



JESUS CHRIST
HEALS AND
RECONCILES
OUR WITNESS
IN EUROPE

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THEME PAPER

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FOREWORD

The 12th Assembly of the Conference of European Churches (CEC) meeting at Trondheim, Norway, 25 June – 2 July 2003 will consider the theme “Jesus Christ Heals and Reconciles – Our Witness in Europe”.


This theme was selected by the Central Committee of CEC at its meeting in Iasi, Romania, in October 2000. Members of the Committee expressed their desire for a theme which, for the first Assembly of CEC in the new millennium, would sound a strong missiological note – “witness” – and affirm the positive message which the Churches have to bring to Europe today in their proclamation of Jesus Christ. The theme continues the emphasis on reconciliation which was so central at the Second European Ecumenical Assembly and the CEC 11th Assembly at Graz in 1997, while now also introducing a new element: “healing”.

An important part of the context in which this theme has emerged, is the engagement of CEC and its member churches, together with the Council of European Bishops’ Conferences (CCEE), in intensive discussion and work on the *Charta Oecumenica – Guidelines for the Growing Co-operation among the Churches of Europe*. Being requested by participants at the Second European Ecumenical Assembly in Graz, the *Charta* “describes fundamental ecumenical responsibilities, from which follow a number of guidelines and commitments. It is designed to promote an ecumenical culture of dialogue and co-operation at all levels of church life, and to provide agreed criteria for this.”



This paper on the Assembly Theme aims to provide an introduction which will enable participants at the 12th Assembly to engage with the theme and related issues, and also to encourage many others who will not themselves be coming to Trondheim nevertheless to be part of the wider discussion. It comprises two chapters – the first being a theological exploration of Jesus Christ as healer and reconciler, and the second being a survey of what the churches' witness to Christ involves in the life of Europe today. Each needs to be read in the light of the other. A bibliography of relevant CEC publications and documents produced since the 11th Assembly is included at the end.

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Producing this paper was a consultative exercise involving many people, and with this process the 12th Assembly itself has effectively begun already. The Assembly Planning Committee first appointed a sub-group in 2001 to produce a draft on the Assembly Theme, which was then revised by the Planning Committee itself, and sent to all CEC member churches and associated organisations as a study document in early 2002. Churches were invited not only to offer comments on the text, but also to offer illustrative stories from their own contexts. The Assembly Planning Committee is very grateful for the many comments, criticisms, suggestions and contributions offered, all of which have been given serious attention.

It will be seen how significantly different this final text is from the first published draft. Certain comments made in the original Foreword, however, do not need any amendment and are now repeated here. The Assembly theme is both challenging and complex, and this paper does not claim to deal with it exhaustively. The text includes only certain reflections on different aspects of the theme. It must also be stressed that the aim has not been to prepare a final document of a dogmatic nature and commanding universal agreement. The aim has been to produce a working document for

the Assembly, and as such the text reflects much of the diversity of perspectives within our ecumenical fellowship no less than the basis of our fellowship in Jesus Christ. It will be seen that, while setting out a firm theological basis, rather than providing ready-made answers to our contemporary challenges, it seeks to identify those questions and burning issues which our constituency feels should be shared and addressed at Trondheim. It will be for the Assembly itself to decide what should be said and acted upon in the name of CEC as a whole, and what the priorities and direction of CEC should be for the future.

Keith Clements
General Secretary
22 January 2003



1. CONFESSING JESUS CHRIST

1. “Jesus Christ heals and reconciles - our witness in Europe”. The Assembly theme begins with Jesus Christ whom we understand as healer and reconciler. The purpose of this first chapter of the theme paper is to stimulate every assembly participant to reflect more deeply and widely on the questions: “Who is Jesus Christ for us today? To whom are we as Christians actually called to witness in Europe today?” This is the necessary theological grounding for all that will be considered and debated at the Assembly, and this chapter therefore relates closely to the next chapter which deals with concrete issues in the life of Europe and the world, and the responsibilities of the Churches.

2. In reflecting on who Jesus is, we today are doing what Christian communities have attempted to do from the beginning - to grasp the mystery of Jesus. Whether they called him the Anointed One (Messiah/Christos), or the Emmanuel, it was always clear that the true and full nature of his being the Son of Man and the Son of God was beyond human grasp, as the Apostle Paul confirms when he says in his Letter to the Philippians: “And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding...” (Philippians 4:7). Christ, the love of God enshrined in human form, is not one of us and yet he is one with us: “Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death - even death on a cross” (Philippians 2:6-8). Prayer, praise and practice have always been the context in which Christians have tried to explain who Jesus Christ



is for them, and this has generated a rich diversity of images and expressions in attempting to “comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge” (Ephesians 3:18f). In this spirit we, too, want to express in several ways what Jesus Christ means for us today.

1.1. The Crucified Healer

3. The Gospels tell us that Jesus literally went out of his way to heal sick, outcast and marginalised people of his time: “Jesus had just then cured many people of diseases, plagues, and evil spirits, and had given sight to many who were blind” (Luke 7:21). He shared the healing power that is a part of God’s Kingdom with those who were bereft of all strength: “Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). He shared it with the children: “Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me” (Matthew 18:4-5). He shared it both with women and men (Mark 1:30f, 2:1-12, 5:24-34). He confronted the seemingly almighty power of death by bringing people from their graves (John 11:43). These were not just “miracles” in the way extraordinary healings may have occurred then and now; they were manifestations of God’s compassion in the midst of human loneliness, pain and despair.

4. It was this compassion that eventually brought Jesus to the cross. Christ Jesus went all the way, even accepting the horrors of crucifixion and the forsakenness of the cross, to remain the “God with us,” i.e. Emmanuel. “Calvary is but Bethlehem become mature” (H.H. Farmer). His wounds on the cross became the source of healing for all human weakness. Christ Jesus erased “the record that



stood against us with its legal demands. He set this aside, nailing it to the cross” (Colossians 2:14). “He assumed the worse that he might give us the better. He became poor that by his poverty we might become rich. He accepted the form of a servant that we might win back our freedom. He came down that we might be lifted up. He was tempted that through him we might conquer. He was dishonoured that he might glorify us. He died that he might save us. He ascended that he might draw to himself us, who were thrown down through the fall of sin” (St Gregory the Theologian, 4th century).

5. From the beginning, Christian communities have regarded the death of Jesus in the light of the words of the prophet Isaiah: “Surely he has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases... he was wounded for our transgressions...” (Isaiah 53:4-5). This is not to glorify suffering for its own sake or to see it as a virtue in itself, still less to encourage people simply to accept the sufferings inflicted upon them by others. It is rather to recognise the cost of love, which positively reaches out to and identifies with others in their need and vulnerability. So Christ can be understood as our “wounded healer,” in other words: We do not expect our healing to come from an invincible God but from the God who shares our vulnerability and woundedness and heals us from within our sin and lostness. Nor do we expect this healing simply to take the form of physical cures as if Jesus is a magical wonder-worker; it is rather the restoration of wholeness to every level of broken human existence, beginning now and to be completed in God’s future which is anticipated in hope. “For to this end we toil and struggle, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Saviour of all people, especially of those who believe” (1 Timothy 4:10).

6. This understanding of Jesus as *the Crucified Healer* will have serious implications for how Christians and Churches view their own mission as a sharing in the healing and reconciling mission of



Jesus Christ, and how they are to relate to the suffering and brokenness of the world today.

1.2. The Resurrected Reconciler

7. What would be our faith without the Resurrected Christ? The Apostle Paul clearly expresses this when he says: “If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins” (1 Corinthians 15:17). The preaching of the Gospel sounds forth from the empty tomb: “He is not here - he is risen!” (Luke 24:5), and the foundation of the new community of God is the presence of the risen Lord in its midst. For the Christian Church, Jesus Christ is not simply a lawgiver, teacher, social reformer, humanist or even a religious leader. The unique contribution of Jesus Christ is himself. On this ground we must see what he said and the way he said it.

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8. As Peter preached the resurrection of Christ in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, the reaction of the people was striking (Acts 2:37-39) - they were “*cut to the heart*” and said: “Brothers, what should we *do*?” This is a powerful reminder that the Gospel requires *public witness* and always calls for *repentance*, a reversal towards God of one’s own life and the life of one’s community, in acknowledgement of the stark truth of one’s condition. The healing of human existence is realised at the personal level by accepting the life of Jesus Christ and especially the central fact of this unique life, i.e. the death and the resurrection. This means that each person must accept for him/herself the once and for all event of Christ’s death and resurrection in order to receive into his/her personal existence the reconciliation realised in Christ (Romans 6:3-4).

9. In response to God’s grace through the re-enactment of Christ’s death and resurrection in baptism, every believer is clothed

in him (Galatians 3:27). Thus, through baptism, the new resurrection life, which was achieved by Christ's voluntary death, is realised in the very existence of the human person. It is evident that the death of the believer in baptism is a symbol and an imitation of real death. Although the death is not real and only an image, its consequences are those of a real transcendence of death by God's grace. "Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4). Here lies the miracle and gift of the restoration of the human person and his/her reconciliation in the Church. Through this symbolic act, humans receive the gifts of resurrection i.e. the healing and reconciliation with God and with his/her fellow human beings.

10. It follows, then, that the person of the incarnate, crucified and resurrected Jesus Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit, is the foundation of the New Testament community, a community of faith and love. This means that there is a unique and new reality, the reality of the new people who are one with Jesus Christ, whose transforming grace is known through faith. It is Jesus Christ, God become human, who reveals to us what a human person really is. Through his death and resurrection, Christ makes every human being a unique person in communion with others. This is what we call Christian community, the new holy nation, which maintains its integrity by the continuing presence of the resurrected Christ. Here "there is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28). St. Maximus the Confessor in the 6th century pointed out that in this new community "men, women and children profoundly divided as to race, nation, language, manner of life, work, knowledge, honour, fortune... all are recreated in the Spirit. To all equally the ecclesial community communicates a divine aspect. All receive from her a unique nature which cannot be broken asunder,



a nature which no longer permits one henceforth to take into consideration the many and profound differences which are their lot. In that way all are raised up and united in a manner, which is truly catholic. In her, none is in the least degree separated from the community, all are grounded, so to speak, in one another by the simple and indivisible power of faith” (Mystagogy, I).

11. The essence of the apostolic teaching was always “Jesus Christ and his resurrection”. The Christian community continues the proclamation of the same message. This message has always been received through faith and expressed and lived by baptism; it exists in the Christian community as the fellowship between those who call themselves Christians. In the long course of Christian history the testimony of the resurrected Lord has often meant persecution, suffering, and even death. In spite of all difficulties faithful Christians did not hesitate to testify to the risen Christ as their Lord and Saviour, because he was a living reality to them. As has often been pointed out, it is worth noting that the 20th century saw more Christian martyrs, most of them in Europe (especially the East), than any previous century.

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12. Authentic preaching of the Gospel always makes clear the proper link between the death and resurrection of Christ. It is not as if Easter just makes a final happy ending to the story which culminated in the tragedy of Good Friday. Easter does not blot out the memory of the cross, but rather sheds new light on the passion and death of Jesus. In his final agony Jesus cried out “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Mark 15:34). In the resurrection it is disclosed that this God-forsakenness was a dark journey he went through and completed. He “descended into Hades” in order to bring the love of God to the utmost realms of God-forsakenness, so that no-one and nothing need be God-forsaken anymore: “For our sake, he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Corinthians 5:21). This is the

most profound basis for all Christian understanding of “solidarity” and right relationships. Thus, there is now hope for all who suffer and this is the reason we believe that the resurrected Lord is our reconciler. We are the new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17) because Christ Jesus is raised from the dead and can bring to new life with himself all who are otherwise abandoned, rejected and condemned.

13. Our diverse Christian traditions have found a rich variety of ways to express and celebrate this good news. The healing of the sick and the significance of reconciliation and the resurrection are clearly depicted in the Orthodox icon which shows that, as Christ rises from the grave, he is drawing with both hands Adam and Eve from their graves. Thus, the life of the risen Christ is life for them – all humankind – as well. Charles Wesley, one of the greatest Protestant hymn-writers, declares:

*Soar we now where Christ has led,
Following our exalted head.
Made like Christ, like Christ we rise,
Ours the cross, the grave, the skies.*

14. It is on the basis of this belief and hope in Christ crucified and risen that Christians are called to face the divisions in their own communities and in society, all situations which cry out for reconciliation and healing, and all scenes of evident hopelessness where death seems to be the only future.

1.3. The Saviour of the Cosmos

15. “For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood



of his cross.” So writes the Apostle Paul about Jesus (Colossians 1:19–20). This is in seeming contrast to the Gospels, which show us Jesus speaking with, comforting and healing many individual people. Jesus as the one who meets every single woman, man and child according to their particular need has from the beginning been the experience, the joy and inspiration of countless people and will always be so. But it is remarkable how the New Testament shows that, within a very few years of the death and resurrection of Jesus, the early Church was also worshipping him and speaking of him on another level – as nothing less than the Saviour of the entire creation (Greek: *kosmos*), the one in whom we see God’s “plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth” (Ephesians 1:10). Indeed, “all things came into being with him, and without him not one thing came into being” (John 1:3). It is evident that, experiencing the extraordinary love and life-giving power of Christ in the Holy Spirit, the apostolic preaching knew that there could be no limits to his saving work which therefore encompasses “all things” – a phrase which runs like a refrain through the New Testament.

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16. When Jesus died upon the cross, he bore the love of God identifying himself with all people. “...One has died for all; therefore all have died” (2 Corinthians 5:14). By his total, self-giving love Jesus Christ re-established in his person the divine image which is intended for humankind but had been obscured by sin – sin which is “the heart curved in upon itself” (Martin Luther). He thus opened the way for human beings to achieve their liberation from estrangement, isolation and egocentric individualism. This means that it is the self-emptying love of the Son of God which provides the foundation of the unity and reconciliation of humankind and moreover of the whole created order of which humankind is a part. Reconciliation can be achieved in Jesus Christ, due to the re-creation of human nature in him. Jesus Christ is the Saviour not only of

humankind but of the whole creation, because he restores the primordial unity of the *kosmos* and brings people together in a new way (Ephesians 2:13-19).

17. Therefore to be true to the biblical faith we must stress the cosmic dimensions both of sin and the saving work of Christ. The original oneness and conjunction of the entire creation with God may be pictured as a beautiful symphony of all things with one another, which was disrupted by sin. Sin introduced discord and confusion into the music of the created universe and even the material world undergoes its effect. Sin was indeed a real catastrophe caused by the free will of intelligent beings. It was a decomposition, disorganisation and dissolution of the unity created by God. Thus, in the condition of sin, the human being was separated from God, from his/her fellow human persons and the rest of creation. Christ, the incarnate Son of God became the solution to this deep human and cosmic tragedy. The Saviour of the *kosmos* re-established the originally-intended harmony of nature and humanity. The perfect Son of God came down from heaven and at great cost became truly human being, thus uniting human beings with God forever. In the incarnation, humanity was assumed into a unity with the Divinity.

18. It is important to recognise that in speaking of the completeness and universal scope of the saving work of Christ, the biblical faith maintains a tension between the “already” and the “not yet.” We see in Jesus Christ what is God’s plan for the fullness of time, and already the nature of that plan is experienced in the “first-fruits” of the gifts of the Spirit, life in Christ, the community of the Church and its worship, and wherever barriers are being broken down and justice and peace being established. But it cannot be pretended that the salvation of the *kosmos* is completed any more than that individuals on this earth are yet wholly redeemed and made perfect: “For in hope we were saved” (Romans 8:24). Sin continues



to corrupt persons and creation even though its conquest through the work of Christ is proclaimed. The various Christian traditions resolve this issue in different ways. Some see the Church as the sphere where the work of Christ is even now truly completed, over against the world of sin and death where it is still incomplete. In rather different fashion, the Reformer Martin Luther introduced the phrase *simul iustus et peccator* – “at the same time a righteous person and a sinner” – to describe the apparently paradoxical situation of the person who has faith in the saving grace of Christ, who is now regarded by God as justified yet remains a sinner until the final day of Christ. So too the whole *kosmos* is to be seen as decisively within the grace of Christ while sin and evil continue to be only too evidently active in it. It is at this point that a critically important ecumenical dialogue is still needed, especially as this bears on the relationship between faith and responsibility in society. What may be hoped for in a world which is evidently not perfectible? What is the relation between hope and realism, vision and practicality? Whatever the precise answer, the biblical faith indicates neither a bland optimism nor a despairing resignation, but rather a yearning hope to be shared with the whole creation. As Paul writes: “For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; for the creation was subjected to futility... in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labour pains until now, and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies” (Romans 8:19-23, cf. Revelation 21:5).

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19. Today, the holistic and cosmic dimensions of faith in Christ are becoming of ever-increasing urgency to Christians and churches as, with all people, they face the challenges of preserving the cre-

ation in face of human despoliation and environmental disasters, the recognition of the interconnectedness of “all things”, human and natural, and the new powers and responsibilities laid on us by advances in biological and medical science.

1.4. The transformation of the world by God through Christ in the Holy Spirit

20. The self-emptying (Greek: *kenosis*) in love of the Son of God as described by the Apostle Paul (Philippians 2:6ff.) was the revelation of the Triune God. It means a radical change for our understanding of God, and therefore also of all our understandings of what truly human life and relationships are, especially where power is concerned. The incarnation implies a movement of God out from himself in sheer love in order to bridge the gulf between God and humankind – while remaining God himself. This can only be understood if “God is love” (1 John 4:8). “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life” (John 3:16). These texts put Christ, as suggested by Martin Luther, as example and picture of “the great love to us” (WA 12, 469,1-3). St Symeon the New Theologian speaks of God in Christ as a “God without pride.” John Calvin writes: “The Son of God descended miraculously from heaven, yet without abandoning heaven: was pleased to be conceived miraculously in the Virgin’s womb, to live on the earth, and hang upon the cross, and yet always filled the earth from the beginning” (Institutes II, 13.4).

21. The early Church, in order to emphasise the one divine love, spoke of the common and indivisible work of Father and Son in the Holy Spirit operative both in creation and salvation – and also in the transformation of the world. This transformation is a common act of the divine love, which can be compared with nothing since it



is a love beyond ordinary human experience. It is a universal, inclusive, and conjoining love, going far beyond ordinary human love, which is partial, physical and divided in quality. “There is no ‘outside the gate’ with God... if God himself is the one who died outside the gate on Golgotha for those who are outside” (J. Moltmann).

22. Through his love, God confronts our expectations of what it means to be God, moving out from all the assumed privileges of majesty and omnipotence in order to be vulnerably incarnate in this world and to free human beings from their divisions, enmities and loneliness. The Son of God was somehow transported out of the security of heaven and in self-giving love brought divine unity to the human level. This is precisely the transformation of the world, which the Greek fathers dared to call deification (*theosis*). Thus, in and through Christ, the human person has the possibility of connecting him/herself with the perfect divine oneness in a personal and unique communion of love. Western Christians have more characteristically spoken of “sanctification”, the energising work of the Holy Spirit in the receptive believer and the believing community. While the two approaches differ in their emphases, both seek to apprehend what is conveyed by Jesus Christ in his great prayer for unity: “The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me” (John 17:22-23).

23. Thus, Christian existence is life in “the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit” (2 Corinthians 13:13). The communion of persons in the Christian body is the reflection and an image of the communion of the three divine Persons. Christ became one with us through his humanity, thus recreating the human person. And through the operation of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost the divine unity of the Father and of the



Son and of the Holy Spirit was transferred to the human level. The *ecclesia*, the communion of saints, is a unique communion of the Triune God. Martin Luther in this respect said, “the Church is the location in which the knowledge of the triune God is preserved” (WA 45,89,17-18; WA 41,270,10). This means that Christian unity, *koinonia*, is not simply a humanitarian fellowship, not even a company of believers, but the body of absolute reconciliation and love, which maintains its integrity through the continuing presence within it of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. This is the reality and the vocation of those who belong to the Christian fellowship, to work and endeavour (Ephesians 4:3-6). Again, while there would be wide if not universal agreement on this basic theology, there are in fact significant differences between the Christian traditions in their understandings of the Church (ecclesiology). Protestants, for example, in line with the principle of *simul iustus et peccator* (see above) would maintain that the Church is *semper reformanda* – “always in need of reformation” even if already “reformed”. On this basis the Church can admit its all-too-human fallibility and even sinfulness as a corporate body, and the absolute descriptions of the Church as the pure and holy Body of Christ can be applied only to the “invisible Church” known only to God. The Orthodox understanding, however, is that sinfulness and human weakness, while applicable to individual Christians, cannot apply to the Church corporately, even in its visible form, because it truly is the Body of Christ, Christ himself with his members incorporated into his divine and human life. Here too there is need to maintain a difficult but essential ecumenical dialogue. All traditions, however, would maintain that both in its own communal life and in its witness in society, empowered by the Holy Spirit, the Church is called to be a sign of God’s transformation of the world.



24. In view of this understanding of the transformative work of God in Christ through the Spirit, recreating human life in commu-

nity, it will have to be asked how far the Churches today actually manifest the new *koinonia* in their own life together, and how far are they able with integrity to call society to a new understanding of what true community means.



2. OUR WITNESS IN EUROPE

2.1. Growing fellowship between Churches

25. The prayer of Jesus Christ to his heavenly Father for his disciples as well as for all who will believe in him “that they may be one” (John 17: 22) is not simply a wish, which the Lord expressed occasionally, but a mandate given to all who follow him and first of all to the Church. The divisions between the churches are against the mandate given by Jesus Christ himself. If the healing and reconciling power of Jesus Christ is to work within and through the churches, then the process of healing and of reconciliation should start with the churches themselves. The fellowship between the churches in Europe is based on their common faith and trust in Jesus Christ. Through their fellowship the churches have immense potentialities to make the Christian witness credible in the today world, so that the world may believe.



2.1.1. Churches walking together

26. We can point to the positive developments among churches and church communions in Europe. Reformed, Lutherans and Methodists have come together in the Leuenberg Church Fellowship; the Evangelical Church in Germany and the Church of England have entered a relation of closer fellowship on the way to visible unity in the Meissen Agreement; the French Reformed and Lutheran Churches with the Anglican Churches of Britain and Ireland have entered a similar relationship through the Reuilly Agreement; Anglicans of Britain and Ireland with Nordic and Baltic

Lutheran Churches have come into communion, the Porvoo Communion; Anglicans and Moravians have entered a new relationship through the Fetter Lane Agreement.

27. In many countries we see examples of ecumenical hospitality. For instance in Sweden new immigrant Christian groups and congregations, be they Eastern or Oriental Orthodox, be they Roman Catholics or Protestants, have been received not only by Christian friends of their own denominations, but by those who are considered very remote relatives in the Christian family. In sharing church buildings, in social activities and in diaconia Christians of all different denominations often have overcome their estrangement, and in doing so given a strong witness of Christian fellowship.

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28. Fundamental differences of faith are however still barriers to visible unity and to eucharistic fellowship between some churches. As the *Charta Oecumenica* notes, “there are different views of the church and its oneness, of the sacraments and ministries. We must not be satisfied with this situation. Jesus Christ, revealed to us on the cross his love and the mystery of reconciliation; as his followers, we intend to do our utmost to overcome the problems and obstacles that still divide the churches” (*Charta Oecumenica*, I,1).

29. We can also point to increased tensions and new divisions in and between churches. These are not limited to one church, one family of churches, or one community of churches. Consideration needs to be given to the relation of each church to other churches as well as to the relationship between different church communions or fellowships. Particular attention should be paid to developments within some Orthodox Churches. Some of them have expressed already a reserved position vis-à-vis the ecumenical movement. Some others while still members have reduced their participation to a minimal level. A growth of understanding between Orthodox

and non-Orthodox Christians is vital in Europe especially in the current situation.

30. This makes new dialogue about the substance and the shape of the ecumenical movement desirable and necessary. CEC has delivered in its work and activities its own contribution to the development of relations between Orthodox churches and other parts of the ecumenical family. The results show that there are not only difficulties but also areas of possible further co-operation. Honest evaluation of the current situation and future possibilities will have an impact on the state of the Orthodox-Protestant dialogue and also for CEC and other ecumenical organisations. It is an important responsibility of CEC both at the Assembly and in the next stages of its life to promote dialogue and understanding between Orthodox and non-Orthodox Christians in Europe.

In November 2002, in Crete, theologians and bishops from Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox Churches came together with Protestant theologians in a three-day meeting sponsored by CEC and the Leuenberg Fellowship of Churches of the Reformation. The subject was ecclesiology (the nature of the Church). At the conclusion of the meeting the participants declared: "This consultation... was especially significant because these issues had never received sufficient attention in previous dialogues between the Orthodox Churches and the Churches of the Reformation. The consultation was also intended to make an important contribution to understanding among the churches as Europe becomes more closely knit."

31. The relationship of CEC member churches to the Roman Catholic Church is of special importance. In some countries there are good relationships with the Roman Catholic Church and it is part of the national ecumenical body. In other countries relationships are less good. The positive example of the good working relations between the CEC and the Roman Catholic Church is the work of the Joint Committee of CEC and CCEE (Council of Bishops' Conferences



in Europe) which was the basis for the process that led to the text of the *Charta Oecumenica*. The *Charta Oecumenica* provides an agenda of commitments both for the Roman Catholic Church as well as for the CEC member churches for improving their relationships. It invites all to proclaim the Gospel together, to pray and act together and continue in mutual dialogue (*Charta Oecumenica*, part II).

32. On our way towards the fellowship of churches we acknowledge the value of our own confessional identity. This should not be an impediment to dialogue but rather the ground for being open to valuing other Christian traditions. In some places we have to witness a lack of communication and information about ecumenical issues. Therefore issues of ecumenical education and formation, as well as sharing and information within the European churches need to be given higher priority.

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2.1.2. Majority-minority churches

33. Disparities of size can make relationships between churches in some countries difficult. Painful histories of relations between churches have not been overcome. Some churches can be identified with particular ethnic or national communities. There are churches, which are identified with small ethnic groups living not in their homeland. They may be part of the church in their homeland or may be recognised as an independent church. In various places in Europe there is an increasing presence of diaspora churches, e.g. African Christian communities and new churches, for instance from a charismatic background. Legal status and relationship to the state may be different for different churches and in different countries.

34. All this points to the fact that the relationship between minority and majority churches has been, and still is, a great chal-

lenge on the way to a more comprehensive fellowship between churches in the ecumenical family. In spite of many official declarations by minority and majority churches recommending ecumenical co-operation that is both deep and durable, the relations between such churches at the local level are often not as good as they could be. CEC has considered and will continue to consider as one of its major tasks to promote dialogue and co-operation between minority and majority churches throughout Europe, and if necessary to be an advocate for minority churches.

In November 2002 the consultation on "Religious Freedom: Majority and Minority Churches in Europe in their Relations to the State" in Vienna recommended that CEC "should play a stronger role as a moderator and mediator in conflict situations between member churches, and in mediating between member churches and the governments of their countries. Any time a member church requests mediation, CEC must have a mandate from all its member churches to intervene as mediator."



2.1.3. Healing of memories

35. Reconciliation opens up a new future but it also deals with the past. How people remember profoundly affects how they behave in the present. Unhealed memories can enslave and condemn us to seemingly endless living out of the past. The real prize to gain of all the positive developments in the fellowship between the churches is that churches together are a more convincing sign of that reconciliation which Christ intends for the whole of creation. The sign of Christian reconciliation shows that by God's grace it is possible to reconcile the bitterest of memories; it is possible, even for those who once burned one another at the stake, to be reconciled, and these acts of reconciliation form in us a people inclined to reconciliation.

36. Acknowledgement of wrongs done and hurts caused is an indispensable part of reconciliation. This may take the form of apology. Apology is the verbalised face of repentance. It opens up the possibility of reconnection with the other. Apology – clearly and publicly expressed – is one way of convincing people that a clear break with the sinful past has been made. Such a confession, however, should not be considered as a claim to forgiveness. In many cases the forgiveness cannot be quickly achieved and in some situations may not even be the most appropriate thing. Insisting on the Christian duty of forgiveness and the readiness to forgive may bring new suffering to the victims. The recognition of guilt must be connected with the effort to replace injustice and to act in such a manner that new justice and a new relationship will be established.

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37. Dealing with the past may mean walking through our history together, particularly visiting together those points that continue to have a painful sting. Walking through our past together may help us recover what we have forgotten, denied, covered up and silenced. In some countries there are painful and difficult histories between churches that have not been overcome. In this respect also should not be forgotten that significant period of life of the churches and the ecumenical movement which coincided with 40 years of the Cold War, with severe limitations for the quality of ecumenical relations. Ecumenical organisations and member churches in both East and West have to look at the lessons to be learned from this period.

38. An understanding of reconciliation is necessarily built on the interlocking dynamics of forgiveness, repentance, truth and justice. Reconciliation is not about a smoothing over of conflict. Instead it is about a profound transformation. In situations of division and brokenness there is a necessary search for truth and justice. Church-

es sometimes have to ask hard questions about their own role, especially in situations when they sided with state power, and with national, ethnic or political ideologies.

- Sectarianism is still experienced in parts of Scotland. The Church and Nation Committee of the Church of Scotland looked at the history of the Church of Scotland and apologised for its sectarian attitudes in the past. One example of where sectarianism is tackled is the Gorbals Parish Church (Church of Scotland) and Blessed Dun Scotus (Roman Catholic) in Glasgow who have come together to work across the divides which are apparent in the community and to provide opportunities for people to discover “their common ground”.

- In Slovakia a commission of scholars has been set up to review the writing of history of the 17th and 18th centuries with the aim of reconciling the differences in Roman Catholic and Lutheran interpretations of that period.

- Several initiatives have been undertaken since the “Wende” of 1989 to deal with the recent past of the Cold War. For instance, church people from the Netherlands, Germany (former West and East) and Hungary organised a series of seminars at the Evangelical Academy in Berlin.

- The contacts between the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) and the churches in the Czech Republic with regard to reconciliation between their two peoples are an example for how reconciliation can work. An initiative by the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren (ECCB) carried out a three-year process of thorough discussion at all levels, including all its local congregations, and finally its Synod passed a resolution “On the problem of the expulsion of Germans from the Sudetenland” on 25 April 1995. In January 1996, the EKD Council replied to this resolution by thanking the ECCB for it, confessing the guilt on its own side and proposing that they set up a joint working group for further study of the issue. During consultations in May 1997 it was proposed that a booklet be prepared for use in German-Czech church partnerships and encounters. The book was published in 1998 with the title “The dividing wall is down. On the agreement between Czechs and Germans”.



2.2. Growing Integration in Europe

2.2.1. European integration as the reconciliation project

39. The development of European society has gone through substantial changes during the last 50 years. From wars to reconciliation in some of its parts, through the Cold War and bipolar division, Europe has arrived today at a stage where much more than any other time in its history questions of integration and co-operation are being discussed. The European integration process in the modern sense started after the last major war in Europe primarily as a reconciliation project. The protection of the values of peace and justice were at the heart of European integration since its beginning. For churches the discussion about Europe has a special significance. It is not only related to the fact that Christianity has played an important role in various parts of the European history – contributing to war and division as well as to peace and reconciliation – but also to the fact that Christianity significantly contributed to the existing value system in the continent. For the churches Europe is not just a geographical place but also a notion with spiritual significance. As the *Charta Oecumenica* states: “Europe – from the Atlantic to the Urals, from the North Cape to the Mediterranean – is today more pluralist in culture than ever before. With the Gospel, we want to stand up for the dignity of the human person created in God’s image and, as churches together, contribute towards reconciling peoples and cultures” (*Charta Oecumenica*, Preamble).

40. From its beginning CEC has seen it as one of its principal tasks to build bridges between churches and countries that were



separated by different political, economic and social systems. The aim was to enable the churches of Europe to become instruments of peace and understanding. The opportunity now that Europe can unite as never before, must be taken for the sake of the good of the people who inhabit this part of the world. Churches should continue and strengthen their active work in promoting respect among all people living on the continent, protecting human dignity, sharing resources, and living together in peace. The current discussion about Europe and its future, as well as the deep social and political changes we are facing today, cannot be and are not external events for the churches. It is consistent with the tradition of the churches and the tradition of CEC to be fully involved in this discussion. Overcoming the brokenness and division that are part of European history is the major contribution of the integration process in Europe.

2.2.2. European integration and enlargement of the European Union

41. There is a diversity of views on the process of integration in Europe. Several elements are significant for how the churches look at it. The most important is that the involvement of churches in the discussion on the European integration is not to be identified with a promotion of some particular political approach, as well as the fact that the process of European integration must not be limited to certain geographical parts of the continent. The process of European integration is to be understood as covering the whole of Europe and addressing the situation on the whole continent. Churches have a task to address those dimensions of the process which may not be in the forefront of the political agenda, as ethical, spiritual and cultural dimensions, including the question of values in Europe, which are however to be seen as integral parts of the process and fully included in the discussion.



42. European integration in this context is not considered purely as a technical expression for the enlargement of the European Union's political and economic structures but, in a much broader sense, as a term which covers the process of transcending borders and divisions on the whole continent. A serious question to ask in this regard is: What makes, or can make, Europe a place of unique co-operation between nations, states, ethnic groups and cultures? Is the expanding area of prosperity and peace in Europe just based on the expanding common market? Are the original motives of peace, reconciliation and justice still the main driving force of European integration today? What role do mutual solidarity and a feeling of togetherness play in this effort?

The document "Churches in the Process of European Integration" issued by the Church and Society Commission of the CEC in May 2001 is an open invitation to the discussion of the churches about their role and contribution to the continuing process of European integration.

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2.2.3. Diversity in Europe

43. In speaking about European integration it has to be recognised that Europe is not identical with the European Union (EU). Europe is wider than the economic and political construction of the Union. Out of its long experience CEC is keeping the vision of Europe alive in relationship with both the Council of Europe and the EU. Political relationships in Europe have to respect also other dimensions of life to which belong culture, spirituality and the whole rich complex of questions related to human identity. The creation of a common Europe must not be based purely on an expansion of the lifestyle of one part of Europe. In view of the intrinsic diversity between the regions of Europe and ways of life in different parts of the continent, there is an increasing need to protect spe-

cific national, ethnic, religious and cultural values and traditions, which has to be seriously considered. The project of building a common European house only has a chance of succeeding if mutual dialogue and learning, mutual recognition and respect between East and West, North and South are its main building blocks. Diversity in Europe will be not approached and adequately dealt with only at the political level, though it is highly important that at this level as well such a process should take place. It is a point of serious deliberation for the churches to formulate the churches' vision of the future Europe and to make a contribution to the current discussion to this theme.

44. Developing a European identity is the main challenge in the continuing process of European integration. This process, however, must be shaped in a mutual interplay of unity and diversity. Churches are a vital part of this scheme. A letter of CEC to its member churches in November 2002 encourages in this respect churches to use "every opportunity in public to remind people that the enlargement of the EU should not be seen as simply the 'East' adjusting to the 'West.' This enlargement is in fact a transformation of Europe as a whole, involving both the current member states and the new ones." Providing a valuable component of national identities, churches at the same time keep a universal (catholic) perspective. Both minority and "non-national" churches have played an important role in preserving the universal Christian values in their local context.



- CEC has always insisted that the discussion on the theme of European integration must involve the whole of Europe and must not create new divisions in Europe but guarantee diversity on the continent. Contributions of the churches to the process have been discussed during the "Europe day" – a special event of the Central Committee of CEC in October 2000.
- There are a number of regional activities in Europe in which churches contribute to the mutual learning, trust-building and reconciliation in their own context. One such is a project which reaches across the borders of an enlarged EU and brings together churches from Ukraine, Belarus, Poland and Germany for regular meetings and discussions.
- From the United Methodist Church Central and Southern Europe Central Conference it can be reported that they experience what it means to work with people of 13 different countries, speaking more than 19 different languages. As they are building bridges between the nations and peoples and trying to share scarce material resources there is always something to be learned.

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2.2.4. European political institutions

45. Churches are connected in their effort to the existing political processes in Europe. These have to be critically and constructively monitored. Especially the challenge of the enlargement of the European Union opens an opportunity to think anew the principles and rules of mutual co-existence between people, states and nations in Europe, as well as the principles of community. It also opens a new opportunity to develop relationships between the churches and the changing European political institutions. The CEC's Church and Society Commission has already made regular contributions to how this can be achieved as it is an issue of substantial interest to the churches and an inseparable part of the political dimension of the process of European integration.

46. This is related to such important processes at the European level as the development of the Charter of Fundamental Rights and recently the EU Convention on the Future of Europe, which mark

substantial changes in the development on our continent. This process of defining a new political framework of Europe has not yet come to an end. It is essential for the churches to include the importance of values and the social dimension of Europe as one of its substantial attributes into its objectives, and to fix them in basic political texts of the developing European Union.

47. Ecumenical co-operation among CEC member churches in approaching the European institutions, but also their co-operation with their Roman Catholic counterparts in critically accompanying the process of European integration, are of crucial importance. Equally important in this regard is the question of their relation to civil society as well as the role and contributions of various Christian grassroots organisations and church-related ecumenical organisations.

- The churches are contributing to the discussion around the EU Convention on the Future of Europe and formulating objectives, aims and goals of the structures in a redefined European Union. They are also making several significant contributions to the institutionalised debate on the future of Europe.

- The Church and Society Commission together with the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Community (COMECE) in August 2002 issued a proposal as to how the role of churches and religious communities can be adequately reflected and protected in a future constitutional treaty.



2.2.5. Secularisation in Europe

48. Christian faith has played a major role in shaping the Europe of today. In particular, Europe's system of values has been profoundly influenced by Christian faith. However, it has to be recognised and accepted that Christianity is not the only source of values for the European continent. Increasing secularisation in Europe creates a challenge for Christians. In this respect it has to be recognised that

there are different faces of secularisation in different parts of Europe. In Western Europe secularisation already has a long history related to an interplay of political, philosophical and theological developments. Church membership in many countries of this part of Europe as well as attendance of worship has decreased. The Church in some countries has become marginalised and of little relevance to many people's lives. On the other hand in the same countries there is an increase in forms of religiosity, which do not conform with historically shaped Christianity. In countries of Central and Eastern Europe the life of the Church has been shaped for a substantial period in the last century by an ideology which strongly opposed Christianity. In these countries we can observe several parallel tendencies. The heritage of Western secularism as well as of the antichristian and atheist ideas of communism is very present in these countries. At the same time, however, an increasing membership in the churches can be witnessed. This poses a question of interrelation between the genuine life-transforming Christian faith and culturally conditioned religiosity. It is true that a deep, real belief can be expressed adequately in culture, but on the other hand there is a constant danger of "para-Christianity" which is based on cultural values, mixed with occultist and pagan ideas. As part of the discussion about secularism in Europe churches need to address the meaning and the role of existing secularised and humanistic values as well as the existence of parallel systems of values, their mutual interlinkage and co-existence.

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- The contribution of the churches of Britain and Ireland indicates what secularisation means in their context: They recognise that they have declined in membership and have become marginal to contemporary culture. At the same time it can be noted that there was a huge media interest in the appointment of the new Archbishop of Canterbury which seemed to demonstrate a yearning for a spiritual leader who could communicate with secular society.
- It is an observation in various countries that at times of national or international disaster, people flock to Cathedrals to light candles and offer prayers.

2.2.6. Religious pluralism in Europe

49. It also needs to be recognised that the number of members of other religions in Europe is increasing. The relation to Islam and other religions creates opportunities and challenges for deepening our own Christian identity. One of the basic challenges is the question: How can Christians be “the salt of the earth” in the context of a contemporary multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, and increasingly multi-religious Europe?

50. If Christians are able to state their own identity, to communicate their basic beliefs, values and traditions they can open up to talk to people of different faiths. Christians in Europe do not need to be defeatist in their relationship to other religions. Creating new possibilities for contacts and active appreciation of existing dialogues with Jewish and Muslim communities at various levels increasingly need to become a part of the life of our churches.



- In September 2001 CEC organised together with CCEE the international conference on the theme “Christians and Muslims in Europe: responsibility and religious commitment in a pluralised society.” The current situation of Christian-Muslim relations in Europe was reflected on, as well as ways of strengthening of the common witness in the discussion of values in Europe.

- The Church of Scotland is gathering stories of local encounters of people of other faith communities. They hope through the medium of story to approach the difficult issues in relating to people of other faith communities in a way that feels less threatening. Individuals are also asked by a recommendation of the General Assembly to “search our own conscience and examine any reluctance to embrace the diversity of faiths and cultures, which enrich Scottish society today.”

2.2.7. Europe as a part of the world community of nations

51. The process of European integration has a profound effect also on the dynamics experienced by other continents. Europe has to define anew its role vis-à-vis other parts of the world. It has to take into consideration issues of responsibility for developing countries as well as the relation to the developed world. The process of European integration has to be seen in its relation to the process of globalisation and its impacts. Neither Europe nor the EU must be a fortress closed in on itself. Openness, understanding, acceptance and respect have to shape our view of the future of our continent. Facing these challenges in the time when Europe is both experiencing and preparing itself for significant changes, the significant question for the churches in Europe becomes: Which Europe will we choose on our way to the future, a Europe with closed borders, or a Europe which is aware of its responsibilities within the family of nations world-wide? How will the new Europe relate to other parts of the world, especially to the neighbouring non-European areas?

36



Many European churches and church-related agencies join forces with churches and organisations in developing countries to address issues of development, aid, conflict-prevention and peace-building in numerous projects. A landmark of their global efforts was the Jubilee 2000 Campaign. Religious organisations around the world joined to convince the leaders of the lending nations that they must take immediate action for debt cancellation. Together they sent their message to the leaders of the lending nations on the occasion of the 1999 G-8 Summit in Germany. Campaigning succeeded so far that the main creditors (the Group of 7 richest countries, the World Bank and International Monetary Fund) agreed on various initiatives to alleviate the debt burden. Chief amongst these was the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) programme. Now it has to be acknowledged that HIPC will not deliver debt "sustainability" as promised. Therefore follow-up initiatives to the Jubilee 2000 continue to campaign for a radical overhaul of the whole debt relief process and a new, fairer relationship between rich creditors and poor country debtors.

2.3. Growing solidarity

2.3.1. Church as an inclusive community

52. How we meet the neighbour – recognise him/her, respect him/her, give him/her a place, see ourselves in him/her – is a central challenge of all human existence. Jesus says, “Whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple – truly I tell you, none of these will lose their reward” (Matthew 10:42). In relating to and dealing with those who are around us – with our neighbours in the broadest meaning of the word – we bring true witness to the personal understanding of reconciliation and healing in our everyday life. Relating to “the neighbour” is a key issue of Christian ethics. In the Europe of today there are many examples where we have to meet “the neighbour”, where we witness the brokenness of the world as well as the healing word of the resurrected Christ. This may happen in a variety of cases – in our dealing with the poor, the persecuted, the victims of violence and the uprooted and in our approach to minorities of whatever kind as well as in bringing service of healing wherever it is necessary.

53. The Christian Church is an inclusive community. It includes women and men, old and young, rich and poor, sick and healthy, migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, homeless and unemployed, people of different ethnic background, of different political opinion, people who are differently abled – physically, psychologically, and intellectually. “There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28). We have differences, which we need to respect



and take into account and we have to form in society a community of solidarity also with people outside the Christian Church.

2.3.2. Women and men in society and church

54. Women and men need the same recognition in society and in the churches. However, in terms of the role of women in the churches and their access to decision-making and ministry, there are differences between churches. Nevertheless, the churches, rooted in the belief in the dignity and equality of all people in Christ, have a special calling to contribute to the implementation of gender equality. It is an issue of justice to take into account gender-specific life situations and gender-specific conditions in health care, education, the bio-ethical debate and in the discussions about economic and social changes. There are old patterns and new developments within our societies and churches that affect women more than men: the economic decline in the so-called transition countries of Central and Eastern Europe has affected women especially; they are more likely to suffer from long term unemployment, the breaking up of community and family support systems, and to lack access to health and social care; women who live as migrants and refugees in Europe are facing xenophobia and racism and often live more isolated than men. In all regions of Europe, violence against women, also in their domestic setting and even in church parishes, is a major problem.

38



The Ecumenical Forum of European Christian Women (EFECW) is a network of women coming from different Christian traditions in over 40 European countries. Its main objective is to enable European Christian women to find a common identity, to deepen their Christian understanding, to work for the unity of the church and of humankind, to develop and strengthen resources for women's ministries and to call for action in the fields of gender issues and women's concerns. In June 2000, 140 women from all over Europe met in Greece for a conference on "The female soul of Europe, Myths or Reality" and discussed themes like migration, sex-trafficking in women, violence against women. During the ecumenical dialogue the main issue was living together in reconciled diversity.

2.3.3. Relationship between generations

55. For many people, their primary human relationships, the place to experience love, solidarity, community and conflict resolution – the family – turns into a place of struggle. They experience family and personal relationships as a reality of brokenness. Marriages break apart and the children as well as the parents suffer from failure, loss and separation. There are families where parents and children hardly see each other because of the work-load, and families where children never see their parents go to work because there is no work to go to. Many people experience violence within their families. Families need the solidarity of the church community providing childcare and youth work, counselling and pastoral care. They also need the support of the state making sure that having children is not a financial risk, providing adequate education and child care, and funding local support.

56. A relationship, which is vital for the health both of the churches and of society, is that between the generations. Young people are neither "the church of tomorrow" nor "the society of tomorrow." Both in Church and society they belong to the community of *today*, with their full role to play and their visions of the future to share.



At the European Ecumenical Encounter at Strasbourg in April 2001, during which the Charta Oecumenica was signed, European church leaders met with an equal number of young people, symbolising the possibility and need for inter-generational dialogue to be taken much further and deepened.

57. We also want to mention explicitly the old people. In the countries of Western Europe – but not only there – the share of old people in the population will increase over the years to come. The churches will have to face new challenges to their diaconal as well as their missionary work:

- What does “human dignity” mean for old people?
- How can the witness to Christ be communicated to the elderly?
- How does the community of young and old find its shape in the churches?

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In connection with our theme “healing and reconciliation” the question has to be addressed how the exclusion of old people from the work place, from the life of society, from family life can be overcome.

In many countries in Europe the work of hospices has been strengthened. The hospice emphasises palliative rather than curative treatment; quality rather than quantity of life. The hospice affirms life and regards dying as part of human life. The dying are comforted. Professional medical care is given, and symptom-relief provided. The patient and family are both included in the care plan and emotional, spiritual and practical support is given according to their special needs. Trained volunteers can offer support to the patient and care for family members in the preparation for death and the bereavement process.

2.3.4. Violence

58. The issue of violence has been moving up the ecumenical agenda. Specifically the issue of gender violence has been highlighted over the last decade through the WCC initiative on “Churches in Solidarity with Women.” The World Council of Churches has declared a “Decade to Overcome Violence” which started in 2001. The events of 11 September 2001 in the USA and their aftermath raise profound issues for churches and Christians in Europe (and throughout the world). Violence has many faces. It includes physical and psychological force as well as political, social and economic exclusion.

59. Women and children especially are subject to violence in families and their immediate surroundings, but men are also affected. Rape, child pornography and child prostitution are extremely destructive forms of violence. Also not to be forgotten is the rising violence against elderly people and minority vulnerable groups in society. Violence degrades both victims and perpetrators. Church communities can offer a safe surrounding and assistance to the victims and help the perpetrators to confess their guilt and deal with it. Churches should also co-operate with professional helpers.

60. Every year a large number of women are trafficked to the West into forced labour, forced marriage and prostitution. This issue demands solidarity in various forms. There is the need of assistance to victims and of building preventive consciousness among possible victims. This issue challenges both women and men since men’s abuse of women hurts and degrades all women and men.

61. It also challenges those theologies which support a culture of subordination, which make women a commodity to be abused by men. A lot of work has been done by CEC on the issue of trafficking. In November 1999 many of the issues of theology, gender



and exploitation were examined in the International Consultation on Trafficking in Women in Driebergen/Netherlands.

62. People sometimes experience violence even in church. In the churches people's different talents are often not fully recognised and people are excluded – by other individuals and by institutional rules – from full participation. There are leading people in churches and congregations who misuse their power to harass, degrade and abuse people. Churches have to address these cases with determination and need carefully to examine where they are involved in violence.

63. The church is not the only organisation in society to deal with violence. There are many organisations in society, which address that issue. Co-operation is needed with other parts of the civil society.

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We have seen a range of responses to violence in our world and communities:

- In Scotland the Episcopalian chaplain helped the Muslim Society at Stirling University to find safe meeting space after 11 September 2001 when they were scared and had nowhere to go.
- In 1999 the Presidents of CEC and CCEE sent a joint letter to the churches on Violence against women. They invited the leaders of each Church to declare publicly that any kind of violence against women is a sin for it is an offence against their human dignity and urged that all churches encourage more open discussion of the issues and name the attitudes and structures which nurture this violence.
- Meeting in Morges, Switzerland, in June 2001, the representatives of the main churches and religious communities of the Former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia agreed to unite their efforts to promote peace and overcome the tensions and violence that are currently dividing Macedonian society. The 19 religious leaders condemned all forms of violence, and appealed to all parties to end the conflict and prevent any further aggravation of the situation. They committed their own communities to find ways of promoting understanding and tolerance, and identified a number of practical measures to restore confidence and promote reconciliation among Macedonia's ethnic communities.

- Like many other groups the Network of Ecumenical Women in Scotland (NEWS) has raised issues of violence against women and have founded Vashti, a network of women of trust, to give help to women who have suffered.

- In their response to the outrageous terrorist attack in Moscow in 2002, members of the Presidium of the Interreligious Council of Russia expressed sincere sympathy for relatives and friends of the dead. In the issued statement they said: "Together with you we mourn for the innocent people, who lost their lives, and pray for their rest in the dwellings of the righteous... we urge all our faithful to maintain peace and prudence and to stand firmly on the way of the dark powers, which are striving to sow the seeds of dissension between the Muslims and adherents of other religions."

2.3.5. The poor, unemployed, socially excluded and homeless

64. Unemployment, social exclusion and poverty are increasingly problems all over Europe. In some parts of the continent they are related to the consequences of economic transformation. However also in other, non-negligible parts of the continent in economically stable societies we have to face problems of this kind with increasing intensity. It is a form of structured violence and discrimination in our countries that people have become economically redundant and are excluded from earning a living by their work and contributing their skills and knowledge towards the good of their societies; that people live in poverty, with not enough means to sustain themselves and their families, to afford health care and a healthy lifestyle, and to take part in the life of society; that poverty can even lead to homelessness.

65. Unemployment, poverty and social exclusion have not only their material side. In current market-oriented societies we have to face the serious problem that numbers of people have become economically redundant. This leads to the loss of dignity and violation of the Biblical message featuring the person as a creature of an immense value created in God's image.





The relation of churches to the poor, the unemployed and the homeless featured in the European Diaconal Forum organised by CEC in cooperation with the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe, Eurodiaconia and the European Contact Group for Urban Rural and Industrial Mission in September 2001 in Järvenpää, Finland. Also, much has been done by the CEC member churches and a lot of activities are carried out by grassroots congregations.

A story shared in Järvenpää comes from Most in the Czech Republic:

"Most has an unemployment rate of 21 percent. We have seen that the people are frustrated, not only by lack of finance, but mainly by loss of their social status – the loss of purpose of their existence. In such great industrial agglomerations there is a lack of employment joined also with lack of many friends. The 'struggle for social survival' of young people is connected to the negation of the work ethos, with escape into their gangs, extremist groups, drugs and criminality. For adults, resignation and alcohol mostly predominate. People have smaller interest in their education; their activities and job searching decrease, and in work they have lower achievement.

'Co-operation Forum' started with the workshops, seminars and public actions on different issues connected with the region, for example involvement in the successful fight against closing the local railroad from Most to the mountains. We organised meetings between NGOs, where we informed each other about our work, possible co-operation, and the network, which should help us work for better co-operation and more efficient assertion of our needs by negotiation with the city, district, and agencies dividing the EU money.

More than 40 unemployed people were employed in our different project in the last three years. And what I like is that these people have an understanding for other people who are living in much worse conditions."

2.3.6. Migrants and migrant communities

66. Exploitation of human beings, discrimination and violence in its open or hidden form, is a phenomenon which affects the migrant communities extremely. Migrants are often considered purely as a factor of production. They are not seen as human beings but only as a labour force, which may be sent away as soon as it is no longer useful for the economic objectives it has been called to serve. The work with migrants, asylum seekers and up-rooted people is still not fully recognised in many churches of CEC. Much more needs to be done. The collaboration with the Churches' Commission on Migrants in Europe

(CCME) needs to be intensified at the European level but this kind of work also requires more ecumenical co-operation and involvement at the level of all CEC member churches. As churches we express our faith in different ways. This has to be taken into account also for the numerous migrant churches, present in many European countries, which need to find a place in our church communion. The existence of migrant churches should find a place in the ecumenical debate.

A story from Italy:

In Italy out of three Protestants one is of Italian origin, two are foreigners, living in Italy. More than 2/3 of the Italian congregations have foreign members, in certain congregations the migrants are the absolute majority. There are several pastors coming from abroad. The liturgy and the music of most congregations have been influenced by this development. Other migrants have founded migrant congregations, which are very often worshipping in Italian churches.

At this moment the Federation of Italian Protestant Churches is promoting a two year process, which should deal with the new situation from different points of view: information, awareness building, promoting dialogue, discussing specific issues like religious education, relations of migrant churches with the State, church order, preparation of church personnel etc. Several initiatives are planned, such as seminars, working groups, information campaigns, intensification of co-operation among congregations etc. The Federation also wishes to work together with sister churches in Europe, where this phenomenon exists, too, although in Italy the situation is particular because of the numbers: minority churches have to build up relationship with migrant churches which are in numbers far bigger than the Italian Protestant Churches themselves.



2.3.7. Philoxenia (love of stranger) and xenophobia

67. Christ's call to love "the neighbour" also includes loving the stranger, the person from a different ethical, cultural or religious background. No society today is completely free of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. Efforts to eliminate these sources of injustice are integral to the building of a cul-

ture of peace and non-violent approaches to conflict transformation. Churches in Europe with their mission societies have sometimes been part of colonial domination. However, the churches have declared racism a sin and many have repented for their wrong belief in superiority. All churches have the responsibility to continue to reconsider their own attitudes and practices towards ethnic and religious minorities, and to engage in anti-racism work in their own societies. Contributions of the churches to a multiethnic and multicultural Europe, which includes people of all colours and various ethnic as well as cultural backgrounds, should be recognised and further reinforced.

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68. The churches' work in this field can include developing national ecumenical coalitions so as to work against racism in all its manifestations; studying their national legislations to be capable of proposing and supporting necessary changes to outlaw racism and discrimination, to implement a just immigration policy and to improve the legal status of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers; looking at their own structures, their systems of membership and employment. It can also mean initiating training programmes on inter-cultural learning and commitment to inter-religious dialogue to contribute to respect and mutual understanding; reviewing curricula in religious education and all material issued by the churches, and revising all those which either explicitly, or implicitly discriminate against social groups on the basis of race, ethnicity or nationality. It can also include offering training to victims and potential targets of racial violence on the use of legal measures (capacity-building); reporting and encouraging the reporting of incidences of racial violence to the authorities and offering support to victims.

Relationship with Roma people has become increasingly an issue for a number of CEC member churches. Facing difficulties which include social exclusion, criminality, education, cultural differences in relations to Roma people (but also issues of human rights and justice, particularly in countries of Central, Eastern and Southern Europe), churches are on the way to fulfil the task of witnessing the Gospel in word and action. There are a number of valuable activities of churches to be reported from countries of this region. In other parts of Europe, particularly Nordic countries, there is a good deal of experience of churches in this field of work. Mutual sharing and support as well as co-operation with other partners are part of the CEC agenda in approaching this theme. In May 2001, CEC organised with the Churches' Commission on Migrants in Europe a consultation in Bratislava, Slovakia on how churches and political institutions are responding to Roma people in Europe.

2.3.8. Healing and wholeness

69. Faith, health and healing are central to God's purposes for humanity and creation. This is embodied in the life, acts and message of Jesus Christ. Healing in the broad sense is the central part of his mission. This may include various meanings and aspects of "healing" – physical and spiritual as well as social ones. Faith in Jesus Christ as the wounded healer helps us to deal with suffering, vulnerability and finiteness. It helps to prevent us from a delusion of omnipotence as if we could create perfect human beings and of a life without suffering and limitations of the body. A significant aspect of the churches' mission consists in pointing out the finiteness of any human approach to healing.

Health and healing

70. Being an inclusive community not only means integrating people of all ages, of all states of health, of all physical and mental abilities but also helping people to become whole. Wholeness includes a positive relationship to our bodies, our minds and to other people. Healing does not have to imply only correcting malfunctions of the body, but also integrating its limitations and vul-



nerability. People with disabilities or chronic diseases can be whole people even though their bodies do not work properly. The Church can help in accepting the brokenness of existence. Health is intimately linked to issues of poverty, economic disparity, age- and gender-specific needs – and is therefore a justice issue. In some countries of Europe healthcare systems are in crisis. The major problem is that many of the poorer countries in Europe do not have an adequate health service at all. There is also a significant concern with a move towards a privatisation of the provision of social care. This raises issues such as finance, competencies and social values. The churches have an important contribution to make in the policy debate and in monitoring policy implications at the community level. The human condition calls out for a healing church. “A religion without healing or saving power is irrelevant” (Paul Tillich, *The Impact of Psychotherapy on Theological Thought*, Vol. 2, p. 315). How can the local faith community be a space for forgiving, reconciliation and the healing of relationships, minds and bodies?

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71. There is a rich amount of pastoral and diaconal work done visibly and invisibly within communities. A healing ministry can take many forms. It can mean development of diaconal activities on the congregational level. It can mean opening doors and minds for those in pain, welcoming them into the community. It can mean care for sick and old persons and for chronically ill as well as differently-abled people; this can include hospices, palliative care, diaconal centres etc. It can also mean developing educational activities with practical training on how families can manage to care for their sick and old without moving them to medical or social institutions. It can mean special healing services as a part of the liturgical life of the church. It can mean active participatory action for identifying causes of ill health and ways to address them in society and to deal with them in the local community.

Congregations can also provide help for people living with HIV/AIDS and other chronic illnesses, for those suffering from alcohol- and drug-abuse through the provision of dedicated pastoral accompaniment.

A member of the CEC staff who had undergone surgery for cancer and was receiving chemotherapy treatment attended a Service of Prayer and Healing in a church in Geneva. "There were just a few of us, sitting quietly in the crypt, with candles burning before an open Bible. We were suffused with an atmosphere of mutual care and love, and trust in God's presence. As I knelt and received the anointing oil on my forehead, I felt as though the WHOLE of me was being touched and embraced by God's grace in a way I had never felt before."

Overcoming the brokenness of life

72. The story of the life and death of Jesus Christ takes the experience of human suffering, sin and guilt very seriously. Many people in contemporary Europe face failure, suffering and brokenness but do not have a vocabulary to express sin, guilt, remorse, repentance and atonement, or have difficulties in using it. How can churches reach them, communicate with them and help them to express themselves in traditional and new terms? Many people search for wholeness, meaning and identity. They desire concrete experiences of the Gospel and want a church that responds in a holistic way to their physical, mental and spiritual needs. Some people shop around for answers, take a "pick and mix" approach. They are searching for spirituality and find it often dissociated from clearly defined belief systems or corporate loyalties. Churches are called to respond to the many people who are searching. They must try to understand what draws people to alternative thinking and individualistic approaches to spirituality. Having personal faith means to participate in sharing the gospel of God's reconciliation of the world in Christ. It involves a new life characterised by commitment in love and reconciliation. Churches and individuals have to reflect con-



tinually upon what a Christian lifestyle and discipleship implies in our world, what holiness means today. There is the wish expressed to deepen a discussion about our communal and inter-personal identity, in which it would be welcome to use a wider range of metaphors which include Christian terminology as Friend, Lover, Community.

A story from the Scottish context:

The Church of Scotland inaugurated the "Ripple Project" in 1996. The purpose was "to improve the quality of life for all sections of the community by providing a range of services and support which help people help themselves". It began with The Information Place, intended to make people aware of where support might be found in problems they were experiencing and to assist users to access such support. The crucial function was providing information about facilities and services, welfare and legal rights, and giving help in communicating with statutory agencies and local government. This was also carried on in the context of other projects.

The project has now grown to embrace some dozen initiatives, which together provide "wrap round" care for all age groups. In addition to groups for children, young people, the elderly etc. an interesting initiative is the Surgery Project, where volunteers staff a room in the local surgery during hours, offering a listening ear for users. Doctors, as part of the treatment given, will "refer" patients to this facility. Elsewhere, The Listening Place provides a similar confidential listening service, where users are offered up to six hour-long sessions per week. A Referral Group offers support for children with behavioural problems. There is strong involvement on the part of local churches.

The Scottish Executive also has encouraged a strengthening of the provision of chaplaincy in hospitals in Scotland. Guidelines for healthcare currently developed recognise that hospital patients have spiritual needs as well as medical ones and acknowledge public responsibility to provide for these needs. Chaplains from the churches have to be sensitive to the multi-faith and secular context in which they exercise their ministry.

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2.4. Growing witness in today's society

2.4.1. Ministry of reconciliation and mission

73. The Church is a community of reconciliation, respect and love, and is called to make this visible to the world. The ability to recognise Christ's presence and at the same time the ability to respond to it is the precondition for our ministry of healing and reconciliation. Christians are called to exercise a ministry of reconciliation on a continent of social and cultural diversity. This diversity influences the role of the Church and its ministry in different circumstances and under various conditions.

74. Christians are the visible fruits of God's reconciliation in Christ. They are called to make this reconciliation visible in their relationships, their openness and hospitality. This visibility should serve the same purpose as Christ's visibility, namely to reveal God and his love towards people and respect towards the whole creation. This is true holiness and the ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:19).

75. Mission belongs to the very being of the Church. It is the clear command of the risen and glorified Lord to his disciples. The Church, as the whole people of God, is to carry out the task entrusted to it by Jesus Christ until the end of time (Matthew 28:19-20). The missionary task of the Church commands itself to all Christians as a priority in today's secularised world. The missionary task of the Church means to invite men and women of today's world to abandon their egocentricity and discover, in Jesus Christ, humanity in all its richness, maturity and abundance, and at the same time discover God, who is full of love and readiness to be merciful.



76. Mission should not be confused with proselytism, with an attempt to win over the faithful of other Christian traditions. Therefore it is important to remember the commitment:

- “to discuss our plans for evangelisation with other churches, entering into agreements with them and thus avoiding harmful competition and the risk of fresh divisions;
- to recognise that every person can freely choose his or her religious and church affiliation as a matter of conscience, which means not inducing anyone to convert through moral pressure or material incentive, but also not hindering anyone from entering into conversion of his or her own free will” (*Charta Oecumenica* II, 2).

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The United Methodist Church Northern European Central Conference gives insight into the different challenges to churches in different contexts: In Eastern Europe the church faces the situation of ministering to congregations in which most members are unemployed or underemployed. Churches cannot afford to pay their ministers. Western mission agencies can provide support but along with the support comes control and the danger of creating dependency. In the Nordic countries there are striking needs in different forms. In some places new ways of opening the churches for the people have been started. In the Church Centre in Grünerløkka in Oslo, Norway, for instance, a new centre for worship, meditation, prayer and pastoral care started in a part of the town where the original population among the Methodists has moved out and the newcomers consist of immigrants from all parts of the world, students and young professionals.

2.4.2. Church as a witness in conflict situations

77. The Church of the One, whose name is “our peace” (Ephesians 2:14), is called to be an agent of peace and reconciliation, especially in situations of conflict and violence. As the European Ecumenical Assemblies in Basel (1989) and Graz (1997) significantly showed, the churches in Europe have a long-standing involvement in issues of peace and security. War has become a reality in

Europe again at the end of 20th century. Issues of peace and reconciliation can, however, by no means be limited to questions of war between states, the use of military force or deterrence through weapons of mass destruction. The overwhelming majority of violent conflicts in the recent past have been conflicts within states and not between states. This raises the question of new mechanisms and methods of conflict prevention and non-violent conflict management. Previous mechanisms do not seem to be adequate any more. The community of churches appears to be divided on the issue of whether or not the use of military force to suppress gross human rights violations within one country (often called “humanitarian intervention”) is legitimate.

78. It is increasingly recognised – also among the European Institutions – that measures to prevent violent conflicts need to be strengthened. Over the years, churches have gained much experience in conflict prevention. Many Christians have been trained in non-violent conflict management and have offered their skills in conflict situations. Democracy, tolerance, the rule of law and the implementation of human rights are important pre-conditions. Churches are committed to foster these principles as the fundament of a new Europe. They need to continue to challenge the European Institutions to allocate sufficient resources for preventive measures.

79. The most recent acts of terrorism have revealed a new form of violence and the limits to full security. Therefore, churches all over the world expressed themselves against attempts to sacrifice human rights standards and commitments in the name of security after 11 September 2001.

80. Finally it has to be mentioned self-critically, that churches are not always seen from the outside as part of the solution in conflict situations. The suggested Conciliation Commission to be estab-



lished by CEC and its partner organisations (see the Reports of the Prague and Graz Assemblies) – a European tool to moderate and mediate in conflicts with a religious component – never came into being. Therefore a recent CEC consultation on “Majority and Minority Churches in their Relation to the State” recommended that CEC should have a facilitating or mediating role, if one of its member churches asks for it.

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- CEC became the “lead agency” for peace and reconciliation in the framework of the WCC South East Europe Ecumenical Partnership (SEEEP). After the period of emergency relief work in South Eastern Europe, churches and aid organisations established SEEEP as a tool for reconstruction and development. It emphasises three areas: re-integration of refugees and internally displaced people; capacity-building; and peace and reconciliation. CEC as a lead-agency in the last-named field facilitates an inter-religious study project, training in non-violence and networking through communication in the region.

- In Northern Ireland the Corrymeela Community among other groups is committed to the healing of social, religious and political divisions. The community wants to be a sign that Protestants and Catholics can share together in a common witness and ministry of reconciliation. It provides opportunities for meeting and learning in communities to dispel ignorance, prejudice and fear and to promote mutual respect, trust and co-operation; and works to support victims of violence and injustice, to enable the healing of personal and social wounds.

2.4.3. Human rights

81. In the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ the dignity of all humankind was made manifest and reinstated: “For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have come to fullness in him, who is the head of every ruler and authority” (Colossians 2:9-10). From recognising God’s gift of dignity to each human person flows the responsibility of churches to work for respect and the implementation of human rights.

82. The end of the Cold War and the process of globalisation offered the opportunity for greater and un-politicised co-operation in defence of human rights. But that development was not necessarily met by increased efforts on the part of the churches. Yet, the Conference of European Churches, many of its member churches and partner organisations responded to the violation of human rights, discrimination and exclusion in European countries and societies in issues related to migrants, refugees, asylum-seekers and uprooted people in Europe as well as on racism and xenophobia, domestic violence and trafficking in women, national minorities, death penalty and the right to conscientious objection. Freedom of religion remains a prominent issue on the human rights agenda of the churches. It needs to be guaranteed by the political authorities and constantly watched by the churches. Besides the relationship to state and non-state political authorities, freedom of religion also includes the aspect of practical observance in the daily life of the churches and relationships among established churches and minority communities. CEC and many of its partner organisations, in working with the human rights agenda, have tried to enhance the legal protection through better international standards and commitments. They have monitored the implementation of international legal standards and supported member churches as they address relevant issues in their countries.

83. The protection of the dignity of humankind as God's creature is the focal point of the theological bases for the churches' approach to human rights. Following the common path of defending those who are persecuted, humiliated and deprived of their human dignity, churches, however, take different approaches towards certain minority groups as e.g. to the "new forms of religion," homosexuality and others. Some churches see their role in line with secular human rights initiatives in protecting human rights in all aspects. Some other churches see a necessity for differ-



entiation in approaching human rights. These churches do not favour the idea of protection of all minorities without proper differentiating among them and see the particular role of the Church in resistance to widely spreading “humanistic secularism”.

84. Churches have to continue their mutual reflection considering what this means for our respect of human dignity and the rights of minorities in the light of a biblical concept of a human being created in the image and likeness of God.

- CEC is one of the few non-governmental organisations which have the right to file collective complaints in the framework of the Social Charter of the Council of Europe – a mechanism not widely known or used.

- CEC has supported the international institutions in many ways as they seek to enhance their legal protection of human rights and monitor their implementation. E.g. co-operation with the Council of Europe’s Commissioner for Human Rights.

- CEC was involved in drafting the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.

- The human rights training courses, jointly organised by CEC and the Lutheran World Federation, are an example of how ecumenical organisations try to support their constituency in building up additional capacities to deal with human rights issues.

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2.4.4. Healing and God’s creation

85. Healing is needed in the relationship between humanity and the world. One of the original roles of science was to find ways to repair the damage and improve the human condition. While this goal remains, some of our innovations have widened the rift. The more we have extended our ability to innovate and alter the world around us, the more these scientific and technological developments need to be framed, and if necessary bounded, by the context of wider ethical and

social perspectives. Advances in the fundamental understanding of the processes of the physical world, the human mind and body; rapid developments in information and communications technology; breakthroughs in the life-sciences as well as those sciences penetrating into the domains of the micro-world and the universe: all these call for a sense of humility and the acknowledgement of limits.

Human life and the new bioethical challenges

86. Science and technology today pose some of the most far-reaching questions for the human condition. Bio-technologies and bio-ethics are in the centre of attention: What is a human being? How much are we similar to or different from other creatures? Where are the limits to reproduction and to experimentation? How far should we go in replacing human cells and organs? Should we seek to treat incurable diseases, or extend human life, by using organs from genetically modified pigs or cells derived from human embryos? Who should control the information contained in our genes and for what purpose? How far may we intervene genetically in God's creation? These are some of the questions which underlie current research into cloning, stem cells and embryos, the discoveries coming from the Human Genome Project, gene therapy, genetic selection, and the genetic modification of plants and animals. Here, questions about the beginning and end of life (like abortion, prenatal and pre-implantation diagnostics and euthanasia) require special attention of the churches.



Within CEC, the Bioethics and Biotechnology Working Group of the Church and Society Commission has been examining many of the crucial questions in this field. It has produced a series of reports on gene patenting, human and animal cloning, stem cells, medically assisted procreation, genetically modified food, and xenotransplantation. It plays an active role in representing the concerns of the churches on these issues to the European institutions and has observer status on the Bioethics Committee of the Council of Europe and close links with the European Commission and Parliament.

Sustainable development

87. From the Bible and the teachings of the early Church, the churches have strong reasons to work towards the healing and reconciling of all creation, for which the divine Word Jesus Christ came, died and rose again. Fourteen years after the 1st European Ecumenical Assembly in Basel in 1989 put “Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation” on the European church map – followed up at the 2nd European Ecumenical Assembly in Graz – many churches are actively involved in the work of environmental protection and sustainable development.

88. Global environmental threats like climate change, pollution and loss of species force us to act more comprehensively on the local and the global level. Churches are responsible for the protection of the whole creation. In this respect we must seriously question our present patterns of consumption, the waste we create, our profligate use of energy and much else. We need to integrate care for God’s creation into our worship, our hearts, our lives and our communities.

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89. In the effort to find a new relationship between humanity and the world the concept of sustainable development has received a lot of attention in recent years. “Sustainable development” integrates issues of economy, ecology, the social agenda and their mutual interlinks. The 2002 United Nations’ World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg was a landmark event, where the world’s attention was once more drawn to the deep need for the healing of God’s creation and the peoples of the world. Links between the environment, poverty, health and global justice and overcoming of failures in recognising these links are at the centre of attention. For far-reaching actions for a more sustainable future, the world now looks more to civil society, which includes activities of churches. Here is a unique opportunity for the churches to “witness in Europe” by their own action in caring for God’s creation.

- The European Christian Environmental Network (ECEN) works towards the development of sustainability at all levels – communal, regional, national and European. This embraces not only the ecological, but also the social, spiritual, political and economic dimension of life. In 2002 the network issued a dossier with reflections on the International Year of Mountains and the International Year of Ecotourism (2002), liturgical material for a “Creation Day” and recommendations for a “Creation Time” in the church year, including exercises for daily life praxis.

- Environmental threats are in great part due to the uncontrolled use of earth resources, which links the issue to the problem of acknowledging the limits to human possibilities, scientific progress and economic growth. The CEC Church and Society Commission’s working group on Economic, Environmental and Social Issues has given the question of limits high priority on its agenda and considered it broadly in its report “Sustainable Development and the European Union – the Need to Develop New Strategies and New Lifestyles” in May 2002.

- The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland awards a Church Environmental Diploma to parishes that make long-term efforts in an environmentally friendly direction and monitor environmental effects. The assessment takes into consideration such things as collection and disposal of refuse, cleaning, offices, cemeteries, forestry and environmental education.



2.4.5. Globalisation

90. Globalisation as a new and progressing phenomenon has a significant impact on the life of individuals and society. There are various aspects to it, which in their mutual linkage need to be taken into consideration:

- economy – with an increasing concentration of capital and an increasing importance of trade;
- financial markets – and the enormous amount of speculative capital floating around the world;
- environment – and the fact that activities that damage the local environment can have an impact in very distant areas;
- social issues – and the increasing gap between the rich and the poor;
- culture – and increasing possibilities of intercultural mixture on our continent;

- information – and rapid access to enormous quantities of global knowledge as well as possibilities of sharing it;
- democracy – and the increasing concentration of political decision-making power in the hands of an economy that does not have democratic legitimacy.

91. CEC, in co-operation with its ecumenical partners, has addressed the issue of globalisation with an attempt to see its different impacts in Central and Eastern Europe, as well as in Western Europe. Acknowledgement of the responsibility of the countries and churches in Europe for the developing countries is one of the important dimensions in the discussion about globalisation. The co-operation of churches in addressing and evaluating the process of globalisation is one of the deepest challenges in this time.

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• In July 2002 the CEC Church and Society Commission Working Group on North-South-Issues, whose mandate is to ensure that the common witness of the European churches is not confined to Europe, by looking at the wider global context of trade, aid and development policies, debt relief and the negotiations within world bodies such as the World Trade Organisation, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, issued a discussion paper: "European Social Market Economy – an alternative model for globalisation?"

• Like many other Churches the Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches works on economic developments inside and outside its own country (for instance through an Ecumenical Consultation in 1998 and through dialogue with the World Economic Forum).

• At the European Social Forum in Florence in November 2002 the Federation of Protestant Churches in Italy, together with other groups, organised two seminars. The first seminar was on the "Role of the Churches in the Construction of a new Europe: Commitment for a Society Based on Justice Peace and Integrity of Creation"; the second one on "Christianity, Islam, and Judaism in Europe: the Road Towards a Dialogue for a Society of Peace". A special conference on "The Role of Religions in the Critique of Globalisation" had over 2000 participants indicating the interest people have in inter-religious activities and dialogue.

CONCLUSION

92. During the last hours of his earthly life Jesus shared the *Pesach* meal with his disciples. We are told that he took the bread, prayed over it, broke it into pieces and gave it to his disciples with the words: "All of you, eat from this bread. And whenever you break the bread do this in remembrance of me." Later he did the same with the wine saying: "Drink from this cup, all of you... the blood of the new covenant..." and again he said: "Do this in remembrance of me".

93. Sharing the eucharistic meal is an act of remembering. We do not only remember what Jesus did and means for us as one would remember some important person who lived in the past. We re-member our lives with the life of Jesus, our woundedness with his wounds, our dying with his death, and our hope with his resurrection. And we understand our "liturgy after the liturgy," i.e. our practical embodiment of our faith as an exercise of re-membering. Put differently, we look at our history with new eyes and we see how dis-membered it is, how broken and disjointed, destroyed and dislocated. And so we begin to understand the ministry of healing and reconciling as a ministry of re-membering, of putting together what belongs together and of bringing home what is lost.

94. The ministry of re-membering cannot be separated from the remembrance of Jesus the Christ. It cannot and dare not be separated from the celebration of the Eucharist. Indeed, our Eucharist is the pivotal point around which our ministries are turning. They are grounded in "eucharistia," in saying "Thank you, God" for all the graces of God.



95. As a matter of fact, Christian communities are, first and foremost, communities of gratitude, they are eucharistic communities. As we affirm this we need to add that we are far from a genuine expression of the fullness of the Eucharist as long as we do not celebrate it together. We even have to admit that at the present time as Christians we have differing understandings of the relationship between the Eucharist and unity: for some the Eucharist can only be celebrated together when full unity in faith has been achieved, while for others it can and should be celebrated even now as a sign and pledge of that unity still to be realised. The mystery of remembering requires the commitment to let our dis-memberment be healed. This is the goal to which we keep travelling.



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