

Introduction

General councils are an opportunity for Alliance churches to review past work, listen to God speaking to us about the challenges of our time, and plan for our future. This is both a constitutional and a moral responsibility.

To fashion a future for the Alliance requires us to read the signs of our times; to know where we have come from; and to understand ourselves and our purposes, and why we do what we currently do.

From Debrecen to Accra

From Debrecen to Accra reports on the life and work of the Alliance between the 23rd and 24th general councils. It outlines how the Alliance family in this period has responded to God's call and shared in the *missio dei*. The opening chapters cover the four main themes of our engagement with the world: mission, justice, unity and leadership development. Other chapters describe the gathering process for Accra, the life of the Alliance in the regions, communication and finance.

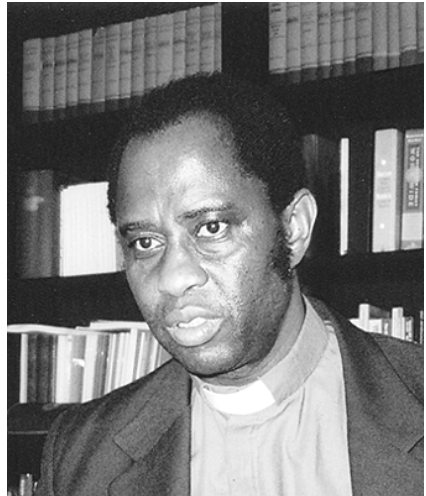
The Alliance was served in this period by two general secretaries. Milan Opocensky of the Evangelical Church of the Czech Brethren was general secretary for over a decade, 1989-2000, and initiated much of the work reported here. Setri Nyomi of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Ghana, took over as general secretary in April 2000, and built upon the work that had begun.

The Alliance beyond 2004

The Alliance beyond 2004 is intended to help our churches engage in the search for an effective and relevant future for the Alliance, building on the good work of the past.

The heart of *The Alliance beyond 2004* is its third part; but this cannot be read independently of the first two parts. We begin by listening to the churches. Based on feedback from the regions, we draw out some global trends that need to inform the work of the Alliance.

In the second part, we outline the historical and current work done by the Alliance, within its self-understanding as an ecumenical confessional body and in response to challenges in the past and present. This part goes back



beyond the last seven years to provide brief historical explanations for our life and programmes.

These two parts together set the stage for the third part of *The Alliance beyond 2004*, which deals with our future as an Alliance responding together to God's call today. Part three sets forth a vision for the Alliance in the decade following Accra. It is a vision open to discussion. It presents some possibilities and raises many questions.

We offer these to our constituency as discussion starters. We hope that as you read and respond with concrete suggestions, all of us together can help discern what the priorities of the Alliance ought to be and discover ways of working that engage our family more deeply. Your feedback will help to move the Alliance in a direction we can all own and commit ourselves to. We invite your critical and constructive response.

Readers who are new to the Alliance may find it helpful to begin with the short history of the Alliance and the second part of *The Alliance beyond 2004*, on what the Alliance is and does and how it is ecumenically engaged.

Setri Nyomi, general secretary