

CHRISTIANS IN DIALOGUE

Feed My Lambs, Feed My Sheep Discussion on Ministry - 1987

**Based on BEM, World Council of Churches
Faith and Order Commission 1982**

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Feed My Lambs, Feed My Sheep – Discussions on Ministry – 1987 (based on BEM, World Council of Churches Faith and Order Commission 1982).
Developed as a study in the series by Christians in Dialogue. Published and distributed by Queensland Churches Together.



INTRODUCTION

Feed My Lambs, Feed My Sheep is the third part of the three-year Christians in Dialogue program which was initiated in 1985 by the two Archbishops of Brisbane and the Moderator of the Queensland Synod of the Uniting Church.

The Christians in Dialogue program is based on the Lima Text “Baptism, Eucharist, Ministry” which was published by the Faith & Order Commission of the World Council of Churches in 1982.

The Lima Text represents fifty years of study by groups of theologians representative of most of the world’s Christian Churches.

Parishes had been invited by the Heads of Churches to make provision for this program during the four weeks following Pentecost Sunday, at the conclusion of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

The interchurch groups which discussed Baptism in 1985 and Eucharist in 1986 described their experiences with enthusiasm.

We are indebted to an interchurch group in Townsville whose material we have adapted.

AIMS

Feed My Lambs, Feed My Sheep aims are:

- * To deepen our awareness of the nature and purpose of ministry from biblical and historical perspectives.
- * To begin to appreciate the strengths of Christian traditions other than our own in their understanding and practice of ministry.
- * To understand better and to make more effective our own participation in the ministry of the whole people of God.
- * To pray together as members of the one Body of Christ.
- * To discover ways in which we can express our unity in Christ and overcome our disunity.

THE MATERIAL

This cover contains material for four sessions on Ministry, together with an evaluation sheet which we would appreciate getting back from each group.

The material for each session is divided into the following sections:

- A. Scripture References.
- B. Summary of a part of the Lima Text.
- C. Discussion Questions.

D. Concluding Devotions.

E. A section of the full Lima Text.

It is recommended that each session run for about one-and-a-half hours, and that the groups be kept small. It is important that each group has in it people from a number of denominations, all of whom are able to share in the discussion.

For the group to function successfully leaders need to make themselves familiar with the material.

References from the New Testament are taken from the Jerusalem Bible.

The team of Christians in Dialogue thank the Faith and Order Commission of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA for permission to quote their “Confessing One Faith”.



Feed my Lambs, Feed my Sheep

EVALUATION FORM

The group leader invites the participants to complete the Evaluation Form at the end of the fourth study.

1. What did you appreciate about these studies?
2. What aspects of these studies did you find difficult?
3. What was the greatest challenge for you and your Church?
4. What topics would you like *Christians in Dialogue* to cover in future?

The Planning Committee invites the leader to respond to the two questions below.

1. Name of your group, each Church represented, and the number of people present from each denomination.
2. Generally speaking, how fully did participants enter into the discussion?

Thank you for your response.

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Leader's Guide

1. Gathering

People coming to a group for the first time will often have some anxiety –

- ◆ Will I know anyone?
- ◆ What will be expected of me?
- ◆ Did I switch off the oven?
- ◆ It is important to help them through this first awkward stage. Have all your preparations done well beforehand so that you are able to greet each person warmly on arrival, introducing them to one another, and perhaps having tea and coffee available.

2. Beginning

- A. When all have arrived get the session started by giving them a clear statement of what the group is about - Welcome the group
- ◆ who we are;
 - ◆ why we're here;
 - ◆ when we will finish.

It might go like this: "Welcome to my place, and I'm delighted that each of you has been able to make it. We are a group of people from Churches gathered together to reflect and share our ideas on ... (*name of study*). Tonight we will be looking at Study One

- B. Then invite the members to introduce themselves saying:
- ◆ who I am;
 - ◆ why I'm here;
 - ◆ what I hope to get out of the program.

Lead yourself by giving a short response to each of the three areas. Then invite each of the others to do likewise. Don't worry if some respond to only one or two of the areas.

- C. Then distribute copies of the program.

Encourage participants to listen to one another's ideas with respect.

3. Opening Devotion

- A. You may wish to play some music quietly in the background and give the group a few moments to reflect on the opening devotion. Then call for volunteers to lead it.
- B. You might like to choose an appropriate song for the group to share

4. Reflection on the Topic

Invite a couple of people to read the teaching. Encourage the readers to pause between each section.

5. Discussion

Allow a few minutes of quiet time to reflect on the questions. Encourage participants to share responses to each question but there is to be no pressure put on anyone to speak. Be sure to make some response to each speaker if only to say e.g. "Thank you John". This makes sure the participant feels that he / she has been heard.

6. Closure

Thank the participants for their participation. Check to ensure venue is right for next session.

Closing Devotion

Cuppa

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SESSION 1: The Calling of the Whole People of God

Feed My Lambs, Feed My Sheep – Discussion on Ministry - 1987

A. Scripture References

Luke 4:18;1 Corinthians 12:4-11

B. Summary of the Lima Text

The Calling of the Whole People of God

God longs for all men and women to relate to him. God called Israel into a special relationship with himself, to be his People. He subsequently revealed himself uniquely in the person of his son, Jesus Christ. The life, teaching, death and Resurrection of Jesus is at the very heart of the life of the Christian Church. The Holy Spirit unites all Christians and empowers them to be effective disciples. In and through Christ people are offered a new dimension to living and given a vision of the Kingdom in all its fullness. The Holy Spirit brings life to the Church. It was manifested in the life and ministry of Jesus and it is manifested in the life and mission of his Body.

The Church is called to proclaim and prefigure the Kingdom of God. The person of Jesus was seen to be inseparable from the coming of the Kingdom. In his life we see the Kingdom in its fullness. It is through Jesus that Christians are able to have an intimate relationship with the Father.

The Holy Spirit gives to the Church a variety of gifts. All members of the church are encouraged to give expression to their particular gifts so that the Gospel may be proclaimed, the church built up, and the world lovingly served.

The churches acknowledge their calling to be the People of God. It is within that great vocation that differences about the role of the Ordained Ministry are considered.

C. Questions for Discussion

- 1. In what ways does your church recognize the diversity of the Spirit's gifts among its lay members? (1 Cor 12:4-11) How are you able to use your gifts?**

- 2. Is the Christian message usually "taught" or "caught"? Share with your group the example of someone who has been important in your spiritual development.**

- 3. In what ways does your congregation have any vision of its commitment to proclaim the Gospel and serve the world?**
- 4. Is there a genuine expression of community in your local congregation? Give some examples.**

D. Closing Devotion

We Are the Church

Leader invites the group to gather for prayer.

Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 12:12-13, 27-31

Christ is like a single body, which has many parts; it is still one body, even though it is made up of different parts. In the same way, all of us, whether Jews or Gentiles, whether slaves or free, have been baptized into the one body by the same Spirit, and we have all been given the one Spirit to drink.

All of you are Christ's body, and each one is a part of it. In the church God has put all in place: in the first place apostles, in the second place prophets, and in the third place teachers; then those who perform miracles, followed by those who are given the power to heal or to help others or to direct them or to speak in strange tongues.

They are not all apostles or prophets or teachers. Not everyone has the power to work miracles or to heal diseases or to speak in strange tongues or to explain what is said. Set your hearts, then, on the more important gifts.

Quiet reflection on the reading.

Leader: Together we are the Body of Christ. Each one of us has been gifted by the Spirit so that we can help to build up the Church and serve the world to which the Church is sent.

Response: It is therefore our prayer that we may become a community in which every member can discover and stir into flame the gift God has given, whatever the gift may be.

Leader: Let us offer each other a sign of peace.

E. The Lima Text

1. The Calling of the Whole People of God

1. In a broken world God calls the whole of humanity to become God's people. For this purpose God chose Israel and then spoke in a unique and decisive way in Jesus Christ, God's Son. Jesus made his own the nature, condition and cause of the whole human race, giving himself as a sacrifice for all. Jesus' life of service, his death and resurrection, are the foundation of a new community which is built up continually by the good news of the Gospel and the gifts of the sacraments. The Holy Spirit unites in a single body those who follow Jesus Christ and sends them as witnesses into the world. Belonging to the Church means living in communion with God through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit.
2. The life of the Church is based on Christ's victory over the powers of evil and death, accomplished once for all. Christ offers forgiveness, invites to repentance and delivers from destruction. Through Christ, people are enabled to turn in praise to God and in

service to their neighbours. In Christ they find the source of new life in freedom, mutual forgiveness and love. Through Christ their hearts and minds are directed to the consummation of the Kingdom where Christ's victory will become manifest and all things made new. God's purpose is that, in Jesus Christ, all people should share in this fellowship.

3. The Church lives through the liberating and renewing power of the Holy Spirit. That the Holy Spirit was upon Jesus is evidenced in his baptism, and after the resurrection that same Spirit was given to those who believed in the Risen Lord in order to recreate them as the body of Christ. The Spirit calls people to faith, sanctifies them through many gifts, gives them strength to witness to the Gospel, and empowers them to serve in hope and love. The Spirit keeps the Church in the truth and guides it despite the frailty of its members.

4. The Church is called to proclaim and prefigure the Kingdom of God. It accomplishes this by announcing the Gospel to the world and by its very existence as the body of Christ. In Jesus the Kingdom of God came among us. He offered salvation to sinners. He preached good news to the poor, release to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, liberation to the oppressed (Lk 4:18). Christ established a new access to the Father. Living in this communion with God, all members of the Church are called to confess their faith and to give account of their hope. They are to identify with the joys and sufferings of all people as they seek to witness in caring love. The members of Christ's body are to struggle with the oppressed towards that freedom and dignity promised with the coming of the Kingdom.

This mission needs to be carried out in varying political, social and cultural contexts. In order to fulfil this mission faithfully, they will seek relevant forms of witness and service in each situation. In so doing they bring to the world a foretaste of the joy and glory of God's Kingdom.

5. The Holy Spirit bestows on the community diverse and complementary gifts. These are for the common good of the whole people and are manifested in acts of service within the community and to the world. They may be gifts of communicating the Gospel in word and deed, gifts of healing, gifts of praying, gifts of teaching and learning, gifts of serving, gifts of guiding and following, gifts of inspiration and vision. All members are called to discover, with the help of the community, the gifts they have received and to use them for the building up of the Church and for the service of the world to which the Church is sent.

6. Though the churches are agreed in their general understanding of the calling of the people of God, they differ in their understanding of how the life of the Church is to be ordered. In particular, there are differences concerning the place and forms of the ordained ministry. As they engage in the effort to overcome these differences, the churches need to work from the perspective of the calling of the whole people of God. A common answer needs to be found to the following question: How, according to the will of God and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is the life of the Church to be understood and ordered, so that the Gospel may be spread and the community built up in love?

SESSION 2: The Church and the Ordained Ministry

Feed My Lambs, Feed My Sheep – Discussion on Ministry - 1987

A. Scripture References

Matthew 10:1-8; Luke 22:30; Acts 1:21-26; Acts 2:42-47; 6:2-6

B. Summary of the Lima Text

The Church and the Ordained Ministry

Ever since Jesus chose twelve Apostles and sent disciples to be witnesses to the Kingdom there have been in the Church roles of leadership assigned to certain people. Christ, through the Holy Spirit, calls people into the ordained ministry - to be leaders, teachers, and pastors within the community of faith.

All Christians have a ministry to exercise whether they be an ordained or a lay person. Ordained persons point to the total ministry of the Christian Church. Their functions are to preach the word and teach, to celebrate the sacraments, and to guide the Church in its worship, mission and loving care. It is when ordained ministers preside at the sacrament of the Eucharist that they are especially seen to be the visible focus of Christ's presence within his Church.

The authority of the ordained ministry stems from Jesus. Through the act of ordination the Church confers public recognition upon the ordained ministers. They are responsible to God and responsible to the Christian community. They are called to loving service. Their authority is modelled on that of the self-sacrificial love of Christ himself, the chief shepherd.

All the members of the Church share in the priesthood of Jesus Christ. They are called to offer their being "as a living sacrifice" and to intercede for the Church and the salvation of the world. Ordained ministers may be called priests because they seek to strengthen and build up the priesthood of the faithful through word and sacraments, through intercessory prayer, and through pastoral guidance.

The church points men and women - to the vision of a new creation. This must include a fullness of ministry for women as well as men. Yet there are obvious differences amongst the churches about the rightness of admitting women to the ranks of the ordained ministry.

C. Questions for Discussion

- 1. Is the ordained ministry still of value today? Give your reasons.**

- 2. How would you describe the chief functions of the ordained minister?
What is his/her job? Can you call it a job?**

3. **What do you think are the stresses on the ordained person?**

4. **Do you think the churches have used women's gifts wisely? What are your views on women being ordained?**

D. Closing Devotion

Focus: A plain cross

Theme: **The Church and the Ordained Ministry**
-Priesthood
- men and women

Scripture Reading:

For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Quiet reflection on the reading.

Prayer: *Offer extempore prayers as members of the group feel led to do so.*

Conclusion:

All: May God the Father bless us, God the Son defend and keep us, God the Holy Spirit enlighten and sanctify us, this night and for ever. Amen.

E. THE LIMA TEXT

The Church and the Ordained Ministry

7. Differences in terminology are part of the matter under debate. In order to avoid confusion in the discussions on the ordained ministry in the Church, it is necessary to delineate clearly how various terms are used in the following paragraphs.
 - a. The word charism denotes the gifts bestowed by the Holy Spirit on any member of the body of Christ for the building up of the community and the fulfilment of its calling.
 - b. The word ministry in its broadest sense denotes the service to which the whole people of God is called, whether as individuals, as a local community, or as the universal Church. Ministry or ministries can also denote the particular institutional forms which this service may take.
 - c. The term ordained ministry refers to persons who have received a charism and whom the church appoints for service by ordination through the invocation of the Spirit and the laying on of hands.

- d. Many churches use the word priest to denote certain ordained ministers. Because this usage is not universal, this document will discuss the substantive questions in paragraph 17.

The Ordained Ministry

8. In order to fulfil its mission, the Church needs persons who are publicly and continually responsible for pointing to its fundamental dependence on Jesus Christ, and thereby provide, within a multiplicity of gifts, a focus of its unity. The ministry of such persons, who since very early times have been ordained, is constitutive for the life and witness of the Church.
9. The Church has never been without persons holding specific authority and responsibility. Jesus chose and sent the disciples to be witnesses of the Kingdom (Mt 10:1-8). The Twelve were promised that they would “sit on thrones judging the tribes of Israel” (Lk 22:30). A particular role is attributed to the Twelve within the communities of the first generation. They are witnesses of the Lord’s life and resurrection (Act 1:21-26). They lead the community in prayer, teaching, the breaking of bread, proclamation and service (Act 2:42-47; 6:2-6 etc.). The very existence of the Twelve and other apostles shows that, from the beginning, there were differentiated roles in the community.

Commentary (9)

In the New Testament the term “apostle” is variously employed. It is used for the Twelve but also for a wider circle of disciples. It is applied to Paul and to others as they are sent out by the risen Christ to proclaim the Gospel. The roles of the apostles cover both foundation and mission.

10. Jesus called the Twelve to be representatives of the renewed Israel. At that moment they represent the whole people of God and at the same time exercise a special role in the midst of that community. After the resurrection they are among the leaders of the community. It can be said that the apostles prefigure both the Church as a whole and the persons within it who are entrusted with the specific authority and responsibility. The role of the apostles as witnesses to the resurrection of Christ is unique and unrepeatable. There is therefore a difference between the apostles and the ordained ministers whose ministries are founded on theirs.
11. As Christ chose and sent the apostles, Christ continues through the Holy Spirit to choose and call persons into the ordained ministry. As heralds and ambassadors, ordained ministers are representatives of Jesus Christ to the community, and proclaim his message of reconciliation. As leaders and teachers they call the community to submit to the authority of Jesus Christ, the teacher and prophet, in whom law and prophets were fulfilled. As pastors, under Jesus Christ the chief shepherd, they assemble and guide the dispersed people of God, in anticipation of the coming Kingdom.

Commentary (11)

The basic reality of an ordained ministry was present from the beginning (cf. para.8). The actual forms of ordination and of the ordained ministry, however, have evolved in complex

historical developments (cf. para. 19). The churches, therefore, need to avoid attributing their particular forms of the ordained ministry directly to the will and institution of Jesus Christ.

12. All members of the believing community, ordained and lay, are interrelated. On the one hand, the community needs ordained ministers. Their presence reminds the community of the divine initiative, and of the dependence of the Church on Jesus Christ, who is the source of its mission and the foundation of its unity. They serve to build up the community in Christ and to strengthen its witness. In them the Church seeks an example of holiness and loving concern. On the other hand, the ordained ministry has no existence apart from the community. Ordained ministers can fulfil their calling only in and for the community. They cannot dispense with the recognition, the support and the encouragement of the community.
13. The chief responsibility of the ordained ministry is to assemble and build up the body of Christ by proclaiming and teaching the Word of God, by celebrating the sacraments, and by guiding the life of the community in its worship, its mission and its caring community.

Commentary (13)

These tasks are not exercised by the ordained ministry in an exclusive way. Since the ordained ministry and the community are inextricably related, all members participate in fulfilling these functions. In fact, every charism serves to assemble and build up the body of Christ. Any member of the body may share in proclaiming and teaching the Word of God, may contribute to the sacramental life of that body. The ordained ministry fulfils these functions in a representative way, providing the focus for the unity of the life and witness of the community.

14. It is especially in the eucharistic celebration that the ordained ministry is the visible focus of the deep and all-embracing communion between Christ and the members of his body. In the celebration of the eucharist, Christ gathers, teaches and nourishes the Church. It is Christ who invites to the meal and who presides at it. In most churches this presidency is signified and represented by an ordained minister.

Commentary (14)

The New Testament says very little about the ordering of the eucharist. There is no explicit evidence about who presided at the eucharist. Very soon however it is clear that an ordained ministry presides over the celebration. If the ordained ministry is to provide a focus for the unity of the life and witness of the Church, it is appropriate that an ordained minister should be given this task. It is intimately related to the task of guiding the community, i.e. supervising its life (episkope) and strengthening its vigilance in relation to the truth of the apostolic message and the coming of the Kingdom.

Ordained Ministry and Authority

15. The authority of the ordained minister is rooted in Jesus Christ, who has received it from the Father (Mt 28:18) and who confers it by 'the Holy Spirit through the act of ordination. This act takes place within a community which accords public recognition to a particular person. Because Jesus came as one who serves (Mk 10:45; Luke 22:27), to be set apart means to be consecrated to service. Since ordination is essentially a setting apart with prayer for the gift of the Holy Spirit, the

authority of the ordained ministry is not to be understood as the possession of the ordained person but as a gift for the continuing edification of the body in and for which the minister has been ordained. Authority has the character of responsibility before God and is exercised with the co-operation of the whole community.

16. Therefore, ordained ministers must not be autocrats or impersonal functionaries. Although called to exercise wise and loving leadership on the basis of the Word of God, they are bound to the faithful in interdependence and reciprocity. Only when they seek the response and acknowledgment of the community can their authority be protected from the distortions of isolation and domination. They manifest and exercise the authority of Christ in the way Christ himself revealed God's authority to the world, by committing their life to the community. Christ's authority is unique. "He spoke as one who has authority (*exousia*), not as the scribes" (Mt 7:29). This authority is an authority governed by love for the 'sheep who have no shepherd' (Mt 9:36). It is confirmed by his life of service and, supremely, by his death and resurrection. Authority in the Church can only be authentic as it seeks to conform to this model.

Commentary (16)

Here two dangers must be avoided. Authority cannot be exercised without regard for the community. The apostles paid heed to the experience and the judgment of the faithful. On the other hand, the authority of ordained ministers must not be so reduced as to make them dependent on the common, opinion of the community. Their authority lies in their responsibility to express the will of God in the community.

Ordained Ministry and Priesthood

17. Jesus Christ is the unique priest of the new covenant. Christ's life was given as a sacrifice for all. Derivatively, the Church as a whole can be described as a priesthood. All members are called to offer their being "as a living sacrifice" and to intercede for the Church and the salvation of the world. Ordained ministers are related, as are all Christians, both to the priesthood of Christ, and to the priesthood of the Church. But they may appropriately be called priests because they fulfil a particular priestly service by strengthening and building up the royal and prophetic priesthood of the faithful through word and sacraments, through their prayers of intercession, and through their pastoral guidance of the community.

Commentary (17)

*The New Testament never uses the term "priesthood" or "priest" (*hierous*) to designate the ordained ministry or the ordained minister. In the New Testament, the term is reserved, on the one hand, for the unique priesthood of Jesus Christ and, on the other hand, for the royal and prophetic priesthood of all baptized. The priesthood of Christ and the priesthood of the baptized have in their respective ways the function of sacrifice and intercession. As Christ has offered himself, Christians offer their whole being "as a living sacrifice". As Christ intercedes before the Father, Christians intercede for the Church and the salvation of the world. Nevertheless, the differences between these two kinds of priesthood cannot be overlooked. While Christ offered himself as a unique sacrifice once and for all for the salvation of the world believers need to receive continually as a gift of God that which Christ has done for them.*

In the early Church the terms “priesthood” and “priest” came to be used to designate the ordained ministry and minister as presiding at the eucharist. They underline the fact that the ordained ministry is related to the priestly reality of Jesus Christ and the whole community. When the terms are used in connection with the ordained ministry, their meaning differs in appropriate ways from the sacrificial priesthood of the Old Testament, from the unique redemptive priesthood of Christ and from the corporate priesthood of the people of God. St Paul could call his ministry “a priestly service of the gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable by the Holy Spirit” (Rom 15:16).

The Ministry of Men and Women in the Church

18. Where Christ is present, human barriers are being broken. The Church is called to convey to the world the image of a new humanity. There is in Christ no male or female (Gal 3:28). Both women and men must discover together their contributions to the service of Christ in the Church. The Church must discover the ministry which can be provided by women as well as that which can be provided by men. A deeper understanding of the comprehensiveness of ministry which reflects the interdependence of men and women needs to be more widely manifested in the life of the Church.

Though they agree on this need, the churches draw different conclusions as to the admission of women to the ordained ministry. An increasing number of churches have decided that there is no biblical or theological reason against ordaining women, and many of them have subsequently proceeded to do so. Yet many churches hold that the tradition of the Church in this regard must not be changed.

Commentary (18)

Those churches which practise the ordination of women do so because of their understanding of the Gospel and of the ministry. It rests for them on the deeply held theological conviction that the ordained ministry of the Church lacks fullness when it is limited to one sex. This theological conviction has been reinforced by their experience during the years in which they have included women in their ordained ministries. They have found that women’s gifts are as wide and varied as men’s and that their ministry is as fully blessed by the Holy Spirit as the ministry of men. None has found reason to reconsider its decision.

Those churches which do not practise the ordination of women consider that the force of nineteen centuries of tradition against the ordination of women must not be set aside. They believe that such a tradition cannot be dismissed as a lack of respect for the participation of women in the Church. They believe that there are theological issues concerning the nature of humanity and concerning Christology which lie at the heart of their convictions and understanding of the role of women in the Church.

The discussion of these practical and theological questions within the various churches and Christian traditions should be complemented by joint study and reflection within the ecumenical fellowship of all churches.

SESSION 3: The Forms of the Ordained Ministry

Feed My Lambs, Feed My Sheep – Discussion on Ministry - 1987

A. Scripture References

Acts 6: 1-6; 15: 13-22; 1; Corinthians 12:28; Romans 16:1; Philippians 1:1.

B. Summary of the Lima Text

The Forms of the Ordained Ministry

The New Testament does not provide a single model of ministry which can be an example for the Church today. During the first three centuries bishops, presbyters and deacons became recognised as the three kinds of ministers in the Church. Originally bishops were the leaders of small local communities and presided at the eucharist. Before long presbyters took over this local responsibility and the bishops became responsible for the supervision of several communities in a region. Bishops preached the Word, presided at the sacraments and were responsible to ensure the continuity of the teaching of the Apostles and unity between church communities. Deacons were expected to show in their lives the relationship between worship and service to others.

The churches need to reconsider officially the ways in which these ministries function today. The guiding principles for exercising the ordained ministry are that it should be personal, so that it points to the presence of Christ among his people, and that it should be exercised collaboratively with ordained ministers in other communities, and with the active participation of the church community in decision making.

At times in the history of the Church special ministries have been inspired by the Spirit for the good of the Church.

C. Questions for Discussion

- 1. How are the functions of bishop, presbyter and deacon, as outlined in the text, carried out in your church?**

- 2. What style of decision making and government are used in your church?**

- 3. How is worship related to service of others in your church?**

- 4. Can you think of examples of special ministries in your church either now or in its past?**

D. Closing Devotion

Focus: A plain cross

Theme: Forms of the Ordained Ministry
- Bishop
- Presbyter
- Deacon

Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 12:4-13

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of working, but it is the same God who inspires them all in every one. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another - various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are inspired by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body - Jews or Greeks, slaves or free - and all were made to drink of one Spirit.

Quiet Reflection on the Reading.

Read Together: Many gifts, one Spirit,
one love known in many ways.
In our difference is blessing,
from diversity we praise.
One Giver, One Lord, One Spirit, One Word,
known in many ways,
hallowing our days.
For the giver, for the gifts,
praise, praise, praise.

Concluding Prayer: The Lord's Prayer.

E. The Lima Text

The Forms of the Ordained Ministry Bishops, Presbyters and Deacons

19. The New Testament does not describe a single pattern of ministry which might serve as a blueprint or continuing norm for all future ministry in the Church. In the New Testament there appears rather a variety of forms which existed at different places and times. As the Holy Spirit continued to lead the Church in life, worship and

mission, certain elements from this early variety were further developed and became settled into a more universal pattern of ministry. During the second and third centuries, a threefold pattern of bishop, presbyter and deacon became established as the pattern of ordained ministry throughout the Church. In succeeding centuries, the ministry by bishop, presbyter and deacon underwent considerable changes in its practical exercise. At some points of crisis in the history of the Church, the continuing functions of ministry were in some places and communities distributed according to structures other than its predominant threefold pattern. Sometimes appeal was made to the New Testament in justification of these other patterns. In other cases, the restructuring of ministry was held to lie within the competence of the Church as it adapted to changed circumstances.

20. It is important to be aware of the changes the threefold ministry has undergone in the history of the Church. In the earliest instances, where threefold ministry is mentioned, the reference is to the local eucharistic community. The bishop was the leader of the community. He was ordained and installed to proclaim the Word and preside over the celebration of the eucharist. He was surrounded by a college of presbyters and by deacons who assisted in his tasks. In this context the bishop's ministry was a focus of unity within the whole community.
21. Soon, however, the functions were modified. Bishops began increasingly to exercise *episkope* over several local communities at the same time. In the first generation, apostles had exercised *episkope* in the wider Church. Later Timothy and Titus are recorded to have fulfilled a function of *episkope* in a given area. Later again this apostolic task is carried out in a new way by the bishops. They provide a focus for unity in life and witness within areas comprising several eucharistic communities. As a consequence, presbyters and deacons are assigned new roles. The presbyters became the leaders of the local eucharistic community, and as assistance of the bishops, deacons receive responsibilities in the larger area.

Commentary (21)

The earliest Church knew both the travelling ministry of such missionaries as Paul and the local ministry of leadership in places where the Gospel was received. At local level, organizational patterns appear to have varied according to circumstances. The Acts of the Apostles mention for Jerusalem the Twelve and the Seven, and later James and the elders; and for Antioch, prophets and teachers (Act 6:2- 6; 15:13-22; 13:1). The letters to Corinth speak of apostles, prophets and teachers (1 Cor 12:28); so too does the letter to the Romans, which also speaks of deacons or assistants (Rom 16:1). In Philippi, the secular terms episkopoi and diakonoi were together used for Christian ministers (Phil 1:1). Several of these ministries are ascribed to both women and men. While some were appointed by the laying on of hands, there is no indication of this procedure in other cases.

Whatever their names, the purpose of these ministries was to proclaim the Word of God, to transmit and safeguard the original content of the Gospel, to feed and strengthen the faith, discipline and service of the Christian communities, and to protect and foster unity within and among them. These have been the constant duties of ministry throughout the developments and crises of Christian history.

22. Although there is no single New Testament pattern, although the Spirit has many times led the Church to adapt its ministries to contextual needs, and although other

forms of the ordained ministry have been blessed with the gifts of the Holy Spirit, nevertheless the threefold ministry of bishop, presbyter and deacon may serve today as an expression of the unity we seek and also as a means for achieving it. Historically, it is true to say, the threefold ministry became the generally accepted pattern in the Church of the early centuries and is still retained today by many churches. In the fulfilment of their mission and service the churches need people who in different ways express and perform the tasks of the ordained ministry in its diaconal, presbyteral and episcopal aspects and functions.

23. The Church as the body of Christ and the eschatological people of God is constituted by the Holy Spirit through a diversity of gifts or ministries. Among these gifts a ministry of *episkope* is necessary to express and safeguard the unity of the body. Every church needs this ministry of unity in some form in order to be the Church of God, the one body of Christ, a sign of the unity of all in the Kingdom.
24. The threefold pattern stands evidently in need of reform. In some churches the collegial dimension of leadership in the eucharistic community has suffered diminution. In others, the function of deacons has been reduced to an assistant role in the celebration of the liturgy: they have ceased to fulfil any function with regard to the diaconal witness of the Church. In general, the relation of the presbyterate to the episcopal ministry has been discussed throughout the centuries, and the degree of the presbyter's participation in the episcopal ministry is still for many an unresolved question of far-reaching ecumenical importance. In some cases, churches which have not formally kept the threefold form have, in fact, maintained certain of its original patterns.
25. The traditional threefold pattern thus raises questions for all the churches. Churches maintaining the threefold pattern will need to ask how its potential can be fully developed for the most effective witness of the Church in this world. In this task churches not having the threefold pattern should also participate. They will further need to ask themselves whether the threefold pattern as developed does not have a powerful claim to be accepted by them.

Guiding Principles for the Exercise of the Ordained Ministry in the Church

26. Three considerations are important in this respect. The ordained ministry should be exercised in a personal, collegial and communal way. It should be personal because the presence of Christ among his people can most effectively be pointed to by the person ordained to proclaim the Gospel and to call the community to serve the Lord in unity of life and witness. It should also be collegial, for there is need for a college of ordained ministers sharing the common task of representing the concerns of the community. Finally, the intimate relationship between the ordained ministry and the community should find expression in a communal dimension where the exercise of the ordained ministry is rooted in the life of the community and requires the community's effective participation in the discovery of God's will and the guidance of the Spirit.

Commentary (26)

These three aspects need to be kept together. In various churches, one or another has been overemphasised at the expense of the others. In some churches, the personal dimension of the

ordained ministry tends to diminish the collegial and communal dimensions. In other churches, the collegial or communal dimension takes so much importance that the ordained ministry loses its personal dimension. Each church needs to ask itself in what way its exercise of the ordained ministry has suffered in the course of history.

An appreciation of these three dimensions lies behind a recommendation made by the first World Conference on Faith and Order at Lausanne in 1927: "In view of (i) the place which the episcopate, the Council of presbyters and the congregation of the faithful, respectively, had in the constitution of the early Church, and (ii) the fact that episcopal, presbyteral and congregational systems of government are each today, and have been for centuries, accepted by great communions in Christendom, and (iii) the fact that episcopal, presbyteral and congregational systems are each believed by many to be essential to the good order of the Church, we therefore recognize that these several elements must all, under conditions which require further study, have an appropriate place in the order of life of a reunited Church..."

27. The ordained ministry needs to be constitutionally or canonically ordered and exercised in the Church in such a way that each of these three dimensions can find adequate expression. At the level of the local eucharistic community there is need for an ordained minister acting within a collegial body. Strong emphasis should be placed on the active participation of all members in the life and the decision-making of the community. At the regional level there is again need for an ordained minister exercising a service of unity. The collegial and communal dimensions will find expression in regular representative synodal gatherings.

Functions of Bishops, Presbyters and Deacons

28. What can then be said about the functions and even the titles of bishops-, presbyters and deacons? A uniform answer to this question is not required for the mutual recognition of the ordained ministry. The following considerations on functions are, however, offered in a tentative way.
29. Bishops preach the Word, preside at the sacraments, and administer discipline in such a way as to be representative pastoral ministers of oversight, continuity and unity in the Church. They have pastoral oversight of the area to which they are called. They serve the apostolicity and unity of the Church's teaching, worship and sacramental life. They have responsibility for leadership in the Church's mission. They relate the Christian community in their area to the wider Church, and the universal Church to their community. They, in communion with the presbyters and deacons and the whole community, are responsible for the orderly transfer of ministerial authority in the Church.
30. Presbyters serve as pastoral ministers of Word and sacraments in a local eucharistic community. They are preachers and teachers of the faith, exercise pastoral care, and bear responsibility for the discipline of the congregation to the end that the world may believe and that the entire membership of the Church may be renewed, strengthened and equipped in ministry. Presbyters have particular responsibility for the preparation of members for Christian life and ministry.
31. Deacons represent to the Church its calling as servant in the world. By struggling in Christ's name with the myriad needs of societies and persons, deacons exemplify the

interdependence of worship and service in the Church's life. They exercise responsibility in the worship of the congregation: for example by reading the scriptures, preaching and leading the people in prayer. They help in the teaching of the congregation. They exercise a ministry of love within the community. They fulfil certain administrative tasks and may be elected to responsibilities for governance.

Commentary (31)

In many churches there is today considerable uncertainty about the need, the rationale, the status and the functions of deacons. In what sense can the diaconate be considered part of the ordained ministry? What is it that distinguishes it from other ministries in the Church (catechists, musicians, etc.)? Why should deacons be ordained while these other ministries do not receive ordination? If they are ordained, do they receive ordination in the full sense of the word or is their ordination only the first step- towards ordination as presbyters? Today, there is a strong tendency in many churches to restore the diaconate as an ordained ministry with its own dignity and meant to be exercised for life. As the churches move closer together there may be united in this office ministries now existing in a variety of forms and under a variety of names. Differences in ordering the diaconal ministry should not be regarded as a hindrance for the mutual recognition of the ordained ministries.

Variety of Charisms

32. The community which lives in the power of the Spirit will be characterized by a variety of charisms. The Spirit is the giver of diverse gifts which enrich the life of the community. In order to enhance their effectiveness, the community will recognize publicly certain of these charisms. While some serve permanent needs in the life of the community, others will be temporary. Men and women in the communities of religious orders fulfil a service which is of particular importance for the life of the Church. The ordained ministry, which is itself a charism, must not become a hindrance for the variety of these charisms. On the contrary, it will help the community to discover the gifts bestowed on it by the Holy Spirit and will equip members of the body to serve in a variety of ways.
33. In the history of the Church there have been times when the truth of the Gospel could only be preserved through prophetic and charismatic leaders. Often new impulses could find their way into the life of the Church only in unusual ways. At times reforms required a special ministry. The ordained ministers and the whole community will need to be attentive to the challenge of such special ministries.

SESSION 4: Apostolic Succession and Ordination of Ministers

Feed My Lambs, Feed My Sheep – Discussion on Ministry - 1987

A. Scripture References

1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6; Acts 14:23; 2 Corinthians 8:19; Acts 6:6, 8:17, 13:3, 19:6; John 3:3; Ephesians 3:20.

B. Summary of the Lima Text

Apostolic Succession and Ordination of Ministers

The Church believes that it is through continuity in the permanent characteristics of the Church of the apostles that it is linked to the teaching of the apostles. The orderly transmission of the ordained ministry is a powerful expression of the continuity of the Church throughout history.

There is a growing recognition that those churches which do not have bishops have preserved continuity in the apostolic faith, worship and mission. Nevertheless, all churches may come to appreciate in a new way the value of apostolic succession through bishops.

Churches have the practice of calling and setting apart people to provide for the faithful proclamation of the Gospel and for humble service in the name of Christ. The Church ordains certain of its members for the ministry in the name of Christ by the invocation of the Spirit and the laying on of hands.

Churches should make deliberate efforts to recognise one another's ministers. This would require different approaches depending on whether a church has preserved apostolic succession through bishops, or not, and whether or not a church ordains only men or both men and women. Mutual recognition of ministries would need to be done publicly.

C. Questions for Discussion

- 1. How does your church see itself as being faithful to the tradition of the apostles?**
- 2. On what matters do you consider the churches will have to agree before there can be unity?**
- 3. Share with one another how ordination is done in your church. Who performs the ordination and what preparation or training must be done first by the person to be ordained?**

4. **With this session we come to the end of a three year spiritual journey. Where should we go from here?**

D. Closing Devotion

Theme: Ordination

Lord, how can man preach thy eternal word?
He is a brittle crazy glass,
Yet in thy temple thou dost him afford
This glorious and transcendent place
To be a window, through thy grace.

from The Windows, George Herbert (1593-1633)

Scriptural Reading: 1 Timothy 3: 1-13

The saying is sure: If any one aspires to the office of bishop, he desires a noble task. Now a bishop must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, sensible, dignified, hospitable, an apt teacher, no drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, and no lover of money. He must manage his own household well, keeping his children submissive and respectful in every way; for if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how can he care for God's church? He must not be a recent convert, or he may be puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil; moreover he must be well thought of by outsiders, or he may fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

Deacons likewise must be serious, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for gain; they must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. And let them also be tested first; then if they prove themselves blameless let them serve as deacons. The women likewise must be serious, no slanderers, but temperate, faithful in all things. Let deacons be the husbands of one wife, and let them manage their children and their households well; for those who serve as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and also great confidence in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.

Prayer:

Leader: Father, we are your people, and you appoint us all to be your servants in the world.

All: Grant that we may each in our vocation and ministry serve you in holiness and truth to the glory of your name.

Leader: We pray for all ministers of the Gospel.

All: By the way they live, the words they speak, and the care they have for people, may they be a living demonstration of your love and power.

Leader: Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

E. The Lima Text

Succession in the Apostolic Tradition Apostolic Tradition in the Church

34. In the Creed, the Church confesses itself to be apostolic. The Church lives in continuity with the apostles and their proclamation. The same Lord who sent the apostles continues to be present in the Church. The Spirit keeps the Church in the apostolic tradition until the fulfilment of history in the Kingdom of God. Apostolic tradition in the Church means continuity in the permanent characteristics of the Church of the apostles: witness to the apostolic faith, proclamation and fresh interpretation of the Gospel, celebration of baptism and the eucharist, the transmission of ministerial responsibilities, communion in prayer, love, joy and suffering, service to the sick and needy, unity among the local churches and sharing the gifts which the Lord has given to each.

Commentary

The apostles, as witnesses of the life and resurrection of Christ and sent by him, are the original transmitters of the Gospel, of the tradition of the saving words and acts of Jesus Christ which constitute the life of the Church. This apostolic tradition continues through history and links the Church to its origins in Christ and in the college of the apostles. Within this apostolic tradition is an apostolic succession of the ministry which serves the continuity of the Church in its life in Christ and its faithfulness to the words and acts of Jesus transmitted by the apostles. The ministers appointed by the apostles, and then the episkopoi of the churches, were the first guardians of this transmission of the apostolic tradition; they testified to the apostolic succession of the ministry which was continued through the bishops of the early Church in collegial communion with the presbyters and deacons within the Christian community. A distinction should be made, therefore, between the apostolic tradition of the whole Church and the succession of the apostolic ministry.

Succession of the Apostolic Ministry

35. The primary manifestation of apostolic succession is to be found in the apostolic tradition, of the Church as a whole. The succession is an expression of the permanence and, therefore, of the continuity of Christ's own mission in which the Church participates. Within the Church the ordained ministry has a particular task of preserving and actualizing the apostolic faith. The orderly transmission of the ordained ministry is therefore a powerful expression of the continuity of the Church throughout history, it also underlines the calling of the ordained minister as guardian of the faith. Where churches see little importance in orderly transmission, they should ask themselves whether they have not to change their conception of continuity in the apostolic tradition. On the other hand, where the ordained ministry does not adequately serve the proclamation of the apostolic faith, churches must ask themselves whether their ministerial structures are not in need of reform.
36. Under the particular historical circumstances of the growing Church in the early centuries, the succession of bishops became one of the ways, together with the transmission of the Gospel and the life of the community, in which the apostolic tradition of the Church was expressed. This succession was understood as serving, symbolizing and guarding the continuity of the apostolic faith and communion.

Commentary

In the early Church the bond between the episcopate and the apostolic community was understood in two ways. Clement of Rome linked the mission of the bishop with the sending of Christ by the Father and the sending of the apostles by Christ (1 Cor 42:44). This made the bishop a successor of the apostles, ensuring the permanence of the apostolic mission in the Church. Clement is primarily interested in the means whereby the historical continuity of Christ's presence is ensured in the Church thanks to the apostolic succession. For Ignatius of Antioch (Magn. 6:1, 3:1-2; Trall. 3:1), it is Christ surrounded by the Twelve who is permanently in the Church in the person of the bishop surrounded by the presbyters. Ignatius regards the Christian community assembled around the bishop in the midst of presbyters and deacons as the actual manifestation in the Spirit of the apostolic community. The sign of apostolic succession thus not only points to historical continuity; it also manifests an actual spiritual reality.

37. In churches which practise the succession through the episcopate, it is increasingly recognized that a continuity in apostolic faith, worship and mission has been preserved in churches which have not retained the form of historic episcopate. This recognition finds additional support in the fact that the reality and function of the episcopal ministry have been preserved in many of these churches, with or without the title "bishop". Ordination, for example, is always done in them by persons in whom the Church recognizes the authority to transmit the ministerial commission.
38. These considerations do not diminish the importance of the episcopal ministry. On the contrary they enable churches which have not retained the episcopate to appreciate the episcopal succession as a sign, though not a guarantee, of the continuity and unity of the Church. Today churches, including those engaged in union negotiations, are expressing willingness to accept episcopal succession as a sign of the apostolicity of the life of the whole Church. Yet, at the same time, they cannot accept any suggestions that the ministry exercised in their own tradition should be invalid until the moment that it enters into an existing line of episcopal succession. Their acceptance of the episcopal succession will best further the unity of the whole Church if it is part of a wider process by which the episcopal churches themselves also regain their lost unity.

Ordination

The Meaning or Ordination

39. The Church ordains certain of its members for the ministry in the name of Christ by the invocation of the Spirit and the laying on of hands (I Tim 4:14; II Tim 1:6); in so doing it seeks to continue the mission of the apostles and to remain faithful to their teaching. The act of ordination by those who are appointed for this ministry attests the bond of the Church with Jesus Christ and the apostolic witness, recalling that it is the risen Lord who is the true ordainer and bestows the gift. In ordaining the Church, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, provides for the faithful proclamation of the Gospel and humble service in the name of Christ. The laying on of hands is the sign of the gift of the Spirit, rendering visible the fact that the ministry was instituted in the revelation accomplished in Christ, and reminding the Church to look to him as the source of its commission. This ordination, however, can have different intentions according to the specific tasks of bishops, presbyters and deacons as indicated in the liturgies of ordination.

Commentary

It is clear that churches have different practices of ordination, and that it would be wrong to single out one of those as exclusively valid. On the other hand, if churches are willing to recognize each other in the sign of apostolic succession, as described above, it would follow that the old tradition, according to which it is the bishop who ordains, with the participation of the community, will be recognized and respected as well.

40. Properly speaking, then, ordination denotes an action by God and the community by which the ordained are strengthened by the Spirit for their task and are upheld by the acknowledgement and prayers of the congregation.

Commentary

The original New Testament terms for ordination tend to be simple and descriptive. The fact of appointment is recorded. The laying on of hands is described. Prayer is made for the Spirit. Different traditions have built different interpretations on the basis of these data.

*It is evident ‘that there is a certain difference between the unspoken cultural setting of the Greek **cheirotonein** and that of the Latin **ordo** or **ordinare**. The New Testament use of the former term borrows its basic secular meaning of “appointment” (Acts 24:23; 2 Cor 8:19), which is, in turn, derived from the original meaning of extending the hand, either to designate a person or to cast a vote. Some scholars see in **cheirotonein** a reference to the act of laying on of hands, in view of the literal description of the action in such seemingly parallel instances as Acts 6:6, 8:17, 23:3, 19:6; 1 Tim 4:24; 2 Tim. 1:6. **Ordo** and **ordinaire**, on the other hand, are terms derived from Roman law where they convey the notion of the special status of a group distinct from the plebs, as in the term **ordo clarissimus** for the Roman senate. The starting point of any conceptual construction using these terms will strongly influence what is taken for granted in both the thought and action which result.*

The Act of Ordination

41. A long and early Christian tradition places ordination in the context of worship and especially of the eucharist. Such a place for the service of ordination preserves the understanding of ordination as an act of the whole community, and not of a certain order within it or of the individual ordained. The act of ordination by the laying on of hands of those appointed to do so is at one and the same time invocation of the Holy Spirit (epiklesis); sacramental sign; acknowledgement of gifts and commitment.
42. (a) Ordination is an invocation to God that the new minister be given the power of the Holy Spirit in the new relation which is established between this minister and the local Christian community and, by intention the Church universal. The otherness of God’s initiative, of which the ordained ministry is a sign, is here acknowledged in the act of ordination itself. “The Spirit blows where it wills” (Jn 3:3); the invocation of the Spirit implies the absolute dependence on God for the outcome of the Church’s prayer. This means that the Spirit may set new forces in motion and open new possibilities “far more abundantly than all that we ask or think” (Eph 3:20).
43. (b) Ordination is a sign of the granting of this prayer by the Lord who gives the gift of the ordained ministry. Although the outcome of the Church’s epiklesis depends on the freedom of God, the Church ordains in confidence that God, being faithful to

his promise in Christ, enters sacramentally into contingent, historical forms of human relationship and uses them for his purpose. Ordination is a sign performed in faith that the spiritual relationship signified is present in, with and through the words spoken, the gestures made and the forms employed.

44. (c) Ordination is an acknowledgment by the Church of the gifts of the Spirit in the one ordained, and a commitment by both the Church and the ordinand to the new relationship. By receiving the new minister in the act of ordination, the congregation acknowledges the minister's gifts and commits itself to be open towards these gifts. Likewise those ordained offer their gifts to the Church and commit themselves to the burden and opportunity of new authority and responsibility. At the same time, they enter into a collegial relationship with other ordained ministers.

The Conditions for Ordination

45. People are called in differing ways to the ordained ministry. There is a personal awareness of a call from the Lord to dedicate oneself to the ordained ministry. This call may be discerned through personal prayer and reflection, as well as through suggestion, example, encouragement, guidance coming from family, friends, the congregation, teachers, and other church authorities. This call must be authenticated by the Church's recognition of the gifts and graces of the particular person, both natural and spiritually given, needed for the ministry to be performed. God can use people both celibate and married for the ordained ministry.
46. Ordained persons may be professional ministers in the sense that they receive their salaries from the church. The church may also ordain people who remain in other occupations or employment.
47. Candidates for the ordained ministry need appropriate preparation through study of scripture and theology, prayer and spirituality, and through acquaintance with the social and human realities of the contemporary world. In some situations, this preparation may take a form other than that of prolonged academic study. The period of training will be one in which the candidate's call is tested, fostered and confirmed, or its understanding modified.
48. Initial commitment to ordained ministry ought normally to be made without reserve or time limit. Yet leave of absence from service is not incompatible with ordination. Resumption of ordained ministry requires the assent of the Church, but no re-ordination. In recognition of the God-given charism of ministry, ordination to any one of the particular ordained ministries is never repeated.
49. The discipline with regard to the conditions for ordination in one church need not be seen as universally applicable and used as grounds for not recognizing ministry in others.
50. Churches which refuse to consider candidates for the ordained ministry on the ground of handicap or because they belong, for example to one particular race or sociological group should re-evaluate their practices. This re-evaluation is particularly important today in view of the multitude of experiments in new forms of ministry with which the churches are approaching the modern world.

Towards the Mutual Recognition of the Ordained Ministries

51. In order to advance towards the mutual recognition of ministries, deliberate efforts are required. All churches need to examine the forms of ordained ministry and the degree to which the churches are faithful to its original intentions. Churches must be prepared to renew their understanding and their practice of the ordained ministry.
52. Among the issues that need to be worked on as churches move towards mutual recognition of ministries, that of apostolic succession is of particular importance. Churches in ecumenical conversations can recognize their respective ordained ministries if they are mutually assured of their intention to transmit the ministry of Word and sacrament in continuity with apostolic times. The act of transmission should be performed in accordance with the apostolic tradition, which includes the invocation of the Spirit and the laying on of hands.
53. In order to achieve mutual recognition, different steps are required of different churches. For example:
 - (a) Churches which have preserved the episcopal succession are asked to recognize both the apostolic content of the ordained ministry which exists in churches which have not maintained such succession and also the existence in these churches of a ministry of *episkope* in various forms.
 - (b) Churches without the episcopal succession, and living in faithful continuity with the apostolic faith and mission, have a ministry of Word and sacrament, as is evident from the belief, practice, and life of those churches. These churches are asked to realize that the continuity with the Church of the apostles finds profound expression in the successive laying on of hands by bishops and that, though they may not lack the continuity of the apostolic tradition, this sign will strengthen and deepen that continuity. They may need to recover the sign of episcopal succession.
54. Some churches ordain both men and women, others ordain only men. Differences on this issue raise obstacles to the mutual recognition of ministries. But those obstacles must not be regarded as substantive hindrance for further efforts towards mutual recognition. Openness to each other holds the possibility that the Spirit may well speak to one church through the insights of another. Ecumenical consideration, therefore, should encourage, not restrain the facing of this question.
55. The mutual recognition of churches and their ministries implies decision by the appropriate authorities and a liturgical act from which point unity should be publicly manifest. Several forms of such public act have been proposed: mutual laying on of hands, eucharistic concelebration, solemn worship without a particular rite of recognition, the reading of a text of union during the course of a celebration. No one liturgical form would be absolutely required, but in any case it would be necessary to proclaim the accomplishment of mutual recognition publicly. The common celebration of the eucharist would certainly be the place for such an act.