

Called to Communion and Common Witness

**Report of the Joint Working Group between
the Lutheran World Federation and
the World Alliance of Reformed Churches
(1999 – 2001)**

LWF

WARC

Geneva, 2002

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Table of Contents

Introduction	7
I. Lutheran-Reformed Developments in Recent Years	9
1. Developing Communion at Regional Level	9
a) United States: The Formula of Agreement	9
b) Indonesia: Towards a United Church	10
c) New Developments in the Leuenberg Fellowship	10
d) Further Developments at National Level	11
2. Other Patterns of Relationship	12
3. Lutheran and Reformed Agreements with Third Parties	13
a) The Meissen Agreement	14
b) The Reuilly Common Statement	14
c) Churches Uniting in Christ	15
4. The Wider Context of Lutheran and Reformed Interconfessional Dialogues	16
II. Developing Visible Structures of Communion	17
1. <i>Satis est</i>	17
2. Proclamation and Communion	18
3. Communion and Commitment to Justice	18
4. Local—Universal	19
5. Diverse Bilateral Ecumenical Commitments	19
6. Oversight (<i>episkopé</i>)	20
7. The World Council of Churches	20
III. Present State of Collaboration between the Lutheran World Federation and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches ...	21
1. Contact and Cooperation at the Level of the Secretariats in Geneva	21
2. Joint Studies and Consultations	22
a) Economic Injustice and Ecological Destruction	22
b) Church Structures in Times of Global Transformations ...	23
c) Indulgences	23

Called to Communion and Common Witness

d) The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification
in a Wider Ecumenical Framework 23

3. Human Rights 24

4. Other Areas of Collaboration 24

IV. LWF-WARC Relations: New Steps in Deepening Communion 25

1. Declaring Mutual Commitment 25

2. The Role of the Two World Bodies in Promoting
National and Regional Relationships 25

3. Study Project on “Structures of Communion” 26

4. The History of Lutheran-Reformed Relationships
since the Reformation 26

5. The Role of United Churches in the LWF and WARC 26

6. Collaboration at the Level of Governing Bodies 27

 a) The LWF Council and WARC Executive Committee 27

 b) Common Assemblies 27

7. A Lutheran-Reformed Joint Commission 28

V. Summary of Recommendations 29

VI. Members of the Lutheran-Reformed Joint Working Group 31

Appendix 1: Ecumenical Consultation on Indulgences 33

**Appendix 2: United churches in their relationship
to the LWF and WARC 35**

**Appendix 3: UNITY IN FAITH—The Joint Declaration on the
Doctrine of Justification in a Wider Ecumenical Context ... 45**

**Appendix 4: The Wider Context of Lutheran and Reformed
Interconfessional Dialogues 49**

Introduction

- (1) Twelve years ago, a Joint Commission of the Lutheran World Federation and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches called on all Lutheran and Reformed churches throughout the world to “declare communion with one another (§79)” and to “make their unity more real and visible for their members as well as for the world (§85)”. It also urged the Lutheran World Federation and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches to collaborate in their work wherever possible.¹
- (2) Much has happened during the last decade. In many parts of the world, Lutheran and Reformed churches have, indeed, established binding forms of communion. Although progress is uneven, bonds between the two families have become stronger. At the international level cooperation between the LWF and WARC has significantly advanced.
- (3) Recognizing the new situation, the decision was taken in 1999 to establish a Joint Working Group with the mandate
 - a) to review the present state of Lutheran-Reformed relations on the regional and international level,
 - b) to assess the implications of regional developments for the global relationship,
 - c) to examine ways in which the governing bodies of the two communions might fruitfully cooperate,
 - d) to identify other possible forms of practical cooperation, and

¹ *Toward Church Fellowship*, Report of the Joint Commission of the LWF and WARC, Geneva 1990; *Auf dem Weg zur Kirchengemeinschaft*, Bericht der Gemeinsamen Kommission des LWB und des RWB, Genf 1990.

Called to Communion and Common Witness

- e) to consider whether it would be helpful to begin a new full round of international Lutheran-Reformed dialogue.
- (4) The Joint Working Group has sought to respond to this mandate. It has met three times: in November 1999 in Geneva, in November 2000 in Campinas, Brazil, and in October 2001 again in Geneva. (For a list of members cf. Appendix 1.)
- (5) The group's mandate was expanded in 2000 when the United Churches in Germany asked the two General Secretaries for discussion about how they might develop their relationship with the LWF and WARC. These churches combine Lutheran and Reformed traditions, but are not at present members of either world organization. Prior to the third meeting of the group, a consultation was held in Geneva with representatives of these churches and other churches uniting Lutheran and Reformed traditions from the Czech Republic, Madagascar, the Netherlands, Russia, and Zambia. The lively discussion stimulated us to make a new assessment of how these German churches might be included in the growing collaboration between the LWF and WARC and our relationships with united churches in other regions.

I. Lutheran-Reformed Developments in Recent Years

- (6) During the past decade many significant developments have taken place. Since the publication of the report *Towards Church Fellowship* in 1990,² Lutheran and Reformed churches in different parts of the world have pursued dialogues and have in several cases officially declared church communion. We begin our report with a summary survey of these developments.

1. Developing Communion at Regional Level

a) United States: The Formula of Agreement

- (7) In 1997, after thirty-five years of dialogue, a *Formula of Agreement* was formally adopted by the national assemblies of the Presbyterian Church (USA), the Reformed Church in America, the United Church of Christ and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. This was the first full communion agreement entered into by a Lutheran church in the USA. The ecumenical approach characterizing this agreement was first articulated in *Marburg Revisited* (1963), the report of the first dialogue between Lutheran and Reformed churches in the United States. The lead concept governing the *Formula of Agreement* is that of “complementarity,” calling both for “mutual affirmation” of areas of common understanding and for “mutual admonition” where different emphases still prevail. No longer are the traditions of Reformation churches considered to be church-dividing. Complementarity allows for the reconciling of “their diverse witness to the saving grace of God that is bestowed in Jesus Christ, the lord of the church.” This understanding urged the churches to bear a common mission in the context of the American culture. Competition has been replaced by a

² In its 1990 report the Joint Commission of the LWF and WARC gave a detailed survey of the state of relationships at that time, cf. *Towards Church Fellowship*, §§ 27–50.

Called to Communion and Common Witness

common and cooperative spirit in proclaiming the gospel of God's saving grace in Jesus Christ. The agreement is being implemented through the work of a Joint Coordinating Committee in areas such as the exchange of pastors, the training of global missionaries and the planning for theological consultations. Other areas of collaboration among the programme boards of the churches are also emerging.

b) Indonesia: Towards a United Church

- (8) The Communion of Churches in Indonesia (PGI) includes 79 churches: 11 Lutheran, 50 Reformed, 1 Methodist, and 17 Evangelical and Pentecostal churches, with a total membership of 13 million. In 1950 a Council of Churches was established to express and to further a movement towards one church in Indonesia. A more decisive step was taken in 1984 with the establishment of the PGI or CCI, based on a consensus set out in the "Five Documents of Unity". In March 2000, the 13th General Assembly of the PGI adopted a revised version of these documents, in the hope of moving closer to the long-stated goal of a United Church in Indonesia (*Gereja Kristen yang Esa di Indonesia*). The assembly agreed on four areas of common work. Some Lutheran and Reformed churches feel that the basis for uniting has not yet been sufficiently established. It is hoped, nonetheless, that the 14th General Assembly in 2005 will agree on further moves towards manifesting the unity of the Indonesian churches.

c) New Developments in the Leuenberg Fellowship

- (9) In the past decade, the communion among Lutheran, Reformed and United Churches in Europe based on the Leuenberg Agreement (1973) has been consolidated, strengthened and expanded. Two further assemblies of the signatory churches have been held—1994 in Vienna and 2001 in Belfast. The theological conversations have led to the publication of a number of significant statements clarifying remaining differences or responding to new challenges. Of particular importance is the statement *The Church of Jesus Christ*, which was adopted by the Vienna Assembly. Additional churches have formally accepted the agreement, among them the Evangelical Church in Germany (1998), the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Russia (1999), the Church of

Called to Communion and Common Witness

Norway (2000) and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark (2001). In 1994 representatives of the Evangelical Methodist Church in Europe signed a declaration endorsing the Leuenberg Agreement. In 1997 five Evangelical Methodist Churches joined the fellowship and are now actively involved in its work.³

d) Further Developments at National Level

- (10) In several countries, Lutheran and Reformed churches are united. Examples are the Church of the River Plate (Argentina), the Church of Lippe (Germany), the Evangelical Church of the Czech Brethren (Czech Republic), and the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesu (Ethiopia). Reformed and Lutheran churches in the Netherlands— in a journey that is not yet complete—are engaged in a unification process called “Together on the Way.” In a large number of countries, Lutheran and Reformed churches include within their life and membership, to varying degrees, elements of the other tradition. The Church of Lippe belongs to both the LWF and WARC. Since 1989 two more churches—The Evangelical Church of the River Plate, Argentina, and the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesu, Ethiopia—have applied for simultaneous membership in both bodies.
- (11) A new development has taken place with regard to the United Churches in Germany. They represent almost half of German Protestantism. Resulting from historical developments in the 19th century, they combine Lutheran and Reformed traditions and seek to witness as united churches to the heritage of the Reformation. At the national level they act through the Evangelical Church of the Union and/or the Arnoldshain Conference. Through the Leuenberg Agreement they have declared communion with Lutheran and Reformed churches throughout Europe. At the international level they have traditionally stressed their ecumenical commitment through the World Council of Churches.

³ These are: the Methodist Church (Central Conference, Germany); the Methodist Church (Central Conference Central and Southern Europe), The Methodist Church (Central Conference, Northern Europe), The Methodist Church in Great Britain, and the Methodist Church in Ireland.

Called to Communion and Common Witness

They have at the same time maintained close partner relations with many member churches of the LWF or WARC or both. In recent years, there has been a growing desire among these united churches to find appropriate ways to be associated with the two world bodies and share in their common life and work. (For more details cf. Appendix 4.)

- (12) In various parts of the world Lutheran and Reformed churches are actively engaged in dialogue. Conversations between the Church of Sweden (Lutheran) and the Mission Covenant Church of Sweden (Reformed) centre on baptismal practice and seek to deepen mutual understanding and cooperation. The Joint Council of the Church of North India, the Church of South India and the Mar Thoma Church is engaged in dialogue with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in India and the Methodist Church in India.⁴ They hope for closer working cooperation and possibly a communion agreement.

2. Other Patterns of Relationship

- (13) In many contexts, ecumenical challenges arise from Lutheran and Reformed churches' pastoral engagement in the local context and from their national or regional historical and geographical situations, which often tend to shape distinctive practices. A few examples may illustrate this.
- (14) At an encounter with church leaders, preceding our meeting in Campinas, Brazil, in 2000, the Working Group learned about the diversities that exist between the Lutheran and the Reformed churches. But it also learned about several joint initiatives in the areas of diaconal and developmental work (Ecumenical Coordination of Service, CESE) and theological education (especially in the framework of the Brazilian Association of Protestant Theological Schools, ASTE). Collaboration in theological work, already existing together with other churches at the level of a single ecumenical board of graduate studies for two major institutes, has a potential to bring together churches which,

⁴ The Church of North India and the Church of South India are both united churches with Reformed roots and both are members of WARC.

Called to Communion and Common Witness

also for geographical reasons, do not know enough about each other. The Evangelical Church of Lutheran Confession (IECLB) in Brazil and the United Presbyterian Church of Brazil are both members of the National Council of Christian Churches. The IECLB and most of the Presbyterian and Reformed churches work together in the Latin American Council of Churches. (For more details cf. Appendix 2.)

- (15) In Venezuela, the Presbyterian Church has been in contact with the Evangelical Lutheran Church for about fifteen years, first through the Student Christian Movement, then through the Latin American Council of Churches (CLAI), and for about five years through the World Day of Prayer. About three years ago, the two churches began conversations about developing a joint programme of theological education and have already initiated a joint programme of adult theological education for non-ordained ministries. They are now developing a new Ecumenical Institute of Higher Studies which will serve them both in the areas of lay education, seminary education, and eventually university-level education. Another example is found in El Salvador, where the small Reformed church is educating its pastors at the new Lutheran university.
- (16) In other countries and regions of the world, there are councils or working committees in place that coordinate the work of Lutheran and Reformed churches. In Hungary, for example, there exists a Joint Reformed-Lutheran Committee, which brings together leadership of both churches for informal meetings at least twice a year. They exchange information and plan common strategy for the future. They agree in many practical tasks of the churches and on common representation for ecumenical and national events. In the Middle East, Reformed and Lutheran churches cooperate closely within the Fellowship of Middle East Evangelical Churches. They also, together with the Anglicans, form one “family” of churches in the Middle East Council of Churches. Joint seminars, pastors’ retreats, youth retreats, and educational endeavours are common.

3. Lutheran and Reformed Agreements with Third Parties

- (17) Lutheran and Reformed churches are committed to ecumenical dialogue with other Christian traditions. In recent years conversations

Called to Communion and Common Witness

have led in several countries to new agreements and even declarations of communion with third parties. These developments are significant in that they show that Lutherans and the Reformed are able to act together in ecumenical partnership.

a) The Meissen Agreement

- (18) The Meissen Agreement is the result of dialogue between the Church of England, the Federation of the Evangelical Churches in the German Democratic Republic (DDR) and the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD), which began officially in February 1987 and was concluded in March 1988. It built on previous developments, such as twinning relationships between cities (e.g., Coventry and Dresden) after 1945, theological conversations since 1964, and the reports of the Anglican-Lutheran European Commission (1982), the International Anglican-Lutheran Joint Working Group (1983), the Anglican-Reformed International Commission (1984) and the Faith and Order document “Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry” (1982).
- (19) The text of the agreement deals with (i) the church as sign, instrument and foretaste of the kingdom of God; (ii) the church as *koinonia*; (iii) growth towards full, visible unity; (iv) communion already shared; (v) communion in faith, and (vi) mutual acknowledgement and next steps. The signatory churches acknowledge one another as true churches belonging to the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church of Jesus Christ and truly participating in the apostolic mission of the whole people of God. The agreement was approved in 1991 by the General Synod of the Church of England, the responsible bodies of the Federation of the Evangelical Churches in the DDR and its member churches, and the EKD and its member churches.

b) The Reilly Common Statement

- (20) In 1999 the British and Irish Anglican churches and the French Lutheran and Reformed churches issued the Reilly Statement, *Called to Witness and Service*. It was signed by the churches in 2001. The dialogue leading to the Meissen Agreement produced a lively interest among

Called to Communion and Common Witness

French Reformed and Lutheran churches and a desire to take steps towards closer fellowship with the Anglican churches across the Channel. It was considered important to work in continuity with the Meissen Agreement, and also with the Porvoo Common Statement between the British and Irish Anglican churches and Nordic and Baltic Lutheran churches. The outline of the agreement is similar to that of the Meissen Agreement, but there are separate sections on the apostolicity of the church and ministry and on wider ecumenical commitment. The mutual acknowledgements and commitments are also similar to those of the Meissen Declaration. Both Meissen and Reuilly commit the signatory churches to work for the goal of full visible unity of the church, and both already allow for a much higher degree of fellowship between them. Since no agreement was reached on the historic episcopate, the statement does not allow for the interchangeability of ministries.

c) Churches Uniting in Christ

- (21) Inaugurated in January 2002 and involving nine US churches, Churches Uniting in Christ (CUIC) is the successor to the forty-year-old Consultation on Church Union (COCU). The consultation envisioned a new church that would be “truly catholic, and truly reformed,” and had its origins in a proposal made by the Presbyterian leader, Eugene Carson Blake, in a sermon preached at Grace Episcopal Cathedral, San Francisco, in December 1960.
- (22) The Presbyterian Church (USA) and the United Church of Christ are full participants in CUIC, alongside the African Methodist Episcopal Church, the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, the Episcopal Church, the International Council of Community Churches, and the United Methodist Church. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) has agreed to become a “partner in mission and dialogue” with the CUIC churches, although the ELCA assembly resolution stops short of full membership.
- (23) CUIC churches explicitly recognize each other as authentic expressions of the one church of Jesus Christ, having in common faith in one God,

Called to Communion and Common Witness

commitment to Jesus Christ as saviour and as the incarnate and risen Lord, faithfulness to Scripture, commitment to faithful participation in the two sacraments baptism and eucharist, and grateful acceptance of the ministry which the Holy Spirit has manifestly given to the churches. As with the Meissen and Reuilly agreements, however, episcopacy remains a sticking point and ministries are not yet interchangeable, although eucharistic sharing is encouraged.

- (24) CUIC churches include three predominantly African-American churches, thus challenging the colour barrier that has so divided churches in the United States. They see challenging racism as being at the core of their common engagement in mission: “There can be no authentic Christian community in CUIC if, by their unquestioning acceptance of unjust gains granted by an unjust system, white members of the community continue their tacit complicity in this unjust social order that denies the fullness of life to black members of the community.”

4. The Wider Context of Lutheran and Reformed Interconfessional Dialogues

- (25) Lutheran-Reformed church fellowship serves a larger ecumenical goal, the communion of the one church of Jesus Christ, and must be viewed in the context of the worldwide ecumenical movement. In recent decades Lutherans and the Reformed have engaged in many bilateral dialogues (cf. Appendix 6). These dialogues, and the changes in church relationships that result from them, are part of the wider setting in which Lutheran-Reformed relationships are developing. They demonstrate the necessity for Lutheran-Reformed bilateral relations to take into account the commitments that each family of churches has been making to others. They also show the necessity for both the Lutheran and Reformed churches to make plain to ecumenical partners the commitments they have made to each other.

II. Developing Visible Structures of Communion

- (26) As this survey shows, many Lutheran and Reformed churches have already declared communion, and this movement continues. This confirms us in the view that there is no need for a new international dialogue on the classical differences which in the past kept Lutheran and Reformed churches apart. The challenge to the two world bodies today is not to discuss whether communion is possible but to help churches in our families to move towards declarations of communion, to advance in communion, and to celebrate unity as God's gift to us all. A new set of tasks needs to be faced: to encourage churches that are in altar and pulpit fellowship to deepen their relationship, to invite churches that are not yet in altar and pulpit fellowship to move towards it, and to consider ways in which, at the world level, the two communions may intensify their common life and witness.
- (27) We are aware, however, that Lutheran and Reformed churches are guided in their life and witness by different ecclesiological emphases. In order to advance toward more visible forms of shared life and common witness, these need to be taken into account and addressed together.

1. *Satis est*

- (28) There is a common conviction that a fundamental doctrinal agreement in the preaching of the gospel and a common understanding and praxis of the sacraments are sufficient for declaring communion. Basically, as the *Confessio Augustana* explicitly states, nothing more is required (*satis est*). In his *Institutes* Calvin expressed the same conviction (IV,1,9). This principle must not be misused, however, to neglect the need for structural expressions of the unity of the church. To be experienced and recognized, communion must become visible. There are, on both sides and sometimes across the boundaries of the two traditions, different approaches to this issue. Often, the view is held that declaring communion does not call for any further steps. We believe that mutual recognition implies a commitment to

Called to Communion and Common Witness

work together towards greater visibility. Lutherans and the Reformed need therefore to engage in a common reflection on the appropriate forms of the visible unity of the church. These forms may differ from place to place. But to secure mutual accountability and common witness common structural frameworks are required.

2. Proclamation and Communion

- (29) Both Lutherans and the Reformed give priority to the proclamation of the gospel—the gift of God’s liberating grace. As Christians we are compelled to witness to God’s reconciliation in Christ. Clearly, this witness presupposes that believers are reconciled with one another. Lutherans and the Reformed differ in spelling out the relationship between proclamation and the need for *koinonia*. The Reformed place strong emphasis on confessing the gospel faithfully in today’s world. In the past decades, many Reformed churches have engaged in formulating contemporary confessions of faith. They have given less attention to “maintaining the bonds of unity” with the result that many splits have occurred in their midst. Lutheran churches have pursued more consistently the building up of communion in and among the Lutheran churches, although the history of the Lutheran churches around the world also shows many examples of splits and persistent tensions. These two emphases on proclamation and *koinonia* are by no means mutually exclusive. But as we engage in a process of implementation, the difference needs to be addressed. The two approaches may prove to be mutually enriching.

3. Communion and Commitment to Justice

- (30) On both sides there is a strong concern to communicate the gospel to the world. The gift of communion is realized not only in formal declarations, but in reconciliation, in sharing of gifts, and in common service. Communion implies a call for mutual recognition and a commitment to justice. It is significant that both Lutherans and the Reformed have declared *status confessionis* with regard to racial discrimination and in particular apartheid. Spiritual discourse neglecting the dimension of justice in practice is misleading. While

Called to Communion and Common Witness

churches in the North often concentrate on declaring communion for the sake of common mission, churches in the South often begin by taking common steps in life and mission and move on the basis of this experience to new forms of communion. We consider these two approaches to be complementary. We see a need for the churches in the North to acquire increased understanding and appreciation of how ecumenism develops in the South.

4. Local—Universal

- (31) Communion in Christ must find expression at all levels of the church's life. Lutherans and the Reformed have given different expressions to communion at the universal level. WARC provides for its member churches a theological and ethical forum and an instrument for mutual aid and public witness, especially through work for Christian unity and justice in the world and inclusiveness in church life. The LWF defines itself explicitly as a communion of churches and has declared altar and pulpit fellowship a binding condition for membership. Its member churches share the same confession and see in the LWF an instrument for their common commitment at the universal level. As the two world bodies engage in common witness and sustained collaboration at the international level, this difference needs to be addressed.

5. Diverse Bilateral Ecumenical Commitments

- (32) The difference also affects the choices of partners in the ecumenical movement (cf. §25 and Appendix 6). While both the LWF and WARC have conducted bilateral conversations, the LWF has given more attention to the process of reception of their findings. It has developed a stronger sensitivity with regard to the binding character of bilateral dialogues. The two families also relate to different partners. While WARC has reached statements of mutual recognition with Methodists and the Churches of Christ (Disciples), Lutheran churches have established communion with Anglican churches. What is the place of the particular relationship between Lutherans and the Reformed within this wider ecumenical context? Implementation of the gift of communion needs to be seen as a service to the wider ecumenical scene.

6. Oversight (*episkopé*)

- (33) In this context, inevitably the issue of oversight arises. Many Lutheran churches have maintained or introduced episcopal structures and are prepared to develop further their understanding of episcopacy and apostolic succession. Reformed churches are generally reluctant to adopt episcopacy as a possible structure of church order. They affirm the need of oversight (*episkopé*) exercised through a collegial ministry. On both sides, synods remain the main form of church governance. Both sides agree that a particular form of *episkopé* cannot be a condition for communion. As Lutherans and the Reformed consider the appropriate structures of unity, they need to engage in a discussion on the nature and appropriate exercise of *episkopé*.

7. *The World Council of Churches*

- (34) Both sides affirm the oneness of the ecumenical movement and support every effort to secure the coherence of ecumenical initiatives. In expressing their support of the World Council of Churches (WCC), the LWF and WARC have taken slightly different lines. WARC has consistently sought to give priority to the life and witness of the WCC. It avoided duplicating programmes and invited its member churches to act directly through the WCC. While many Lutheran churches were among the founders of the WCC and have remained active members, the LWF has to a larger extent than WARC sought to contribute to the wider ecumenical movement also through its common life and witness as a federation and as a communion. The role of the two families in the ecumenical movement and in particular in the WCC requires fresh exploration. How can they best contribute to the integrity of the WCC? How can they represent together in constructive ways the voices of the Reformation within the ecumenical movement and promote together the wider ecumenical cause?

III. Present State of Collaboration between the Lutheran World Federation and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches

- (35) Both our world bodies have changed importantly in recent decades. They have grown in size, and the balance in their membership has shifted towards the churches of the South. Each of them has taken significant decisions which have redefined the character of its life. For example, the 1977 LWF declaration and the 1982 WARC declaration of *status confessionis* in relation to apartheid showed the capacity of their member churches to make a common and binding commitment. This capacity is being further tested in the current debates about economic injustice and ecological destruction. The 1984 declaration of altar and pulpit fellowship in the LWF and the 1990 constitution defining the LWF as a communion deeply affect the way in which its member churches relate to each other. The LWF continues to explore the significance and further development of these decisions.
- (36) Collaboration between the LWF and WARC has considerably increased during the last decades and there is on both sides the definite wish to join forces in as many areas of life and witness as possible.

1. Contact and Cooperation at the Level of the Secretariats in Geneva

- (37) The location of both the WARC and the LWF secretariats in the Ecumenical Centre in Geneva contributes substantially to contact and collaboration between the two organizations. Cooperation is furthered by regular joint staff meetings chaired alternately by the two general secretaries and including senior executives from both sides. In these meetings discussion and coordination takes place with regard to projects and programmes where there is joint involvement. The pattern of programmatic collaboration characteristically connects to several of the main areas of activity within the two organizations, such as mission, theology, ecumenism

Called to Communion and Common Witness

and human rights. Direct contact and cooperation between members of staff in connected areas are maintained in a variety of ways throughout the year.

- (38) Some of the cooperation between the two secretariats also takes place jointly with the WCC. The three general secretaries hold regular coordination meetings, together with the general secretary of the Conference of European Churches. At the present time (2001–2002), the three organizations (LWF, WARC, WCC) meet monthly in a joint staff group with the particular purpose of discussing and expanding areas of cooperation. A report from this staff group will be presented in late spring 2002. In addition, the three secretariats cooperate in the house committee of the Ecumenical Centre as well as in the coordination of various in-house activities.

2. Joint Studies and Consultations

- (39) WARC and the LWF have participated jointly in several consultations and programmes set up either by themselves or by others. The following common efforts may serve as illustrations:

a) Economic Injustice and Ecological Destruction

- (40) At its 23rd General Council (Debrecen, 1997), WARC launched a study and action process to gain clarity on the question in what way and to what extent the economic injustice and ecological destruction resulting from the present economic order constitute a *status confessionis* for the churches. The project, first known under the title *processus confessionis* (a process of confession) and now as *covenanting for justice in the economy and the earth*, met with a wide response both within and beyond WARC member churches. The LWF is engaged in similar initiatives, but focused on the implications of what it means to be a communion in the face of economic globalization. The two families have initiated conversations on themes related to these studies. The LWF and WARC bring different but related strategies to these matters. Hopefully, these will be further developed in relation to the LWF Assembly in 2003 and the WARC

Called to Communion and Common Witness

General Council in 2004. Collaborative efforts will at the same time shed new light on the relationship between confessions and confessing and may lead to a deeper common understanding of the relevance of inherited confessions for the churches' witness today.

b) Church Structures in Times of Global Transformations

- (41) Following a WARC study in 1993 on “The Challenge of Emerging Ecclesiologies to Church Renewal” and a three-year LWF study on “Communion, Community, Society” (1997–2000), the two organizations have jointly sponsored an exploratory meeting in February 2001 and a consultation in February 2002 on “Church Structures in Times of Global Transformations”. The two consultations aim at understanding ongoing structural changes taking place in Reformation churches, both in the light of the changing role played by religion in contemporary societies and in the light of church priorities related to the understanding of the gospel message in different historical, cultural and ecclesial contexts.

c) Indulgences

- (42) Prompted by Reformed and Lutheran reactions to the papal bull *Incarnationis Mysterium* (1998) and the way in which the celebration in Rome of the Jubilee Year 2000 was prepared and interpreted, the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity invited the LWF and WARC to a consultation in Rome in February 2001 to discuss historical and systematic aspects of the Roman Catholic practice of indulgence. Papers and responses were presented by all three sides and discussed. No report was adopted, but a communiqué was issued (cf. Appendix 3). Publications in English and German of the papers presented are being prepared.

d) The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification in a Wider Ecumenical Framework

- (43) The significance of the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (1999) in a wider ecumenical framework was the topic for a consultation (“Unity in Faith”) in November 2001. The LWF and the Pontifical

Called to Communion and Common Witness

Council for Promoting Christian Unity had jointly invited WARC and the World Methodist Council to discuss how the Reformed and Methodists, in particular, might be associated with the agreements reached and formulated in the Joint Declaration. A communiqué and a report were adopted by this consultation (cf. Appendix 5).

3. Human Rights

- (44) WARC and the LWF, together with the WCC, work together closely on human rights. During the annual session of the UN Commission on Human Rights, joint statements are made on certain questions. On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the LWF and WARC, together with the WCC, published liturgical material on selected human rights issues. More substantial cooperation took place in revising the document adopted by WARC in 1976 on the theological basis of human rights. The LWF as well as the WCC accompanied the WARC process, particularly by taking part in a consultation held in 1997. This process is not yet finished, and cooperation between the two organizations in this area continues.

4. Other Areas of Collaboration

- (45) In many other areas regular exchange takes place. This applies in particular to mission work, and issues related to women and to youth. The preparation of the Assemblies in 2003 (LWF) and 2004 (LWF) provides an opportunity to consult one another on various aspects of the programme, in particular the preparation of Bible studies and worship materials.

IV. LWF-WARC Relations: New Steps in Deepening Communion

- (46) Our discussion has persuaded us that there is need for WARC and the LWF to take concrete actions that can further stimulate processes to develop and transform our common life.

1. Declaring Mutual Commitment

- (47) Lutherans and the Reformed have come a long way together. The time has come for our highest governing bodies to make a joint declaration on the importance that they attach to the further development of Lutheran-Reformed relationships. The Joint Working Group *recommends* that the general secretaries take the steps necessary to prepare a declaration to be presented to the LWF Council and the WARC Executive Committee and thereafter to the LWF Assembly and the WARC General Council.

2. The Role of the Two World Bodies in Promoting National and Regional Relationships

- (48) The path towards closer fellowship may differ greatly from one part of the world to another. While recognizing that only individual churches have the authority to establish church fellowship with other churches, WARC and the LWF should play an active role in enabling and deepening communion relations between Reformed and Lutheran churches in different areas. They have an important task in communicating and interpreting regional and national agreements and their theological foundations to the whole of our two church families. In all of this, the two world bodies should be aware that all ecumenical agreements have a contextual character and cannot simply be duplicated elsewhere. Sharing of experiences across regional and national boundaries may, however, stimulate developments in other churches, showing them that obstacles to communion can be overcome and giving them the confidence to take their own steps forward.

Called to Communion and Common Witness

- (49) We see a specific opportunity for an initiative by the world bodies to support the Lutheran and Reformed churches in Indonesia as they move towards a united church.

3. Study Project on “Structures of Communion”

- (50) We recommend to the LWF and WARC to initiate a study process on Structures of Communion. Its mandate would consist in exploring the theological issues listed in Part II and providing clearer perspectives on the diversity and complementarity of different ecclesiological options and emphases. The aim of the study process would be to assist Lutheran and Reformed churches as they move towards new forms of communion. Particular attention needs to be given to the diversity of contexts. (Cf. §§26-35.)

4. The History of Lutheran-Reformed Relationships since the Reformation

- (51) To build relations of communion it is important to deepen the awareness of the separate histories of Lutheran and Reformed churches. The history of Lutheran-Reformed relationships has not yet been sufficiently explored. How did the two streams of the Reformation become distinct at the time of the Reformation? How did they relate to other streams that took shape at the time? How did they evolve throughout the centuries since the Reformation? How did they interact and affect one another? Clearly, many misconceptions and sensitivities have their root in historical developments and events. A deliberate *common* attempt to present the history for Lutheran and Reformed readers could contribute significantly to a deeper mutual understanding. We propose that the LWF and WARC approach a university or an institute to organize such a study, covering the Reformation period and the time since the Reformation and focusing on the particular periods which have determined—both positively and negatively—relationships.

5. The Role of United Churches in the LWF and WARC

- (52) The presence within our memberships of united churches combining Lutheran and Reformed traditions reminds us that, even at the world

Called to Communion and Common Witness

level, the Lutheran and Reformed traditions are intertwined. Neither of our world communions is purely Lutheran or Reformed. We value the presence within our membership of united churches, and we affirm that we need to reflect together on the significance of their membership, their special contributions and special needs. We are grateful to the united churches for the conversations which took place on their initiative.

- (53) Constitutionally, there are no obstacles to the United Churches in Germany entering into membership in the two world bodies, and we would see definite value in their doing so. In the meantime we encourage the two world bodies to involve these churches in as many ways as possible in their ongoing work. (For more details, cf. Appendix 4.)

6. Collaboration at the Level of Governing Bodies

- (54) After years of collaboration at the staff level and in working groups, it is time to involve the governing bodies more directly.

a) The LWF Council and WARC Executive Committee

- (55) We propose that the opportunity be created for the LWF Council and the WARC Executive Committee to meet and clarify issues that they both face. Exchanges at this level could in our view help to strengthen and broaden the common witness of the world bodies. They would need to be carefully prepared in common. A first step could be parallel meetings of the WARC Executive Committee and the LWF Council where blocks of time would be reserved for a common agenda. It will not be possible to hold such a parallel meeting before the LWF Assembly in 2003 and the WARC General Council in 2004. We propose that the LWF and WARC begin now to schedule and prepare such a meeting for 2005 or 2006.

b) Common Assemblies

- (56) The WARC General Council in Debrecen (1997) proposed that common assemblies of WARC and the LWF, together with the WCC, should be explored. This idea has been followed up to a certain extent by an LWF-WCC staff group (1999-2000), in which WARC was an observer,

Called to Communion and Common Witness

which presented its report in spring 2000. At the present time, the issue is again being discussed in the new LWF-WARC-WCC staff group (2001–2002) which will present its report in spring 2002. The matter is also being discussed within the LWF and will be an item at the LWF Council in 2002. It seems clear that the upcoming assemblies of the three world bodies will all have the same distinct formats as until now. However, there is the possibility that some decisions will be made that could open the way for joint or coordinated assemblies in the future.

- (57) For the LWF Assembly and WARC General Council in 2003 and 2004, similar themes have been chosen, and each world body has welcomed a representative of the other tradition as a member of its assembly planning committee. A longer-term objective is to hold joint or parallel assemblies. A common theme would enable joint preparation of study materials. Preparation of a joint worship book would involve our world bodies in further study of our traditions of worship, a task that we have long considered important. Joint discussion in such world meetings would lead to elements of a common mandate in the period following them.

7. A Lutheran-Reformed Joint Commission

- (58) This joint working group has had a three-year mandate, and its work now comes to an end. As we look back at Lutheran-Reformed relationships at the world level during the last decades, we realize that there have been several working groups which have made valuable recommendations, but mechanisms to implement these ideas have been lacking and progress has, in consequence, been impeded. We recommend that in order to further the growing relationships between our two families, a Joint Commission with a more than temporary mandate be created. This Commission should have the mandate to monitor the implementation of the decisions taken by the governing bodies regarding the recommendations of this report.
- (59) The mandate of the Lutheran-Reformed Joint Commission should be reviewed at regular intervals.

V. Summary of Recommendations

We *recommend* that the general secretaries of the LWF and WARC

1. Take the steps necessary to prepare a declaration of mutual commitment to be presented to the LWF Council and the WARC Executive Committee and thereafter to the LWF Assembly and the WARC General Council.

We *recommend* that the LWF and WARC

2.
 - a) Encourage and assist churches in regions where Lutheran-Reformed agreements do not yet exist to enter into dialogue with a view to establishing communion;
 - b) Help in interpreting national and regional Lutheran-Reformed agreements to the whole constituency, so that all may profit from the experience of all in finding ways forward that are contextually appropriate;
 - c) Examine the implications for their own life and work of these national and regional experiences;
 - d) Reflect on the specific needs and contributions of united churches within their fellowships; and
 - e) Explore ways in which the United Churches in Germany may be further involved in their work.
3. Establish a joint international study project on structures of church communion with the mandate to reflect on the diversity and complementarity of ecclesiological approaches within our two confessional families, so as to assist Lutheran and Reformed churches as they move towards new forms of communion.
4. Endorse the proposal to develop a common history of the relations between Lutheran and Reformed churches.
5. Identify distinctive areas of Lutheran-Reformed joint study and action on which they may work together; and cooperate closely within the World Council of Churches on their common ecumenical agenda.

Called to Communion and Common Witness

6. Prepare the next LWF Assembly (Winnipeg, 2003) and WARC General Council (Accra, 2004) in ways that encourage the formation of a mandate for common Lutheran-Reformed work in the period that follows.
7. Schedule parallel meetings of the LWF Council and WARC Executive Committee in 2005 or 2006, with careful joint preparation beforehand.
8. Make possible holding the following Assembly and General Council at the same time and in the same place, with common preparation and the greatest possible degree of common programme.
9. Create a Joint Commission with a mandate to monitor the implementation of the decisions taken by their governing bodies regarding the recommendations of this report.

VI. Members of the Lutheran-Reformed Joint Working Group

Lutheran Members

The Rt. Rev. Guy Edmiston, Co-chair
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, U.S.A.

Rev. Fui-Yung Chong
Basel Christian Church of Malaysia, Malaysia

Prof. Dr. Luis Henrique Dreher
Evangelical Church of the Lutheran Confession in Brazil, Brazil

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Consultant

Prof. Dr. André Birmelé
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Staff

Rev. Sven Oppegaard
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Ms. Sybille Graumann
The Lutheran World Federation

Called to Communion and Common Witness

Reformed Members

Prof. Dr. Jane Dempsey Douglass, Co-Chair
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), U.S.A.

Dr. Hermann Schaefer
Reformed Alliance, Germany

Consultant

Dr. Lukas Vischer, Switzerland

Staff

Dr. Odair Pedroso Mateus
World Alliance of Reformed Churches

Rev. Páraic Réamonn
World Alliance of Reformed Churches

Appendix 1

Ecumenical Consultation on Indulgences

Press Release

For the first time since the Reformation, Catholics, Lutherans and Reformed held an ecumenical theological consultation on the theme of indulgences. The meeting involving the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU) the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) took place in Rome, February 9 and 10, 2001, upon invitation by the PCPCU.

The purpose was to clarify historical, theological and pastoral issues related to indulgences in order to come to a better understanding of each other's traditions. It did not aim at an agreement on indulgences – an issue on which there have been longstanding differences between the Roman Catholic Church and the churches of the Reformation.

The consultation took place in a positive atmosphere which lent itself to honest and constructive discussion. There were common prayers at the beginning of each day and at the end of the consultation. Two presentations described the Roman Catholic understanding of indulgences. Prof. Gerhard L. Mueller (Munich, Germany), addressed the “Historical Aspects of the Indulgence”. Prof. Jared Wicks, s.j, (Rome, Italy) gave a systematic presentation entitled “Towards Understanding Indulgences: *Vetera et Nova*”. On the Lutheran and Reformed side the following responses were given: Prof. Michael Root, Lutheran (Columbus, Ohio, USA), gave an analysis of “The Jubilee Indulgence and the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification”. Prof. Ellen Babinsky, Reformed (Austin, Texas, USA), presented “A Reformed View of Indulgences”. Prof. Theodor Dieter, Lutheran (Strasbourg, France), gave a response to Prof. Mueller's paper. Prof. George Sabra, Reformed (Beirut, Lebanon) responded to Prof. Wicks' paper.

Bishop Walter Kasper, Secretary of the PCPCU, Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko, General Secretary of the LWF, and Rev. Dr Setri Nyomi, General Secretary

Called to Communion and Common Witness

of the WARC, each took turns chairing the meeting. His Eminence Edward Idris Cardinal Cassidy, President of the PCPCU, took part in several sessions of the consultation.

Other participants included, on the Catholic side, Prof. Barbara Hallensleben (Fribourg, Switzerland), Prof. John M. McDermott, s.j. (Columbus, Ohio, USA), Msgr. John Radano and Rev. Matthias Türk (PCPCU staff, Rome, Italy); on the Lutheran side Archbishop K.G. Hammar (Uppsala, Sweden), Dr Pirjo Työrinoja (Helsinki, Finland) and Rev. Sven Oppeggaard (LWF staff, Geneva, Switzerland); on the Reformed side Dr Alan Falconer (Geneva, Switzerland), Dr Fulvio Ferrario (Milan, Italy) and Dr Odair Pedroso Mateus (WARC staff, Geneva, Switzerland).

It is intended that the papers from this consultation will be published as a contribution to further discussion in the churches.

Rome, February 10, 2001

Appendix 2

United churches in their relationship to the LWF and WARC

Communiqué

Representatives of Lutheran, Reformed and united churches combining both traditions came together in Geneva from October 11–14, 2001, in the first week of the war against Afghanistan. The air raids on that country, already devastated by twenty years of conflict, together with the criminal attacks in the USA which prompted them, brought home to us the importance of our working together, as churches of the Reformation, in witnessing to the gospel and serving a broken world.

We met at the invitation of the general secretaries of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC). Our group of almost 30 people from many regions of the world included invited representatives of united churches in Germany, the Czech Republic, Madagascar, the Netherlands and Zambia. (See “the experience of united churches” below and Appendix 1.)

We have shared information, experience and ecumenical passion; clarified misunderstandings; and explored together the significance of united and uniting churches in our two fellowships and how the united churches in Germany might appropriately relate to them. Recent developments at all levels have created a new context for our discussions and have led to a new desire for common witness and practical collaboration.

Approximately 50 united or uniting churches cross the boundaries of the existing Christian world communions; of this 50, almost half combine Lutheran and Reformed traditions. Some are members of the LWF or WARC, others are members of both (the Church of Lippe, the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus, and the Evangelical Church of the River Plate). At its meeting in Bangalore in 2000, hosted by the Karnataka Central diocese of the Church of South India, itself a united church combining Reformed

and other traditions, the WARC executive committee “strongly affirmed” the participation of united and uniting churches in the Alliance.

The experience of the united churches represented

Germany

These churches combine Lutheran and Reformed traditions. Some belong to the Evangelical Church of the Union, all of them to the Arnoldshain Conference. They go back to a movement to unite the different confessions of the Reformation at the beginning of the 19th century. They have kept a clear constitutional relationship to the historic Lutheran and Reformed confessions, and are keenly interested in how their confession is to be actualized today. Therefore the Theological Declaration of Barmen (1934) plays an important role in their life. Of the 24 regional churches (Landeskirchen) in Germany, 12 are united.

Like other united and uniting churches, they participate enthusiastically in the ecumenical movement. At the international level, they have traditionally expressed their ecumenical commitment through the World Council of Churches and the group of united and uniting churches, which meets in consultation from time to time.

In recent years, the united churches in Germany have turned their attention to their relationship to the LWF and WARC:

At the international level, the German united churches express the desire for a platform on which they may meet their partner churches, most of whom already belong to the LWF and WARC.

Recent developments, such as the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification, raise the question of how churches that share a common heritage in the Reformation and its teachings can speak with a common voice on matters that concern them all.

The Czech Republic

The Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren traces its origins to reforming movements in the 14th and 15th centuries and above all to the struggle of Jan Hus (1370–1415). An important development was the creation in 1457 of the *Unitas Fratrum* (the unity of the brethren).

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In 1620, the Protestant faith was proscribed throughout the Austro-Hungarian empire. By 1781, when Joseph II issued an edict of toleration, only 100,000 Protestants remained in the Czech lands. They were not allowed to organize themselves in continuity with their indigenous Czech tradition, but were obliged to register as either Lutheran or Reformed.

Following the first world war, the state of Czechoslovakia was created and the larger Reformed and the smaller Lutheran church decided to reject their artificial separation and recover their authentic history by uniting as the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren. This church has played a leading role in the discussions on the “first” and “second” Reformations and in developing a wider understanding of what it means to be reformed.

Madagascar

The Church of Jesus Christ in Madagascar was formed in 1968 during the celebration of the 150th anniversary of the arrival of Protestant missions: it is a union of three strands (the Church of Christ in Madagascar, which grew out of the work of the London Missionary Society; the Evangelical Church in Madagascar, the result of French missionary efforts; and the Malagasy Friends’ Church, created by Quaker mission).

In 1980, it founded the National Council of Christian Churches in Madagascar, together with the Lutheran, Anglican and Roman Catholic churches: a particular concern was to unify Christian language and to agree on a common Malagasy version of the name of Jesus Christ: Jesoa Kristy. The church is active in the fields of evangelism, education and development. In 1991, it played an active role in the fall of the second republic and in developing the constitution of the third republic.

The small Malagasy Protestant Church (FPMA) in France, which was set up by students in 1959, has dual membership in the LWF and WARC.

The Netherlands

In 1973, the two largest Reformed churches—the Netherlands Reformed Church and the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands—held their first joint synod. Later they joined with the Evangelical-Lutheran Church in the Kingdom of the Netherlands in a tripartite project of union, *Samen op weg* (Together on the way). This project heightened the awareness in the

Called to Communion and Common Witness

churches of their historical and confessional roots; at the same time, it made it clear that confessional loyalty did not require them to remain separate. A union scheme was adopted in 1997, and the three churches are already united administratively.

Zambia

The United Church of Zambia, with a million members, is the largest Protestant church in Zambia. In 1965, less than three months after independence, it brought together into a single union four Reformed and Methodist churches: the Church of Central Africa in Rhodesia (itself a union of the Church of Scotland and the London Missionary Society churches with the Union Church of the Copperbelt), the congregations of the Copperbelt Free Church Council, the Church of Barotseland, and the Methodist Church.

The UCZ sees itself as showing that unity in diversity is possible and fulfilling in a small way the prayer of Jesus in John 17. But it also understands itself contextually: it is proud of its contribution in the struggle for independence in southern Africa and in building a peaceful nation out of a diverse tribal society. "We are called to be one Zambia, one church." Evangelization remains the main goal of the church.

The LWF and WARC

Cooperation between the two world communions goes back as far as the 1950s and springs from the recognition that, although they are separate organizations, they have much in common. It has had an erratic history, as we must admit, but in the last decade it has been greatly intensified.

The 1989 report of the joint commission of the LWF and WARC, *Toward Church Fellowship*, concluded that "nothing stands in the way of church fellowship" between churches of the Lutheran and Reformed traditions. It called on member churches of both organizations to establish full pulpit and table fellowship and to grow in unity through new steps in church life and mission together. At the international level, it called on the LWF and WARC to work together wherever possible.

From 1993, the LWF and WARC began to collaborate in different programmes. A further impetus came from the 25th anniversary of the

Called to Communion and Common Witness

Leuenberg agreement and the new Formula of Agreement between one Lutheran and three Reformed churches in the USA. In March 1999, senior staff of the two organizations began to meet at regular six-monthly intervals to deepen their cooperation.

A joint working group was appointed by the general secretary of the LWF and the executive committee of the Alliance with a three-year mandate (1999–2001) to review Lutheran-Reformed relations on the regional and international levels. The group has focused on taking forward the positive results of previous dialogues. It sees its task as accompanying and promoting the implementation of their recommendations, furthering and making visible the growing communion among member churches, and calling for specific initiatives of cooperation between the two international bodies.

In this consultation, we were pleased to learn of the extent to which the LWF and WARC are already cooperating and of their vision of their life together in the years immediately to come.

In addition to the senior staff meetings mentioned above, the general secretaries of the two organizations meet regularly in the Ecumenical Centre. There is reciprocal involvement in work on mission. The two bodies are co-sponsors of the “Prague” dialogue on the “first” and “second” Reformations. WARC will share in discussions, initiated by the LWF and the Vatican, on the follow-up to the joint declaration on the doctrine of justification. The LWF programme on church structures in times of global transformation has become a common project. The WARC process on economic injustice and ecological destruction has attracted regular LWF involvement; inversely, WARC has been involved in the emerging LWF programme in this area. A WARC study on the theological imperatives for human rights has widened to embrace the LWF. The two bodies have worked together on peace and conflict resolution in Africa. The LWF and WARC are founding sponsors of the ecumenical news agency, Ecumenical News International. There are regular joint discussions and coordination in relation to the United Nations and human rights. The two organizations have long worked together in the area of partnership of women and men and are cooperating in developing a gender training manual. The list is growing, and reflects a growing conviction that it is better to do things together and that, when they are done together, they are done better—a conviction that springs from the common sense that, despite their obvious differences in history and profile, the LWF and WARC have in common that they are fellowships of churches of the Reformation.

Called to Communion and Common Witness

The two organizations are coordinating their preparations for the LWF general assembly in 2003 and the WARC general council in 2004, and envisage a joint meeting of the LWF council and the WARC executive committee in 2005 or 2006. WARC already in 1997 envisaged a joint meeting, or parallel meetings, of the two supreme governing bodies; it proved impossible to realize this vision immediately, but proposals on this point will be brought for decision to the two meetings in 2003 and 2004.

In all these ways, the commitment of the LWF and WARC to be together and to work together deepens and intensifies.

The united churches in Germany have a strong desire to find appropriate ways to share in this common life and work. Both fellowships understand and welcome this desire.

Both communions make provision for membership by united churches and many united churches have been welcomed into membership of one or other or both. For both fellowships, the presence in these churches is a living reminder of what they already know: that their relationship to the confessional heritage is complex and that confessional loyalty is not to be confused with confessionalism.

We are all heirs of the Reformation

Our self-understandings as Lutheran, united or Reformed make us ecumenical and exclude all sectarianism. We find our identity in the gospel of Jesus Christ proclaimed by the universal church.

Within this one worldwide church, we recognize the Lutheran, Reformed and united churches combining both traditions as a natural grouping, with a common heritage in the Reformation of the 16th century. Because of that heritage, this group of churches is often referred to as churches of the Reformation (*Reformatorische Kirchen*): the term is not exclusive, since there are other churches that also claim a link to the Reformation.

We do not privilege this grouping over others: in the ecumenical house, there are many mansions, and all of us are bound in wider sets of ecumenical relationships. But as churches of the Reformation we affirm that we can and should face the future together. Around this table, in

all our difference and distinctiveness, we recognize ourselves in one other. We belong together.

We echo the words of *Toward Church Fellowship* (par.78): “We believe that unity, diversity and harmony are all God’s gifts to the church. Therefore diversity must not obscure unity, nor concern for unity deny diversity. Together we serve one Lord, through whom alone we have access by the one Spirit to the Father.”

Actualizing our confession

We value our confessional heritages, but we are not imprisoned by them. Our confessional traditions are precious resources as we study the Scriptures and strive to interpret the will of God for our times. To us, as in every Christian generation, Jesus of Nazareth poses the question, “Who do you say that I am?” As we seek to answer responsibly, we actualize our confession.

In recent times, we have seen examples of this actualizing in the Theological Declaration of Barmen; the debates over weapons of mass destruction; the struggle against apartheid reflected in the *status confessionis* declarations of the two communions and in the Confession of Belhar; the question of the church and the Jewish people; the conciliar process on justice, peace and the integrity of creation; the campaigns for the cancellation of international debt; and the current programmes on economic justice and ecological destruction. These efforts, in which we have all shared, mark our common desire to witness to a timeless saviour: a Christ who speaks to the world yesterday, today and tomorrow.

The way forward

What can be done to deepen understanding between churches of the Reformation, to dispel old prejudices, and to respond together in concrete witness and action to the challenges of God’s world? Specifically, what steps can be taken at the international level and how can the united churches in Germany be involved?

Called to Communion and Common Witness

We discussed this question in three aspects:

1. Engagement of the German united churches

We can envisage many ways in which the German united churches could share in the work of the LWF and WARC, for example:

- a) Reception of and response to dialogue results and other completed work;
- b) Participation in programmes, dialogues or projects;
- c) Observer or consultant status in consultations or meetings of governing bodies.

The LWF and WARC are open to such possibilities. They would warmly welcome, for example, involvement by the united churches in ongoing work on economic globalization.

2. Structures of cooperation

The current Lutheran-Reformed joint working group has a time-limited mandate, but a joint commission to further cooperation and deepen relationships between the two world bodies may well be needed for the longer term. This commission, supported by the necessary staff, should also further relations with the united churches. During our brainstorming, some participants raised the question of whether a common desk would be helpful towards these goals.

3. Membership in the world bodies

It would be possible for some or all of the German united churches to enter into membership of one or both Christian world communions. It was suggested that such membership, especially if it were dual membership, would help in shaping from within the future of the two bodies. It was also suggested that the question may be premature: the German united churches are currently engaged in a fundamental restructuring of their own relationships, in which it is likely that the Arnoldshain Conference and the Evangelical Church of the Union will be replaced by a single but open structure. It may be that the question of membership in the two

Called to Communion and Common Witness

Christian world communions would be best raised in the course of that restructuring or when it is complete.

Our conversations here in Geneva will be taken up, on the side of the two world bodies, by the Lutheran-Reformed joint working group, which will report to the WARC executive committee and through the general secretary of the LWF to its council; and on the side of the German united churches, within the Arnoldshain Conference and the Evangelical Church of the Union. The reorganization of the united churches in Germany and the meetings of the LWF general assembly in 2003 and the WARC general council in 2004 provide a larger timeframe for our discussions.

None of us came to this consultation with a blueprint for our future life together. We go away knowing that we have not yet arrived at complete clarity on the way forward; but we are clear that this way must be a common way. We shall stay together. We walk by faith, and we find our way in small and fumbling steps; but we put our trust in the leading of the Holy Spirit.

We commend these reflections to the Lutheran-Reformed joint working group and the governing bodies of the two Christian world communions, and to the leading bodies of the Arnoldshain Conference and the Evangelical Church of the Union and their member churches.

Called to Communion and Common Witness

Appendix 3

UNITY IN FAITH The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification in a Wider Ecumenical Context

Columbus, Ohio, 27–30 November 2001

COMMUNIQUE

In 1999, the Lutheran World Federation and the Roman Catholic Church signed the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ). Such an agreement was bound to have repercussions for all the churches which have been in dialogue with the signatory churches. In the case of Methodists and Reformed, these dialogues have included the very subject of justification and the results encourage an exploration of ways in which the Joint Declaration might be more widely affirmed. To begin this process, a consultation was held in Columbus, Ohio, November 27 to 30, 2001, with the participation of theologians and some church leaders from the Roman Catholic Church, the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) and the World Methodist Council (WMC). This consultation built upon the considerable measure of agreement on the doctrine of justification that had already been demonstrated in earlier bilateral dialogues involving the participating partners.

The consultation was hosted by the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU) and the LWF and generously supported by the three local seminaries, organized in a consortium: The Pontifical College Josephinum (where the consultation was held), the Methodist Theological School in Ohio and Trinity Lutheran Seminary.

Program:

All four days, the participants attended morning and evening prayers with students and faculty of the Pontifical College Josephinum in the

Called to Communion and Common Witness

chapels of the College. The gracious assistance of the students in the course of the prayers was especially appreciated.

Special dinners, with the presence of guests, were hosted by Trinity Lutheran Seminary, the (Roman Catholic) Bishop of Columbus, James Griffin, and the Methodist Theological School in Ohio.

On the first day, words of welcome were extended by President Norman E. Dewire of the Methodist Theological School in Ohio, President Earl Boyea of the Pontifical College Josephinum and President Mark Ramseth of Trinity Lutheran Seminary. Introductory addresses were presented by Bishop William H. Lazareth, Bishop Paul-Werner Scheele, General Secretary George Freeman and Professor Dr Anna Case-Winters. Reports on the reception of the JDDJ were heard from Rev. Dr Matthias Türk, Rev. Dr Darlis Swan, Bishop Thomas Hoyt and Prof. Dr Michael Weinrich. The topic “In what ways might the agreements reached in the JDDJ be affirmed by other ecumenical partners? Identification of theological issues”, was addressed by Prof. Dr Geoffrey Wainwright, Prof. Dr Russel Botman, Prof. Dr Theo Dieter and Prof. Dr Jared Wicks.

On the second day, the topic “In what ways might the agreements reached in the JDDJ be affirmed by other ecumenical partners? Procedural aspects”, was addressed by Prof. Dr George Tavard and Prof. Dr Theodor Dieter, Prof. Dr Anna Case-Winters and Bishop Thomas Hoyt.

On the third day, the topic “The significance of reaching doctrinal agreements for the development of official church relations” was addressed by Prof. Dr Michael Root, Bishop Paul-Werner Scheele, Prof. Dr Manfred Marquardt and Prof. Dr Mindawati Perangin-Angin.

On the fourth day, the following topic was addressed by Prof. Dr Harding Meyer: “Unity in faith—beyond bilateralism”.

After all the presentations there was plenary discussion.

Outcome:

The consultation identified theological and procedural issues involved in the possible association of the Methodist and Reformed families of churches with the Joint Declaration. The importance of doctrinal agreements for the development of official church relations was recognized especially for those churches that have been involved in church-dividing doctrinal condemnations.

Called to Communion and Common Witness

It was agreed to propose that the consultative process be continued. It was agreed to propose that Lutherans, Roman Catholics, Methodists and Reformed continue the consultation process as equal partners in dialogue.

The participants share the conviction that agreement in the doctrine of justification represents an important step forward towards the goal of church unity and is necessary for the credibility of our common witness in the world.

REPORT

In 1999, the Lutheran World Federation and the Roman Catholic Church signed the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ). Such an agreement was bound to have repercussions for all the churches which have been in dialogue with the signatory churches. In the case of Methodists and Reformed, these dialogues have included the very subject of justification and the results encourage an exploration of ways in which the Joint Declaration might be more widely affirmed. To begin this process, a consultation was held in Columbus, Ohio, November 27 to 30, 2001, with the participation of theologians and some church leaders from the Roman Catholic Church, the Lutheran World Federation, the World Methodist Council, and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches.

The consultation identified theological and procedural issues involved in the possible association of the Methodist and Reformed families of churches with the Joint Declaration. The importance of doctrinal agreements for the development of official church relations was recognized especially for those churches that have been involved in church-dividing doctrinal condemnations.

It was agreed to propose that the consultative process be continued. Given the different characters of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the World Methodist Council, two distinct but interrelated processes are proposed to the four partners:

In light of the appreciation already formally expressed by the Executive Committee of the World Methodist Council in favour of the JDDJ, the Methodist understanding of justification and its relationship to the JDDJ should be theologically explained and substantiated. To facilitate this, a small commission should be established representing the WMC, LWF

Called to Communion and Common Witness

and PCPCU. In this commission, the Methodist understanding of and relationship to the agreements reached in the JDDJ would be discussed with a view to producing an official text that the WMC might, in accordance with its own procedures, present to the LWF and the Roman Catholic Church for possible endorsement by these two parties. It would be appropriate that an observer from the WARC participate in this process.

1. In light of the strong commitment of the Reformed tradition since the Reformation to the doctrine of justification and its connections with individual and social life, the Reformed participants would be agreeable to the establishment of a quadrilateral study commission, wherein their perspective could contribute to the understanding of the doctrine of justification. For Methodists, such a commission would be a welcome opportunity to process some of the wider issues relevant to justification. For Lutherans and Roman Catholics such a commission could be one way in which to pursue further, and ecumenically, some of the issues that are identified in JDDJ 43 and the Official Common Statement. It would be appropriate to invite the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches to be represented with an advisory status in such a commission. As part of the commission's work, the Reformed participants would continue to explore the question of whether and how they might express support for the agreements set forth in the JDDJ. Any recommendations agreed by these participants would be discussed in the commission and forwarded to the WARC Executive Committee for consideration.
2. It is the conviction of us all that the attainment of agreement on the doctrine of justification is an important step forward towards the goal of church unity and necessary for the credibility of our common witness before the world.

Columbus, 30 November 2001

Appendix 4

The Wider Context of Lutheran and Reformed Interconfessional Dialogues

The following overview does not include Lutheran-Reformed dialogues and agreements at international, regional and national levels, nor those cases (Meissen, Reuilly, Churches Uniting in Christ) in which Lutherans and Reformed have together entered into dialogues and agreements with others, since these are described extensively in the report itself.

International¹

African Instituted dialogue

Dialogue between WARC and the Organization of African Instituted Churches began in 1998 and will conclude in 2002. The 1999 “Kigali Statement” identified historical, cultural and ecclesial challenges facing Christian churches in Africa and proposed concrete responses.

Anglican dialogue

The LWF began dialogue with the Anglican Communion in 1970, WARC in 1978: several reports have been published. The Anglican-Reformed dialogue report, “God’s Reign and Our Unity” (1984), is noteworthy for describing the unity and mission of the church within the perspective of

¹ The dialogues are listed alphabetically by dialogue partner. Most of the dialogue reports are to be found in *Growth in Agreement: Reports and Agreed Statements of Ecumenical Conversations on a World Level*, ed. Harding Meyer and Lukas Vischer (Geneva/New York: WCC/Paulist Press, 1984) and *Growth in Agreement II: Reports and Agreed Statements of Ecumenical Conversations on a World Level 1982-1998*, ed. Jeffrey Gros, FSC, Harding Meyer and William G Rusch (Geneva/Grand Rapids: WCC/Eerdmans, 2000).

Called to Communion and Common Witness

the kingdom of God. An Anglican-Lutheran International Working Group began work in 2000 on various aspects of Anglican-Lutheran relations today and is expected to report in summer 2002.

Baptist conversations and dialogue

WARC began dialogue with the Baptist World Alliance in 1974, reporting in 1977. Mutual challenges and warnings were issued within the context of common rejoicing “in our membership of the one church of Jesus Christ.” Conversations between the Baptist World Alliance and the LWF took place between 1986 and 1989 and addressed, among other matters, Lutheran condemnations of the Anabaptists in the 16th century.

Churches of Christ (Disciples)

WARC engaged in dialogue with the Disciples’ Ecumenical Consultative Council from 1984 to 1987. The dialogue report called on churches in the two traditions, which are historically close, to say whether or not they could accept the declaration that “the Disciples of Christ recognize and accept each other as visible expressions of the one church of Christ;” acceptance of this declaration “presses us beyond our divided histories towards a common ecumenical future”.

Mennonite dialogue

WARC entered into dialogue with the Mennonite World Conference in 1984. The 1986 report addresses the condemnation of the Anabaptists in Reformed confessional documents and calls for dialogue at the local level.

Methodist dialogue

Dialogue between the LWF and the World Methodist Council (1977–1984) resulted in the 1984 report, “The Church, Community of Grace,” recommending steps toward closer fellowship between Lutheran and Methodist churches. Dialogue between WARC and the World Methodist Council (1985–1987) attempted a joint statement of faith and concluded that the classic doctrinal differences were not impediments to unity; the dialogue report asked member churches to consider the implications of this observation.

Oriental Orthodox dialogue

Dialogue between WARC and the Oriental Orthodox churches (1993–2001) led to an agreed statement on Christology (1994) and a final report identifying convergences and divergences on a range of theological issues.

Orthodox dialogue

Dialogue between the LWF and the Orthodox church from 1981 led to joint statements on divine revelation, Scripture and tradition, and the canon and inspiration of Holy Scripture; in 1999, a new phase of this dialogue was begun on word and sacraments (*mysteria*) in the life of the church. Dialogue between WARC and the Orthodox from 1988 resulted in agreed statements on the Trinity (1992) and Christology (1994); currently under discussion are aspects of the church.

Pentecostal dialogue

WARC-Pentecostal dialogue (1996–2001) focused on spirituality and contemporary challenges, the role of the Bible in both families, the role of the Holy Spirit in proclamation and praxis, and the key issue of *charismata*.

Prague consultations

These multilateral conversations seek a more inclusive understanding of the Reformation movement. They began in 1986 in Prague and initially involved only churches or movements with roots in the “first” or radical Reformations: Brethren, Czech Brethren, Hussites, Hutterian Brethren, Mennonites, Moravians, Quakers and Waldensians. From 1994, the meetings moved to Geneva and then Strasbourg and were organized by WARC, the LWF and the Mennonite World Conference; they were also attended by Baptists, Methodists and a representative of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity.

Roman Catholic

The LWF began dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church in 1965, WARC in 1970. The Reformed-Roman Catholic dialogue report, “Towards a Common

Called to Communion and Common Witness

Understanding of the Church” (1990), called for a “reconciliation of memories”; dialogue continues on the topic of church and kingdom. In the “Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification” (1999), the LWF and the Roman Catholic Church established a differentiated consensus in basic truths regarding justification and declared that the mutual condemnations from the time of the Reformation do not apply to the teaching presented in the Declaration.

Seventh-Day Adventist conversations and dialogue

The report of Adventist-Lutheran conversations (1994–1998) deals with justification by faith, Scripture and authority in the church, and eschatology, and presents several recommendations to the churches on both sides. A dialogue between WARC and the Seventh-Day Adventist church in 2001 noted that “the Reformed and the Adventists have frequently misunderstood one another”; it focused on challenges to Christian mission today, particularly economic injustice, environmental destruction, HIV/Aids, prejudice in many forms, and violence against women and children.

National or Regional

At national or regional levels, dialogue involving Lutherans and/or Reformed has resulted in binding forms of church communion, for example:

1. In Canada, the “Waterloo Agreement” (2000) is a communion agreement between the Anglican Church of Canada and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada;
2. “The Porvoo Common Statement” (1996) is a communion agreement between Nordic and Baltic Lutheran churches and the Anglican churches of Britain and Ireland;
3. Formal declarations of communion have been made between the Methodists and the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD), the Church of Norway and the Church of Sweden;

Called to Communion and Common Witness

4. In Italy, Waldensians and Methodists are practically united in one church, the Waldensian Evangelical Church; they have also reached agreement with the Italian Baptists on mutual recognition of baptism;
5. In the USA, “Following our Shepherd to Full Communion” (1999) is a communion agreement between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and the Moravian Church in America; and “Called to Common Mission” (2000) is a communion agreement between the ELCA and the Episcopal Church, USA.

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