

Together towards Life

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Mission and Evangelism
in Changing Landscapes

with a Practical Guide

Edited by Jooseop Keum



**World Council
of Churches**
Publications

TOGETHER TOWARDS LIFE

Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes

- with a Practical Guide

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Foreword

The new World Council of Churches (WCC) ecumenical affirmation on mission and evangelism, *Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes*, was prepared by the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME) and was unanimously approved as an official statement of the WCC by the central committee at its meeting on the island of Crete, Greece, on 5 September 2012. The CWME is thankful to God that the world church and mission bodies of the WCC have been able to reach a common understanding of and commitment to God's mission today. The commission is also grateful that the affirmation is provoking fresh interest in the new vision of ecumenical mission thinking and action.

After the central committee's approval, CWME organized a consultation in January 2013, Kochi, India. The aim was to translate the new concepts brought by the affirmation into missional actions in local congregations, mission organizations and missiological formation. Based on the consultation, *A Practical Guide* on the new statement has been produced by the commission. Therefore, this book consists of three components:

- Part One is the new WCC affirmation on mission and evangelism, *Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes*.
- Part Two is *A Practical Guide* to the affirmation approved by CWME.

- The third component is a DVD that contains video clips on the history and activities of CWME, the eight preparatory study reports to the new statement, and the centenary issue of the *International Review of Mission* (IRM).

This book is meant to enable reflection, study and application of the new mission statement. Therefore, CWME would like to invite all people who are interested, who are committed to God's mission, to take up the new vision and direction of mission that has been produced by the new mission statement.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Metropolitan Dr Geervarghese Mor Coorilos, CWME moderator; to Prof. Kirsteen Kim, vice-moderator; as well as to the commissioners, staff and all the working group members for their tireless and creative work, over the past several years, in developing the new ecumenical statement. My deepest appreciation goes to Rev. Prof. Kenneth Ross, Ms Eva Christina Nilsson and Rev. Dr Roderick Hewitt, who have enormously contributed to and successfully compiled the guide. My special thanks to Mr. Coetzee Zietsman, who produced the CWME videos and edited the DVD. Wiley-Blackwell has kindly given permission to use material from two recent issues of *International Review of Mission*, 100.2 and 101.1, on the DVD.

I hope that this book will inspire churches, mission bodies and practitioners to a renewed commitment to God's mission today and tomorrow. A new milestone is set up! Let us journey together towards life in the mission of the Holy Spirit!

Jooseop Keum

Secretary

Commission on World Mission and Evangelism

**Together towards Life:
Mission and Evangelism
in Changing Landscapes**

New Affirmation on Mission and Evangelism

New WCC Affirmation on Mission and Evangelism
Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME)

The Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME) has, since the WCC Porto Alegre assembly in 2006, been working toward and contributing to the construction of a new ecumenical mission affirmation. The new statement will be presented to the WCC 10th Assembly at Busan, Republic of Korea, in 2013. Since the integration of the International Missionary Council (IMC) and the World Council of Churches (WCC) in New Delhi in 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 was unanimously approved by the WCC central committee on 5 September 2012 at its meeting on the island of Crete, Greece. It is the aim of this new 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 (Gen. 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 the 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 the spiritual commitment of people, is capable of transforming the

1. Unless otherwise indicated, Bible quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV). Abbreviations used for other translations include KJV (Authorized/King James Version), NIV (New International Version), and REB (Revised English Bible).

world in God's grace. How can we reclaim mission as a 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 "unreached 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 either are living or have their origins in the global South and East.² Migration has become a worldwide, multi-directional phenomenon which is reshaping 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 the envisioning of mission has strong biblical foundations because God chose the poor, the foolish, and the powerless (1 Cor. 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?

2. See Todd M. Johnson and Kenneth R. Ross eds., *Atlas of Global Christianity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009).

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 interfaith dialogue and cross-cultural communication is therefore indispensable. What are the ecumenical convictions regarding common witnessing and practicing 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 (Gen. 1:2), being the source of life and the breath of humankind (Gen. 2:7). In the Hebrew Bible, the Spirit led the people of God—inspiring wisdom (Prov. 8), empowering prophecy (Is. 61:1), stirring life

from dry bones (Ezek. 37), prompting dreams (Joel 2), and bringing renewal as the glory of the Lord in the temple (2 Chron. 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 (Rom. 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 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 Cor. 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 on the role of the Holy Spirit in mission emphasizes the Holy Spirit as fully dependent on Christ, as the Paraclete and the one who will come as Counselor and Advocate only after Christ has gone to the Father. The Holy Spirit is seen as the continuing presence of Christ, his agent to fulfill the task of mission. This understanding leads to a missiology focusing on sending out and going forth. Therefore, a pneumatological focus on Christian mission recognizes 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; it proclaims 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. This 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 (Gen. 4:10).

3. See Ion Bria, *The Liturgy after the Liturgy: Mission and Witness from an Orthodox Perspective* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1996). The term was originally coined by Archbishop Anastasios Yannoulatos and widely publicized by Ion Bria.

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 Cor. 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 (Is. 11:1-9; 25:6-10; 66:22; Rev. 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 believe falsely that 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 practice 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 in the Bible affirms creation's praise of its Creator (Ps. 9:1-4; 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 that 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 Cor. 12:8-10; Rom. 12:6-8; Eph. 4:11) which are to be shared for the building up of others (1 Cor. 12:7; 14:26) and the reconciliation of the whole creation (Rom. 8:19-23). One of the gifts of the Spirit is discernment of spirits (1 Cor. 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 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, Heb. 1:14), “principalities” and “powers” (Eph. 6:12), the beast (Rev. 13:1-7), and other powers—both good and evil. The apostle Paul also testifies to some spiritual struggle (Eph. 6:10-18; 2 Cor. 10:4-6) and other apostolic writings contain injunctions to resist the devil (James 4:7; 1 Pet. 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 (Is. 11:3; Eph. 1:17) and guides us 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 are life-affirming are gifts from God's Spirit. We lift up testimonies of peoples whose traditions have been scorned and mocked by theologians and scientists, yet whose 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, and self-control (Gal. 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 toward 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” (Matt. 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 Tim. 2:11-12). In situations of oppression, discrimination, and hurt, the cross of Christ is the

4. *Alternative Globalization Addressing Peoples and Earth (AGAPE): A Background Document* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2005), 13.

5. World Alliance of Reformed Churches, *The Accra Confession: Covenanting for Justice: in the Economy and the Earth* (2004), §10.

power of God for salvation (1 Cor. 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. To experience life in the Spirit is to taste life in its fullness. We are called to witness to a movement toward life, celebrating all that the Spirit continues to call into being, walking in solidarity in order to cross the rivers of despair and anxiety (Ps. 23, Is. 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 is 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

6. Edinburgh 2010, *Common Call* (2010), § 4.