

CHRISTIANS IN DIALOGUE

IT'S TIME TO MOVE TOGETHER

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It's Time to Move Together

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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It's Time to Move Together

Study 1: The Things we have in Common

Opening Devotion

A Litany for Christian Unity (Part 1)

Oh God, you have welcomed us by baptism into one holy Church,
and joined us by faith
to Christian people in every time and place.
May your Church on earth
be a sign of the communion you promise,
where we shall all be one with Christ,
and joyful in your kingdom.

Amen.

From clinging to power that prevents Christian unity;
from thinking that our own ways
are the only ways:

Good Lord, deliver us.

From mistaken zeal that will not compromise;
from religious pride that belittles the faith of others,
claiming true wisdom, but failing to love;

Good Lord, deliver us.

From a worldly mind that drums up party spirit;
from divisiveness, and a refusal to listen to others;
from protecting systems that have had their day:

Good Lord, deliver us.

The Lord's Prayer: Our Father....

Question

What are some of the things you have in common with the other members of this group?
Superficial things? Centrally important things?

The word **Koinonia** as used in modern ecumenical debate, has many possibilities. The Greek stem **Koin-**, meaning **common** is found in a small group of words, used in the New Testament. In Christian debate, people often use the important word **Koinonia**, as a kind of shorthand to represent this whole group of words. New Testament Greek, or **Koine** Greek, is the common language of trade used throughout the Roman Empire in New Testament times. This word for **common** can mean **ordinary** as opposed to **distinctive**. **Koinonia** means participation together with others in something that is common to them all. Compare the later use in the title **The Book of Common Prayer**. The word **Koinonia** can be translated **fellowship**, or **communion**.

The word-group was popular in ordinary Greek to express relationships, generally as they exist for people in small groups, coming together for specific purposes. Sometimes this is in a

religious context, as in the mystery religions, which provided a more intimate personal relationship than the decaying official religions.

Koinonia plays no real role in the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures, and there is no recorded evidence that Jesus used the word. Its adoption by the early Church, particularly by St. Paul and the Johannine community, was a useful means of communication for the Church in relationship to the world, as well as clarifying matters for Gentile Christians.

In John particularly, the word has a Godward reference as well. In Trinitarian terms, we may say that in **Christ** we **share in relationship** with the **Father** through the **Spirit**.

1 John 1: 3, 6-7:

We declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you also may have fellowship (koinonia) with us; and truly our fellowship (koinonia) is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.... If we say that we have fellowship (koinonia) with him while we are walking in darkness, we lie and do not do what is true; but if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship (koinonia) with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. (NRSV)

For Christians the word means we are bound together in unity by sharing together in Christ and all his benefits (and his sufferings). The following passages are referenced by Brendan Byrne SJ to show that “believers have Koinonia with one another through common participation in various aspects of Christian life:

in the **basic faith** (Philemon 1:6; cf. Titus 1:4)

in the **experience of the Spirit** (2 Corinthians 13:13; Philippians 2: 1)

in **responsibility for the Gospel** (2 Corinthians 8:10; Philippians 1: 5, 7)

in **sufferings** and **hope of glory** (2 Corinthians 1:7; Philippians 4:14;cf. 1 Peter 4:13; 5:1; Hebrews 10:33; Jude 3; Revelation 1:9).”

Question

Give your own definition of Koinonia. How can the concept help us to draw closer together in unity?

Koinonia is a practical rather than a theoretical term. It was used for the collection for the poor saints in Jerusalem, organised by Saint Paul, the common faith expressing itself in the Gentiles sharing their wealth with their poor Jewish sisters and brothers. It may also refer to the experiment in the **sharing of property** mentioned in Acts 2.

Acts 2:44-47.

All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to the number those who were being saved. (NRSV)

The deepest fellowship shared by people in the early Church was that of the

Lord’s Supper the sharing of the one loaf which bound them together with Christ into one body.

1 Corinthians 10: 16-17.

The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing (koinonia) in the blood of

Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing (koinonia) in the body of

Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread. (NRSV)

This sharing in the real presence of the living Lord bound the members of the Christian communities together, in spite of wide differences in personal background and diverse interests. Christ has broken down **all barriers** between Jew and Gentile, slave and free, rich and poor, male and female. This is the most inclusive language of all, binding us together in the common humanity we share with the God who is human for our sake.

Questions

- If Christ has broken down all barriers, what are the implications for us today?
- What are the barriers, which still exist between us, weakening our fellowship? How can we overcome them?

Yet there are limits connected with the use of the word-group in the New Testament. We do not all have this unity simply because we are human. If we join ourselves in fellowship with the powers of evil, with purposes that are opposed to God's purpose in the world, we, by our own decision, cut ourselves off from the fellowship God intends for all humanity.

1 Corinthians 10:18ff.

Consider the people of Israel; are not those who eat the sacrifices partners (koinonoi) in the altar? What do they imply then? That food sacrificed to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? No, simply that what pagans sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be partners (koinonoi) with demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons.

(NRSV)

Nevertheless, the koinonia of God's people in the world is not a closed fellowship. All human beings are potentially members of the kingdom of God, and we should treat them all as such.

The good news of koinonia calls all Christian people to share together in the deepest way possible to each denomination, as we move towards the third millennium. In the studies 2, 3 and 4 that follow we will look at the Canberra Statement and try to learn what it suggests to us of how we may find deeper unity through the things we already hold in common.

Question

- "All human beings are potentially members of the Kingdom of God." How do you react to this statement?
- We already have fellowship with one another in Christ. It is God's gift. Fellowship is practical. What more can we do to put Koinonia more deeply into practice?

A Litany for Christian Unity (Part 2)

As you sent disciples into every land, O God,
gather them now from the ends of the earth
into one fellowship
that chooses your purpose and praises your name,
in one faith, hope and love.

Amen.

Make us one, Lord,
in our eagerness to speak the good news
and to set all captives free.

Grant us the Holy Spirit.

Make us one, Lord,
in concern for the poor, the hurt, and the down-trodden,
to show them your love.

Grant us the Holy Spirit

Make us one, Lord,
in worship and fellowship, breaking bread together
and singing your praise with single voice.

Grant us the Holy Spirit

Make as one, Lord,
in faithfulness to Jesus Christ who never falls us,
and who will come again in triumph.

Grant us the Holy Spirit.

Grant us the Holy Spirit God our Father,
so that we may have among us
the mind that was in Christ Jesus;
and proclaim him to the world.
May every knee bow down,
and every tongue confess him as Lord,
to the glory of your holy name.

Amen.

The Worship Book Services, 1970; Presbyterian Church, U.S.A. (Adapted from Uniting in Worship People's Book, 1988.)

The Grace...

It's Time to Move Together

Study 2 Relationships that Bind

Prayerful Reflection

Welcome to our second session of our program. Let us take a few moments to prepare our hearts for the word by joining in one of the songs or quietly listening to one.

Trinity Song by Fr Frank Anderson

St Patrick's Breast Plate (last 2 stanzas)

Opening Prayer:

L: We bind unto ourselves today the strong name of the Trinity, One in Three and Three in One. May the power and mercy of you who are Creator give us strength for our journey. May the mercy and love of Jesus Christ, our Redeemer heal the broken places of our lives. And may the light and mercy of the Spirit empower us to proclaim with all our beings. Glory and praise to you Holy Trinity, Undivided Unity now and forever.

All: Amen.

L: Let us reflectively listen to the reading of Sections 1.1 and 1.2 of the Canberra Statement and allow the words to speak in our hearts.

Reader:

The purpose of God according to holy Scripture is to gather the whole of creation under the Lordship of Christ Jesus in whom, by the power of the Holy Spirit, all are brought into communion with God (Ephesians 1). The church is the foretaste of this communion with God and with one another. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit enable the one church to live as sign of the reign of God and servant of the reconciliation with God, promised and provided for the whole creation. The purpose of the church is to unite people and action and thus to point to the fullness of communion with God, humanity and the whole creation in the glory of the kingdom.

(1.1 Canberra Statement)

L: You may wish to pray aloud any word, phrase or sentence that speaks to you

Reader:

The calling of the church is to proclaim reconciliation and provide healing, to overcome divisions based on race, gender, age, culture, colour and to bring all people into communion with God. Because of sin and the misunderstanding of the diverse gifts of the Spirit, the churches are painfully divided within themselves and among each other. The scandalous divisions damage the credibility of their witness to the world in worship and service. Moreover they contradict not only the church's witness but also its very nature.

(1.2 Canberra Statement)

L: You may wish to pray aloud any word, phrase or sentence that speaks to you

L: Loving God, you read our hearts and you know our greatest needs. Touch us, guide and direct us in all our deliberations, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

For Study and Discussion:

Dr Mary Tanner in addressing the members of the 3rd Forum of the National Council of Churches Australia has this to say:

- The Canberra Statement begins not with the Church as koinonia, but with God's purpose with creation to bring all into communion with God, the vision of Ephesians. The unity of the Church is not a thing in and of itself. It is inseparable from what we believe about the nature of God, about the universe, the creation of God, and God's ultimate purpose. So in focussing on Koinonia, the Canberra Statement was placing the understanding of the unity of the Church, and the visible unity of the Church, in relation to God's own being and God's purpose for Creation.

Pause to savour the word. What insights come from this statement?

- The strength of the theme of koinonia is that it is a thoroughly biblical way of understanding the nature of the Church, both Johannine and Pauline. It draws attention away from the Church as institution and structure, and makes us rethink the fundamental nature of the Church as personal and relational. The Church is about persons in relationship with one another because they have been drawn into the giving and receiving life and love of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Pause to savour the word. Have I any comments I'd like to make?

The implications of the Canberra statement's emphasis on the notion of koinonia is that, as through prayer and through experience of life in community, we come to a common understanding and experience of the divine trinitarian life, the source of our life together. This enables us to hold to a deeper understanding of the unity of the Church and its need to be visible, audible and credible in this world and for this world. The unity that we are to live together is none other than "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit".

Pause to savour the word.

- How much emphasis does our Church place on becoming a personal and relational community?
- How does this vision flow into our ecumenical experiences?
- What are some of the weaknesses we struggle with which prevent us from recognising and living out koinonia?

(Refer to the diagram at the foot of the last page of this study)

- How does this diagram help me to understand the vision put forward in the Canberra Document?

+ How do I understand the relationship between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit?

+ The Trinity is the ultimate model of all our ecumenical endeavours. How can this vision influence our way of relating to each other?

- What influence does this have on me personally in relation to my own prayer life and my involvement in the Church?

Section 1.3 invites us to acknowledge the achievements of the Ecumenical Movement with gratitude and to recognise our failures. Let us reflect on this section of the program.

Reader:

We acknowledge with gratitude to God that in the ecumenical movement the churches walk together in mutual understanding, theological convergence, common suffering and common prayer, shared witness and service as they draw close to one another. This has allowed them to recognise a certain degree of communion already existing between them. This is indeed the fruit of the active presence of the Holy Spirit in the midst of all who believe in Christ Jesus and who struggle for visible unity now. Nevertheless churches have failed to draw the consequences for their life from the degree of communion they have already experienced and the agreements already achieved. They have remained satisfied to co-exist in division.

(1.3 Canberra Statement)

How do I respond to this statement?

Is there any aspect of it that I agree / disagree with?

How relevant is this statement for the members in my own Church?

Is there any way I could interest people in having a close look at it?

L: To conclude our session I would like to use this statement to lead you in a prayer of thanksgiving to give praise and thanks to God for all that has been accomplished through the Ecumenical Movement. I would also like to ask God's forgiveness for the ways in which we have failed in our efforts.

Let us take a moment to prepare ourselves for prayer.

L: For the times we have walked together in mutual understanding.

All: We give praise and thanks to you, O God.

L: For the theological convergence our churches have achieved.

All: We give you praise and thanks O God.

L: For common suffering and common prayer.

All: We give you praise and thanks O God.

L: For shared witness and service.

All: We give you praise and thanks O God.

L: For the degree of communion already existing between us.

All: We give you praise and thanks O God.

L: For the gift of the Spirit working in and through our churches leading us to Unity.

All: We give you praise and thanks O God.

L: Let us now ask pardon of our God for our slowness in responding to all God asks of us. For the times we fail to accept the degree of communion we have already achieved.

All: We ask your forgiveness O God.

L: For the times we have failed to act on the consequences of what we have already accomplished.

All: We ask your forgiveness O God.

L: For having remained satisfied to co-exist in division.

All: We ask your forgiveness O God.

L: Let us pray.

All: Gracious God we come to ask you to touch the hearts of all your people. Fill each person with a great desire to be converted and to return to you with humble and grateful hearts, so that the whole world may come to believe. We make this prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen.

L: May the inexhaustible creativity of God reach out to us.

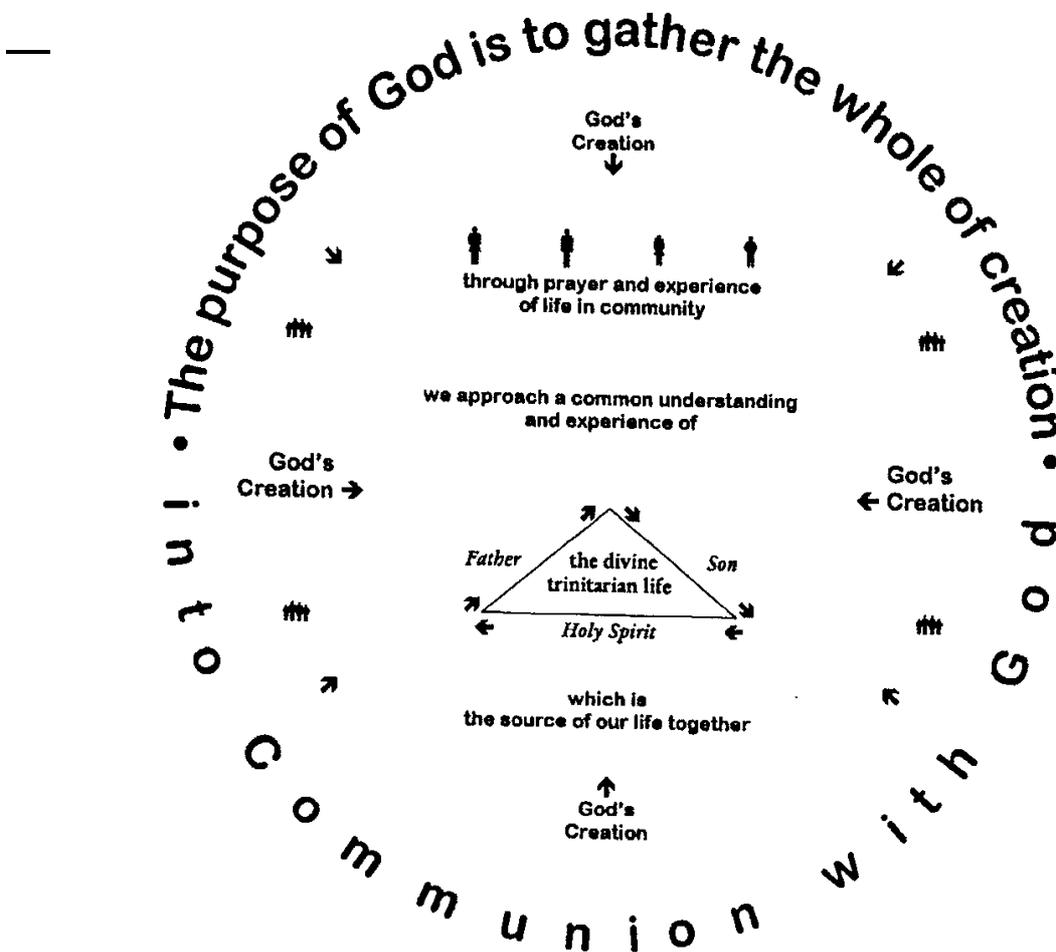
All: Amen.

L: May the humble generosity of God abide with us.

All: Amen.

L: May the ardent charity of God renew and animate us.

All: Amen.



It's Time to Move Together

Study 3: The Impossible Dream??

- Leader:** Let us dream the impossible dream: the unity of God's Church! Your Word, O God, is power and truth.
- Group:** We have seen it with our own eyes and stand in awe. You are with us.
- Leader:** You have chosen the weak to lift up the strong.
- Group:** And have called the foolish to confound the wise.
- Leader:** We have seen your glory made manifest in the little ones.
- Group:** and radiant in the eyes of the poor.
- All:** Guide our thinking as we study and pray as members of Your Holy Catholic Apostolic Church, but primarily as Your children called for the mission of love in this earth.

Quietly sing 'Bind us Together'

THINKING QUESTIONS to begin with (no right answers supplied!):

In our last study we discussed that through prayer and reflecting on the experience of life in community, we actually come closer to discovering the meaning of life.

- **Does this really lead us to an understanding and experience of the divine Trinitarian life?**
- **Is the perfect mutual relationship between Creator - the Incarnated One - the Comforter and Sustainer somehow giving a blueprint for human relationship????**
- **Did we humans find God through our life in community? Or was God there as the source and meaning of it all?**

In the first study we read 1 John 1:3, 6-7.. *in Christ* we share in relationship with the Father through the Spirit. So in John's letter he is saying that we enter into the divine relationship through the Incarnated One. There is mystery here, and there will continue to be during our earthly lives. We have the Church as a fellowship in Christ which exists for Jew and Gentile, slave and free, rich and poor, male and female. Yet the Church - NOT GOD! - has failed in following the blueprint for human relationship.

The unity we are to live out together is 'the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit'!!!!

Those of us who want the Church to find its way, look to the World Council of Churches to give us some leadership, so we have this opportunity to study discussions and directions taken so far.

The notion of koinonia has enabled divided Christians to understand that they are not out of communion with one another to recognise a certain profound degree of communion, which is already the gift of God to us all. (Mary Tanner)

Canberra Statement 2.1 The unity of the church to which we are called is a koinonia given and expressed in the common confession of the apostolic faith; a common sacramental life entered by the one baptism and celebrated together in one eucharistic fellowship; a common life in which members and ministries are mutually recognised and reconciled; and a common

mission witnessing to the gospel of God's grace to all people and serving the whole of creation.

The goal of the search for full communion is realised when all the churches are able to recognise in one another the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church in its fullness. This full communion will be expressed on the local and the universal levels through conciliar forms of life and action. In such communion churches are bound in all aspects of their life together at all levels in confessing the one faith and engaging in worship and witness, deliberation and action.

This statement claims that the **unity of the church** to which we are called is a **koinonia** given and expressed through four things in common.

- **Pick out those four things and discuss your understanding of such koinonia.**
- **The statement also gives us the goal of a search for full communion. Do you agree with it? Is it an impossible dream? Are we tilting at windmills? How is it related to the 'thinking questions' with which we began?**

'This full communion will be expressed on the local and the universal levels through conciliar forms of life and action.'

- **What does that mean to you? Can you do something on the local level or maybe encourage response at the universal level?**

Remember the wise words of Bishop Hans Lilje:

'Churches do not move toward unity by taking steps toward each other, but by moving toward Christ. When they do that the differences which exist are not trivialised; but on a higher plane, their sting is drawn.'

+ Terms employed in the paper:

Koinonia; confession of the apostolic faith; common sacramental life; mutually recognised and reconciled; common mission; holy, catholic, apostolic church; conciliar forms of life and action.

- **Having discussed this section, do you have some understanding of the above terms? Run through them together to see how you go.**

Maybe you will need to do some homework on this for next time?

Canberra Statement 2.2

Diversities which are rooted in theological traditions, various cultural, ethnic or historical contacts are integral to the nature of communion; yet there are limits to diversity. Diversity is illegitimate when, for instance, it makes impossible the common confession of Jesus Christ as God and Saviour the same yesterday, today and forever (Hebrews 13:8); and salvation and the final destiny of humanity as proclaimed in holy scripture and preached by the apostolic community. In communion diversities are brought together in harmony as gifts of the Holy Spirit, contributing to the richness and fullness of the church of God.

2.2 of the Canberra statement comments on the diversities which exist in our traditions, how much unity can exist in diversity, and yet what are the limits to diversity.

There are two situations where diversity is said to be illegitimate i.e. where the diversity cannot be ignored or accepted in a bid for unity.

- **Can you translate the rather wordy descriptions into terms which can be understood by people in our congregations?**
- **Give some examples of those situations.**

It has been said that the churches obstinately seem happy to co-exist in division. (statement 1.3)

They fail to draw the consequences of God's gift of communion of God's own life.

(Remember our thinking questions??)

- **Discuss the following quote from Robin Boyd in his book, 'Is there a Life beyond Dialogue?'**

'The time has come for the Church once more to say what it is for. It is not there simply to work for its own unity: it is there to worship God, and as part of that worship to work – in unity - for the transformation of humanity and of the whole creation which we call the kingdom of God; and to actualise - in the koinonia of worshipping communities - the present reality of that eschatological kingdom'

- **Has the time come for the Churches to replace closed minds with open minds? Have some issues become 'sacred cows' and millstones around the neck of the Church?**

Closing Prayer

Side One You have called us to be church,
we believe it can be ONE church!
and we strive to be that faithfully.

Side Two Yet still we find ourselves
recalling only words and forgetting your Spirit.

Side One We dwell on differences and impossibilities for unity,
We remember law and often disregard life.
We confuse ourselves with scholarship,
and forget wisdom.

Side Two We too often concentrate on DOING service,
causing your church to become a place and not a people
and worse than that ... PLACES even competing against one another.

Side One Forgive us. Show us mercy.
Let us see the truth as seen by you.

Side Two Let us recognise your bonding presence among us
as the gift of mutual love shared unsparingly with us
from Your eternal divine trinitarian life.

Side One Help us turn things right side up again,
beginning with our hearts.

Together The unity we resolve to live out together is
'the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship
of the Holy Spirit.' Amen.

It's Time to Move Together

Study 4: WHERE TO FROM HERE?

OPENING DEVOTION

Leader: The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all.

All: Amen.

Leader: Loving Saviour, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, you are perfectly united as three persons in one God. Help us, your people, more fully to experience your oneness within and amongst ourselves so that we may more clearly reflect your true nature to the world around us. Through Jesus Christ. Amen.

A reading from Ephesians 4:1-6.

Reader 1: I, therefore, a prisoner in the Lord, beg you to live a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called,

Reader 2: with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love,

Reader 3: making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

Reader 1: There is one body and one Spirit,

Reader 2: just as you were called to the one hope of your calling,

Reader 3: one Lord,

Reader 1: one faith,

Reader 2: one baptism;

Reader 3: one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.

A brief silence meditating on the unity that God gives.

PRAYER

Leader: God of peace and hope, let us be guided by your Holy Spirit as we share our experiences, our hopes and dreams for your church. Thank you that be being together and engaging in dialogue we are experiencing and celebrating your gift of fellowship. Help us to be humble, gentle and patient toward each other, and guide us more fully into your truth. We pray through Christ our Lord. Amen.

FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

The Document says:

3.1 Many things have been done and many remain to be done on the way towards the realisation of full communion. Churches have reached agreements in bilateral and multilateral dialogues which are already bearing fruit, renewing their liturgical and spiritual life and their

theology. In taking specific steps together the churches express and encourage the enrichment and renewal of Christian life, as they learn from one another, work together for justice and peace, and care together for God's creation.

Rev. Dr. Rowan Strong (An Anglican Response) writes:

'The recognition that theological dialogues are a part of the Holy Spirit's creation of koinonia places a high value upon such theological agreements. Unfortunately, this is not often reflected in the churches' use of them. They remain largely unknown and unheeded by most of the faithful in the churches and play too little part in the search for unity other than at the highest or the professional theological level.'

How well-known and well-promoted are these inter-church dialogue statements in your church? Are members of your congregation made aware of them and encouraged to study and act upon them? How might they be used?

In last week's study the following quotation from Lutheran Bishop Hans Lilje was discussed:

'Churches do not move toward unity by taking steps toward each other, but by moving toward Christ.'

What do you believe he means by this? How do you respond to this idea? What would the process he describes mean for continuing ecumenical progress?

IN SUMMARY

In addition to what you have already discussed, reflect on the content of paragraph 3.1. What is not clear to you? What do you agree/disagree with, and why?

The Document says:

3.2 The challenge at this moment in the ecumenical movement as a reconciling and renewing movement towards full visible unity is for the seventh assembly of the WCC to call all churches:

- to recognise each other's baptism on the basis of the BEM document;
- to move towards the recognition of the apostolic faith as expressed through the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed in the life and witness of one another.
- on the basis of convergence in faith in baptism, eucharist and ministry to consider, wherever appropriate, forms of eucharistic hospitality; we gladly acknowledge that some who do not observe these rites share in the spiritual experiences of life in Christ;
- to move towards a mutual recognition of ministries;
- to endeavour in word and deed to give common witness to the gospel as a whole;
- to recommit themselves to work for justice, peace and the integrity of creation, linking more closely the search for the sacramental communion of the church with the struggles for justice and peace;
- to help parishes and communities express in appropriate ways locally the degree of communion that already exists.

Dr Mary Tanner, recently retired from the position of General Secretary of the Council for Christian Unity of the Church of England, reflects on paragraph 3.2 of The Canberra Statement:

“The Seventh Assembly has challenged us, not just generally, but in all these specific ways. I hope, though I fear this may not be so, that the Eighth Assembly will call us to account for our fidelity. How far have you in Australia responded to those challenges formulated in your midst?”

What has happened within your local church and community to carry out the intentions listed above?

The Eighth Assembly has, in fact, taken this up. In the final session it was decided that in the period following the Assembly, and as we enter the twenty first century the World Council of Churches fellowship must directly engage each member church around four questions central to the purpose of the WCC. Those four questions are:

1. How do we as churches engage together in mission and evangelism in the midst of a highly pluralistic world?
2. How do we understand baptism as a foundation for the life in community in which we are called to share?
3. How do we offer together our resources, witness and action for the sake of the world’s very future?
4. How do we walk together on the path towards visible unity?

It was also decided that, “before we meet again in Assembly, the life of each member church must be addressed ecumenically with these four questions. Our shared responses would then build our common life and empower out witness to the world”. (WCC Eighth Assembly)

How appropriate do you believe these questions are? If they are appropriate, how might they be actioned within member churches?

Rev. Fr. Nabil Kachab writes in *An Orthodox Response to the Canberra Statement*:

“For the Orthodox, the Eucharist is the supreme expression of unity and not a means toward unity.”

How do you respond to this in the light of the Canberra Statement’s call to eucharistic hospitality, wherever appropriate? Do we Christians need to have the same beliefs about the Eucharist before we commune together, or should we commune together as a means of achieving the same beliefs? Or something else? Discuss.

The Rev. Dr Chris Mostert (Uniting Church) comments on the Canberra Statement:

“Koinonia must be related to mission. Koinonia is not something that concerns the churches in their ‘internal’ life alone; it includes their commitment to justice and peace and the integrity of creation. The goal is not simply full eucharistic sharing and the mutual

recognition of ministries; it has to include the sharing of every aspect of the church's life in the communities in which it is set...Christian koinonia looks for the fulfilment of God's purpose for the whole creation."

How well is this expressed in the Statement's paragraph 3.2 above? How far do you agree with it?

IN SUMMARY

In addition to what you have already discussed, reflect on the content of paragraph 12. What is not clear to you? What do you agree/disagree with, and why?

The Document says:

4.1 The Holy Spirit as promoter of koinonia (2 Corinthians 13:13) gives those who are still divided the thirst and hunger for full communion. We remain restless until we grow together according to the wish and prayer of Christ that those who believe in him may be one (John 17:21). In the process of praying, working and struggling for unity, the Holy Spirit comforts us in pain, disturbs us when we are satisfied to remain in our division, leads us to repentance, and grants us joy when our communion flourishes.

Read the Scripture verses 2 Corinthians 13:13 and John 17:21. What do these verses say to you about koinonia?

Sister Margaret Jenkins CSB, in her response to the Canberra Statement, observes:

"There seems to be a need for closer agreement about exactly what constitutes the nature and mission of the Church itself, taking into consideration the rich diversity of all our traditions."

Having studied and discussed the document, how far do you share her concern? How would you define the nature and mission of the church?

CLOSING DEVOTION

Leader: Lord of the church, we thank you for enabling us to achieve progress towards the realisation of full communion;

All: for the agreements that have been reached in dialogues, and the fruit they have borne. Help us to keep learning from one another, working together for justice and peace, and caring together for God's creation.

Leader: We confess our failure, and seek your grace:

Group 1: to recognise each other's baptism on the basis of the BEM document;

Group 2: to move towards recognition of the apostolic faith as expressed in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed in the life and witness of one another;

Group 1: on the basis of convergence in faith in baptism, eucharist and ministry to consider, wherever appropriate, forms of eucharistic hospitality, at the same time gladly acknowledging that some who do not observe these rites share in the spiritual experience of life in Christ;

Group 2: to move towards a mutual recognition of ministries;

Group 1: to endeavour in word and deed to give common witness to the gospel as a whole;

Group 2: to recommit ourselves to work for justice, peace and the integrity of creation, linking more closely the search for the sacramental communion of the church with the struggles for justice and peace;

Group 1: to help parishes and communities express in appropriate ways locally the degree of communion that already exists.

Leader: Holy Spirit, promoter of koinonia, give to those who are still divided a hunger and thirst for full communion.

All: Help us to grow together according to the wish and prayer of Christ, that those who believe in him may be one.

Leader: As we pray, work and struggle for unity,

All: comfort us in our pain, disturb us when we are satisfied to remain in our division, lead us to repentance, and grant us joy when our communion flourishes.

The Lord's Prayer

Leader: The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with us all.

All: Amen.