World Council of Churches

TOGETHER TOWARDS LIFE: MISSION AND EVANGELISM IN CHANGING LANDSCAPES

A New WCC Affirmation on Mission and Evangelism

The Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME) has, since the WCC Porto Alegre Assembly in 2006, been working and contributing toward the construction of a new ecumenical mission affirmation. The new statement will be presented to the WCC 10th assembly at Busan, Korea, in 2013. Since the integration of the International Missionary Council (IMC) and the World Council of Churches (WCC) in New Delhi, 1961, there has been only one official WCC position statement on mission and evangelism which was approved by the central committee in 1982, "Mission and Evangelism: An Ecumenical Affirmation." This new mission affirmation has been unanimously approved by the WCC central committee held in Crete, Greece on 5th of September 2012. It is the aim of this ecumenical discernment to seek vision, concepts and directions for a renewed understanding and practice of mission and evangelism in changing landscapes. It seeks a broad appeal, even wider than WCC member churches and affiliated mission bodies, so that we can commit ourselves together to fullness of life for all, led by the God of Life!

TOGETHER TOWARDS LIFE: INTRODUCING THE THEME

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

2. Mission begins in the heart of the Triune God and the love which binds together the Holy Trinity overflows to all humanity and creation. The missionary God who sent the Son to the world calls all God's people (John 20:21), and empowers them to be a community of hope. The church is commissioned to celebrate life, and to resist and transform all life-destroying forces, in the power of the Holy Spirit. How important it is to "receive the Holy Spirit" (John 20:22) to become living witnesses to the coming reign of God! From a renewed appreciation of the mission of the Spirit, how do we re-envision God's mission in a changing and diverse world today?

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

4. God did not send the Son for the salvation of humanity alone or give us a partial salvation. Rather the gospel is the good news for every part of creation and every aspect of our life and society. It is, therefore, vital to recognize God's mission in a cosmic sense, and to affirm all life, the whole

oikoumene, as being interconnected in God's web of life. As threats to the future of our planet are evident, what are their implications for our participation in God's mission?

5. The history of Christian mission has been characterized by conceptions of geographical expansion from a Christian centre to the "un-reached territories", to the ends of the earth. But today we are facing a radically changing ecclesial landscape described as "world Christianity" where the majority of Christians are either living, or have their origins in the global South and East.[2] Migration has become a worldwide, multi-directional phenomenon which is re-shaping the Christian landscape. The emergence of strong Pentecostal and charismatic movements from different localities is one of the most noteworthy characteristics of world Christianity today. What are the insights for mission and evangelism – theologies, agendas and practices – of this "shift of the centre of gravity of Christianity"?

6. Mission has been understood as a movement taking place from the centre to the periphery, and from the privileged to the marginalized of society. Now people at the margins are claiming their key role as agents of mission and affirming mission as transformation. This reversal of roles in terms of envisioning mission has strong biblical foundations because God chose the poor, the foolish and the powerless (1 Corinthians 1:18-31) to further God's mission of justice and peace so that life may flourish. If there is a shift of the mission concept from "mission *to* the margins" to "mission *from* the margins", what then is the distinctive contribution of the people from the margins? And why are their experiences and visions crucial for re-imagining mission and evangelism today?

7. We are living in a world in which faith in mammon threatens the credibility of the gospel. Market ideology is spreading the propaganda that the global market will save the world through unlimited growth. This myth is a threat not only to economic life but also to the spiritual life of people, and not only to humanity but also to the whole creation. How can we proclaim the good news and values of God's kingdom in the global market, or win over the spirit of the market? What kind of missional action can the church take in the midst of economic and ecological injustice and crisis on a global scale?

8. All Christians, churches and congregations are called to be vibrant messengers of the gospel of Jesus Christ, which is the good news of salvation. Evangelism is a confident but humble sharing of our faith and conviction with other people. Such sharing is a gift to others which announces the love, grace and mercy of God in Christ. It is the inevitable fruit of genuine faith. Therefore, in each generation, the church must renew its commitment to evangelism as an essential part of the way we convey God's love to the world. How can we proclaim God's love and justice to a generation living in an individualized, secularized and materialized world?

9. The church lives in multi-religious and multi-cultural contexts and new communication technology is also bringing the people of the world into a greater awareness of one another's identities and pursuits. Locally and globally Christians are engaged with people of other religions and cultures in building societies of love, peace and justice. Plurality is a challenge to the churches and serious commitment to inter-faith dialogue and cross-cultural communication is therefore indispensable. What are the ecumenical convictions regarding common witnessing and practising life-giving mission in a world of many religions and cultures?

10. The church is a gift of God to the world for its transformation towards the kingdom of God. Its mission is to bring new life and announce the loving presence of God in our world. We must participate in God's mission in unity, overcoming the divisions and tensions that exist among us, so that the world may believe and all may be one (John 17:21). The church, as the communion of Christ's disciples, must become an inclusive community and exists to bring healing and reconciliation to the world. How can the church renew herself to be missional and move forward together towards life in its fullness?

11. This statement highlights some key developments in understanding the mission of the Holy Spirit within the mission of the Triune God (*missio Dei*) which have emerged through the work of CWME. It does so under four main headings:

- Spirit of Mission: Breath of Life
- Spirit of Liberation: Mission from the Margins
- Spirit of Community: Church on the Move
- Spirit of Pentecost: Good News for All

Reflection on such perspectives enables us to embrace dynamism, justice, diversity and transformation as key concepts of mission in changing landscapes today. In response to the questions posed above, we conclude with ten affirmations for mission and evangelism today.

SPIRIT OF MISSION: BREATH OF LIFE

The Mission of the Spirit

12. God's Spirit – *ru'ach* – moved over the waters at the beginning (Genesis 1:2), being the source of life and the breath of humankind (Genesis 2:7). In the Hebrew Bible, the Spirit led the people of God – inspiring wisdom (Proverbs 8), empowering prophecy (Isaiah 61:1), stirring life from dry bones (Ezekiel 37), prompting dreams (Joel 2) and bringing renewal as the glory of the Lord in the temple (2 Chronicles 7:1).

13. The same Spirit of God, which "swept over the face of the waters" in creation, descended on Mary (Luke 1:35) and brought forth Jesus. It was the Holy Spirit who empowered Jesus at his baptism (Mark 1:10) and commissioned him for his mission (Luke 4:14, 18). Jesus Christ, full of the Spirit of God, died on the cross. He gave up the spirit (John 19:30). In death, in the coldness of the tomb, by the power of the Holy Spirit he was raised to life, the firstborn from the dead (Romans 8:11).

14. After his resurrection, Jesus Christ appeared to his community and sent his disciples in mission: "As the Father has sent me, so I send you" (John 20:21-22). By the gift of the Holy Spirit, "the power from on high", they were formed into a new community of witness to the hope in Christ (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8). In the Spirit of unity, the early church lived together and shared her goods among her members (Acts 2:44-45).

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

16. Biblical witness attests to a variety of understandings of the role of the Holy Spirit in mission. One perspective of the role of the Holy Spirit in mission emphasizes the Holy Spirit as fully dependent on Christ, the Paraclete and the one who will come as Counsellor and Advocate only after Christ has gone to the Father. The Holy Spirit is seen as the continuing presence of Christ, his agent to fulfil the task of mission. This understanding leads to a missiology focusing on sending out and going forth. Therefore, a pneumatological focus on Christian mission recognises that mission is essentially christologically based and relates the work of the Holy Spirit to the salvation through Jesus Christ.

17. Another perspective emphasizes that the Holy Spirit is the "Spirit of Truth" that leads us to the "whole truth" (John 16:13) and blows wherever he/she wills (John 3:8), thus embracing the whole of the cosmos, therefore proclaiming the Holy Spirit as the source of Christ, and the church as the eschatological coming together (*synaxis*) of the people of God in God's kingdom. The second perspective posits that the faithful go forth in peace (in mission) after they have experienced in their eucharistic gathering the eschatological kingdom of God as a glimpse and foretaste of it. Mission as going forth is thus the outcome, rather than the origin of the church, and is called "liturgy after the liturgy".[3]

18. What is clear is that by the Spirit we participate in the mission of love that is at the heart of the life of the Trinity. This results in Christian witness which unceasingly proclaims the salvific power of God through Jesus Christ and constantly affirms God's dynamic involvement, through the Holy Spirit, in the whole created world. All who respond to the outpouring of the love of God are invited to join in with the Spirit in the mission of God.

Mission and the Flourishing of Creation

19. Mission is the overflow of the infinite love of the Triune God. God's mission begins with the act of creation. Creation's life and God's life are entwined. The mission of God's Spirit encompasses us all in an ever-giving act of grace. We are therefore called to move beyond a narrowly human-centred approach and to embrace forms of mission which express our reconciled relationship with all created life. We hear the cry of the earth as we listen to the cries of the poor and we know that from its beginning the earth has cried out to God over humanity's injustice (Genesis 4:10).

20. Mission with creation at its heart is already a positive movement in our churches through campaigns for eco-justice and more sustainable lifestyles and the development of spiritualities that are respectful of the earth. However, we have sometimes forgotten that the whole of creation is included in the reconciled unity towards which we are all called (2 Corinthians 5:18-19). We do not believe that the earth is to be discarded and only souls saved; both the earth and our bodies have to be transformed through the Spirit's grace. As the vision of Isaiah and John's revelation testify, heaven and earth will be made new (Isaiah 11:1-9; 25:6-10; 66:22; Revelation 21:1-4).

21. Our participation in mission, our being in creation and our practice of the life of the Spirit need to be woven together for they are mutually transformative. We ought not to seek the one without the others. If we do, we will lapse into an individualistic spirituality that leads us to falsely believe we can belong to God without belonging to our neighbour and we will fall into a spirituality that simply makes us feel good while other parts of creation hurt and yearn.

22. We need a new conversion (*metanoia*) in our mission, which invites a new humility in regard to the mission of God's Spirit. We tend to understand and practise mission as something done by humanity *to* others. Instead, humans can participate in communion *with* all of creation in celebrating the work of the Creator. In many ways creation is in mission to humanity, for instance the natural world has a power that can heal the human heart and body. The wisdom literature affirms creation's praise of its Creator (Psalm 19:1-4; 66:1; 96:11-13; 98:4; 100:1; 150:6). The Creator's joy and wonder in creation is one of the sources of our spirituality (Job 38–39).

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

Spiritual Gifts and Discernment

24. The Holy Spirit gives gifts freely and impartially (1 Corinthians 12:8-10; Romans 12:6-8; Ephesians 4:11) which are to be shared for the building up of others (1 Corinthians 12:7; 14:26) and the reconciliation of the whole creation (Romans 8:19-23). One of the gifts of the Spirit is discernment of spirits (1 Corinthians 12:10). We discern the Spirit of God wherever life in its fullness is affirmed and in all its dimensions, including liberation of the oppressed, healing and reconciliation of broken communities and the restoration of the creation. We also discern evil spirits wherever forces of death and destruction of life prevail.

25. The early Christians, like many today, experienced a world of many spirits. The New Testament witnesses to diverse spirits, including evil spirits, "ministering spirits" (i.e. angels, Hebrews 1:14), "principalities" and "powers" (Ephesians 6:12), the beast (Revelation 13:1-7) and other powers – both good and evil. The apostle Paul also testifies to some spiritual struggle (Ephesians 6:10-18; 2 Corinthians 10:4-6) and the injunction to resist the devil (James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:8). The churches are called to discern the work of the life-giving Spirit sent into the world and to join with the Holy Spirit in bringing about God's reign of justice (Acts 1:6-8). When we have discerned the Holy Spirit's presence, we are called to respond, recognizing that God's Spirit is often subversive, leading us beyond boundaries and surprising us.

26. Our encounter with the Triune God is inward, personal, and communal but also directs us outward in missionary endeavour. The traditional symbols and titles for the Spirit (such as fire, light, dew, fountain, anointing, healing, melting, warming, solace, comfort, strength, rest, washing, shining) show that the Spirit is familiar with our lives and connected with all the aspects of relationship, life and creation with which mission is concerned. We are led by the Spirit into various situations and moments, into meeting points with others, into spaces of encounter and into critical locations of human struggle.

27. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of wisdom (Isaiah 11:3; Ephesians 1:17) and guides into all truth (John 16:13). The Spirit inspires human cultures and creativity, so it is part of our mission to acknowledge, respect and cooperate with life-giving wisdoms in every culture and context. We regret that mission activity linked with colonization has often denigrated cultures and failed to recognize the wisdom of local people. Local wisdom and culture which is life-affirming is a gift from God's Spirit. We lift up testimonies of peoples whose traditions have been scorned and mocked by theologians and scientists, yet their wisdom offers us the vital and sometimes new orientation that can connect us again with the life of the Spirit in creation, which helps us to consider the ways in which God is revealed in creation.

28. The claim that the Spirit is with us is not for us to make, but for others to recognize in the life that we lead. The apostle Paul expresses this by encouraging the church to bear the fruits of the Spirit which entail love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, self-control (Galatians 5:23). As we bear these fruits, we hope others will discern the love and power of the Spirit at work.

Transformative Spirituality

29. Authentic Christian witness is not only in *what* we do in mission but *how* we live out our mission. The church in mission can only be sustained by spiritualities deeply rooted in the Trinity's communion of love. Spirituality gives our lives their deepest meaning. It stimulates, motivates and gives dynamism to life's journey. It is energy for life in its fullness and calls for a commitment to resist all forces, powers and systems which deny, destroy and reduce life.

30. Mission spirituality is always transformative. Mission spirituality resists and seeks to transform all life-destroying values and systems wherever these are at work in our economies, our politics, and even our churches. "Our faithfulness to God and God's free gift of life compels us to confront idolatrous assumptions, unjust systems, politics of domination and exploitation in our current world economic order. Economics and economic justice are always matters of faith as they touch the very core of God's will for creation".[4] Mission spirituality motivates us to serve God's economy of life, not mammon, to share life at God's table rather than satisfy individual greed, to pursue change to a better world while challenging the self-interest of the powerful who desire to maintain the status quo.

31. Jesus has told us, "You cannot serve God and mammon" (Matthew 6:24, KJV). The policy of unlimited growth through the domination of the global free market is an ideology that claims to be without alternative, demanding an endless flow of sacrifices from the poor and from nature. "It makes the false promise that it can save the world through creation of wealth and prosperity, claiming sovereignty over life and demanding total allegiance which amounts to idolatry".[5] This is a global system of mammon

that protects the unlimited growth of wealth of only the rich and powerful through endless exploitation. This tower of greed is threatening the whole household of God. The reign of God is in direct opposition to the empire of mammon.

32. Transformation can be understood in the light of the Paschal mystery: "If we have died with Christ, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him" (2 Timothy 2:11-12). In situations of oppression, discrimination and hurt, the cross of Christ is the power of God for salvation (1 Corinthians 1:18). Even in our time, some have paid with their lives for their Christian witness, reminding us all of the cost of discipleship. The Spirit gives Christians courage to live out their convictions, even in the face of persecution and martyrdom.

33. The cross calls for repentance in light of misuse of power and use of the wrong kind of power in mission and in the church. "Disturbed by the asymmetries and imbalances of power that divide and trouble us in church and world, we are called to repentance, to critical reflection on systems of power, and to accountable use of power structures." [6] The Spirit empowers the powerless and challenges the powerful to empty themselves of their privileges for the sake of the disempowered.

34. Experiencing life in the Spirit is to taste life in its fullness. We are called to witness to a movement towards life, celebrating all that the Spirit continues to call into being, walking in solidarity in order to cross the rivers of despair and anxiety (Psalm 23, Isaiah 43:1-5). Mission provokes in us a renewed awareness that the Holy Spirit meets us and challenges us at all levels of life, and brings newness and change to the places and times of our personal and collective journeys.

35. The Holy Spirit is present with us as companion, yet never domesticated or "tame". Among the surprises of the Spirit are the ways in which God works from locations which appear to be on the margins and through people who appear to be excluded.

SPIRIT OF LIBERATION: MISSION FROM THE MARGINS

36. God's purpose for the world is not to create another world, but to re-create what God has already created in love and wisdom. Jesus began his ministry by claiming that to be filled by the Spirit is to liberate the oppressed, to open eyes that are blind, and to announce the coming of God's reign (Luke 4:16-18). He went about fulfilling this mission by opting to be with the marginalized people of his time, not out of paternalistic charity but because their situations testified to the sinfulness of the world, and their yearnings for life pointed to God's purposes.

37. Jesus Christ relates to and embraces those who are most marginalized in society, in order to confront and transform all that denies life. This includes cultures and systems which generate and sustain massive poverty, discrimination and dehumanization, and that exploit or destroy people and the earth. Mission from the margins calls for an understanding of the complexities of power dynamics, global systems and structures, and local contextual realities. Christian mission has at times been understood and practised in ways which failed to recognize God's alignment with those consistently pushed to the margins. Therefore, mission from the margins invites the church to re-imagine mission as a vocation from God's Spirit who works for a world where the fullness of life is available for all.

Why Margins and Marginalization?

38. Mission from the margins seeks to counteract injustices in life, church, and mission. It seeks to be an alternative missional movement against the perception that mission can only be done by the powerful to the powerless, by the rich to the poor, or by the privileged to the marginalized. Such approaches can contribute to oppression and marginalization. Mission from the margins recognizes that being in the centre means having access to systems that lead to one's rights, freedom and individuality being affirmed and respected; living in the margins means exclusion from justice and dignity. Living on the margins, however, can provide its own lessons. People on the margins have agency, and can often see

what, from the centre, is out of view. People on the margins, living in vulnerable positions, often know what exclusionary forces are threatening their survival and can best discern the urgency of their struggles; people in positions of privilege have much to learn from the daily struggles of people living in marginal conditions.

39. Marginalized people have God-given gifts that are under-utilized because of disempowerment, and denial of access to opportunities and/or justice. Through struggles in and for life, marginalized people are reservoirs of the active hope, collective resistance, and perseverance that are needed to remain faithful to the promised reign of God.

40. Because the context of missional activity influences its scope and character, the social location of all engaged in mission work must be taken into account. Missiological reflections need to recognize the different value orientations that shape missional perspectives. The aim of mission is not simply to move people from the margins to centres of power but to confront those who remain the centre by keeping people on the margins. Instead, churches are called to *transform* power structures.

41. The dominant expressions of mission, in the past and today, have often been directed *at* people on the margins of societies. These have generally viewed those on the margins as recipients and not active agents of missionary activity. Mission expressed in this way has too often been complicit with oppressive and life-denying systems. It has generally aligned with the privileges of the centre and largely failed to challenge economic, social, cultural and political systems which have marginalized some peoples. Mission from the centre is motivated by an attitude of paternalism and a superiority complex. Historically, this has equated Christianity with Western culture and resulted in adverse consequences, including the denial of the full personhood of the victims of such marginalization.

42. A major common concern of people from the margins is the failure of societies, cultures, civilizations, nations and even churches to honour the dignity and worth of *all* persons. Injustice is at the roots of the inequalities that give rise to marginalization and oppression. God's desire for justice is inextricably linked to God's nature and sovereignty: "For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords....who executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and who also loves the strangers, providing them food and clothing" (Deuteronomy 10:17-18). All missional activity must, therefore, safeguard the sacred worth of every human being and of the earth (cf. Isaiah 58).

Mission as Struggle and Resistance

43. The affirmation of God's mission (*missio Dei*) points to the belief in God as One who acts in history and in creation, in concrete realities of time and contexts, who seeks the fullness of life for the whole earth through justice, peace and reconciliation. Participation in God's ongoing work of liberation and reconciliation by the Holy Spirit, therefore, includes discerning and unmasking the demons that exploit and enslave. For example, this involves deconstructing patriarchal ideologies, upholding the right to self-determination for Indigenous peoples, and challenging the social embeddedness of racism and casteism.

44. The church's hope is rooted in the promised fulfilment of the reign of God. It entails the restoration of right relationships between God and humanity and all of creation. Even though this vision speaks to an eschatological reality, it deeply energizes and informs our current participation in God's salvific work in this penultimate period.

45. Participation in God's mission follows the way of Jesus, who came to serve, not to be served (Mark 10:45); who tears down the mighty and powerful and exalts the lowly (Luke 1:46-55); and whose love is characterized by mutuality, reciprocity and interdependence. It, therefore, requires a commitment to struggle and resist the powers that obstruct the fullness of life that God wills for all, and a willingness to work with all people involved in movements and initiatives committed to the causes of justice, dignity and life.

Mission Seeking Justice and Inclusivity

46. The good news of God's reign is about the promise of the actualization of a just and inclusive world. Inclusivity fosters just relationships in the community of humanity and creation, with mutual acknowledgement of persons and creation, and mutual respect and sustenance of each one's sacred worth. It also facilitates each one's full participation in the life of the community. Baptism in Christ implies a lifelong commitment to give an account of this hope by overcoming the barriers in order to find a common identity under the sovereignty of God (Galatians 3:27-28). Therefore, discrimination of all types against any human being is unacceptable in the sight of God.

47. Jesus promises that the last shall be first (Matthew 20:16). To the extent that the church practises radical hospitality to the estranged in society, it demonstrates commitment to embodying the values of the reign of God (Isaiah 58:6). To the extent that it denounces self-centredness as a way of life, it makes space for the reign of God to permeate human existence. To the extent that it renounces violence in its physical, psychological and spiritual manifestations both in personal interactions and in the economic, political, social systems, it testifies to the reign of God at work in the world.

48. In reality, however, mission, money and political power are strategic partners. Although our theological and missiological talk says a lot about the mission of the church being in solidarity with the poor, sometimes in practice it is much more concerned with being in the centres of power, eating with the rich and lobbying for money to maintain ecclesial bureaucracy. This poses particular challenges to reflect on what is the good news for people who are privileged and powerful.

49. The church is called to make present God's holy and life-affirming plan for the world revealed in Jesus Christ. It means rejecting values and practices which lead to the destruction of community. Christians are called to acknowledge the sinful nature of all forms of discrimination and transform unjust structures. This call places certain expectations on the church. It must refuse to harbour oppressive forces within its ranks, acting instead as a counter-cultural community. The biblical mandate to the covenant community in both testaments is characterized by the dictum, "It shall not be so among you" (Matthew 20:26, KJV).

Mission as Healing and Wholeness

50. Actions towards healing and wholeness of life of persons and communities are an important expression of mission. Healing was not only a central feature of Jesus' ministry but also a feature of his call to his followers to continue his work (Matthew 10:1). Healing is also one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:9; Acts 3). The Spirit empowers the church for a life-nurturing mission, which includes prayer, pastoral care, and professional health care on the one hand, and prophetic denunciation of the root causes of suffering, transforming structures that dispense injustice and the pursuit of scientific research on the other.

51. Health is more than physical and/or mental well-being, and healing is not primarily medical. This understanding of health coheres with the biblical-theological tradition of the church, which sees a human being as a multidimensional unity, and the body, soul and mind as interrelated and interdependent. It thus affirms the social, political and ecological dimensions of personhood and wholeness. Health, in the sense of wholeness, is a condition related to God's promise for the end of time, as well as a real possibility in the present.[7] Wholeness is not a static balance of harmony but rather involves living-in-community with God, people and creation. Individualism and injustice are barriers to community building, and therefore to wholeness. Discrimination on grounds of medical conditions or disability – including HIV and AIDS – is contrary to the teaching of Jesus Christ. When all the parts of our individual and corporate lives that have been left out are included, and wherever the neglected or marginalized are brought together in love, such that wholeness is experienced, we may discern signs of God's reign on earth.

52. Societies have tended to see disability or illness as a manifestation of sin or a medical problem to be solved. The medical model has emphasized the correction or cure of what is assumed to be the "deficiency" in the individual. Many who are marginalized, however, do not see themselves as "deficient" or "sick". The Bible recounts many instances where Jesus healed people with various infirmities but, equally importantly, he restored people to their rightful places within the fabric of the community. Healing is more about the restoration of wholeness than about correcting something perceived as defective. To become whole, the parts that have become estranged need to be reclaimed. The fixation on cure is thus a perspective that must be overcome in order to promote the biblical focus. Mission should foster the full participation of people with disabilities and illness in the life of the church and society.

53. Christian medical mission aims at achieving health for all, in the sense that all people around the globe will have access to quality health care. There are many ways in which churches can be, and are, involved in health and healing in a comprehensive sense. They create or support clinics and mission hospitals; they offer counselling services, care groups and health programmes; local churches can create groups to visit sick congregation members. Healing processes could include praying with and for the sick, confession and forgiveness, the laying-on of hands, anointing with oil, and the use of charismatic spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12). But it must also be noted that inappropriate forms of Christian worship, including triumphalistic healing services in which the healer is glorified at the expense of God, and where false expectations are raised, can deeply harm people. This is not to deny God's miraculous intervention of healing in some cases.

54. As a community of imperfect people, and as part of a creation groaning in pain and longing for its liberation, the Christian community can be a sign of hope, and an expression of the kingdom of God here on earth (Romans 8:22-24). The Holy Spirit works for justice and healing in many ways and is pleased to indwell the particular community which is called to embody Christ's mission.

SPIRIT OF COMMUNITY: CHURCH ON THE MOVE

God's Mission and the Life of the Church

55. The life of the church arises from the love of the Triune God. "God is love" (1 John 4:8). Mission is a response to God's urging love shown in creation and redemption. "God's love invites us" (*Caritas Christi urget nos*). This communion (*koinonia*) opens our hearts and lives to our brothers and sisters in the same movement of sharing God's love (2 Corinthians 5:18-21). Living in that love of God, the church is called to become good news for all. The Triune God's overflowing sharing of love is the source of all mission and evangelism.

56. God's love, manifest in the Holy Spirit, is an inspirational gift to all humanity "in all times and places"[8] and for all cultures and situations. The powerful presence of the Holy Spirit, revealed in Jesus Christ, the crucified and risen Lord, initiates us into the fullness of life that is God's gift to each one of us. Through Christ in the Holy Spirit, God indwells the church, revealing God's purposes for the world, and empowering and enabling its members to participate in the realization of those purposes.

57. The church in history has not always existed but, both theologically and empirically, came into being for the sake of mission. It is not possible to separate church and mission in terms of their origin or purpose. To fulfil God's missionary purpose is the church's aim. The relationship between church and mission is very intimate because the same Spirit of Christ who empowers the church in mission is also the life of the church. At the same time as he sent the church into the world, Jesus Christ breathed the Holy Spirit into the church (John 20:19-23). Therefore, the church exists by mission, just as fire exists by burning. If it does not engage in mission, it ceases to be church.

58. Starting with God's mission leads to an ecclesiological approach "from below". In this perspective it is not the church that has a mission but rather the mission that has a church. Mission is not a project of expanding churches but of the church embodying God's salvation in this world. Out of this follows a dynamic understanding of the apostolicity of the church: apostolicity is not only safeguarding the faith of the church through the ages but also participating in the apostolate. Thus the churches mainly and foremost need to be missionary churches.

God's Mission and the Church's Unity

59. Living out our faith in community is an important way of participating in mission. Through baptism, we become sisters and brothers belonging together in Christ (Hebrews 10:25). The church is called to be an inclusive community that welcomes all. Through word and deed and in its very being, the church foretastes and witnesses to the vision of the coming reign of God. The church is the *coming together* of the faithful and their *going forth* in peace.

60. Practically, as well as theologically, mission and unity belong together. In this regard, the integration in 1961 of IMC and WCC was a significant step. This historical experience encourages us to believe that mission and church can come together. This aim, however, is not yet fully accomplished. We have to continue this journey in our century with fresh attempts so that the church becomes truly missionary.

61. The churches realize today that in many respects they are still not adequate embodiments of God's mission. Sometimes, a sense of separation of mission and church still prevails. The lack of full and real unity in mission still harms the authenticity and credibility of the fulfilment of God's mission in this world. Our Lord prayed "that they may all be one...so that the world may believe" (John 17:21). Thus mission and unity are intertwined. Consequently there is the need to open up our reflections on church and unity to an even wider understanding of unity: the unity of humanity and even the cosmic unity of the whole of God's creation.

62. The highly competitive environment of the free market economy has unfortunately influenced some churches and para-church movements to seek to be "winners" over others. This can even lead to the adoption of aggressive tactics to persuade Christians who already belong to a church to change their denominational allegiance. Seeking numerical growth at all costs is incompatible with the respect for others required of Christian disciples. Jesus became our Christ not through power or money but through his self-emptying (*kenosis*) and death on the cross. This humble understanding of mission does not merely shape our methods, but is the very nature and essence of our faith in Christ. The church is a servant in God's mission and not the master. The missionary church glorifies God in self-emptying love.

63. The Christian communities in their diversity are called to identify and practise ways of common witness in a spirit of partnership and cooperation, including through mutually respectful and responsible forms of evangelism. Common witness is what the "churches, even while separated, bear together, especially through joint efforts, by manifesting whatever divine gifts of truth and life they already share and experience in common."[9]

64. The missionary nature of the church also means that there must be a way that churches and para-church structures can be more closely related. The integration of IMC and WCC brought about a new framework for consideration of church unity and mission. While discussions of unity have been very concerned with structural questions, mission agencies can represent flexibility and subsidiarity in mission. While para-church movements can find accountability and direction through ecclesial mooring, para-church structures can help churches not to forget their dynamic apostolic character.

65. The CWME, the direct heir of Edinburgh 1910's initiatives on cooperation and unity, provides a structure for churches and mission agencies to seek ways of expressing and strengthening unity in mission. Being an integral part of the WCC, the CWME has been able to encounter new understandings of mission and unity from Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican, Protestant, Evangelical, Pentecostal and

Indigenous churches from all over the globe. In particular, the context of the WCC has facilitated close working relationships with the Roman Catholic Church. A growing intensity of collaboration with Evangelicals, especially with the Lausanne Movement for World Evangelization and the World Evangelical Alliance, has also abundantly contributed to the enrichment of ecumenical theological reflection on mission in unity. Together we share a common concern that the whole church should witness to the whole gospel in the whole world.[10]

66. The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of unity, unites people and churches too, to celebrate unity in diversity both proactively and constructively. The Spirit provides both the dynamic context and the resources needed for people to explore differences in a safe, positive and nurturing environment in order to grow into an inclusive and mutually responsible community.

God Empowers the Church in Mission

67. Through Christ in the Holy Spirit, God indwells the church, empowering and energizing its members. Thus mission becomes for Christians an urgent inner compulsion (1 Corinthians 9:16), even a test and criterion for authentic life in Christ, rooted in the profound demands of Christ's love, to invite others to share in the fullness of life Jesus came to bring. Participating in God's mission, therefore, should be natural for all Christians and all churches, not only for particular individuals or specialized groups.[11]

68. What makes the Christian message of God's abundant love for humanity and all creation credible is our ability to speak with one voice, where possible, and to give common witness and an account of the hope that is in us (1 Peter 3:15). The churches have therefore produced a rich array of common declarations, some of them resulting in uniting or united churches, and of dialogues, seeking to restore the unity of all Christians in one living organism of healing and reconciliation. A rediscovery of the work of the Holy Spirit in healing and reconciliation, which is at the heart of today's mission theology, has significant ecumenical implications.[12]

69. While acknowledging the great importance of "visible" unity among churches, nonetheless unity need not be sought only at the level of organizational structures. From a mission perspective, it is important to discern what helps the cause of God's mission. In other words, unity in mission is the basis for the visible unity of the churches which also has implications for the order of the church. Attempts to achieve unity must be in concert with the biblical call to seek justice. Our call to do justice may sometimes involve breaking false unities that silence and oppress. Genuine unity always entails inclusivity and respect for others.

70. Today's context of large-scale worldwide migration challenges the churches' commitment to unity in very practical ways. We are told: "Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it." (Hebrews 13:2, NIV). Churches can be a place of refuge for migrant communities; they can also be intentional focal points for inter-cultural engagement.[13] The churches are called to be one to serve God's mission beyond ethnic and cultural boundaries and ought to create multi-cultural ministry and mission as a concrete expression of common witness in diversity. This may entail advocating justice in regard to migration policies and resistance to xenophobia and racism. Women, children, and undocumented workers are often the most vulnerable among migrants in all contexts. But, women are also often at the cutting edge of new migrant ministries.

71. God's hospitality calls us to move beyond binary notions of culturally dominant groups as hosts, and migrant and minority peoples as guests. Instead, in God's hospitality, God is host and we are all invited by the Spirit to participate with humility and mutuality in God's mission.

Local Congregations: New Initiatives

72. While cherishing the unity of the Spirit in the one Church, it is also important to honour the ways in which each local congregation is led by the Spirit to respond to their own contextual realities. Today's

changed world calls for local congregations to take new initiatives. For example, in the secularizing global north, new forms of contextual mission, such as "new monasticism", "emerging church", and "fresh expressions", have re-defined and re-vitalized churches. Exploring contextual ways of being church can be particularly relevant to young people. Some churches in the global north now meet in pubs, coffee houses, or converted movie theatres. Engaging with church life online is an attractive option for young people thinking in a non-linear, visual, and experiential way.

73. Like the early church in the Book of Acts, local congregations have the privilege of forming a community marked by the presence of the risen Christ. For many people, acceptance or refusal to become members of the church is linked to their positive or negative experience with a local congregation, which can be either a stumbling block or an agent of transformation.[14] Therefore, it is vital that local congregations are constantly renewed and inspired by the Spirit of mission. Local congregations are frontiers and primary agents of mission.

74. Worship and the Sacraments play a crucial role in the formation of transformative spirituality and mission. Reading the Bible contextually is also a primary resource in enabling local congregations to be messengers and witnesses to God's justice and love. Liturgy in the sanctuary only has full integrity when we live out God's mission in our communities in our daily life. Local congregations are therefore impelled to step out of their comfort zones and cross boundaries for the sake of the mission of God.

75. More than ever before, local congregations today can play a key role in emphasizing the crossing of cultural and racial boundaries, and affirming cultural difference as a gift of the Spirit. Rather than being perceived as a problem, migration can be seen as offering new possibilities for churches to re-discover themselves afresh. It inspires opportunities for the creation of intercultural and multicultural churches at local level. All churches can create space for different cultural communities to come together; and embrace exciting opportunities for contextual expressions of intercultural mission in our time.

76. Local congregations can also, as never before, develop global connections. Many inspirational and transformative linkages are being formed between churches that are geographically far apart and located in very different contexts. These offer innovative possibilities but are not without pitfalls. The increasingly popular short-term "mission trips" can help to build partnerships between churches in different parts of the world but in some cases place an intolerable burden on poor local churches, or disregard the existing churches altogether. While there is some danger and caution around such trips, these exposure opportunities in diverse cultural and socio-economic contexts can also lead to long-term change when the traveller returns to their home community. The challenge is to find ways of exercising spiritual gifts which build up the whole church in every part (1 Corinthians 12-14).

77. Advocacy for justice is no longer the sole prerogative of national assemblies and central offices but a form of witness which calls for the engagement of local churches. For example, the WCC Decade to Overcome Violence (2001-2011) concluded with a plea in the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation that: "Churches must help in identifying the everyday choices that can abuse and promote human rights, gender justice, climate justice, unity and peace".[15] Their grounding in everyday life gives local churches both legitimacy and motivation in the struggle for justice and peace.

78. The church in every geo-political and socio-economic context is called to service (*diakonia*) – to live out the faith and hope of the community of God's people, witnessing to what God has done in Jesus Christ. Through service the church participates in God's mission, following the way of its Servant Lord. The church is called to be a diaconal community manifesting the power of service over the power of domination, enabling and nurturing possibilities for life, and witnessing to God's transforming grace through acts of service that hold forth the promise of God's reign.[16]

79. As the church discovers more deeply its identity as a missionary community, its outward-looking character finds expression in evangelism.

SPIRIT OF PENTECOST: GOOD NEWS FOR ALL

The Call to Evangelize

80. Witness (*martyria*) takes concrete form in evangelism – the communication of the whole gospel to the whole of humanity in the whole world.[17] Its goal is the salvation of the world and the glory of the Triune God. Evangelism is mission activity which makes explicit and unambiguous the centrality of the incarnation, suffering and resurrection of Jesus Christ without setting limits to the saving grace of God. It seeks to share this good news with all who have not yet heard it and invites them to an experience of life in Christ.

81. "Evangelism is the outflow of hearts that are filled with the love of God for those who do not yet know him."[18] At Pentecost, the disciples could not but declare the mighty works of God (Acts 2:4; 4:20). Evangelism, while not excluding the different dimensions of mission, focuses on explicit and intentional articulation of the gospel, including "the invitation to personal conversion to a new life in Christ and to discipleship".[19] While the Holy Spirit calls some to be evangelists (Ephesians 4:11), we all are called to give an account of the hope that is in us (1 Peter 3:15). Not only individuals but also the whole church together is called to evangelize (Mark 16:15; 1 Peter 2:9).

82. Today's world is marked by excessive assertion of religious identities and persuasions that seem to break and brutalize in the name of God rather than heal and nurture communities. In such a context, it is important to recognize that proselytism is not a legitimate way of practising evangelism.[20] The Holy Spirit chooses to work in partnership with peoples' preaching and demonstration of the good news (cf. Romans 10:14-15; 2 Corinthians 4:2-6), but it is only God's Spirit who creates new life and brings about rebirth (John 3:5-8; 1 Thessalonians 1:4-6). We acknowledge that evangelism at times has been distorted and lost its credibility because some Christians have forced "conversions" by violent means or the abuse of power. In some contexts, however, accusations of forceful conversions are motivated by the desire of dominant groups to keep the marginalized living with oppressed identities and in dehumanizing conditions.

83. Evangelism is sharing one's faith and conviction with other people, inviting them to discipleship, whether or not they adhere to other religious traditions. Such sharing is to take place with both confidence and humility, and as an expression of our professed love for our world. If we claim to love God and to love our fellow human beings but fail to share the good news with them urgently and consistently, we deceive ourselves as to the integrity of our love for either God or people. There is no greater gift we can offer to our fellow human beings than to share and or introduce them to the love, grace and mercy of God in Christ.

84. Evangelism leads to repentance, faith and baptism. Hearing the truth in the face of sin and evil demands a response – positive or negative (John 4:28-29 cf. Mark 10:22). It provokes conversion, involving a change of attitudes, priorities and goals. It results in salvation of the lost, healing of the sick and the liberation of the oppressed and the whole creation.

85. "Evangelism", while not excluding the different dimensions of mission, focuses on explicit and intentional articulation of the gospel, including "the invitation to personal conversion to a new life in Christ and to discipleship".[21] In different churches, there are differing understandings of how the Spirit calls us to evangelize in our contexts. For some, evangelism is primarily about leading people to personal conversion through Jesus Christ; for others, evangelism is about being in solidarity and offering Christian witness through presence with oppressed peoples; others again look on evangelism as one component of God's mission. Different Christian traditions denote aspects of mission and evangelism in different ways; however, we can still affirm that the Spirit calls us all towards an understanding of evangelism which is grounded in the life of the local church where worship (*leiturgia*) is inextricably linked to witness (*martyria*), service (*diakonia*) and fellowship (*koinonia*).

Evangelism in Christ's Way

86. Evangelism is sharing the good news both in word and action. Evangelizing through verbal proclamation or preaching of the gospel (*kerygma*) is profoundly biblical. However, if our words are not consistent with our actions, our evangelism is inauthentic. The combination of verbal declaration and visible action bears witness to God's revelation in Jesus Christ and of his purposes. Evangelism is closely related to unity: The love for one another is a demonstration of the gospel we proclaim (John 13:34-35) while disunity is an embarrassment to the gospel (1 Corinthians 1).

87. There are historical and contemporary examples of faithful, humble service by Christians, working in their own local contexts, with whom the Spirit has partnered to bring about fullness of life. Also, many Christians who lived and worked as missionaries far away from their own cultural contexts did so with humility, mutuality, and respect; God's Spirit also stirred in those communities to bring about transformation.

88. Regrettably, sometimes evangelism has been practised in ways which betray rather than incarnate the gospel. Whenever this occurs repentance is in order. Mission in Christ's way involves affirming the dignity and rights of others. We are called to serve others as Christ did (cf. Mark 10:45; Matthew 25:45), without exploitation or any form of allurement.[22] In such individualized contexts, it may be possible to confuse evangelism with buying and selling a "product", where *we* decide what aspects Christian life we want to take on. Instead, the Spirit rejects the idea that Jesus' good news for all can be consumed under capitalist terms, and the Spirit calls us to conversion and transformation at a personal level, which leads us to the proclamation of the fullness of life for all.

89. Authentic evangelism is grounded in humility and respect for all, and flourishes in the context of dialogue. It promotes the message of the gospel, of healing and reconciliation, in word and deed. "There is no evangelism without solidarity; there is no Christian solidarity that does not involve sharing the message of God's coming reign."[23] Evangelism, therefore, inspires the building of inter-personal and community relationships. Such authentic relationships are often best nourished in local faith communities, and based on local cultural contexts. Christian witness is as much by our presence as by our words. In situations where the public testimony to one's faith is not possible without risking one's life, simply living the gospel may be a powerful alternative.

90. Aware of tensions between people and communities of different religious convictions and varied interpretations of Christian witness, authentic evangelism must always be guided by life-affirming values, as stated in the joint statement on "Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World: Recommendations for Conduct.":
    a. Rejection of all forms of violence, discrimination and repression by religious and secular authority, including the abuse of power – psychological or social.
    b. Affirming the freedom of religion to practise and profess faith without any fear of reprisal and or intimidation. Mutual respect and solidarity which promote justice, peace and the common good of all.
    c. Respect for all people and human cultures, while also discerning the elements in our own cultures, such as patriarchy, racism, casteism etc., that need to be challenged by the gospel.
    d. Renunciation of false witness and listening in order to understand in mutual respect.
    e. Ensuring freedom for ongoing discernment by persons and communities as part of decision-making.
    f. Building relationships with believers of other faiths or no faith to facilitate deeper mutual understanding, reconciliation and cooperation for the common good.[24]

91. We live in a world strongly influenced by individualism, secularism and materialism, and other ideologies that challenge the values of the kingdom of God. Although the gospel is ultimately good news for all, it is bad news for the forces which promote falsehood, injustice and oppression. To that extent, evangelism is also a prophetic vocation which involves speaking truth to power in hope and in

love (Acts 26:25; Colossians 1:5; Ephesians 4:15). The gospel is liberative and transformative. Its proclamation must involve transformation of societies with a view to creating just and inclusive communities.

92. Standing against evil or injustice and being prophetic can sometimes be met with suppression and violence, and thus consequently lead to suffering, persecution, and even death. Authentic evangelism involves being vulnerable, following the example of Christ by carrying the cross and emptying oneself (Philippians 2:5-11). Just as the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the church under Roman persecution, today the pursuit of justice and righteousness makes a powerful witness to Christ. Jesus linked such self-denial with the call to follow him and with eternal salvation (Mark 8:34-38).

Evangelism, Interfaith Dialogue and Christian Presence

93. In the plurality and complexity of today's world, we encounter people of many different faiths, ideologies and convictions. We believe that the Spirit of Life brings joy and fullness of life. God's Spirit, therefore, can be found in all cultures that affirm life. The Holy Spirit works in mysterious ways, and we do not fully understand the workings of the Spirit in other faith traditions. We acknowledge that there is inherent value and wisdom in diverse life-giving spiritualities. Therefore, authentic mission makes the "other" a partner in, not an "object" of mission.

94. Dialogue is a way of affirming our common life and goals in terms of the affirmation of life and the integrity of creation. Dialogue at the religious level is possible only if we begin with the expectation of meeting God who has preceded us and has been present with people within their own contexts.[25] God is there before we come (Acts 17) and our task is not to bring God along, but to witness to the God who is already there. Dialogue provides for an honest encounter where each party brings to the table all that they are in an open, patient and respectful manner.

95. Evangelism and dialogue are distinct but interrelated. Although Christians hope and pray that all people may come to living knowledge of the Triune God, evangelism is not the purpose of dialogue. However, since dialogue is also "a mutual encounter of commitments", sharing the good news of Jesus Christ has a legitimate place in it. Furthermore, authentic evangelism takes place in the context of the dialogue of life and action, and in "the spirit of dialogue": "an attitude of respect and friendship".[26] Evangelism entails not only proclamation of our deepest convictions, but also listening to others, and being challenged and enriched by others (Acts 10).

96. Particularly important is dialogue between people of different faiths, not only in multi-religious contexts but equally where there is a large majority of a particular faith. It is necessary to protect rights of minority groups and religious freedom and to enable all to contribute to the common good. Religious freedom should be upheld because it flows from the dignity of the human person, grounded in the creation of all human beings in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:26). Followers of all religions and beliefs have equal rights and responsibilities.[27]

Evangelism and Cultures

97. The gospel takes root in different contexts through engagement with specific cultural, political and religious realities. Respect for people and their cultural and symbolic life-worlds are necessary if the gospel is to take root in those different realities. In this way it must begin with engagement and dialogue with the wider context in order to discern how Christ is already present and where God's Spirit is already at work.

98. The connection of evangelism with colonial powers in the history of mission has led to the presupposition that Western forms of Christianity are the standards by which other's adherence to the gospel should be judged. Evangelism by those who enjoy economic power or cultural hegemony risks

distorting the gospel. Therefore, they must seek the partnership of the poor, the dispossessed and minorities, and be shaped by their theological resources and visions.

99. The enforcement of uniformity discredits the uniqueness of each individual created in the image and likeness of God. Whereas Babel attempted to enforce uniformity, the preaching of the disciples on the day of Pentecost resulted in a unity in which personal particularities and community identities were not lost but respected – they heard the good news in their own languages.

100. Jesus calls us out of the narrow concerns of *our* own kingdom, *our* own liberation and *our* own independence (Acts 1:6) by unveiling to us a larger vision and empowering us by the Holy Spirit to go "to the ends of the earth" as witnesses in each context of time and space to God's justice, freedom and peace. Our calling is to point all to Jesus, rather than to ourselves or our institutions, looking out for the interests of others rather than our own (cf. Philippians 2:3-4). We cannot capture the complexities of the scriptures, through one dominant cultural perspective. A plurality of cultures is a gift of the Spirit to deepen our understanding of our faith and one another. As such, intercultural communities of faith, where diverse cultural communities worship together, is one way in which cultures can engage one another authentically, and where culture can enrich gospel. At the same time, the gospel critiques notions of cultural superiority. Therefore, "the gospel, to be fruitful, needs to be both true to itself and incarnated or rooted in the culture of a people…We need constantly to seek the insight of the Holy Spirit in helping us to better discern where the gospel challenges, endorses or transforms a particular culture"[28] for the sake of life.

FEAST OF LIFE: CONCLUDING AFFIRMATIONS

101. We are the servants of the Triune God, who has given us the mission of proclaiming the good news to all humanity and creation, especially the oppressed and the suffering people who are longing for fullness of life. Mission – as a common witness to Christ – is an invitation to the "feast in the kingdom of God" (Luke 14:15). The mission of the church is to prepare the banquet and to invite all people to the feast of life. The feast is a celebration of creation and fruitfulness overflowing from the love of God, the source of life in abundance. It is a sign of the liberation and reconciliation of the whole creation which is the goal of mission. With a renewed appreciation of the mission of God's Spirit, we offer the following affirmations in response to the question posed at the beginning of this document.

102. **We affirm that the purpose of God's mission is fullness of life (John 10:10) and this is the criterion for discernment in mission.** Therefore, we are called to discern the Spirit of God wherever there is life in its fullness, particularly in terms of the liberation of the oppressed peoples, the healing and reconciliation of broken communities and the restoration of the whole creation. We are challenged to appreciate the life-affirming spirits present in different cultures and to be in solidarity with all those who are involved in the mission of affirming and preserving life. We also discern and confront evil spirits wherever forces of death and negation of life are experienced.

103. **We affirm that mission begins with God's act of creation and continues in re-creation, by the enlivening power of the Holy Spirit.** The Holy Spirit, poured out in tongues of fire at Pentecost, fills our hearts and makes us into Christ's church. The Spirit which was in Christ Jesus inspires us to a self-emptying and cross-bearing life-style and accompanies God's people as we seek to bear witness to the love of God in word and deed. The Spirit of truth leads into all truth and empowers us to defy the demonic powers and speak the truth in love. As a redeemed community we share with others the waters of life and look for the Spirit of unity to heal, reconcile and renew the whole creation.

104. **We affirm that spirituality is the source of energy for mission and that mission in the Spirit is transformative.** Thus we seek a re-orienting of our perspective between mission, spirituality and creation. Mission spirituality that flows from liturgy and worship reconnects us with one another and with the wider creation. We understand that our participation in mission, our existence in creation and

our practice of the life of the Spirit are woven together for they are mutually transformative. Mission that begins with creation invites us to celebrate life in all its dimensions as God's gift.

105. **We affirm that the mission of God's Spirit is to renew the whole creation.** "The earth is the Lord's and everything in it" (Psalm 24:1, NIV). The God of life protects, loves and cares for nature. Humanity is not the master of the earth but is responsible to care for the integrity of creation. Excessive greed and unlimited consumption which lead to continuous destruction of nature must end. God's love does not proclaim a human salvation separate from the renewal of the whole creation. We are called to participate in God's mission beyond our human-centred goals. God's mission is to all life and we have to both acknowledge it and serve it in new ways of mission. We pray for repentance and forgiveness, but we also call for action now. Mission has creation at its heart.

106. **We affirm that today mission movements are emerging from the global South and East which are multi-directional and many faceted.** The shifting centre of gravity of Christianity to the global South and East challenges us to explore missiological expressions that are rooted in these contexts, cultures and spiritualities. We need to develop further mutuality and partnership and affirm interdependence within mission and the ecumenical movement. Our mission practice should show solidarity with suffering peoples and harmony with nature. Evangelism is done in self-emptying humility, with respect towards others and in dialogue with people of different cultures and faiths. It should, in this landscape, also involve confronting structures and cultures of oppression and dehumanization that are in contradiction to the values of God's reign.

107. **We affirm that marginalized people are agents of mission and exercise a prophetic role which emphasizes that fullness of life is for all.** The marginalized in society are the main partners in God's mission. Marginalized, oppressed and suffering people have a special gift to distinguish what news is good for them and what news is bad for their endangered life. In order to commit ourselves to God's life-giving mission, we have to listen to the voices from the margins to hear what is life-affirming and what is life-destroying. We must turn our direction of mission to the actions that the marginalized are taking. Justice, solidarity and inclusivity are key expressions of mission from the margins.

108. **We affirm that the economy of God is based on values of love and justice for all and that transformative mission resists idolatry in the free-market economy.** Economic globalization has effectively supplanted the God of life with mammon, the god of free-market capitalism that claims the power to save the world through the accumulation of undue wealth and prosperity. Mission in this context needs to be counter-cultural, offering alternatives to such idolatrous visions because mission belongs to the God of life, justice and peace and not to this false god who brings misery and suffering to people and nature. Mission, then, is to denounce the economy of greed and to participate in and practise the divine economy of love, sharing and justice.

109. **We affirm that the gospel of Jesus Christ is good news in all ages and places and should be proclaimed in the Spirit of love and humility.** We affirm the centrality of the incarnation, the cross and the resurrection in our message and also in the way we do evangelism. Therefore, evangelism is pointing always to Jesus and the kingdom of God rather than to institutions, and it belongs to the very being of the church. The prophetic voice of the church should not be silent in times that demand this voice be heard. The church is called to renew its methods of evangelism to communicate the good news with persuasion, inspiration and conviction.

110. **We affirm that dialogue and cooperation for life are integral to mission and evangelism.** Authentic evangelism is done with respect to freedom of religion and belief, for all human beings, as images of God. Proselytism by violent means, economic incentive or abuse of power is contrary to the message of the gospel. In doing evangelism it is important to build relations of respect and trust between people of different faiths. We value each and every human culture and recognize that the gospel is not possessed by any group but is for every people. We understand that our task is not to bring God along but to

witness to the God who is already there (Acts 17:23-28). Joining in with the Spirit we are enabled to cross cultural and religious barriers to work together towards Life.

111. **We affirm that God moves and empowers the church in mission.** The church as the people of God, the body of Christ, and the temple of the Holy Spirit is dynamic and changing as it continues the mission of God. This leads to a variety of forms of common witness, reflecting the diversity of world Christianity. Thus the churches need to be on the move, journeying together in mission, continuing in the mission of the apostles. Practically, this means that church and mission should be united, and different ecclesial and missional bodies need to work together for the sake of Life.

112. The Triune God invites the whole creation to the Feast of Life, through Jesus Christ who came "that they may have life, and may have it in all its fullness" (John 10:10, REB), through the Holy Spirit who affirms the vision of the reign of God, "Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth!" (Isaiah 65:17, KJV). We commit ourselves together in humility and hope to the mission of God, who recreates all and reconciles all. And we pray, "God of Life, lead us into justice and peace!"

Notes

[1] If not otherwise indicated, Bible quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV).
[2] Cf. Todd M. Johnson, Kenneth R. Ross eds., *Atlas of Global Christianity*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2009.
[3] Cf. Ion Bria, *The Liturgy after the Liturgy: Mission and Witness from an Orthodox Perspective*, Geneva, WCC, 1996. The term was originally coined by Archbishop Anastasios Yannoulatos and widely publicized by Ion Bria.
[4] *Alternative Globalization Addressing Peoples and Earth (AGAPE)*: *A Background Document*, Geneva, WCC, 2005, p.13.
[5] *The Accra Confession*, *Covenanting for Justice: in the Economy and the Earth,* World Alliance of Reformed Churches, 2004, §10.
[6] Edinburgh 2010, *Common Call*, 2010, § 4.
[7] *Healing and Wholeness: The Churches' Role in Health,* Geneva, WCC, 1990, p.6.
[8] *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry,* Faith and Order Paper no.111, 1982, §19.
[9] Thomas F. Best, Günther Gassmann eds., *On the Way to Fuller Koinonia: Official Report of the Fifth World Conference on Faith and Order, Santiago de Compostela 1993,* Faith and Order Paper no.166*,* Geneva, WCC, 1994, p.254.
[10] Cf. "The Whole Church Taking the Whole Gospel to the Whole World: Reflections of the Lausanne Theology Working Group," 2010.
[11] *Mission and Evangelism in Unity*, CWME Study Document, 2000, §13.
[12] Cf. *Mission as Ministry of Reconciliation,* in Jacques Matthey ed., *You Are the Light of the World: Statements on Mission by the World Council of Churches 1980-2005,* Geneva, WCC, 2005, pp.90-162.
[13] "Report of WCC Consultation on Mission and Ecclesiology of the Migrant Churches, Utrecht, the Netherlands, 16-21 November 2010," *International Review of Mission,* 100.1., 2011, pp.104-107.
[14] Christopher Duraisingh ed., *Called to One Hope: The Gospel in Diverse Cultures*, Geneva, WCC, 1998, p.54.
[15] *Glory to God and Peace on Earth: The Message of the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation,* WCC, Kingston, Jamaica, 17-25 May 2011, p.2.
[16] "*Diakonia* in the Twenty First Century: Theological Perspectives," WCC Conference on Theology of *Diakonia* in the 21st Century, Colombo, Sri Lanka, 2-6 June 2012, p.2.
[17] *Minutes and Reports of the Fourth Meeting of the Central Committee*, WCC, Rolle, Switzerland, 1951, p.66.
[18] The Lausanne Movement, *The Cape Town Commitment*, 2010, Part I, 7(b).
[19] Cf. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Doctrinal Note on Some Aspects of Evangelization*, No.12, 2007, pp. 489-504.
[20] *Towards Common Witness: A Call to Adopt Responsible Relationships in Mission and to Renounce Proselytism*, WCC Central Committee, 1997.
[21] It is important to note that not all churches understand evangelism as expressed in the above. The Roman Catholic Church refers to "evangelization" as the *missio ad gentes* [mission to the peoples] directed to those who do not know Christ. In a wider sense, it is used to describe ordinary pastoral work, while the phrase "new evangelization" designates pastoral outreach to those who no longer practise the Christian faith. Cf. *Doctrinal Note on Some Aspects of Evangelization*.
[22] World Council of Churches, Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, World Evangelical Alliance, *Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World: Recommendations for Conduct,* 2011.
[23] *The San Antonio Report*, p.26; *Mission and Evangelism: An Ecumenical Affirmation,* §34; *Called to One Hope,* p.38.
[24] *Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World: Recommendations for Conduct,* 2011.
[25] Cf. *Baar Statement: Theological Perspectives on Plurality*, WCC, 1990.
[26] PCID, *Dialogue and Proclamation,* 1991, §9.
[27] *Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World: Recommendations for Conduct,* 2011.
[28] *Called to One Hope*, pp.21-22; 24.