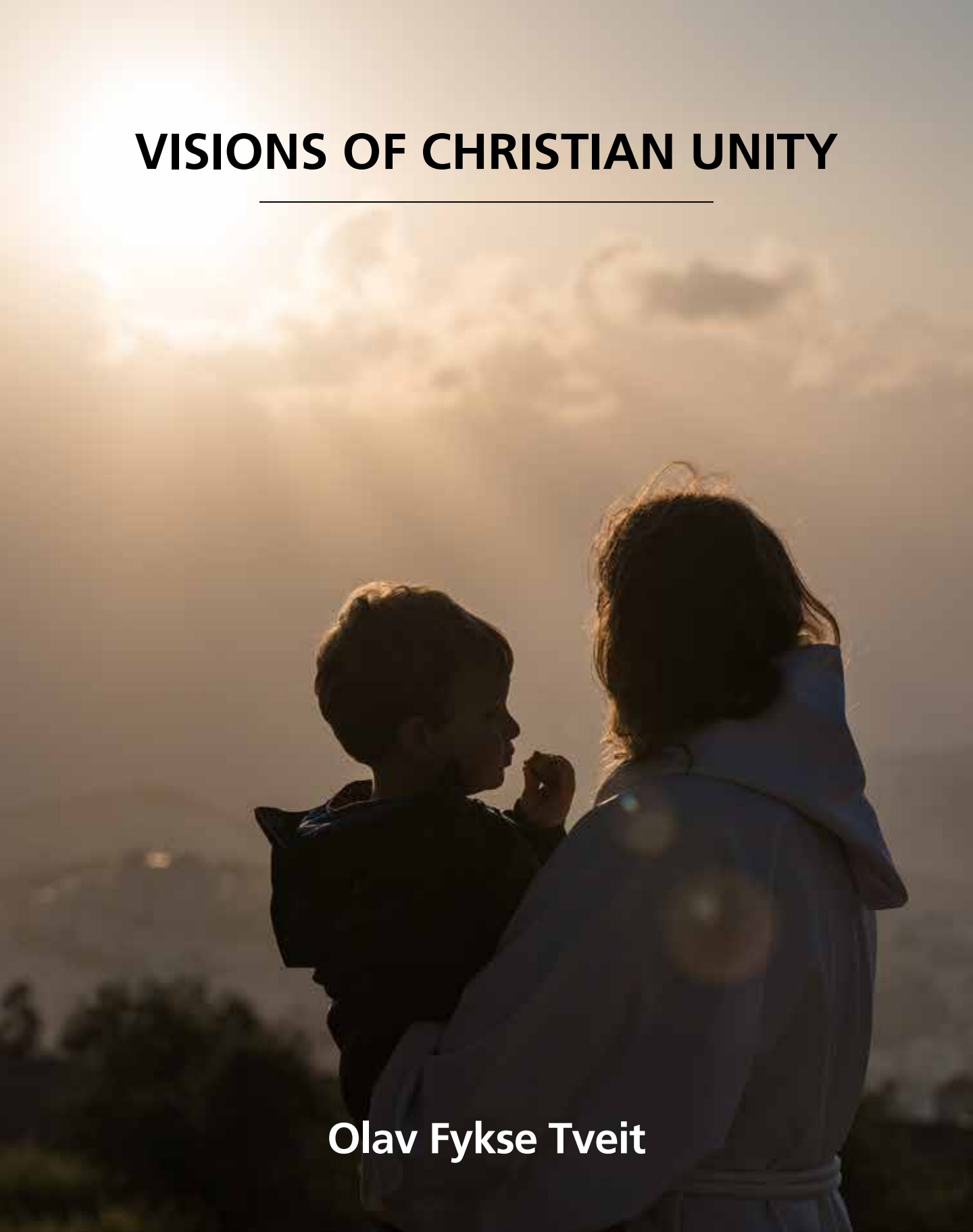
VISIONS OF CHRISTIAN UNITY



Olav Fykse Tveit

VISIONS OF CHRISTIAN UNITY

VISIONS OF CHRISTIAN UNITY

Olav Fykse Tveit

World Council of Churches

VISIONS OF CHRISTIAN UNITY

Copyright © 2022 WCC Publications. All rights reserved. Except for brief quotations in notices or reviews, no part of this book may be reproduced in any manner without prior written permission from the publisher. Write: **publications@wcc-coe.org**.

WCC Publications is the book publishing programme of the World Council of Churches. The WCC is a worldwide fellowship of 352 member churches which represents more than half a billion Christians around the world. The WCC calls its member churches to seek unity, a common public witness and service to others in a world where hope and solidarity are the seeds for justice and peace. The WCC works with people of all faiths seeking reconciliation with the goal of justice, peace, and a more equitable world.

Opinions expressed in WCC Publications are those of the authors.

Scripture quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version Bible, © copyright 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA. Used by permission.

Cover image: 20 April 2019, Jerusalem: Rev. Jeni Falkman Grangaard and her two-and-a-half-year-old son Amos share a moment after an Easter Sunday sunrise service at Jabal Allah (God's Mountain) on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem, held by the Lutheran Church of the Redeemer (English-speaking congregation). Albin Hillert Photography.

Production: Lyn van Rooyen, coordinator WCC Publications
Photos: Copyright © World Council of Churches. Unless otherwise noted, photos are by Albin Hillert.
Design Concept: Albin Hillert
Typesetting: Beth Oberholtzer
ISBN: 978-2-8254-1707-2

World Council of Churches
150 route de Ferney, P.O. Box 2100
1211 Geneva 2, Switzerland
www.oikoumene.org

Contents

Preface / vii

Part One: Walking, Working, Praying Together

1. A Fellowship of Hope / 3
2. The New Quest for Christian Unity / 9
3. What Does Mutual Accountability Mean for Christians and the Christian Life? / 15
4. What's Love Got to Do with It? / 23

Part Two: The Right to Hope

5. Climate Justice and Inequality / 33
6. Human Rights and Human Wrongs / 39
7. Gender Justice and the Churches / 45
8. Ending Violence against Children / 53
9. Our Journey with Migrants and Refugees / 59
10. Human Fraternity and Interreligious Encounter / 65
11. Globalization and Leadership / 71

Part Three: Love Will Find a Way

12. You Are the Salt of the Earth / 79
13. Do You Love Me? / 85

Sources / 91
Notes / 93

Preface

In text and images, this brief volume offers visions of what Christian unity might mean for our faith and for the human future. In fact, I believe in the tremendous potential of Christian churches united in love and solidarity to heal and rescue our one human family.

We live in a time when the churches and the world are in desperate need of people committed to fellowship and solidarity in multilateral relations and organizations. The work of the fellowship of the one ecumenical movement is more complex but more relevant and needed than ever. At the very end of my tenure as general secretary of the World Council of Churches, the COVID-19 pandemic forced us to cancel many traditional ways of working, notably physical gatherings. Yet I find that the reflections articulated and shared in the active life of ecumenical encounters, as presented here, are perhaps even more relevant and challenging in this situation, when we have many limitations to what we can do together.

The human family faces several simultaneous crises that can only be addressed properly by expressing our shared accountability for the One Humanity and the One Creation of God. The dramatic consequences of climate change, for example, are not limited to any national borders. Nor is the ongoing pandemic, which can be controlled only through fair and effective vaccination of all people everywhere.

In both cases, the less privileged are the most vulnerable, as usual.

If the unity and solidarity of the churches are crucial to the human future, it is not because those churches are a demographic majority of the world's population. They are not. The churches in the ecumenical fellowship of the World Council of Churches number about 352, representing an impressive 580 million Christians around the world. But the decisive character of our ecumenical fellowship is in its sharing a way of living faithfully and accountably together while embracing diversity, modeling and renewing loving community, and nurturing and inspiring passionate engagement for peace and justice for the sake of the world.

This ecumenical vision of Christ-inspired solidarity is, I trust, reflected in my writing of the last few years, from which I have developed these chapters, as well as in the photos that illustrate them. I hope that these pieces demonstrate that the ecumenical movement is responsive to the times, in such a way as to meld its historic and ongoing quest for Christian unity with the search for justice and peace.

In Part One, I lay out what I think of as the fundamental insights that inform our identity and commitments as a movement and as a working fellowship. This ecumenical core is treated especially in relation to the WCC's work of recent years, in

which we, as a global fellowship of churches, self-consciously view ourselves as on a journey of faith, a Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace. Now, as we look ahead to our next assembly, we are reaping the insights of these years to see how Christ's love moves us to be agents of unity and reconciliation.

In Part Two, I try to show that, on the basis of those underlying themes and insights that have fueled the pilgrimage, we, as Christians and Christian churches, gain a fuller understanding of the meaning and significance of our current challenges and how we might address and surmount them. Of course, not every topic is covered here. But whether climate change, gender justice, economic inequality, or racism, each cries out for our steadfast faith in the God of Life, our creative engagement and wholehearted commitment, and our hope-filled determination to rescue God's one human family and place it on the path of justice and peace. In each case, I believe, we have reasons, and even a right, to hope.

Finally, in Part Three, I reflect further on the spirituality and spiritual commitments that animate the ecumenical movement which is, ultimately, a movement of love. Historically and now, the ecumenical movement is about a shared experience of the love of Christ, and the ways in which that love can transform the world and even, one trusts, oneself.

Our journey as a fellowship, but also my own journey, are reflected in these pages. In fact, these years of leadership in the World Council of Churches have prompted my own spiritual and theological pilgrimage toward a deeper sense of what our ecumenical calling and contribution might mean today. For that, I am also indebted to my many and gifted colleagues in the WCC. Our fruitful collaborations and discussions have informed my understanding of various contexts, and their concerns and convictions are also reflected in these chapters. My thanks also go to our colleagues in WCC Communications, for bringing this work into an engaging format, especially to Albin Hillert for his arresting photographs and design concept, and to Michael West, with whom I have worked to sharpen the texts.

In preparing these short pieces, I have tried to keep notes to a minimum, and readers can find the specific occasions that sparked these reflections at the end of the book.

PART ONE

Walking, Working, Praying Together

Chapter 1

A Fellowship of Hope

An Accounting of Our Hope

For us as Christians and Christian churches, the greatest aspect of the overriding theme of the World Council of Churches in these years, the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace, is that it forces us to lift our eyes, to believe that we belong to a movement that is searching for what is better, even for what is best.

The church is a pilgrimage people, just as it says in the Faith and Order convergence document *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*. We are a people defined by hope. The church is "given a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Peter 1:4). This living hope is not grounded in something we leave behind us, just as a matter of history, or something we only project into life after death. It is the living hope nurtured every day by the Holy Spirit. This is what we need when we enter into all of the challenges of life, in different and even dangerous landscapes.

Wherever we go, we are even called to "always be prepared to make a defence to anyone who calls you to account for the hope that is in you" (1 Peter 3:15). Therefore, just as the hope that we carry is not given by ourselves, so it is not to be kept to ourselves. The hope given in the cross and the resurrection of Christ shapes our perspectives and relations of life accordingly, but it is not a private issue or for a privileged group of people. This hope is to be shared, particularly with those who are in greatest need of it. It is a hope for the whole of God's creation, given through the once-for-all and one-for-all suffering and resurrection of Jesus Christ. If it is not for all, it is not Christian hope.

Thus the fellowship of churches in the World Council of Churches and the wider ecumenical movement are always tested by this criterion of hope. Are we shaped by the living hope given to us? Are we holding ourselves accountable, asking ourselves if hope is what is seen and heard in our words and actions, or are we destroying the hope of

A young girl reaches toward Jerusalem, holding a palm leaf cross, as on Palm Sunday, thousands gather to march from the Mount of Olives down to the Old City of Jerusalem, following in the footsteps of Jesus as he journeyed to Jerusalem. Photo: Albin Hillert/ WCC, April 2019

"The theme of the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace forces us to lift our eyes, to believe that we belong to a movement that is searching for what is better . . ."

others? Are we breaking "the bruised reed" (Isaiah 42:3)? Are we conveying hope in a way that the words of the risen Christ, "Do not be afraid," can be taken seriously? Are we part of that culture of life, are we protecting and nurturing the life that is manifested in the unique resurrection of Christ?

This is not about generalized optimism, but instead about conveying a reason and motivation for hope. Often it means being able to see beyond what we see and expecting something more and something else, looking for justice and peace, and nothing less. Hope is a criterion of our Christian faith. I think it should be part of a proper critique of religion, including our own, demanding of ourselves whether we are nurturing hope, rather than destroying it.

This is the bottom line of our accountability for the World Council of Churches and for me as general secretary. This is about more than whether we have success in achieving our objectives or if we see a bright future, but also whether we can say that we have done what we could with our efforts and available resources to promote, to nurture, to share and not to destroy hope. Sometimes we have to do it even against the obvious reasons to be worried or even afraid.

A Pilgrim People

Making use of a familiar idea from our faith traditions and practices, such as pilgrimage, gives us an incentive to integrate our work for justice and peace with our faith.[1] These traditions speak in different ways about pilgrimage. Together they remind us that pilgrimage requires new courage, honest and humble attitudes, willingness to take new roads and routes, always seeking closeness to the reality in us and around us. Above all, the pilgrimage expresses in a new way a deep desire and prayer that the kingdom of God will come, that the will of God be done on earth as it is in heaven.

The pilgrimage theme has also strengthened our ability to foster hope within the ecumenical movement through dual dimensions of self-reflection: critique and construction. We must name what is wrong, and make a contribution together to change. We are doing this exercise of accountability both to dismantle evil through the cross and to foster the rebirth and renewal of life through the resurrection. This has created a practice and attitude of mutual accountability. We are not so afraid of listening to what others are saying – even critically – if we can do so in a joint commitment to speaking the truth to one another. We never do so with the purpose of diminishing or discriminating against the other, but to correct our direction, to learn from our mistakes, and join our steps forward.

To further expand on this, to critique means to specifically name what needs to be changed; construction calls upon us to offer contributions to our life together in hope.

"When our Lord Jesus Christ said 'repent,' he meant that the whole life should

Students raise their arms in prayer at the Global Ecumenical Theological Institute in Arusha, Tanzania. Photo: Albin Hillert/WCC, March 2018

be one of repentance." This was the first thesis of Martin Luther in 1517, and the beginning of the processes called Reformation. The impulse to deal with sin seriously, also our own mistakes and shortcomings, has been an inspiration also for the ecumenical movement. To address what is wrong – our divisions, our failing to witness to the truth, our insufficient work for justice and peace, our complicity with unrighteousness, neglecting to be sensitive to places of discrimination, racism, oppression, and violence in an honest, serious and consistent way, not cheating or covering up while absolving ourselves from the realities – addressing these should be a sign of a Christian throughout his or her whole life. This should also be the approach from us as churches together. This repentance is needed for the purpose of service to those in need and to repudiate a focus on our own self-destructiveness or our own self-righteousness.

The other dimension of a pilgrimage is to be constantly aware of how the resurrection of Christ changes our perspectives and our perceptions, our aspirations and our understanding of how transformation is possible. The power of the resurrection is working in our lives, in the whole of creation, and in the church. We are called to be light in the world, the light of Christ, not to provoke but to give real hope.

Hope Must Be Shared

The hope we have been given is not something we can keep for ourselves, but something intended to be shared, and to be made present in all contexts and before all people. We do this in the service of God's mission. The most recent mission statement, *Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes,* also carries this calling to be aware of how the God of life is at work, and particularly among those who are in the so-called margins. We are looking not only at our own lives as individuals, but at our churches, our communities, our nations, our fellowship as one humanity, with different religions or no religion, still in the one world. The pilgrimage is fundamentally a way of relating to one another and to God, in this world that is our home. We are on a pilgrimage to search for change, for transformation of ourselves and of the world in which we live. We do so in the name of the coming kingdom of God with its justice, peace, and joy.

We find in places where the values of the kingdom of God are ignored, violated, even destroyed, that the struggle for justice and peace calls upon all resources and creativity and time available. We see signs of how the churches, with the strength of conciliar fellowship nationally, regionally, and globally, are able to contribute to the justice and peace so urgently called for. We see that the WCC can make a difference; we see that by changing ourselves we can inspire others to change.

The pilgrimage perspective means trying new directions and being willing to go ahead, in the forefront of what we recommend for the churches to do. This is demanding, but utterly exciting, sometimes empowering, though sometimes rather overwhelming. Concretely, we would wish

there were always more resources available, even as we are able to adjust to changing economic conditions. In all we do on our pilgrimage, we need to continue to be faithful stewards of our resources, not least our human resources.

The theme of pilgrimage has focused the role of the World Council of Churches to be one of facilitating, convening, sharing, and strengthening cooperation and new relationships under a common vision. We have seen how the openness implied in our pilgrimage makes us open to new methods, new partners, and new ways of moving. Being open about our intentions and our strategies has made the WCC a more comprehensive organization, even with fewer funds. Seeing ourselves as a fellowship, a movement, an institution, a network, our task is thus to facilitate and convene so we make use of the many dynamics between us.

Once again, we do this in mutual accountability, in terms of self-critique and critique, and in sharing the real reasons for and signs of hope. This is a unique character of being a follower of Christ: we are not afraid of taking responsibility for both our sins and our hope, both the cross and the resurrection, both the regret and the affirmations of our contributions.

Chapter 2

The New Quest for Christian Unity

When our Lord Jesus Christ prayed for his disciples "that they all may be one" (John 17), he prayed that their being one should be defined by the qualities of their relations and the practical expressions of true human relationships: "that they love one another as you have loved me." Their unity should be for the purpose of transformation of themselves and the world, "so the world may believe." This is what the tapestry in the hall of the Ecumenical Centre says to us every time we see it.

The unity Jesus prayed for is a unity different from others in the world. This unity should neither be that of an imperial power dominating other peoples nor exclusive to national and religious communities, as "my kingdom is not of this world" (John 19). It should be a fellowship of diversity, a new relationship in "spirit and truth" (John 4), crossing traditional ethnic, geographic, and religious boundaries. It manifests itself as a prophetic message of critique, as light in darkness, but also as building new relationships through sharing bread, through healing, through including the marginalized, participating in the feasts of life, transforming human lives, creating friendship and through willingness to sacrifice something, even your own life, for others, to counteract ignorance, injustice, lack of integrity, and selfishness.

The Ambiguities of Unity

When we try to discern the signs of our times, we see many different quests for unity. There is a sense of being one world through new possibilities of communication and sharing information, connecting people through enormous and sometimes unlimited openness, but also making the world a globalized marketplace dominated by a few and powerful actors, some with little or no ethical or value-based standards for a unity of economic justice for all. The global market creates opportunities but not equality. There is also a global trend toward building a safer and closed unity for some – but not for all – by actions that divide and polarize, manifesting national identity as exclusive, defining difference as a reason for superiority, discrimination, racism, or xenophobia.

The tapestry of the Ecumenical Centre in Geneva, portraying churches around the world, with Christ in their midst. Photo: Albin Hillert/WCC, December 2017

These signs can be seen in all continents, for example in Europe and in the USA.

We can observe a parallel trend in a globalized and even a post-globalized *religious* realm. There is a strong momentum toward openness to ideas other than one's own traditions and given religion, and to a mixture of religious traditions and, even more, a life-orientation without religious identity. On the other hand, there are strong movements toward manifesting those dimensions in religion that affirm an exclusive identity (we-they), politicizing religion, nationalizing religion, even using religion as an excuse for violence. We can see these tendencies on all continents.

An Alternative Approach, a New Momentum

Yet, within this landscape, there is a new momentum for the unity of the church. This can be seen as a need for an alternative to destructive or divisive trends. The alternative approach to unity can be offered as a contribution to unity in the world and a just peace with all and with the whole of creation, crossing all kinds of boundaries and counteracting forces that make human beings enemies to one another. This unity can manifest itself through qualities of relations based on faith in the God of life as creator of all human beings created in the image of God, faith in God the Holy Spirit and life-giver of all, and faith in the God of love, compassion and critique, incarnated in Jesus Christ. This unity can be promoted in common actions and shared commitment to the values of the kingdom of God: joy, justice and peace (Romans 14).

This new momentum for church unity in our time is manifest in a new willingness to work together for justice and peace, through a shared commitment to ecumenical *diakonia* or service. This is expressed in the WCC agenda and call for being "Together on a Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace." It is expressed in the first commemoration of the 500 years of Reformation in Lund, 31 October 2016. It is also expressed in the exploration of new ways of acting together for sharing justice and peace as churches, for example through ACT Alliance as an instrument for international, ecumenical *diakonia.* There are new and strong signals of making that alliance a more inclusive and church-based common enterprise. The WCC is experiencing a new openness to cooperation in *diakonia,* for example from the World Evangelical Alliance, the World Pentecostal Fellowship, World Vision, and others representing those parts of Christianity not organized in the traditional ecumenical movement.

The connection between a new quest for unity and a new quest for ecumenical *diakonia* should manifest itself in new initiatives toward more mutual accountability. This accountability should focus on shared values and faith traditions. This is to manifest the oneness Jesus Christ prayed for as an alternative, faith-based search for unity through concrete visible actions for the well-being and just peace for others and for creation. This means that actions and relations must all be established and tested by their accountability to these values and by their good intention and effect on those who need the common witness for just peace the most: the marginalized, the

poor, refugees from war and conflicts, the sick, victims of violence, particularly victims of gender-based violence and children. The unity we seek through common service must be holistic as we are seeking the values of the kingdom of God, and must therefore seek to express how our ecumenical *diakonia* is both faith-based and rights-based at the same time. Shared expressions of ecumenical *diakonia* from churches and their partners can show an alternative counter-movement to ignorance of, or disinterest in, spiritual and moral values, and an alternative to an understanding of unity (also religious unity) as a closed and exclusive reality and entity.

The Practice of Discipleship

The Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace is an expression of our faith and our search for transformation toward unity, justice, and peace as disciples of Jesus Christ. Following the many lessons learned in the ecumenical movement and its practice, the 10th Assembly of the WCC invited all churches and "all people of good will" to join us in this Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace. This means that we seek partners for the work we do and partners in developing the visions and the capacities of the churches to contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals. This is not to minimize or change our faith-based commitment and our Christian identity but to be more able to contribute substantially to the care for, and the transformation of, human communities toward a fellowship of justice and peace.

The quest for new expressions of this Christian unity through ecumenical *diakonia* must be shown through visible and tangible practice locally and globally. Unity, love, service, justice, peace, and hope are all best seen and perceived in daily and concrete practices. The way to visible unity for churches and for the churches' contribution to life-giving unity of societies can be found through developing healthy, holistic, and sustainable movements among the peoples, establishing alternative, inclusive, and constructive populism. We can all go forward in manifesting and developing qualities of relationships as expressions of the basic values in Christian discipleship. These qualities must and can be shown by staying true to our values, and through sharing our gifts and openness, through reliability and honest conversation. We do this to express our faith, love, and hope. These attitudes can make a difference. These qualities of relationships must and can be shown in sharing in service/*diakonia* in daily, practical behaviour on both the micro-level and the macro-level, in families, schools, local churches, and communities – as well as in stewardship and advocacy at a national and global level.

The ecumenical movement and the World Council of Churches are not primarily about what happens in Geneva. It is a poly-centric movement. For the constant renewal and reformation of the churches and human societies we cannot wait for figures like Martin Luther or Martin Luther King Jr. We all have to be, and we all can be, agents of change for unity, justice, and peace. This reality has to be filled out by everyone for herself or himself, defining what we are and what we can do together to be the prophetic voice for another type of relationship, to bring hope to the world.

World Council of Churches

"There is a new momentum for church unity in our time that is manifested in a new willingness to work together for justice and peace, through a shared commitment to ecumenical diakonia."

Tree planting ceremony at the Global Ecumenical Theological Institute in Arusha, Tanzania. Photo: Albin Hillert/WCC, March 2018

Chapter 3

What Does Mutual Accountability Mean for Christians and the Christian Life?

A Golden Thread through Ecumenical History

We have already referred to the notion of mutual accountability. But what does it mean in an ecumenical context and for our lives as Christians?

We are used to approaching the history of the ecumenical movement, and the theological initiatives that have accompanied and fueled it, through the lenses of unity, witness, and service, through *koinonia, missio dei, diakonia,* and how such themes play out in theological topics or *loci.* Through these lenses the movement has been able to find convergence, indeed even consensus, in key areas of ecclesiology, doctrine, and polity, in ways that have led to mutual recognition, communion, and even uniting of churches in regions around the world.

But from the very start of the organized movement, there has also been the sense that commitment to the spirit and work of ecumenical work also involves not just tolerating each other or navigating around differences or being willing to overlook past insults, condemnations, and conflicts but also genuine, indeed sympathetic, understanding of each other's distinctive traditions and traits.[1]

It is this spirit, or more technically, this attitude, that I have tracked and traced in my work on mutual accountability.[2] I found that mutual accountability, as an underlying attitude, runs like a golden thread through the decades of work by the Faith and Order Commission. It was indeed a mark of the whole movement as it grew, ever more explicitly, right into the contemporary period. Beyond or beneath the growing convergence on specific theological matters, indeed making such understanding and convergence possible, there has been cultivated a

Two people greet at Maundy Thursday evening service in Högalid Church, Church of Sweden. Photo: Albin Hillert, April 2017

radical openness and accompanying humility we term mutual accountability.

If I may elaborate, mutual accountability refers to a quality of the relationships that we enter when we commit to the search for Christian unity and to the movement for unity.[3] Mutual accountability denotes a kind of covenantal pledge implicit between and among people in community. We can see it at play in our own relations with our friends or spouse or close community. It refers to an attitude of active responsibility that must characterize any authentic relationship, the profoundly moral dimension of life together.

The Moral Core of the Ecumenical Fellowship

In the ecclesial fellowship, mutual accountability means that churches in ecumenical fellowship are related, first and foremost, not to an organization or even to a movement *but to each other.* It refers to attitudes of openness, constructive critical and self-critical approaches, repentance, reliability, commitment to the common calling and tasks, faithfulness, sharing, and indeed hope – derived from the Gospel itself, these are all genuine and necessary attitudes in a fellowship that follows the crucified and risen Christ.

The truth of the Gospel can only be sought in a sense of accountability to what is given to us as the faith through the ages, to our partners in ecumenical fellowship, and even in a sense of accountability to those whom the Gospel addresses today, in their context, in their time, in their search for hope.[4]

Commitment to the fellowship of Christian churches thus entails a genuine and ongoing search for the deepest, most inclusive truths of faith[5] in order to come to authentic faith for myself and my fellow Christians but also to model a credible, self-critical faith to our contemporaries and to free us from the oversights and biases that keep us from giving ourselves fully to the needs of others.

This has deep implications for theology, for spirituality, for our encounters and engagements in the world, including other religious traditions.

In sum, in the ecumenical movement, mutual accountability is a matter of how we seek the truth together by sharing insights into the truth we carry. This progressive, collaborative discovery of course entails as much repentance and self-criticism as it does fidelity to traditions. Churches must be learners as well as teachers! Often your insights shed light on my oversights![6]

Ultimately, the truth we owe one another is an accounting for our hope not just to ourselves and our kind but to others as well. We are as churches and followers of the crucified and risen Christ called always to be ready to give account of the hope that we carry. This is the criterion of our Christian witness. This is in fact the criterion of being church: Are we giving hope to others,

A group of youth lead a moment of prayer as the WCC marks its 70th anniversary in the Nieuwe Kerk, Amsterdam. Photo: Albin Hillert/WCC, August 2018

"The truth of the Gospel can only be sought in a sense of accountability to what is given to us as the faith through the ages . . ."

real hope? This is also the criterion of what it means to be human, created in the image of God: How do we give hope to the other?[7]

Walking, Working, and Praying Together

What does mutual accountability mean for Christian life and discipleship? When we think of mutual accountability in relation to the Christian life, its radicality is perhaps more personally, immediately evident. It brings into sharper relief the real, profound implications of our personal commitment to God and each other. It illumines our journey of faith. Here are several ways that I see it shedding light on the Christian life:

1. Mutual accountability highlights listening to and learning from each other as a mark of Christian life. Practically speaking, in that fellowship and in relationships, mutual accountability dictates a fidelity beyond even the truths I most strongly affirm in my own tradition. Our God is larger than even our most sacrosanct formulations can contain![8] I open myself not only to learning *about* you but also *from* you. I open myself to being challenged and changed by you and by absorbing your insights into my own, newly broadened and deepened faith life.

2. In turn I can claim all the brightest insights and profound wisdom of each of the other traditions I encounter. As Christians, we may claim these diverse riches and insights for ourselves, not just to appreciate how they explain how others think and act but also to prod and deepen our own religious lives.

3. Conversely, mutual accountability invites critical and self-critical theology. It means that I must be able to hear and absorb the criticism and critiques of my traditions and my theology from those who see it all differently. I must really accept and learn from them, when, for example, they point out that my proud Christian history also includes moments of oppression and persecution. Or that my tradition, which deeply values justification, sometimes gives short shrift to the hard work of sanctification. I have to recognize that, as Pope Francis recently argued, the gift and blessings of ministry have been sometimes skewed into a clericalism that can then be employed to facilitate abuse or that my religious life has accommodated itself uncritically to nationalism or colonialism or demagoguery or economic powers. I must recognize shortcomings in how our shared Christian tradition has treated women or Indigenous Peoples. More broadly, I have to recognize that the church itself, the body of Christ, is simply broader, more encompassing and inclusive, than my structures and strictures allow.

Above all, perhaps, as we have learned over the last 50 years, such learning, such theology, must come from concrete engagement with and learning from those who are on the margins of our societies, those who often are left behind by our way of life, those who are different from us.[9]

4. It recasts the Christian life as one of ongoing conversion to the needs of the other. Conversion has often been conceived as a life-changing experience that leads to a change of religious allegiance. But more commonly our encounters with God are ongoing, our experience of the mystery of death and resurrection ever deepening, and our involvement and engagement with the world ever more urgent. So conversion actually sets up an ongoing dialectic of repentance and growth, often occasioned by the unwelcome truths that others reveal to us[10] or needs of the others around us. The Christian life is a kind of faith journey or pilgrimage toward the reign of God, glimpsed here through radical openness and progressive inclusivity. As Pope Francis remarked in his recent visit to the WCC:

Walking, in a word, demands constant conversion. That is why so many people refuse to do it. They prefer to remain in the quiet of their home, where it is easy to manage their affairs without facing the risks of travel. But that is to cling to a momentary security, incapable of bestowing the peace and joy for which our hearts yearn. That joy and peace can only be found by going out from ourselves. That is what God has called us to do from the beginning.

5. It recasts the criterion of authenticity of the Christian life. What is the authentic Christian life? Certainly one measure is its responsiveness to the other and the quality of our relationships with others: honesty, inclusiveness, placing ourselves at their disposal. "When did we see you, Lord?" This concrete measure of Christian authenticity breaks through the tendencies in religious life toward solipsism, self-delusion, and hypocrisy to more open, inclusive, learning way of life.[11]

6. Mutual accountability also reframes discipleship itself. We see that following Jesus can be characterized as "transformative discipleship," that is, action and advocacy for justice and peace that is inspired by Jesus and that transforms not only the situations it addresses but ourselves in the process. Our engagement with refugees, the homeless, the poor, the marginalized, the outcast is not an afterthought to conversion but its agent. In the end, the pilgrimage changes the pilgrim.

7. Likewise, spirituality and the spiritual life are nuanced differently in light of our ultimate and proximate accountabilities. In a framework of mutuality, spirituality becomes more communal, more globally oriented, less introspective – rather like the Ecumenical Prayer Cycle or the songs that have so richly animated the ecumenical movement since at least the 1980s.[12] Our prayer puts us in touch with the deepest longings and aspirations of the world around us as we pray, "Thy kingdom come." Ecumenical spirituality, seen so well in movements like Taizé or or Sant'Egidio or Focolare, is perhaps the underappreciated side of the whole movement and a key to its future.

8. *Finally, mutual accountability reveals just how utterly relevant our faith is to the lives of*

"Mutual accountability reveals just how utterly relevant our faith is to the lives of those around us . . ."

those around us and, indeed, to the future of humanity itself. The progressive openness of ongoing conversion not only makes us available to address the ills we see around us. It also models an authentic and credible Christian witness to the world that is based on truth and self-transcendence rather than lies and greed.

So, in the end, our commitment to Christian fellowship (as churches) or community (as individuals) creates sets of accountabilities – not a list of obligations or duties but marks of a whole life in the Spirit, a nexus of mutually accountable relationships and an ongoing dialectical quest for a truer, more authentic Christian life, a dynamism of love that mirrors the mutuality and truth in God's own self.

This, of course, seems to claim quite a bit for the humble notion of mutual accountability. Yet, perhaps you will agree with me that, based on this description and in the context of Christian life and discipleship, mutual accountability is seen as simply another word for love.

Our long pilgrimage is not over. In word and sacrament, in conscience and calling, God still urges each of us to transcend our stubborn boundaries of self and reach out in love for God and each other, to follow Jesus more truly, to articulate a message of healing and salvation, and to open ourselves up in radical hospitality to the needs of our neighbour. This indeed is our ultimate accountability, our vocation, and indeed our joy.

A girl with disabilities, paired with a supportive fellow member of the community of faith, laughs during worship celebration in the Yum-kwang Presbyterian Church in Seoul, South Korea. Photo: Paul Jeffrey/WCC, December 2017

Chapter 4

What's Love Got to Do with It?

"Christ's love moves the world to reconciliation and unity"

What the World Needs Now . . .

"Man's disorder and God's design" – that phrase might sound like a description of some political realities familiar to many in the world today. It was, however, the theme of the First Assembly of the World Council of Churches, held in Amsterdam in 1948. It was a new beginning, in many ways, for the churches to meet, to reconcile, and to develop their agenda for unity. They wanted to build serious, mutually accountable relations. Their conclusion was: "We will stay together." In many ways they echoed the mood of the post-World War II times: "Never again!" Never again should the world be torn apart by wars. Never again to Nazism and fascism and their anti-human ideologies. Never again to genocide based on antisemitism and racism. Never again should the churches themselves be divided by wars and "man's disorder."

These events and convictions 70 years ago set agendas for the churches and far beyond for several generations. Now we are preparing the 11th Assembly of the WCC, in 2021. What is it that the churches want to say now? What is it that the world needs now? Well, I believe that the life-saving yet also profoundly theological answer is . . . Love!

The word "love" has never come into any of the themes of the assemblies of the WCC, but it needs to do so now.

The theme of the 11th Assembly of the WCC, to be held in September 2021 in Karlsruhe, Germany, will be "Christ's love moves the world to reconciliation and unity." This is a way to summarize the legacy of more than 70 years of the fellowship of 350 Orthodox, Protestant, Anglican, Old-Catholic, United and Uniting churches, independent churches, and others in their longstanding work for unity, justice,

A crucifix sits on a wall in the Cathedral Church of Saint George the Martyr, Jerusalem. Photo: Albin Hillert/WCC, April 2019

and peace. But it is also a formulation that signals the way forward for all our work. It also provides a measure or gauge or test of what we are saying and doing. It even has an eschatological dimension.

With this theme we want to say that

- Our identity and mission as Christian churches are defined by Christ
- Christ's love is the source, the heart, the centre of everything in our fellowship and in our mission
- This love of Christ has changed the world and has the potential to move the world
- The task of our fellowship is to enable the world's moving toward reconciliation and unity.

This must be expressed by the WCC as a fellowship of faith, moving as pilgrims, humbly but resolutely. When Pope Francis visited the WCC – on a separate pilgrimage to us in June 2018 – we gathered as sisters and brothers under the theme "walking, praying and working together." Together we affirmed that there is one ecumenical movement, with a shared vision for our ministry in the world. It was a unique, historic moment. One of the signs of the times is that there is common ground and a common vision for the mission and the service of the church – on our way to unity. *Our unity must be an expression of the love of Christ poured out in our hearts.*

All this can sound obvious, even naive. Yet it was an important and far-reaching process of reflection to come to this theme. We have been brought back to the origins of our work in the WCC. We have struggled to see and to say what is particularly needed now. We have asked: What does faith in Jesus Christ mean today, in the world as it is? Further, we ask what is the practical relevance of love, even Christ's love, when we work in a church organization for reconciliation and unity?

Further: What does it mean to be a "*World* Council of Churches"? We sometimes hear criticism from both sides. Some would ask how the WCC can be relevant to the real lives of people in the world today. Others might say that we are busier with the "world" than with the church or with faith in Christ as such. Both challenges help us to see the objective of being a World Council of Churches. But how could we think that we do not have a calling to contribute to positive movements in the world - as it is, in real time? We are not intending by this theme to be exaggerating or boosting our self-image, but we have to reflect on the biblical mandate that the church is called by Jesus Christ to do its mission in the whole world, and to share that God loved and loves the world.

Therefore: How could we ever accept that the church is divided and even a source of division? This was the question in 1948. This is the question today. We are neither called to promote, nor to be a source of conflict and polarization. That means that we cannot ignore tribalism, racism, nationalism, or any other form of exclusivism – if we are to be the followers of Christ in this world. But

how to fight against these destructive forces? That is exactly why the WCC now asks the question – which is not at all an obsolete or rhetorical one: What does love mean – in practice – facing these realities? What does it mean to love your neighbour? Is it limited to those who are already within the borders of your country? Does God's love make your love for your nation, for the stability, wealth, economy, and security you want – unimportant or illegitimate? How can the churches as a fellowship contribute to a world moved by Christ's love toward reconciliation and unity? What do the churches have to offer a world endangered and imperiled?

Christ's Love

The theme of our next assembly alludes to the text from 2 Corinthians 5. There St. Paul even says:

> The love of Christ compels us, because we know that one has died for all; therefore all have died. And he died for all. So that those who live might not live any longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them. . . . So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us, we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled with God. (vv. 14, 20)

Our minds ponder and might be disturbed by the questions related to the reconciliation through Jesus Christ, particularly as they are elaborated in different doctrinal models. How are the questions of justice, reconciliation, unity, and love actually connected at the heart of our faith in Jesus Christ?

Two answers I have found to open such a theological mystery, were found in reflecting precisely on that very text from 2 Corinthians 5. It has also shaped my theology and my calling since then, particularly as I have been working ecumenically and in the WCC. The biblical authors struggled to see the deeper meaning of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. So there were references to legal, forensic practices and particularly to cultic traditions. Many models of human experience and structures for reconciliation are relevant to describe the mystery of our faith.

One such experience I learned about in a visit to Samoa, in the Pacific. There, if anything wrongful was done, the family of the perpetrator sat down outside the house of the victim's family expressing their shame and guilt. They would sit there till the victim and the family were ready to come out and stretch their hands toward the others. Revenge would destroy everybody. Unity in the island could be restored, without covering up for the sin done.

That there are different models for expressing what this ultimate love of Jesus Christ meant, is the case also in this biblical text. The most significant statement in this whole letter helps to answer this. Paul, with his Jewish roots, and the readers in the new community established in multicultural Corinth, belong together in a "new creation." Then it is proper to conclude: "But all this is from God" (v 18.) This is the bottom line in all these reflections and images in the New Testament. It is God the creator, the saviour, the life-giver in action, in human realities.

"We are seeking the signs of the kingdom of God in this world and particularly also seeking to manifest these signs ourselves."

The other clear message in the text from 2 Corinthians 5, which is alluded to in the theme of our next assembly: It is one motivation, one attitude, that matters, that even compels us: The love of Christ for us, for all. It changes our relationship to God – and therefore to all others. This is about God's attitude to us and our attitudes to one another. God has reconciled the world to Godself in Christ. This is an attitude that we are called to show to the world, to anyone in the world. It is an attitude of love seeking the transformation of love, the new creation, shaped in the image of Jesus Christ. We are not ignoring the reality of sin, but we are finding that God can deal with sin in a way we could not, in Jesus Christ.

Why do we refer to the well known Christian doctrine when we define the theme for a unique meeting in this time of church history and human history? Because the world needs it. It doesn't take much of an analysis to say that we actually see the opposite: The world is not moving in love toward reconciliation and unity.

Even the communities of Christian faith are sometimes quite self-centred and themselves a source of division and even conflict – with a negative effect far beyond their own circles. In fact, now is actually a time when religion is one of the dividing factors in the world, or at least used and misused to divide, for other purposes than the strictly religious. We have to add: As it has been many times before in the history of humankind and our civilizations.

Christ the Crucible

This is, therefore, a time when the churches themselves need to reconsider their own relations and mission. Many churches struggle with their roles, and many leaders in churches and in the ecumenical movement are struggling with their personal, professional, and ecclesial roles as peacemakers and bringers of reconciliation. Why are we here, as churches in a fellowship, in a world threatened by climate change, by division and fragmentation based on economic injustice, by escalations of violence, and by the deconstruction of open, representative democracies, not able to focus on the important issues?

It is time to go back to basics and, going forward, knowing and showing what the basics really are. That is why it is time to say: Christ's love moves us. And, even more: Christ's love moves the world to reconciliation and unity.

The WCC has focused in this most recent period on how the ecumenical movement is a pilgrimage together, a Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace. We are seeking the signs of the kingdom of God in this world and particularly also seeking to manifest these signs ourselves. In this we learn that

Previous spread: A procession enters Saint Peter's Cathedral in Geneva during a WCC 70-year anniversary service. Photo: Albin Hillert/WCC, June 2018

Easter midnight service in Kista Church, Church of Sweden. Photo: Albin Hillert, April 2017

"It is time to say: Christ's love moves us."

following Christ is an exercise in humility with a purpose. It is a humility that expresses the genuine and unique approach given in the stories and the messages about Jesus Christ. The uniqueness of the God present in a human being was and is Jesus' being-for-others as the sign and criterion of what God is, and what God's love means.

PART TWO

The Right to Hope

Chapter 5

Climate Justice and Inequality

Challenges of Our Time

That we are living in an era of unprecedented abundance is evident even as we take a quick look around us now. Markets are brimming with tradable commodities, and shops are filled with an incredible array of gadgets and things. So much so that the sheer number of options before us can be more incapacitating than liberating for our decision-making processes–what sociologists and psychologists now term the "paradox" or even the "tyranny" of choice. That humanity has reached dizzying heights of scientific knowledge and technological achievement also cannot be denied. We can extract oil from sand, for instance, with innovative processes. We can move entire mountains with cutting-edge equipment to get to the gold deposits beneath them. And as people gain more education and skills, productivity levels have been steadily increasing (and our workloads too).

Still: in such a world and in such a time, nearly a billion people – many of them residing in Africa, Asia-Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean – are deprived of the barest necessities needed to support life, particularly food, water and sanitation, and a roof over one's head.

The stark contrast between these two realities is reflected in various measures of socio-economic inequality. Many of them indicate that the chasms between rich and poor are widening, particularly within countries, whether "developed" or "developing." That eight men (yes, they are all men!) can accumulate and possess as much wealth as half of the global population or 3.5 billion people put together (as per a 2017 Oxfam report) is quite astounding and cannot but raise all sorts of theological, moral, and ethical questions.

Poverty and inequality are critical themes that Christian theology has engaged with for many centuries. Recently, the Peruvian liberation theologian Gustavo Gutiérrez has pointed out that poverty is not simply about material deprivation or living on less than

A group of Oromo Internally Displaced People walk on the dry riverbed near Burka Dare IDP site in Seweyna woreda, Bale Zone, Ethiopia. Photo: Albin Hillert, January 2019

USD 2 per day. Rather, poverty is nothing less than a "degrading force"; it "denigrates human dignity." "To be poor is to be insignificant," he says. It "means an early and unjust death."

Poverty and Climate

Today, however, we cannot talk about poverty and inequality without talking about the other immense challenge confronting our generation: climate change. The several reports of the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) present alarming research: a wake-up call, it is hoped, for our leaders and societies.

The IPCC report reveals that global temperatures have already warmed by 1 degree Celsius from pre-industrial levels; and the effects are already being experienced from powerfully destructive hurricanes in the Caribbean, forest fires in Europe and North America, and water shortages in Africa and many parts of the world. It points out that we are well on track to pass 1.5 degrees Celsius in around 20 years or so. It indicates that crossing this threshold will lead to a 10 cm sea-level rise and will heighten the risk of reaching tipping points, such as the melting of polar caps and therefore multi-metre sea-level rise that would inundate low-lying islands and many coastal cities. The interrelated threats of drought, famine, displacement, conflict, and species extinction will also increase with a half degree rise from 1.5 C to 2 C – the less ambitious target governments agreed to in Paris in 2015.

The IPCC report reiterates that our sisters and brothers subsisting in poverty and deprivation and experiencing vulnerabilities and disadvantages will continue disproportionately to feel the impacts of climate change, including through the erosion of livelihoods, escalating food prices, water insecurity, and massive displacement – though they contributed least to global greenhouse gas emissions that cause warming. As a 2013 World Council of Churches statement puts it: "Victims of climate change are the new face of the poor, the widow and the stranger that are especially loved and cared for by God (Deut. 10:17-18)." In other words, climate change is not only aggravating poverty, it may very well entrench it as communities are locked into build and rebuild cycles with ever-decreasing means and resources.

Roots of Poverty, Inequality, and Climate Change

Theological perspectives on poverty are of course varied, and it is not my intention to summarize them here. Still, there is, I think, greater recognition in the theological debates of the last century that poverty is *not* an outcome of fate or laziness or lack of faith in God. Progressive reflections point to poverty's rootedness in structural injustices or dysfunctional economic systems that privilege a few while marginalizing many oth-

Tens of thousands of people march through New York City, demanding climate justice. Photo: Simon Chambers/ACT, September 2019

"This foremost biblical commandment 'to love' continues to be the very foundation for Christian engagement in key issues of poverty, inequality, and climate change."

ers. Oxfam notes, in their recent report, that the world's 2000 plus billionaires saw their wealth surge by USD 762 billion – a figure that is enough to banish extreme hunger and poverty seven times over! Indeed "poverty is not inevitable," Gustavo Gutiérrez observes (neither, one may add, are the worst consequences of climate change . . . if we act *now*). Like climate change, poverty is "human-induced" and can be undone. Redistributive measures, for example, can make considerable headway in combating it.

More broadly, it is clear that tackling poverty entails tackling inequality and climate change; and addressing climate change also entails addressing poverty and inequality (there is admittedly some symmetrical beauty to this). For instance, Andrew Bradstock (2009), the public theologian from New Zealand, points out that reducing inequality is vital to our efforts to safeguard our increasingly fragile ecological systems. Many of our governments are promoting consumption-driven economic growth. But "the reason we buy things is less because we need them than that growing inequality has put pressure on us to maintain standards relative to others. Contentment has less to do with actual wealth than relative wealth, a factor which explains why we continue to pursue economic growth despite its apparent lack of benefits."

In this vein, the economist Jason Hickel from South Africa underlines that interrogating and uncovering the myths of economic growth as a pathway to development and of consumption as a means to attaining genuine happiness are critical steps to combating the existential problems of poverty and climate change. This is particularly relevant for those of us in the ecumenical movement. For questions of whether economic expansion ought to be a goal in and of itself and of things and money as sources of happiness are again deeply theological, moral, and ethical. One of the key tasks before us then as churches, Christians, and people of faith is to examine and criticize these perspectives according to our scriptural teachings and spiritual values – unceasingly and in as many platforms as possible.

Responding with Love and Justice

As Christians we are called to love God with all our hearts and to love our neighbour as we love ourselves (Matt. 22:24-30); and a 2013 WCC statement on ecological debt and eco-justice further challenges us to "expand the boundaries of who are neighbours are" to embrace all of God's wondrous creation. This foremost biblical commandment "to love" continues to be the very foundation for Christian engagement in key issues of poverty, inequality, and climate change. Acting in love means acting in justice. Or as the American theologian Paul Tillich beautifully put it:

> Love does not do more than justice demands, but love is the ultimate principle of justice.
> Love reunites; justice preserves what is to be united.
> It is the form in which and through which love performs its work.

> Love is formless without justice.
> Justice is thus driven by love, gives form to it.
> Love does not come after justice but permeates it.
> Love and justice are ontologically united.
> The test of love, therefore, is whether justice is achieved –
> justice is the sign of love in the relation of being with being. That is to say:
> if there is justice, then there must be love; if there is love, then there must be justice.[1]

The question then is: How do we live in loving and just relations with our sisters and brothers, especially those in need and poverty, and with all of creation? This entails nothing less than deep solidarity, affirmed in the WCC document *An Economy of Life:*

> Deep solidarity is an essential part of our baptismal experience. For those of us living in locations of power and privilege – through class, gender, race, caste, et cetera – it is a spiritual and political expression through which we immerse ourselves in communities who struggle for life in the midst of the "impossibility of life" and then act together with, not simply for, our sisters and brothers . . . We demonstrate such a witness by living in a spirit of repentance [and] reparation.[2]

Friends, if we are to banish poverty in our world, if we are to live sustainably, God invites us to build a different kind of economy – an Economy of Life – where we, as human beings, celebrate the sacred gift of life; where we tend the earth that sustains us with love and respect for all creation; and where all of us, sisters and brothers, jointly develop systems of sharing and enjoy the basic necessities of life.

AFYA
YANGU.
UTAJIRI
Wangu
EN TO ACCES

Chapter 6

Human Rights and Human Wrongs

December 10, 2018, marked the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights – the day in 1948 when the newly created General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the first global proclamation of the inalienable human rights to which all persons should be entitled.

The World Council of Churches, through its Commission of the Churches on International Affairs, participated in the drafting of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, in particular through contributing to the text in Article 18 on freedom of thought, conscience, and religion. Over the last 70 years, the WCC has remained active in advocating for the implementation of both the Declaration and the body of international human rights law which has been developed in the ensuing years.

Certainly, considerable progress has been made for human rights since that historic day. The rights enshrined in the Declaration were incorporated into the two International Covenants in 1966, creating legal obligations in those states which adopted them into their national laws. Following this, the drafting of seven further key Conventions and additional supporting treaties has helped to focus attention on particular categories of rights holders, including women, children, and people with disabilities.

It is important to reflect on the progress made in 70 years. War crimes and crimes against humanity can now be prosecuted following the creation of international tribunals, and the establishment of the Human Rights Council and its monitoring mechanism, the Universal Periodic Review, have increased the transparency of human rights accountability. Rights to development were given a boost by the Millennium Development Goals and their successors in the Sustainable Development Goals, in 2000 and 2015 respectively, resulting in a decline in preventable infant mortality and great improvements toward gender equality in education.

More than 500 people – school children alongside faith leaders – gather on the streets of Nairobi, Kenya, to commemorate the Day of the African Child and to speak up publicly for the rights of children and adolescents living with HIV. Photo: Albin Hillert/WCC, June 2017

The Ongoing Challenge

Yet the gains and progress we have achieved in 70 years remain fragile. Greed and inequality, manifested through racism, discrimination, and a shocking disregard for the protection of our natural environment, are rampant. Despite the grand promises of governments and the legal obligations they have committed themselves to, millions of people in all corners of the world continue to experience violations of their human rights on a daily basis. Discrimination against people on the basis of their gender, age, ethnicity, disability, or religious belief leads to violence, displacement, and denial of such basic needs as the right to food, clean water, health care and sanitation, and in many situations such discrimination is carried out with complete impunity.

As both the World Council of Churches and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights have marked 70 years, we also acknowledge that the aspiration of equality - that the rights of the Declaration be applied to "all members of the human family" and that they were "equal rights of men and women" – is still far from being realized.

For the WCC itself, it was only after 40 years of hard work and leadership by women – and men - in the WCC that the Decade of the Churches in Solidarity with Women was launched in 1988. For the global community, we are reminded in the Sustainable Development Goals that gender equality in all sectors is still far from being reached.

This is nowhere more apparent than in the levels of violence and abuse perpetrated against women and girls. The deafening conspiracy of silence around sexual and gender-based violence is one of the most serious obstacles to the vision of a just community. We know that it is a reality everywhere.

The 2018 Nobel Peace Prize awarded to Denis Mukwege and Nadia Murad is an important – and long overdue – high-profile acknowledgment of the extent to which sexual violence is used as a weapon of war. Such an award is an encouragement for all to do more to end sexual violence in war and conflict. But we are also called to pursue an end to gender-based violence at all levels.

How do we overcome the persistent, stubborn realities of prejudice and discrimination based on gender or race or ethnicity, sexual orientation or class? Ultimately such change requires a deep transformation of values. Religion remains the single most influential factor in the values of most people around the world. To nurture change at the deepest level, therefore, we believe we must enlist the power of religion and religious commitment in the service of human dignity and human rights.

One concrete example of how this transvaluation of values can happen is through interreligious education for peace.

Young pilgrims reflect on the meaning of 'A Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace' as part of the WCC 70th anniversary celebrations. Photo: Albin Hillert/WCC, August 2018

"As Christians we seek peace, and we educate our people to seek peace . . ."

Education for Peace in a Multi-Religious World

The question of how faith communities can educate for peace in a world torn by war and conflict is most pressing in today's world. It is imperative that leaders of religious communities of various kinds recognize that one of the most solemn tasks laid upon them is to pass on a vision for the pursuit of peace to those they lead, those they teach, those whose imaginations they shape and whose consciences they help to form. Faith communities as communities of edification at various levels – formal, informal, religious and secular – have a definite role in this. What are the motivations and means for us to capitalize on the constant opportunities for religious communities to teach their members how to be peacemakers?

As Christians we seek peace, and we educate our people to seek peace, because to do so is a clear expression of our obedience to the call of Christ to love God and to love our neighbor as ourselves. One of the many manifestations of this love-motivated activity of Christians in and for the sake of the wider world is to seek peace.

Inclusivity is one of the most important principles to reshape education. For Christians, the theological foundation that human beings are created in the image and likeness of God (cf. Genesis 1:27) is at the core of this principle of inclusivity and should shape educational methodologies and practice. Flowing from this principle are two practical implications – namely to make education *accessible* as well as *affirmative*. We have the responsibility to uphold the right of all children, for example irrespective of their gender, to an education that will equip them to make a meaningful contribution to our world today.

This has been foregrounded in the setting up of several Christian educational institutions across the world in the most remote places and among the most marginalized communities. It is also important that opportunities for education not be limited on the basis of gender. That would widen the asymmetries which exist between genders today and constitute a major cause for conflicts and injustice in the future.

Education needs to become an inclusive process, affirming especially the roles of women and children. Education for peace should also have an affirmative dimension where one's perception and understanding of the other should lead to mutual flourishing. A positive vision of human beings who are different from us in ethnicity or religion needs to be nurtured. In contexts where a majority religious community controls the educational system, any inadequate and inaccurate representations of the "other" needs to be avoided in order to avoid distorted attitudes toward them.

The WCC in collaboration with the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue has been involved in producing a document on education for peace in a multi-religious world. This document emphasizes:

> Educational systems need to offer opportunities for encouraging the plurality of society and for enabling effective

> encounter among different groups and communities. Families in which members come from different religious, ethnic, geographical or cultural backgrounds have particular challenges to meet and unique opportunities to offer. *Educational programmes* must be directed to the integral development of the human person and to the strengthening of *respect* for human rights and fundamental *freedoms, including* the right to *freedom of religion*.[1]

As part of an interreligious contribution to education for peace, there are some efforts that communities of faith can undertake together. The "Education for Peace" document has helpfully identified a few possibilities, including implementing effective models of education for peace at the local level, where possible interreligiously, as part of a process of building inclusive communities. Other joint efforts can include developing educational resources and curricula that focus not only on the promotion of knowledge but also on developing skills along with good will to translate them into concrete action and behavioural practice. Faith communities need to work toward enhancing the capacity for behavioural change.

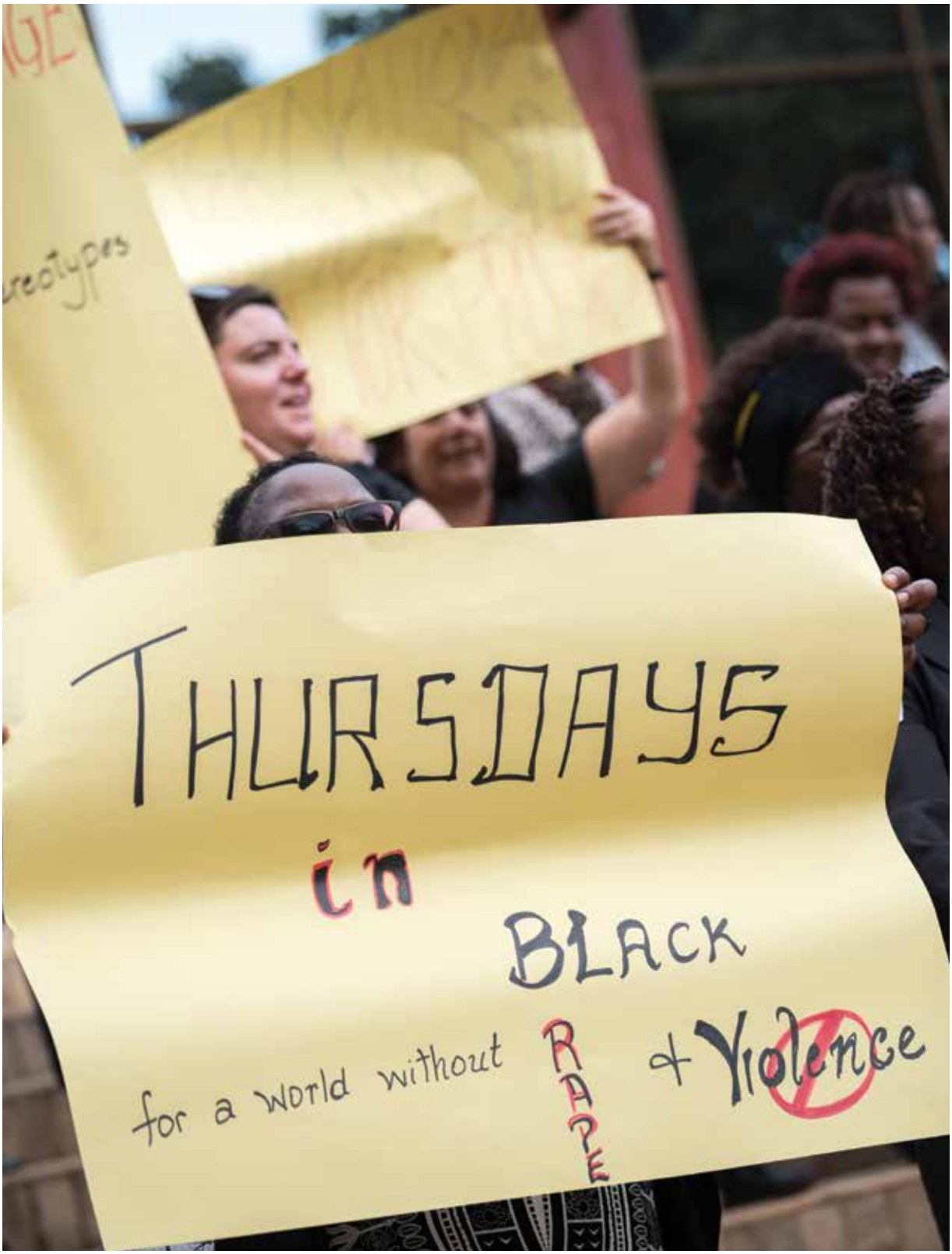
At the institutional level, there is need for faith communities to challenge governments to shape education as a means to strengthen fundamental human rights and safeguard the dignity of all, dispelling injustice and discrimination, respecting legitimate differences, and enabling greater openness to others.

The Horizon of Justice

In this and other arenas where human dignity and human rights are at stake, the World Council of Churches will continue to raise its voice to speak out for those who cannot speak for themselves and to amplify the voices of those who can. We will name violations and violators, and call upon them to respect the laws to which they have agreed to be bound.

In the language of the Universal Declaration, we must make the right to life, liberty and security of every person a reality. In the language of our faith, we must make our pilgrimage toward justice and peace a time of transformation for all in our communities.

Seventy years on, in action and advocacy, education and service, the World Council of Churches remains committed to affirming and upholding the dignity of every person and to working with our member churches, ecumenical partners, the United Nations and its agencies, and all people of good will to implement the ideals of the Universal Declaration.


THURSDAYS
in
BLACK
for a world without
RACE
+ Violence

Chapter 7

Gender Justice and the Churches

The Vital Element in the Churches' Journey toward Justice and Peace

As we observe the 20th anniversary of the Ecumenical Decade of the Churches in Solidarity with Women, 1988-1998, we pause on this long, inspiring yet often arduous pilgrimage toward gender justice to acknowledge the courage, faith, and achievements of these pioneers of a fully inclusive ecumenical movement. We owe them so much.

Yet this gathering of intergenerational women and men from WCC member churches and their theological institutions and ecumenical partners is not only about celebrating the past. It is also an invitation for us to shape together the future vision for a just community of women and men and to further develop the strategies for how we can promote that together.

So with pride and joy – yet also profound hope – we welcome you to the next chapter in this story, or the next leg in this pilgrimage.

The conjunction of this anniversary with the 70th anniversary of the WCC and in the context of our Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace is itself auspicious. It reminds us, first, that it was only after 40 years of hard work and leadership by women – and men - in the WCC that the Decade of Solidarity was launched. Second, the theological, spiritual, social, advocacy, and diplomatic tools we still employ in our pilgrimage and programmatic work today were crafted and used with important results in the Decade. And, third, the Decade reminds us how long the arc of progress is. The long journey of the churches on this crucial issue of the inclusion and dignity of women in their lives has given us a key measure of authenticity and accountability not only as churches but also as Christians, indeed as humans. But it is not finished. Gender justice is a key focus

A group of women bear witness, delivering a message from the women of the Conference on World Mission and Evangelism in Arusha, Tanzania. Photo: Albin Hillert/WCC, March 2018.

and criterion of our ongoing pilgrimage toward justice and peace for all.

In the language of the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace, I would like briefly to evoke how commemorating the Decade allows us to celebrate its gifts, name or visit the wounds it addressed, and further develop tools for transformation toward a just community for all of us, women and men, and in all other aspects of our identity and diversity.

Remembering the Gifts

Christian commitment as disciples of Jesus has always been animated through memory and testimony, for example through the stories of biblical women like Ruth, Hannah, Mary the mother of Jesus, the Samaritan woman, Mary Magdalene, and many other women. We also have the many stories from the history of the churches of women who have been examples of discipleship through their words and their work. We also have in our personal life stories and names of many women who have given us formation and leadership.

In the ecumenical movement, we rejoice with women who walked through the doors when God opened them. Through them we know that our calling is not confined by who or what we are but rather by how God calls us within our context, embracing our experience and inspiring our perspectives. They envisioned their participation in terms of solidarity of a global community of women and men, allowed their hearts of compassion to burst into action, embodying their biblical foremothers, even long before the Decade.

Their stories still challenge us, reminding us to listen and hear differently, to choose new directions, or to notice new resources that God has placed in front of us. One of them was Suzanne de Dietrich, who led the work on Bible studies in the WCC since before the First Assembly and for many, many years through her role in the Bossey Insititute.

We want also to celebrate the women who have held WCC programmatic responsibilities, starting from 1953, when the Cooperation of Men and Women was born. Madeleine Barot, Brigalia Bam, Bärbel Wartenberg-Potter, Anna Karin Hammar, Aruna Gnanadason, and Fulata Mbano Moyo have carried the WCC mantle of coordinating the process of building the just community of women and men in close collaboration with member churches, theological institutions, and women's theological and advocacy networks all over the world. Through the collaborative work of these women and men, it eventually became clear that the WCC could not address gender justice without taking an intersectional approach to other issues of justice, addressing economic and racial justice, environmental issues, health and healing, and the work for just peace in all its dimensions.

I want particularly to thank those women from the WCC who have worked so hard in recent years to give visibility to women's leadership in the council and the WCC's work toward a just community. The WCC has witnessed and directly benefited from the growing number of women

in leadership positions in the churches, theological institutions, WCC staff, and governing bodies.

The Decade came at a crucial time theologically as well. One of the great achievements of the ecumenical presence and work of women was encouraging the impulse to retrieve the long-lost or neglected histories of women in the church, along with their theological and spiritual works. In turn, we saw the Decade bring to the churches the critical insights of feminist theology, relevant for many discourses in theology. This work continues to challenge and renew theology, in theological anthropology, of course, but also in the richer understanding of God, also how this is expressed in liturgy and spirituality.

We also need to celebrate the contributions to our understanding of the issues that we have received through international organizations like the United Nations' international year of women in 1975, which led to the international decade of women (1976-1985), and the Beijing Women's World Conference in 1995, then later to the Millennium Development Goals, and the current Sustainable Development Goals agenda 2030. These UN processes have direct and indirect impact on our ecumenical journey together, especially for the meaningful participation of women (and men) in work against discrimination against women in societies at large – but also in the churches themselves. It is notable that when WCC member churches were not significantly affected by the UN international decade of women, the Methodist Bishop Rogers Uwadi of Nigeria boldly called for the WCC central committee of 1985 to sponsor a similar decade.

Another of the gifts of the ecumenical Decade was the solidarity of women with each other. Through storytelling as a pedagogical methodology, the WCC discovered women's agency in addressing political violence, which exposed the use of rape as a weapon of war. It also inspired the need for women-to-women solidarity visits as well as Living Letters visits, which included men as well. It is the women-to-women solidarity visits that actually opened women's eyes to acknowledge the existing women's movements and agency in responding to violence.

Toward a Just Community

You are invited to reflect on where we have come but also the ways forward toward a just community of women and men in the churches, for the sake of our fellowship of churches, but also as a strong contribution to the human family and the one world in which we live and where we have to live together with justice and peace. For that to happen, we need new and strong expressions of faith, hope, and love.

We also have to acknowledge the reality of destructive forces and discrimination that continue to challenge our walking, praying, and working together.

Addressing the wounds of exclusion on the basis of gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, disability, and age has been part of the ecumenical journey. It is about "visiting the wounds," and accompanying one another into transformation.

The deafening conspiracy of silence around sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) suffered especially by children and women is one of the most serious obstacles to the vision of a just community. We know that it is a reality everywhere. It is particularly hurting to know that it happens also in Christian homes, church-related institutions, churches and ecumenical bodies (which was acknowledged at the end of the Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women). This remains a great wound in the body of Christ. This scandal begs for urgent and honest acts of repentance because otherwise it undermines the integrity of our Christian witness.

Also within the context of HIV and AIDS, sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) has been identified as a major determinant of HIV infections as well as a key hindrance to treatment, care, and support. Moreover, rape can result in unwanted pregnancies. Needless to say, sexual and gender-based violence is a major cause of trauma and severe mental illness, which may even lead to death, often through suicide. Moreover, research has shown that unattended trauma contributes to a vicious cycle of violence that keeps paralyzing the church and society at large.

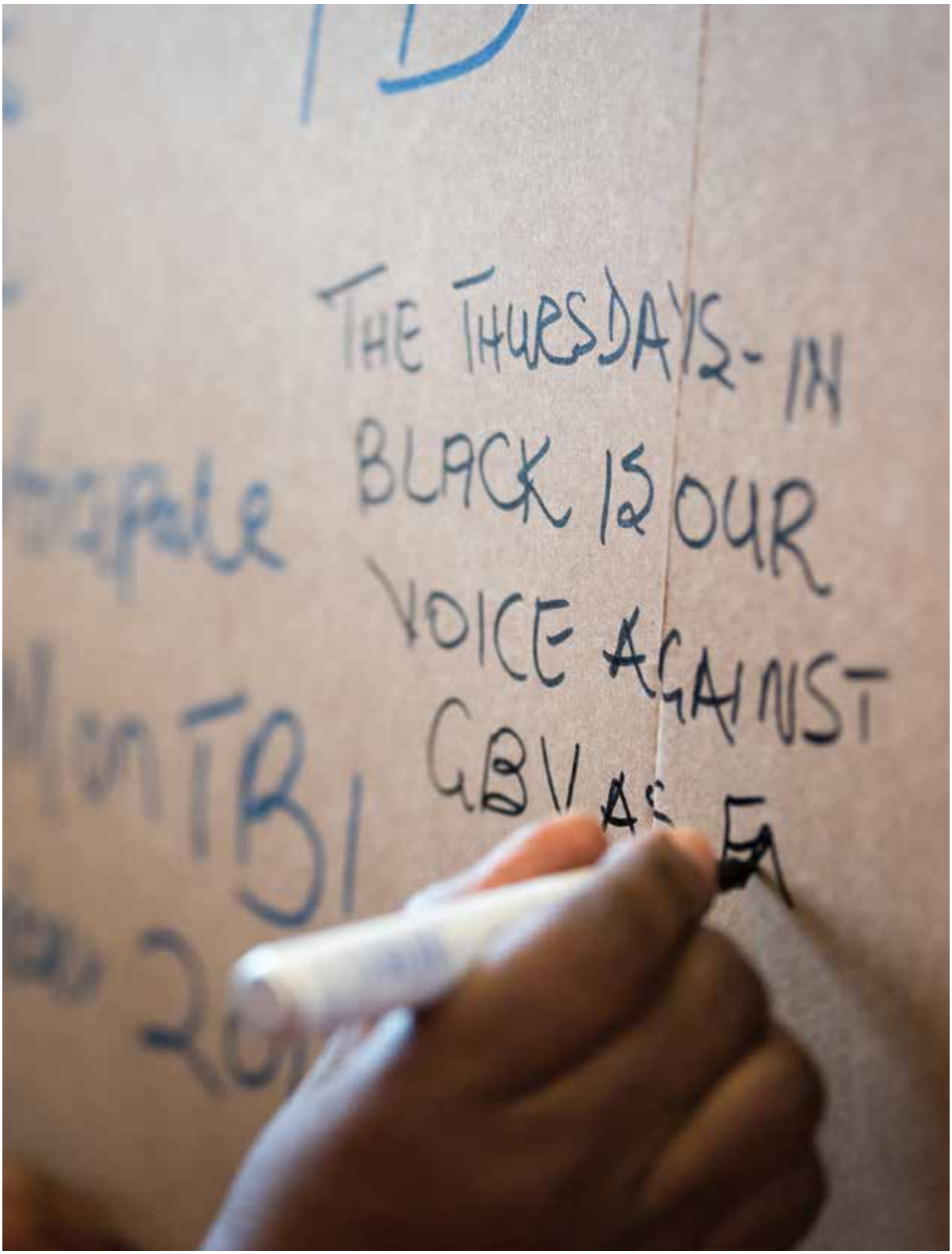
Unfortunately, there are several identified enablers and/or justifications for the culture of SGBV in the church and society. Certain readings and interpretation of scriptures, religious teachings, and cultural practices have been used as impediments to dealing with SGBV. New studies and research have contributed to the unveiling of toxic masculinities and femininities, which beg for transformation.

The renewal of the "Thursdays in Black" campaign has really brought a lot of new dimensions to our common understanding and commitments to make a difference. I am encouraged to see how many women and particularly how many men in leadership roles in the churches have taken pictures of themselves and together to show this commitment. We have the responsibility to carry on the work of transformation and put into practice what has already has been affirmed and envisioned. The WCC has acknowledged women's agency and spirituality of resilience, resistance, and transformation by adopting, mobilizing and launching Thursdays in Black: Towards a World without Rape and Violence, an ecumenical product of the Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women. Now it is time to manifest this again as a campaign that also leads to actions beyond the important symbols.

The task of restoring human dignity to those who have been violated goes beyond this campaign to holistically embrace the ways in which culture, religion, and scriptures are read and interpreted. For example, in addressing sexual and gender-based violence through the Decade to Overcome Violence and the process of addressing HIV

A woman holds a globe in the palm of her hands. Photo: Albin Hillert/WCC, September 2018

"We have the responsibility to carry on the work of transformation and put into practice what has already has been affirmed and envisioned."


THE THURSDAYS- IN
BLACK IS OUR
VOICE AGAINST
GBV AS

and AIDS, the vulnerable and marginalized have been able to find hope through the contextual reading and community-based interpretation of the Bible. This methodology has allowed women and men to interrogate femininities and masculinities in different religious and cultural contexts in their search for life-affirming theologies and ethics.

Memory, testimony, discernment, prayer, empathy, nurturance, resilience, solidarity, creativity, and resolve: these are the legacy not solely of the Decade but, through it, of the whole commitment to church renewal and world transformation that we call the ecumenical movement. They are the tools of love. They are also the tools for your work and the work of the churches, divining a future path toward gender justice in the churches and beyond.

Yours is sacred work. As the women who witnessed to the resurrection of Jesus – "I have seen the Lord!" – lifted the sights of Jesus' discouraged followers, may our work together inspire and embolden today's Christians and Christian churches to renew their lives and practices into genuinely just communities of women and men, eager to walk in the ways of Jesus toward abundant – and just – life for all.

"Thursdays in Black is our voice against gender-based violence as faith communities," writes a woman after morning prayer in the Interfaith Networking Zone at AIDS 2018 in Amsterdam. Photo: Albin Hillert/WCC, July 2018

Chapter 8

Ending Violence against Children

Over the last five years, we at the World Council of Churches have partnered with UNICEF to promote children's rights in a way that reflects our unique position as a global ecumenical fellowship of 345 churches with ties to half a billion grassroots Christians around the world. The WCC-UNICEF partnership led to development of "Churches' Commitments to Children,"[1] a joint action plan supporting churches in their engagements for *child protection, child participation*, and *climate justice initiatives* for and with children.

When I asked the WCC member churches in 2017 to consider joint efforts through the "Churches' Commitment to Children," we witnessed immediately a strong willingness of churches to unite for children and join hands with secular partners to translate the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) into effective action on the ground. We shared more than 100 effective tools and strategies to strengthen the work for children.

A network of over 400 influential supporters, ranging from church leaders to Nobel Prize winners and activists at the grassroots level, are now collaborating around the action plan, using their influence to advance the three main objectives of our joint WCC-UNICEF programme. In light of the 30th anniversary of the Convention, I have also called upon our executive committee to lift up throughout church communities around the world the rights of children.

Let me offer examples of steps taken by churches to promote child rights, in each of these three areas of engagement:

1. Activities of churches promoting *children's right to be protected* range from shelters, such as the "Obra Ecumenica Barrio Borro"

Children from the Greek schools in Geneva and Lausanne watch a puppet show together with the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I on the occasion of 2018 World Children's Day, and in recognition of the World Council of Churches' 70th anniversary. UNICEF and WCC convened a number of WCC member churches and common partners to celebrate the UNICEF-WCC global partnership and to take stock of the many achievements of the Churches' Commitments to Children. Photo: Albin Hillert/WCC, November 2018

"Children exhibit such optimism and growth yet also such vulnerability to violence. They carry some of the heaviest burdens of human conflicts. They need a reconciled world. We can help."

in Uruguay, where adolescent victims of trafficking receive vocational training, to campaigns to end corporal punishment, such as the petitions and theological studies of the Anglican Church in Canada to prohibit violent disciplining, and sermons which educate communities on ways in which the CRC comports with messages of the Bible. Such a campaign in Nigeria recently reached up to 40 million people.

As a pre-condition for any activities related to children, every church must have a solid child safeguarding policy and verify that measures are in place to prevent any misconduct in activities involving children and adolescents. I speak here not only about prevention of grave crimes, such as sexual abuse of children, but the whole range of mistreatment of children.

The WCC's child safeguarding policy and related tools now serve as a model for member churches. We collaborate closely with the National Council of Churches in Australia in in-depth training for staff and volunteers working with children, to be made available to churches in other parts of the world. In Indonesia and in Jamaica, the WCC supported National Councils of Churches in expanding child safeguarding measures across the country, and collaborating around the INSPIRE strategy in actions to end violence against children in society at large. This strategy has been developed through the global initiative called "End Violence against Children," which includes many significant partners (including UNICEF) and for which I have had the privilege of serving on the board.

Because it is essential that children can speak out in confidential settings when they suffer injustices or need advice on a situation, steps are now also undertaken to promote awareness about the toll-free child help-lines through church facilities in Tanzania, India and the Philippines, with support from the "Out of the Shadows" index and fund.

2. Child Protection also implies creating an environment in which children are taken seriously, are encouraged to express themselves, ask questions, and share concerns. As part of the "Churches' Commitments to Children" action plan on *child and youth participation,* the WCC trains churches on how to include children's voices in alternative reports to the UN Committee on the Child and the Universal Periodic Review. As a result, for example, a 15-year-old girl named Peace from Nigeria has recently shared at the UN Human Rights Council her account of the violence experienced by her peers and proposed solutions, based on a child-led WCC coordinated report.

In steps undertaken by the Protestant church in Argentina, young people from slums were given media training, to discuss national and international news from various sources and produce short videos in which the teenagers express their views on

Two young girls walk through the Minawao camp for Nigerian refugees, located in the Far North region of Cameroon. Photo: Albin Hillert/LWF, May 2019

community and world events and propose ideas on how to address key challenges for a better future.

For the engagement of younger children, the Protestant Church in Geneva developed with us a special puppet theatre play for Sunday schools, explaining child rights to 4-8 year old children and telling them how churches support refugee children and undertake initiatives to protect the planet with and for children.

3. Regrettably, we see today an increase of child rights violations due to consequences of the climate emergency worldwide. Therefore, in the future the "Churches' Commitments to Children" initiative will accelerate efforts to address the root causes of child rights violations and to promote strong *measures to address the climate emergency*.

We have just been granted the Keeling Curve Prize to support churches' efforts for child rights through climate justice, through the WCC-UNICEF partnership. Through the network of church-run schools, Sunday schools, and summer camps we are supporting the initiatives of young people to influence decisions that affect their future.

"Children exhibit such optimism and growth yet also such vulnerability to violence. They carry some of the heaviest burdens of human conflicts. They need a reconciled world. We can help."

And we look forward to collaborating with many of you in doing what the children and teenagers in the climate marches are demanding from adults: changing the systems which cause climate change and environmental deterioration. This includes changing our financial systems and consumer behaviors which are not compatible with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, divesting from fossil fuels, measuring our ecological footprints, and even addressing eco-anxiety, which is spreading among children and adolescents as a serious form of psychological violence.

One of our ambitious objectives for 2020 for the "Churches' Commitments to Children" is that 50 percent of the WCC's constituency should have eco-friendly systems (including banking and pension funds arrangements) and have activities in place that build the capacity of young people to act as climate activists and to measure the footprint of their community and institutions.

Children exhibit such optimism and growth yet also such vulnerability to violence. They carry some of the heaviest burdens of human conflicts. They need a reconciled world. They should have in a particular way the right to hope.[2] We can help.

Rev. Tekle Ayele of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus blesses the congregation's children as they gather around the altar. Photo: Albin Hillert/LWF, October 2019

Chapter 9

Our Journey with Migrants and Refugees: Responding to Racism and Xenophobia

Today's churches face a demanding task, a call from God coming to us through excluded peoples of today, especially the estimated 70 million migrants and refugees on the move. Together we must address fear of the other, the expressions of that fear, the political use or abuse of fear. It is human to feel fear and anxiety. It is a natural response to protect ourselves and those we love. Yet fear can be used to divide and to polarize and to create more fear.

I believe that churches are called to confront together the destructive forces of xenophobia, racism, and populist, exclusive nationalism. These are just three layers in the same wall that divides us as human beings, expressing closed identities and neglecting the right and the dignity of the other: "us" against "them," "our security" against their vulnerability, "our wealth" against their right to life and livelihood. All these sentiments are deeply rooted in fear.[1]

Yet we stand for an alternative way, the way of inclusive love. As Christians, we share a passion and love for all human beings. We have a call from Christ to protect human dignity. As a Christian, I must take action to support the most vulnerable in the world. Among the most vulnerable today are refugees all over the world, fleeing conflict and violence, trying to find a new home, a safe space.

I still remember first learning about the situation of refugees in the world today. It was through media reporting on the refugees from Hungary, fleeing for their lives to find a new home. The words *fear* and *fleeing* had a very strong impact on me. Someone fleeing from fear – that's the strongest memory. Every time I hear about the refugees' situation, I think about their fear for their lives. The main role of the churches is to speak up for the refugees and make space for them – to integrate them in their new

Syrian refugees walk in the countryside outside Messstetten, Germany. They have applied for asylum in Germany and are awaiting word on the government's decision. Meanwhile, they live in a room in a former army barracks in Messstetten, where church groups and other community members have provided a hospitality. Photo: Paul Jeffrey, October 2015

"We stand for an alternative way, the way of inclusive love."

communities, to work beyond the boundaries. We have seen many good, concrete examples of this work, like the Mediterranean Hope in Italy, France, and Belgium.

Let the Church Be the Church

"Perfect love casts out fear" says the Bible (1 John 4:18). This is a strong and courageous statement; and it is true. This is another basic human experience. It should be the message of the church: "God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them" (1 John 4:16). So let the church be the church. Let us stand for neighbour love and justice, for strong relationships of mutual support, for unity in the diversity of humankind. Let us be ambassadors of the love of Christ working for healing and reconciliation in this world torn apart not only by fear, but selfish greed and hatred. Let us nurture hope for a common future without fear of the other.

The love of Christ is far more than emotions. It fosters renewal of relationships between God and the world and among all of us broken by the consequences of sin that undermine life. Christian discipleship moved by love comes with responsibility for the other and accountability to family, to other people, to all creatures of God. Christ challenged his disciples to extend their realm of responsibility and accountability beyond any border – including even enemies.

The love of Christ includes the obligation to affirm the life and livelihoods of people and not to create the disasters of violence and war that force people to flee and to migrate, as happened in Libya and continues in the Middle East. The love of Christ requires us not to succumb to racism but to resist exclusion based on fear, the fear that fuels xenophobia and exclusive nationalism.

The WCC sees all this movement toward renewal of the human community in the perspective of our journey of faith, a Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace that looks for signs of the presence of God in this world. We have come to describe this pilgrimage as a movement of the love of Christ for people and the earth. This love has animated and energized Christians to journey in faith together, to overcome their historic divisions, to support human rights, and to reach out in love.

The message of love, of unity in diversity, of healing and salvation, of hospitality and solidarity with all who are in need is more urgent today than ever:

- We must help millions of migrants and refugees to secure their safety and to integrate them into new homes;
- We must heal societies that are deeply divided by xenophobia, racism, and hatred;
- We must ensure that women and children are always and everywhere protected against abuse and are treated with dignity;
- We must become authentic communities as churches, defending human

Archbishop Antje Jackelén of the Church of Sweden (right) greets Azra Said and her baby Jaynar in the Ashti camp for displaced persons in Ankawa, in the Kurdistan region of northern Iraq. Photo: Paul Jeffrey/WCC, January 2017

rights and being accountable in our faith, especially to the most vulnerable and marginalized;
– We must address and overcome the destructive consequences of sinful economic structures and greed and care for our common home.

I believe that the starting point for our reflections on migration is not the "otherness of the other" as stranger, but the sense of mutual belonging to the one body of Christ and – in the wider circle – to one human family. Migrants and refugees, as subjects of their destiny, encourage us to take a pro-active stance toward the transformation of our societies so that they are safe places for diverse people, places where hope is nurtured and not fear. We will not allow the divisive forces of xenophobia, racism, and nationalist populism to prevail, but are ready to struggle for the consciousness of all people affected by them.

The Inclusive Community of Love

The existential context of migration reveals the deeper meaning of community and mutual belonging, encouraging us to stand up for the rights of the other and to share in our common humanity in all its diversity. The dangers we face make us more conscious of our shared humanity, and our solidarity as Christians frees us to serve the one world created by the one God. This is important especially in view of the advent of a new generation whose creativity, openness, and joy can offer fresh energy and ideas to make our earthly home more closely akin to the realm of God and God's justice.

How will this happen? How it always happens: love will find a way.

It is love that will bind us as churches and as Christians to each other and to our neighbours across the street and around the world. Love will free us from distorted values and deep prejudice. Love will see through the falsehoods of racism and tribalism. Love will open us up to learn from criticism and self-criticism of our own complicity. Love will fire our dreams of freedom and peace. Love will unleash new visions, creative thinking, and fresh approaches to our steepest challenges. And love will give us the courage and stamina, the heart and soul, to rescue progress from deep danger, and peace from peril.

Fellow pilgrims on God's Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace, you are – we are – building that ecumenical movement of love, grounded in the one Spirit of Christ, ever eager and alert to journey on together in faith and hope for a better world.

And so this is our task, this is our calling: to create a radically inclusive community of love on the move. Through our solidarity and struggle, through breaking barriers and boundaries, through our work and welcome, let the migrants' journey become our own pilgrimage to a new home, a new hope, and a new future as one humanity created and loved by the one God.

15-year-old Adija braids her mother Didi's hair by their home in the Borgop refugee camp, Cameroon. Photo: Albin Hillert/LWF, June 2019

Chapter 10

Human Fraternity and Interreligious Encounter

Brothers and sisters! That is how we persons of faith from different religious traditions can address each other. That simple greeting sets us all together in the light of God and proclaims to us a beautiful and radical truth, a truth which is both liberating and also very demanding.

A Simple Truth

It is a truth which was also the focus of the historic event in Abu Dhabi in February 2019. It was a very great privilege for me to represent the WCC at that historic meeting at which His Holiness Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of al-Azhar, Dr Ahmad al-Tayyeb, issued their bold declaration about human fraternity.[1] This was an encouraging moment in the long journey on which we as Christians are travelling with members of other religious communities – a journey toward greater recognition of our shared humanity and of our call to work together for the common good.

The Abu Dhabi declaration reminds us of the truth that we are all members of the *one human family*. As human beings we are related, as sisters and brothers. This simple truth is liberating: it sets us free from all kinds of lies that have divided and enslaved human beings over the ages. This truth is also very demanding: it calls us to leave behind often deeply engrained patterns of thinking about others and to live in new ways as a human family.

That sounds straightforward – to live together as a human family. But, of course, in every family, there are differences. In every family, there are challenges. Some challenges relate to how we handle those differences. But in every family there is – or should be – something that can make us feel at home, something that can make us feel protected and supported, something that can keep us together and help us overcome problems and failures. And that is *love*. With love, life in a family is a blessing;

Canon Gideon Byamugisha, the first religious leader in Africa to publicly disclose his positive HIV status, reads a prayer at an interfaith service organized by the World Council of Churches – Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance in the Keizersgrachtkerk in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. Photo: Albin Hillert/WCC, July 2018

without love, life in any family is a problem and a burden, which is sadly the experience of far too many. The same is true for the *one human family*. We need to show what we all need: love for one another. And we have to show what that love means in practice. Sometimes we need to learn that we have to love those who are very different from us. Love must express itself in a true search for justice, for peace, and for unity.

As in Abu Dhabi, we come together from different religious traditions to affirm our human fraternity. We will naturally do so in different ways, according to our different convictions. Speaking for the WCC, I can say that we base our commitment to human fraternity on the fundamental Christian conviction, found in the first chapter of the Bible, that every single person, of whatever religion or none, has been created in the image of God. To look upon all our fellow human beings in that light is a great inspiration as we continue on the often challenging path toward greater justice and peace throughout God's world, for all the human family.

But the opening chapters of the Bible are also very frank about our human failure to honour the divine image in one another. In the story of Cain and Abel, one brother murders another and cynically asks: "Am I my brother's keeper?" This story corresponds closely with the current realities of our world, and shows how easily and brutally we can destroy the bonds of human fraternity. Christians believe that in our unjust and violent world the way forward is in the love of God manifested to us in Jesus Christ. Jesus comes among us as brother to us all. He invites us both to call God "Father" and so also to regard all people as beloved sisters and brothers.

Strengthening the Bonds of Fraternity

Recognizing both our high calling and also our failures, we in the WCC seek in our varied activities to witness to the love of God, which bestows dignity upon all people, and so to find practical ways of living out our commitment to human fraternity in the world today. Let me mention just a few ways in which we seek to do this.

The current motto of the WCC is that we are together on a Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace. This year we particularly focus on how to combat *racism*, which perhaps more than anything else directly opposes justice and peace and undermines human fraternity. Even though the concept of "race" is a construction, often employed to reinforce certain political interests, sometimes even combined with religious perspectives, racism is nevertheless a terrible reality, degrading, excluding and discriminating against countless human beings. Racism is a sin and one of the most dangerous poisons in our lives as the human family. It has deadly consequen-

Three days after a terror attack in central Stockholm, an interreligious service is held to commemorate the victims of violence, and to pray for a future of compassion and peace. Photo: Albin Hillert, April 2017

"'Brothers and sisters!' – That simple greeting sets us all together in the light of God and proclaims to us a beautiful and radical truth."

ces, as we know from the history of the 20th century, particularly in the genocides against Jews and other peoples. At present we are working to learn from our member churches and other partners about the realities around the world of racism, discrimination, and xenophobia and to identify ways of responding. We will make this focus a major theme of our next general assembly, to be held in September 2021. This is one way we are trying to work out in practice what it means truly to love all our human sisters and brothers, and to seek for them the experience of justice and peace in their daily lives that we would also wish for ourselves.

Another field in which the WCC is committed to strengthening the bonds of human fraternity is that of Jewish-Christian relations. I was extremely encouraged by a meeting held between a WCC delegation and representatives of the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations. In view of the painful complexities of Middle Eastern politics, it is no surprise that there have been some disagreements between us and our Jewish partners in recent years. At our meeting, however, we took a step forward, acknowledging our different perspectives but also commiting ourselves to renewed dialogue and cooperation. As we discussed the many troubling manifestations in today's world of the "normalization of hatred," we naturally addressed the recent rise in expressions of antisemitism. WCC's commitment to combatting antisemitism was clearly emphasized: from our foundation in 1948, antisemitism has been denounced by WCC as "sin against God and man." Equally clearly, we stated our commitment to seeking justice and peace for our Palestinian brothers and sisters (which we continue to do, for example in a 2019 statement concerning human rights violations and violence in the West Bank and East Jerusalem). Encouragingly, we and our Jewish partners also committed ourselves to working together on shared projects for the sake of justice and peace in the wider world. We in effect affirmed both our human fraternity as Jews and Christians, and also, in our desire to serve the needs of the wider human family, our fraternity with all the people of the world. Of course, the way ahead may not always be clear or easy. Seeking human fraternity in our divided and complex world is a hard challenge. But this is the path to which we are committed.

In recent months, a very worrying example of the increasing "normalization of hatred" in our world is the disturbingly repetitive pattern of murderous attacks on vulnerable minorities worshipping in their holy places. Repeatedly, we at WCC have raised our voices to condemn these brutal acts and to express our sense of fraternity and solidarity with traumatized and grieving communities, thinking especially of the Jewish community in Pittsburgh, the Muslim community in Christchurch, and the Christian communities of Sri Lanka. But there is a danger that our words of condemnation and solidarity, however sincerely intended, will start to sound routine and hollow unless we are serious about asking ourselves what we can do in response to such horrific events.

In my message in 2019 to Muslims around the world at Eid al-Fitr, I expressed the desire of the WCC to explore with Muslim colleagues and partner organizations what we can do together for the sake of justice and peace, especially in the face of this rising tide of violence against vulnerable communities. We must all strive to keep our hearts open to the suffering of other communities and beware of the temptation to perpetuate narratives of competitive suffering in which our community is always the most victimized. Do we see in the suffering of other communities the suffering of our own sisters and brothers? I was encouraged by the warm response to my message from many Muslim leaders. I also take heart from examples known to me of Muslim-Christian cooperation in a spirit of fraternity in various parts of the world. But of course, there is always much, much more that we could do, together, for the sake of our world.

As I said earlier, the idea that all people are one human family is a simple but beautiful truth, a liberating but also demanding truth. These are indeed challenging times, when it is far from easy to live out the truth that we are one human family. These are times that require of us daring stands and bold actions in the name of God and for the sake of all people. Confronted by racism, antisemitism, unspeakable violence against the vulnerable, all forms of xenophobia, and all other denials of our shared humanity, equally created in the image of God, we must affirm: *Human fraternity is a gift, and also a task, a divine calling.* This is a matter of being truly human, acknowledging one another and behaving as one human family. So may God give to us all the courage to be one human family and to choose the right way – the way of justice and peace, the way of love!

UNITED
KINGDOM
IRELAND
London
Paris
FRANCE
Madrid
SPAIN
Algiers
TUNISIA
ALGERIA

Chapter 11

Globalization and Leadership

New expressions of polarizing populism are leading to greater division in our world and in our societies. We see more tribalism, nationalism, racism, and violence. The root causes of these trends can often be found in the negative effects of economic globalization – or of its radical opposite, economic protectionism, inequality, and exclusion – with more and more people marginalized and left behind, creating ever greater gaps between the rich and the poor. Some of those left behind are vocal and voting, some of them are young and unemployed, many of them live in marginal conditions without any public voice, some of them are homeless.

Appeasing the fear of one group by increasing the fear of another cannot be the solution. These challenges require leadership accountable to the whole and one humanity for the sake of justice and peace for all. Real accountable relationships, not only to owners but also to employees, is a condition for a healthy business. Responsible global leadership today entails a much wider horizon of accountability as an attitude, a self-critical awareness of the negative effects of narrow interest and of excluding so many others from the growth and the development enjoyed by a few. Economic gains must provide the resources for education, jobs, health, and a healthy environment - for all. Taxes are common resources needed for sustainable development of a society, and should not be escaped or avoided. In a wider horizon of mutual accountability to humanity and the future of the one planet Earth, we can find much better solutions together than apart.

Many powerful and prominent women and men participate annually in Davos in the annual meeting of the World Economic Forum. They discuss what responsible global leadership means in our time. This theme, though appropriate to every historical context, seems especially critical now. All leaders in all sectors need to define and

Participants at a workshop at the Ecumenical Centre in Geneva have marked their personal trajectories on a world map, as a way of illustrating how we are all migrants. Photo: Albin Hillert/WCC, February 2019

"These challenges require leadership accountable to the whole and one humanity for the sake of justice and peace for all."

embody leadership based on mutual accountability among them to address the challenges of today and tomorrow. Accountable leadership cannot be built on half-truths or a post-truth approach.

Our Accountability before God and Humanity

It is time for all responsible leaders to address together and with fresh minds what is required of us now, in this time. This also includes religious leaders, who must take the lead in being accountable for our moral and spiritual values to those who have the greatest needs. This is based on our belief that accountability to God means accountability to all those created in the image of God. Let me mention some urgent examples:

It is obvious that we need to address climate change both as a global problem and as a local problem everywhere, through accountability to the shared commitments of Paris 2015 and Marrakesh 2016. This must include accountability to the victims of climate change today and tomorrow. We must never forget that the most vulnerable suffer the most severe effects of greenhouse gas emissions already. Economic development, which we all need, is mutually accountable when it favours sources of energy and methods of production and transportation that are sustainable. This "green shift" is possible. It requires moral motivation, political decisions, new directions in investment and business. This Earth is our one and only home, and that of our children and grandchildren.

Indeed, it is children who frequently suffer the most from economic injustice and new forms of polarization, local conflicts and violence. We acknowledge that religion is sometimes misused to legitimize or justify violence against children, even in their own homes. Children have the right to grow up without violence and in security. Children who do not receive what they need for their development in terms of nutrition, safety, health, education, and loving care are suffering now, and they will carry the wounds for their whole lives. There is no better investment for a world of peace and justice than care and education for all girls and boys. Accountable leaders of all sectors must pay much more attention to the needs of children, as the hope of humanity.

New and different forms of violence and terrorism are appearing in many parts of the world. Violence happens in homes, against women, in communities, against minorities of many kinds, between tribes, communities and nations, by individuals and by groups, and by states in the form of oppression and structural violence or use of weapons. Some of it claims a religious justification. But violence in the name of religion is violence against the true meaning of religion. Religious

Previous spread: Women walk along the road to Mokong, in the Mayo-Tsanaga department, Far North Region, Cameroon. Photo: Albin Hillert/LWF, May 2019

leaders and those who believe and practice their faith must show their accountability and stand together against abuse of religion to directly motivate or indirectly legitimize violence. It is our responsibility as religious leaders today to define how religious faith and practices can lead to more justice and more peace, for all God's creation.

A true leader knows that we need the wisdom of one another, gained through open and even critical dialogue across interests and borders. To commit to a vision of inclusivity and mutual accountability is a challenge for everyone, whatever sector we are in. Nevertheless, this is what it is required of global leadership in our time. We need to promote hope for all, not only for our own interests or those of companies, specific groups, or nations. Otherwise it is not a real hope.

PART THREE

Love Will Find a Way

Chapter 12

You Are the Salt of the Earth

"You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled under foot.

"You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven. –Matthew 5:13–16

On 4 July 1968, Dr Martin Luther King Jr. was supposed to enter the pulpit in Uppsala Cathedral, to preach at the opening service of the 4th Assembly of the World Council of Churches. He never came. On April 4 he was assassinated, for being salt and light in the world, as he was called by our Lord Jesus Christ to be.

"You are the salt of the world . . . You are the light of the world." These are Jesus' words to his followers. In a world of destruction and darkness, in a world of discrimination and hate speech, in a world of violence and death, in a world of evil and sin, these words are our guide and goad.

When things get rotten or tasteless, you are the salt. Where people cannot find their way in the darkness, you are the light. You are there to be the signs of the love of God. You are there to be the signs of the coming kingdom of God.

50 Years after a Milestone Assembly

"Behold, I make all things new." This was the theme that gathered and challenged the participants from around the world as they came to Uppsala in July 1968.[1] The Uppsala assembly became a milestone, even a turning point on that pilgrimage journey.

They saw that hope means to anticipate, which means to participate in the coming reign of God. It led to a renewed commitment to be salt and light in the world – together, to be signs of this new reality. Together as one fellowship of churches, as

A group of young women light candles on the light stand in Uppsala Cathedral, first introduced at the WCC assembly in 1968. Photo: Mikael Stjernberg, November 2018

one ecumenical movement. "The Church is bold in speaking of itself as the sign of the coming unity of mankind," they even said in the report from their assembly.

For the small community of disciples in a world where the emperor was the light and the power, Jesus' words to them might have sounded almost ridiculous. Likewise, the bold words of the assembly in Uppsala might have sounded exaggerated, speaking of the coming unity of humankind when the world in 1968 was divided between East and West in the Cold War, and between South and North due to the centuries-long era of colonization that was only then coming to an end.

What made the church delegates boldly announce this new mandate they had discovered? How were they emboldened to be the sign of the unity of all created in the image of God – black and white, rich and poor, from all continents, women and men? What made them so bold as to be salt and light in the world together? I think there are several answers, and I will mention three of them:

Saints Tell the Truth in Love

First: Dr Martin Luther King Jr. did not come to the assembly, but it looks like his struggle and his boldness to work for justice were there. The leader of the civil rights movement in the USA was a true witness and prophet of the new things to come, that had to come, but that only would come through hard work and struggle. He proclaimed nonviolent struggle to end racism in legislation, in politics, in practices, in attitudes, in speech, in the media, in the schools. He had become the voice of the growing cries for justice and for peace among the oppressed peoples in many countries in (what we today call) the global south. He won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964. We can well understand that he was invited to give new inspiration and new direction to the churches' understanding of what it meant to be salt and light in the world – and how to be so together. The unity of the church must be a unity in reconciliation, in justice and peace, between all people of any race, gender, land or continent.

The spirit of his work was very much alive in Uppsala in July 1968. He became a martyr for his faith, his dream of a new humanity – according to God's will. He continues to inspire so many around the world today. I am convinced that the martyrdom of Martin Luther King Jr. made the participants in the assembly in 1968 sad but also courageous, even so bold as to see themselves as salt and light, signs of the new unity of humankind. Nothing less.

In the one ecumenical movement we are walking, praying, and working together, also with those who are not members of the WCC. There are different ways of honouring the people who have gone before us and left examples to us. Pope Francis recently canonized another church leader in the Roman Catholic Church who has been an inspiration for people in all churches worldwide in my generation, Archbishop Oscar Arnulfo Romero. He was shot dead

as he celebrated mass before the altar in his church in San Salvador in 1980. He did what he was asked and called to do, being a priest and a bishop for his people who experienced military dictatorship, oppression, violence, injustice, and poverty. In his canonization the virtue of courage was emphasized: The courage to tell the truth in love, the courage to care for the people who need the signs of the kingdom of God, the courage to be salt and light.

We could make the list much longer. Whether we call them saints or not, there are so many people who have been given the grace and the strength and the courage to show us the way. Many of them are unknown to most of us, without names in the history of the church, both women and men. They were human beings like us, not perfect, but real salt and light for our lives. Their names are in God's eternal memory. I know some I could name in my heart who have given me faith, hope, and love. Some are very close to us, some we never met personally. I am sure you can do the same. The communion of saints among us today, which we confess together, is also the communion with those who have gone before us.

Second: However, there was another remarkable dimension to the Uppsala assembly that we should not forget in this respect. There were many young people and young voices there, and they had a lot to say to the church leaders. The photos from the Uppsala cathedral from 1968 are remarkable. The photos in my mind are those of youth representatives as they were carrying posters here in the aisle saying "end colonization," "eradicate poverty," "stop the war." The world desperately needed new signs of the unity of humankind: Justice for all, ending oppression, discrimination, colonization, and racism. Peace for all, in all continents and nations and communities. We need the new voices of youth again and again to tell the truth. We must give them space and make them visible.

The *third* reason I see in the reports why they were so bold is that they heard the promise of something new as words to themselves. The gospel took on new dimensions. Today the words are for us, here and now. "You are the salt of the earth. You are the light of the world." Who were they to whom Jesus addressed these words the first time? They were the poor, the poor in spirit, the meek, those who thirst and hunger for righteousness, the peacemakers, those who are clean in their hearts, those who experience difficulties following Jesus Christ. They were people like you and me, with our limitations and our mistakes, our failures, and even sins. But as church, in the fellowship with all the saints, we are called to show the power of salt and the clarity of light.

These are big words. I am glad we should not say such things about ourselves. It is Jesus Christ that qualifies us to do so and to be so.

The World Needs Signs of Love

Today we live in a world disfigured by hate speech, polarization, violence, even martyrdom for the faith that people

"As church, we are called to show the power of salt and the clarity of light."

carry in their hearts and profess in words. Christians, Jews, Muslims, and people of other faiths – and people without religious faith – experience the effects of words of hate.

As followers of Jesus Christ, as church, we live not in a closed circle or behind thick walls, but in the world where salt and light are needed. Our posters today are not on paper but in social media. We live in a time when accountability and love are needed in our communication – more than ever.

The ecumenical movement of love appears with saltiness and clarity. It all began with Christ's love and Christ's call to share this love. That is why we seek unity, not for the sake of our own comfort and peacefulness, but because the world needs the true signs of love.

People hold hands during the Conference on World Mission and Evangelism in Arusha, Tanzania. Photo: Albin Hillert/WCC, March 2018

Chapter 13

Do You Love Me?

"Do you love me?"

This is a tough question to hear. Maybe one of the toughest questions we can ask one another. The question itself contains a doubt that it is so, and perhaps even reasons to believe that it is not the case. The relationship that raises the question is perhaps a broken one. Still, the question also reveals a hope that love can be affirmed, even manifested in such a way that the question will not have to be repeated.

One can sense this painful dynamic in the Gospel of John, 21:15-18, where the context was catastrophe. The worst possible scenario had happened. Jesus' words about truth and love, justice for the poor, and hope for the future had indeed created a new reality and new relationships. But his message had also provoked opposition, most of all from the powerful. It had led to conspiracy, power-games, politicization of religion, willful ignorance, and violation of moral and legal responsibilities and principles. Countering his message and seeking to retain power led his enemies to inflict violence, cruelty, torture of an innocent person, and death.

But even Jesus' friends, his closest friends, had broken their relationships through betrayal and denial of him: "I do not know this man!" All the more remarkable, then, that when Jesus next met them, as the resurrected Christ, he offered his disciples a chance to share his new life: "Come and eat!" he said. The one whom they had betrayed, left alone, was inviting them to a new relationship.

Jesus' love across all broken relationships, all barriers, all fear and hopelessness, could not be expressed in a stronger way. Love is always about relationships, and love is about the future: Where are we going from here? To get there, the past must be clarified, and Jesus had done it. Completely. His love for Peter and the failing disciples was without reservation. Still, Peter also had to clarify

Candles surround a large plant on the altar of the Iglesia de Jesús in Madrid, Spain, where people of faith gather for an interfaith dialogue on the eve of COP25. Photo: Albin Hillert/ LWF, December 2019

and answer the question: Do you love me? This is the question and the answer that will define their future relationship.

No wonder that it was tough to answer. Three times Jesus asked. It had to be a moment of truth in his mind.

Today, this is the defining question to all leaders in the church. Do you love me? The question comes from Jesus. But he immediately directs the attention to all on whose behalf he is asking. Affirming love leads immediately to the task: Feed my lambs. Tend my sheep. Feed my sheep. Love for God must be shown in responsibility and care for those in need, all those whom God cares for.

I hear Jesus' question in what we face in our time. Children and young people are posing the same question in a new way. Do you love me? Do you care for our future? Do you care for more than yourself? Do you love us?

Today we hear this question as it pertains to this greatest concern of our time, climate change or global warming. Will we fulfill the promises from Paris – or maybe just mouth the intentions – to halt global warming at 1.5 degrees Celsius? The destructive changes in our environment, water, soil, air – all that defines the parameters of "nature" – raise questions of calling and conscience for us, to us, and even about us.

With regard to climate change, we are far beyond the level of knowing or not. Denial is not a serious option. Yet we are perhaps still in the phase of understanding or not, at least understanding the full dimensions of what we are talking about. In almost all the places in the world, we are experiencing its consequences: droughts, fires, irregular and unpredictable seasons, extreme rain, hail and snow, new record-high temperatures, winds, destruction, sea levels rising.

We address this human-made situation and talk about these catastrophes at our dinner tables, in classrooms, in social media, in private and public, in parliaments, in the United Nations.

We also address this situation as communities of faith, believing in God. We remind others and ourselves about our responsibilities to take care of God's creation. We talk about achieving just peace with creation. We discuss climate justice, asking who is responsible for the problem and the solutions. We ponder what it means to hope, in face of these challenges. We plan for a just and sustainable way of living, locally and globally. We give children and youth agency in how the churches address global warming.

All this and much more raises many questions, and many answers are required from our churches as communities, as institutions, from leaders, indeed from all of us. Again and again, from our pulpits, in our liturgies, in our meetings, as we work and walk together in faith.

Today I am struck by anew by Jesus' question, as I have been many times before at critical points in my life, when making decisions about my life and future. Do you love me? The question immediately shifts our attention to the tasks of our lives, whether we are pastors caring for lambs, leaders or

actors in community organizations or businesses or government, or something totally different. It is all and always about whether and how we love each other in response to divine love.

Do you love me? Do you respond to the love of the creator, who has given you life and all that nurtures and protects your life? Do you respond to being forgiven and accepted by God, even when we know very well our shortcomings and our failures? How do you respond to the love that expects you to do something that really makes a difference for those around you, for the ones you love the most – your partner in life, your family, your friends, your children, your grandchildren, all those who are enriched or affected by the way you live?

Do you love me? This is the question our children and youth are asking, demanding a love that shows itself in solidarity with them and their future, all over the world. What we are dealing with is always both very near to us and yet also a global reality. We know that now.

Do you love me? The question also comes from all those with whom Jesus identified. All those in the margins, all those who are less empowered and privileged. The WCC has said that we are on a Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace together, seeking just peace in all the world. We are pursuing our mission work from and with the margins. And we are committing ourselves as churches to children, ending violence against them, individually and collectively, now and for the future.

Do you love me? The question comes from all that are created by God, all that are interdependent with one another in what we call nature. This is no less the reality for those living in urban areas than in rural areas. We are all totally dependent on everything, the whole, the balances between everything God has created. We are ourselves living organisms, we are nature ourselves, not disembodied souls just sojourning for a while on earth.

When we realize that the essence, the heart, of our relationships is love, and we hear from each other this question of our love for God, it becomes clear that the great commandment, the principle guideline for life, is the double commandment: You shall love God with all your heart and soul and strength, and love your neighbour as yourself. Because the neighbour is "as one of us." We are all as one of us. We are so even with nature. Therefore, in our time, we cannot love God and our neighbour without loving nature. We cannot ignore or destroy God's creation while claiming to love God and those God has created.

We still have the ability to hear this question, though it seems that some of us need more hearing aids than others. Still, there is hope in the question's being asked, continually posed and amplified and echoed: Do you love me?

My dear sisters and brothers: This is our testing time. What do you answer, through what you do: Do you love me?

Dear leaders of churches and religious communities: This is our testing time. What

are we doing, through what we say, preach, and teach: Do you love me?

Dear leaders of states and international bodies: This is your testing time. What are you doing now, not only saying, to give your children and your grandchildren a future in which they can live, love, and enjoy life together in justice and peace? What are you doing to answer the question: Do you love me?

God so loved the world that he gave his only son. This is the time for the leaders of the world to give the right answers - and for all of us to make them do so.

A father and son fold their hands as if in prayer, as people gather for an interfaith dialogue and service in the Iglesia de Jesús in Madrid. Photo: Albin Hillert/LWF, December 2019

Love is always about relationships,
and love is about the future:
Where are we going from here?

Sources

Chapter 1. From "A Fellowship of Living Hope," Report of the General Secretary to the Central Committee, June 2016, Trondheim, Norway.

Chapter 2. The New Quest for Christian Unity. From: "9.5 Theses for a New Quest for Unity and Peace through Ecumenical *Diakonia*," commemorating 500 years of Reformation, 4 October 2017.

Chapter 3. What Does Mutual Accountability Mean for Christians and the Christian Life? From: "What Does Mutual Accountability Mean for Christians and the Christian Life?" Centro Pro Unione, 15 November 2018.

Chapter 4. What's Love Got to Do with It? From: "What's Love Got to Do with It? The Ecumenical Future of the Churches," Inaugural Michael Huffington Lecture, Loyola University, Los Angeles, California, USA, 2 April 2019.

Chapter 5. Climate Change and Inequality. From: "Poverty and Inequality in a Time of Climate Change," 16 October 2018, speech at the Community of Sant'Egidio in Bologna, Italy.

Chapter 6. Human Rights and Human Wrongs. From: "The 70th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and the World Council of Churches," 2018.

Chapter 7. Gender Justice and the Churches. From "Address to the Global Consultation on the Decade of the Churches in Solidarity with Women," 2 October 2018.

Chapter 8. Ending Violence against Children. From "Multi-Religious Perspectives on the CRC@30," the 30th Anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child," July 15, 2019, at the Ford Foundation, New York City.

Chapter 9. Our Journey with Migrants and Refugees: Responding to Racism and Xenophobia. From "World Conference on Xenophobia, Racism, and Populist Nationalism in the Context of Global Migration," Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development and WCC with Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, 18-20 September 2018, Rome.

Chapter 10. Human Fraternity and Interreligious Encounter. From "Peace with No Borders: Religions and Cultures in Dialogue," Sant' Egidio International Meeting, Madrid: 17 September 2019.

Chapter 11. Globalization and Leadership. From a speech delivered 17 January 2017 at the World Economic Forum, Davos, Switzerland.

Chapter 12. You Are the Salt of the Earth. Sermon delivered in Uppsala Cathedral, 4 November 2018, observing the 70th anniversary of the World Council of Churches and 50 years since the WCC's 1968 assembly in Uppsala.

Chapter 13. Do Your Love Me? A sermon preached at Marble Church, New York City, Sunday 22 September 2019.

Notes

Chapter 1: A Fellowship of Hope

1. See the 2014 inaugural document of the pilgrimage, "An Invitation to the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace," at: **https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/central-committee/geneva-2014/an-invitation-to-the-pilgrimage-of-justice-and-peace**.

Chapter 3: What Does Mutual Accountability Mean for Christians and the Christian Life?

1. For example, in 1913 already, soon after the Edinburgh conference, as the movement began to spread, a 32-page pamphlet "by a layman" was sent to churches, urging that the forthcoming conference on Faith and Order centre, not on competing statements or negotiations between churches or confessions but on "honest and loving examination of our differences." Cultivating "the true conference spirit" requires cross-examination of our convictions, he said, "not to defeat and humiliate, but to understand each other." Using examples from ecclesiology and soteriology, and in light of the inexhaustibility of divine mysteries, the author urged a "reverent agnosticsm" toward our own and others' theological explanations to "open the way for the growth of all into one mind." Joint Commission Appointed to Arrange for a World Conference on Faith and Order, *The Conference Spirit: By a Layman* (1913). Online in the Faith and Order Papers Digital Edition, at: **https://archive.org/details/wccfops1.011**.

2. See Olav Fykse Tveit, *The Truth We Owe Each Other: Mutual Accountability in the Ecumenical Movement* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2016).

3. Thus the constitution of the WCC speaks of a spirit of mutual accountability in terms of "the prayerful search for forgiveness and reconciliation." We can find strikingly parallel language in *Redintegratio unitatis,* the Second Vatican Council's *Decree on Ecumenism,* especially in section 8. Mutual accountability is a theme which holds together many of the varied dimensions of the search for Christian unity. Mutual accountability is also a vision about how we work together in the ecumenical movement as a demonstration that we are one. It is an ecumenical attitude required wherever we are and on our way toward unity.

4. This in turn sheds light on what we do as the WCC: serving as convener, catalyst, facilitator of the fellowship of churches, i.e., *nurturing real fellowship* through creative and committed interaction of the churches and their partners. It also casts light on the role of such a fellowship in the world: we relate to the world and its troubles through witnessing to and *offering genuine hope* – not because we have the answers but because our faith-inspired hope gives us the confidence, the willingness, and openness to find and fashion them together.

5. Here we refer to the mysteries of faith, the *mysterium fidei,* the reality that precedes our doctrinal or theological formulations.

6. This means that the ideal of "reconciled diversity" involves not just appreciating each other's gifts and insights but also laying bare our oversights and inadequacies. To repeat, accountable reconciled diversity is a spur to church reform and renewal.

7. Here I am quoting from *The Truth We Owe*, vii–viii.

8. This of course is the age-old tradition of a *via negativa* and apophatic theology and the perennial affirmation of the inexhaustibility of the divine mysteries.

9. This is argued most powerfully in the landmark mission statement *Together toward Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes,* ed. Jooseop Keum (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2014).

10. Bernard Lonergan, the Canadian philosopher-theologian, observed that, although authenticity is conceived in positive terms, it is often experienced

in negative ones, i.e., as a challenge to relinquish the major and minor inauthenticities that bedevil our lives and even our communities. My love for you reveals shortcomings I need to address in order to free me to love more fully and authentically.

11. These principles are given contextual life and dynamism in the reflections from the theological study group of our Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace: *Walking Together: Theological Reflections from the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace,* ed. Susan Durber and Fernando Enns (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2018). The appendix contains the important new paper from the Faith and Order Commission, "Come and See," on how the pilgrimage relates the journey toward justice and peace to the perennial quest for Christian unity.

12. The Ecumenical Prayer Cycle can be accessed each week at oikoumene.org. See also the new songbook, gathering ecumenical songs from around the world: *Hosannah! Ecumenical Songs for Justice and Peace,* ed. Andrew Donaldson (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2016).

Chapter 5: Climate Justice and Inequality

1. Paul Tillich, *Love, Power, and Justice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1954), 71.

2. *An Economy of Life: An Invitation to Theological Reflection and Action* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2014), 4.

Chapter 6: Human Rights and Human Wrongs

1. See "Education for Peace in a Multi-Religious World: A Christian Perspective," 2018: **https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/publications/education-for-peace-in-a-multi-religious-world-a-christian-perspective**

Chapter 8: Ending Violence against Children

1. See **https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/churches-commitments-to-children**

2. Christian ideas about human dignity and equality strongly shaped the concept of human rights in the CRC and other human rights instruments. Background material about the CRC and reference documents that outline positive relationships between biblical perspectives and child rights can be found on **www.oikoumene.org/resources-children**.

Chapter 9: Our Journey with Migrants and Refugees

1. It is important to acknowledge those roots. They actually lie in the most precious touchstones of our identity: our values and ideals, the mores and practices of "our" group – whether family or clan, ethnicity or nationality, or even as a religion or religious community – that we share and hold most dear. When those worthy values become warped or distorted by self-interest, then those not in our group become a threat to our identity as a community or nation or people. Racism or xenophobia or nationalist populism are forms of habitual disregard of or hostility toward the other. When our very identity is reinforced by the baser self-interests of the group, we then fear differences that seem to threaten our identity. So friendships become cliques, family love fuels clannish competition, political parties become hostile factions, sexist behavior becomes systemic gender exclusion, national pride becomes perverted by self-serving myths, and religious zeal morphs into extremist violence. Yes, we see this even in religion and in some divisions among churches and religious groups. Even love and devotion can become distorted and exclusive.

Chapter 10: Human Fraternity and Interreligious Encounter

1. See the full "Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together," 4 Feb. 2019, at: **https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2019-02/pope-francis-uae-declaration-with-al-azhar-grand-imam.html**.

Chapter 12: You Are the Salt of the Earth

1. We thank the Archbishop of Uppsala and Primate of the Church of Sweden, Antje Jackelén, and the churches in Sweden for inviting the WCC executive committee and many others to celebrate and to be challenged at this 50th anniversary. This is one of many events that marked the 70 years of the WCC during the year.

ENVISIONING A HORIZON OF HOPE—

In this volume, Olav Fykse Tveit sketches an ecumenical movement that reveals a horizon of hope and illumines many of our most pressing global challenges.

Rather than focusing inward, Tveit envisions an ecumenism that leverages the Christ-inspired unity of the global fellowship into transformative engagement with the world. He shows how the recent journey of the Christian fellowship reframes its diversity and differences through solidarity in witness and service. Then, ranging across issues of economic and ecological justice, interreligious encounter and gender justice, just peace, racism and xenophobia, he demonstrates the potential of Christians and Christian churches to engender authentic discipleship, reform and renew the churches, and pursue justice and peace for the whole human family.

Olav Fykse Tveit has served as general secretary of the World Council of Churches since 2010, and has been serving as Presiding Bishop and Bishop in Nidaros Diocese, Church of Norway since May 2020. He holds a doctorate in theology, has worked in national and international ecumenical settings, and is author, most recently, of *The Truth We Owe Each Other* (2016).

RELIGION/ECUMENISM

oikoumene World Council of Churches

9 782825 417072