

Introduction

This paper offers reflections on *mission as ministry of reconciliation* from an ecumenical point of view and is shared by the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME) of the World Council of Churches as a document for reflection and study in preparation for the world mission conference in Athens in May 2005. The present paper is a slightly revised and expanded version of the earlier document published in 2004 as CWME Conference Preparatory Paper No 4. It takes into account suggestions and reactions received from many places, as well as the results of the discussions held at the CWME Commission meeting itself last October. This revised version was elaborated in January 2005 by a small editorial group appointed by the Commission. Together with the document on *the healing mission of the church* (CWME Conference Preparatory paper No 11), it provides a summary of the state of discussion on mission as ministry of reconciliation and healing in the WCC. None of these two papers do however represent an official position of the WCC. They have not been adopted by one of its governing bodies. They are offered as resources for reflection and study on the significance and importance of mission in the beginning of the 21st century. Reactions and contributions to the study process are welcome and can be sent to:

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Mission as ministry of reconciliation

1) Mission and reconciliation - an emerging paradigm

1. Mission is understood in different ways in various times and places, also among actors in the ecumenical movement. From time to time, there is an attempt at a more holistic interpretation of Christian witness. In 1982, the World Council of Churches (WCC) reached such a balanced understanding of mission, in its Ecumenical Affirmation on Mission and Evangelism¹. Responding to the challenge of the gospel and the request of the time, that declaration combined the focus on sharing the gospel with the concern for the liberation of the poor. It remains until now the basic WCC text on mission and evangelism. Since the late 1980s new aspects emerged and mission has been increasingly connected with reconciliation and healing. The language of reconciliation has come to the fore in many different contexts and catches the imagination of people inside and outside the churches. In this situation we have come to discern anew that reconciliation is at the heart of Christian faith. This takes place both in ecumenical and evangelical mission thinking. The reconciling love of God shown in Jesus Christ is an important biblical theme and a central element in the life and ministry of the church. We affirm thus now that the Holy Spirit calls us to a ministry of reconciliation and to express this in both the spirituality and strategies of our mission and evangelism.

2. There are a number of other reasons why reconciliation has become so prominent in the world today. These are related to the contemporary trends of globalisation, post-modernity and fragmentation as identified in the CWME study document "Mission and Evangelism in Unity Today" (2000)². Globalisation has brought different communities of the world into closer contact than ever before and has highlighted human commonality. At the same time it has exposed the diversity of interests and worldviews among different groups. On the one hand, there are new ways to express unity and cross the boundaries that have divided us. On the other hand, there are also clashes of cultures, religions, economic interests and genders, which leave a legacy of hurt and grievances. The heightened enmity that has resulted from globalisation and the imbalance of power in today's world has been strikingly confirmed in the terrorist acts of September 11, 2001 and the subsequent "war on terror". In this context also, a number of initiatives, both by civil society and by churches, have contributed to the reconstruction of societies after conflict through processes of truth and reconciliation. Christian witnesses are called upon to help bring peace with justice in situations of tension, violence, and conflict. As the churches seek reconciliation and peace, the World Council of Churches has launched the *Decade to Overcome Violence* (2001-2010).

3. The dominance and pervasiveness of global market forces have led to enormous changes in the way people live and work, yet economic globalisation is highly ambiguous. While free trade and competition have led to economic growth and increased prosperity in some countries, particularly in Asia, the economic policies of the richer nations have had tremendous and often highly damaging effects on poorer nations. More are victims rather than beneficiaries. Unfair trade laws protect the richer nations and exclude and exploit the poorer ones. Many of the poorer countries are saddled with debt and its repayment is an intolerable burden. Structural adjustment programmes imposed by global bodies pay little regard to local wisdom and it is the poor who suffer most under them. In this situation, the *Jubilee Debt Campaign* has had a significant effect in raising awareness of trade imbalance and influencing G8 decisions. True reconciliation that involves the repentance of the rich and brings justice for the poor is urgently needed.

4. The network of global communications also brings benefit to some and excludes others. In some respects, by increasing the possibilities of dialogue and cooperation, it is beneficial in widening fellowship and facilitating alternative movements for change. However the mass culture of post-modernity spread in this way is often experienced as a threat to personal and national identities and contributes to the increasing fragmentation of societies. As a result of globalisation, many have lost their family and local roots, many have been displaced by migration, and exclusion is widely experienced. Many are longing for the embrace of others and sense a need for belonging and community. In this situation, we are called to be reconciling and healing communities.

5. We look to the Holy Spirit, who in the Bible is related with communion (II Cor 13:13), to lead us and all creation in integrity and wholeness towards reconciliation with God and one another. However, exposed to the strength and vicissitudes of global forces, the difficulties of discerning the Holy Spirit among the complexities of the world have never been greater as we are faced with difficult personal and strategic choices in mission. In 1996, at the last WCC conference on mission and evangelism, we were reminded in Salvador, Bahía, Brazil how the perpetrators of economic injustice denied the rights of indigenous populations and plundered resources given by the creator for all. We asked for forgiveness for this and sought reconciliation³. Affirming that "the Spirit poured out on the day of Pentecost makes all cultures worthy vehicles of God's love" and "enables a real awakening of the image of God"

in persons in oppressed groups, we committed ourselves at Salvador to "the search for alternative models of community, more equitable economic systems, fair trade practices, responsible use of the media, and just environmental practice"⁴.

6. All over the world, we are experiencing a thirst for spiritual experience, a renewal within religions, a resurgence of fundamentalist forms of religiosity, as well as a proliferation of new religious movements. All this is linked to the influence of globalisation and post-modernity. On the one hand, the variety of spiritualities to which we are exposed raises our spiritual awareness, enriches our perception of God's mystery and broadens our horizons. On the other, we also discern increasing tensions between religions which are due to many internal and external factors, in particular religious reinforcement of closed identities, justification of violence and aggressive methods of religious propagation. These trends make it even more urgent for us to seek a reconciliatory spirituality for mission.

7. Within the Christian faith, while some churches continue to decline, many are experiencing rapid numerical growth. The centre of gravity of Christianity has decisively shifted towards the poorer nations of the world and the faith is widely expressed in a Pentecostal-charismatic form. The rapid growth of the Pentecostal and charismatic churches is a noticeable fact of our time. The positive impact of charismatic experience gives great encouragement and hope for the future of Christian faith. It calls our attention to the theology of the Holy Spirit and the way in which the Spirit repeatedly renews the church for its mission in every age. At the same time, the potential for tension and disunity reminds us of the Spirit's close association with reconciliation and peace. It is important that this pneumatological orientation should never take the form of a "pneumatomonism", as in the past when a hidden "christomonism" relegated the Holy Spirit into an ancillary role. In the mission of the church the understanding of Christology should always be conditioned in a constitutive way by pneumatology.

8. Since Pentecost the Holy Spirit has inspired the church to proclaim Jesus Christ as the Lord and Saviour and we continue to be obedient to the command to preach the gospel in all the world. The Holy Spirit anointed the Son of God to "preach good news to the poor, heal the brokenhearted, proclaim liberty to captives, recovery of sight to the blind and set at liberty those who are oppressed" (Luke 4:18). We seek to continue his liberating and healing mission. This involves bold proclamation of the liberating gospel to people bound by sin, a healing ministry to the sick and suffering, and the struggle for justice on the side of the oppressed and marginalized. Recognising that the Spirit of God has been present in creation since the beginning and goes before us in our mission and evangelism, we have also affirmed the Spirit's creativity expressed in diverse cultures and we have entered into dialogue with people of other faiths. Now, confronted with the world situation we have described, we are rediscovering the ministry of the Spirit to reconcile and to heal.

2) The triune God, source and initiator of reconciliation : biblical, theological and liturgical perspectives

9. Reconciliation is the work of the triune God bringing fulfilment to God's eternal purposes of creation and salvation through Jesus Christ: "For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross □ For in Him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily" (Col. 1: 19-20; 2:9). In the person of Jesus Christ the divine nature and the human nature were reconciled, united forever. This is the starting point for our reconciliation with

God. We have to actualize by God's grace and our efforts, what we already have in Christ, through the Holy Spirit.

The Godhead, the Three-in-One, expresses the very nature of community, the reconciliation we hope for: "The Trinity, the source and image of our existence, shows the importance of diversity, otherness and intrinsic relationships in constituting a community".⁵

Reconciliation from a biblical perspective

10. The Bible is full of stories of reconciliation. The Old Testament tells a number of stories of conflict and strife between brothers, family members, peoples; some of these end in reconciliation and others are unresolved. It acknowledges and bemoans the dimension of violence and underlines the need for and the power of reconciliation. The family stories of Jacob and Esau (Gen. 25:19-33:20), or of Joseph and his brothers (Gen. 37-45) are examples for interpersonal - and perhaps also communal - conflicts. They also illustrate the power of reconciling attitudes of people who try to solve strife, enmity, and experiences or perceptions of injustice through negotiations, repentance, forgiveness, and searching for a common basis and a shared future. The Old Testament addresses again and again the estrangement between God and God's people and God's desire and urge for reconciliation and restoration of a relationship that was broken and fragmented through human pride and various forms of rebellion against the God of life and justice. Reconciliation is thus very much a theme in the biblical narratives and in the liturgical language of Israel - such as the Psalms, even though the Hebrew language does not know the specific term "reconciliation". In the books of the lament tradition, such as Lamentations and Job, human longing for reconciliation with God is poignantly expressed.

11. Similarly in the New Testament, though the actual term "reconciliation" does not appear very prominently, the matter itself is prevalent throughout. John's Gospel shows a particular concern for truth and peace; in the Gospel of Luke salvation is closely linked to the healing ministry of Jesus. The Book of Acts tells how Jews and Gentiles were reconciled in one new community. And throughout his letters, Paul is greatly concerned that those whom Christ has reconciled in his body should not be divided and that community life should be the first expression of God's plan to reconcile all things. He envisages the unity of not only Jew and Gentile but also of slave and free, male and female in Christ (Gal. 3:28).

12. Apart from Matthew 5:24, where it relates to the reconciliation of individuals, we find the terms "reconciliation" and "to reconcile" - the Greek words are *katallage* and *katallassein* - only in the letters of the Apostle Paul (2 Cor. 5:17-20; Rom. 5:10-11; 11:15; 1 Cor. 7:11, and then Eph. 2:16 and Col. 1:20-22). However, the apostle expresses the theme so forcefully that it emerges as a key notion in the Christian identity as a whole. Paul uses the term reconciliation in exploring the nature of God, to illumine the content of the gospel as good news, and to explain the ministry and mission of the apostle and the church in the world. The term "reconciliation" thus becomes an almost all-embracing term to articulate what is at the heart of the Christian faith.

There are several features of reconciliation as used by Paul to note briefly:

13. The very notion of reconciliation presupposes the experience of broken communion. This may be in the form of estrangement, separation, enmity, hatred, exclusion, fragmentation, distorted relationships. It usually also encompasses a certain degree of injustice, harm and

suffering. Reconciliation, in biblical as well as secular language, is understood as the effort towards and engagement for mending this broken and distorted relationship and building up community and relationships afresh.

14. Paul applies the notion of reconciliation to three different though overlapping realms of brokenness and hostility, in which healing of relationship occurs: reconciliation between God and human beings; reconciliation of different groups of human beings; and reconciliation of the cosmos.

15. Reconciliation is much more than simply a superficial fixing of distortions, the arrival of a status quo of coexistence. Reconciliation looks at a transformation of the present, a very deep-rooted renewal. The "peace" which Paul speaks about is first and foremost peace with God (cf. Rom. 5:1,11). It is also in a prominent way the transformation of human relationships and the building of a community. It is the radical new peace between Jews and Gentiles that results from Christ breaking down the wall of hostility (Eph. 2:14). It is even the transformation of the whole creation towards peace as it is expressed in Colossians 1:20, where Paul speaks of Christ as reconciling "all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross". The last reference indicates that reconciliation indeed envisions a new creation as Paul expresses so vividly in 2 Corinthians 5:17. The category of "new creation" shows that there is even more in view than a mending of brokenness. Reconciliation is a totally new quality of being, as expressed in the hymn celebrating the gathering of all things in Christ (Eph. 1:10).

16. According to Paul, it is God who takes the initiative towards reconciliation. Furthermore, God has already achieved reconciliation for the world: "In Christ God was reconciling the world to himself" (2 Cor. 5:19). Human beings may seek for reconciliation and minister reconciliation but the initiative and the effectiveness of reconciliation lies with God. Human beings are only recipients of the gift of reconciliation. It is therefore essential to affirm that Christian life and attitude is grounded in the experience of reconciliation through Godself. Christians discover what God has already done in Christ.

17. The human predicament that creates the need for reconciliation with God is the alienation from God that is due to human sin, disobedience to and break of communion with God, resulting in guilt and death, both spiritually and physically (Rom. 3:23; Eph. 2:1-3). This enmity between God and human beings was overcome through the death of Jesus on the cross. "When we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son" (Rom. 5:10). On the cross the Son of God freely gave his life as an atoning sacrifice for the sins and guilt of the whole world. He is the lamb of God who carries the sins of the world (John 1:29), who himself "bore our sins in his own body on the tree" (1 Pet. 2:24). Through Christ's substitutionary death "for us" (Rom. 5:8; Gal. 1:4) reconciliation has been achieved once for all leading to forgiveness of sins, communion with God and new life in God's kingdom. This is all by the grace and love of God.

18. The Christian narrative of reconciliation is thus based on and centred in the story of the incarnation, passion, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ. The messianic ministry of Jesus of Nazareth links his suffering with the suffering of all humanity, and is therefore an expression of the deep solidarity of God with an agonized, fragmented and tortured world. The cross is, at the same time, an expression of the divine protest against this suffering, for Jesus of Nazareth suffered as the innocent victim. He refused to take refuge in violence, he persisted in the love of his enemies and he made love towards God and his fellow-human

beings the central concern of his life. The gruesome act of throwing "the one who was just" out of this world is in itself the judgment of a world in which the powerful seem to prevail over the victims. In Christ, through whose wounds we are healed (1 Pet. 2:24), we also experience God seeking to rectify the wrongs of this world through the power of love with which God, in his Son, gave himself up for others, even for the perpetrators of violence and injustice.

19. The cross of Christ, and the obligation of the Christians to participate in the suffering of the people and their struggle for a better life, which results from it, is not the only criterion for the mission of the church. It is through the resurrection that the death of Christ receives its true meaning. The resurrection means that God himself recognised Jesus and his cross; it was a liberating judgement making the cross an instrument of salvation and reconciliation. The resurrection is even more, however, being itself an integral part of God's reconciling work in Christ. For Christians resurrection is not understood as just an historical event of the past, nor just an article of faith, but also a mystically lived present day reality. In missiology, cross and resurrection form an indissoluble unity. The church exists not only because Christ died on the cross, but also and primarily because he is risen from the dead, thus becoming the first fruit of all humanity (cf. 1 Cor. 15:20). The centrality of resurrection in both the N.T. and the life of the church not only gives "the hope that is in us" (1 Pet. 3:15), but it inevitably leads to the primary importance of eschatology.

20. It is through the Holy Spirit that human beings are empowered to share in the narrative of God reconciling the world in Jesus Christ. In Romans 5, where Paul explores the way God reconciles sinners and even God's enemies and the ungodly with Godself, Paul says that the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit. In Jesus Christ, who was raised and ascended into heaven, we not only enjoy the gift of reconciliation, we are also sent in service and ministry into the world. This is expressed, for example, in the ethical teaching of Paul where he urged individuals and communities to be signs and expressions of the reconciliation they had experienced (cf. Rom. 12:9-21). It is also expressed in the way Paul talks about his own mission as a "ministry of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5:18). To share in this ministry of reconciliation - that is to participate in the Holy Spirit's work of reconciliation and communicate God's reconciling activity to all of humanity - is the Christian calling today as much as in Paul's day.

21. This means that God's work of reconciliation with human beings was not finished on the cross and in the resurrection; it goes on through history in the ministry of reconciliation that has been entrusted to the church. Based on the reconciliation effected in Christ's death and resurrection and on God's behalf, the church challenges and invites all people to be reconciled with God. "Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to himself and given us the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5:18-21) This offer of reconciliation is received and becomes a personal reality through faith (Eph. 2:8).

The Holy Spirit and reconciliation

22. The Holy Spirit empowers the church to participate in this work of reconciliation as the document "Mission and Evangelism in Unity" states: "The mission of God (*missio Dei*) is the source of and basis for the mission of the church, the body of Christ. Through Christ in the Holy Spirit, God indwells the church, empowering and energizing its members."⁶ The ministry of the Spirit (2 Cor. 3:8) is a ministry of reconciliation, made possible through Christ and entrusted to us (2 Cor. 5:18-19).

23. In the power of the Spirit, the church as *koinonia* - the communion of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 13:13) - continually grows into a healing and reconciling community that shares the joys and sorrows of her members and reaches out to those in need of forgiveness and reconciliation. According to the Book of Acts (2:44-45; 4:32-37), the early church, having been born on the day of Pentecost, shared her goods among her members, pointing to the interrelatedness of "spiritual" and "material" concerns in Christian mission and church life. One aspect of the empowering ministry of the Holy Spirit is to endow Christians and Christian communities with charismatic gifts, which include healing (1 Cor. 12:9; Acts 3).

24. The church herself is in need of continuing renewal by the Spirit to be able to discern the mind of Christ as well as be convicted by the Spirit of division and sin within (John 16:8-11). This repentance within the church of Christ is itself part of the ministry and witness of reconciliation to the world.

25. The Holy Spirit blows where the Spirit wills (cf. John 3:8). Thus, the Spirit knows no limits and reaches out to people of all faiths as well as those without any religious commitment - a growing number in this time of secularisation. The church is called to discern the signs of the Spirit in the world and witness to Christ in the power of the Spirit (Acts 1:8) as well as be engaged in all forms of liberation and reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:18-19).

26. In the sufferings of the present time, the Spirit shares our "groans" and the childbirth pains of the whole of creation subjected to "bondage under decay" (Rom. 8:26, 21-22). Therefore, we are looking forward to the redemption of our bodies (Rom. 8:23) with hope and joy. The same Spirit of God that "swept over the face of the waters" (Gen. 1:2) in creation now indwells the church and works in the world often in mysterious and unknown ways. The Spirit will participate in the ushering in of the new creation when God finally will be all in all.

27. Since the time of the New Testament, two understandings of pneumatology can be discerned. One emphasises the Holy Spirit as fully dependant on Christ, as being the agent of Christ to fulfill the task of mission, and has led to a missiology focussing on *sending* and *going forth*. The other understands the Holy Spirit as the source of Christ, and the church as the eschatological *synaxis* (coming together) of the people of God in God's kingdom. In that second perspective, mission as *going forth* is the outcome, not the origin of the church. Mission is the liturgy *after* the Liturgy. Because reconciliation is a prerequisite of the eucharist (the act that actually constitutes the church) it becomes a primary of mission in that perspective.

Liturgical perspectives on reconciliation

28. The church's mission, in the power of the Spirit, derives from the teaching, life and work of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is to be understood in reference to the expectations of Judaism. The core of this was the idea of the coming of a Messiah, who in the "last days" of history would establish his kingdom (Joel 3:1; Isa. 2:2, 59:21; Ezek. 36:24, etc.) by calling all the dispersed and afflicted people of God *into one place*, reconciled to God and becoming one body united around him (Mic. 4:1-4; Isa. 2:2-4; Psa. 147:2-3). In the Gospel of John it is clearly stated that the high priest "prophesied that Jesus should die...not for the nation only, but to *gather into one* the children of God who are scattered abroad" (John 11:51-52).

29. This reconciliation was experienced in the liturgical, more precisely "eucharistic" (in the wider sense), life of the early church. The early Christian community suffered from factions

and divisions but, reconciled through the grace of our Lord to God, felt obliged to extend horizontally this reconciliation to one another by being incorporated into the one people of God through the eucharist, a significant act of identity, which was celebrated as a manifestation (more precisely a foretaste) of the coming kingdom. It is not accidental that the condition for participating in the Lord's table was, and still often is, an act of reconciliation with one's sisters and brothers which bears profound symbolic value and is remindful of the core of the gospel (Matt. 5:23-24). By sharing the "kiss of love", church members give each other a sign of reconciliation and commit themselves to the healing of relationships in the community. In a related manner, Paul challenges the Corinthians to take seriously the fact that their failure to share could jeopardise the very celebration of the Lord's supper (1 Cor. 11:20-21).

30. This eucharistic act is not the only liturgical rite of reconciliation in the healing process. Baptism, which presupposes an act of repentance, is a common sign of incorporation through the Spirit into the one body (1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 4:4-5). The act of confession, which has sacramental significance for some churches, was originally meant as the necessary reconciling process with the community - a sacrament of reconciliation. There is also the act - or sacrament - of anointment for healing. For many churches the Lord's supper itself also has therapeutic meaning. These examples draw our attention to the importance of reconciliation and healing in the life and mission of the church.

31. These manifestations of the kingdom in the community were the starting point of Christian mission, the springboard of the church's witnessing *exodus* to the world. The missiological imperatives of the church stem exactly from this awareness of the church as a dynamic and corporate body of reconciled believers commissioned to witness to the coming kingdom of God. In striving to manifest the ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:18 ff) to the world, we become a reconciling community. This ministry to be "ambassadors for Christ" includes a commitment to the proclamation of the gospel: "We entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." (2 Cor. 5:20 - 21)

In ecumenical perspective such evangelism "aims to build up a reconciling and reconciled community (cf. 2 Cor. 5:19) that will point to the fullness of God's reign, which is ☐ righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit' (Rom. 14:17)". This affirmation of the preparatory document for Salvador finds an echo in the recent WCC mission statement: "To speak of evangelism means to emphasise the proclamation of God's offer of freedom and reconciliation, together with the invitation to join those who follow Christ and work for the reign of God."⁷

3) Reconciliation as an imperative for mission

32. The powerful convergence of a new interest in reconciliation and healing within the churches, and a parallel new quest for healing and reconciliation in many societies around the world, have prompted us to rethink what God is calling us to in mission today. Remembering that the reconciliation we have received in Jesus Christ is to be shared in the world, we have come to see reconciliation as part of mission.

33. Mission as ministry of reconciliation involves the obligation to share the gospel of Jesus Christ in all its fullness, the good news of him who through his incarnation, death and resurrection has once for all provided the basis for reconciliation with God, forgiveness of

sins and new life in the power of the Holy Spirit. This ministry invites people to accept God's offer of reconciliation in Christ, and to become his disciples in the communion of his church. It promises the hope of fullness of life in God, both in this age and in God's future, eternal kingdom.

34. The ministry of reconciliation also involves the work for reconciliation among persons and societies. In order to understand what this participation in God's mission of reconciliation may mean, we will focus upon the goals and processes of reconciliation and healing. This involves both some general thoughts and reflections upon the dynamics of how reconciliation and healing come about.

35. Reconciliation is and results from a process leading to peace with justice. The vision is to establish community, where brokenness and sectarianism are overcome and people live together with mutual respect and tolerance. Reconciliation results in communication with one another without fear. It implies tolerance of others, inclusion and consideration of them. Reconciled community is where differences can be resolved through dialogue and without resort to violence.

36. Reconciliation is sought between *individuals*, in order to overcome divisions, enmity and conflicts from the past. Here the internal dynamics for both parties, for victims and wrongdoers must be explored. Reconciliation also needs to occur between *groups* or *communities*. In these instances social and structural relations will need special attention. And reconciliation sometimes needs to happen within and among *nations*, in which the whole structures of societies will need examination. In the first instance, between individuals, reconciliation is often about restoring dignity and a sense of humanity. In the second instance, reconciliation focuses upon how to live together, both as human beings and in the whole of creation. In the third instance, on national levels, the institutions of society itself will need attention for reconstruction to be possible.

37. Reconciliation is both a *goal* and a *process*. As individuals and societies we need a vision to keep us moving toward a future state of peace and well-being. But without understanding the process we can lose heart and sense of direction in our work. In actual practice, we will find ourselves moving back and forth between goal and process, since we need both in reconciliation and healing.

Dynamics of reconciliation processes

38. Attention needs to be given both to initiating the process of reconciliation and to sustaining it. The participants in this process are often divided into *victims* and *wrongdoers*. Sometimes the two parties are easily distinguished and identified, as for example in many cases of victims of rape and those who perpetrate the act. But in extended conflicts, victims may, at a later date, become wrongdoers, and wrongdoers become victims. This makes clear-cut categories less helpful. While Christian practice has special regard for the plight of victims, reconciliation and healing require restoration and healing both of the victim *and* repentance and transformation of the wrongdoer. These things do not always happen in a clear sequence, but becoming a "new creation" (2 Cor. 5:17) requires change in both.

39. Six aspects of the reconciliation and healing process need special attention. They are: **truth, memory, repentance, justice, forgiveness and love.**

Establishing the **truth** about the past is often difficult because abuses and atrocities have been shrouded in silence. Healing requires that the silence be broken and the truth be allowed to come to light. It allows for *recognition* of what has been hidden.

40. At other times, under a repressive regime for instance, there has been a systematic distortion of the truth. Lies prevail where truth should dwell. In such cases, the truth needs to be asserted. This is especially true when the language of reconciliation itself is misused. There have been instances where wrongdoers have called for "reconciliation" when they really mean that victims should ignore the wrongdoing done, and life should continue as though nothing happened. In such cases, the meaning of the word "reconciliation" has been so poisoned that it cannot even be used. In other cases, wrongdoers urge hasty "reconciliation" so that the claims of the victims will not even be considered. They may do this by making Christians feel guilty for not being able to forgive quickly. Such false uses of the idea of reconciliation must be resisted.

41. At a national level, after prolonged conflict and struggle, Truth and Reconciliation Commissions have been established to seek out the truth about the past. The Commission in South Africa is perhaps the most well-known. The need for such commissions underscores how difficult it is to establish the truth, and how important it is for reconciliation and healing.

42. The Christian understanding of truth can help in such situations. The Spirit of God is the Spirit of truth (John 14:17), and Jesus "who is the way, and the truth, and the life" (John 14:6), prayed that his disciples be sanctified by the Spirit of truth (John 17:17). Establishing the truth, especially after situations of conflict, can be difficult. Respect for the truth comes from knowing God wants the truth to be told (cf. the prophetic tradition).

43. **Memory** is closely linked to truth. How will the past be remembered, how shall we speak of it? Authentic memory should yield the truth about the past. Traumatic memories of acts of wrongdoing or atrocity often will need healing if they are to be the building blocks of a different kind of future. To heal memories means that they lose their toxic quality. When that happens, memories do not hold us hostage to the past, but empower us to create a future where the wrongdoing of the past cannot happen again.

44. Memories are not just about the past. They are the basis for identity. *How* we remember the past is both the basis for how we will live and relate to one another in the present, and how we will envision the future. For that reason, memory is central to the process of reconciliation and healing.

45. Memories that do not heal can inhibit reconciliation. Sometimes the healing takes more than a generation. In some instances victims are so submerged in their memories that they need help in coming free of them. This may imply to provide a space for the victims to express their anger. In a few instances, victims do not want to be healed, and use their memories to keep any progress from happening. Accompanying victims so that they can come free from traumatic memories is an important task of those who work for reconciliation.

46. Projects of recovering memory that has been suppressed or distorted are often important for building a different future together. Publishing the results of Truth and Reconciliation Commissions,⁸ or collecting recollections of what happened⁹ are examples of this. Recovering memory can also be a threat to the wrongdoers who still hold power¹⁰.

47. Recovering memory and allowing it to help us live in the present, as well as imagine the future, is central to Christian practice and witness. We celebrate the eucharist to remember what happened to Jesus: his betrayal, suffering and death, and how he was raised from the dead. It is the memory of what God has done in the story of Jesus that gives us hope and the Spirit of Christ who empowers us in our work of reconciliation.

48. In many cases of conflict there is a need for **repentance** (*metanoia*) before reconciliation can take place. Because there may be a situation of wrongdoing and guilt, personal or collective, that has caused the enmity or estrangement, true reconciliation cannot take place until the guilty part has repented of sin and wrongdoing. Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom of God was accompanied by a call for repentance and faith in the gospel (Mark 1:15). It is noteworthy that Jesus' call for repentance is motivated by the new time of salvation that is inaugurated by his coming. True repentance cannot be the result of threats and fear, but has to come from a realisation of guilt and a wish and hope for a new reconciled relationship based on forgiveness (cf. Acts 2:38).

49. **Justice** is essential to the work of reconciliation. Three kinds of justice are needed. First, there is **retributive justice**, where wrongdoers are held accountable for their actions. This is important both for acknowledging that wrong has been done, and as a statement that such wrongdoing will not be tolerated in the future. Retributive justice should be the task of the legally constituted state. Punishment outside that forum can be renegade action or sheer revenge, and should be avoided. If the state itself is implicated in the corruption, it may be possible to achieve retributive justice by means of non-violent protest¹¹. This will require great personal sacrifice.

50. Second, there is **restorative justice**, in which what has been taken wrongfully from victims is restored, either directly or in some symbolic way. This may be by reparation or compensation. In Luke's gospel, the story of Zacchaeus's encounter with Jesus (19: 1-10) shows how an authentic repentance resulting from meeting Christ can lead to a radical form of restitution. In other cases, for example when the perpetrator or victim has died, some other statement of reconciliation may need to be found - such as a public memorial.

51. And finally, there is **structural justice**, whereby the institutions of society are reformed to prevent instances of injustice from happening in the future. Dimensions of restorative and structural justice often need special attention. For example, to achieve economic justice, reform of global trade laws and the mechanisms of trade will be necessary. Gender justice will require attending to the special contributions of women to overcoming injustice and retaining right relations. To overcome sexism and racism structural reform will be necessary. In recent years, the need for ecological justice has come to the fore as well.

52. The Holy Spirit spoke through the prophets of old against injustice and anointed Jesus Christ to bring freedom to the oppressed (Luke 4:18-19). The Spirit gives gifts of prophecy and boldness today as Christians struggle especially to aid in the process of restorative justice, and work toward the reforms that structural justice require. Biblical images of covenant - care for all, and right relations between God and humanity - support efforts for these reforms of society. These are illustrated by the collection from the churches taken up by the Apostle Paul to Jerusalem so that there might be "equality" between the churches in the mutual meeting of one another's needs (2 Cor. 8:14).

53. **Forgiveness** is often considered a specifically religious dimension of reconciling and healing. It is important to realize that forgiveness does not mean condoning past wrongdoing, or even foregoing punishment. Forgiveness acknowledges what has happened in the past, but seeks a different relationship both to the wrongdoer and to the deed. Without forgiveness, we remain locked in our relationships to the past and cannot have a different kind of future.

54. Along with having a Christian vision of the whole, seeking reconciliation for the human community today requires interaction with the different communities of faith. For us as Christians, this will call for some knowledge of how the other great religious traditions envision healing and wholeness, since many situations will require our acting together. In those situations also, we as Christians must be able to communicate our own contribution to the common task. Many cultures have their own spiritual and ritual resources for bringing about reconciliation and healing. Whenever possible, these need to be incorporated into our work toward reconciliation.

55. Forgiveness has special import for Christians. We believe that it is God who forgives sin (Mark 2:7-12). Jesus came among us preaching the forgiveness of sins (Luke 24:47), pointing to the graciousness of God and the possibility of overcoming the past for the sake of a different kind of future. Personal experience of acceptance and grace can be life-changing, inspiring individuals to reach out in love to others and transform society, as the story of Zacchaeus illustrates. After his resurrection, when he breathed the Holy Spirit into his disciples, Jesus sent them out with a ministry of forgiveness (John 20:21-23).

56. Forgiveness by God is bound up with our willingness to forgive others (see Matt. 6:12,14-15). Because of this, Christians often say that we should "forgive and forget." We can never forget wrongdoing, as though it never happened. To ask victims to do this would be to demean them once again. We can never forget, but we can remember in a different way - a way that allows for a different relationship to the past and to the wrongdoer. That is what we are called to as Christians.

57. **Love** (*agape*) is the most characteristic feature of Christianity. The triune God, the Three-in-One expresses the perfect union of distinct persons, the supreme love, which encompasses everything. God reveals and manifests Godself as love, because God is love (John 3: 16; 1 John 4:7-21). Being created according to God's image and recreated through baptism, God's love "has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us" (Rom. 5:5; cf. Gal. 5: 22). That is why the commandment to love our enemies (Matt. 5: 44) is not a commandment that is impossible to fulfill. God never asks from us what God did not give already. To love the enemies is simultaneously God's gift and the human personal contribution, "the more excellent way" (1 Cor. 12:31; 13: 1-8) which brings us to a holy life, to conformity with Christ, our model (Gal. 4:19), to his way of being and thinking: "We have the mind of Christ" (1 Cor. 2:16). Love encompasses the whole process of reconciliation as the very sign of its authenticity.

58. Truth, memory, repentance, justice, forgiveness and love are important and essential elements for holistic complete and true reconciliation. Experience has however shown that reconciliation is **not always complete**. Most of the stories told in the Bible are not stories of full reconciliation. The well-known stories of Sarah and Hagar, Jacob and Esau, Rachel and Leah, leave us wondering whether the characters were truly reconciled. Even the parable of the prodigal son makes no mention of the reconciliation between the two brothers. Most situations of intense conflict result in some reservations on either side that hinder complete

acceptance and reconciliation. This is not to suggest that true reconciliation cannot take place, but rather to acknowledge that the reconciliatory process can take long, perhaps even a life time or longer for the eradication of hurt, suspicion and anger.

59. Another dimension of this is that the perpetrator of conflict may never repent, or seek forgiveness even after the period of conflict. Stories from South Africa and several other parts of the world attest to this fact. In such instances, victims may have to find ways to cope with the situation by moving away from the site of oppression, a form of resistance. The victim then often realises that forgiveness may have to be given even when repentance is not forthcoming nor forgiveness sought by the perpetrator. The victim however must become able to live on and cope with the situation. Carrying around feelings of anger, hurt and bitterness is detrimental to the self and growth of the individual or community. There are other situations where the perpetrator is really seeking forgiveness, but does not receive it. In such cases, the perpetrator is the one who must find other ways to resolve his or her guilt. It can also happen that the victim needs to forgive him- or herself for having allowed something to happen and for having shown complicity in systems of oppression. It is important that such dimensions of the perpetrator's or victim's experience be duly considered in the dynamics of reconciliation.

60. Whether at social, community or personal level reconciliation and healing are *goals* we seek within the ambivalence and brokenness of human existence. These goals are inspired by the biblical vision of the eschatological restoration of the original *shalom*, *the promised final realisation of the kingdom of God*, when all will have been healed, made whole again and united in God. In contemporary human history, we may hope to reach levels of reconciliation or healing, or justice, peace, and the integrity of creation. Whereas the vision of full reconciliation and healing embraces the totality of God's creation, our contribution is limited as is our vision. But we are called to give corporate signs of God's reconciliation, for in so doing we renew hope. Indeed, seeking reconciliation and healing in our world requires a constant moving back and forth between imagining reconciliation within human life, society and creation as a goal and as the process of reaching that goal. This may be a long and difficult struggle and it cannot be carried through unless it is in a spirit of love that "bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things" (1 Cor. 13:7). In the process we do not lose hope and, at the same time, focus our participation in the reconciling and healing work of the Holy Spirit in the whole creation.

4) The reconciling mission of the church

61. The Holy Spirit transforms the church and empowers it to be missional: "The Holy Spirit transforms Christians into living, courageous and bold witnesses (cf. Acts 1:8)"¹². Therefore, for the church, mission is not an option but an imperative: "Mission is central to Christian faith and theology. It is not an option but is rather an existential calling and vocation. Mission is constitutive of and conditions the very being of the church and of all Christians". The church is by nature called to participate in God's mission: "Through Christ in the Holy Spirit □ participating in God's mission □ should be natural for all Christians and all churches"¹³ (cf. the reference to the priestly ministry of the community in I Peter 2:2-12).

62. The church's mission in the power of the Spirit is to work for reconciliation and healing in the context of brokenness. Reconciliation constitutes an important focus and characteristic of the mission of God which bears consequences for the church's mission: "The church is sent into the world to reconcile humanity and renew creation by calling people and nations to repentance, announcing forgiveness of sin and a new beginning in relations with God and

with neighbours through Jesus Christ"¹⁴. We expect full reconciliation as the establishment of *shalom* by God at the end of time that is the creation - or re-creation - of harmonious and just relationships. It is a holistic process, initiated by God and extended to the whole creation, both human and non-human. As we and all creation struggle for freedom from our bondage to decay, "the Spirit helps us in our weakness □ [and] intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words" (Rom. 8:22-26). In a context of broken relationships in the world today, the specific challenge for the church is to grasp more deeply the gift of God's reconciliation in its life and ministry on behalf of the whole created order.

Reconciliation in the context of brokenness

63. The primary broken relationship is between *God* and humanity. The gospel of reconciliation is a call to turn to God, to be converted to God and to renew our faith in the One who constantly invites us to be in communion with Godself, with one another and with the whole creation. We rejoice that through our Saviour Jesus Christ, this reconciliation has been made possible: "Through our Lord Jesus Christ we have now received our reconciliation" (Rom. 5:11). We are called to extend this reconciliation to the rest of the world in mission and to join our energies with that of the Spirit of God in creation.

64. At the heart of the brokenness today is the distortion and destruction of the integral bond that existed in the divine order, between humanity and the rest of *creation*. The human-centred separation of human and non-human creation has led to a tendency of some parts of humanity to conquer and destroy nature. Much of the ecological crisis we face today may be attributed to a lack of respect for life and the integrity of creation. An ecological healing - or "ecociliation" - is what Christians envisage: the reconciliation of "all things, whether on earth or in heaven" (Col. 1:20). In the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed we confess the Holy Spirit as the lord and the giver of life. Mission in the Spirit warrants a new perspective - a life-centred approach that will cause the earth to flourish and sustain human communities. This model of cosmic reconciliation and healing provides a powerful basis for reconciliation among humanity.

65. Brokenness is also felt in the area of *human relationships*. The image of God is distorted in estrangement and enmity, which is often related to power structures. These are manifested concretely in manifold forms of discrimination in the world at large on the bases of caste, race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, and socio-economic status. Mission in terms of reconciliation and healing in this context is about going beyond and transcending such frontiers and thereby restoring the consciousness of the image of God in humanity. In real terms, the mission of the churches is to strive to work in common for the dismantling of divisive walls - those within the church as well as outside. This means taking part in ecumenical attempts at reconciliation within and among churches and in people's struggles for reconstruction of society on the basis of justice and human rights, as well as providing a space for dialogue and debate where society or the churches remain profoundly divided. The body of Christ is endowed with various spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12:8-10; see also Rom. 12:6-8). Exercised in the spirit of love (1 Cor. 13:1-3; Rom. 12:9-10), these build up the community and express its reconciled unity in diversity.

66. In a context where there are victims and perpetrators of injustice and exploitation, the church has a particular missionary role to play, namely that of a *bridge-builder*, between the poor and the rich, women and men, black and white, and so on. The Holy Spirit has been described as "the Go-Between God"¹⁵ because of the Spirit's role in creating and sustaining

communion (Eph. 2:18, 4:3). The "go-between" or "in between" position is not to be construed as a value-neutral position but acknowledged as a rather risky and costly position to be in. While taking the sides of the victims, the church also has the mission of reaching out to the victimizers with the challenges of the gospel. Mission at the point of "in betweenness" is simultaneously a mission of empowering the powerless by accompanying them and also of challenging the perpetrators of hurt to repent. In this way it becomes a mission of mutual life-giving.

67. Brokenness is also sadly a mark of today's *church*. The divisions among churches, both doctrinal and non-theological, are a challenge to the mission of reconciliation and healing. A divided church is an aberration of the body of Christ (1 Cor. 1:13) and grieves the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:25-32). If churches are not able to reconcile one with the other, they are failing the gospel call and will lack credibility in witness. "Sent to a world in need of unity and greater interdependence amidst the competition and fragmentation of the human community, the Church is called to be sign and instrument of God's reconciling love... Divisions among Christians are a counter-witness to Christ and contradict their witness to reconciliation in Christ."¹⁶ There has been a particular tendency of churches and Christian movements to split in and over mission work during the last century. Competition and conflict in mission, in development or inter-church aid, as well as proselytism, have proved to be a serious counter-witness to Christ's reconciling work. Christians and churches are called to undertake or strengthen reconciliation processes among themselves. There are signs of some theological convergence between opposed mission movements in recent years. And churches themselves have made significant progress towards shared baptism, eucharist and ministry and also toward common witness. We hope that these will lead to renewed relationships. The gospel of reconciliation is shared with integrity if the church is a reconciled and healing community.

68. If the goal and process of mission is to be reconciliation, it is imperative that the church revisit its past and engages in some introspection and self-examination about its *mission* in the world. Any credible mission by the church has to begin with the confession that not all of her mission has been a reflection of the mission which God has intended and which Godself carries out (*missio Dei*). If we have declared the love of God while hating our brother or sister, we are liars (1 John 4:20). Where Christian missionary enterprise was - and still is - complicit in an imperialistic project involving violence, causing destruction of indigenous cultures, fragmentation of communities and even division among Christians, it calls for repentance (*metanoia*). Repentance requires the confession of the sin of violent colonization in the name of the gospel. This is important for the "healing of memories", which is an integral part of the mission of reconciliation and healing. The church must take care to dress the wounds of the past (cf. Jer. 6:14 f).

69. While we confess these sins, we also acknowledge the fact that there has been, and is, much genuine Christian mission in the spirit of peace and reconciliation. Such mission results in peace with God, healed lives, restored communities and the socio-economic liberation of marginalized peoples.

Spirituality of reconciliation

70. Mission in terms of reconciliation and healing calls for a corresponding spirituality: one that is healing, transforming, liberating, and builds relationships of mutual respect. A genuine spirituality for reconciliation and healing reflects the interaction of faith and praxis that constitutes witness (*martyria*). Witness presupposes a spirituality of self-examination and

confession of sins (*metanoia*), leading to proclamation (*kerygma*) of the gospel of reconciliation, service (*diakonia*) in love, worship (*leiturgia*) in truth, and teaching of justice. The exercise of these spiritual gifts builds up reconciled communities (*koinonia*).¹⁷

71. The spirituality of reconciliation is one of humility and self-emptying (*kenosis*; Phil. 2:7), and at the same time an experience of the Holy Spirit's sanctifying and transforming power. In his struggle to reconcile Jews and Gentiles and other factions, the Apostle Paul declared that God's power is made perfect in weakness (2 Cor. 12:9; 1 Cor. 2:3-5). The spirituality of reconciliation is the spirituality of passion, resurrection as well as of Pentecost. In the global context of the return of imperialism - especially in the form of the hegemonic power of globalisation - this self-emptying spirituality is a challenge both to the victims and perpetrators of systemic violence and injustice. The treasure we have is "in earthen vessels, to show that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us" (2 Cor. 4:7). The church's mission in this context is once again to be in the "in betweenness" - between the wielders of power and the powerless - to empower the powerless and also challenge the powerful to empty themselves of their power and privileges for the sake of the dis-empowered. The spirituality of reconciliation challenges the power structures of local communities, including the churches, in particular where traditional majority or folk churches act in a hegemonious way.

72. A self-emptying spirituality is also a spirituality of cross-bearing. The church is called to bear the cross of Jesus Christ, by being with the suffering.¹⁸ A spirituality of non-violent resistance is an integral aspect of reconciliation and healing in an age of continuing exploitation of the poor and the marginalized. In situations of oppression, discrimination and hurt, the cross of Christ is the power of God for salvation (1 Cor. 1:18).

73. The sacraments and liturgical life of the church should express the mission of reconciliation and healing. Baptism is an act of sharing in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is symbolic of the spirituality of cross-bearing, which is both a dying to self (Mark 8:34 and parallels) and a raising up to life (John 3:14, etc.). The eucharist is a sacramental act of healing, an act of remembrance, and a re-enactment of the breaking of the body of Christ for the sake of cosmic reconciliation. The bread of God, which comes down from heaven, gives life to the world (John 6:33). The sharing out of the bread and the wine among all calls for redistribution of wealth and the equality of the kingdom that Jesus Christ proclaimed. In prayer, the church intercedes with God for the world, standing in the "in betweenness" in faith that God will bring reconciliation and healing. In preaching the word, the church brings comfort to the downtrodden, proclaims truth and justice, and calls all to repentance and forgiveness. The church's worship is itself a witness to the world of reconciliation in Christ, and in the power of the Spirit the church lives out this eucharistic witness in daily life.

74. Spiritual resources for reconciliation and healing are not confined to Christian faith traditions. This challenges us to take the inter faith dimensions of mission seriously, for reconciliation and healing in the holistic sense cannot be achieved without reconciliation amongst various faiths and cultures. One way of doing this is to appreciate and learn from the spiritual resources available in other faiths and cultures. Other traditions and experiences of healing and reconciliation, including those of indigenous communities, are of great value.

75. The recent ecumenical statement on dialogue reminds us that "interreligious dialogue is not an instrument to resolve problems instantly in emergency situations"¹⁹. However, in times of conflict the relationships built up by patient dialogue during peacetime may prevent

religion from being used as a weapon and, in many cases, pave the way for mediation and reconciliation initiatives. Dialogue presupposes mutual recognition, it signifies a willingness to reconcile and desire to live together. A process of dialogue can build up trust and allow for mutual witness, in this way it may be a means of healing. However, while dialogue is important, issues of truth, memory, repentance, justice, forgiveness and love may need to be addressed before dialogue is possible. The "in betweenness" of the missionary praxis means that in some situations what is called for is the prophetic power of the gospel to critique religious practices and beliefs that promote injustice and to bring about repentance.

76. The ministry of the Holy Spirit - in which the church is privileged to share - is to heal and reconcile a broken world. In order to exercise this mission with integrity, the church must be a community that is experiencing healing and reconciliation in Christ. The spirituality of reconciliation is self-emptying and cross-bearing in order that the saving power of God may be demonstrated. The Holy Spirit endows the church with gifts and resources for this ministry and, in the spirit of dialogue, Christians are open to appreciate the resources that people of other faiths bring to it. The mission of the church involves going between the parties that are estranged or in conflict. This means accompanying them in their struggles and at the same time challenging the powers of injustice and violence to bring about reconciliation. The goal is to build up reconciled and healing communities which are again missional in commitment and practical ministry.

5) Equipping for reconciliation: pedagogy, pastoralia and vision

77. In the mission of reconciliation we are inspired by the gospel vision of peace on earth (Luke 2:14). In his preaching of the kingdom of God in both word and deed, our lord Jesus Christ showed us what the kingdom of God is like. It is the kingdom of truth and justice, repentance and forgiveness, in which the first are last and the leaders are servants of all. In the epistles, the apostles taught the churches how to be communities of reconciliation. These bring forth the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal. 5:22-23). Members are called to love one another, live at peace with one another, and bless those who persecute them, leaving vengeance to God (Rom. 12:9-21).

78. However, many have proclaimed peace where there is no peace and only superficially treated the deep wounds caused by broken relationships and injustice (Jer. 6:14). Any pedagogical and pastoral approach to mission has to acknowledge the fact that the ministry of healing and reconciliation is a profound and often lengthy process that therefore requires long-term strategies (Rom. 8:25). Once the church believes that mission belongs to God, and that it is not a frenzied activity initiated by the church, then the church's mission will be oriented towards the long-term goal of creating communities of reconciliation and healing. The realization of our hope requires patience, pastoral sensitivity and an appropriate educational method.

79. Our sense of being human is key to this educational process. Human beings are essentially relational beings, linked together and active in the web of life. For our survival, we depend on one another and therefore we need to live in just relationships of trust and build communities of reconciliation and healing. From a Christian anthropological perspective, human beings are also forgiven beings, forgiven by God. Forgiveness as a theological category has ethical ramifications. The ministry of reconciliation and healing through forgiveness involves truth telling and justice. In other words, the pedagogy of justice is what makes forgiveness a radical

concept. Forgiveness that undermines justice is not Christian forgiveness. Costly discipleship, which is integral to the ministry of healing and reconciliation, has to be justice oriented.

80. Compassion for the broken and concern for life in all its fullness are the pastoral modes of Christian mission. One of the most important sources for learning about this ministry is the immense wealth of people's day-to-day life experience, especially that of the poor and the vulnerable. The church's involvement in people's life experiences, in their struggles to affirm life wherever it is denied, is perhaps the best learning process. Through this pedagogy of shared memories, the church will be enabled to carry out its mission effectively.

81. Whereas the emphasis is being put in this document on social reconciliation processes, insights can be drawn for renewing and strengthening the pastoral approach to conflicts between individual persons in family, work place and church. Reconciliation between persons also needs to address questions of truth, healing of memories, repentance, justice, forgiveness and love. Pastors, priests as well as lay members of the community have the most important and difficult task to find ways to journey with persons who suffer from deep wounds left by the hardship of life or inter-personal conflicts, to offer them a safe space for expressing their vulnerability, anger, helplessness, suffering and yearning. At personal level, too, to follow Christ's call to reconciliation may entail a long journey or process, needing time and the capacity to cope with success and failures, moments of hope and of despair, putting faith to the test. Not all churches have kept the tradition of the sacrament of confession and reconciliation, but all are encouraged to find a way to envisage their pastoral ministry in terms of the understanding of mission described in this document.

82. This pastoral healing ministry must be embedded in a community life where people find a home and a safe space in which joys and pains can be shared openly, where those feeling vulnerable find enough security to express what burdens them, a community in which love overcomes fear and judgement. Such communities, nourished by the celebration of the eucharist, become then as such missionary entities, because the gospel which is preached is also lived and experienced. That such communities also have a role to play in society and be welcoming even to those who are not regular members was forcefully described by Paul in Romans 12. That passage also reminds us that a reconciling and healing mission may lead to suffer persecution. Since Christ, many missionary persons and communities have also been victims of violence and discrimination. But even in such cases, the commandment to love is to be the overarching characteristic of Christian witness to God's reconciliation.

83. Equipping for mission in a paradigm of reconciliation has significant implications for existing models of theological and mission education and training. Imbuing the church with a pedagogy of justice and a compassionate pastoral theology brings challenges for both the content and the mode of instruction. As Christians engaging in a ministry of reconciliation we will continue to require the knowledge of language, culture and religious traditions that will help us enter into the experience of others and serve them. However, equally importantly, we will need a theology and spirituality of reconciliation. We should together develop a theological understanding of how God effects reconciliation in the world and Christians' part in it. The church needs to learn and teach the dynamics and processes of reconciliation and the importance of the different dimensions of reconciliation ministry: establishing the truth, healing the memory, doing justice, receiving forgiveness and forgiving others. In order to overcome the contemporary culture of violence and counter the myth of redemptive violence, the church must demonstrate in its life and witness that justice and redemption is achieved through a non-violent resistance. This requires a spirituality of reconciliation that is self-

emptying and cross-bearing for the sake of justice. We also have a responsibility to use and develop the spiritual gifts that, used in the spirit of love, build up community and overcome disunity and enmity (1 Cor. 12:8-10, 13:1-3; see also Rom. 12:6-10).

84. The main theme of the 2005 Conference on World Mission and Evangelism, "Come, Holy Spirit, heal and reconcile" calls our attention to the mission of the Spirit. According to St John's Gospel, the Holy Spirit who proceeds from the Father, is the *parakletos*, who accompanies us in our brokenness. The Spirit, the intercessor, is in the "in betweenness", going between the Father, the Son and all creation. The *parakletos* is the Spirit of truth who leads us into all truth and interprets to us the teaching of Jesus. The Holy Spirit unites us to God the Father and the Son and makes us part of the *missio Dei* to bring life to the world. The Spirit teaches us to abide in Christ and to love one another, thus witnessing to the love of Christ. In a situation of enmity, the Spirit comforts us and gives us courage to speak and declare the word of God. The *parakletos* consoles the suffering and convinces the world of sin and righteousness and God's judgement. The Spirit, who is our counsellor, is the Spirit of peace in a violent world (John 14:15-16:15).

85. The *parakletos* provides a model and the medium for the church's ministry of reconciliation. The Holy Spirit heals and reconciles by coming alongside to inspire, enlighten and empower. In the Spirit, we are enabled to affirm what is true and at the same time to discern what is false and evil. The Spirit binds us together and in the Spirit we enjoy true communion and fellowship (2 Cor. 13:13). Though for a little while we, and all creation, groan like a woman in childbirth, the Spirit is our midwife and when the mission is accomplished we believe that our sorrow will turn to joy at the new life of reconciliation (John 16:20-22; Rom. 8:18-25).

The final vision

86. At the very end of the Bible, in the Book of Revelation, St John set down the vision given to him of the new heaven and new earth, the new creation that is the result of God's reconciling work in Christ (Rev. 21:1,5; cf. 2 Cor. 5:17-18). The New Jerusalem is the reconciled city where God dwells with God's people. In this city there is no longer any mourning or crying or pain because justice has been done; nor is there any darkness because everything is in the light of the glory of God. Through the centre of the city runs the river of life for the healing of the nations (Rev. 21:1-22:5). In the field of world mission we can, therefore, speak of the "oekoumene which is to come" (Heb. 2:5 cf. 13:14ff.), as an open society, where an honest dialogue between the existing living cultures can take place. The world today can and must become a *household* (*oikos*), where everyone is open to the "other" (as they are open to the Ultimate Other, i.e. God), and where all can share a common life, despite the plurality and difference of their identity. Reconciliation as a new mission paradigm results in a new understanding of the term *oekoumene* and its derivatives (ecumenism etc.). These terms no longer exclusively refer to an abstract universality, such as the entire inhabited world, or the whole human race, or even a united universal church. In other words they no longer describe a given situation, but substantial - and at the same time threatened - relations between churches, between cultures, between people and human societies, and at the same time between humanity and the rest of God's creation.

6) Questions for further study and discussion

87. This attempt toward a theology of mission as reconciliation raises a number of questions that will need further and more detailed attention. These include:

What are the practical implications of the call for economic reconciliation? What are the processes that can bring Muslim-Christian reconciliation in the present context? What contributions does Pentecostal and charismatic thinking and experience make to mission theology of reconciliation? In what ways can the theology of the Holy Spirit (pneumatology) further aid the practice of and reflection on reconciliation? How does a renewed focus on pneumatology transform humankind's relation with creation? What changes does mission as reconciliation suggest to existing paradigms of mission? In particular, what does it mean for the understanding of conversion? How can the importance of the spirit of reconciliation in mission be effectively communicated to those using aggressive missionary methods? How can we resource and develop appropriate ways to equip local churches to become reconciling and healing communities? How can the churches support those specially called and gifted in the ministry of reconciliation?

Notes

[1](#) *Mission and Evangelism. An Ecumenical Affirmation*. Geneva, WCC, 1982. Approved by the Central Committee of the WCC.

[2](#) *Mission and Evangelism in Unity Today*. CWME Conference Preparatory Paper No 1. Statement adopted as a study document by the CWME Commission in the year 2000.

[3](#) During the Salvador conference, a particularly important and moving celebration took place at the Solar do Unhão dock, the place where the ships loaded with slaves and coming from Africa landed. Representatives from both European and African origin expressed repentance from participation in the sin of slavery and asked for forgiveness. Cf. Jean S. Stromberg, "From Each Culture, with One Voice. Worship at Salvador" in: Christopher Duraisingh (ed.), *Called to One Hope. The Gospel in Diverse Cultures*. Geneva, WCC, 1998, pp. 166- 176.

[4](#) Christopher Duraisingh (ed), *Called to One Hope. Op.cit.*, pp. 27 and 28. Acts of commitment of the 1996 world mission conference in Salvador da Bahia, Brazil.

[5](#) *Mission and Evangelism in Unity Today, op.cit.*, § 39.

[6](#) *Ibid.*, § 13.

[7](#) WCC Unit II, Churches in Mission: Education, Health, Witness: *Preparatory Papers for Section Work, Conference on World Mission and Evangelism, Salvador da Bahia*. Geneva, WCC, 1996, p. 19. *Mission and Evangelism in Unity Today, op.cit.*, § 62

[8](#) As in South Africa

[9](#) As in Guatemala

[10](#) The murder of Bishop Gerardi in Guatemala after he announced the results of such a report is a chilling reminder of this.

[11](#) As for example the "mothers of the disappeared" in Argentina

[12](#) *Mission and Evangelism in Unity Today, op.cit.* § 13

[13](#) *Ibid.*, §§ 9 and 13

[14](#) *Ibid.*, §14

[15](#) Reference to John V. Taylor *The Go-Between God: the Holy Spirit and Christian Mission*. London, SCM, 1972

[16](#) "The Challenge of Proselytism and the Calling to Common Witness", Appendix C of the 7th *Report of the Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches*, Geneva-Rome 1998, p. 45, §§ 8 and 9

[17](#) *Mission and Evangelism in Unity Today, op.cit.* §7

[18](#) For example, the "Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel" aims to be with Palestinians and Israelis in their non-violent actions and concerted advocacy efforts to end the occupation.

[19](#) *Ecumenical considerations for dialogue and relations with people of other religions. Taking stock of 30 years of dialogue and revisiting the 1979 guidelines*, Geneva, WCC, 2003, §28