. Ecumenical reception in the reflection of the Joint Working Group
- E. Learning points and recommendations

II. HOW ECUMENICAL RECEPTION HAPPENS: THE EXPERIENCE OF CHRISTIAN WORLD COMMUNIONS

- A. The processes of reception
- B. How the processes work
- C. Learning points and recommendations

III. OVERCOMING THE DIVISIONS OF THE PAST: RECEPTION PROMOTING RECONCILIATION

- A. The new context fostering reception
- B. Towards overcoming fifth century divisions
 - 1. *Common Christological declarations*
 - a. Bishops of Rome and Oriental Orthodox Patriarchs

- b. The Bishop of Rome and the Patriarch of the Assyrian Church of the East
- c. The official dialogue of the Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox Churches
- d. Christological agreement in other relationships and dialogues
- C. Towards overcoming the divisions of 1054
- D. Towards overcoming divisions from the 16th century
 - 1. *Early examples of mutual reception*
 - 2. *More recent examples of successful reception processes: Leuenberg and Porvoo*
 - a. The Community of Protestant Churches in Europe—The Leuenberg Concord
 - b. The Community of British and Irish Anglican Churches and Northern and Baltic Lutheran Churches—The Porvoo Communion
 - 3. The continuing reception of the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*
 - 4. *Lutheran and Mennonite reconciliation*
- E. The role of the sponsoring bodies as agents of reception
 - 1. *The Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity*
 - 2. *The World Council of Churches*
 - a. An example of ecumenical reception within the WCC itself
 - b. An example of the WCC receiving the results of a bilateral dialogue report
 - c. Forum on bilateral dialogues
 - d. The continuing reception of *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*
- F. Learning points and recommendations

IV. WHEN ECUMENICAL RECEPTION IS A STRUGGLE

- A. Challenges to reception
- B. Learning points and recommendations

V. ECUMENICAL FORMATION: A KEY TO ECUMENICAL RECEPTION

- A. Formation and reception
- B. Tracing the history of ecumenical formation in the JWG context
- C. Articulating ecumenical formation
 - 1. *General principles*
 - 2. *Programs and guidelines*
- D. Learning points and recommendations

VI. CONCLUSION: AN APPEAL TO THE CHURCHES

Introduction

1. Reception is intimately linked with the nature and purpose of the ecumenical movement. The *Eighth Report* of the Joint Working Group (JWG) between the Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches (WCC) expressed the urgency of reception as an ecclesiological issue today:

“Reception” is the process by which the churches make their own the results of all their encounters with one another, and in a particular way the convergences and agreements reached on issues over which they have historically been divided. As the report of the sixth forum on bilateral dialogues notes: “Reception is an integral part of the movement towards that full communion which is realised when ‘all the churches are able to recognise in one another the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church in its fullness.’” Thus reception is far more than the official responses to the dialogue results, although official responses are essential. However, even though they are not concerned with the full range of interchurch relations, the results of international theological dialogues are a crucial aspect of reception, as specific attempts to overcome what divides churches and impedes the expression of unity willed by our Lord.¹

2. This quotation itself reveals the complexity of the concept of reception; it encompasses not only the reception of ecumenical dialogue but the broader process by which churches can receive elements, such as liturgy, spirituality and forms of witness from one another’s traditions, and even the totality of the process by which churches may receive one another in full communion.

3. By engaging in multilateral and bilateral dialogue, and by increasing contacts with one another in many ways, Christian communions long separated have begun to receive one another in fresh ways as brothers and sisters in Christ. The present text sets out to reflect the gifts and challenges of reception to the churches as they receive insights resulting from their ecumenical dialogues with one another. The pages in this report are by no means an exhaustive examination of the full scope of ecumenical achievements and their reception. The report does, however, present diverse experiences and types of reception emerging from the major ecumenical dialogues. With this study document the JWG returns to a theme taken up

1. “The Nature and Purpose of Ecumenical Dialogue.” (2005) *The Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches: Eighth Report*. WCC Publications, Geneva, pp. 82-83.

before and reflects further on reception as an integral part of the ecumenical movement, vital for fostering the goal of visible unity.

4. Section I starts with a brief presentation of the importance of reception in general in the life of the church. This is followed by a discussion of ecumenical reception “by which the churches make their own the results of all their encounters with one another, and in a particular way the convergences and agreements reached on issues over which they have been historically divided.”² It stresses in particular the need of continually receiving the ecumenical movement and its results into the life of the churches. Section II presents descriptions of specific processes used by various Christian world communions especially of receiving ecumenical documents. Section III shows ways in which, through the ecumenical movement, the reception of ecumenical dialogue results and the gradual reception by long separated Christians of each other as brothers and sisters in Christ, has enabled them to take significant steps towards overcoming divisions originating in the fifth, the eleventh, and the sixteenth centuries. At the same time Section IV makes clear that there remain obstacles to unity still to be resolved and therefore challenges to ecumenical reception. In this light Section V discusses the importance of ecumenical formation as a key to ecumenical reception. At the end of each section, learning points and recommendations are offered to assist the churches in receiving from one another and receiving each other. The text concludes with “An Appeal to the Churches” to acknowledge the fact that much progress has been achieved during the century of ecumenism after the 1910 Edinburgh World Missionary Conference, and urges the parent bodies of the JWG to continually foster the ecumenical movement and the reception of its achievements in the life of the churches.

I. Ecumenical Reception: Vital for Achieving Unity

A. Reception in the life of the church: yesterday, today and tomorrow

5. Reception is fundamental to the life of the church. Reception is rooted in the revelation of the mutual interaction and love of the persons of the Trinity—Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Biblical vocabulary and witness (*lambanein/apolambanein, dechesthai/apodechesthai*—receive, welcome) provides a rich source of meaning of reception as rooted in revelation.

6. To receive is essential to our experience as Christians. We receive existence and being as creatures from God, we receive salvation as

2. *The Nature and Purpose of Ecumenical Dialogue*, No. 59.

redemption through Jesus Christ, and a new life as anointed ones in the Holy Spirit. We receive God's word and sacraments as effective signs of the new covenant. We receive the call to mission as disciples with various charisms for the upbuilding of the Church of Christ. As the Father sends the Son and the Holy Spirit to allow human beings to receive the good news of salvation, so too those in Christ are sent so that the world may receive the joy of eternal life.

7. Since reception takes place in the Holy Spirit, it occurs in and through events of communion (*koinonia*). From the reception of the preaching of Jesus and the preaching of the gospel through the apostles, the Church was born and continues to exist. This inheritance, handed down through the ages, was received with varying degrees of difference in form and manner, reflecting the many circumstances in life of the local churches. Through mutual exchange and reception of various traditions in a visible communion (*koinonia*) the Church is sustained in unity and holiness, true to its apostolic origins and universal mission.

8. Reception necessarily involves an active discernment by the Church regarding the authenticity of what is being received. It assumes that the recognition of what is already known is grounded in the living Word of God. St. Paul reminded the Corinthians that they had already received the gospel, a gospel which he himself received (cf. 1 Cor. 15:1).

9. Reception is more than recognition: it involves appropriation and assimilation of what is received in concrete communities with concrete gestures of communion (*koinonia*). Common celebrations of the eucharist, letters of communion among bishops, profession of a common symbol of the faith (creed) and shared artistic traditions, diptychs in the liturgy, synods and councils, and pulpit exchanges are among the many and varied ways full ecclesial communion has been expressed in the Church. These signs give testimony that the call of St. Paul is lived among Christians: "Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God" (Rom. 15:7).

10. When a receiving community recognizes its own faith, however new its expression, it is effectively transformed and lives ever more deeply its discipleship of Christ. This dynamic of re-receiving and re-affirming the mystery of the faith is a fruit of the creative force of the Holy Spirit in the life of the church. This unexpected or unforeseen aspect of reception sustains the continued vitality of the faith.

11. Reception is often gradual. At times, it is a painful experience associated with great upheaval in the lives of individuals and communities. The securing and handing on of the faith with its ecclesial life and structures, and the protection of the fellowship and unity of local churches, takes place over time, often spanning generations. This is clearly evident, for example, in such formative events in the life of the Church as the development and the establishment of the canon of scripture and the reception of the Council of Nicaea. The latter took over 50 years and the former took several centuries to achieve universal consensus.³

12. In this manner, reception has been used as a term to describe the process by which the local churches accept the decision of a council and thereby recognize its authority. This process is a multiplex one and may last for centuries. Even after the formal conclusion of such a process and the canonical reception of a council's doctrinal formula, usually through a new council, the process of reception continues in some way or other as long as the churches are involved in self-examination on the basis of the question whether a particular council has been received and appropriated properly and with justification. In this sense we can say that *in the ecumenical movement the churches find themselves in a process of continuing reception or re-reception of the councils.*"⁴ In this setting, reception "is

3. Richard R. Gaillardetz. "Reception of Doctrine." (2002) in *Authority in the Roman Catholic Church*, ed. Bernard Hoose. Ashgate, Aldershot Hants/Burlington Vt., p. 98.

4. *Faith and Order Louvain, 1971, Study Reports and Documents.* (1971). WCC, Geneva, p. 29, italics added, and quoted by Anton Houtepen, "Reception," in *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, ed. Lossky et al. (Geneva: WCC, 2nd edition, 2002), [=DEM], pp. 959-60. Here could also be documented the work of the World Council of Churches with regards to reception. For example: at the New Delhi Assembly of the World Council of Churches in 1961, there was a call for Faith and Order to undertake a study on "Councils and the Ecumenical Movement," the result of which was published in 1968. In 1971, the Final Report, "The Importance of the Conciliar Process in the Ancient Church for the Ecumenical Movement" was adopted at the Faith and Order meeting in Louvain. The appropriation of the critical discernment of the traditions according to "the faith of the church through the ages" was explicitly addressed by Faith and Order through consultations and forums on bilateral dialogues. Three of the forums are cited as the Faith and Order Paper 107, Geneva, 1982 by Johannes Willebrands, "Ecumenical Dialogue and its Reception," *Diakonia* 1-3, (1984/5): 121. This culminated in a new stage in reception when churches were asked to respond to *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (1982).

an effect and a sign of the Spirit's presence; no mere legal category, it is a theological process that is constitutive of the life of the Church."⁵

13. In receiving and in sharing what it receives, the Church is renewed in its life and mission. It is caught up in the dynamic of revelation and tradition that always begins and ends with the living word that is sent, received and sustained in the Church itself, and shared for the life of the world. In the church, God's word is proclaimed in the scriptures and interpreted, celebrated in the liturgy, and by believers committed to living and communicating the depths of gospel in their homes, families and workplaces. In this dynamic, the Church offers itself to the world so that it may come to know God's salvation in Christ through the Holy Spirit.⁶

B. Ecumenical reception

14. Reception has assumed a new meaning in the modern ecumenical movement which is generally understood to have begun with the 1910 World Missionary Conference at Edinburgh, Scotland. The goal of this movement, visible unity, has been expressed both by the World Council of Churches and the Catholic Church. According to the WCC Constitution the primary purpose of the fellowship of churches in it "is to call one another to visible unity in one faith and in one eucharistic fellowship, expressed in worship and common life in Christ, through witness and service to the world, and to advance towards that unity that the world may believe."⁷ According to Pope John Paul II, the unity we seek is "constituted by the bonds of the profession of faith, the sacraments and hierarchical communion."⁸ The success of the ecumenical movement in achieving its goal depends on the willingness of Christians in all communities to engage in dialogue, to critically evaluate dialogue results, to receive those results into the life of their churches, and to discern ways in which the new insights can be translated into new relationships which go beyond the divisions which have afflicted Christians in the past.

5. William G. Rusch. (2007) *Ecumenical Reception: Its challenge and opportunity*. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, p. 7.

6. See John Zizioulas, "The Theological Problem of 'Reception'" in *Bulletin Centro Pro Unione*, No. 26 (Fall, 1984): 4.

7. Constitution and Rules of the World Council of Churches (as amended by the 9th Assembly, Porto Alegre, Brazil, February 2006), No. III. www.oikoumene.org/en/who-are-we/self.../constitution-rules.html (Accessed April 2, 2012)

8. Pope John Paul II, *Ut unum sint*, No. 9.

15. In this new context of churches in conversation after a period of significant estrangement, reception involves not only the consideration of results of the dialogue, but also refers to the formal decision of the competent ecclesial authorities to allow these outcomes to shape their own life and mission. The forces of receptivity and receivability are at work in this critical process of reception.⁹ While receivability deals with recognizing the results of dialogue as true and conforming to the rule of faith, receptivity designates the evangelical attitude necessary to allow those results to be adopted in one's own ecclesial tradition. Each church is called to stretch beyond its own experience to recognize and be enriched by that which is of the living word of God in other churches. The acknowledgment that one has something to learn and receive from another ecclesial body and tradition requires not only openness but also great humility. The divided churches are being called not only to receive from one another, but also to receive one another.¹⁰ Such reception includes a conscious commitment to the spiritual roots of ecumenism.

16. Ecumenical reception involves the active and distinct participation of the entire people of God. According to Cardinal Willebrands speaking from a Catholic perspective:

Reception therefore involves the *kerygma*, the *didaché*, and the *praxis pietatis*. Inasmuch as the entire People of God partakes in the search for and the unfolding of the truth of God's word, all the charisms and services are involved according to their station: the theologians by means of their research activities, the faithful by means of their preserving fidelity and piety, the ecclesial ministries and especially the college of bishops with its function of making binding doctrinal decisions. One can also say that ministry and charism, proclamation and theology, magisterial ministry and sense of faith of the People, all act together in the reception process. The Church and all her members are therefore involved in a learning process that by its very nature is not exclusively

9. William Henn, "The Reception of Ecumenical Documents," in *La recepción y la comunión entre las Iglesias*, ed. H. Legrand, J. Manzanares, and A. García y García. (1997) Universidad Pontificia Salamanca, Salamanca, p. 484.

10. Especially, "[t]his raises fundamental ecclesiological questions [...] Ecumenically, reception is coming to be seen as a process, guided by the Holy Spirit, in which churches are called to acknowledge elements of sanctification and truth in one another. This implies that they are being called to recognise in one another elements of Christ's Church." See *The Church of the Triune God: The Cyprus statement of the International Commission for Anglican-Orthodox Theological Dialogue 2006*. (2006) Anglican Consultative Council, London, pp. 97-98.

concerned with theological documents, but also considers developments in the domains of liturgy, pastoral care, canon law, discipline, forms of piety, etc.¹¹

17. Reception cannot and must not be understood only as a purely technical or instrumental concept or even as just a sociological process in a purely numerical or quantitative manner. Signs in the community confirming that reception has taken place must be evident, not only in words but also in life. The entire Church has the responsibility to be actively engaged as a hermeneutical community that responds to the Holy Spirit fostering unity in its midst for the life of the world. As the ninth forum on bilateral dialogues said in its 2008 Breklum Report:

We believe that it would be profitable to keep in mind right from the beginning of any phase of dialogue the reception of its results. As each dialogue is in some way a “learning process,” each needs to consider how this learning process may be shared with the wider membership of the two communities involved. Only an abiding commitment to the ecclesial reception of ecumenical texts can allow these statements of convergence or consensus to have a reconciling and transforming effect in the life of our churches. Each dialogue report might suggest some appropriate actions which could be taken by the leaders and believers of their communities on the basis of the agreements reached. We recommend that communions find a way to mark by public signs their progress in dialogue. We recommend that those churches which have made a declaration of communion between themselves develop structures of unity that provide for common decision-making, teaching, mission and action.¹²

C. Continually receiving the ecumenical movement and its results in the life of the churches

1. Receiving the achievements of a century of ecumenism

18. In the century since Edinburgh 1910, participation in the ecumenical movement has increased dramatically. At Edinburgh, only Protestants and Anglicans were present.¹³ Over the decades they were joined

11. Cardinal Johannes Willebrands. (Spring, 1985) “The Ecumenical Dialogue and its Reception,” in *Bulletin Centro Pro Unione* No. 27: 6.

12. “The Breklum Statement” of the Ninth Forum on Bilateral Dialogue, Recommendation 2, www.oikoumene.org/fileadmin/files/wcc-main/documents/p2/breklum-statement.pdf

13. It is, however, important to note that the Bishop of Cremona, in Italy, Msgr. Geremia Bonomelli, at the invitation of Silas McBee, an Episcopalian, sent a letter of support to the Conference. Brian Stanley, *The World Missionary Con-*

by Orthodox, Roman Catholics, and more recently Pentecostals in efforts of dialogue and cooperation for the sake of unity. Within a century after Edinburgh, there were closer relations among Christians. Dialogue and other contacts have addressed issues which have caused division, and have helped to radically change relationships between many Christian communities long divided from one another.

19. One can cite, for example, the continuing efforts of the World Council of Churches over six decades to relate churches to one another in the quest for unity. The many achievements of the multilateral dialogues in Faith and Order, especially *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (BEM), include the highest degree of convergence on these subjects among separated Christians since the sixteenth century Reformation. BEM has provided theological support for churches in different parts of the world as they have built new and closer relations between them, such as, among others, the Porvoo and Meissen Agreements.

20. Through recent contacts and dialogue, old conflicts over the Council of Chalcedon's Christological definition, which led to division 1500 years ago, have been faced, and have led to Christological declarations which have helped to resolve these issues. In contrast to nine centuries of separation between Eastern and Western Christians (since 1054), new relationships have developed between them in the twentieth century, and today there are many ways in which they cooperate. In regard to the sixteenth century Reformation, through dialogue a common understanding of the doctrine of justification, the central theological issue in the conflicts of the reformation, has been achieved, as seen especially in the Lutheran-Catholic *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*. Anglican and other churches in Asia have formed church unions;

ference, Edinburgh 1910. William B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge, U.K., 2009, p. 11. Moreover Russian Orthodox Archbishop (now Saint) Nicolai of Japan was consulted; he pointed out the connection between unity in mission and the unity of the church: "I am in friendly, more than that, brotherly relations with all the missionaries of other sections known to me, and so are our Christians with their Christians. So shall we be from our part always, because we know that the first duty of us Christians is to cultivate Christian love to all men, and particularly to our brothers in Christ. But, nevertheless, there is no real and full unity between us and other sections; more than that, we are far from such unity because we are divided in the Christian doctrine." In *World Missionary Conference, 1910, Report of Commission VIII: Cooperation and the promotion of unity*, Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier, New York, Chicago and Toronto, p. 4.

Reformed and Lutherans in Europe have entered into altar and pulpit fellowship. These and other important achievements will be discussed in detail in section III below. They have not led yet to full unity among Christians. There are still important issues to be resolved. But collectively, over the century since Edinburgh 1910, the reception by the churches of many dialogue results has created a new ecumenical situation.

2. Building on achievements as the ecumenical journey continues

21. The responsibility now is to receive and build on those achievements. A century ago, when the movement set in motion at Edinburgh first began to unfold, it was not clear what directions it might take. As the second century of the modern ecumenical movement has begun, it has become clear that the movement's achievements are significant. Christians have overcome some of the causes of the historic divisions among them. The ecumenical movement has helped promote healing and reconciliation among Christians.

22. Today, the challenge for Christians is to recognize that achievements such as those just mentioned (cf. nos. 19 and 20), have changed relationships among Christians, have allowed them to identify the deep bonds of faith they share with one another, and the real though imperfect *koinonia*/communion that exists between them. It is this new situation in their relations, fostered by the ecumenical movement, that needs to be received so that a new phase of the ecumenical movement can begin.

23. The question now is, in what ways can the ecumenical achievements of a century, which have taken Christians in many ways beyond the divisions which had long characterized their relationships, be solidified? In what ways can those achievements help fashion steps forward which will promote the unity that is sought, steps forward which will contribute to resolving the theological conflicts which still exist? There are no easy answers to these questions, which continue to challenge all Christians.

D. Ecumenical reception in the reflection of the Joint Working Group

24. The Joint Working Group is in a unique position to serve not only its own parent bodies, but the whole ecumenical movement as well. In different ways, the JWG has already acknowledged the importance of ecumenical reception by giving significant attention to it. It is also in a position to foster reception in the wider ecumenical movement. In some ways the JWG can serve as a gauge of developments in the ecumenical movement and the way in which this movement is being received.

25. The Joint Working Group has reflected on ecumenical reception both directly and indirectly. In the eighth JWG report (2005), each of its three study documents gives attention to ecumenical reception, albeit in different ways. One study document, *The Nature and Purpose of Ecumenical Dialogue*, illustrates the growing significance of ecumenical reception. The first JWG working paper on *Ecumenical Dialogue* (1967) had no treatment of reception, although it hinted at reception when indicating that the aim of dialogue “is to grow together in *koinonia*.” (no.1), and that the results “must be shared with the whole church” (no. 3). On the other hand, *The Nature and Purpose of Ecumenical Dialogue* (2005) shows that ecumenical reception is currently acknowledged as an integral aspect of the ecumenical movement. It includes a section on “The reception of ecumenical dialogues” (nos. 58-79), describing its meaning and difficulties associated with it, and giving case studies illustrating positive experiences with reception from both multilateral and bilateral dialogue.

26. A second 2005 study document, *Ecclesiological and Ecumenical Implications of a Common Baptism*, is in many ways an act of reception of the growing understanding of a common baptism resulting from dialogue, especially to reception of the Faith and Order convergence text *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (BEM, 1982). Exploring different aspects of the common understanding of baptism, it illustrates ecumenical implications of this common understanding, and identifies ecclesiological issues, some deep bonds of faith Christians share with one another which enhance this common understanding of baptism, and others which need further treatment in dialogue in order to resolve differences which still stand in the way of the degree of unity implied in a common baptism.

27. A third study, *‘Inspired by the Same Vision’: Roman Catholic Participation in National and Regional Councils of Churches*, explores the phenomenon of the growing membership of the Catholic Church in these councils—itsself a reception of ideas put forward in the *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms of Ecumenism* (1993).

28. Studies previously published by the JWG have included important aspects of reception. Its *Sixth Report* (1990) included two studies, both suggested in the conversation between WCC staff and John Paul II during the Pope’s visit to the WCC in 1984. One, entitled *The Church: Local and Universal*, was undertaken partly in reception of BEM. The introduction to Faith and Order Paper No. 150, in which this study was published, stated that the responses to BEM indicated that ecclesiology

must be given further attention in the future, and therefore Faith and Order took initial steps toward a major study of ecclesiology: “An important aspect of an ecumenical understanding of the church is a proper understanding of the meaning and relationship of its universal and local expressions.” Ecumenical dialogue has fostered convergence on this question, and “[t]he present study is a result of such dialogue and a contribution to its further development.”¹⁴

29. The second 1990 study, *The Notion of ‘Hierarchy of Truths’: An Ecumenical Interpretation*, was the first common ecumenical study on this subject. It refers to the expression found in number 11 of Vatican II’s *Unitatis Redintegratio* (Decree on Ecumenism). It was seen as a concept which “has aroused ecumenical hopes, but...needs clarification...of its implications for the ecumenical dialogue” (no. 1). As this concept was already received as important for ecumenism, but not given ecumenical attention, the JWG study set out to study and interpret it. Its report concluded that it “has implications for the relations between churches as they seek full communion with one another through such means as the ecumenical dialogue. It can help to improve mutual understanding and to provide a criterion which would help to distinguish those differences in the understanding of the truths of faith which are areas of conflict from other differences which need not be” (no. 28). It was, in effect, inviting further reception and use of this notion in ecumenical dialogue.

30. This present study document gives examples of some of the significant achievements of the ecumenical movement, showing how new relationships have come about between churches long divided, and steps taken towards overcoming theological conflicts which have divided Christians for centuries (Section III below). These examples illustrate creative acts of reception, underlining the interrelationship of the various aspects of the one ecumenical movement. The study document also notes ongoing challenges to ecumenical reception to illustrate the difficulties before us as the movement towards Christian unity continues (Section IV below). Still other creative acts of reception should be considered in the years ahead. Continuing reception of the ecumenical movement and its various expressions in this second century of the movement will be vital for reaching the goal of visible unity.

14. *Faith and Order paper No. 150*, “Introduction,” (1990) WCC, Geneva, p. viii.

E. Learning points and recommendations

1. Learning points

To be human is to grow by receiving from others. To be Christian is to receive the grace and the gifts of God. In the ecumenical context to be Christian today involves receiving Christ in one another and through one another. In learning to receive one another we walk together under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. This is both gift and responsibility.

- If progress is to be made in the ecumenical movement, there must be reception of the achievements already made. This responsibility is essential for the life of the churches in order to be faithful to the will of Christ (cf. John 17:21) and to live the mission of the church.

- The costly nature of discipleship teaches us that reception of these achievements takes time, is often difficult, at times painful, but always essential and fruitful. If part of reception is an exchange of gifts, those gifts can be blessings. Now is the time to harvest these fruits and gifts and move forward.

2. Recommendations

For reception to be expressed in the life of the Church and lead to concrete action, we propose the following recommendations:

- take positive steps to inculcate a spirituality of *metanoia* and welcome¹⁵ in their engagement with ecumenical partners so that the inherited barriers may be overcome and a receptivity to Christ in the other be developed;

- remind churches of the rich diversity of elements of Christian life and discipleship which can be shared across the traditions and offered for ecumenical reception;

- actively recognize, especially in the case of dialogue reports, that reception is a multilayered process, and ensure that there is a real engagement with documents in the arenas of both formal and informal reception in all its stages;

- encourage dialogue commissions to be explicit about the issues related to reception of the document when texts are being drafted and when agreed statements are achieved. This includes, for example, making clear the genre and status of the statement, giving an invitation to reader responses, and indicating that formal responses of the statements depend on the churches which sponsor the dialogue;

15. Cf. Section II.B of the 2013 JWG Study Document *Be Renewed in the Spirit: The Spiritual Roots of Ecumenism*.

- take steps to affirm ecumenical achievements and encourage the churches to receive them with a commitment to implementation.

II. How Ecumenical Reception Happens: The Experience of Christian World Communions

A. *The processes of reception*

31. Within the broadest understanding of ecumenical reception lies the precise act of a formal action whereby churches receive agreed statements of their ecumenical dialogues. Concerning such a formal action, *The Nature and Purpose of Ecumenical Dialogue* (2005) said the following:

If the agreements reached through ecumenical dialogue are to have an impact on the life and witness of the churches and lead to a new stage of communion, then careful attention needs to be paid to processes for receiving the agreements so that the whole community might be involved in the process of discernment.¹⁶

32. Such a precise act of reception is in and of itself only a moment within broader processes which begin long before a text or statement is formally received, and continue long after such an action has taken place. There seems to be no common process for the reception of ecumenical texts, except that it is multilayered, multifaceted, difficult to identify, at times difficult to discern, and even more difficult to achieve. Nevertheless, it is possible to identify a broadly similar pattern of reception operating across international church structures and Christian world communions. Stages of reception can be described as discovery, dialogue, and reflection on the insights of the dialogue; when appropriate, a formal act; and finally, ongoing reception.

33. Reception is born with the discovery of those brothers and sisters in Christ with whom we are called into fellowship. In a sense, the very action of discovery is an act of reception, when we learn to appreciate other churches and traditions and recognize that Christ is active and present in their life. The establishment of dialogue is a further act of reception, when we recognize an ecumenical partner as someone whose presence is needed to achieve the full visible unity of the church. The early processes of reception therefore include discovery and dialogue. An essential aspect of the dialogue is the publication of any report or agreed

16. "The Nature and Purpose of Ecumenical Dialogue," in the *Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches: Eighth Report*. (2005). WCC Publications, Geneva-Rome, No. 58.

statement, the promotion of its study, and reflection upon it by each of the dialogue partners. Such processes may well include rigorous theological analysis and consultation on a wide basis across the communion in question. Not all dialogues have been taken forward to a formal evaluation of the degree of ecumenical progress which the document represents. The goals of dialogue may vary from a search to lay the foundations of visible unity in one faith with one eucharistic fellowship, to a more general seeking of mutual understanding and cooperation.

34. A formal act of reception can itself take many forms. It may be a declaration by the highest authorities within a world communion, a canonical act¹⁷, or the adoption of the text by motion or resolution at a synodical or conciliar gathering or assembly. A mutual act of formal reception takes place when, after internal study, both partners respectively agree to commit themselves formally to the specific achievements of the dialogue.

35. For the fruits of the dialogue to be received it remains for the theological insights and convergence expressed in the documents to be acknowledged and lived out in the ongoing life of the receiving communions at every level of the church's life.

B. How the processes work

36. The following brief inventory includes descriptions of reception at the global level, drawing on conversations with the general secretaries and ecumenical officers of the Christian world communions. It highlights the way that international church structures, or Christian world communions, deal with the question of and response to the reception of ecumenical statements at the international level. While the list of short descriptions is not exhaustive, it does reflect different Christian traditions which are found around the world. They are listed here in alphabetical order.

37. In the formal process of reception, the interplay between the national and international levels of reception is evident in the *Anglican Communion*, but consultation across a body of autonomous provinces is inevitably slow and can be confusing to ecumenical partners. When reports are offered which need response from the churches of the Anglican Communion, they are sent to each primate and the respective ecumeni-

17. In many Anglican Churches, for example, ecumenical agreements will be incorporated into the church law of a province by a church canon or other legal process.

cal officers by one of the Instruments of Communion (the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Primates Meetings, the Lambeth Conference, the Anglican Consultative Council), usually the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC), accompanied by questions for analysis and response. Responses at the provincial level are submitted to an Instrument of Communion, usually the ACC but also the Lambeth Conferences, often depending when the meetings are held. The new Inter-Anglican Standing Committee on Unity, Faith and Order is addressing this question and may bring recommendations for the Anglican Communion.

38. Reception in the *Baptist World Alliance* (BWA) first begins with the Committee on Doctrine and Inter-church Relations. An instance of how the process works in the BWA is in its dialogue with the Anglican Communion, *Conversations Around the World, 2000-2005*. The BWA convened a group of twelve people to assist the Committee on Doctrine and Inter-church Relations, six of whom were ecumenically aware, and six who were not so ecumenically aware, to “test the waters.” The final document prepared by the expanded committee was presented to the executive committee, but was commended, rather than voted on. An ongoing process of reception included things such as symposia at annual gatherings for questions and responses.

39. The multileveled and multilayered processes around reception are evident in the *Catholic Church*.¹⁸ When a dialogue has finished its work, the result—an agreed statement or text—is considered at this stage as no more than the property and work of the commission. The first stage of ecclesial reception begins when the text is sent by the dialogue commission to the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU), which then studies the text and makes a judgment as to whether or not it leads to closer communion and is open to full visible unity. Then a decision is made by the PCPCU to publish the document together with a theological commentary. This is done in agreement with the Congregation for

18. The spiritual nature and complex process of reception as understood in Catholic ecclesiology was described by Cardinal J. Willebrands in a speech to the Assembly of the Lutheran Church in America (Toronto, 3 July, 1984): “In Catholic understanding reception can be outlined as a process by means of which the People of God, in its differentiated structure and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, recognizes and accepts new insights, new witnesses of truth, and their forms of expression, because they are deemed to be in the line of the apostolic tradition and in harmony with the *sensus fidelium*, the sense of faith living in the whole People of God—the Church as a whole.”

the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF). It is then sent to episcopal conferences. If a document is to receive formal reception by church authorities in both communions sponsoring the dialogue, then, on the Catholic side, a joint commission of the PCPCU and the CDF is established to make the text the formal object of study and analysis. At this point, a text may be commended to the attention of the Pope, who is ultimately responsible for formal reception in the Catholic Church. This long process requires a growing agreement on the perceived value of the text; it depends on the perceived value of the text, and on whether the faithful begin to support it. Reception involves movement and reaction within the Church on the part of the bishops and the whole people of God.

40. Within the *Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)*, agreed statements of the dialogues are sent to the Disciples Ecumenical Consultative Council, which in turn publishes the material and sends it to all the member churches. Because the Disciples of Christ have no official doctrine as in many other churches, how ecumenical texts are treated by the churches can vary enormously. Texts are often sent to congregations, ministers and other leaders, as well as to seminaries where they may function as teaching documents. Also, ecumenical texts are made available to local and national bilateral dialogues as resources. The fundamental question for the Disciples is, what does a text mean in life of the churches?

41. In the *Lutheran World Federation (LWF)* reception is a multi-leveled process, and is identified as a challenge for this Christian world communion. Creating and receiving a text is understood as occurring as a communion in communion. Dialogue reports are sent to the Committee on Ecumenical Affairs, which may give limited approval but not much more. An ecumenical text so approved is then sent to all the LWF member churches for study and comment. In practice, this stage of the reception process does not work well since many of the member churches lack the structures to give a theologically responsible response; the process appears biased towards the churches of the global north. Even in the northern churches this stage is weak, often due to lack of staff or interest. On the other hand, when the issues attract popular attention, such as with Lutheran-Roman Catholic or Lutheran-Mennonite agreed statements, more attention is paid to reception. An identified missing step is allowing dialogue statements to be part of the formation of clergy, and then being appropriated into the lives of congregations. The LWF recognizes the need for better structures for ecumenical reception.

42. The process of reception in the *Mennonite World Conference* is evident in the case of the agreed statements from the Roman Catholic-Mennonite dialogue. When the report of this dialogue was completed it was sent to the Mennonite international governing body, which then commended the report to all churches with request for responses. Responses from the local churches, which are occasionally sent to faculties of theology, were then sent back to the General Council. If recommendations for follow-up are accepted, the responses and recommendations are then sent to the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity of the Catholic Church.

43. An instance of reception in the *Oriental Orthodox* tradition is seen in the Holy See of Cilicia of the Armenian Apostolic Church. It is the responsibility of the ecumenical officer to provide His Holiness the Catholicos a progress report on a dialogue, or a final agreed statement. Then the text may be sent to the Ecumenical Relations Committee, presided over by the Catholicos. If the text is approved by the Catholicos, it is then sent to the Central Religious Council (equivalent to the Holy Synod of other Orthodox churches) for approval. Because the Armenian Apostolic Church has two jurisdictions—Etchmiadzin and Cilicia—the agreement of one Holy Synod is then forwarded to the other; representatives of the two Holy Synods must meet and agree on the text. The final step is to send the report and joint decision of the two Holy Synods to all the Oriental Orthodox churches for final reception by the family of Oriental Orthodox churches. The process of reception is largely conditioned by the nature of the agreed text or statement.

44. In most of the local autocephalous *Eastern Orthodox* churches, the findings of bi-lateral theological dialogues as well as the documents of ecumenical organizations submitted to churches for action are normally forwarded by the Holy Synod of each church to their respective specialized synodical commission or department. These would assess each document and report back to the Holy Synod. In some cases (i.e. study documents) churches may formulate and offer their own response individually. In other cases (i.e. results of bilateral theological dialogues) there is always an awareness that further consultation and final agreement with other sister Orthodox churches is needed within the framework of the pan-Orthodox conciliar process. A concrete example of coordinated Orthodox efforts aiming at reception is from the Ecumenical Patriarchate. There are cases where the Ecumenical Patriarchate would convene or encourage inter-orthodox consultations (organized, for example, by the

WCC) in order to articulate an Orthodox response or offer an Orthodox contribution to major ecumenical processes. Such responses or contributions are normally better known and received. In other cases, the Ecumenical Patriarchate would attempt to assess the level of consensus among Orthodox churches (e.g. in the case of bilateral theological dialogues) either by correspondence with the heads of Orthodox churches or by convening a consultation with the participation of all local churches. Another concrete example of reception within the Orthodox Church is the Russian Orthodox Church, where the appraisal of ecumenical texts is the responsibility of its Department for External Church Relations. Agreed statements are studied by the department, and then sent to the Holy Synod's theological commission for further analysis of the document. If approved, the text is then sent to faculties of theology for further theological study. The final stage of reception is the bishops' council. The process can be very slow, as is reflected in the agreed statements arising from dialogue with the Oriental Orthodox churches.

45. The *Pentecostal* churches have not yet developed any formal mechanisms to receive texts arising from ecumenical dialogues. While a number of international bilateral and multilateral theological dialogues currently exist (Catholic, World Communion of Reformed Churches, WCC, and Ecumenical Patriarchate) or will soon begin (LWF, Baptist World Alliance), they include both formal and informal participants. Reports are currently published and widely studied by members of the worldwide Pentecostal academic community, and the leadership of the Pentecostal World Fellowship and a number of its participating churches is both aware of and encouraging of these encounters. It is already the case that Pentecostals have begun to reflect on how they might receive the fruits of their ecumenical encounters with others. On the whole, Pentecostals are more comfortable in speaking of a diffuse and Spirit-led process of reception, and indeed, of "receiving one another as Christ has received us" (cf. Rom. 15:7). This is both difficult to define and to recognize, but it does happen.

46. The *Salvation Army* does not make joint declarations, and does not have formal processes for reception. The results of its bilateral dialogues are sent to territorial leaders. They also appear in church publications and are sent to journals.

47. Among *Seventh Day Adventists*, the reception of ecumenical texts is under the auspices of the Council for Interchurch and Interfaith Relations (CIIR). When members of a given dialogue organized or coordinated by the

General Conference have reached agreement and are ready to report their findings to the church for response, their dialogue statements are sent to the CIIR. If, in the judgment of the Council, the agreement is of interest to the whole church, it goes to the General Conference's administrative committee, and if accepted it is sent to the regional bodies for study and comment. If the agreement is not accepted at the local and regional levels, it is sent to the General Conference's CIIR for adjustment, which will be done in consultation with the dialogue partner. The Seventh Day Adventists now are engaged in an international bilateral dialogue with the Mennonite World Conference, and a regional bilateral dialogue with the Presbyterian Church (USA).

48. An example of reception in a *United and Uniting Church* is found in the United Reformed Church (URC) in the United Kingdom. The URC makes the distinction between dialogue reports which seek understanding and dialogues which seek action. Reception is an open process that can happen in less formal ways. For example, the reception of the teaching on the eucharist from *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* is seen in newer eucharistic liturgies. Reception of BEM's teaching on baptism is seen in a readiness to accept believers and infant baptism. Reception of BEM's treatment on ministry has been more problematic, related to the challenges around the mutual recognition of ministry. The experience of the URC suggests that when churches have an open policy concerning reception, with no expectation that official action needs to be taken, informal reception may be much easier for churches than when reception is a more formal and complex process.

49. For the *World Communion of Reformed Churches* (WCRC), reports and agreed statements are first sent to the WCRC for publication. The report is then sent to members of the executive committee, then to the General Council. If the report is accepted by these bodies, the General Secretary of the WCRC then sends it to member churches with a commendation for study and action. In the experience of the WCRC, a number of different kinds of responses are possible, ranging from silence to relatively quick reactions. Often the process of receiving responses from member churches can take up to a decade, e.g. the Leuenberg Agreement of 1973 (Lutheran-Reformed), or the Reformed-Roman Catholic dialogue. Formal reception is experienced as a challenge for the WCRC, with the expressed need for more official feedback and response. On the other hand, informally, agreed statements are received in other ways at various levels of the life of the church.

50. Within the *World Evangelical Alliance* (WEA), responsibility for ecumenical dialogues belongs to the WEA International Council. Agreed statements are committed to this body, and it decides whether it has respect from the WEA side. If a statement merits such respect, it is then sent out to the corresponding bodies in the national Alliance headquarters, and then from there to the grassroots level of local congregations. Churches who share an agreement with the dialogue statement signal so at national meetings.

51. Dialogues at the international level report every five years to the major quinquennial gathering of the *World Methodist Council* (WMC). The ecumenical reports are introduced at the WMC, questions are taken, and they are welcomed or “received” in this manner. In emerging practice, ecumenical texts are sent beforehand to the officers of the Council (now also to a new steering committee) and to the Standing Committee on Ecumenical Relations (formerly “on Ecumenics and Dialogue”), and thence to all delegates of the member churches. The churches are asked to respond to the proposed texts and report their views. At its formal gathering, the WMC is asked to affirm the agreed statements of the theological dialogues; such an affirmation is registered and recorded within the minutes of the Council. The texts are published after authorisation for use by member churches and indeed the wider public. The current test-case for a higher degree of reception is the process around the recent synthesis of the last forty years of Methodist-Roman Catholic dialogue, *Together to Holiness*, which was presented to the WMC in 2011. The joint report noted those doctrinal topics on which there is consensus; those where there exists a degree of convergence, and those which are acknowledged as being more resistant to such agreement and which are commended to the Commission’s future work.

52. In summary, even a preliminary outline of these processes indicates something of the complexity and uncertainty attached to the processes of reception. Moreover, the processes described above can only give some indication of the formal ways in which reports and agreed statements are brought to the point of a formal act of reception. There remains the task of ongoing reception, which is the most vital if a real change is to be brought about in the quality of *koinonia* that a formal act of reception might invite or entail.

53. The most formidable challenge facing the reception of the fruits of ecumenical dialogues must relate to the way in which documents that have

received formal approval are permitted to impact the lived experience of the faithful in mission and witness. It is all too possible for a document of convergence to remain on the shelves of an ecumenical office or department without even the fact of its existence becoming widely known and received by the churches at the local level. It is vital in addressing the processes of reception therefore that attention is given to all elements of the process.

C. Learning points and recommendations

1. Learning points

- There is growing awareness of the wide diversity of processes for reception in the life of different churches.

- Reception includes stages of discovery, dialogue, reflection, formal act (when mandated) and ongoing reception in the life of the churches.

- No church structures necessarily guarantee reception. Unless there is a will at all levels to enter the process of reception, it will not occur.

- The process of reception cannot begin until Christians discover Christ at work in one another. Reception is born when space is created to welcome the other in our midst.

- If reception is to be successful the entire people of God must be involved throughout its multifaceted processes.

- When churches enter the dynamic of reception they move from isolation and self-sufficiency towards a deepening *koinonia*. International church structures and Christian world communions in particular facilitate this process. They become instruments of and vehicles for reception.

2. Recommendations

For reception to be concretely expressed in the life of the church, we propose the following recommendations:

- ensure that structures and opportunities exist to assist the entire people of God to discover their brothers and sisters in Christ in other traditions;

- encourage all Christian leaders and the faithful to take responsibility for the ecumenical process by a commitment to concrete action;

- foster openness to a diversity that is not irreconcilable with the gospel, but which may enrich the life of the churches and be an opportunity rather than a problem for *koinonia*;

- encourage those holding authority at any level to act in service of the ecumenical movement by fostering an appropriation of the fruits of ecumenical engagement at all levels;

- commit themselves to the ecumenical formation of the entire people of God in order to guarantee growth in fidelity to discipleship in an ecumenical age.

III. Overcoming the Divisions of the Past: Reception Promoting Reconciliation

A. The new context fostering reception

54. The twentieth century transformed Christian relationships, as modern means of transport and communication allowed much closer and more frequent contact than in ages past. In the various examples explored below, it was the impact of broader ecumenical contact that created an atmosphere enabling Christians of various traditions to begin to cooperate with each other, first in the great movements coming immediately from the time of Edinburgh 1910—the Missionary Movement, Faith and Order, Life and Work, co-operation in education and the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. This ecumenical movement itself sustained and prompted new initiatives. Christians taking part in these movements began in some degree to receive one another as co-workers in Christ seeking the unity for which he prayed (cf. John 17:21). More specifically, as these movements led to the creation of the World Council of Churches in 1948, the churches themselves, who were now represented together in the WCC, began to receive one another as communities, and gradually to develop common cause for the sake of Christ. Though the Roman Catholic Church was not a member, some of its theologians were in contact with the WCC from the 1950s.

55. During the Second Vatican Council, the Catholic Church and the WCC began to develop a formal and regular relationship, and from that time, to receive each other as partners in the one ecumenical movement. At Vatican II, through the observers sent by the WCC, the churches and Christian world communions began to know the Catholic Church and vice versa. In this context, initial steps were taken to receive one another in Christ, which would help them later to take more profound steps towards facing the divisions of the past. They began to recognize together the degree to which they hold the faith in common despite those divisions. The stage was set for addressing the divisive issues of the past.

56. In order to understand the dimensions of ecumenical reception, it will be useful, first, to describe some instances when reception has succeeded. In the twentieth century, reception of ecumenical insights has contributed to overcoming some conflicts that led to the three most significant

divisions in the history of Christianity. These divisions took place in the fifth century after the Councils of Ephesus (431) and Chalcedon (451), in the eleventh century (1054), and in the sixteenth century with the reformation.

B. Towards overcoming fifth century divisions

57. In the fifth century some churches, for various reasons, did not receive certain theological statements of the Councils of Ephesus (431) and Chalcedon (451). Reactions to the Christological formulations of the Council of Chalcedon led to a separation within Christianity, a division which has lasted until today. Within the modern ecumenical movement, dialogue has led to clarification of issues which contributed, then, to misunderstanding. New contacts and dialogue between Oriental Orthodox churches,¹⁹ the churches which “historically inherit a refusal of the Christological teachings of the Council of Chalcedon,”²⁰ and those such as the Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox churches which accepted those teachings, have led to much agreement today on the mystery of Christ.

58. New contacts between Oriental Orthodox churches and the Catholic Church at Vatican II were important for building trust after centuries of separation. New insights and clarifications achieved in dialogue, whether at the Pro Oriente Foundation in Vienna starting in 1971, or in the multilateral dialogue of Faith and Order, or in bilateral dialogue, have helped those involved to formulate Christological statements expressing the same faith in Jesus Christ. These new insights and clarifications have been received and expressed in authoritative common Christological declarations formulated by the Bishops of Rome, especially Paul VI and John Paul II, with Patriarchs of several Oriental Orthodox churches. The Eastern Orthodox-Oriental Orthodox dialogue has also formulated common Christological statements. Dialogues between Oriental Orthodox and significant Western churches have likewise achieved agreed statements on Christology, presented below in paragraph 64.

1. Common Christological declarations

a. Bishops of Rome and Oriental Orthodox Patriarchs

59. The first of these declarations, between Pope Paul VI and Coptic Orthodox Pope Shenouda III (May 10, 1973), stated:

19. The Coptic, Syrian, Armenian, Ethiopian, Eritrean, and Indian (Malankara) Orthodox Churches.

20. Ronald G. Roberson, “Oriental Orthodox-Roman Catholic Dialogue.” DEM, pp. 862-63.

we confess one faith in the Triune God, the divinity of the Only Begotten Son of God, the second person of the Holy Trinity...who for us was incarnate, assuming for Himself a real body with a rational soul, and who shared with us our humanity but without sin. We confess that our Lord and God and Saviour and King...Jesus Christ is perfect God with respect to His Divinity, perfect man with respect to his humanity. In Him His divinity is united with his humanity in a real, perfect union without mingling, without commixtion, without confusion, without alteration, without division, without separation. His divinity did not separate from his humanity...not for the twinkling of an eye.²¹

60. Christological language in the same line, confessing Jesus Christ as perfect in his divinity and perfect in his humanity, can be found also in common declarations between: Pope John Paul II and Syrian Orthodox Patriarch Mar Ignatius Zakka I Iwas (June, 1984),²² John Paul II and Catholicos Karekin I of the Armenian Apostolic See of Etchmiadzin (December, 1996)²³ and re-affirmed in the common declaration signed by John Paul II and Catholicos Aram I of the Armenian Apostolic See of Cilicia (January, 1997).²⁴ It is found, too, in the doctrinal agreement on Christology approved by Pope John Paul II and Catholicos Mar Basilius Marthoma Matthews I of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church (3 June 1990).²⁵

b. The Bishop of Rome and the Patriarch of the Assyrian Church of the East

61. In a process with another ancient church, the Assyrian Church of the East, Pope John Paul II and Patriarch Mar Dinkha IV also addressed the conflicts arising from the Council of Ephesus 431. In their common declaration of 11 November 1994, similar to those above, they confessed

our Lord Jesus Christ is true God and true man, perfect in his divinity, perfect in his humanity, consubstantial with the Father and consubstantial with us in all things but sin. His divinity and his humanity are united in one person without confusion or change, without division or separation. In him has been preserved the difference of the natures of the divinity and humanity, with all of their properties, faculties and operations.²⁶

21. "Visit of His Holiness Amba Shenouda III, Common Declaration," *IS* 22 (1973): 9.

22. "Common Declaration of Pope John Paul II and HH Mar Ignatius Zakka I Iwas," *IS* 55 (1984): 62.

23. "Common Declaration of John Paul II and Catholicos Karekin I," *IS* 94 (1997): 30.

24. "Common Declaration of the Pope and the Catholicos Aram I," *IS* 95 (1997): 80.

25. "Statement of the Joint Commission," *IS* 73 (1990): 39.

26. "Common Christological Declaration between the Catholic Church and

c. The official dialogue of the Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox Churches

62. This dialogue said:

We have inherited from our Fathers in Christ the one apostolic faith and traditions, though as churches we have been separated from each other for centuries. The Logos, eternally consubstantial with the Father and the Holy Spirit in His Divinity, has in these last days, become incarnate of the Holy Spirit and Blessed Virgin Mary Theotokos, and thus became man, consubstantial with us in His humanity but without sin. He is true God and true Man at the same time, perfect in His Divinity, perfect in His humanity. Because the one she bore in her womb was at the same time fully God as well as fully human we call the Blessed Virgin Theotokos. (First Agreed Statement, 1989)²⁷

63. The consequences of the Christological agreements reached in the dialogue between the Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Churches have not been fully received by the respective constituencies. Eucharistic communion, for instance, has not been restored. Other issues remain, such as lifting the anathemas against one another's saints, and questions about liturgical and ascetical traditions. Yet there are other signs of rapprochement. For instance, as a result of the Christological agreements, the Coptic Orthodox no longer re-baptize members of the Eastern Orthodox. Within the unique context of Syrian ecumenism, the two Antiochian patriarchates experience the pastoral reality of sacramental communion.

d. Christological agreement in other bilateral dialogues

64. Christological agreement is expressed in contacts and dialogues of other churches with the Oriental Orthodox churches. These include the Common Declaration of Pope Shenouda III and Archbishop of Canterbury Robert Runcie (October 1, 1987),²⁸ international dialogue reports such as the *Agreed statement on Christology* of the International Reformed-Oriental Orthodox Dialogue (September 13, 1994),²⁹ and the *Agreed Statement on Christology* of the Anglican-Oriental Orthodox International Commission (November 5-10, 2002).³⁰ Agreement on Christology

the Assyrian Church of the East," *IS* 88 (1995): 2.

27. Jeffrey Gros, FSC, Harding Meyer, William G. Rusch, eds. (2000) *Growth in Agreement II: Reports and agreed statements of ecumenical conversations on a world level 1982-1998 [=GA II]* WCC Publications, Geneva and William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids Michigan/Cambridge, p. 192.

28. GA II, pp. 110-111.

29. GA II, pp. 292-93.

30. Jeffrey Gros, FSC, Thomas Best, Lorelei F. Fuchs, SA., eds. (2007) *Growth in Agreement III: International dialogue texts and agreed statements, 1998-2005*

is found also in dialogues between others including the *Agreed Statement on Christology* of the Old Catholic-Orthodox dialogue (1975 and 1977),³¹ the 1977 Reformed-Catholic International Dialogue report *Presence of Christ in Church and World* (no. 84), and the 1995 Lutheran-Orthodox Joint Commission report *Authority in and of the Church* (no. 5a).

65. Thus, the dialogues taken together have resulted in widespread agreement on the nature and mystery of Christ. Agreement has been formally received by the Catholic Church and certain Oriental Orthodox churches through common Christological declarations of popes and patriarchs which illustrate, for them, the basic resolution of the fifth century Christological controversies (cf. note 17). Formal reception processes concerning these agreements are not yet complete and continue within other churches. It is clear that other issues also still need to be resolved. Nevertheless the broad Christological agreement seen above will enable the churches to get beyond a particular divisive fifth century conflict, and assist them in confessing together before the world the same faith in Jesus Christ, true God and true man.

C. Towards overcoming the divisions of 1054

66. For more than nine centuries, since the mutual excommunications in 1054 between representatives of the Sees of Rome and Constantinople, and intensified by later events, the relationship between the Orthodox East and the Latin West had been characterized by schism, hostility, and misunderstanding. In the twentieth century, and especially since the Second Vatican Council, Orthodox and Catholics have renewed relationships in a variety of ways. They gradually are coming to recognize and mutually receive one another as “sister churches,” a designation which indicates that they share to a profound degree the same apostolic faith, and participate in the one apostolic succession. Nonetheless, there are still issues to be resolved before full communion is achieved.

67. The public reading of the Common Declaration of Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras I and Pope Paul VI on 7 December 1965³² at the

[=GAI]. WCC Publications, Geneva and William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge, pp. 35-37.

31. Harding Meyer and Lukas Vischer, eds. (1984) *Growth in Agreement: Reports and agreed statements of ecumenical conversations on a world level* [=GA]. Paulist Press, New York/Ramsey and World Council of Churches, Geneva, pp. 396-98.

32. The “Common Declaration of Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras I, 7 December 1965.” Austin Flannery O.P., ed., *Vatican Council II. The Conciliar and Postconciliar Documents*. (1988, Revised edition) Costello Publishing

conclusion of Vatican II and simultaneously at St. Peter's Basilica and at the Phanar, was an important context for this new relationship. Pope and Patriarch, addressing the mutual excommunications levelled at one another in 1054 by the legates of the Roman See and the Patriarch and Synod of Constantinople, expressed their regret for the sad events of that time. They stated that those mutual excommunications brought consequences which "went much further than their authors had intended or expected," and, most critically, "[t]heir censures were aimed at the persons concerned and not on the Churches; they were not meant to break the ecclesial communion between the Sees of Rome and Constantinople" (no. 3). They declared together that they "regret and wish to erase from memory and from the midst of the Church the sentences of excommunication which followed them and consign them to oblivion" (no. 4b). They expressed hope that this action, fostering a healing of bitter memories of the past, would be followed by dialogue leading them to full communion of faith and sacramental life which obtained between them for the first thousand years of the life of the church.

68. Since the early 1960s, ecumenical patriarchs and popes, in addressing one another, have used the designation "sister church" to describe the relationship of Orthodox and Catholic Churches.³³ It appears to have been first used by the Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras I in replying on 12 April 1962 to a letter from Cardinal Augustin Bea.³⁴ In the period between 1962 and 1967, the Ecumenical Patriarch or his representative addressed the Church of Rome as "sister church" seven times.³⁵ Pope Paul VI first used this designation in his letter (*Anno Ineunte*) of 25 July 1967 to Athenagoras I, describing also its significant theological meaning. Both have received the faith of the apostles, and by baptism are

Company, Northport, New York, pp. 471-73.

33. In Catholic usage, sister churches are particular churches or groupings of particular churches, for example the Patriarchates or metropolitan provinces among themselves.

34. E.J. Stormon, S.J. Editor and translator. *Towards the Healing of Schism: The Sees of Rome and Constantinople. Public statements and correspondence between the Holy See and the Ecumenical Patriarchate 1958-1984* (1987) Paulist Press, New York Mahwah, Doc 10, p.35.

35. For example, in his statement to the Holy Synod on the death of Pope John XXIII in 1963, Athenagoras said that "in the person of the late venerable leader of our sister Church of Rome we discerned an inspired labourer well able...to train his gaze on those points of the teaching of the Lord and of apostolic tradition which are common to both the Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches." 4 June 1963, Stormon, pp.44-45. Other usages of this designation can be seen in Stormon pp. 51-52, 71, 76, 86, 134.

one in Christ. And “in virtue of the apostolic succession, we are united more closely by the priesthood and the Eucharist.... In each local Church this mystery of divine love is enacted, and surely this is the ground of the traditional and very beautiful expression ‘sister churches’ which local churches were fond of applying to one another.” And “for centuries we lived this life of ‘sister churches’ and together held the Ecumenical Councils which guarded the deposit of faith against all corruption. And now, after a long period of division and mutual misunderstanding, the Lord is enabling us to discover ourselves as ‘sister churches’ once more, in spite of the obstacles which were once raised between us.”³⁶ And in a 1971 letter to Athenagoras, Pope Paul VI expressed his view that between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches “there already exists a communion which is almost complete—though still short of perfection—deriving from our common participation in the mystery of Christ and his Church.”³⁷

69. Their successors, too, have articulated this mutual designation together in common declarations. Pope John Paul II and Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios I announced together on 30 November 1979 the beginning of a theological dialogue which envisages “an advance towards the reestablishment of full communion between the Catholic and Orthodox sister Churches...”³⁸ In their common declaration of 29 June 1995, John Paul II and Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I, reflecting on the results of the dialogue which had affirmed “that our churches recognize one another as sister churches, responsible together for safeguarding the one church of God”, concluded that these affirmations “not only hasten the way to solving the existing difficulties, but henceforth enable Catholics and Orthodox to give a common witness of faith.”³⁹

70. Besides the Sees of Rome and Constantinople, this designation has also been used by Pope John Paul II and Patriarch Teoctist of the Orthodox Church of Romania in their common declaration of 12 October 2002. Stating that “[i]n accord with the traditional beautiful expression, the particular churches like to call one another ‘sister churches,’” they point to the implications this recognition has for mission: “[t]o be open to this dimension means collaborating to restore to Europe its deepest ethos and its truly human face.”⁴⁰ In some cases, as in the relations

36. Stormon, 161-162.

37. 8 February 1971, Stormon, 231-232, citation 232.

38. Stormon, p. 367.

39. In GA II, p. 686.

40. In GA III, pp. 180-181.

between the Church of Rome and the Moscow Patriarchate, there have not been common declarations. But the mutual recognition of sacraments and holy orders, reflecting the theological basis of the designation “sister churches” is known in other ways.⁴¹

71. Similarly, this designation has also been used, in at least one instance, between a pope and an Oriental Orthodox patriarch. In their common declaration on 23 June 1984, Pope John Paul II and Patriarch Mar Ignatius Zakka I Iwas of the Syrian Orthodox Church, indicate that if their faithful find access to a priest of their own church materially or morally impossible, “we authorize them in such cases to ask for the sacraments of penance, eucharist and anointing of the sick from lawful priests of either of our two sister churches, when they need them.”⁴²

72. The international Orthodox-Roman Catholic dialogue, too, on the basis of the concept of “sister churches,” proposed a way to resolve an old conflict between them concerning the role of Eastern Catholic churches, which flared up again following the fall of communism in 1989. Its 1993 report, *Uniatism: Method of Union of the Past, and the Present Search for Full Communion*, on the one hand affirms the rights and obligations of Eastern Catholic churches to undertake their mission (cf. no. 16). On the other hand, it indicates that the “uniatism” which developed in events and conflicts of centuries ago can today be interpreted as a form of missionary apostolate against the other (no. 12, cf. 10-11) and thus “can no longer be accepted neither as a method to be followed nor as a model of the unity our churches are seeking.” The report argues “that what Christ has entrusted to his church—profession of apostolic faith, participation in the sacraments, above all the one priesthood celebrating the one sacrifice of Christ, the apostolic succession of bishops—cannot be considered the exclusive property of one of our churches.... It is in this perspective that the Catholic churches and the Orthodox churches recognize each other as sister churches, responsible together for maintaining the church of God in fidelity” (nos. 13, 14, cf. 12).

73. In regard to those same tensions between Orthodox and Catholics after the changes in Eastern Europe, John Paul II in his 31 May 1991

41. The official attitude of the Church of Russia, among others, “is recognizing and respecting the Holy Orders and full sacramentality of the Roman Catholic Church.” See “Ecclesiological and Ecumenical Implications of a Common Baptism. A JWJG Study”, no. 62. Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches: Eighth Report. (2005) WCC Publications, Geneva, p. 59.

42. In *GA II*, pp. 692-93.

Letter to Bishops of Europe on relations between Catholics and Orthodox in the new situation of central and eastern Europe, made clear that “with these Churches relations are to be fostered as between sister churches.”⁴³

74. Many other developments have fostered this relationship. Although Orthodox and Catholics do not yet share full communion, this gradual mutual reception of each other as sister churches calls attention to the deep bonds of faith they continued to share, even though separated for more than nine centuries, and share more intensely now. Despite continuing areas of divergence between them, much of what has separated them has been overcome.

75. Significant and longstanding theological dialogue has been carried out between the Orthodox churches and other Western churches, such as Anglican-Orthodox dialogue, Lutheran-Orthodox dialogue, Methodist-Orthodox dialogue, Old Catholic-Orthodox dialogue, and Reformed-Orthodox dialogue. Participation by the Orthodox churches in the WCC and the numerous theological dialogues that have been initiated have led to great understanding and co-operation. All these steps bear witness to a greater sense of reconciliation between East and West.

D. Towards overcoming divisions from the sixteenth century

76. Some of the most intense divisions in the history of the Church took place in the sixteenth century. Within the complex ecclesiastical and political situation of that time, reformers from different countries criticized and sought to revise practices inherited from late medieval Christianity within the Catholic Church. Such efforts to reform and renew often led to a break in communion with the See of Rome; other reforms occurred within the Catholic Church. But separated churches, shaped by the Protestant Reformation, were in serious conflict with each other as much as they were with the Catholic Church. Nonetheless, in a variety of ways, recent ecumenical contact and dialogue have helped to resolve some of the issues leading to division in that century. Receiving the results of dialogue has enabled separated Christians to begin to receive one another again. Examples of the way in which different churches have been able to receive each other multiplied in the twentieth century.

43. Letter of Pope John Paul II “To Bishops of Europe on Relations Between Catholics and Orthodox in the New Situation of Central and Eastern Europe, May 31, 1991.” *IS* 81 (1992): 103.

1. Early examples of mutual reception

77. a. An early example of this can be found in the Bonn Agreement between the Anglican and Old Catholic churches in 1931. While not resolving a division from the 16th century, this agreement stands perhaps as a strong example of explicit reception in a relatively simple model. The Bonn Agreement is essentially an acknowledgement of reception. The churches of the Anglican Communion and of the Union of Utrecht established full communion. This has not been without its difficulties. Questions still remain about parallel jurisdictions in some European countries, and the traditions remain distinct and separate, not in full organic unity. Nevertheless, the Bonn Agreement institutes full mutual reception of the faith, sacraments and ministry by these two families of churches.

78. b. The South Asian experience of the united churches is also worth recording. Starting in the 1940s churches of the various Protestant and Anglican traditions in North and South India, in Pakistan and Bangladesh, were able to receive one another into a united fellowship and a reconciled ministry. And thus were born the Church of South India (1947), the Church of North India (1970), the Church of Pakistan (1970), and the Church of Bangladesh (1970). The mechanisms of reconciliation varied and were sometimes seen as controversial and partial in their implementation, but one generation later, the churches which participated in the various schemes of unity have now fully received one another and been united into single churches.

79. c. In the same way that Anglicans and Old Catholics have been able to receive one another, so the churches of the Anglican Communion have been able to extend reception to other churches. Sometimes this has meant that churches, such as the Lusitanian Church of Portugal (1963) and the Spanish Reformed Episcopal Church (1980), have been welcomed into full membership of the Anglican Communion; in other cases, such as the Independent Church of the Philippines (1960) and the Mar Thoma Church of South India, the faith, sacraments and ministry of churches have been mutually received without formal and organic integration.

80. These processes have sometimes been at work at the regional level as well. The Porvoo Agreement between the Anglican Churches of the British and Irish Isles and the Nordic and Baltic Lutheran Churches involves the full reception of one another's lives as churches, including the reception of one another's members, ministries and sacraments.

81. Further examples could be adduced. What is clear so far is that several examples exist in which mutual reception has been possible and

indeed, has resulted. Churches have been able to recognize the fullness of the presence of the Church in one another and have translated that into concrete agreement and action—in some cases leading to full organic unity.

2. More recent examples of successful reception: Leuenberg and Porvoo

82. The 16th century movement of the Reformation was meant to renew the Church in accordance with the gospel and the ecclesial formation of the early Christian church. Within this Reformation context, however, the understandings of what was needed varied in different places in Europe due to the different political, social and cultural contexts in which theologians and laity experienced church life. Consequently, several strands developed within this broad movement which derived their energy from what was perceived as the rediscovery of the true message of the gospel. What united them was the common conviction of God's unconditional grace and the justification by faith alone. The reformers understood the Bible as the decisive source for Christian faith and teaching. According to this renewed insight into God's grace and justice, there was broad agreement among the reformers on the major issues that needed to be reformed, such as the praxis of penitence and indulgences.

83. Theological reflection on the understanding of the sacraments and the Christology behind them and on questions of predestination, however, led to conflicting positions, especially among reformers in Wittenberg and in Switzerland. Moreover, different political circumstances allowed for different institutional forms by which the reforms were established, especially with respect to ministry and church order. This is at least part of the reason for the fact that along with the modern ecumenical movement, European churches, in their effort to overcome separation, developed two different models to do so on the grounds of their heritage from the Reformation.

a. The Community of Protestant Churches in Europe—The Leuenberg Concord

84. In 1973, Lutheran, Reformed and United churches in Europe together with pre-Reformation churches, the Waldensian Church and the Church of Czech Brethren, were successful in developing the *Leuenberg Concord* (LC), an agreement by which the traditional church dividing issues could be resolved on the grounds of a common understanding of the gospel. In the document itself, historical distance is counted as an advantage. This has made it easier for churches to discern common elements in their teaching despite the former differences.

In the course of four hundred years of history, the churches have been led to new and similar ways of thinking and living; by theological wrestling with the questions of modern times, by advances of biblical research, by the movements of church renewal, and by the rediscovery of the ecumenical horizon. ... In the process they have learned to distinguish between the fundamental witness of the Reformation confessions of faith and their historically-conditioned thought forms. (LC 5)

85. On the grounds of a common understanding of the gospel proclaiming God's gracious and unconditioned justification as the message of his free grace (LC 7-12), the document offers a common definition of baptism and the Lord's supper (LC 14-15). While the doctrine of justification was not controversial in the Reformation period and in later confessional development, the mutual condemnations were intimately connected with a Christological difference. Therefore, the heart of the *Leuenberg Concord* is the paragraph on Christology, saying: "In the true man Jesus Christ, the eternal Son, and so God himself, has bestowed himself upon mankind for its salvation. In the word of the promise and in the sacraments, the Holy Spirit, and so God himself, makes the crucified and risen Jesus present to us" (LC 21). The shaping of church fellowship was possible on the ground of Article VII of the *Augsburg Confession*. In this article reformers confess and teach:

that one holy church is to continue forever. The church is the congregation of saints, in which the Gospel is rightly taught and the sacraments are rightly administered. And to the true unity of the church it is enough to agree concerning the doctrine of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments. Nor is it necessary that human traditions, that is, rites or ceremonies, instituted by men, should be everywhere alike.

86. According to this understanding of church unity, churches may on the ground of their shared understanding of the gospel be able to "accord each other fellowship in word and sacrament and strive for the fullest possible co-operation in witness and service to the world" (LC 29). This "includes the mutual recognition of ordination and the freedom to provide for intercelebration" (LC 33).

87. The *Leuenberg Concord* has served successfully as an agreement for more than one hundred European churches to be able to declare church fellowship to the present day. The *Leuenberg Concord* has been extended beyond Europe. The declaration of church fellowship, however, is not to be equated with its realization, but it needs a deepening of

theological reflection with respect to contemporary challenges in various contexts of the lives of churches. Thus, the realization of church fellowship is bound in with the reception of the gospel and the deepening of its common understanding and co-operation. Only in this process does church fellowship become a reality.

88. The study document *The Church of Jesus Christ* makes clear that to declare church fellowship is not just an option, but should be understood as an obligation in the light of the gospel whenever a church or an ecclesial community is recognized to truly proclaim the gospel and adequately administer the sacraments and thereby to display the marks “of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church.”⁴⁴

b. The Community of British and Irish Anglican Churches and Nordic and Baltic Lutheran Churches—The Porvoo Communion

89. While the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE) adopted the heritage of the Reformation by expounding the constitutive role of the gospel for understanding the unity of the church, in some ways a similar approach was taken by Anglican and Lutheran churches of northern Europe, this time however with a strong focus on the interrelation between the unity, apostolicity and the ministry of the church. By *The Porvoo Common Statement*⁴⁵ (PC) prepared in 1992 and celebrated in Porvoo Cathedral in 1996, these churches were able to mutually “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” (PC 58a). For them this entails acknowledging “that in all our churches the Word of God is authentically preached, and the sacraments of baptism and the eucharist are duly administered” and “that all our churches share in the common confession of the apostolic faith” (PC 58a).

90. While the Statement includes an agreement in faith, there is no requirement to mutually accept doctrinal formulations characteristic of the distinctive traditions. What is, however, required is “to face and overcome the remaining obstacles to still closer communion” (PC 33). Furthermore, the agreement does not only include the acknowledgment of one another’s ordained ministries and of the personal, collegial and

44. *The Church of Jesus Christ*, p. 126.

45. *Together in Mission and Ministry: Conversations between the British and Irish Anglican churches and the Nordic and Baltic Lutheran churches: The Porvoo Common Statement, with essays on church and ministry in Northern Europe*, (1993) Church House Publishing, London.

communal dimension of oversight, but also the declaration that “the episcopal office is valued and maintained in all our churches as a visible sign expressing and serving the Church’s unity and continuity in apostolic life, mission and ministry” (PC 58).

91. A special characteristic of the Porvoo Agreement consists in the fact that it conceives of the episcopal office as a visible sign of the apostolicity of the Church in terms of historic episcopal succession and includes the mutual acknowledgment of this sign as part of the church communion. Those churches who did not preserve the sign of historic episcopal succession agree to resume it again on joining the Porvoo Communion. It is important to note that the churches regard the sign of episcopal historic succession as part of their apostolicity and full visible unity but at the same time emphasize that it:

does not by itself guarantee the fidelity of a church to every aspect of the apostolic faith, life and mission. [...] Nor does the sign guarantee the personal faithfulness of the bishop. Nonetheless, the retention of the sign remains a permanent challenge to fidelity and to unity, a summons to witness to, and a commission to realize more fully, the permanent characteristics of the Church of the apostles. (PC 51)

92. It is also important that the mutual acknowledgment of the churches and ministries “is theologically prior to the use of the sign of the laying on of hands in the historic succession. Resumption of the use of the sign does not imply an adverse judgment on the ministries of those churches which did not previously make use of the sign. It is rather a means of making more visible the unity and continuity of the Church at all times and in all places” (PC 53). Like in the CPCE, the mutual acknowledgment is seen as a step on a way to further growth in communion. Hence, the agreement entails the commitment:

to share a common life in mission and service, to pray for and with one another, and to share resources; ... to encourage consultations of representatives of our churches, and to facilitate learning and exchange of ideas and information in theological and pastoral matters; to establish a contact group to nurture our growth in communion and to co-ordinate the implementation of this agreement.” (PC 58b)

93. While the Porvoo communion conceives the exchange of ministers to be dependent upon the common acknowledgment and use of the sign of historic episcopal succession, within CPCE the mutual acknowledgment and exchange of ordained ministers is not bound to the retention of the sign of historic episcopal succession. This in fact represents a major difference

between the two movements. While agreement on the historic episcopal succession is a central aspect of the Porvoo communion, it has no role at all in the CPCE. It will be a task for CPCE and the Porvoo communion to further discuss the issue of full visible unity as they wish to deepen their ecumenical relations, which may be possible by further rethinking the heritage of the Reformation. With respect to the topic of reception, however, they both provide an example of how reception can be ecumenically successful. For in both of these ecumenical ventures churches were able to realize that their common faith in the gospel would allow for mutual acknowledgment and conceive this as a stage on the way towards further growth in communion.

3. *The continuing reception of the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*

94. After decades of international and national dialogue following Vatican II, Lutherans and Catholics arrived at a consensus in basic truths concerning the understanding of the doctrine of justification, which was the theological issue at the heart of Luther's conflict with the authorities of the Church. The signing of the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ)* in 1999 by the Lutheran World Federation and the Catholic Church was an important official step towards overcoming a major cause of division in the sixteenth century. The *Joint Declaration* expresses formal agreement on basic truths of the doctrine of justification, indicating that the mutual condemnations of the sixteenth century do not apply to the understanding of justification expressed therein. The JWG *Eighth Report's* study document, *The Nature and Purpose of Ecumenical Dialogue* (no. 74), included a case study illustrating factors involving the reception of the *Joint Declaration*. But important developments have taken place since then, leading to the Declaration's continuing reception in the wider ecumenical world.

95. The LWF and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU) have used the important anniversaries of the 1999 signing to celebrate it again together and renew commitment to this agreement—the fifth anniversary in 2004 in a celebration in South Africa and the tenth anniversary in a celebration in Augsburg, Germany, among others.

96. It is very significant that another Christian world communion, the World Methodist Council (WMC), received the *Joint Declaration* by formally associating itself with it in 2006. The historic significance of this is that now two Christian world communions rooted in the Reformation and the Roman Catholic Church together have a formal agreement on

this theological issue which was at the heart of conflict between Catholics and Protestants in the sixteenth century.

97. The steps toward this development are themselves examples of ecumenical reception. The remote background is that the mutual understanding, respect and friendship in Methodist-Catholic relations resulting from the forty years of Methodist-Catholic dialogue,⁴⁶ and the many years of collaboration between the LWF and the WMC,⁴⁷ created an atmosphere which fostered this development. More proximately, starting in 1999, the WMC resolved to explore with the LWF and the Catholic Church “the possibility for the WMC and its member churches to become officially associated” with the *JDDJ*. In 2001, the LWF and the Catholic Church together invited the World Methodist Council and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches to a meeting in Columbus, Ohio, to explore the possibility of their associating with the *Joint Declaration*. While both expressed interest, the WMC took steps shortly afterwards to move ahead on this.

98. Such association was an unprecedented step. Different bilateral and multilateral dialogues can and do influence each other. But in this case a third Christian world communion would formally relate itself to—that is, receive—an official agreement achieved by two other world communions as a result of years of intense bilateral dialogue. The WMC had not been involved in that bilateral nor had the Methodist-Catholic dialogue treated the issue of justification to the same extent as had the Lutheran-Catholic dialogue.

99. By what process did the WMC receive the *JDDJ*?⁴⁸ Two major steps were involved in this process. First, extensive consultation among Methodists within the WMC developed and approved a “*Methodist Statement of Association with the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*.”⁴⁹ While doing this, they were in continuing consultation with appropriate bodies of the LWF and the PCPCU. In this *Statement of Association*,

46. Cf. Address of Cardinal Walter Kasper, President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, at the meeting of the World Methodist Council in Seoul, Korea, July, 2006, when the WMC accepted the *JDDJ*. *IS* 122 (2006): 58.

47. Cf. address of The Revd Dr Ishmael Noko, LWF general secretary at the meeting of the World Methodist Council, 2006, when it accepted the *JDDJ*. *IS* 122 (2006): 59.

48. The process and the pertinent related documents are found in “The Affirmation of the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification by the World Methodist Council,” *IS* 122 (2006): 55-60.

49. Hereafter: *Statement of Association*.

WMC churches indicate that the common understanding of justification as outlined in the *JDDJ*'s nos. 15-17 "corresponds to Methodist doctrine" (no. 2). They "agree also with what Lutherans and Roman Catholics say together about some of the crucial issues in the doctrine of justification which were disputed between them since the time of the Reformation"⁵⁰ and accept the explanations which Lutherans and Catholics respectively give concerning their respective positions on these issues⁵¹ and "do not consider these diverse emphases sufficient cause for division between either party and Methodists" (no. 3). Besides these affirmations, they also add a number of paragraphs giving a particular Methodist emphasis, for example the deep connection between justification and sanctification that has always been crucial for the Methodist understanding of the biblical doctrine of justification (no. 4.2). In this way, as a third partner associates itself with the *Joint Declaration*, further insights on the meaning of justification than those articulated in the *JDDJ*, but not contradicting the *JDDJ*, are acknowledged as belonging to the common understanding of justification. The WMC meeting in Seoul, Korea in July, 2006 voted unanimously to approve the *Methodist Statement of Association* with the *JDDJ*, and authorized the second step.

100. This second step was the development of an "Official Common Affirmation" of the *Methodist Statement of Association* with the *JDDJ* by the three parties now involved. It states that the WMC and member churches affirm their fundamental doctrinal agreement with the teaching expressed in the *JDDJ*, and that the original signing partners join together in welcoming the Methodist statement of agreement with the *JDDJ* consensus in basic truths of the doctrine of justification, and then "building on their shared affirmation" the "three parties commit themselves to strive together for the deepening of their common understanding of justification..." The three are now related in their common understanding of justification.

101. Furthermore, a number of elements in this process show that ecumenical reception reveals and enhances the unity of the one ecumenical movement. For example, the *Statement of Association* indicates that the Methodist movement, on the one hand, "has always understood itself as deeply indebted to the biblical teaching on justification as...understood by Luther...other reformers and...the Wesleys," but, on the other

50. *JDDJ* paragraphs 19, 22, 25, 28, 31, 34, 37.

51. *JDDJ* paragraphs 20-21, 23-24, 26-27, 29-30, 32-33, 35-36, 38-39.

hand, “it has also always embraced elements of the doctrine of justification which belong to the catholic tradition of the early church both east and west” (no. 4).⁵²

4. *Lutheran-Mennonite reconciliation*

102. Ecumenical reception today goes beyond the receiving of agreed statements on church-dividing doctrinal issues. A powerful example of a different model of reception comes from recent Lutheran-Mennonite relations. Dialogues established to examine theological differences between these families found their work impeded by the continuing shadow of the violent Reformation-era persecutions which Lutheran forebears had perpetrated against Anabaptists. The ecclesial scars from the experience of such persecution shaped not only Mennonite self-awareness and church life, but also its collective memory. Violent coercion had been theologically defended by Lutheran reformers, but contemporary Lutherans had largely forgotten this aspect of their past. One of the goals of Lutheran-Mennonite dialogue became the healing of such memories. Rigorous historical work allowed a joint study commission to prepare the first common narrative of the painful events of the sixteenth century—itsself a reconciling process. But in the end the culmination of the process was not just the text but a powerful event—an act of reconciliation. At the 2010 LWF Assembly in Stuttgart, the LWF’s highest governing body formally asked forgiveness “from God and from our Mennonite sisters and brothers” for the initial wrongs and their continuing legacies. The Lutheran assembly knelt to ask this forgiveness; significantly, ecumenical guests also knelt—both in solidarity with the Lutherans and to recognize that this moment of reconciliation was healing for the entire church.

103. Mennonites had prepared for this moment through their own practices of decision-making and prayer, knowing that they wanted immediately to assure the Lutherans that the forgiveness was extended. Also acknowledging their own wrongs and rejoicing in the release which this reconciliation offered also to them, Mennonites gave the Lutherans a foot-washing tub, used characteristically in Anabaptist worship, with the prayer that since “today you have heard and honoured our story,” from this time forward “we may serve one another as our Lord and Teacher served us.”

104. While most Lutherans and Mennonites will never read the

52. The international dialogue between the Catholic Church and the World Communion of Reformed Churches is currently exploring the possibility of the WCRC also adhering to the *JDDJ*.

reports of dialogue commissions, the images and the narratives around the Stuttgart action have been widely received in both communities. In the violent society of Colombia, where the historical wrongs seemed far away, it was this example of peaceful resolution which the churches particularly celebrated together. In the world's largest refugee camp, where the LWF seeks non-violently to provide civil governance and security, the collaboration of the Mennonite Central Committee has been welcomed with special warmth. Beyond these two families, the example of the LWF in seeking forgiveness has stimulated reflection in other traditions which have their own memories of persecution in need of healing. This is a further receiving of the fruits of Lutheran-Mennonite dialogue.

105. If ecumenical reception is to receive one another as Christ has received us—precisely the hope conveyed in the act of foot-washing—the reception of Lutheran-Mennonite dialogue in visible acts of repentance and reconciliation takes on an iconic role that invites others to do the same.

E. The role of the sponsoring bodies as agents of reception

1. The Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity

106. In the description above of the Catholic processes of reception (ch. II no. 40) the prominent role of the PCPCU in regard to reception is already noted. In promoting unity it works to develop contacts with partners, both to work with them in initiating dialogues and also to foster reception of the results of dialogues. In formal reception processes within the Catholic Church the PCPCU works in close relationship especially with the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in examining critically the results of ecumenical dialogue, and in contributing to official texts such as the joint statements with partners intended to be published. The culminating moment of formal reception lies in the approval of the Pope. In some way these factors have been in the background of the development of significant statements seen in this chapter (see nos. 61-63, 68-72) and the 1999 Lutheran-Catholic Joint Declaration on Justification (nos. 95-99 above).

107. Another way in which the PCPCU promotes reception is seen in the recent PCPCU project published by Cardinal Walter Kasper under the title *Harvesting the Fruits* (2009: Continuum). It seeks to promote reception of the results of four international dialogues that began after Vatican II involving the Catholic Church with the Lutheran World Federation, the World Methodist Council, the Anglican Communion and the World Alli-

ance of Reformed Churches. In this project the PCPCU studied the 36 reports published by these four dialogues. It analyzed the findings of these four dialogues in regard to four questions: (a) fundamentals of the faith, the Trinity and Christ; (b) salvation, justification, sanctification; (c) the church; (d) baptism and the eucharist. It brought together the results of the four dialogues on those issues, showing the great degree of convergence/consensus on them in the four dialogues, noting as well the differences. It also offered preliminary conclusions that could be drawn from the findings and some directions and issues that could be taken up in the future. The implications of these reports were discussed further with representatives of the four partners in dialogue. All of this was aimed at fostering the reception of the results of these reports in the life of the churches.

2. *The World Council of Churches*

108. “The WCC is a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the Scripture and therefore seek to fulfil together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit” (WCC Constitution). This “common calling” impels the churches to seek together convergence and greater consensus on the issues that yet divide them. As a fellowship of churches, the World Council of Churches (WCC) includes as members and ecumenical partners, virtually all of the churches mentioned in this present text. It has had its own unique opportunities to promote unity, and there have been recent examples of ecumenical reception relating to the WCC as well.

a. An example of ecumenical reception within the WCC itself

109. At the core of the life of the World Council of Churches is a degree of reception by the churches of one another in a collegial life in which they explore and implement together their common vocation to foster the unity which Christ wills. How this process works has itself become the subject of reflection and reception in the work of the Special Commission on the Participation of the Orthodox Churches. The Orthodox concerns about the WCC provoked a series of conversations between 1999 and 2005. These marked the first phase of an ongoing reassessment of the working structures of the WCC. The Orthodox Churches had become uneasy with the parliamentary models of debate and majority decision that were more familiar in the assembly models of Christian world communions of the Western Protestant traditions. The Special Commission was tasked with finding ways by which the authentic life and decision making of the different churches could be

offered and received, and a model of consensus decision making introduced. This model allows the WCC to take into account the spectrum of reactions to any proposal, and to be more alive to the concerns of all the traditions which contribute to the work of the Council. The Special Commission made other recommendations concerning, for example, ecclesiological and theological criteria for membership. Some of its recommendations led to changes in the WCC constitution and rules. These changes help make the life of the WCC more receptive to the whole fellowship of churches, and therefore make the WCC more representative of its whole membership. This enables better reception of one another by the member churches of the WCC, and in turn enhances the WCC's ability to serve the ecumenical movement.

b. An example of the WCC receiving the results of a bilateral dialogue report

110. The WCC's office of the Decade to Overcome Violence (DOV) made a general request to the Christian world to contribute suggestions concerning the shape and content of the proposed International Ecumenical Peace Convocation with which the DOV would culminate in 2011. Responding, in 2007 the Mennonite World Conference and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity invited the WCC DOV office to a two-day consultation to reflect together on whether themes discussed in the Mennonite–Catholic international dialogue report *Called Together to be Peacemakers* could contribute to this process of preparation. This consultation resulted in a report giving precise suggestions of themes relating to a theology of peace based on *Called Together to be Peacemakers*, which was then received by the DOV office as a contribution, among many others, to its reflection for the 2011 event. This illustrates a method of finding ways to integrate bilateral and multilateral dialogues, by offering for possible reception by a multilateral process, the results of a bilateral dialogue.

c. Forum on Bilateral Dialogues

111. The Forum on Bilateral Dialogues is regularly constituted by the Conference of Secretaries of the Christian world communions, and convened by the World Council of Churches' Commission on Faith and Order. Its mandate is to be a forum where representatives of the international dialogues are both able to share information with one another concerning the content, developments and achievements of the bilateral dialogues, and also to bring coherence to these conversations. The bilateral and multilateral dialogues often receive insights from one another

and build on each other's convergences. Thus, the Forum provides a unique platform for the mutual exchange of information on topics, methods, challenges, solutions and aims of these different dialogues. The reports of the Forum record the shifting realities in the international dialogues, such as new participants, and the developments in ecumenical relations. The conversations in the Forum have brought fresh perspectives into the dialogues. By promoting a dialogue between the dialogues, the Forum on Bilateral Dialogue has thus become an effective instrument of reception, although at a step removed from reception by the churches. Moreover, the Forum has engaged in four distinctive reflections on the nature and processes of reception of the theological dialogues. As already noted in this text, the 2008 Ninth Forum meeting in Breklum, Germany, has said to the churches: "As each dialogue is in some way a 'learning process,' each needs to consider how this learning process may be shared with the wider membership of the two communities involved. Only an abiding commitment to the ecclesial reception of ecumenical texts can allow these statements of convergence to have a reconciling and transforming effect in the life of our churches."

d. The continuing reception of Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry

112. The World Council of Churches' Faith and Order convergence text, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (BEM), 1982, remains an influential part of ecumenical history. Aspects of some of the agreements mentioned above, e.g. the Meissen agreement (1988) and the Porvoo agreement (1996) were influenced by BEM. One of the documents of the Joint Working Group's *Eighth Report, The Nature and Purpose of Ecumenical Dialogue: A Study Document*, contained a significant treatment of the reception of dialogue results (nos. 58-79). This included "a multilateral case study" focusing on BEM.

113. That case study gives many insights into the development of the text, by describing the way in which reception processes encouraged discussion of emerging drafts of BEM by the churches. These discussions played an important role in the process leading to the final form in which BEM was published in 1982, and the fact that once published, more than 186 churches replied to Faith and Order's request for official responses to it "at the highest level of authority." This was an unprecedented response to an ecumenical text. The case study also illustrates the fact that BEM helped some churches in different parts of the world to enter into new relationships with one another. These are important expressions of the reception of BEM.

114. There are four additional ways in which reception of BEM has been experienced. The first is that BEM has been important for deepening relationships between the World Council of Churches and the Catholic Church. The Roman Catholic Church was among those who submitted an official response. Its extensive response was the result of a five-year process in which the Holy See sought reflection and comment on BEM from Catholic Churches around the world, as well as involving its normal processes of study in appropriate offices of the Roman Curia. Many Catholics came to know the WCC better because of BEM. Furthermore, BEM has entered into documents of the papal magisterium. Pope John Paul II's interest in BEM is illustrated by his positive references to it in a number of addresses during the 1980s, often speaking of it as an important sign of ecumenical progress, and his mention of BEM and its significance in four places in the 1995 encyclical *Ut unum sint* (no. 17, note 28; no. 42, note 71; no. 45, note 76; no. 87, note 144). There has been significant reception of BEM in the Catholic Church.

115. A second way in which reception of BEM has been experienced can be seen in the current Faith and Order study of the church. Over the last several decades, it has become clear that the nature of the Church is perhaps the central ecumenical issue today. BEM has helped to provoke deeper study of the church. A number of churches responding to BEM, including the Catholic Church, called for further reflection on the Church as a way of deepening the convergences found in BEM. After the Fifth World Conference on Faith and Order (1993) called for a study on the church, the first result of this Faith and Order study was a volume entitled *The Nature and Purpose of the Church: A stage on the way to a common statement* (1998). It stated that "in the style of BEM, this document seeks to evolve into what could be called a convergence text" (no. 4). After receiving critical evaluation of this text from churches and other sources, Faith and Order produced a second volume, *The Nature and Mission of the Church: A stage on the way to a common statement* (2005) which indicated that "the experience of the BEM process and an increasing interest in ecclesiology in many churches provide fresh insights into how many Christians understand being the Church" (no. 3). Faith and Order is currently continuing its study, refining the text. But the current Faith and Order study of the Church in a true sense has benefitted from the reception of BEM, and continues the heritage of BEM.

116. There is a third way in which reception of BEM has been experienced, not unrelated to the second. BEM's contribution specifically to a common understanding of baptism as a basic bond of unity among Christians has provoked ecumenical reflection on the deeper implications of this important insight. A prime example of this reflection is the text found in the Joint Working Group's *Eighth Report* entitled *Ecclesiological and Ecumenical Implications of a Common Baptism: A JWG Study* (2005). The influence of BEM on this text is seen from its first paragraphs, and throughout the text. Examining a number of themes relating to a common baptism, the study draws out ecclesiological implications, some of which are issues which should be pursued further in dialogue in order to remove obstacles to unity which still exist, or others which give insights that help to appreciate even more the degree of unity that exists now because of a common baptism. The study also lists a series of ecumenical implications of a common baptism, many of a more pastoral character, suggesting ways to deepen ecumenical relations which are rooted in common baptism. That study, therefore, suggests additional ways in which BEM can be received.

117. A fourth way has to do with the impact of BEM on local ecumenism and the life of the churches. In addition to formal agreements which acknowledge the influence of BEM, the text (which has sold more copies than any other book published by the WCC) became a teaching tool, and a vehicle for ecumenical conversations in community settings around the world, in some cases initiated by ecumenical entities such as councils of churches and clergy associations, in others spontaneously initiated. In this case, reception flowed from the value of the text itself, meeting a need, indeed a hunger, for accessible yet substantial information about essential aspects of Christian faith and life. BEM inspired some churches to consider the possibility of developing a common baptismal certificate. It influenced those responsible for preparing baptismal rites, and was crucial—in the light of debates about inclusive language—in maintaining the classical baptismal formula in those texts.

F. Learning points and recommendations

1. Learning points

- Exploring the issues considered above in relation to the three historical periods highlights the fact that, despite centuries of divisions, many basic Christian convictions and bonds of faith also were shared in com-

mon. The new atmosphere created by the ecumenical movement, especially in dialogue through which separated Christians came to know one another and cleared away misunderstandings about each other's traditions, allowed them to recognize that truth, which had not been realized before.

- The fact that long standing church-dividing issues are being addressed and resolved gives hope that other issues can be resolved in the long term. Patience and prayer are needed if immediate results are not achieved.

- The evolution of the social sciences, philosophical thought, hermeneutics and other spheres of learning, have enhanced the appreciation of the context in which previous divisions took place. Consequently new ways of thinking have emerged, fostering an understanding of some of the reasons for divisions and helping the churches to move beyond them.

- The achievements of dialogue have shown that it is possible to express common faith while respecting the traditions and terminologies of each partner.

- Even after achieving agreement on an issue over which there had been conflict, new questions may arise that are potentially divisive and liable to cause difficulty. Even when old conflicts are resolved, long periods of separation make the healing of the bitter historical memories related to them a lengthy and continuing process.

- Where the results of dialogues are expressed by formal acts and symbolic actions the impact of the progress made might be greatly enhanced.

2. Recommendations

In order for reception to take root in the life of the churches we propose the following recommendations:

- that personal contacts be nurtured and encouraged since they foster relationships that assist in mutual understanding and lead to the resolution of conflicts. For example, we commend the example of the presence of observers from other Christian communions at the Second Vatican Council. Ongoing meetings of church leaders constitute an impact that set free the impulses for ecumenical dialogue and new ecumenical initiatives;

- that the work done by one bilateral or multilateral dialogue should be considered more widely and used to inform other dialogues as well as becoming a resource in education and formation;

- that after agreement on doctrinal questions there should be a process to ensure that continuing study of these issues is undertaken, and the implications of agreement lived out in the life of the churches;

- that churches be aware of the effects of particular bilateral relations and agreements on their wider bilateral and multilateral ecumenical relationships. The presence of ecumenical observers on bilateral dialogues may alert such dialogues to the ecumenical consequences of their agreements.

IV. When Ecumenical Reception Is a Struggle

A. Challenges to reception

118. Although ecumenical accomplishments have been cited, it must be acknowledged that reception often involves a struggle in so far as relationships between persons and ecclesial communities are concerned. The reality being faced today is that questions are being raised concerning the value and goals of dialogue in the face of perceived divergences of beliefs and practices. These can arise out of bitter memories of the past and reactions to developments in the life of some Christian traditions. Ongoing issues such as the ordination of women and new conflicting approaches to questions related to marriage and family, sexual ethics, bioethics and economic ethics have had an adverse impact on some relationships and therefore on reception.

119. Much discussion and debate continues to take place among members *within* the church traditions on the varying interpretations of their beliefs and practices. Relationships among Christian traditions are influenced by the intensity of the discussions and the extent to which each one is prepared, out of a sense of respect and in humility, to be receptive to different viewpoints. Reception in this sense can serve as a means of each one benefiting from valuable spiritual insights that are not one's own. In dialogue, participants must present the truth understood in their own tradition, while being attentive to the truth presented by the other, and seek as much common ground as possible, while being honest about the differences. A willingness to listen will go a long way in arriving at a position of mutual respect and cordiality between Christian communities.

120. It is relatively straightforward to cite instances when reception has been positive or when a reception process has been initiated. It is more difficult when reception is a struggle. While some ecumenical texts are truly received by the churches, others are received to a limited degree or not at all. The challenges to reception are many and varied: some are external, relating to the situation within particular churches or in the broader ecumenical movement; others are internal, relating directly to

the text in question, or to the process by which it was created or by which it may be responded to. Examples of the struggles of reception are illustrated in the accounts of two dialogues: one a bilateral—reports from the Old Catholic-Eastern Orthodox international dialogue; the other a multilateral—*The Nature and Mission of the Church: A Stage on the Way to a Common Statement* from the WCC's Faith and Order Commission.

121. As is seen in the case of the Old Catholic-Eastern Orthodox international bilateral dialogue, the context of ecclesial relationships has serious effects on reception. Between 1975 and 1987 the joint commission of Old Catholic and Orthodox theologians held several dialogues touching on such fundamental issues as the doctrine of God, Christology, ecclesiology, soteriology, the sacraments, eschatology and ecclesial communion. In each case the commission affirmed that the text produced “represents the teaching of the Orthodox and Old Catholic churches.” From 1987, however, relations between the two bodies became more difficult. The ordination of women in some Old Catholic churches from 1996 led to Old Catholic-Orthodox consultations held in that year with indecisive results. More recently differences have arisen on other issues related to gender and sexuality. Differences also have arisen over the participation of Old Catholic bishops in consecrations of Anglican bishops, which also have included Lutheran bishops. For the Orthodox, such participation implies a state of full communion between Old Catholic and Lutheran churches, whereas Old Catholics insist that it reflects only the full communion they have shared with the Anglican Communion since 1931. These various tensions militated against reception of the dialogues, however fruitful and positive they may have been. This illustrates that reception does not depend solely on the quality of the texts produced, since reception takes place within the context of the overall relationship between the churches concerned. A permanent Old Catholic-Orthodox committee “for reflection and exchange” was established in 2004 to develop joint theological and pastoral projects, and it is hoped that this eventually will enable the reception of the dialogue results so far achieved.

122. Different lessons may be learned from the more recent multilateral experience of the Faith and Order Commission. *The Nature and Mission of the Church* (2005) by all accounts did not receive the widespread attention it deserved. Following the methodology of *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, *The Nature and Mission of the Church* is the second in a series of texts on ecclesiology sent to the churches for study and

response, to enable the churches to begin to recognize a convergence that has emerged. The responses to *The Nature and Mission of the Church*, like its predecessor, the 1998 *The Nature and Purpose of the Church*, were intended to be integral to the process of discerning such a multilateral convergence. By 2010 eighty responses had been received by Faith and Order, yet only twenty-seven came from the churches. Although the text was sent with the specific request that the churches respond, clearly this was a text that appealed primarily to theological specialists and students. The year after *The Nature and Mission of the Church* was published, the 2006 WCC assembly accepted *Called to be the One Church*, an ecclesiology text likewise produced by Faith and Order. This text also was sent to the churches for response; since 2006 a mere handful of responses have been received by Faith and Order. In effect, two ecclesiological texts from the WCC were in circulation at the same time, each requesting study and response from the churches.

123. Anecdotal evidence suggests that it is no exaggeration to speak of an ecumenical overload of texts and response processes—and this at a time when many churches face declining resources, both human and financial, with which to support their ecumenical engagement. This suggests perhaps that fewer such texts should be produced; that they should be clear and accessible to their intended audience; that if multiple texts must be sent to the churches, they should be sent in a coordinated way; that pacing is crucial. Furthermore, it is vital that clear expectations, including specific suggestions for reflection and action, be laid upon the churches in asking for their response.

124. The processes as outlined by the general secretaries or other representatives of the Christian world communions (cf. chapter II) need to be seen alongside the difficulties outlined by those responsible for overseeing the process of reception at the international, regional and local levels.

125. Again, anecdotal evidence suggests that ecumenical officers and theological commissions can exhibit a lack of confidence about the length and quality of response that is asked of them. Many reported that the churches simply do not have adequate instruments to assess a theological document arising from bilateral or multilateral dialogues, and to engage in the processes of ecclesial reception. Sometimes the level of response being requested is unclear—i.e., is a short response sufficient, or is a complex and detailed theological assessment being looked for? Is it better to

offer no response than one that is too brief or simple? Is a shorter text of less worth than a longer one? Will churches feel embarrassed by a shorter response?

126. In addition, the sponsors of dialogues often lack clarity and communication both about timelines and about what precisely is being requested in a formal response to an agreed statement. Often the questions posed to the churches are unclear and too demanding. For example, what is meant by terms such as “common,” “convergence,” or even “agreement” is not always clear.

127. Others report that the sort of responses requested by a parent body or a dialogue do not seem to fit comfortably with the pressing concerns of some national or local churches. Sometimes the topics addressed are perceived to belong to an earlier period of history or to a different context and continent, and not to relate to current global realities. The kinds of questions dealt with by a dialogue may appear to be not those of the churches but of specialists or those only of the dialogue partner. How much dialogue relates to the context of European historical divisions rather than to current mission imperatives in the developing world? The remark was made that local churches are more responsive to life and work issues than a Faith and Order theological text. These comments suggest an environment of resistance to the processes of reception. In response to these comments, it is clear that it is necessary to demonstrate the ways that the historical conflicts which led to divisions continue to impinge upon church relations today.

128. We also need to keep in mind that there are many non-theological factors that can have a bearing on the issues addressed in dialogue. These, too, can interfere with the processes of reception. The theological conflicts of the past, and the way in which they unfolded in exclusion and persecution, may have left many longstanding and bitter memories that remain unhealed and that can affect responses in the present. Sociological factors such as class and racial conflict, cultural differences and imperial history bring radically different perspectives to the questions under consideration and can affect even the will to engage in dialogue. The fear of surrendering power can be as potent a factor in continuing church divisions as can problems with doctrine. All of this requires patient acknowledgment and engagement to build mutual confidence as a context for effective dialogue and reception.

B. Learning points and recommendations

1. Learning points

- All dialogue reports, when they are published, are intended for general reception. This includes discussion, criticism and evaluation in theological institutions, in congregations and parishes and by church authorities with the hope of bringing new insights.

- Reception processes have demonstrated substantial unevenness. While some ecumenical texts have received significant attention, others, though substantial, have not received such extensive study. Careful consideration of how to support the dissemination, study and response to a text will bear significant fruit.

- Issues at the root of conflicts between Christians that arose in particular historical contexts can have a continuing impact on the churches and can be difficult to resolve even after intense theological dialogue.

- Since *episcopé* involves being an instrument for the *koinonia* of the whole church, it necessarily includes care and responsibility for reception.

2. Recommendations

In order to assist in the effectiveness of the reception of the fruits of dialogue, we propose the following recommendations to those responsible for ecumenical dialogue, specifically, that church leaders:

- make clear whether a formal process of reception is intended when sponsoring dialogue, and specify the nature of the responses required;

- give consideration to issues like context, timing and pacing when texts are ready for dissemination;

- encourage authorities at different levels to appoint and support ecumenical officers, coordinators or commissions who are tasked to ensure that there is an awareness of these reports among their constituencies.

V. Ecumenical Formation: A Key to Ecumenical Reception

A. Formation and reception

129. Ecumenical formation is in itself a way of consolidating reception. As people listen to the history of the ecumenical movement and receive the fruits of ecumenical dialogue, they themselves are deepening their formation as disciples of Christ. The multiplex process of reception requires a process of education and formation which embraces both the intellectual and theological dimensions of being trained in ecumenical dialogue and the existential and spiritual dimensions of receiving and

recognizing one another in the name of Christ. Ecumenical formation and reception, therefore, are intrinsically intertwined.

130. The primary goals of ecumenical formation are to awaken the hearts and souls of Christians to the ecumenical imperative; to acknowledge the results of the ecumenical movement in all its levels and expressions; and to form persons of dialogue now, especially in order to pave the way for the education of future generations who are committed to the quest for unity.

131. The JWG has always been concerned about ecumenical formation as a fundamental dimension on the path towards the unity among Christians. The JWG *Fifth Report* (1983) stated:

Another crucial area is that of theological education and particularly the education of pastors, perhaps the most influential point in ecumenical sensitization. There is a great range of possibilities but even where there are joint or collaborative faculties and programs, more could be done to draw out their potential with the support and guidance of those responsible in the various churches.

132. The present JWG acknowledges the successful work done in the last decades by previous JWG. Important steps have been taken in focusing on the need for ecumenical formation as a priority in the ecumenical agenda, as well as in providing the parent bodies with meaningful and fruitful tools to reflect and to act upon it.

133. In recent decades, however, ecumenical formation has gained more and more interest and centrality as a key factor in the search for visible unity, and it is still a priority to be addressed. The 1993 JWG document on *Ecumenical Formation* has been—and still is—a valuable instrument to foster ecumenical reception, and needs to be brought again to the attention of the churches. *Ecumenical Formation* reminds Christians that ecumenical formation pertains to the whole people of God, each one having a responsibility in the search for unity and in the building up of communion. It is a process in which individuals and communities must be engaged, and it is an imperative to which churches, educational agencies, academic institutions and ecumenical organizations must respond.

134. The *Eighth Report* (2005) of the JWG indicates that ecumenical formation is a fundamental goal calling for recommitment in the future mandate of the JWG: “The JWG has over the years expressed concern for ecumenical formation and education as fundamental to the search for the unity of the church.”⁵³ Further on the report adds:

53. JWG *Eighth Report*, III, no. 3.

We likewise agree that greater effort is needed in the field of ecumenical formation. Both parent bodies need to be concerned about laity and clergy who need ecumenical formation. A new generation of Christians is sometimes unaware of the way things were and how much things have changed in the decades since the founding of the WCC and since the Second Vatican Council. In this respect much is being done, but we advocate an effort to improve the coordination of such formation through a more effective sharing of information and resources, and by providing greater opportunities for participation in each other's life.⁵⁴

135. This specific mandate has been ratified by the ninth assembly of the WCC in Porto Alegre in 2006. Both the *General Secretary's Report* and the *Policy Reference Committee Report* explicitly emphasize the need for ecumenical formation, confirming the relevance of this issue in the contemporary scene.⁵⁵

B. Tracing the history of ecumenical formation in the JWG context

136. The concern for cooperation in the field of formation has been an issue raised from the very beginning of the JWG.⁵⁶ This concern later developed into a process of regular information dissemination and the sharing of documents and initiatives, joint consultations, and study projects within the parent bodies.⁵⁷ The *Fifth Report* of the JWG in 1985 addressed extensively, as a priority, the need for a common concern about ecumenical formation. The report recognized its value as a complementary aspect of ecumenical dialogue and joint action, and sought to ensure that formation would have a renewed place in the life of the churches in both dialogue and action.⁵⁸

54. JWG, *Eighth Report*, V, no. 2. Important achievements and future potentials of the JWG mandate which can constitute a wider framework to address the issue of ecumenical formation have been pointed out during the 40th anniversary consultation about the mandate of the JWG between the RCC and the WCC, held in November 2005 at Bossey, Switzerland.

55. Cfr. WCC, *Official Report of the Ninth Assembly*: Official report, resolutions, "Statements and reports adopted by the Assembly. Program Guidelines committee," nos. 14, 18-20, 26.

56. Cfr. JWG, *Common statement on the relationships between the WCC and the RCC*, no. 7; JWG, *Second Report*, 3.c).

57. Cfr. JWG, *Future Joint Activities of the JWG*, 1973, I, E.

58. "The JWG insists on the present urgency of the task of ecumenical formation. It stresses that the improved relations between still separated Christians are not enough. The scandal of Christian divisions and their deleterious effect on Christian witness continues to obscure the saving power of God's grace."

137. In the following years, the JWG kept ecumenical formation on its agenda.⁵⁹ It worked towards the realization of important goals, such as the drafting of the 1998 document *Ecumenical Formation: Ecumenical Reflections and Suggestions*,⁶⁰ while remaining committed to encouraging and supporting initiatives taken by the parent bodies on the issue. Some significant steps taken in the last 20 years within the WCC are: the publication of the document *Alive Together* (1989)⁶¹ and the International Consultation on Ecumenical Formation (Oslo, 1996),⁶² both sponsored by the Ecumenical Theological Education Programme (ETE) of the WCC. Some significant steps taken in the last 20 years within the Roman Catholic Church are: the publication by the PCPCU of the most complete document on ecumenical formation and reception, Chapters II and III of the new *Directory for the Application of the Principles and Norms on Ecumenism*, 1993,⁶³ which was followed and integrated into a detailed document on contents and methods of ecumenical theological formation published in 1997.⁶⁴

138. In recent times, the programme on ETE has published the *Magna Charta*⁶⁵ of ecumenical formation as well as the document *14 Reasons for Global Theological Education*,⁶⁶ while supporting and cooperating with other associations such as World Conference of Associations of Theological Institutions (WOCATI), and the Conference of European Churches

JWG, *Fifth Report*, IV, 4. Cfr. also III, B, no. 5; IV, no. 4.

59. Cfr. JWG, *Sixth Report*, III, A, no. 2; III, B, no. 8; JWG, *Seventh Report*, III, C; V; JWG, *Eighth Report*, III, no. 3; V, no. 2.

60. JWG, *Seventh Report*. Appendix D: Ecumenical formation; ecumenical reflection and suggestions, 1993.

61. *Alive Together*, Ecumenical Theological Education Program of the World Council of Churches, 1989

62. ETE/WCC, *Towards a Viable Theological Education: Ecumenical imperative, catalyst of renewal*, Oslo, Norway 1996. (1997) J. Pobee, ed. WCC Publications, Geneva.

63. PCPCU, *Directory for the Applications of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism*, 1993, Chapter III.

64. PCPCU, *The Ecumenical Dimension in the Formation of those Engaged in Pastoral Work*, 1995.

65. ETE/WCC, *Magna Charta on Ecumenical Theological Education in the 21st century*. ETE/WCC - Reference document for use in Associations of Theological Schools and Colleges, WOCATI and in the Edinburgh 2010 Process, 2008.

66. ETE/WCC, *14 Reasons for Global Solidarity in Ecumenical Theological Education: Communication initiative for the WCC program on ETE*.

(CEC), and on the organization of regional consultations.⁶⁷ The Catholic Church has committed herself in a process of verification and evaluation of the level of ecumenical formation in Catholic institutions and of the way that the guidelines given in the *Directory* have been put into practice.

C. Articulating ecumenical formation

1. General principles

140. Ecumenical formation implies first and foremost a life-long learning process for all members of the church. Ecumenical formation implies moving towards God, in the sense that it has to be understood primarily as an expression of the spiritual dimension of the ecumenical imperative: Christian spirituality “readies Christians and their churches to respond to God’s initiatives—to what the Triune God is doing in and through us according to the gospel. It involves discerning God’s activity in people, in churches, in the world. Theology and spirituality are inextricably intertwined because both deal with God and God’s relationship with humanity through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit.”⁶⁸

141. In this perspective ecumenical formation is a process which includes: (1) discerning and enjoying the riches of God’s gifts to his people by learning the standpoints, doctrines and praxis of the different Christian traditions; (2) turning to Him in repentance and hope by acknowledging the need for conversion and welcoming in our hearts and minds our brothers and sisters in Christ; (3) deepening the sense of Christian identity and the baptismal vocation by discovering convergences among the various confessions; and (4) living out the mission of the Church as witness of His love and care for human beings by fostering a common reflection and working on common projects.

142. In the perspective of the process of reception, the following five aspects of theological reflection and church action seem to be particularly relevant and, therefore, need to be emphasized in ecumenical formation: (1) the call to receive the mandate of our Lord Jesus Christ to be one and therefore to orient our lives as Christians in the will to strive for full visible unity in the one apostolic faith among those who are called by His name. The whole ecumenical movement, in fact, is a movement of

67. ETE/WCC-CEC, International Seminar on the Future of Ecumenical Theological Education in Eastern and Central Europe, Sambada de Sus, Romania, 2008. (2009) V. Ionita-D. Werner, eds. CEC-WCC, Geneva.

68. JWG, *Spiritual Roots of Ecumenism*, par 9.

reception as it aims at fulfilling the ecumenical imperative received from Christ, the gift of unity received from the Father, and the living out of the variety of charisms received from the Holy Spirit; (2) a renewed reflection on the Church and a common understanding of the Church, its nature, mission and witness to the world, as the churches seek to receive one another, to receive the *koinonia* they share, and therefore to receive ecumenical events, dialogues, documents and efforts as part of the process of receiving one another in the name of Christ; (3) the process of dispelling prejudices and stereotypes so to be able to receive others in the spirit of the “exchange of gifts”⁶⁹ (4) an opportunity to be engaged in the process of the healing and reconciliation of memories among Christians; to reflect upon what has been achieved in decades of ecumenical theological dialogue; and what have been and are the chances of joint effort for a more authentic Christian witness to the world; and (5) a chance for a mutual appreciation of structures and programmes offered by various confessional traditions to foster ecumenical formation.

143. These principles have universal application, but it is particularly within the context of university education, and especially in seminary education, that ecumenical formation should be addressed in two ways: (1) a specific course on ecumenism with a detailed curriculum; and (2) the articulation of the ecumenical dimension in each field of theology. Both are part of ecumenical formation, so that ecumenism is not seen as an isolated speciality, but exists as a living component in all theological discourse. Ecumenical formation must be an essential element for candidates for ordained ministry.

2. Programmes and guidelines

144. In the last decade both the Catholic Church and the WCC, building on past efforts, have developed programmes and projects to promote ecumenical formation and facilitate reception of ecumenical goals and achievements, needs and priorities.

145. The WCC Programme on Education and Ecumenical Formation is well articulated and structured. It includes three elements: the Ecumenical Institute in Bossey (Geneva, Switzerland), which offers courses and programmes in theology and ecumenism for future church leaders, pastors and theologians at graduate and postgraduate levels; the ecumenical lay formation and faith nurture project, which is aimed at creating networks to engage faith formation practitioners in a fruitful exchange of ideas and initiatives; and the ecumenical theological education project,

69. John Paul II, *Ut unum sint*, no. 28.

which targets ecumenical and theological educators to share principles and contents concerning ecumenical formation and to create concrete possibilities dealing with ecumenical theological education.

146. The PCPCU's *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms of Ecumenism* (1993) reflects on the urgency of providing ways and methods of growth in ecumenical formation, by creating a network of ecumenical concern as well as by setting rules of ecumenical formation.⁷⁰ The *Directory* presents ecumenical formation as a concern for all the faithful in whatever status or situation they may be, and therefore develops a map of structures at the service of Christian unity which include every level of church life (parishes, dioceses, lay groups and associations, religious and secular orders, episcopal conferences and synods and councils of Eastern churches, families, schools, mass-media, educational agencies) whose aim is to sensitize to ecumenism and dialogue according to their specific mandates and tasks. All the pastoral and catechetical tools (preaching, Bible studies, catechism, mission) should become an instrument of ecumenical learning.⁷¹

147. The Joint Working Group, together with the parent bodies, rejoices in the mutual appreciation and in the growing cooperation in the field of formation among churches in the past decades. In many parts of the world churches cooperate in the field of ecumenical formation through joint projects, academic institutions and research centres. Inviting scholars and theologians of different Christian traditions, for example, to lecture and to teach in interconfessional settings is almost a consolidated praxis in some contexts, as well as a growing reality in others. Moreover, students are often encouraged to engage themselves in a formation programme which includes interconfessional exposure (either in selecting the topics for doctoral dissertations or in attending one or two semesters in an institution of a different confession).

D. Learning points and recommendations

1. Learning points

- Ecumenical formation is an essential key to ensuring the continuity and forward movement of the ecumenical quest. Every generation needs to be reminded of what already has been received in the ecumenical process.

70. The Apostolic Constitution *Sapientia Christiana* had already introduced ecumenical formation as an obligatory subject in the theological curriculum in 1979.

71. Cfr. PCPCU, *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms of Ecumenism*, II and III.

- Ecumenical formation is an integrated process which includes affective, spiritual and intellectual dimensions.

- Ecumenical formation is not the preserve of any particular section of the church, but the opportunity must consciously be given for all to participate. The fullness of *koinonia* only can be assured by giving the whole people of God the opportunity for ecumenical formation.

- Since *episcopé* involves being an instrument for the *koinonia* of the whole people of God, it necessarily includes care and responsibility for fostering the unity of Christians, and therefore for the ecumenical formation of the people of God.

- Ecumenical studies not only is a distinct discipline, but also is an all pervading orientation. Forming people ecumenically involves an outlook and methodology which should influence all aspects of theological reflection and action.

2. Recommendations

In order to ensure that ecumenical formation becomes an integral part of the life of the churches, the JWG recommends that the PCPCU and the WCC:

- foster further joint reflection on ecumenical formation, even exploring a possible follow-up to the 1993 JWG document on the same topic;

- promote the integral dimension of ecumenical formation as a spiritual as well as an intellectual process, highlighting particularly the spiritual roots of ecumenism as a fundamental dimension of it;

- continue to encourage cooperation with various ecumenical regional/international and confessional/interconfessional bodies, thus sharing the variety of styles and methods they use. A concrete goal could be the realization of a common curriculum for ecumenical formation;

- support the sharing and, wherever possible, the publication and use of common texts, and the realization of formative initiatives of common witness. The formation of young people has to be strongly encouraged both by developing ecumenically oriented projects already existing, and by creating new ecumenical formative initiatives targeting young people;

- encourage and facilitate interaction between the various experiences of formation on the local level, and connect them to the ecumenical and ecclesial bodies dealing with ecumenical formation.

VI. Conclusion

An appeal to the churches

148. During this ninth period of the Joint Working Group between the Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches, the JWG has had the opportunity to study the notion of ecumenical reception during the last seven years. This study has given the JWG an opportunity to review some of the major achievements of the modern ecumenical movement in the century since the 1910 World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh, Scotland. It has helped us to recognize that in arriving at these achievements, the churches had been able to receive insights resulting from ecumenical dialogue and to implement them. But more deeply than this, it is clear that by engaging in dialogue and by increasing contacts with one another in many ways, Christian communions long separated have begun to receive one another as brothers and sisters in Christ, and to receive from one another. Getting beyond historic divisions of the past, Christians have begun to shape a new future in which they are better able to witness together before the world to the healing message of the gospel, free from some of the conflicts, misunderstandings and prejudices of the past.

149. Thus, the JWG appeals to the PCPCU and the WCC to challenge the churches to call each other:

- to renew their commitment to serve in the quest for Christian unity, and to intensify ecumenical engagement at all levels;
- to appreciate with gratitude the considerable ecumenical advances that have taken place over the last century, and to build on these with new energy;
- to ensure that the fruits of ecumenical dialogue and co-operation are well-known and accessible, supported by study guides and carrying their approbation;
- to take every opportunity to promote unity and to make use of the reports of dialogues, which convey new perspectives on disputed questions and new insights about other churches;
- to experience and understand the Christian life and worship of other traditions, and in turn, as much as possible, to offer hospitality to other Christians in their own life;
- to endorse the message of the Eighth Forum on Bilateral Dialogue, which occurred in 2008 during the present mandate of this JWG. It said: We

believe that it would be profitable to keep in mind right from the beginning of any phase of dialogue the reception of its results. As each dialogue is in some way a “learning process,” each needs to consider how this learning process may be shared with the wider membership of the two communities involved. Only an abiding commitment to the ecclesial reception of ecumenical texts can allow these statements of convergence or consensus to have a reconciling and transforming effect in the life of our churches.⁷²

150. In this light the JWG makes this appeal to the PCPCU and the WCC, based on the conviction that the movement toward Christian unity is a response to the will of Christ and to his prayer for the unity of his disciples. It is rooted in the conviction that unity and mission go hand in hand. Christ prayed for the unity of his disciples “so that the world may believe” (John 17:21).

72. “The Breklum Statement” of the Ninth Forum on Bilateral Dialogue, Recommendation 2, www.oikoumene.org/fileadmin/files/wcc-main/documents/p2/breklum-statement.pdf

Appendix B

Be Renewed in the Spirit The Spiritual Roots of Ecumenism

Contents

INTRODUCTION

I. BASIC TERMS

II. BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

- A. The Prayer of Jesus as a basis for unity
- B. Our calling to repentance and conversion as a basis for unity
- C. The gifts of the Spirit in a dialogue with cultures as a basis for unity
- D. Enduring hope as a basis for unity

III. SOME IMPLICATIONS FOR PRAYER AND LITURGICAL PRACTICE

IV. EXAMPLES INSPIRED BY THE SAINTS

V. THE POWER OF TRANSFORMING ENCOUNTERS

VI. PRACTICAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHURCHES— SOME RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE PARENT BODIES

- A. Opportunities to pray together
- B. Opportunities for ecumenical witness
- C. Opportunities to offer ecumenical hospitality
- D. Opportunities for programmatic engagement
- E. Opportunities in ecumenical education

VII. SOME RESOURCES

Introduction

“Be renewed in the spirit of your minds...” (Eph. 4:23)¹

1. In response to the prayer of our Lord “that they may all be one...” (John 17:21) and motivated by Christ’s call for renewal of life and conversion of heart, the Joint Working Group (JWG), responsible for fostering the relationship between the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the Roman Catholic Church (RCC), initiated a project to reflect anew on the spiritual roots of ecumenism. In doing so, the goal is to get back to basics—to remind Christians of the spiritual impulse that has driven the ecumenical movement from its inception, and to consider fresh ways that churches can nurture these spiritual roots on the ground by offering some practical recommendations. Thus, after explaining the use of the terms “spirituality” and “ecumenism” (words that popular culture often uses without sufficient clarity), this study will explore briefly the theological basis for spiritual ecumenism; will consider practices of piety, prayer, and worship that nurture these spiritual roots; will highlight how God in Christ through the Holy Spirit breathes new life into Christians through examples among the saints and transforming encounters with the other; and will offer some practical ways to appropriate this foundation more fully in local settings. The members of the JWG do so mindful of the variety of cultural contexts and many stressful situations in which churches find themselves, while seeking to be faithful to the gospel in the twenty-first century.

2. In the face of all sorts of tensions and conflicts, local and international, among churches and in the world, the members of the JWG are keenly aware of how essential is a reconciling witness. We are conscious both of the continuing divisions among Christian churches and of the perception that many are content with the status quo. Some are openly critical of the ecumenical movement because they fear that it will compromise doctrine and ethical teachings as they understand them. Yet as the Vatican II *Decree on Ecumenism* declared, division “openly contradicts the will of Christ, provides a stumbling block to the world and inflicts damage on the most holy cause of proclaiming the good news to

1. All biblical citations are from the New Revised Standard Version. (1989, 1995) The Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

every creature.”² People who live in a reconciling spirit are powerful witnesses to the essence of the Christian faith.

3. Long before the twentieth century, whenever divisions among Christians occurred, the impulse toward unity also was evident. The modern ecumenical movement, however, began with certain markers—the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh, 1910; the Conference on Life and Work in Stockholm, 1925; and the World Conference on Faith and Order in Lausanne, 1927. Resolution (9) of the Lambeth Conference of 1920 on the reunion of Christendom was saying “We believe that the Holy Spirit has called us in a very solemn and special manner to associate ourselves in penitence and prayer with all those who deplore the divisions of Christian people, and are inspired by the vision and hope of a visible unity of the whole Church.”³ An encyclical from the Ecumenical Patriarchate in 1920, addressed “unto all the churches of Christ, everywhere,” was another cornerstone in the ecumenical foundation being laid at the beginning of the twentieth century.⁴ Much has been written about these initiatives. They have borne good fruit.

4. After the World Council of Churches was formed in 1948, member churches identified certain assumptions about the basis of their relationship. Among these was a commitment by the member churches to “enter into spiritual relationships through which they seek to learn from that the life of the churches may be renewed.”⁵ Sixteen years later, the *Decree on Ecumenism (Unitatis Redintegratio-UR)* of the Roman Catholic Church resonated with a similar spirit. In what was the culmination of a long process of “return to the sources” in scriptural, liturgical and theological studies, the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) formally and irrevocably committed the Catholic Church to the search for Christian unity. In the chapter on *The Practice of Ecumenism*, the *Decree* asserted that “There can be no ecumenism worthy of the name without a change of heart.

2. *Unitatis Redintegratio*. (1966) *The Documents of Vatican II*. The American Press, USA, Par. 1.

3. Cf the Lambeth Conference official website: <http://www.lambethconference.org/resolutions/1920/1920-9.cfm>

4. Cf. Bishop John (Kallos) of Amorion. A Historical Sketch of the Ecumenical Movement. www.orthodoxresearchinstitute.org/articles/ecumenical/john_thermon_history_ecumenism.htm; Fr Peter Alban Heers. The Missionary Origins of Modern Ecumenism. <http://orthodoxinfo.com/ecumenism/heers-themissionaryrootsofmodernecumenism.pdf>.

5. *Toronto Statement*. (1950) World Council of Churches Central Committee, IV.8.

For it is from renewal of the inner life of our minds, (cf. Eph. 4:23), from self-denial and an unstinted love that desires of unity take their rise and develop in a mature way.”⁶

5. Although the contemporary ecumenical movement takes various institutional forms—councils of churches, bi- and multi-lateral dialogues, initiatives of the Christian world communions, the student Christian movement, world missionary conferences, united and uniting churches, encyclicals from Orthodox and Catholic religious leaders—all these institutional forms have a spiritual foundation.

6. The members of the JWG rejoice in the many successes that have taken place in the last century. While the communion of our churches remains incomplete, Christians neither should dwell on the negatives nor overly exult about the positives, but always return to the reason for engaging in the quest for Christian unity. Christians do this work to be faithful to the gospel, believing it will bear good fruit in God’s good time.

7. Followers of Christ are called to incorporate “a broad spirituality of openness to the other in light of the imperative of Christian unity, directed by the Holy Spirit.”⁷ At the heart of the Christian faith is the idea of a reconciled community of people who treat each other with the same compassionate, loving, reconciling spirit that God has shown and continues to show through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit. The very nature of the Godhead is one of community. God created human beings to share in this sacred friendship. As friends of God, each one of us realizes our own unique gifts in community with others and in solidarity with all whom God loves, indeed, with all creation. The sharing of these gifts in community leads to change and growth.

8. Only God’s grace and the work of the Holy Spirit can truly bring Christians together with all the riches which God has sown in each of the churches and in all peoples. As growth in communion ecumenism is a powerful witness to the gospel that all Christians can bear before a fragmented and divided world. The more Christians remain rooted in Jesus Christ, the self-revelation of God, the more credible will be their witness to the world at large. The ecumenical movement regularly highlights this understanding. As the Apostle Paul asserts, “we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us” (2 Cor. 5:20). Fresh

6. *Unitatis Redintegratio*, Par. 7.

7. *The Nature and Purpose of Ecumenical Dialogue*. A Joint Working Group Study: Eighth Report, Par. 37.

focus on the spiritual roots of ecumenism is an appropriate response to contemporary challenges among churches and within the world.

I. Basic Terms

“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)

9. The words “ecumenism” and “spirituality” tend to be used in a variety of ways. The JWG will be using terms in the following ways:

10. Christian spirituality is the living and sharing in God’s love because, in the words of the Apostle Paul, “...God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us” (Romans 5:5). It enables Christians and their churches to respond to God’s initiatives—to what the triune God is doing in and through us. Theology and spirituality are inextricably intertwined, because both deal with God and God’s relationship with humanity through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit. It involves discerning God’s activity in people, in churches, in the world. By the grace of God, Christians seek to grow in understanding God’s will, and to follow that will in themselves, in the community of the church, and in society. Spirituality is a holistic discipline. It is personal (not individualistic); at the same time, it flourishes in community. It grows from our human capacity as conscious, free beings in relationship to others and in relationship to the ground and source of our being, the triune God. It is meaning-seeking and a power of transformation. Spirituality moves toward authenticity and encounters truth, fulfilling our life, restoring our true dimension, and enabling us to have a fuller understanding, real dialogue, and communion. It shapes our horizons. Christians have relied on a variety of personal and communal ways, chief among them prayer and worship, to understand and follow the will of God.

11. Ecumenism is a response to Christ’s prayer for unity for the sake of the world (John 17:21). The term comes from the Greek word, *oikoumene*, which means “the whole inhabited earth.” In the twentieth century, the word “ecumenism” came to be applied to efforts to heal divisions among Christian churches for the sake of the world. The WCC Constitution articulates elements of this vision: “The primary purpose of the fellowship of churches in the World Council of Churches is to call one another to visible unity in one faith and in one eucharistic fellowship, expressed in worship and common life in Christ, through witness and service to the world, and

to advance towards that unity in order that the world may believe.”⁸ This quest is important because it is an essential dimension of the gospel. As the WCC founding Amsterdam assembly message affirmed, “Christ has made us His own, and He is not divided.”⁹ Churches help one another to be faithful to the gospel mandate of reconciliation, and call one another to mutual accountability as together, they seek to know the mind of Christ. Because Christ’s call is for the salvation of the whole inhabited earth, the quest for Christian unity is not for its sake alone.

12. The unity Christian churches seek is not a call for uniformity. Nor does it entail compromises of doctrine or conscience as churches address differences in perspectives about basic Christian tenets. Unity allows for legitimate diversity in theological expression, spirituality, rite, reflections on faith, and inculturation. Rather, legitimate diversity aims to enrich the whole body of Christ. “The dynamic of the ecumenical movement is rooted in the tension between the churches as they are and the true *koinonia* with the triune God and among one another which is their calling and God’s gift.”¹⁰ The living force of this ecumenical quest is the Holy Spirit, who bestows the fruit of “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control” (Gal. 5:22).

13. In the twentieth century, the word “ecumenism” began to refer specifically to Christians working toward “visible unity in one faith and one Eucharistic fellowship.” While we affirm the essential value of promoting positive relationships among all peoples of faith, the intra-Christian understanding of the term “ecumenism” is how the word will be used in this text.

14. Ecumenical dialogue and interreligious dialogue are related to each other. Christians need to bear common witness in so far as it is possible with people of other religions. *The Directory for the Application of the Principles and Norms of Ecumenism* takes notice of this fact. It states:

There are increasing contacts in today’s world between Christians and persons of other religions. These contacts differ radically from the contacts

8. *Constitution and Rules of the World Council of Churches* (as amended by the 9th Assembly, Porto Alegre, Brazil, February 2006), III Purposes and Functions.

9. Ruth Rouse and Stephen Charles Neill. (1986) *A History of the Ecumenical Movement: Volume I, 1517-1948, third edition*. World Council of Churches, Geneva. p. 720.

10. *Towards a Common Understanding and Vision of the World Council of Churches*. (Sept. 1997). A policy statement adopted by the WCC Central Committee [CUV] Par. 2.8.1.

between the church and ecclesial communities, which have for their object the restoration of the unity Christ willed among all his disciples, and are properly called ecumenical. But in practice they are deeply influenced by, and in turn influence ecumenical relationships. Through them, Christians can deepen the level of communion existing among themselves, and so they are to be considered an important part of ecumenical cooperation.¹¹

15. The spiritual roots of ecumenism combine efforts of Christians to discern God's will and to be receptive to the Holy Spirit, with particular attention to "the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5:18) which has been entrusted to us through Christ for the sake of the world—indeed, for all creation, "in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay..." (Rom. 8:21). This is the common hope for all human beings and a source of the ecumenical mandate. Division "openly contradicts the will of Christ, scandalizes the world, and damages the holy cause of preaching the Gospel to every creature."¹² In response to the reality of divisions among Christians, at the 50th anniversary of its founding, the WCC member churches recommitted themselves to nurture "the ability to pray, live, act and grow together in community—sometimes through struggle and conflict—with churches from differing backgrounds and traditions."¹³ In this project, the members of the Joint Working Group have been attentive to the variety of writings within and among Christian traditions that particularly inform this ecumenical mandate.

16. The quest for Christian unity is not something new in the life of the churches. It is rooted in the tradition of the Church from the earliest centuries, and is embedded in liturgy. Furthermore, it is part of the fundamental nature of the church. As Pope John Paul II said in his encyclical *Ut unum sint*, the unity

which the Lord has bestowed on his church and in which he wishes to embrace all people, is not something added on, but stands at the very heart of Christ's mission. Nor is it some secondary attribute of the community of his disciples. Rather, it belongs to the very essence of this community. God wills the church because he wills unity, and unity is an expression of the whole depth of his agape.¹⁴

11. Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, *The Directory for the Application of the Principles and Norms of Ecumenism*, 1993, n. 210.

12. *Unitatis Redintegratio*. Par. 1.

13. *Towards a Common Understanding and Vision of the World Council of Churches*. (Sept. 1997) A policy statement adopted by the WCC Central Committee. Par. 3.7.1.

14. *Ut unum sint*. No. 9.

In other words, the spiritual roots of ecumenism are at the very heart of the quest for Christian unity: that is, they entail conversion and renewal, holiness of life in accordance with the gospel, personal and communal prayer. At the same time that the response to God's will for unity is grounded in the scripture and tradition that Christians share, the forms of that response are open to fresh winds of the Holy Spirit in ways still to be made known.

17. The members of the JWG have chosen to use the metaphor of "spiritual roots" because roots are a common source of nourishment. As with all metaphors, it is evocative and provides a good visual image for the fundamentals undergirding the ecumenical movement. Roots are dependent on the same life-giving sources of soil and water. These sources often are hidden, yet they quietly sustain. All roots intermingle, sometimes in complex ways not visible to the human eye. They have the potential to bear good fruit. So it is with the spiritual roots of ecumenism. The common source nourishing Christians is the triune God. Christians are reborn and nourished in the waters of baptism, through which we share a real though incomplete communion. Our distinct traditions are inter-dependent. We turn to the same life-giving channels of scripture and tradition discerned through human experience to guide, sustain, and bear the fruit of reconciliation. The ecumenical movement, itself, has been a fruit of the Holy Spirit, refreshing our commitment and inspiring Christians to engage with each other as we reach toward full *koinonia*—"visible unity in one faith and one eucharistic fellowship."¹⁵

II. Biblical Foundations

"I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, 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" (John 17:20-21).

18. Because prayer is rooted in a relationship with the triune God, the JWG has chosen prayer as an organizing principle to explore the theological foundations of spiritual ecumenism. Prayer rooted in the prayer of Jesus leads the believer to confront his or her sins that contribute to division within the community, and also the sins committed by members of the church in previous ages which have led to schism and fracture in ecclesial communion. By praying with Christ, believers undergo interior

15. *Constitution and Rules of the World Council of Churches* (as amended by the 9th Assembly, Porto Alegre, Brazil, February 2006), III Purposes and Functions.

conversion and become instruments of healing who remove obstacles to communion, but also witnesses to the diversity of the Holy Spirit's gifts that make true unity possible. Finally, as Christians who look to Christ as the principal agent of reconciliation, we also cultivate a patience that recognizes the perfection of unity as the final gift of the Lord when he returns in glory. As has been stated in section I (Basic terms), prayer is only one dimension of the spiritual life.

A. The prayer of Jesus as a basis for unity

19. The Gospel of John places Jesus' prayer for unity at the climax of his farewell address to the disciples on the night before his death. In what is often called the high priestly prayer (John 17), Jesus asks the Father to give his disciples, those who belong to him in the time of his death on the cross, as well as those who have yet to believe in him, a share in their communion of life and love. The prayer for unity is first a prayer to "abide" (*μένειν*) in Jesus and in the love that he has for the Father (15:7-10) and for his disciples (13:34). Like branches of the vine (15:5), his disciples will bear fruit if they obey the Father's commandments and love one another as Jesus himself has loved them. To lay down one's life for a brother or sister is the most supreme expression of unity precisely because it imitates the sacrificial love of Jesus revealed on the cross (13:1; 15:13).

20. Unity in the love of Jesus is first an I-Thou relationship which builds communion between individuals and Christ as the ground from which unity between communities emerges. The disciples derive their unity with one another from Christ who shows how to love and how to find the way to the Father (John 8:12; 14:7). It is his love that gives rise to the desire for unity, even in those who have never been aware of the need for it. Saint Cyril of Alexandria writes that Christ wishes his disciples

to be kept in a state of unity by maintaining a like-mindedness and an identity of will, being mingled together as it were in soul and spirit and in the law of peace and love for one another. He wishes them to be bound together tightly with an unbreakable bond of love, that they may advance to such a degree of unity that is conceived to exist between the Father and the Son.¹⁶

The early Christian community, as depicted in the Book of Acts, realizes this harmony of minds and hearts as its members "devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread

16. Joel C. Elowsky and Thomas C. Oden, eds. (2007) *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: John 11-21*. InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, IL; Commentary on the Gospel of John 11.9, p. 245.

and the prayers” as well as to the sharing of wealth for the benefit of one another (Acts 2:42, 44-45).

21. All loving action, all fruitfulness of life in communion among Christians flows from hearing the word of Christ and receiving it in faith. The word that Jesus speaks comes from the Father, and is expressed through a variety of teachings and powerful signs. But all of the words and deeds of Christ are, at the same time, concentrated in the one word that is the divine name shared by both Jesus and the Father. “I AM” is the powerful name of God revealed first through Moses to the people of Israel (Exodus 3:14), and now to all peoples through the exaltation of Christ on the cross (John 18ff). Within the high priestly prayer, Jesus acknowledges that he has revealed the Father’s ineffable name to his disciples (John 17:6), the name that saves human beings because it elicits faith from them. Wherever two or three gather to invoke Jesus’ name, he is present in the midst of them (Matt. 18:20).

22. In the Gospel of Matthew the divine name is similarly invoked in the distinctive prayer that Jesus teaches to his disciples: “Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name...” The Lord’s Prayer sanctifies the divine name because it petitions the Father for the means to live within the heavenly kingdom, where sins are forgiven and all are reconciled to one another in Christ. This very prayer that Christians of differing confessional allegiances often recite in common today is the prayer for unity *par excellence*. As St. Cyprian noted about the Lord’s Prayer, “we say not ‘My Father, which art in heaven,’ nor ‘Give me this day my daily bread’... When we pray [the Lord’s Prayer] we pray not for one but for the whole people, because we the whole people are one.”¹⁷

23. The prayer for unity, the prayer of Jesus and his disciples, achieves its desired object only through the power of the Holy Spirit. Earlier in his farewell address, Jesus promises another Advocate in whom the disciples will abide and in whom his memory will be preserved in all truth (John 14:16-17, 25-26). The same Spirit that helps us in our weakness, intercedes for us when we do not know how to pray (Rom. 8:26-27), and enables us to proclaim that “Jesus is Lord” (1 Cor. 12:3)—that same Spirit draws the first Christians into the unity of the richly endowed church at Pentecost. Sent by the Father through the Son, the life-giving Spirit (Nicene Constantinopolitan Creed) accompanies the church throughout the pilgrimage of history, preserving believers in the truth and enabling

17. St. Cyprian, Treatise IV, *On the Lord’s Prayer*. No. 8; www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf05.iv.v.iv.html (Accessed March 15, 2010).

them to witness boldly to the gospel. In the process of praying, working and struggling for unity, the Holy Spirit also “comforts us in pain, disturbs us when we are satisfied to remain in our division, leads us to repentance and grants us joy when our communion flourishes.”¹⁸

24. Finally, the unity for which Christ and his followers pray achieves its fulfillment only when the rest of humanity finds its place within creation’s worship of the triune God (Phil. 2:10-11). Jesus prays that we may be one “so that the world may believe” that he is the one sent by the Father—a realization that marks the beginning of eternal life (John 17:3). Thus communion among Christians fosters mission, which includes both the proclamation of the word as well as action on behalf of justice, peace and care for God’s creation. It is in this spirit that John Calvin offered a prayer saying “Save us, Lord, from being self-centered in our prayers; teach us to remember to pray for others. May we be so caught up in love for those for whom we pray, that we may feel their needs as keenly as our own, and pray for them with imagination, sensitivity, and knowledge.”¹⁹ Christians today who pray for unity stand within the modern ecumenical movement, which began more than one hundred years ago with the realization that the mission of announcing the good news of Jesus Christ is impeded by the discordant witness of Christian communities in competition with or indifferent to one another. Such a contradiction becomes an obstacle for those who hear the message and who might otherwise place their faith in Christ.

B. Our calling to repentance and conversion as a basis for unity

25. The dialogue of *metanoia* which comprises repentance and conversion is also a dialogue of unity among Christians.²⁰ From the beginning of history, sin has led either to a break or a wound in humanity’s communion with God, which has resulted in conflicts between individuals and their communities. God’s solution to the catastrophic consequences of human rebellion is to restore the relationship by means of a covenant. Through the prophets of Israel, the people are further educated in the bond between worship and justice, sacrifices and merciful deeds (e.g. Hos. 6:6).

18. *The Unity of the Church: Gift and Calling—The Canberra statement*. (1991) World Council of Churches. No. 4.1; www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-commissions/faith-and-order-commission-unity-the-church-and-its-mission/the-unity-of-the-church-gift-and-calling-the-canberra-statement.html (Accessed March 15, 2010)

19. Dorothy Stewart, compiler. (2002) *The Westminster Collection of Christian Prayers*. WJK, Louisville, KY, p. 314.

20. *Ut unum sint*. No. 35.

26. With the coming of Jesus Christ, the new Adam who renews all of humanity through his incarnation and life-giving death on the cross (cf. 1 Cor. 15:47), believers receive the definitive plan for communion and unity. By the grace that comes through faith in Christ Jesus, believers who are baptized into him have the means of overcoming their sins and evil in the world and of being transformed into holy instruments of God's new creation (Gal. 3:27).

27. Christians rejoice in the ways that the Lord equips them to be ambassadors of reconciliation (cf. 2 Cor. 5:19) and announcers of a gospel that promises renewed friendship with God (cf. John 15:15). "Humanity is one, organically one by its divine structure; it is the church's mission to reveal to men that pristine unity that they have lost, to restore and complete it," said St. Hilary of Poitiers.²¹ The vocation of service to unity is, therefore, an inherent part of the call to discipleship.

28. In our worship, the community makes a confession of sin in order to remove the obstacles to communion with God and fellowship with one another. Sometimes the confession takes the form of a communal prayer. At other times it is a litany that repeats the words of penitents in the Gospel: "Lord, have mercy"/*Kyrie eleison* (cf. Mark 10:48; Luke 18:13, 38). In confessing our sins together as part of communal worship, we turn together to Christ whose blood pays the debt of our sins (cf. Rom. 5:16) and calls out for mercy and reconciliation among believers and within the wider human family (cf. Heb. 12:24; Col. 1:20).

29. The community of believers that carries the message and presence of Christ into the world begins its life at Pentecost with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, whom the Lord had promised to send (Acts 1:8; cf. John 14:16). What had been a Jewish feast of God's gift of the covenant at Sinai becomes for the followers of Jesus the beginning of a new phase in the history of salvation, in which all the earth's peoples are represented (Acts 2:1-11). Through the outpouring of the Spirit, Christ undoes the damage wrought by Babel (cf. Gen. 11:1-9) and enables human beings to reunite in the language of faith in the one whose blood dissolves the walls of division (Eph. 2:14-15). Christ makes himself the head of this new body (Col. 1:18), but animates it by the Spirit who is the bearer of God's love (Rom. 5:5)—a love that casts out fear (1 John 14).

30. The church is the place where humanity rediscovers its unity in communion with God. In the images of the early church Fathers, the

21. Henri de Lubac. (1988) *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man*. Ignatius Press, San Francisco, pp. 45, 48, 53.

church is the ark which “in the full sail of the Lord’s cross, by the breath of the Holy Spirit, navigates safely in this world,” and through which human beings are “saved from the flood” as in the days of Noah.²²

31. At its ninth assembly in Porto Alegre, Brazil in 2006, the World Council of Churches affirmed in its statement on ecclesiology, *Called to Be the One Church*, that the Church is the sign and instrument of what God intends for the salvation of the world. “The kingdom of God can be perceived in a reconciled and reconciling community called to holiness: a community that strives to overcome the discriminations expressed in sinful social structures, and to work for the healing of divisions in its own life and for healing and unity in the human community.”²³

32. Conversion to Christ and prayer for unity lead to the healing of those memories of intolerance, hatred and even violence perpetrated by Christians against other Christians in the name of religion. As Pope John Paul II said in his encyclical *Ut unum sint*: “With the grace of the Holy Spirit, the Lord’s disciples, inspired by love, by the power of the truth and by a sincere desire for mutual forgiveness and reconciliation, are called to re-examine together their painful past and the hurt which that past regrettably continues to provoke even today.”²⁴ With similar dedication, they are to affirm and renew “the image of God in all humanity” and to work “alongside all those whose human dignity has been denied by economic, political, and social marginalization.”²⁵ Joined to Christ the reconciler, Christians do not hesitate to engage in works that promote healing and unity in the broader society, even while recognizing with Paul that such good work appropriately begins in the household of faith (cf. Gal. 6:10).

C. The gifts of the Spirit in a dialogue with cultures as a basis for unity

33. Spiritual ecumenism values unity and diversity as two interpenetrating gifts that Christ in his Spirit bestows upon the church. Already in the New Testament, the new people of God reveals itself as a unity rich in diversity when the Word and the Spirit appear together in moments of God’s creative acts. In his spiritual interpretation of the baptism of Jesus

22. St. Augustine. *Sermon*. 96,7,9: PL 38, 588; St. Ambrose, *De virg.* 18 118: PL 16,297B; cf. already 1 Pet. 3:20-21.

23. WCC. (2006) *Called to Be One Church—Porto Alegre Statement*. No. 10; www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/assembly/porto-alegre-2006/1-statements-documents-adopted/christian-unity-and-message-to-the-churches/called-to-be-the-one-church-as-adopted.html (Accessed March 15, 2010).

24. *Ut unum sint*, No. 2.

25. WCC. (2006) *Called to Be One Church—Porto Alegre statement*. No. 10.

and the day of Pentecost, Augustine of Hippo points out that it is the same Holy Spirit who reveals himself in both events as the source of the new creation (cf. Matt. 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22; John 1:29-34; Acts 2:4). The two manifestations of the Spirit represent, according to Augustine, the diversity of gifts and the unity of faith in the one church. At Pentecost, Augustine writes, “there is a diversity of tongues, but the diversity of tongues does not imply schisms. Do not be afraid of the separation in the cloven tongues, but in the dove recognize unity.”²⁶ In the hovering of the Spirit over Jesus, at the moment the Father pronounces his Son “beloved,” the unity of all those who would be baptized in Christ and made children of the one God, also is manifested. For Augustine, incorporation into Christ at baptism and the gathering into the church at Pentecost are two aspects of God’s single response to the chaos provoked by sin.

34. Unity in diversity is found throughout the life of the church, in every stage of its existence. Given the mandate of the church to proclaim the gospel and baptize people of all nations (Matt. 28:19-20), the church enters into dialogue with disparate cultures. Each new culture and ethnic community that receives the gospel and allows the church to take root on its soil, contributes its own gifts to the life of the body of believers. Worship, theology, and witness find new and enriching expressions because the dialogue of church and culture continues in every age. Christians on the ecumenical journey agree with Paul that the Holy Spirit bestows a rich variety of theological and pastoral gifts for the up-building of the one church (cf. Eph. 4:1-16).

35. Yet the principle of diversity of gifts is qualified by the ecclesial purpose to which they are always directed: “To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good” (1 Cor. 12:4-7). The churches recognize the important work of theological dialogues that aim to identify doctrinal convergences across confessional divides. Christians today can gratefully acknowledge that sometimes another tradition comes nearer than one’s own to a full appreciation of some aspects of a mystery of revelation, or has expressed them to better advantage. “In such cases, these various theological expressions are to be considered often as mutually complementary rather than conflicting.”²⁷

26. St. Augustine. *Tractates on the Gospel of John* 6:3. ACCS: Acts, p. 22.

27. *Unitatis Redintegratio*, No. 17; www.vatican.va/archives/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/va-ii_decree_19641121_unitatis-redintegratio_en.html (Accessed March 15, 2010).

36. While affirming the life-giving effects of the gifts of the Spirit, we also recognize the limits of diversity. Diversity is integral to the nature of ecclesial communion. There is, however, also a diversity of cultures which can undermine communion when it renders impossible the common profession of faith in Christ as God and Savior the same yesterday, today and forever (Heb. 13:8); or when doubt is cast upon “salvation and the final destiny of humanity as proclaimed in Holy Scripture and preached by the apostolic community.”²⁸ When diversity gives way to a profound divergence in the way the gospel is proclaimed by people, or when it breaks apart fellowships of Christians because of profound differences in understanding the moral life, then it no longer accords with the mind of Christ or with the movement of his Spirit in the church. Those on the ecumenical journey can say with Origen of Alexandria (185-254): “Wherever there are sins, there are also divisions, schisms, heresies, and disputes.” By the same token, wherever there are virtues like patience and humility borne of the Spirit “there is also harmony and unity, from which arise the one heart and one soul of all believers.”²⁹

37. Unity in diversity finds its perfect expression in the absolute oneness and distinction of persons in the Holy Trinity. God, the Father Almighty, God the only begotten Son, and God the Holy Spirit who is Lord and giver of life, are one God, as professed in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (381). Each Person (*hypostasis*) is distinct in his identity, co-equally sharing in the one divine essence (*ousia*). The church as the people of God, the body of Christ, and the temple of the Holy Spirit mirrors—albeit in a creaturely and imperfect way—the “oneness in rich diversity” of the living God. The prayer and spiritual works for Christian unity are therefore aimed at the growth of ecclesial communion into the Trinitarian communion of self-giving love, from which it derives its life.³⁰

38. Christians on the ecumenical journey understand the importance of hospitality as a virtue that helps to overcome the barriers between historically divided churches. Over the last hundred years, we have learned to welcome into our communities the stranger who later was discovered

28. Faith and Order Commission. (1991) *The Unity of the Church: Gift and calling—the Canberra statement*, World Council of Churches, No. 2.2; www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-commissions/faith-and-order-commission/i-unity-the-church-and-its-mission/the-unity-of-the-church-gift-and-calling-the-canberra-statement.html (Accessed March 15, 2010).

29. Origen, Hom. In Ezech. 9,1: Par. 13, 732.

30. WCC, *Called to Be One Church*. No. 3.

to be our sister or brother in Christ. One of the great ecumenical challenges today is to cultivate a Trinitarian spirituality that fosters within our communities an attitude of welcome toward believers from churches other than our own. Like Abraham and Sarah who entertain the “divine friends” unaware of their identity, we too may find a blessing in receiving the holy other into our tents, and also the rich spiritual gifts that he or she bears (Gen. 18:1-19; cf. Heb. 13:2).³¹

D. Enduring hope as a basis for unity

39. As believers in Jesus Christ, Christians desire what the Lord desires; and he desires unity, peace and friendship for his disciples. Yet this unity for which we labour must be acknowledged as a gift of the Lord before it ever becomes the task of his disciples. Unity accompanies the Holy Spirit whom the Father sends through the Son on the day of Pentecost as a permanent endowment. Whenever the Lord’s followers fall into division, we contradict ourselves as members of his body. Discord and fracture within the church always call for deeper prayer, repentance, and remembrance of the original gift of the Spirit.

40. The final vision of the people of God is one of harmonious worship and fruitful life in the kingdom of God. All divisions will fall by the wayside, and all of creation will become a song of praise (Rev. 5:11-14). Christians wait in joyful hope for the return of the Lord who will gather his elect into perfect communion. In the meantime, we look for signs and opportunities to heal the body of Christ of all its divisions. Yet we also seek to find some purpose even in our disunity, knowing that God’s grace is more powerful than our sins of division. Saint Paul understood that the divisions unsettling the church in Corinth helped to expose genuine Christian belief and practice from its false opposites (1 Cor. 11:19). Commenting on this same text, Saint Augustine argued that even divisions over false teachings render the truths of faith more luminous.³²

31. See Pope John Paul II, *Ut unum sint*, No. 28: “Dialogue is not simply an exchange of ideas. In some way it is always an ‘exchange of gifts.’” Cf. No. 57: “Communion is made fruitful by the exchange of gifts between the Churches insofar as they complement each other.” www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25051995_ut-unum-sint_en.html (Accessed March 15, 2010).

32. Augustine, *Confessions*, Book 7, chap 19: “For the disapproval of heretics makes the tenets of Your Church and sound doctrine to stand out boldly. For there must be also heresies, that the approved may be made manifest among the weak.”

41. While recognizing that diversity can contribute to the fulfillment of God's plan, Christians know that God's call is to be together as ambassadors of reconciliation and agents of peace. Mindful of this call, the delegates to the first assembly of the World Council of Churches, held in Amsterdam, said in their message, "God has broken the power of evil once and for all, and opened for everyone the gate into freedom and joy in the Holy Spirit."³³ Appreciative of the Spirit's rich variety of gifts, we fulfill our calling and anticipate the coming of God's heavenly reign.

III. Some Implications for Prayer and Liturgical Practice

"Whatever you ask for in prayer with faith, you will receive." (Matt. 21:22)

42. Prayer has long been recognized as the soul of the ecumenical movement. As was noted in the previous section, the prayer for unity is always an extension and participation in the prayer of Christ who desires that we be one as he and the Father are one (John 17:21). This prayer is for the followers of Christ. In prayer, Christians are invited to respond to this appeal, and to become fully that for which our Lord prayed. Prayer is the spiritual taproot of ecumenism—the main root from which all else springs.

43. The biblical principle, "apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5) applies to the work of removing obstacles to full communion among the Christian people. Through prayer, Christian believers invite Christ to shape unity as he wills it—to let go of any notions or habits that are not consistent with his will. By praying with Christ and in Christ the believer is united with all believers in a symphony of prayer that orients minds and hearts to the service of building unity within the one church.

44. Christians regularly pray for each other in a variety of ways. This is one of the fruits of the ecumenical movement—a fruit that is in continuity with the traditions of the church. Many churches include prayers for unity (collects) in their liturgies. Some are a regular part of worship, others are for occasional or particular use during certain seasons or on particular days. For example, many Lutheran worship services include

33. *The Message of the Assembly*. The First Assembly of the World Council of Churches: The Official Report. (1949) W.A. Visser't Hooft, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, ed. Harper & Brothers, New York, p.10. This publication is Volume V of the series *Man's Disorder and God's Design*. Also available at www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/assembly/ejubilee/8-piece8.htm.

petitions for peace (“give peace to your church...”³⁴) which address the need for reconciliation among peoples, and for the church (“where it is divided, reunite it...”³⁵). The historic Anglican eucharistic prayers and intercessions usually include prayer for the unity of the church, and the following phrase represents a classic formulation: “beseeching thee to inspire continually the universal church with the spirit of truth, unity, and concord...”³⁶ In the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom during the great litany, the priest invites the people to pray “For peace in the whole world, for the stability of the holy churches of God, and for the unity of all...”³⁷ At the dismissal, the priest prays “Grant peace to Your world, to Your churches...”³⁸ In the Roman Catholic Church, when the priest invites members of the congregation to offer each other a sign of peace, he begins by saying: “Lord Jesus Christ, who said to your apostles, peace I leave you, my peace I give you, look not on our sins, but on the faith of your church, and graciously grant her peace and unity in accordance with your will. Who live and reign for ever and ever.”³⁹

45. Christians also pray with each other in ecumenical gatherings. As the report of the Special Commission on Orthodox Participation in the World Council of Churches observed:

Common prayer in ecumenical settings makes it possible for Christians from divided ecclesial traditions to praise God together and offer prayer for Christian unity. Prayer lies at the centre of our identity as Christians, both in our separate communions and in the conciliar ecumenical movement. The very fact that we are able to pray together both as individuals and as representatives of our churches is a sign of the progress that has been made. Yet our common prayer is also a sign of those things that are still to be achieved. Many of our divisions become apparent precisely in our common prayer.⁴⁰

34. *Evangelical Lutheran Worship, Pew Edition*. (2006) Augsburg Fortress, Minneapolis, MN, p. 73.

35. *Ibid.*, p. 76.

36. From the prayer “for the whole state of Christ’s Church militant here in earth” in the Service of Holy Communion in the *Book of Common Prayer 1662*.

37. *The Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom*. (1985) Holy Cross Orthodox Press, Brookline, MA, p. 1.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 35.

39. *The Roman Missal*. The Communion Rite, “Sign of Peace.”

40. Final report of the Special Commission on Orthodox Participation in the WCC. (14 February 2006) Appendix A, “A framework for Common Prayer at WCC Gatherings,” par. 1. Pdf version: wcc.oikoumene.org/resources/docu-

The report concluded: “Our divisions will not be resolved solely with theological dialogue and common service to the world. We must also pray together if we are to stay together, for common prayer is at the very heart of our Christian life, both in our own communities and as we work together for Christian unity.”⁴¹

46. Some intentional communities have been inspired and shaped by the ecumenical vision, and have used it as an organizing principle in their life together. It has shaped their prayer life and informed the spirit of hospitality with which they receive Christians into their life. Among these are the Chemin Neuf Community, the Focolare Movement, the Community of Grandchamp, the Iona Community, the Ecumenical Community of Taizé, and the Monastic Community of Bose.

47. Some churches observe an ecumenical prayer cycle in which they systematically pray for Christian churches around the world. Some pray especially for churches in times of threat and for churches under the cross. At the 50th anniversary assembly of the World Council of Churches in Harare, Nelson Mandela thanked the churches, saying “Your support exemplified in the most concrete way the contribution that religion has made to our liberation.”⁴² Prayer was an essential part of this support. Some have special companion relationships with Christians in other parts of the world for whom they pray. Some support a fruitful outcome of ecumenical events through prayer.

48. The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (WPCU), now observed among churches around the world for over a century, helps the faithful focus intensely on Christian unity. This “week,” observed from 18-25 January (or in some places, during Pentecost or in the southern hemisphere, in July), has been called “one of the oldest and most enduring institutionalized expressions of ‘spiritual ecumenism.’”⁴³ Suggested materials for a common WPCU text now are prepared by the commission on Faith and Order of the WCC and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian

ments/ assembly/porto-alegre-2006/3-preparatory and background documents/final report of the Special Commission on Orthodox Participation in the WCC.html.

41. *Ibid.*, Conclusion, Par. 43.

42. Diane Kessler, ed. (1999) *Together on the Way: Official report of the Eighth Assembly of the World Council of Churches*. WCC Publications, Geneva, p. 8.

43. Nicholas Lossky et al. (2002) *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*. WCC Publications, Geneva. “Week of Prayer for Christian Unity,” by Thomas F. Best, p. 1203.

Unity, and distributed widely by churches, bishops conferences, councils of churches, and other ecumenical organizations. It has served as a catalyst for connection among young adults, and is among the most visited sections on the WCC's website. That churches offer these prayers is a sign of a real though incomplete communion which already exist among them.

49. The Joint Working Group study on *The Nature and Purpose of Ecumenical Dialogue*, observes that "Our common commitment to Christian unity requires not only prayers for one another but a life of common prayer."⁴⁴ In other words, Christians not only should be praying for each other, but also with each other. When this happens, as Pope John Paul II observed in *Ut unum sint*, "the goal of unity seems closer. The long history of Christians marked by many divisions seems to converge once more because it tends toward that Source of its unity which is Jesus Christ."⁴⁵ It is worth noting that this section on *The Primacy of Prayer* precedes the section on *Ecumenical Dialogue*, and that prayer is considered "the basis and support" for dialogue. Thus, every gathering of Christians from different traditions should be enveloped by prayer.

50. Where to begin? Christian churches hold the Lord's Prayer in common. It is used both for private devotion and public worship. When Christians from various traditions gather in ecumenical settings, the experience of praying the Lord's Prayer together, each in his or her own language, is an especially powerful reminder of the unity already shared through our baptism. In so doing, we follow our Lord's counsel to "Pray then in this way" (Matt. 6:9a). This is the ultimate rule of prayer that establishes unity in communion, however partial.

51. Churches are learning and receiving from one another's patterns of worship. The liturgical movement is a genuine source of the spiritual roots of ecumenism, especially in its ecumenical recovery of shapes of liturgical rites that predate the major divisions of the church. For instance, in the Western churches, hymns, canticles and other musical resources are shared ecumenically. Music from the Taizé community has had a profound ecumenical influence. Styles of worship in Charismatic and Pentecostal churches, especially the use of hymns and spiritual songs, are being integrated in the liturgy of some historic churches. Increasingly, the

44. *The Nature and Purpose of Ecumenical Dialogue*. (2005) Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches, Eighth Report. WCC Publications, Geneva, p. 80, Par. 42.

45. *Ut unum sint*, No. 22.

services of daily prayer in many of the Protestant traditions share much in common with the Anglican, Catholic and Orthodox traditions. These services of daily prayer are steeped in the Psalms, which are a unifying element among the churches in prayer and liturgical life.

52. The liturgical movement fostered renewal in the eucharistic services of the Protestant, Anglican, and Roman Catholic churches. These liturgies share common roots in the ancient structure of the eucharist which always has been part of the living tradition of the Eastern and Oriental and Orthodox. A significant sign in the recovery of a common understanding of the eucharistic theology which accompanied the renewal of Western liturgy is the 1982 convergence text on *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*⁴⁶ from the commission on Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches. This convergence has been recognized and honoured when structuring opportunities for shared prayer in ecumenical settings.

53. All churches face the challenge of helping the faithful live out that for which they pray. Christians trust that God hears these prayers for unity, but God also invites us to cooperate in their fulfillment. Even as prayer deepens faith, it also is in the service of unity and mission. The challenge faced by all worship leaders is to find ways to help members of the congregation be attentive to the full import of these prayers for unity—in their own lives, in the life of their churches, and in their communities.

IV. Examples Inspired by the Saints

“[Since] we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith...” (Heb. 12:1-2a)

54. As Christians become more familiar with the spiritual gifts of each other's traditions, they are reclaiming those gifts in ways that bring them and their churches closer together to inform and guide them into unity. They are inspired by writings from all Christian spiritual traditions; they are enriched by stories of singular commitment and devotion; and despite the diversity in devotional practices, they are enlivened by persons who have been exemplary examples of holy living and dying. Martyrs, saints, and living witnesses—these sources of inspiration provide a unity in the diversity of the spiritual life of Christians. These holy men

46. *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*. Faith and Order Paper No. 111. (1982) World Council of Churches, Geneva.

and women, not just of the past but also of our own times, nurture and inform our relationships in church and society. They are icons of Christ in ways that have attracted us to God, and through God, to the reconciling spirit at the heart of the gospel and the core of the ecumenical mandate. All have the potential to refresh and rededicate us to be witnesses “to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

55. Beginning with Christ himself, the scriptures provide abundant reminders of the power of holiness. Jesus said “unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life” (John 12:24-25; Heb. 12:1-2a).

56. The influence of Christian martyrs transcends the categories that sometimes bind and separate. In fact, martyrdom remains a powerful witness among the churches of our day—an eloquent defence of conscience where Christians are a persecuted minority. These witnesses nurture all Christians in the faith. And in this way, they are reminders of the real though incomplete communion shared through baptism—a communion, that as John Calvin observed, is united through a common heavenly Father, with Christ as the head, so that the faithful “cannot but be united in brotherly love, and mutually impart their blessings to each other.”⁴⁷ When Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras I and Pope Paul VI met in Rome in 1967, they voiced this link between the witness of martyrs and the ecumenical mandate.

We hear...the cry of the blood of the apostles Peter and Paul, and the voice of the church of the catacombs and of the martyrs of the Colosseum, inviting us to use every possible means to bring to completion the work we have begun—that of the perfect healing of Christ’s divided church—not only that the will of the Lord should be accomplished, but that the world may see shining forth what is, according to our creed, the primary property of the church—its unity.⁴⁸

57. Among the many examples, we mention the following: In 1968 Pope Paul VI journeyed to Uganda to dedicate the site for a shrine to honour forty-five Anglican and Catholic faithful who had been martyred at the direction of King Mwanga II. This visit was followed in 1984 with a pilgrimage by Archbishop of Canterbury Robert Runcie. In Romania the

47. John Calvin. *Institutes of Christian Religion*, Book IV, 1, 2-3.

48. Nicholas Lossky et al. (1991) *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*. WCC Publications, Geneva. “Martyrdom,” p. 661.

church and the state annually celebrate “The Day of Heroes” on the Feast of the Ascension to honour all martyrs of the country including those of communist persecution, and those killed in the 1989 uprising-revolution.

58. Pope John Paul II gave fresh impetus to the ecumenical potential of martyrs in *Ut unum sint*. The second paragraph of the encyclical calls attention to the witness of martyrs as a force for unity. The text asserts that:

The courageous witness of so many martyrs of our century, including members of churches and ecclesial communities not in full communion with the Catholic Church, gives new vigor to the [Second Vatican] council’s call and reminds us of our duty to listen to and put into practice its exhortation. These brothers and sisters of ours, united in the selfless offering of their lives for the kingdom of God, are the most powerful proof that every factor of division can be transcended and overcome in the total gift of self for the sake of the Gospel.⁴⁹

59. In an effort to give visible witness to this idea, on May 7 in the Jubilee Year 2000 the Pope held an “Ecumenical Commemoration of Witnesses to the Faith in the Twentieth Century” in the Colosseum, a site of martyrdom in the early Church of Rome.⁵⁰ Representatives of other churches and ecclesial communities from a variety of nations were invited to participate in the service of evening prayer marking the occasion. These initiatives offer great promise. While particular churches may have a process for recognizing saints and martyrs for their own members, the churches still need a means of providing ecumenical recognition where Christian martyrs of different traditions are honoured together, as a fruit of the ecumenical movement and a means of fostering unity.

60. A significant initiative to explore ways that the witness of martyrs can be a force for unity was a gathering sponsored jointly by the Monastery of Bose and the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches, held in the autumn of 2008. The setting was especially appropriate because the Community of Bose already had published *Il libro dei testimoni*—an ecumenical martyrology offering daily stories with short prayers and Bible readings about witnesses, drawn from various Christian traditions.⁵¹ The Feast of All Saints occurred during the symposium. According to the message of the meeting:

49. *Ut unum sint*, No. 1.

50. See “Ecumenical Commemoration of Witnesses to the Faith in the Twentieth Century,” Press Conference, www.vatican.va/news_services/liturgy/documents.

51. *Il Libro dei testimoni. Martirologio ecumenico, a cura di Comunità di Bose*, Ed. San Paolo, Milano, 2002.

The aims behind this project were: to recognize each other's witnesses of faith, when this is not mutually exclusive; to find ways of commemorating witnesses from various traditions at ecumenical meetings; to develop or recover the commemoration of witnesses in churches that do not have such a practice; to work towards a common ecumenical martyrology.⁵²

61. As the participants in the Bose meeting recognized, when one wades into the history of Christian martyrdom, one quickly realizes that the circumstances of martyrdom in some situations have an underside that must be surfaced and addressed as a step towards reconciliation among churches. Over the centuries, many Christians have been martyred in inter-confessional acts of violence, thus fueling the flames of acrimony between Christians. *Ut unum sint* acknowledges the need for a "purification of past memories."⁵³ A common exploration of painful memories offers Christians an opportunity to acknowledge past wrongs, repent for sins committed, seek forgiveness, and transcend the past in keeping with the reconciling spirit of the gospel.

62. This process is not easy. It requires "speaking the truth in love," so that "we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love" (Eph. 4:15-16). In this way, an exploration of a common martyrology offers the possibility for churches to grow together through costly obedience to the reconciling essence of the gospel.

63. The Bose symposium acknowledged that churches continue to differ in particular matters as, for instance, "the intercession of the saints, canonization, veneration of saintly relics, and the practice of indulgences" (par. 4.1). It observed that "churches differ in the ways they commemorate the great witnesses. Many churches do so through story telling, religious instruction, publications, and artistic expression. Some also commemorate witnesses as part of their daily liturgical life" (par. 4.2). Yet Christians are united in being attracted to examples of holy living from all our traditions, and are doing so in a variety of ways—through "ecclesiastical calendars, liturgies, books, catechetical materials, memorials, pilgrimages and celebra-

52. Tamara Grdzeldze and Guido Dotti (eds). (2009) *A Cloud of Witnesses: Opportunities for ecumenical commemoration*. Faith and Order Paper No. 209. WCC Publications, Geneva. "A Cloud of Witnesses: A message to the churches from a symposium at the Monastery of Bose, Par. 1.2.

53. *Ut unum sint*, No. 2.

tions” (par. 4.3). These saints are accessible because of the way that they have evidenced holiness in their very humanity. Their appropriation by all traditions helps break out of defining ourselves over against the other.

64. A popular hymn written in the nineteenth century is titled “For All the Saints.” The fourth verse reads, “O Blest communion, fellowship divine! We feebly struggle, they in glory shine; Yet all are one in thee, for all are thine. Alleluia!”⁵⁴ In this sense, all are called to holiness through baptism. The saints show us the way. Their holiness in imitation of Christ shines through especially clearly, inviting emulation in an ongoing conversion of heart.

65. One concrete way that the reconciling potential of examples among the saints is being realized is through the creation of ecumenical chapels of martyrs and similar memorials. The spirit of these chapels is one of unity. The chapels provide a welcoming space for all Christians to pray and reflect in the company of women and men who suffered and died as witnesses to their faith. The martyrs come from different continents, cultures, and Christian traditions. Some have been recognized officially. Others live in the collective memory of the faithful.

66. Another example of this growing convergence is the creation of “A Resource for Worship and Personal Devotion” titled *Walking with the Saints*,⁵⁵ developed by Beeson Divinity School—an interdenominational evangelical seminary in the United States. The text begins with Patrick (c. 390-461), “Bishop and Missionary to Ireland,” and concludes with Bill Wallace (1908-1950), “Baptist Surgeon and Missionary.” Invoking the ecumenical martyrs, including those in the twentieth century who died by working for justice (e.g. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Oscar Romero) can be a powerful means of joint prayer and study.

67. These are visible signs of a growing convergence in understanding Christian martyrs as belonging to the whole people of God. They draw the faithful to Christ, and through Christ, toward each other.

V. The Power of Transforming Encounters

“There are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone.” (1 Cor. 12:4-6)

54. *For All the Saints*, no. 306. (1931, 1935, 1958) *Pilgrim Hymnal*. The Pilgrim Press, Boston.

55. *Walking with the Saints: A resource for worship and personal devotion*, 2007-2008. (2007) Beeson Divinity School, Samford University, Birmingham, Alabama.

68. Each of us can think of people in living memory whose lives were transformed by experiences or encounters with Christians of other traditions and who, as a result, became converts to the reconciling aims embodied in the ecumenical movement. When people in the ecumenical movement are asked about how they became actively involved, or about what keeps them going when challenges arise, they often tell stories of their own transforming encounters. “When I became involved with Christians from other traditions, my life was changed. I never will be the same. My faith has been enriched, and that has been a great blessing of God.” Over and over again, Christians offer similar testimonies that speak of a deepening faith and commitment to Christ through such encounters. These human exchanges may occur when Christians from different traditions are thrust together in difficult circumstances, such as being prisoners of war, persecuted minorities, or survivors of natural disasters. They may be brief and providential, or the result of deepening relationships with mentors or friends.

69. When Christians seek to discern God’s will in their life and in the life of their churches, they are drawn to Christ’s prayer “that they may all be one” (John 17:21). This prayer leads believers to confront the sins which contribute to division within and among members of the community, and to become receptive to the working of the Holy Spirit who draws Christians into ever deepening fellowship. In this place of openness and vulnerability, and in conversation with the Triune God, a dialogue of conversion begins. Fears are acknowledged and confronted. Trust increases. Minds and hearts are changed from an exclusive to an inclusive spirit. Through the grace of God, this transformation of persons also contributes to the healing of divisions among churches for the sake of the world. Then the churches, themselves, become increasingly effective witnesses to the reconciling power of the gospel, whether they are calling for more compassionate responses to persons affected by HIV and AIDS, or banding together to support Millennium Development Goals.

70. This conversion to become a reconciling witness in the midst of division may happen when Christ uses a single revelatory encounter. More often, however, such a conversion is a process of engaging in progressively deepening relationships with Christians of other traditions. The believer learns to listen, experiences the pain of past wrongs, the distress of separation. Fear and anxiety ebb; curiosity and interest increase. Understanding and appreciation of the other develop to the point that he

or she has become a friend in Christ. Believers begin to share both the gifts and tasks of mission. Faith matures, deepens, and is enriched.

71. In this way, Christians long to make visible the unity that Christ bestows and which our relationships with one another have intimated, and we are led to a renewed responsibility to cooperate with God and other Christians in the process of reconciliation. The status quo of division is no longer acceptable. We discover that what can be done together far surpasses what can be done separately. Reaching this conclusion itself is a revelation.

72. The Scriptures are full of stories of people who have been transformed and whose vision of the other has been radically changed—either through an encounter with Christ himself, or through the working of the Holy Spirit in human interactions. For example, when the Samaritan woman met Jesus at a well where she came to draw water, the conversation she had with him changed her life and influenced many from her village. At the same time, it opened the eyes of Christ's disciples to see Samaritans, who had been considered aliens, as brother and sisters (John 4:7-42). When the disciples were inclined to push children to the periphery, Jesus brought them into the circle, saying that “it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs” (Matt. 19:14). In another parable, Jesus responds to the question, “Who is my neighbour?” by using the improbable example of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:29-37). And in giving his disciples the great commandment to “love one another as I have loved you,” he uses the language of friendship to describe the relationship of those who emulate his love and bear good fruit that will last (John 15:12-17).

73. Jesus' followers in the early church continued to learn about the nature of *koinonia*—of true communion—through transforming encounters with the risen Christ and with each other. When Peter was challenged by the question of why he was going to uncircumcised and eating with them, he responded “Who was I, that I could hinder God?... Then God has given even to the Gentiles the repentance that leads to life” (cf. Acts 11: 17-18). When Paul and Barnabas returned to Jerusalem for a consultation about whether there should be distinctions between Jews and Gentile converts, they “met together to consider” the matter with the apostles and the elders. They had “much debate,” and concluded that circumcision and keeping the law of Moses would not be necessary, because “we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will.” (Acts. 15: 11) This was a great “ecumenical act” which established an ideal of shared responsibility in the spirit of Christ.

74. This commitment is not without risk and fear, both for individuals and for institutions. The following are examples of fears that surface when people engage in ecumenical relationships: people may be afraid that they do not know their own faith well enough to explain it or, if necessary, to defend it. If Christians come from a tradition that has not always practiced Bible reading among the laity, they may feel intimidated by those who come from traditions that historically have encouraged such a practice. They may fear the unfamiliar, because it pulls them out of their comfort zone. They simply might fear change, and the anxiety that accompanies growth and development. They may be afraid of losing or betraying their confessional identity by considering teachings not their own. They may fear being swallowed up. They may have to relinquish an identity which has been formed by differentiation from the other.

75. The common denominator among all these anxieties is fear. But Christians believe that “[p]erfect love casts out fear” (1 Jn. 4:18). For example, Mother Teresa, fearless in reaching out to people of all backgrounds, once observed: “by blood, I am Albanian; my citizenship is Indian; in my heart, I belong to Christ.” What gives Christians their security is the conviction that their essential identity is rooted in the God known through Christ in the Holy Spirit.

76. Persons who have been challenged and blessed by ecumenical encounters speak about the ways that their prayer life has been enhanced, enlivened, and enriched. They talk about feeling comfortable in a variety of liturgical settings, even though they have one particular tradition which they call home. They know that “to sing hymns is to pray twice,” and they sing with gusto hymns from many traditions. They claim as friends people from various traditions, cultures, races, and places. As a result, they are attentive to the needs of the world with a sense of compassion and justice that has been informed by dialogue with many Christians. They benefit from the teachings and writings of all Christian scholars. They are influenced by all Christian spiritual traditions. In these ways, Christians testify to the power of transforming encounters with brothers and sisters in faith, whether across the road or around the world.

VI. Practical Opportunities for Churches—

Some recommendations to the Parent Bodies

“All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation.” (cf. 2 Cor. 5:16-21)

77. The Joint Working Group makes the following practical recommendations to the WCC and PCPCU, and through them, to all the churches, for ways to reclaim and reinforce the spiritual roots of ecumenism. This list is intended to stimulate further creative ideas and actions within and among churches.

A. Opportunities to pray together

- The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity has fostered prayer for unity among Christians for over a century. The JWG commends this practice, and affirms initiatives by the international planning committee to offer some materials that meet the needs of children, youth, and young adults. The JWG also recommends that the regional and local organizers continue to take a fresh look at the preparatory materials, and to place more emphasis on ways that participants can engage with each other both in prayer and in conversation.⁵⁶ This could include offering a simple question to stimulate dialogue before or after the service of prayer; shared Bible study; or the possibility that participants could be given an architectural tour of the church building in which the service is being held. These are only examples of possibilities, but they point to the aim of finding ways to link prayer and ecumenical encounter. Churches need to create more spaces to help people share their faith experiences and traditions with each other.

- Churches should find fresh ways to promote regular use of the Ecumenical Prayer cycle, initiated by WCC Faith and Order in Bangalore, 1978. The communications offices of denominations may be helpful in circulating and promoting this initiative.

- Because Christians share a deep love of the Holy Scriptures, the gathering together of Christians from different traditions offers a particular opportunity for the prayerful hearing and studying the word of God. Thus, it should be encouraged. This may occur either during scheduled gatherings, or at particular times during the liturgical year when Christians are brought together for the explicit purpose of shared Bible study, perhaps using a classical method such as *lectio divina*. One occasion that

56. Walter Cardinal Kasper. (2007) *A Handbook for Spiritual Ecumenism*. New City Press, Hyde Park, N.Y.

might be particularly appropriate is Good Friday, when a procession of the way of the cross (*Via Crucis*) could be ecumenical in nature, such as occasionally has occurred when the Pope has invited representatives from other Christian traditions to offer meditations on the sufferings of Jesus, and has invited others to participate in the procession. This presents great opportunities for local collaboration.

- The churches at all levels should be encouraged to take every opportunity to place on the agenda at ecumenical events an exploration of whether prayers for unity are a regular part of worship; the degree to which the faithful are conscious of the ecumenical intentions and implications of these prayers; and how the representatives at these meetings could contribute to a deepening awareness of the practice of prayer for unity in their own settings.

- A growing practice among Christians in many places, which could be emulated, is that of combining prayer with fasting. This is not confined to the Lenten period, when we commemorate Jesus' forty days of prayer and fasting in the wilderness. It follows, rather, the tendency within the early church to spend considerable time in prayer and fasting before jointly undertaking some significant assignment in mission.

B. Opportunities for ecumenical witness

- One of the customs of the twentieth century ecumenical movement has been to send small delegations of Christians representing a variety of traditions on visits to brothers and sisters in Christ to express solidarity, share in particular events, and learn from each other. Hospitality on these occasions is given and received. By placing a human face on the ecumenical movement, Christians are led by the Holy Spirit to understand each other in fresh ways, and to communicate that understanding to their home church and community. The JWG recommends that this custom be commended to the churches for more widespread use in a variety of local and national, as well as international settings. The Roman Catholic custom of holding World Youth Days offers an opportunity to extend this practice to ecumenical youth delegations. The ecumenical rationale for this practice should be made explicit to maximize the value of the visits.

- All persons who have experienced the transforming power of ecumenical encounters should be encouraged to see themselves as witnesses, and should be prepared to offer testimony to the ways in which their experiences with other Christians have been blessings that have deepened their own spiritual roots. Ecumenical leaders often have heard the claim,

“You are never the same after you attend an ecumenical gathering.” Thus, at the conclusion of such meetings, the organizers should be encouraged to invite people to share this good news in their own contexts.

C. Opportunities to offer ecumenical hospitality

- Although existing divisions among churches pose obstacles for couples in inter-church marriages, and for their families, clergy have an opportunity—particularly on occasions such as baptisms, weddings, and funerals—to demonstrate and model hospitality in ways that are consistent with their tradition and do not scandalize the faithful. Theological educators should be attentive to this need as they educate candidates for ministry. Continuing education events for clergy also offer opportunities to help clergy in particular contexts address with compassion the concrete pastoral issues arising from inter-church marriages.

- Another way to pray together and learn about each other is to attend services in the liturgical tradition of ecumenical partners, and thus, to experience how the other prays. To maximize the ecumenical benefits of such experiences, however, preparatory planning by the partnering congregations should occur. In this way, the sending delegation will feel welcomed and can be recognized by the receiving congregation; the purpose of the visit can be presented through an ecumenical lens; adequate support can be provided so the visitors understand and can participate as fully as possible in worship; and post-worship conversation can be offered, so the visitors have an opportunity to engage in dialogue about what they have experienced. Such a format would be appropriate both for youth and adults.

- Increasing numbers of people of all ages, especially but not only from the developed world, are engaging in pilgrimages and educational travel, often in groups. Many are curious about other places, people, cultures, and religious traditions. They are eager to learn. When they return home, they are eager to share their experiences with others. In some cases, Christians respond to invitations from church-related institutions to make visitations—pilgrimages—to particular holy sites, such as those in the Holy Land. (In this and similar situations where churches are under the cross, it might be particularly helpful to offer preparatory briefings about the context and situations they will experience.) These sites often are part of our shared spiritual heritage. In this field, the ecumenical movement has an opportunity to focus on the spiritual roots of ecumenism. Several components would be necessary to achieve this aim:

an intentional effort to involve Christians from different traditions in the travel experience; ecumenically informed and culturally sensitive travel guides; a carefully developed and structured programme; and the specific aim to encounter Christians in the setting they are visiting in ways that promote dialogue and an exchange of spiritual gifts in the Biblical sense that Christians are called to “Receive one another as Christ has received you for the glory of God” (Rom. 15:7). The JWG recommends exploring the possibility of a pilot project with the WCC Palestine Israel Forum and the Pontifical Council for Migrants and Itinerant People on pilgrimages to the Holy Land.

D. Opportunities for programmatic engagement

- Because the Bible is the authoritative text that Christians hold in common, it provides a mutually enriching basis for shared study, dialogue, reflection, and prayer. This practice is common in ecumenical contexts. Thus, the JWG commends and encourages such practices in a variety of settings. We recognize that churches use different translations. These variations, themselves, can provide opportunities to stimulate fresh insights into the significance of particular texts and the context in which those texts were written, as all churches seek to be faithful to the word of God. The use of the Bible for faith-sharing and prayer as a basis for the practice of piety lends itself to spontaneous, locally initiated encounters.

- All Christians, but particularly those for whom encountering Christians from other churches is a new or courageous experience, may find the opportunity to work together in response to community problems or in joint mission, such as programmes supporting “justice, peace, and creation,” to provide an opening to appreciate the other through shared work and common aims. All too often, however, the potential ecumenical benefit of such encounters is lost unless the sponsoring organizations make a particular effort to help participants understand the religious motivation for their initiatives, and the underlying unity in Christ that they share and that motivates their work. Thus, the JWG encourages organizations to be attentive to opportunities for ecumenical initiatives, and to be intentional about using appropriate occasions.

E. Opportunities in ecumenical education

- Religious leaders are encouraged to be attentive to clergy and lay leaders, particularly the young who have some potential or demonstrated interest in ecumenism, so they can foster their ecumenical exposure. This can be done by including them in ecumenical delegations and by enabling

their participation in ecumenical studies at centres like the World Council of Churches' Ecumenical Institute at Bossey, the Tantur Institute for Ecumenical Studies, the Centro Pro Unione, the Corrymeela Community, and the Irish School of Ecumenics. Existing youth organizations could be helpful in identifying appropriate candidates. Some of these entities include the World Council of Churches' "youth body" ECHOS, the World Student Christian Federation, Syndesmos—the World Fellowship of Orthodox Youth, and Catholic Youth Organizations.

- In the same way that Christian scholars share research and perspectives through ecumenical professional organizations, churches also should encourage academic staff to draw intentionally and explicitly on the spiritual roots of ecumenism for their students, and to focus on the importance of the purification of memories. This may be done in a variety of ways: through the study of all Christian spiritual traditions; through promoting participation in ecumenical observances such as the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity; through enabling students to take advantage of scholarship opportunities for ecumenical education at various institutes; through discussions and study days on ecumenical issues; through joint retreats for students; through cross-registration for courses at theological schools; and through the exchange of teachers among seminaries and theological faculties of different traditions.

78. Much thoughtful attention has been given to the spiritual roots of ecumenism among contemporary theologians. Some highlights of this work are listed in the bibliography which follows this text. The Joint Working Group commends them for study and reflection.

VII. Some Resources

This list is intended to be suggestive and illustrative, rather than exhaustive. The selections include reference works, some materials on the topic from key consultations, and a sampling of writings from some key figures in the ecumenical movement.

Anastasios (Yannoulatos), Archbishop. *Facing the World: Orthodox Christian essays on global concerns*. New York, St. Vladimir's Press, 2003. Provides persuasive reasons why Orthodox Christians should be engaged in ecumenical dialogue.

Bartholomew, Ecumenical Patriarch. "Remarks of His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew on the quest for unity of the Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches." In *Speaking the Truth in Love—Theological and spiritual exhortations of ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew*.

Rev. Dr. John Chryssavgis, ed., with foreword by Dr. Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury. New York, Fordham University Press, *Orthodox Christianity and Contemporary Thought*, 2010. Contains three paragraphs on elements contributing to reconciliation: “fervent prayer for unity,” “countless acts of love, forgiveness and mutual respect,” and “theological dialogue... [through which] we seek the guidance of the Spirit who will lead us in all truth.”

Bria, Ion and Dagmar Heller, eds. *Ecumenical Pilgrims: Profiles of pioneers in Christian reconciliation*. Geneva, WCC Publications, 1995. Offers profiles of fifty twentieth century ecumenical witnesses.

Canadian Council of Churches, Faith and Witness Commission. *Liturgies for Christian Unity: The first hundred years, 1908-2008*. Ottawa, Les Editions Novalis, 2007. Offers a wide variety of liturgical resources focusing on the quest to heal divisions among Christian churches.

“Ecumenical Spirituality,” in *The Westminster Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, ed. Gordon S. Wakefield. Philadelphia, The Westminster Press, 1983, pp. 125-127. Despite the phrase “ecumenical spirituality,” the actual text offers a brief, yet comprehensive description of the field. It includes Biblical warrants, theological basis (“God is the agent of reconciliation; Christ is the means”), understanding of the church, implications for life together (“conversion or change of heart towards Christians of other churches”), place of renewal, reconciliation, and hope, significance of Christian friendship.

Evangelization, Proselytism and Common Witness: The report from the fourth phase of the international dialogue 1990-1997 between the Roman Catholic Church and some classical Pentecostal churches and Leaders. www.pctii.org/cyberj/cyberj4/rcpent97.html. See Chapter 5, Nos. 105-109. The section titled “Resolving conflicts in the quest for unity” speaks about the “mutual respect” and the “deeper understanding of the meaning of faith in Christ” which participants in the twenty-five year old dialogue have gained through their relationship with each other.

Final Report of the Special Commission on Orthodox Participation in the WCC. 14 February 2006, pdf version: www.oikoumene.org/.../final-report-of-the-special-commission-on-orthodox-participation-in-the-wcc.html. See especially section V on common prayer and Appendix A: “A framework for common prayer at WCC gatherings.”

Grdzeldze, Tamara and Guido Dotti, eds. *A Cloud of Witnesses: Opportunities for ecumenical commemoration*. Geneva, WCC Publica-

tions, 2009. Presents results from an international symposium exploring the growing awareness that contemporary witnesses to the faith are a source of inspiration for all churches.

In God's Hands: The ecumenical prayer cycle, in book and website. Produced by the World Council of Churches. www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/prayer-cycle.html. Contains aids for intercessory prayers, "prayers on behalf of and in solidarity with others."

John Paul II. *Ut unum sint* (That All May Be One). Origins, CNS Documentary Service, Vol. 25: No. 4, 8 June 1995. Encyclical "On Commitment to Ecumenism." See especially the section on "Renewal and Conversion," paragraphs 15-17. Par. 15 calls attention to "new horizons for which the Triune God calls us to give thanks" and to "an increased sense of the need for repentance."

Kasper, Walter Cardinal. *A Handbook of Spiritual Ecumenism*. Hyde Park, NY, New City Press, 2007. A brief book, suitable for laity and clergy, giving an overview of the fundamentals of spiritual ecumenism.

The Paschal Homily of St. John Chrysostom. www.orthodoxchristian.info/pages/sermon.htm. Read aloud in every Orthodox parish on the morning of the Great and Holy Pascha Jesus Christ. Noted for its exemplary Christian compassion and spirit of charity.

The Patriarchal and Synodal Encyclical of 1920, "Unto All the Churches Wheresoever They Be." Published in *Guidelines for Orthodox Christians in Ecumenical Relations*, The Revd Robert G. Stephanopoulos, General Secretary, S.C.O.B.A.. The Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in America, 1973. Generally acknowledged as the formal basis of Orthodox participation in the ecumenical movement.

Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism*. Vatican City, 25 March 1993. Paragraph 25 observes that "ecumenism...reaches into the depths of Christian spirituality."

"Prayer in the Ecumenical Movement," "Spiritual Ecumenism," and "Spirituality in the Ecumenical Movement," in *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement, 2nd Edition*. Nicholas Lossky et al., eds. Geneva, WCC Publications, 2002, pp. 925-928, 1069-1070, 1070-1073. Builds on the concept of discipleship. Defines spirituality as follows: "Spirituality...is the way people take to be Christian, to fulfill their Christian vocation. It embraces ministry and service, relationships, life-style, prayer and response to the political and social environment." Includes sections on definition, histori-

cal context, marks of the church (one, holy, catholic and apostolic), and “implications and new explorations.”

“Prayer and Worship: Towards Conversion of the Heart,” in *The Ecumenical Movement: An anthology of key texts and voices*. Michael Kinamon and Brian C. Cope, eds. Geneva, WCC Publications, 1997, pp. 497-525. Contains excerpts from individual writings (Paul Couturier, Roger Schutz, Lukas Vischer, Desmond Tutu), prayers used in ecumenical contexts (student Christian movements, WCC assembly worship books, Lima liturgy), material from ecumenical gatherings (Fourth and Fifth World Conferences on Faith and Order), and John Paul II’s ecumenical encyclical, *Ut unum sint*.

The Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas. *Pastoral Letter on the Occasion of the Third Christian Millennium*. www.scoba.us/resources/third_christian_millennium.html. See paragraphs 115-124, “A Community of Healing and Reconciliation,” which says “The involvement of the Orthodox Church in the quest for reconciliation of Christians and the restoration of the visible unity of the churches is an expression of our faithfulness to the Lord and His Gospel. By seeking the reconciliation of divided Christians, we are in fact sharing in our Lord’s ministry of reconciliation.”

Unitatis Redintegratio, Vatican II Decree on Ecumenism, Chapter II, “The Practice of Ecumenism.” Provides the basis for the Vatican II understanding of the spiritual roots of ecumenism. A frequently quoted text: “There can be no ecumenism worthy of the name without a change of heart.” Also worthy of note: “Christ summons the Church, as she goes her pilgrim way, to that continual reformation of which she always has need, insofar as she is an institution of men here on earth.” And “Let all Christ’s faithful remember that the more purely they strive to live according to the gospel, the more they are fostering and even practicing Christian unity.”

Appendix C

The Church in the Life of Youth and Youth in the Life of the Church

Contents

I. BELONGING TO THE CHURCH

II. WHO ARE THE YOUTH?

III. THE REALITY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE TODAY

IV. YOUTH IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH AND CHURCH IN THE
LIFE OF YOUTH

V. YOUTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

VI. DIALOGUING WITH YOUTH

A. *Resources for youth*: Exploring a new methodology

B. Feedback from youth on the resource materials

C. The role of faith in the life of youth

D. The role of the Church

E. Ecumenical awareness of youth

VII. WORKING WITH YOUTH—RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Collaboration

B. Formation

C. Participation

D. Advocacy

As part of its ninth mandate, the Joint Working Group (JWG) has sought to reflect more deeply about the reality of young people as part of the body of Christ, the Church. Our approach has been to seek to understand more fully how youth respond to the call of Christ and how youth belong, or discover the need to belong, to the church family.

I. Belonging to the Church

“Let no one despise your youth, but set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.” (1 Tim. 4:12)

1. Inspired by the words of the Apostle Paul to the young Timothy, the JWG recognizes that the Church is called to play an essential role in the life of young people, while the role and contribution of youth in the life of the Church must also be recognized and encouraged as an essential part of our Christian identity. Young people are one of the most dynamic sections of any society, and are at a fascinating stage of life. It is also a stage when nurtured development, guidance and formation are important, and even necessary. It is essential, as an integral part of the mission of the Church, to find suitable and creative ways to lead young people to Jesus Christ, the only One who has words of eternal life (cf. John 6:68).

2. The JWG agrees with Pope John Paul II when he affirmed:

What is needed today is a church which knows how to respond to the expectations of young people. Jesus wants to enter into dialogue with them and, through his body, which is the Church, to propose the possibility of a choice, which will require a commitment of their lives. As Jesus with the disciples of Emmaus, so the Church must become the traveling companion of young people.¹

3. We also understand that youth are fully part of the body of Christ, the Church, and have a significant role to play in today's world:

We need the vision and the courage of young people for the necessary changes. We see how young people lead processes of democratization and peace in many countries today. The young people of today are witnesses and agents for peace even when they become victims of violence and terror like in Norway this summer. We have to acknowledge that we have not always been good at honoring and fostering the contributions young people can make in our religious communities. We elders standing here need to work together for peace between generations and to give young people throughout the world real hope for the future.²

4. All the churches are faced with the same reality: if young people are absent, the vitality of the Church is at stake. Yet our churches face vastly different experiences in youth participation, from parts of the developed

1. Pope John Paul II, World Youth Day 1995, Philippines.

2. Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit, WCC General Secretary, Day of Reflection, Dialogue and Prayer for Peace and Justice in the World, 27 October 2011, Assisi.

world, where young people have often become disassociated from the life of the institutional church, to other regions where young people form an increasingly large part of the church family. Indeed, young people comprise a significant presence in the contemporary church, and globally are one of the largest demographic groups among Christians.

5. Accordingly, we wish to stimulate discussion on how the Church can configure its life to appeal to young people, and to ensure that there are opportunities for them to experience and understand the richness of the Christian faith. While it is frequently (and correctly) said that young people are the church of tomorrow, we also wish to affirm and reflect upon their place and role in today's church.

II. Who Are the Youth?

6. For statistical purposes, the United Nations defines "youth" as individuals between the ages of 15 and 24. Young people, according to this definition, currently number 1.2 billion, accounting for approximately 18 percent of the global population,³ a substantial demographic group. Such an age range, however, covers a period of enormous growth in physical development and maturity, and it is helpful to distinguish between teenagers (13-19) and young adults (20-24), since the sociological, psychological and physical contexts that they face differ substantially. For many churches, however, those regarded as youth cannot be determined by a uniform reference to their age, but rather by their dynamic contribution in particular cultural contexts. What constitutes youth in one culture may be significantly different in another. Most youth ministries across different churches worldwide therefore also differ, although it is common to cater to youth in general across the ages of 18-35 years.

III. The Reality Facing Young People Today

"Test everything; hold fast to what is good." (1 Thess. 5:21)

7. All would agree that the contemporary world presents many challenges to young people. The JWG wishes to suggest, however, that these very challenges also can be seen as opportunities to relate to youth, and to speak to them of the value and advantages of a life of faith in fidelity to Christ.

8. The first challenge is the pressure of an increasingly global society, which places high expectations on young people, which demands high

3. www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/documents/wyr10/Brief%20demographic.pdf.

levels of skill, efficiency and competitiveness, and in which education is fundamental. The pressure towards academic achievement that is linked to employment prospects has become a serious concern for many young people, while many others are struggling even to have access to education—a struggle made more difficult by poverty, political instability, violence and conflict.

9. Second, the very diversity of human culture, with its global accessibility, brings along with it the risk of feeding an individualistic approach to life. This may be aggravated by a lack of appropriate role models and sources of authority, and even an abundance of negative examples. The family is not always able to provide the appropriate support and guidance which are so essential to young people in their discernment as they mature.

10. The JWG invites the churches to be aware of the consequences of these pressures, and the inevitable frustrations to which they can give rise. As youth are influenced by patterns of living that challenge older generations, youth also fear that their voice is not valued or is not being heard.

11. Another reality that must be acknowledged is the social context affecting contemporary youth. It is important to take serious note of the proliferation of information and communication technologies that have had a considerable impact on the lives of young people. These technologies especially have affected their interests, priorities, passions and lifestyles. For example, new social networking technologies have changed the perspective and understanding of young persons on many issues, but especially with respect to human relationships, even to the extent that personal and direct relationships are at times replaced by virtual contacts.

12. Nevertheless, the JWG invites the churches to reflect on positive opportunities provided by these new technologies. If given the opportunity, young people often exhibit great interest in contributing to society and to the life of the Church. With their vast knowledge of information technologies, they have the means to harness the potential inherent in those media. Many young people have developed remarkable, creative communication skills, enabling them to link up, network and collaborate. This means that there is an impressive sense of global solidarity among young people today, and a passion for empowering themselves to mobilize into action. Youth is dynamic; its preference is for participatory and action-oriented programmes and events. They aspire to put their acquired learning and training into practice, especially at the service of the poor and voiceless.

13. Moreover, the contemporary world encourages young people to develop a sense of independent action. Young people dare to make decisions on their own, they yearn to get the most out of life, and they are open to new experiences. Importantly—and surprisingly for some observers—a great number of young people continue to search for personal spiritual experiences. They have a deep longing for a personal relationship with God. The JWG challenges the churches to ask whether they truly give young people an opportunity to cultivate their relationship with God and personal spiritual development, as well as community experience and involvement.

IV. Youth in the Life of the Church and Church in the Life of Youth

“So we, who are many, are one body in Christ...” (1Cor.12: 5a)

14. The JWG suggest that the challenges outlined above also have an impact on the way that youth participate in the Church.

Their heightened influence in society demands of them [young people] a proportionately active apostolate. Happily, their natural qualities fit them for this activity. As they become more conscious of their own personality, they are impelled by a zest for life and abounding energies to assume their own responsibility, and they yearn to play their part in social and cultural life. If this zeal is imbued with the spirit of Christ and is inspired by obedience to and love for the shepherds of the Church, it can be expected to be very fruitful. They themselves ought to become the prime and direct apostles of youth, exercising the apostolate among themselves and through themselves and reckoning with the social environment in which they live.⁴

15. A number of young people continue to engage in the life of the church through worship and liturgy, parochial/congregational activity, and participation in various youth organizations and movements. Many others, however, remain passive or cease to involve themselves in any church-related activities. Both groups can feel that the church lives in a culture that is unresponsive to their aspirations and modes of expression. This can lead to an uneasiness and sense of distance from the life of the Church.

16. We should neither ignore nor avoid addressing this increasing uneasiness, isolation, and indeed frustration with the church that is sometimes expressed by young people. The church may seem irrelevant to them and may appear unable to inspire trust. The churches sometimes

4. Second Vatican Council, Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, n. 12.

fail to demonstrate how young people can play a tangible role in their lives—a role that young people expect to be offered if they are invited to participate. One of the most important issues for churches to reflect on is how to avoid the perception that the contribution of young people is undervalued. For many young people, the difficult realities of the world in which they live—where injustice, conflict, unemployment and so many other issues seem to prevail—challenge their belonging to the church. If the Church is seen as a catalyst for change, a hope for justice and peace expressed in the good news of God’s kingdom, then such realities can be considered an opportunity to strengthen the faith of young people.

17. Thus, we invite the churches to seek to understand and respond to the complex reality experienced by youth, to be open to their needs and expectations as a key for developing, maintaining and nurturing their belonging to the Church. We also invite the churches to give young people the opportunity to identify substantial contributions, roles and responsibilities within the church that will enable them to gain confidence and to feel trusted.

18. In creating these opportunities, the churches must bear in mind the dynamic of the Church as described by the Apostle Paul, who points to the importance of every member in it. “For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us” (Rom. 12:4-6a). While young persons in the church have their own particular and important function, they must also be helped to recognize that other members also have their own contributions to make. Undoubtedly, “we do not want to create for the youth a special separate division in the church, since they are part of the one family of the church.”⁵

19. It is helpful to acknowledge that, in the history of the church, there have been young people who have been good examples, and whose impact has been widely recognized for their outstanding contribution to the church. We think, for example, of Saint Francis of Assisi, who, we read, “was a young man when he surrendered his life to God. His passion for the goodness of creation and example of radical daring for peace show the significance of faith and the courage of young people. What Francis accomplished as a young man in his twenties is a salutary reminder to us

5. His Beatitude Patriarch Ignatius IV, 4th JWG Plenary Session, Saidnaya, Syria, October 2010.

of the important role that young people need to and can play both in the faith communities and in wider society.”⁶

20. In the early church of the second century, Bishop Eleutherios was 22 years of age when he was martyred in Valona Illyria, today Albania. St. Therese of Lisieux, who was canonized by the Catholic Church and officially named as “Doctor of the Church,” was only 24 years old when she died in 1897. These and others are models who demonstrate how the contributions of youth to the Church can be real and substantial.

V. Youth and Christian Unity

“That they may all be one...” (John 17:21)

21. In reflecting on the role of youth in promoting Christian unity, the JWG also invites the churches to develop new ways of engaging young people in the work of ecumenism.

22. As disciples of Christ themselves, youth share in the church’s mission. Young people have played a crucial role in shaping the development of the modern ecumenical movement, and they continue to play a role in the search for the unity willed by Christ for the church in the third millennium.

23. Among the earliest ecumenical institutions, the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) and the Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA) emerged in the mid-nineteenth century, and gathered young men and women together across the lines of the divided churches. The World Student Christian Federation (WSCF), founded in 1895, and the local Student Christian Movement (SCM) similarly gathered university students together. For generations, these organizations provided the training ground for future ecumenical leadership. Under the leadership of John Mott, one of the early pioneers of ecumenism, the WSCF and the English SCM were pivotal in shaping the direction of the 1910 Edinburgh missionary conference into something more ecclesial in nature, which in turn ignited the modern ecumenical movement.

24. In recent years, the Ecumenical Global Gathering for Students and Youth in 1993 sought to continue the role of young people in promoting ecumenism. In early 2000, the Ecumenical Asia Students and Youth Network (EASY Net) was formed to strengthen the ecumenical network and initiatives in the region. On the occasion of the hundredth anniversary of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, global Christian

6. Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit, WCC General Secretary. 27 October 2011. Day of Reflection, Dialogue and Prayer for Peace and Justice in the World. Assisi.

youth organizations were involved in common action with other Christian student and youth organizations at regional and local levels. The World Youth Days, started in 1985 with John Paul II's invitation to Catholic youth "to announce to everyone that only in the death and resurrection of Christ we can find salvation and redemption," also recognizes the role of youth in promoting ecumenism.

25. Today, undeniably, there is increasing interest in and desire to increase youth participation in the life of the Church and the ecumenical movement. Yet at the same time, there may be a growing sense of frustration about the way that churches engage with young people. Thus, we challenge churches to reflect on their perceptions of youth. The way that we understand youth involvement and engagement can reveal a generational gap. At times young people are even seen to be a problem, and they can feel ignored within their churches. At times, they perceive that they are treated with condescension, as an audience, as passive recipients, or as targets, rather than as potential partners. We invite the churches to respond to the call by The Revd Samuel Kobia, former WCC general secretary, to establish a positive perspective on youth:

The time has come, when we must not only open opportunities to young people for their ecumenical growth and leadership, but where we must learn from the innovative and dynamic models of ecumenical relationships that youth can teach us. As an ecumenical and intergenerational family, we need to humble ourselves and to listen to young people. It was with young people that the ecumenical movement was born. It is young people's passion and insight today that will ensure the relevance and vitality of it. Without young people our ecumenical family is incomplete. At this time we need to nurture meaningful relationships and shared leadership between the generations. Young people need to know that they are important partners and that we are open to learning from their ecumenical experience.⁷

26. The WCC-ECHOS Commission on Youth was created in 2007 to encourage young adults to become more active in the life of the churches and the ecumenical movement. We call upon our member churches to consider how, in a similar way, their ecumenical engagement can offer young people the sense that their contribution is heard and valued, and that their ideas and enthusiasms are making a real difference in the work of Christian unity.

7. The Rev. Samuel Kobia, ninth WCC assembly, Porto Alegre, 2006

VI. Dialoguing with Youth

A. Resources for youth: Exploring a new methodology

27. Bearing in mind that the topics of ecumenical reception and the spiritual roots of ecumenism have been the focus of the JWG's ninth mandate, the study about youth has explored ways to seek a deep connection with these wider issues. Our aim has not been to compose a document solely about youth, but also to open a channel of communication with young people through specific resources that can be used in different places and churches.

28. As a starting point, the JWG prepared a six page document titled *Resources for Youth*, to be tested among young people on a worldwide level.⁸The growing awareness of decreasing youth participation in church life in the developed world was an important factor in developing the materials. Youth's believing without belonging is one of the biggest challenges for all churches. The intention of the document was not to carry out a theoretical analysis of the reasons behind this situation, but rather to encourage a dialogue with young people themselves.

29. The three areas explored by the *Resources for Youth* are: 1) believing (faith); 2) belonging to the Church (baptism); and 3) living one's faith (discipleship). Each area was dealt with from three different perspectives: the word of God, the early Christian witnesses, and the church today. There was no intention to create a new catechism, but rather to provide a template that might be used by different churches in various contexts. The resources were prepared with the intention to test them in group encounters or sessions focusing on the three areas. While each encounter would have a formal structure, creativity and fresh insights were encouraged. Different methodologies were put forward (including bibliodrama, brainstorming, story-telling, picture analysis, and film). An evaluation form was provided to obtain feedback.

30. The resource materials were tested among Christian students' groups, parish and congregational groups, as well as in schools. Members of the ECHOS Commission and young leaders from different parts of the world, including America, Asia, Europe and Oceania, also reviewed and tested the materials. The JWG is very grateful for the generous and honest responses received.

8. The resource is available on the website of the WCC: www.oikoumene.org/en/programmes/the-wcc-and-the-ecumenical-movement-in-the-21st-century/youth-in-the-ecumenical-movement.html.

B. Feedback from youth on the resource materials

31. The responses we received addressed a number of issues: the role of faith in the lives of young people; explored what it means to belong to the Christian tradition; considered the role of the Church; and examined the interaction with Christians from different traditions. Even though there was little familiarity with the Church Fathers, the use of these texts did not prove to be a real obstacle. While no particular concern was expressed regarding the content, some respondents, however, expressed difficulty in identifying with certain aspects of different ecclesial traditions.

32. It is important, however, to underline that *Resources for Youth* is intended as a starting point, and that the JWG encourages churches which may like to use this material to develop suitable reflections and emphases suitable for their own Christian traditions. Nevertheless, the youth involved in the consultation considered the resource materials to be useful and interesting tools.

33. While the *Resources for Youth* treated issues, such as faith, conversion and discipleship, that are not commonly associated with young people, the feedback shows a surprising interest in and readiness to speak out about these topics. Naturally, opinions and experiences differed.

C. The role of faith in the life of youth

34. The feedback contained important insights about the significant role that faith plays in the life of young people, and the way that faith provides spiritual support to their overall well-being. The responses we received affirmed that young people find that faith helps them to distinguish between good and evil, gives them guidance in their solitude, and enables them to experience the existence of God. Some young people responded that it would not be possible to exist without faith because it gives them a sense of meaning and purpose, and helps them to overcome obstacles in their lives. Faith was seen by the majority of youth responding as a source of direction, strength, and courage. It was also described as giving a sense of solidarity, confidence, rest and space for protest, compassion and love, comfort, and a way of dealing with life. Some young people believe that they are led to faith by everyday problems and trials; others by Sunday worship, their relationship with other Christian believers or moments of prayer. Some youth feel challenged by how to put faith into practice and wonder whether it is possible to live a Christian life in the professional workplace.

D. The role of the church

35. While faith was identified as a very important issue in many young people's lives, the question of the relevance of church membership for youth provides much thought for reflection. For many of our respondents, the recognition of the importance of faith did not entail automatically becoming active in a church. Some young people expressed eagerness to be part of the Christian tradition, while others felt they could live their Christian faith without the church.

36. While some young people do not believe that the church has a significant role to play in nurturing their faith, others appreciated the pastoral care offered by the church at various levels. Some expressed regret that they do not receive enough support from the Christian community. Nonetheless, the church appears to be a constant reminder of questions of faith even to those who do not practice their faith regularly.

37. In a relativistic world, it can be difficult for youth to understand where truth lies, not only in matters of ethics and universal values, but also in other matters of faith and beliefs. This is particularly complicated in the pluralistic setting in which all our churches live. Some question the authority and the moral teaching of church leaders. The responses we received generally affirmed, however, that the church is called upon and expected to play an active role in modern society.

E. Ecumenical awareness of youth

38. The feedback shows that while young people are very open to interaction with the various Christian traditions, in general there is little awareness of ecumenism in the wider life of the church, or of the role that young people can play in this area. Therefore, the JWG believes it is important for churches to consider how they can involve young people more in their ecumenical strategies, so that they move from a merely peaceful coexistence with other Christians to a conscious effort to promote Christian unity.

VII. Working with Youth—Recommendations

39. We recognize that each new generation of Christians inherits the burden of past divisions. We invite our parent bodies to promote initiatives seeking to build cooperation and exchange among young people from different churches. The JWG wishes to highlight four areas in particular in which the parent bodies might wish to concentrate their

efforts and pursue common initiatives to encourage youth involvement in the ecumenical movement: collaboration, formation, participation and advocacy.

A. Collaboration

- We invite churches to develop clearly directed and purposeful cooperation with existing Christian youth networks on a regular basis. Although institutional support for specific events is much appreciated, it is just as important to establish partnerships with existing bodies for ecumenical work.

- We commend the ECHOS commission on youth as a useful instrument for developing ecumenism in the 21st century. In doing so, we are aware that ECHOS must include representation of regional and international ecumenical youth networks.

- We encourage an emphasis on the ecumenical dimension in the context of youth events. International youth gatherings also could provide a fruitful opportunity for a common ecumenical commitment. In this context, it is worth mentioning the ecumenical event that was jointly organized by the International Young Catholic Students (IYCS) in collaboration with ECHOS during the World Youth Day (WYD) in Madrid, 2011. It also is important to repeat such experiences at a local level.

B. Formation

- We encourage churches to provide suitable ecumenical educators and to develop resource materials for the ecumenical formation of young people.

- We recommend prayerful reading of the sacred scriptures in common as well as the opportunity to discover afresh the Christian witness of the first centuries, helping young people to develop a sense of belonging to the body of Christ.

- We call the churches to evaluate and renew themselves through the lens of the critique offered by young people.

C. Participation

- We recommend that churches invite Christian youth networks to adapt, plan and implement the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity at the local level on a regular basis. In the area of spiritual ecumenism, in particular, the challenge is to make use of the creativity and contribution of new generations.

- We encourage opportunities for networking between Christian movements at all levels, from the grassroots to the global, and for building friendships with Christians of other traditions.

D. Advocacy

- We urge parent bodies to exercise common advocacy on youth issues such as education and employment; and to enable youth to be agents of peace and justice.

40. We entrust this reflection to the churches in their efforts to promote Christian unity. It is an ardent appeal that reflects the aspiration of the young people of our churches, who long for meaning in their lives. We are convinced that a personal encounter with Jesus Christ will enable them to say: “Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life” (John 6:68).

