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*St-Paul's United Theological College, Lumuru, Kenya*



This quarterly journal aims to encourage sharing and cooperation among all who are working for the renewal of the churches through programmes of ministerial formation. All correspondence regarding MINISTERIAL FORMATION should be sent to the address below. Submission of relevant articles, reports and news is welcomed. Items in this journal do not necessarily reflect the views of the WCC and its programme on Education and Ecumenical Formation (formerly Programme on Theological Education).

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**LETTER FROM STAFF**

Dear friend and colleague,

It is our hope and prayer that you have entered the year 2002 with praise and gratitude!

Many of us are focused on many critical issues that are life-threatening in our world today, wondering and searching how we can be part of the solution rather than the problem. As we prepared this issue of January 2002, we watched helplessly the destruction of life in Goma, Eastern part of Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), when Nyiragongo volcano irrupted sending hot lava to a large area of the town.

Goma is the home of *Université Libre des Pays des Grands lacs*, which has a faculty of theology. Word has reached us through the only woman in the faculty, Ms. Julienne Kavira Wangahemuka, that the university was spared and has now become the home of many families who have occupied the classrooms. Even though this was a natural disaster, experts tell us that if only the people of Goma had the skills and the right tools, they could have known such a disaster was on the way and many would have been evacuated in good time. Poverty and many other problems have made it very difficult for the people of Goma to cope with this great tragedy and they are asking for our prayers and support.

The articles in this issue, in one way or the other, are challenging and encouraging us in theological education and ecumenical ministerial formation to be critically aware of the life-threatening issues of the day and to do something in our methodologies and curricula in order to address them and to deliver effective and transforming education in the church and society. Poverty, diseases, deep hatred, violence, economic exploitation, gender inequalities and discrimination, to name a few, are life-threatening issues that we must attend to otherwise we will have failed to heed the farewell message of Jesus to Peter in John 21.

*“Simon son of John, do you love me more than these? ... Yes, Lord, you know I love you...Feed my Lambs...Tend my sheep...Feed my sheep...Follow me!”*

The lambs and the sheep might be in Goma, in your backyard or a stranger in need of shelter, love and warmth. How is your theological institution and programmes tending to the flock of Jesus in this day and age of globalisation, HIV/AIDS pandemic, great and deep hatred, greed, selfishness and revenge?

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## NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

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**WELCOMING THE STRANGER**

**Dan Mosley**

A strange convergence of circumstances led me to new insights on September 11, 2001. I am a white, North American male minister who grew up in a conservative Christian home in a small town in middle America. On September 11, I found myself with a friend looking for a Bed and Breakfast in rural France west of Lyon. When we knocked at the door of the farm house recommended by our Michelin Guide, we were greeted with the question, "You Americans?" Responding affirmatively, we were escorted into the living room and watched on French television as the second plane flew into the second tower of the World Trade Center in New York City. French was not a language either my friend or I were very accomplished in, so we watched in stunned confusion as we tried to make some sense of the pictures we were seeing. Not until we made it to Attune the next morning and were able to secure a copy of the *London Times* and the *International Herald Tribune* were we able to get a more complete picture of what we had been seeing on TV.

But, even with the newspaper in our own language, we were unable to comprehend what had happened. It was almost beyond our comprehension. We could see, but we couldn't believe. We could understand in our heads, but our hearts and our bodies were shaken in incredulity.

That event, and the subsequent days of discovery and attention to the global developments while I was in attendance at the Commission on Ecumenical Education and Formation of the World Council of Churches, has led me to some reflections on the world and the changing role of the Ecumenical church in the exploration of justice and peace.

First, a few words about me and my context.

I have been active in the Unity movement of the Christian Church for over 40 years. I have been involved in conversations with diverse Christian communities in North America, Europe, South East Asia and the South Pacific. I teach in a seminary which is affiliated with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and has members of 25 denominations in its student body and faculty. I have lived my life in conversation with Christians.

But, September 11 focused for me one of the fundamental problems of my life. The leader of the group suspected of masterminding the attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City and the Pentagon in Washington DC, Osama Ben Laden, sees the attack as an assault against the infidel Christians and called for all true Muslims to engage in a Holy War against Christianity. September 11 highlighted for me the fundamental flaw in much of what I have been involved in my life as one who worked for Christian Unity. It reminded me that I had not been in conversation with people who were willing to die for the faith they professed.

And it reminded me that I had not spent much time in my life in conversation with people who were willing to disengage with me because of the faith I professed. I had not tried to engage many persons who considered me an infidel. I realize that other Christians face this kind of challenge daily. But, I have not encountered this kind of intense religious hostility in my work and ministry.

But, an increasing number of Christians in North America are members of communions which are not interested in engaging with persons who hold different faith positions. Radical insistence on one's position as being the only position which represents the will of the holy one is becoming an increasingly difficult problem in the shrinking globe in which we live. I have decided that if we are going to be engaged in issues of peacemaking and justice making

in this world, we are called to the courage of engaging persons who believe that we are representatives of the evil one.

Now this is no small task. I much prefer meeting with and engaging cordial conversation with members of the Presbyterian Church or the Methodist Church. It is less threatening to me. It is true that we have our differences, but neither one of us consider them to be issues of life or death. It is true that we hold different understandings about practices of faith, but neither of us is likely to kill the other over those understandings.

The emerging issue for the Church today is how we engage persons who hold us to be their enemies. In North America, there are people who believe that persons who hold different positions on social issues such as abortion are mortal enemies. There are people in the Christian community who believe that homosexual activity is evil and condemned by God. Others believe that any loving behavior is affirmed by the holy. The question of the ordination of gay and lesbian persons threatens to fragment several denominations. The authority of scripture is at stake for some. Within my denomination, there are some who feel the need to distance themselves from us because of our church's efforts to welcome all people to the table of the Lord.

How do we go about engaging conversations with these Christians? How do we go about engaging people from around the world who hold different faith positions from our own? How do we contribute to peaceful solutions to global issues and still maintain commitment to our own understandings? How can the Ecumenical agenda be advanced in a climate where people are killing each other in the name of God?

I have only a few suggestions from the perspective of a North American Christian. I know that my perspective is infected by my heritage and my cultural bias. I know that I speak from the platform of privilege in this global economic situation. I know that I am one who has been shaped by western enlightenment thinking. I would not presume to know how others might address this fundamentally troubling issue of fragmentation. But, I speak as a Christian deeply concerned for the witness of peace and justice in a shrinking globe.

From my experience in teaching in an ecumenical seminary, I would suggest that the first step in ecumenical conversation is an assumption of respect. It is very difficult to communicate to others that you respect them when you don't agree with what they hold sacred. When we hold a belief sacred and another person admits that they do not hold that sacred, it often feels like a threat. If you have been taught that your way of thinking is the only one faithful to the holy one, it is very difficult to believe that one who disagrees respects you.

How do you communicate respect? Humility is fundamental to respect. The conversation must begin with a genuine belief that your understanding is partial and limited. If you assume that the other is "ignorant" or "unsophisticated", that will be communicated in the way you are present with them. If, however, you genuinely believe that you are "partially enlightened" and that you believe that the one you are engaging actually has something to offer your understanding, they will be more likely to offer their insights.

I have discovered that if you are able to genuinely be able to receive the insights of others with grace, they "may" be more likely to receive your insights. In some of my encounters with fundamentalists in churches I have served, this isn't always the case. I admit that I sometimes come on as an advocate for my position and don't listen with sensitivity to those who differ, but even when I do, it doesn't always result in their listening to me. Respect of another doesn't, by itself, result in the opening of dialogue. But, certainly, without it, openness is virtually impossible.

When we listen to those with whom we are in conflict, it is important to listen to the pain below the language. As Christians, we center our lives around a table of pain and suffering. If we are sensitive to our sacraments and allow them to break us open to our own pain, we become more attentive to the pain of the “other” who is speaking to us. When persons feel that our position might create deep suffering—even immortal suffering—they will be in fear of those who hold our position. At some point they will feel the need to eliminate our position and those who hold it. But, if we can hear the fear and anticipated pain they feel, maybe we can respond in ways which will contribute to reducing their feeling of threat.

One way to reduce the feeling of threat is to avoid naming the other as the enemy. In my own denomination there was a split which became very ugly when the protagonists began attacking the other as the enemy. It was believed that each was the enemy of truth. When the “other” is determined to be of the “evil one” then it is very difficult to restrain any behavior that is not designed to destroy the other.

This is not an easy task. Evil is often perceived to be that which threatens our existence—threatens our sense of who we are. When my wife died, death became the enemy. Death was that which threatened me as I knew myself. It took away that which defined me as a husband. It took away that which affirmed me as a male in relationship to females. It was the enemy which I fought. I tried everything I could do to defeat the enemy.

When we feel threatened by another—when we feel that the ideas and the thoughts of another threaten our sense of who we are, we treat them as an enemy. In the shrinking globe, there are many people who believe that the power of western culture is stealing from them that which they hold sacred. And indeed, the powerful always impose their understanding of truth on the other. So, resistance is frequently required. But, resistance which demonizes the other provokes an aggressive and hostile response which does not contribute to breaking down the walls of suspicion and fear.

One way to begin dealing with our tendency to demonize the other is to remember to listen to the diverse voices within ourselves and our own communities. None of us is pure in our motivation. We are each a collection of voices which challenge each other. Some voices within take a dominate position of authority and there may be a consistency in our actions in response to those voices. But, if we are honest with ourselves, other voices which challenge the dominate voices also rise up and wish to speak. One way to deal with those contrary voices is to exorcise them. Another way to deal with them, and a way I believe is psychologically and spiritually healthy, is to listen more carefully to those voices and see how they might contribute to a broader understanding of truth.

This way of dealing with the “different” voices is endorsed by several religious traditions. Within the Jewish and Christian traditions it is a command that we welcome the stranger. The stranger is the mediator of the divine insight. Sarah and Abraham were blessed in listening to the proclamation of the stranger. The disciples who fed the stranger on the road to Emmaus were blessed with a vision of the Christ. The courage to welcome the stranger is the courage to welcome the holy. Strangers are uncomfortable and frequently threatening to our sense of security. They bring with them ideas which cause us to reconsider our own hard won and passionate ideas.

When death visited my own household, I resisted with all my strength. I tried everything I could to bar the door and keep it out. It was an unwelcome stranger. But, by its presence, I have been forced to be open to new insights in my faith. I am a part of a faith which prides itself in being rational and thoughtful. When my wife died, reason was erased. I was driven out of my mind and into my body. I felt things I had never felt before. I felt pain and agony which could not be articulated with the reasonable and thoughtful words I had learned to trust. Many of the words given to me by my Reformed faith would not sustain me.

In the presence of death, I was driven to open myself to, what was for me a strange world, the mystics and those who experienced the divine in the desert. I had never comprehended how anyone could talk of God as dark and night—until—until I was driven to where there was no light. And then I had to open myself to the possibility that God was more than I had comprehended. I tasted hints of the holy in the very dark despair of grief and loneliness. I discovered the divine in the withered touch of the ancient widow in my church. The presence of the stranger who stole away my world opened me to dimensions of faith that I had never known before. We discover our own identity when we go among strangers.

Knowing this and believing this can frequently open us to the ones who are so outside our realm of experience that we become confused in their presence. That very confusion may be a gift from the holy one to humble us and to open us to truth to which we have here-to-fore been blind.

Another way to look at the confrontation of conflicting truths is that any compromise will be experienced as loss. If we hold something to be true and we receive some information from another which raises some question about our belief or causes us to altar that belief in some way, we will need to grieve a loss. We will need to grieve the loss of the world as we had come to know it. All too often we confront another who disagrees with us with little regard to the price we and they will pay when we honestly confront the differences each brings to the other. We neither allow ourselves to grieve the loss of our own idea or grant grace to the other to grieve his or her loss.

Grieving is the process of relearning our world without the presence of that which has been fundamentally important to us. To relearn that world requires that we identify and mourn the loss, experience the fear and anguish of life without the presence of that which is loss, imagine what the world could be like without that presence, try out some new ideas which might replace that idea or belief which has died, and live with that long enough that it becomes an integrated part of the self in the new world. This process requires a great deal of time and patience. We all too easily have assumed that transformation is something that is without painful cost to the self. Pastoral sensitivity to the suffering which results from losing ourselves is critical if we are to engage in conversations and confrontations which challenge what is sacred to us.

But, what if we can't avoid making the stranger into an enemy? What if we are not able to overcome our fear of the one who is so different that they scare us into violent action against them?

The Christian tradition calls us to "love our enemies." Love means to "attend to." Love means that we increase our awareness of the other. It means that we look for the life giving spirit which is the energy of the other. To love means opening ourselves to understandings which seem alien to the very core of who we are—to seek the presence of the divine in the spirit of "the other".

To love our enemies, we must pray for them. To pray for someone is to hold that person before the holy one who creates and recreates reality. It is to remember that person as one who is a part of God's web of creative energy. It reminds us that we are not that person's creator and therefore not called to be their destroyer. We are fellow creatures with this one before God whose vision is more complete than is our own or that of any other.

Now, it is my experience that sometimes there are persons who are not in the leadership of our religious movements who might contribute to this task of peacemaking and justice making better than some of us who are "professional religious". My experience in the parish ministry is that persons who live with and make neighbors out of persons who are different from themselves often see more clearly the "divine humanity" in the other. Many laity I know are not as tempted to sacrifice a world of "shalom" as readily as some clergy who have taken some ride in maintaining a sense of "purity" in their theological position. Communities which listen to the voices of all and consider the consequences of actions for all the community are less likely to act with anger and hatred toward the other.



Now, this assumes that there is time to explore. And time is a critical issue when it comes to love. There is a keen interest in North America at this point to understand more about Islamic faith. But, it isn't something that we can do by simply reading a book. Understanding another is possible only when we learn with the many levels of understanding we know. It means that we have to take the time to live with, to eat with, to pray with, to talk with the other. It means that we have to find ways to be present in the cultural context of the other.

The Commission on Ecumenical Education and Formation is working to find ways to enhance cross cultural experiences where people can actually spend time in the seminaries of others in different cultures. This should be expanded to enable persons to spend time in the diverse cultural and religious communities which are not Christian. The World Council of Churches has been effective in many conflicts throughout its life because it has taken time to sit with and meet with persons of diverse opinions even when there was no crisis. It is the developing relationships which are grounded in respect for the gifts of the other which has made it possible to contribute to increasing light in situations where heat is burning down homes and killing children.

September 11, 2001 focused for me the fundamental issues we have with our attempts to contribute to a world of peace and justice. As the world lives out its response to that crisis and seeks to sort out solutions to the death of innocents, we who are a part of the Christian faith community must work to nurture relationships which will open us to the truth about "the other". We must give ourselves to the hard work of expanding our organizations so that we become practiced at the hard work of hearing the sacred truth of the other and articulating our own understanding of the sacred in a way which potentially enriches the other rather than threatening them with extinction.

**“LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR” AS AN INTERFAITH IMPERATIVE**

*Henry S. Wilson*

*The one who knows one religion knows none, Max Muller*

**Introduction**

“Contextualization”, the *mantra* made popular in the 1960s with the initiative of the Theological Education Fund under the leadership of Shoki Coe<sup>1</sup>. Even today that *mantra* challenges the enterprise of ministerial formation to pay close attention to the realities and the needs of the community of which it is a part. Contextual realities comprise of a wide variety of phenomena that affect lives of people and communities in a given place. One such reality is the enduring religious pluralism in many parts of the world. Christians of almost all denominations and groups are dealing with this reality through programs and projects shaped by their respective theologies. The enduring religious pluralism has also put the interfaith agenda as a permanent component of the curriculum in theological studies. However, the choice as to how far one should integrate multi-faith concerns in the total curriculum is one left to each of the theological institutions and its supporting church bodies.

Christianity as a faith community emerged in a multi-religious context; in its missionary outreach it constantly interacted with other faith traditions. As far as relating to other living faiths, Christianity in the course of two millennia has gone through many stages of development. In the initial years of formation in the Greco-Roman world it had to vigorously defend its faith, and also protect its followers from the threat of persecution. In the process, it resorted to a full-fledged apologetic defense, affirming its distinct identity. Following its recognition by the emperor Constantine in the fourth century, it was free to develop an elaborate schema of theology and liturgies. It manifested its grandeur through the construction of cathedrals, monasteries, commissioning arts, icons, songs and music. It ensured its continuity by developing skillful organizational structures. Further, a well-rounded organizational status gave the needed influence and power to silence, reprimand, punish, and persecute all those who opposed it, either among its faithful or those outside its faith community. The mood of Western Christianity in Europe during the High Middle Ages (1050-1400) was that of being the only true religion of the world with no equal to it. Christian theology was considered as the “queen of the sciences,” and such a triumphalistic attitude was supported with arguments drawn from Scripture and traditions. In spite of the turbulent times it had to pass through during the 16<sup>th</sup> century Reformation, as well as the 18<sup>th</sup> century Enlightenment and the subsequent challenges that were posed by the scientific discoveries and technological inventions, Western Christianity got a boost with the European colonial adventures and successes. Europe was no longer the area of concern but the whole world was at the beckon of Christianity.

One could imagine how such an elevated status might have shaped the attitude of Christianity towards other faiths. The whole world is there for Christianity to win over and to bring to its fold. To achieve this mission goal, the use of political offices and forces seemed normal. Such euphoria was the ‘Christendom’ mentality of the church. Having a continually successful story as a religious movement made the church relate to people outside its fold only from a missiological point of view. Any serious attempt to develop a theology of religions to dialogically engage people of other faiths was absent. [Amirtham/Ariarajah, 1986: 23]

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<sup>1</sup> Editor’s note: Theological Education Fund (TEF) was initiated by the International Missionary Council (IMC) based in London in 1958. Later when IMC joined the World Council of Churches (WCC) in 1961, TEF became a programme of WCC. It is the predecessor programme of Programme of Theological Education (PTE), today known as Ecumenical Theological Education (ETE).

In a strange way the climax and anti-climax of such euphoria made its initial appearance at the very significant World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh, Scotland in 1910. The predominantly European and North American delegates, consisting of missionaries and church leaders who were the backbone of such a world missionary outreach, while celebrating all the great opportunities that were there to further spread Christianity to the nooks and corners of the world, could also recognize the deep rootedness of ancient cultures and religions in spite of European colonial lordship in many parts of the world. So, amidst several decisions, a resolution was made that touched on the realities of the enduring world religions. The conference resolved that the future missionaries should be encouraged to undergo training in comparative religions. Of course at that time it was primarily for developing a better strategy for evangelism than for engaging interfaith concerns. Summing up, Andrew Walls states that the Edinburgh conference was “the high point of the Western missionary movement and the point from which it declined; ...the point at which Christians first began to glimpse something of what a world church would be like.” [Walls, 2001:310]

The two world wars shattered the optimism that was evident at Edinburgh. The irony of history was that the liberation struggles in many colonized countries against the Western ‘Christian’ colonial powers were led by people of other faiths who drew on the resources of their religious traditions to achieve this goal. What followed was the consolidation of historical religions in the newly independent nation states as well as a resurgence of religions as a counter-cultural act against decades and centuries of hegemony of the Western ‘Christian’ nations. This change brought a tremendous pressure on the Christian populations of these newly independent countries. They had to prove their national loyalties especially if their record was poor regarding their support and participation in the struggles for independence. Further, if their practice of Christianity was predominantly western and therefore totally alien to local cultures, their task of proving loyalties became even tougher.

The post Second World War years also gave rise to formerly immigrated, as well as newly immigrated, people asserting their religious identities in hitherto predominantly Christian nations in Europe. They often got support for such assertions from their former domiciles. Thus Christianity was faced with a new challenge of responding to people of other faiths in its very backyard. The steady demographical changes in some cities and regions in Europe and North America made it impossible to shut off the issue of interfaith relations as something alien. In fact such changes forced interfaith concerns into the agenda of many churches, including the national and regional councils of churches, the World Council of Churches, and the Pontifical Council. Theological schools were also pressurized to reckon with these changes with appropriate curricula. Even some of the city councils had to make provisions to incorporate the demands of people of other faiths in matters of schooling, jobs, facilities for worship, religious activities, and observations.

All of these changes were not smooth. Small and large scale clashes and/or lobbying were common occurrences in several places. In several instances, religious affiliations intermingled with other disputes and disagreements. In a number of clashes between communities, one could discern strong religious components, explicit or subtle. The recent September 11 tragic events in the USA has once again drawn the attention of all concerned to the need to address the multifaith realities of our contemporary world if communities are to be in harmonious relationships.

### **September 11 and interfaith intricacies**

The shock and the dismay created by the tragic events of September 11 have made many people in the USA and elsewhere to turn for solace in their faith traditions. A number of public gatherings for prayers, vigils, memorials, worship services, media discourses, voluntary services, and fund raising campaigns were very moving watch. The interesting phenomenon in this was, that many of these gatherings were cross-cultural, inter-denominational, and multi-religious. What they affirmed is the value of intense interfaith work that has been going on with some vigor since the 1960s. It cannot be anything else. When the twin World Trade Centers were collapsing, people from about 60 nationalities and belonging to an array of religions were at work there. It was, in fact, a mini-macrocosmic population concentrated in a small business area.

The presence and participation of people of different faiths at the worship service in the National Cathedral in Washington D.C., at the vigil in Yankee Stadium in New York, and in other interfaith services, were all a witness to positive attitudes that have developed as a result of interfaith ministries. Who could have imagined that celebrated Christian evangelist Rev. Billy Graham would be willing to participate and preach in a service at the National Cathedral alongside a Jewish Rabbi and a Muslim Mullah, sharing the same chancel area with these worship leaders, who read and prayed from their own sacred texts and traditions? To his credit, Rev. Graham also decided to drop the familiar 'crusade' label for his future evangelistic meetings.

Even earlier, those who had given their time and talents for interfaith ministry shared a celebrative moment when the United Nations recognized the importance of interfaith relations and summoned a conference of religious leaders in New York just prior to the Millennium Summit Meeting of world leaders in August 2000. One also needs to give credit to the careful work that has been done by religious bodies, educational institutions, and local communities regarding better understanding between the Islamic faith and other religious traditions since the Gulf War in 1991.

The interfaith unit of the World Council of Churches, the Pontifical Council for Interfaith Relations, the many national and regional councils of church and denominational programs among Christians, and similar attempts among the Jewish and Islamic communities and world bodies, have, through their interfaith work, created a new ethos for addressing issues when religious feelings are brought out in conflicting situations. The Association of Theological Schools in almost all the regions of the world have been persistent in their plea for interfaith concerns to be incorporated in the theological school curriculum. Some of the Association of Theological Schools even insist on incorporating interfaith concern as a requirement for the purposes of the accreditation of theological school. All such efforts have borne results even though such accomplishments have been uneven and dependent on the commitments of the faculty as well as the supporting churches and institutions of theological schools.

However, what has been accomplished so far is not enough. The September 11 crisis clearly demonstrated it. The humane approach to the September 11 events (especially in the USA and in some of the Western European countries) became complicated when the investigation report identified those involved in the terrorist acts as adherents of Islam and allegedly highly motivated by their religious teaching. Strong emotional reactions were expressed against Islam and Muslims. Despite of the attempt of national leaders and the mass media to interpret the incident as a malicious terrorist act of disgruntled and frustrated people full of evil intensions, for many North Americans it was difficult, if not impossible, to accept the acts as non-religious. The public reaction in the USA was colored by 'Islamophobia' and 'Arabophobia', somewhat similar to Christianophobia and Judeophobia among a number of Muslim communities around the globe.

The assumption on the part of many was that all Arabs were Muslims, even though many publications made it known that 77% of Arabs in USA are Christians (the survey report conducted by the Arab American Institute in 2000). The majority of the world's one billion Muslims are Asians and Africans living in Indonesia, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nigeria and Central Asian countries.

Severe criticisms were made even about the fundamentals of Islam. For example, Franklin Graham (son of Rev. Billy Graham), in an interview with the NBC News broadcast commenting on the ongoing 'war on terrorism' stated that, "...Islam has attacked us. The God of Islam is not the same God. He's not the son of God of the Christian or Judeo-Christian faith. It's different God, and I believe it is a very evil and wicked religion." [Associated Press, Nov. 20, 2001] More than anything, this statement discloses the theology of Franklin and the theological formation that shaped his view about Islam, which, to say the least, is distorted. Examples like that are plentiful. Even though one can be a bit sympathetic to such outbursts, they are regrettable in a time when what is most needed are not words of hatred but greater patience to understand the religious values of different adherents of faith in spite of its misuse. Both the positive and negative reactions mentioned above, further demands from all those who are aspiring for peace and justice a renewed commitment for interfaith work at all levels.

### **Interfaith component in ministerial formation**

The security of identity for an individual, as well as to a community, is as important as an anchor for a ship. Unfortunately, at times, religious identity gets entangled and submerged under other identities like nationalities and ethnicities. In such cases, religion becomes a constraining force instead of a redeeming force. All the enduring historical religions contain a global and cosmic vision at their core and are meant to help its followers to transcend their particular identity – tribal, ethnic, racial, or national. It is implied in the reference of religions to the Ultimate/Divine/God.

At a close personal level, religions provide valuable support to followers to be a self-contained community and offer a rallying force for resistance, especially, when its members face oppressions, injustice, and sufferings. At the same time, all historical religions challenge their followers with a broadened global vision. They provide an ultimate/divine purpose for life that transcends any narrow well being of a particular community, and extends the horizon to the well-being of the whole of humanity and creation. The acceptance of the statement, 'Declaration Toward a Global Ethic,' by several of the religious leaders from all the major faith traditions of the world at the 1993 Parliament of the World's Religions, was an indication of the global dimension of every historical religion. [Kung/Kuschel, 1993]

Thus, by nature, identities in faith traditions play a dual role in somewhat of a paradoxical manner. First of all, they give followers a strong sense of a cohesive community identity with historical moorings; supportive signs and symbols (primarily drawn from a particular cultural milieu); rites and rituals associated with the community it originally emerged from, (canonized) scriptures and traditions. Secondly, they urge followers to discern their interconnectedness with the rest of humanity and creation. Keeping these two-dimensional identities in a dialectical relation is a challenge to a faith-affiliated person in today's steadily expanding religiously plural world.

Theological schools prepare people for community involvement as leaders, enablers, and facilitators. However, there is always a temptation and danger of narrowing the vision of the community to Christian churches and groups. For clergy and other church workers, church is the body, which calls, trains, and equips them and accepts their leadership service. However, as long as the Christian community is part of a larger community, its total life and well being cannot be separated from the rest of the community. The church is called to be the light and the salt of the earth. Therefore, mission, witness, service and theology of the Christian community will not be able to speak to the outside community unless it has a relationship and has integrated itself with the larger community while dealing with the day-to-day challenges and gifts of life.

Traditionally, ministerial formation may not have consciously paid attention to this aspect of relating to the larger society as a significant component of ministry. Now the new awareness of cultural and religious pluralism has brought this need much closer to churches and its institutions including the theological education. This raises the question about the vision needed in preparing the leaders for the wider religiously pluralistic community. As examples I would like to briefly describe two experiments in expanding the horizon of students to include the realities of people of other living faiths. They are drawn from two seminaries: (1) Karnataka Theological College (founded in 1847) of Mangalore, Karnataka, in India; and (2) Wartburg Theological Seminary (founded in 1852) of Dubuque, Iowa, in the USA, where I currently teach.

The Karnataka Theological College (KTC) is a seminary of the Church of South India. Wartburg Theological Seminary belongs to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. The majority of students at both seminaries are trained for pastoral ministry primarily to work in small towns and rural areas. One major geographic difference between these two seminaries is their respective demographic situation. In India, Christianity is a minority religion (about 3% of the total population), whereas in the USA Christianity represents the majority. However, neither of these settings diminish the challenge of equipping the students to relate to people of other faiths. With regard to people of other faiths, the understanding of entering students in both the seminaries does not differ much. It is common that a minority of the students are willing to accept the possibility of salvation for the 'non-Christians' within their respective faith traditions, whereas the majority hold on to an exclusive position of salvation for all humans only through Jesus Christ (and Christianity). Such views, which they bring from their respective congregations, invariably shape their attitude towards people of other faiths.

The Karnataka Theological College primarily gets students straight from post-secondary school/college. Therefore the sponsoring churches require a year of engagement in some form of ongoing ministry of the Church. Since most of such exposures are done in the traditional congregational setting and related to ministerial practices, it was observed that the majority of the candidates come with a very pietistic view of Christianity. Therefore, the faculty does not take for granted any serious reflection on the part of the candidates regarding the diversities of religions and their implications for ministry.

One unique feature of the KTC is the experience of living together with the students of other faiths in a common dorm. The dormitory where theological students reside has about 180 occupants of which only 35-40 are (single) theological candidates. Each of them share a room with another secular student who in most cases is a follower of another living faith. This is a wonderful opportunity to relate and share day to day dormitory life with members of other faiths and develop a life long friendship. Of course the ability to use this opportunity as a full pledged pedagogical tool depends on the initiative and capacity of each individual. However, it is a commendable pedagogical component in a multi-religious situation. There are possibilities that the common youth preoccupations and often-transitory nature of academic life, can keep students away from any serious multi-faith discourses in spite of sharing common dorm facilities. An assessment of the impact of this on graduated ministerial candidates will be a valuable resource in ministerial training for other seminaries to emulate.

During the remainder of their academic study, the students get opportunities to visit religious centers, engage in religious conversations, participate in some of the traditional evangelistic and missional activities, and assess the challenges that are posed by the people of other faiths. The college also offers continuing education courses on religious pluralism and conducts seminars on inter-faith issues.

In contrast, at Wartburg Theological Seminary (WTS), only half or fewer students come to the seminary directly from their university or college studies. The remainder come to the seminary to pursue religious callings as a second career. Many are older and have families with children. Therefore, the faculty of the seminary has to take in to consideration a broader background in church or societal experience of their students.

At Wartburg, the very first week of classes for all the incoming students is devoted to a course entitled, 'Local Theologies.' The objective of the course is to help students 'gain ethnographic skills in looking into the contexts and listening to people in groups to understand their religious and theological world with empathy'. On the basis of this, students are assisted to analyze religious and theological frameworks they bring with them to their seminary studies. To achieve this goal a number of sessions are devoted to visiting several parts of the town as individuals, or in small groups, to interact with people and find out about the various aspects of local life. Additionally, the seminary faculty also organizes interactive sessions with the representatives of various ethnic communities and the students. Such interactions normally take place with African-American, Bosnian, Hispanic, Indian, Irish, and Vietnamese communities in a town of 50,000-plus inhabitants. The learning that emerges from such an interaction is considered very productive by the students, despite the challenge it poses to some of their previously held views about other ethnic and religious communities.

This first-week course is followed by another common course entitled, 'Religion, Anthropology and the Human World,' which explores the religious nature of human beings and the meaning of religion for human living. Such an exploration is done against the background of biblical traditions. The students are amazed to find out how throughout history religious views were in constant conversation and influenced each other from time immemorial as human communities from different regions and areas interacted with each other. The people who are mentioned in the Bible, and the writing of the Bible itself, have been enriched with such cross-fertilization of views and visions. For this course, the students are required to do some preparatory reading and reflection prior to their arrival at the seminary. Two of the suggested books for this course that deal directly with religions and interfaith issues are *World's Religions* by Huston Smith and *Encountering God* by Diana Eck. Students are also required to read in advance *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture* by Lamin Sanneh to familiarize themselves with issues involved in the Gospel and cultural encounter.

Needless to say, from this initial broadening of horizons, other courses in the Wartburg curriculum follow trying to be faithful to the Christian tradition and also relate to contextual realities of religious pluralism. The curriculum at every stage takes cognisance of the challenges that have to be faced to bear witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ in the ever-increasing multi-faith and cultural pluralities in the Midwest region of USA where WTS is located to serve.

That does not mean that these seminaries offer a perfect type of ministerial formation for responding to interfaith challenges in the wider community. They only contribute in a small way to the larger challenge of being a Christian community and church in a world that is constantly changing. That larger challenge has to be faced by the community as a whole as its reality has changed from Christendom type of existence into a world Christian community in the midst of other religious communities offering their own answers for religious issues faced by humanity in a missional way. Today, a faith-driven person has multiple faith options. One can make choices without much social constraint in many parts of the world where secularism is the order of the day. Christianity has to bear witness in such a milieu, shunning old aggressive ways and highlighting the positive values it can offer to its adherents. For WTS, engaging in ministerial formation and affirming its historical identities, while at the same time being open to the realities of the religious pluralism in a positive way, is a grueling challenge like any other programme of theological education.

Examples like this may be numerous as interfaith concerns have been developing as an integral part of the thinking in ministerial formation around the globe. As far back as in 1985, the Programme on Theological Education and the Sub-unit on Dialogue of the World Council of Churches organized a consultation on the theme, “Ministerial Formation in a Multi-Faith Milieu: Implication of Interfaith Dialogue for Theological Education” [Amirtham/Ariarajah, 1986], which is in fact was an analysis of the work that has been carried out in a number of theological schools as well as an encouragement for those who needed to move in that direction. Since then attempts in this direction have only multiplied. However, such multiplications have also brought theological polarization regarding the aim of such ministerial equipment. What is the ultimate goal of all of these pedagogical enterprises? Is it for better understanding people of other faiths; is it also for Christians to understand themselves and their faith so that they can serve others better; is it to develop better strategies to convert people of other faiths; is it to enable Christians to do mission in a holistic way by working together for peace and justice? Christian communities are approaching these issues with different justifications as per their own theological persuasions. There are Christian communities even today who would like to keep away from any positive attitude towards the faith of the so-called ‘non-Christians’ and limit their understanding of loving their neighbors to a simple non-faith involvement at a social-relational level.

Here I would like to pose a question: Can Christians fulfill their obligation to love their neighbors (Matt. 19:19, 22:39; Mk. 12:31, 33; Lk.10: 27) without being respectful of their neighbor’s faiths and traditions? I personally think that this is impossible. If I am correct, ‘love your neighbor’, the ‘golden rule’ that Christians share with people of other historical religions, must be understood as an imperative for interfaith engagements — engaging in faith matters of neighbors of other living faiths.

### **Loving ones neighbor, what does it entail?**

Love your neighbor as yourself is not meant to be just a cognitive and theoretical accomplishment. It also demands a relational expression; in that sense, it is meant to be a practical act. The Christian perspective of loving one’s neighbor is often shaped by missiological overtones. This neighborliness is geared to bringing the truth of Christianity, and, if the situation demands, meeting physical and material needs. This is particularly true if such neighborly encounters are with people of other faiths. However, it is becoming clear that in the much debated ‘clash of cultures,’ neighborly love must extend to core worldviews of neighbors in order for genuine encounters to take place. That means the characteristics beyond the exterior attires of our neighbors (their religious traditions, beliefs, practices, and values) should be part of our love relationship. To relate to the core life of neighbors, Christians must have an attitude of patient openness even to the extent of being taught by people of other faiths. Such openness to learning is essential for evaluating Christian beliefs and practices for the sake of authentically engaging in the contemporary world with all its societal complexities. Amirtham expounds this in relation to ministerial formation as follows: “Theological teachers and students need to be helped to see that to understand the other, we need to learn not only *about* the other, but also *from* the other, and that we *need* the other in order to understand not only the other but also to understand ourselves and our faith”. [Amirtham/Ariarajah, 1985:26]



Coping with such a vision is not easy as it calls for overcoming fears and prejudices of the other, being open to being educated by the other, and being prepared for consequential reorientation of one's views as a result. It is in such a genuine relationship with the neighbor of other living faiths, that the Christian perspective of life itself is bound to be enriched and enlarged. It is in such a relationship that one is able to arrive at even greater insight into the divine engagement with humanity and with the whole of creation.

Therefore, mutual learning of religious traditions is called for on the part of all faith traditions for the inner transformation of each faith tradition to meet the challenges of the contemporary world which has drastically changed from the time of the formation of any of the historical religions. Most of the world religions today are multicultural and multinational in their membership. That phenomenon itself calls for some constant reorientation even at a simple human existential level. It demands that the gifts that each faithful brings to the tradition are received with appreciation and utilized to enlarge the horizon of the community of the faithful. Without such openness for inner transformations any productive interreligious relations and engagements are not possible.

The recognition for inner-transformation (within each religious tradition) and the need for inter-religious engagement are on the increase. One such creative experiment has been in place now for the past two years in Rotterdam, the Netherlands. It has even gained the support of the city council. It is a promotion of inter-religious dialogues through the exchange of preachers set up in the city of Rotterdam. Preachers belonging to different faith traditions are invited as guest preachers at different Christian denominational congregations, mosques, synagogues, and temples. It is about religions exercising tolerance and addressing the realities of religious pluralism. The *Ecumenical News International Bulletin* reported, "Of the 38 religious leaders scheduled to guest preach this year. 22 were Christians, eight Muslims, five Hindus, two Jews and one Baha'i. They have provided sermons in 29 Christian worship services, five Muslim, two Hindu, one Jewish and one Baha'i." [ENI, 2001:23:16] It is hoped that such close contacts between members of different faith will facilitate overcoming the existing prejudice, indifference, and discrimination.

In a number of the centers of ministerial formation and even in some of the congregational activities, visiting places of worship of other faiths and even participating in special worships are becoming increasingly common. By nature, they are still predominantly visitor programs. But involving leaders/preachers of other faiths to bring 'good tidings' on some regular basis is something unusual or unheard of. Such possibilities will help in overcoming the existing reality that people can go through their entire life without ever knowing a person of another living faith or even ever having a chance to personally listening to the religious discourse of a person of the other faith.

Red flags will go up in many centers of ministerial formation if demands are made to train people to handle preaching in worship services of other faiths. There are enough challenges already in hand in preparing preachers to cope with the demands of constantly changing Christian communities. If this challenge is expanded to prepare preachers for inter-religious contexts, the task is only going to be even tougher. But there is no escape from it, since we have as humans ventured out of sheltered and isolated communities to a global society of intermingling of people with their varied cultures and religions. Future choices of any great magnitude will have to be made while being sensitive and respectful to neighbors' cultures and religions to assure sufficient and equitable, if not fruitfully enhanced, living as individuals and societies. In the face of these realities, there seems to be no room for any complacency on the part of ministerial formation. This is the case with any discipline that is committed to the well being of humanity and hopes to undertake their task to the best of its vocational ability and integrity.

Another recent example of inter-religious solidarity comes from India. This is in regard to interfaith support given by some Christian groups and churches in India when thousands of Hindu Dalits embraced Buddhism at a mass conversion ceremony on November 4, 2001. Historically, the Indian Christian community itself is a product of a large-scale conversion of Dalits. Therefore, in this incident, when Hindu Dalits decided to opt for Buddhism rather than Christianity, Christians were able to rise above religious parochialism and perceive the whole issue from the gospel perspectives of “justice, human dignity and equality for Dalits.” They stood in solidarity with the Dalit converts in spite of the false criticism from the *Vishwa Hindu Parishad* (World Hindu Council) that the event was a “Christian conspiracy to discredit Hinduism”. [ENI, 2001:22:13] Needless to say, such an act of solidarity did not emerge at the spur of the moment but was a product of transformation from a long period of mutual engagements between the Dalits both belonging to Christian, Islam, Buddhist, and Hindu faiths in India. In that process, they transcended individual religious boundaries and expressed solidarity on the basis of fundamental religious values of dignity and equality of human beings.

These examples are indications for us of the understanding that loving and caring for one’s neighbor must include the total humanity of one’s neighbor. Such a vision and imperative demands a lot of reorientation within the Christian understanding of itself as a faith tradition in the multi-religious context and demands changes for facilitating the reorientation. Ministerial formation has quite a large share in this because, as in many traditions, formally trained and authorized leaders have a major role to play in shaping the thoughts and practices of the whole community.

The old and familiar way of categorizing people in a community in exclusive terms as ‘we’ and ‘they’ is becoming more complex. With the rapidly changing demographic situation, the issue of majority ‘we’ (belonging to one faith and/or ethnicity) as the prime people and minority ‘they’, the new comers with their faiths and ethnicities is hard to maintain. Seminaries draw people from such changing societies, which are no longer mono-religious. In the majority of cases, their graduates are not going to serve in a mono- (solely Christian denominational) religious situation unless they understand their ministry narrowly as relating only to their congregation members. So in spite of the rich legacies of being centers of strong Christian formation, theological seminaries cannot any more restrict their teaching responsibility to a mono-Christian religious tradition, because their students increasingly do not come anymore from or return to such a social environment.

## **Conclusion**

As human beings we are made differently, we have different personalities, and, as we grow up, we develop different interests, commitments, and priorities by choice or by various persuasions. All of these things add to our individual, group, and communal identities. While the differences and diversities are routinely cherished and emphasized, in times of crisis and threat from outside, it is natural for people to step back, to transcend these differences and to focus on broader community identity, in order to face the challenge with the needed solidarity depending on the severity of such a crisis and threat.

People approach differences from two broad perspectives. One is to start looking at the world, and all that is in it, from a perspective of distinctiveness of each individual person and things, and then try to see the unity that binds the whole humanity and creation. (By and large, this approach dominates the Western tradition, which shares many attributes begun with the Enlightenment.) The other approach is to start from the perspective of the ‘unity of all beings’ and then proceed to affirm and celebrate the complimentary plurality that exists in creation, thereby affirming the ‘fundamental interconnectedness of all being’. [Lerner, 2000: 43] The tendency to view other faith traditions from the perspective and distinctiveness of Christianity has generated a lot of exclusivist activities and theologies. What is required for a new ethos of globalization is an approach to viewing people of other faiths from the perspective of ‘unity of all beings’. It is always a challenge to find out how the whole is present in the particular and how a particular can be a window to the whole. Programs and institutions of theological education have a prime role in promoting this alternate approach to other faith traditions. The exact nature of shaping pedagogical schema no doubt will be governed by each context.

Today one does not need much persuasion to convince the importance of interfaith engagements. But there are a wide variety of goals that have been ascribed for such engagements depending on theological positions of each of the Christian churches, denominations, and groups. The institutions and programs for ministerial formation have to work within such constraints depending on the academic freedom that is allowed by its supporting church body. Theological training programs that are expected to be at the cutting edges of theological enterprise have to gear themselves to do their utmost to further the interfaith engagement as a core, not peripheral, concern of their ministry.

While the seminary faculty will not have total control on the formation of the ministerial candidates, it is important that the ethos of the seminary is constantly reviewed and renewed so that interfaith concerns do not slip aside. The seminary community has to strive not only to reflect, but also to embody, the ethos of interfaith realities in its community life to the fullest extent possible. The crucial issue is that the total community life (including the curriculum) itself becomes a learning atmosphere for interfaith reality so that as the candidates walk out of the school's corridors they will be equipped to deal with the multi-religious challenges. As several centers of theological learning are embarking on distance learning, the task of equipping for interfaith challenges may be further complicated.

An adequate ministerial formation to meet the challenges of multi-faith realities is a big agenda and can be adequately realized only with the total commitment of the entire Christian community. If the community is helped to see an interfaith engagement as a faith imperative, based on the reaffirmed scriptural command by Jesus to love ones neighbor as oneself, the task may become a little easier.

The massive destruction of lives and materials on September 11 did not deter people in the USA and around the world from responding to grief and loss with values of love, service, empathy, sympathy, patient care, and charity. Boundaries were crossed – religious and otherwise. Such a manifestation of the exuberant spirit is communicating, once again, that humans have tremendous potential that can go astray if not creatively engaged. Faith traditions have a crucial role in guiding the human spirit in creative directions. The *neighborly-spirited* interfaith approach is a holistic means of accomplishing this goal.

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***ECUMENICAL AND ETHICAL IMPERATIVES IN  
THEOLOGICAL RESPONSES  
TO CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES IN AFRICA<sup>1</sup>***

*Samuel Kobia*

**Introduction**

We are gathered here today at the joyful occasion of celebrating the graduation of these forty young people and to heartily congratulate them on their success. On such a day it is fitting to reflect on the kind of world for and into which these graduands have been trained and are being sent out to serve. In my view the twenty-first century must be a century that fosters relationships based on pursuit of justice and affirmation of dignity for all human beings or it will not be at all. The first year of the third millennium has been permanently marked by the events that have radically changed the world as we have known it. The bombings on September 11 of New York City and Washington, DC in the USA must be condemned for their gross violation of the sanctity of life. While the destruction of the icons of economic and military might of the only superpower in the world could well be considered as a dramatic way of expressing grievances, there is no justification whatsoever for the violent ending of life of thousands of innocent people.

In response to the bombings of the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, President Bush declared what he defines as “the first war of the twenty-first century”. As church we must take the language of war extremely seriously because it means more destruction of more innocent lives. From a Christian perspective it is not ethically and spiritually acceptable to speak lightly of war. The perpetrators of the bombings must be made to account but that ought to be done within the context of a broader commitment to justice and in the framework of international law. But besides talking of war we must look at the situation more critically.

We should be concerned with the language of war from the White House because it exhibits the mentality of religious fundamentalism strikingly similar to the language of the Taliban. Whether it is Christian or Muslim, fundamentalism and religious extremism is dangerous as we know from history. The dualistic mentality that only sees “good and evil”, “right and wrong”, and refuses to accept the moral ambiguity of human existence suggests that the only way to respond to violence is through violence. The leader of the only superpower in the world goes on to intimidate the weaker nations: you are either on our side or on the side of the terrorists, there is no third way! He asks us to condemn the killings of innocent people by the terrorists (which we of course do), but in the same breath he asks us to support the killings of other innocent people by Americans and British (which we of course can't do). Our answer should be to denounce and condemn any killings of innocent people anywhere in the world and by anybody in the world. As Christians we must say very clearly that there is an alternative way. The way of cultivating peace with justice for all; the way of restorative justice which provides true peace and security for the nations and peoples of our world.

We should gain a clear perspective of what is at stake. The world is being led on the warpath not because of the loss of six thousand lives, but more so because the security of the rich has been threatened. We are all well aware that the security of millions of poverty stricken Americans alongside with that of the majority of two-thirds of the world population is in a permanent state of threat. Their security is threatened by not only the silent violence of hunger, starvation and disease, but by real violence that leads to death albeit in less dramatic ways than the events of September 11<sup>th</sup>. But the death of the millions of the wretched of the earth does not threaten the security of the rich and powerful and therefore does not motivate the President of America to lead the world to war against poverty and injustices. Nor did the death of hundreds of Kenyans at the hands of terrorists elicit similar response from the White House. It may well be that September 11 could have been avoided if America had declared war against terrorism after the East Africa bombings of 1998. But then those who died then by the hundreds were not Americans but African whose lives matter little to the rich and powerful in the USA.

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<sup>1</sup> Graduation Address at St. Paul's United Theological College, Limuru, Kenya, 13 October 2001

The church is called to lead in seeking for the root causes of the increasing violence in the world. The September 11<sup>th</sup> bombings should serve as a wake-up call to humankind in the twenty-first century. One of the lessons to learn from those events is that security does not flow from the fountain of riches and military might. Rather security could only be guaranteed by just relations between nations and between peoples. The other lesson to learn is that the security and safety of the few will be an illusion until the security of the majority can also be realized. The reality of September 11<sup>th</sup> compels us to ask again what kind of world the human beings have been busy building in the preceding centuries of the second millennium and whether it serves humanity well to maintain the status quo.

While Africa might consider it as a noble duty to join the world in condemnation of the perpetrators of the terrible events of September 11<sup>th</sup>, Africans should also feel ethically bound and gather the courage to tell the Americans and their European allies to review their foreign policies and the way they have hitherto been running the world. Their policies towards Angola and the Democratic Republic of Congo (formerly Zaire) for instance, have in no small measure, directly and indirectly caused the death of millions of innocent people. The current war in the DRC which is a legacy of the American and Belgian involvement has claimed the death of an estimated three million people.

If the twenty-first century will be a time to right the wrongs of the previous centuries, then it must be characterized by repentance, forgiveness and reconciliation. The unacknowledged and unrepented wrongs of the past must be dealt with honestly and fully in order to recover the dignity of the victims and reclaim the humanity of the perpetrators.. In this context even the church needs to repent. The church has contributed to the building of a world that perpetuates injustice, oppression and exploitation. Even in Africa, the church has served as a lubrication of the wheels of oppression during the colonial period. In the post-colonial time some sections of the church have condoned despotic leadership and sanitized political tyrants.

At the world level the church must insist on ethical dimensions of relations between nations. In response to the September 11<sup>th</sup> events the World Council of Churches has said:

The violence of terrorism - in all its many forms - is abhorrent to all who believe human life is a gift of God and therefore infinitely precious. Every attempt to intimidate others by inflicting indiscriminate death and injury upon them is to be universally condemned. The answer to terrorism, however, cannot be to respond in kind, for this can lead only to more violence and terror. Instead a concerted effort of all nations is needed to remove any possible justification for such acts.

So long as the cries of those humiliated by unremitting injustice, by the systematic deprivation of their rights, and by the arrogance of power of those who possess unchallenged military might are ignored or neglected by a seemingly uncaring world, terrorism will not be overcome. The answer to terrorism must be found in redressing these wrongs that breed violence between and within nations.

We hope and pray that the response to the terrible tragedies of 11 September will mark a turning point for a global reassessment of our collective responsibility to heal the wounds and offer new perspectives to our world. Certainly it is this, not the language of war, that would be the finest tribute to those who lost their lives in these terrible attacks.

You are going out to practice your ministry at a time when the world is engulfed in a war that could easily spread beyond Afghanistan if not checked in good time. Most of you, if not all of you, will serve in parishes here in Kenya or elsewhere in Africa; far away from where the war is being waged. But in a globalized and globalizing world there is no place which is too far away from everywhere else. Moreover, we are living at a time of globalization of terrorism. Kenyans know all too well about this because in 1998 we went through the trauma of the Nairobi bombings and their aftermath. As church ministers we might live under the illusion that we are safe in the confines of our sanctuaries be they cathedrals or simple church buildings.

But let us not forget that in the world of enormous disparities and the ever widening gap between the rich and the poor, every town has its local equivalent of the World Trade Center. The increasing robbery with violence in our towns, and even in the villages, signal dangerous trends that could only be ignored at our own peril. As theologians we must read the signs of the times, interpret them and do something about them. Ecumenical theologians must have a critical mind. You should have the Bible on the one hand and a newspaper on the other because your ministry is in the real world, and the real world is a world of politics.

### **Ecumenical social responsibility**

At the core of the Gospel is Jesus' command that we seek unity of the church and unity of humankind. Time has come for the African people and African churches to revisit the respective visions for the unity they seek. With the end of official apartheid in South Africa the end of an era for institutions associated with Pan-Africanism and internal self-determination, a creative exit from the euphoria of the sixties and a clear entry into the definitive ground of alternatives is urgent indeed. This is already symbolized by the historic gesture and ideological shifts within the Organization of African Unity (OAU). While the transition of OAU to the African Union (AU) falls short of Kwame Nkrumah's original vision of a United Africa, it nevertheless signifies an effort in the direction of consolidated regional co-operation which cannot be ignored by the African churches, especially the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC). The search for unity within the sphere of faith cannot ignore these major developments however frustrated or illusive they may seem. Institutional ecumenism will not survive without reading the signs of the times and translation of such insights into the moral fabric of Christian witness.

Being church in Africa today means we must take an active role in laying ethical and spiritual foundations of the society. We must insist that ethical values be put at the center of governance, including dealing with the sensitive issue of use, misuse and abuse of power. In advocating for churches' involvement in democratization processes, we are not unaware of the dilemmas that confront the church leadership in Africa. Some church leaders in Africa, like elsewhere in the world, are faced with a theological dilemma of how to confront the abuse of power without appearing to be disloyal to the state authority. Very often these church leaders are reminded (and some remind themselves) of Romans 13, and that they have a duty to obey the rulers. Many genuinely want to be loyal, but there is the question of whether it is morally right to be loyal to tyrants. My contention is that when any given human authority is no longer accountable to its constituency, then it loses the moral imperative for its very existence. Disobedience against tyranny is an appeal to a higher moral authority namely justice. The integrity of authority as a gift to society is intrinsic to the establishment of a just and peaceful social order. And so in Romans 13 loyalty is obedience to the harmony inherent in the systems and structures of self-governance. Obedience to human authority is not

submission to the inevitable fate of unlimited power but rather an exercise of just relationship between the led and the leader. As theologians we will strengthen our ecumenical social responsibility by deepening our theological self-understanding of the church as a community of critical discernment and critical participation in social and political processes. The prophetic tradition is not in conflict with the basic tenets of civility but rather how the church engages in political change while avoiding political co-option. This raises the question of whether and how churches should/could build alliances with institutions of the civil society to bring pressure to bear on the powers that be. The church cannot be involved in direct politics of power transfer, i.e. the very crude stuff of *Realpolitik* games which is often guided by self-serving intrigues and the blind use of force. Neither could she be drawn into internal political arrangements of the parties involved especially in the event of an election. Rather the church intervention in political crises ought to be focused on the vision beyond intra-party or state politics as defined by the notions of power transfer. Above all, critical solidarity with the voiceless and unceasing adherence to the ethical responsibility as custodian of social justice remains paramount.

With regard to the question of democracy, the conflictual dimensions of western dialectical systems can inflame and deepen the ethnic disparities within church membership. The idea of inclusivity and holistic participation is very critical for the quality of prophetic witness to the political society by churches in Africa. This must go beyond structural changes in the internal governance; it must be a translation of deep commitment and ethical responsibility on the part of church leaders. The churches must learn how to advocate for immediate political change while promoting a culture of participation. Contemporary theological training and curriculum should be designed and equipped to respond to the prevailing ideological and social consequences of global and local trends on the continent. Basic consensus on clarity and links between theoretical understanding of the mission and calling of church related institutions and the realities facing the continent must be addressed and acted upon. This would supplement the high profile human rights advocacy and corporate imaging of ecumenical institutions which are the main sphere of public visibility.

Exploring alternative pedagogies for democracy as a way of life within community should challenge the African political elite's preoccupation with democracy as form rather than process. To establish genuine democracy in Africa it is necessary to have a hard look at and deal very intentionally with the content and the relational character of democracy. Until, and unless the African elite is liberated from the captivity of using the democratization process as a stepping stone to political positions of power and to legitimize their domination of the public sphere, democracy is in danger of being stripped of its communitarian value. That would be a repeat of what happened with the attainment of political independence in the 1960s. Instead of trying to discern the possibilities and potentialities in the new historical situation for societal alternatives, the political leaders saw the situation as one of opportunities to be seized to fulfil egotistic interests based on ethnic clientelism. In the rush to grab the spoils of the Cold War, even the intellectuals abandoned their role of helping to articulate the rich experiences acquired during the many years of struggles against the social injustices in the society. Instead they opted for appointed positions in the unjust systems and structures, or rushed to occupy spaces created in the emerging opposition



political parties and the proliferating non-governmental organizations.

The suffering and misery experienced in Africa today is an invitation to the vocation of restoration of human and people's dignity. It is further an invitation to awakening of the hearts and minds of her own people, the authentic hope towards a new life of abundance and fulfillment. But until and unless the question of the dignity of every individual person is affirmed, respected and upheld, democratic experiments in Africa will remain hobbled and futile without focus. In modern capitalist economy to be is to have money and to become is to consume. From the African traditional worldview the individuality of a person, as created by God, is all that matters and cannot be substituted or valued for relations with others. The person's dignity and worth is not, therefore, incumbent upon one's monetary wealth. To be is to be in relation with the other human persons and with the Creator.

But the question of dignity is not exclusive to the realm of human experiences, it especially includes institutions that also mediate those experiences. Part of the process of restoration of dignity is reconstruction of the legitimacy of the state, of social interventions, and of leadership as prerequisite to the success of democracy as dignified participation in public policy processes in Africa. Hence the quest to reclaim, restore and recover the dignity of the people of Africa constitutes one of the greatest challenges of the twenty-first century. For the churches to respond meaningfully to this challenge they must invest in building of strong institutions in order to become financially self-reliant which is a prerequisite for self-confidence.

St. Paul's as an ecumenical endeavor continues to provide the crucially important space for nurturing Christian unity. My hope and earnest prayer is that the sponsors of this dignified academic institution will strengthen their resolve to make it even stronger by resisting temptations for denominational aggrandizement. The vision for a strong, well-endowed ecumenical university has never been more urgent especially vis a vis the general trends toward assertions of denominational identity.

Each individual person is so important that God knows him or her by name. God takes the time to create each individual in a special way. Molding of human beings is not a mass production in an assembly line but a careful intricate business of the Creator (Ps. 139). There are numerous biblical references and stories about individuals who God called by their names; Adam and Eve, Abraham, Sarah and Hagar, Moses and Samuel, prophets like Jeremiah and Nehemiah. Jesus also calls his disciples each by name, as well as other individuals like Mary, Martha and Lazarus. This calling of the individual by name signifies that the worthiness of the person before God, and hence not defined by the external or even the internal qualities of a person. Neither is it based on the subjective relationship with God. Rather the relationship of each individual person is based on the objective likeness to God. By virtue of having been created, each individual has, independently of all others and all else, a relationship with God and vice versa. The criteria, against which the worthiness of a person is to be measured is the reverence of life, that is the God in every person, and not against utilitarian criteria derived from the enlightenment that modernity tries to impose. Defining of the human dignity of individual persons is to be understood in terms of the nature of the being that is human. It is not to be confused with the radical humanism, which defines the individual human person as the subject of understanding and will.

### **The challenge of HIV/AIDS**

The most chilling nightmare of the HIV/AIDS is the fact that it brings about a slow, gradual painful process of death. Communities, families and individuals are helpless as they watch their own sons and daughters bound in hopelessness. The misery that comes with death leaves so many unanswered questions in the minds and hearts of the bereaved. The calamity visits not just individuals but a whole range of persons who relate to the immediate victims. The cumulative effects of HIV/AIDS bring down productivity in national economies, demoralize populations and leads to social nihilism. People give up

living and societies are engulfed with the fear of the unknown. The African ethical framework whereby for an individual to be, he or she must be and be seen to be part of an extended family or community is the vital source of moral strength to manage the disease. The outbreak of AIDS pandemic is challenging Africans anew to rethink the legacy of communitarian ethics. There is need for a responsible approach to sexuality whereby we go deeper and further than an isolated change of behavior. Stigmatization of human sexuality is not the solution. There is the terrifying tendency among some churches to read into and even transform the whole phenomenon of HIV/AIDS into the apocalyptic event - God's curse upon humankind! - and that Africans are the perpetual bearers of this curse. Such simple misreading of calamities is dangerous and only serves to alienate the victims of the pandemic. It is urgent that a new culture of understanding human sexuality is allowed to evolve, whereby sexual encounter is seen from its communal dimensions instead of only stressing a one-dimensional and individual-oriented self-realization as the highest value. The indigenous communitarian ethics of human sexuality must be revisited.

While sexual encounter is primarily between individuals, the outcomes have always had communal implications. A case in point is when the outcome is reproduction or unfortunately catching of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), especially AIDS. In the latter case, the matter gains greater currency in case of sickness and or eventual death of the parties concerned. In either case the community is involved. But there is a link to the global economic order in the spread of HIV/AIDS. Encouraging illicit trading in drugs, and recycling of dirty money deprives the individual persons of dignity in the most brutal manner. Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) have exacerbated the spread of HIV/AIDS in ways that are sometimes not fully acknowledged. Poverty and gender must be at the center of our ministry and our concern for fuller understanding of HIV/AIDS.

There is a need for communities to develop social skills of alleviating apathy and instead accompany those who are living with the reality of death. Communities of the resurrection, based on a profound theological understanding of the moral power of innocence are vital indeed.

The central idea here is that for the African the value and struggle for life has always been the source and inspiration of all endeavors. So the tragedy is that the very means by which human life comes into being and linked to a moral cosmology becomes the source of death and threat of nonbeing. That is why new theologies of life in the context of HIV/AIDS pandemic would be liberating indeed. The main approach then would be to identify and analyze the forces that sustain, protect, enhance and enrich life, and the forces that seek to destroy life. Themes of hope beyond the void, spiritual and ethical exposition on the meaning of life beyond death using the ordinary languages of the people would enrich the discourse on alternative ways of living with HIV/AIDS. The values of equanimity that knit the web of relations of kinship and community should enable people to experience collective resurrection in the face of death.

There are other dimensions of the crisis of health care in Africa that specifically affect women in relation to violence. Contemporary medical training and practice in most African countries do not respond to medical and social consequences of domestic violence, rape and access to emergency obstetric care for disenfranchised women. In cases where more than 50% of the population are living below the poverty line, hence feminization of poverty, a large proportion of the percentage are women of childbearing age. Over the past ten years domestic violence and its consequences has become a global public health issue. The absence of clarity and links between public health policy and human rights advocacy has led to a crisis to the response to the emerging women health needs. The situation is further aggravated by the absence of institutional response to this predicament. Due to the fact that public health care systems have become dysfunctional and even though the private sector is providing a critical response to the health care needs in many African countries, it is imperative that churches revive the traditional component of mission hospitals as part of evangelization. The receding role of the government in providing health care is evidenced by the growing involvement of the private and non-governmental sector. Nearly 55% of health care service delivery are offered by the latter while most mission hospitals have been taken over by governments. It is therefore urgent that an alternative institutional framework is established to fill the lacuna and consolidate the links between the socio-economic realities and health care needs especially for women in Africa.

The erosion of communal social safety net structures, which guaranteed security of the widows, the orphans and the poor in rural Africa, further aggravates the health care situation. It is imperative that a framework of wider concerted ecumenical initiative be established for the continent to consolidate resources and accompany local communities in their struggles to bring new hope among the poor and the suffering.

New methodologies and preventive measures against the spread of HIV/AIDS especially among young people is necessary. Building institutions with ethical responsibilities and moral life especially in the midst of communities is essential. The churches must now set a new pace to reverse the trends of apathy and nihilism among the youth and provide the space of enthusiasm and courage to hope. She must provide the space for the development of new schools of leadership, responsibility and democracy for the immediate future. Such schools or sites of learning and spiritual rebirth, will revive new movements for alternative moral values. They will be based on the curriculum of the moral traditions of abundant life and hopefully help to avert the looming process of social death and apathy in Africa. Such schools will not only be the market place of new ideas for the future but also the place where new communities of memory will reside and communities of the resurrection are born. They will be places where people go to encounter dialogue and celebrate diversity and sexuality as a gift of creation and not the occasion for conflict or death. The growth of new forms of ecumenical witnessing in which communities are revived because hope has been made possible is the great promise for Africa. It shall be the greatest gift amid suffering and humiliation that Africa will again offer the world.

HIV/AIDS is health and ethical equivalent to colonial oppression that made Africans to say no, and came up with a vision and a project to reclaim the dignity violated by that oppression. Vis a vis HIV/AIDS Africa is today challenged to galvanize ourselves and in a concerted way use all resources, material, moral and spiritual to struggle against this silent genocide (see Plan of Action in this volume).

### **Moral crisis and the challenge to the church**

Moral leadership is by far the most critical area where the church is expected to play a specific role. My contention is that even more than the political and economic crises, the moral crisis poses the greatest challenge in Africa - and indeed in the world in general. There are serious ethical questions both at Africa and world levels that we must be prepared to give leadership in addressing.

One area in which the moral leadership of the church is critical is in fighting corruption. Corruption and graft exist in all countries of the world. In some countries of Europe what passes as commission could be considered as corruption in others. So we cannot say that corruption only exists in the South. However, a society where corruption and graft are institutionalized and generally accepted as a norm for behavior will hardly progress in anything. Our own country, Kenya, is a living example of such a society. There is no doubt that a drastic change in ethical and moral climate in Africa is necessary for the

continent to be in a position to utilize and allocate its resources justly and efficiently.

The basis of colonial rule introduced a governance paradigm that suggested that the system be devoid of any ethical or just consideration towards the people being governed. By virtue of the fact that the people were subjects and not citizens they did not feel any obligation to respect, trust or obey the colonial government. Not only has this paradigm persisted hitherto, it has been perfected through the privatization of the state. The phenomenon of private state is at the heart of corruption. It is interesting to note that contemporary theories of political development in Africa continue to focus on corruption as the major impediment to modernization of the nation state in Africa without being critical of the model of the nation state itself which is undergoing gradual but radical changes even in its locale of origin in Europe. Re-imagining the state should therefore be essentially an exercise in seeking ways and means of addressing the root causes of corruption. This requires the widening of public space through broader participation in public policy formulation. The privatized state guides and leads to poor public policy and hence a multitude of problems ranging from incompetence of public delivery systems, ignorance and at the end of the spectrum, poverty. So the cancer of corruption in Africa with its origin in and sustenance by the colonial factors then becomes directly linked to the problem of leadership. This is because as the state is gradually put in the exclusive disposal and in the private hands of whoever is heading its public structures, accountability and transparency are severely undermined.

I insist on the church's role in fighting corruption not only just because it is Christian to do so. It is also African. From the traditional African point of view to talk of a corrupt leader was a contradiction in terms. A leader was one whose moral integrity was unquestionable.

Each community in Africa had its own traditional way of dealing with corrupt leaders. Almost without exception the punishment was severe. In Senegal the king had to resign and this was signaled by a distinct drumbeat. Following an elaborate and exhaustive public trial a Yoruba king was required to go into the inner corner of his palace and commit suicide. In Meru notorious crimes against the community were punishable by death through crucifixion on the ground at a cross-roads, or by stoning to death with the closest relative throwing the first stone. That is how serious the issue of corruption was taken in the African indigenous governance.

In conclusion I suggest we ask ourselves some crucial questions: where are the sites in which Africans buried the truths that made it possible for the leaders to live such dignified lives? Where is the crucible of the spirit that enabled our people to name and deal ruthlessly with 'the intolerable' in community thereby sustaining hope for life with dignity for all the people? Whatever happened to the generosity of the spirit that characterized the qualities of an African leader?

I assume that in your training you did not ask such questions much less find their answers. Therefore I would like to leave you with the questions as you go out to serve God and humanity. It is through deep engagement with the communities that you will begin a process of critical discernment which should be an integral part of your ministry. It is by answering such questions that we will begin to deal in earnest with the issue of spirituality as a foundation of our society. And there is no more precious gift the church could give to Africa at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

**INHABITING GOD'S GARDEN  
ARE WE IN THE GLOBAL VILLAGE OR GOD'S GARDEN?<sup>1</sup>**

**Musa W. Dube**

*Depending on the angle from which one approaches it, globalization is seen either as a blessing or a curse, as a buzzword or a swearword. (Tulloch 1998: 100)*

*Ever more rapid change is a characteristic of the present period of history... Over-exploitation of natural resources and destruction of the environment are inevitable consequence. These developments have blinded human beings to life of nature. Like an impermeable wall, the technological means which humans have created prevents them from perceiving creation in its own dignity ( Vischer 1998: 40)*

### **Introduction**

In today's economic language, we hear about globalization. It is constantly said that we are living in the global economic era. Judging by the many ringing bells, it seems it is a new era. Yet some argue that it is an era that has been creeping in for many decades. We also hear many conflicting debates: Some say globalization is the miracle economic era, a blessing. Some say globalization is an ungodly exploitative global structure—a curse. For some of us, globalization is best captured by the image of demonstrators in World Trade Organization whose protests seem to be quite unstoppable, while inside the conference room top world leaders hold talks about the world economy and sign agreements. Whatever this globalization is, it is upon us. We will therefore do well to pause and ask ourselves:

- What is globalization?
- How is it related to the earth as God's good garden?
- What are the ethics and effects of globalization?
- Does the Lord's prayer provide us with a vision to resist globalisation?
- How should we position ourselves in relation to the global economic era?

### **What is globalization?**

There are many definitions given for the meaning of globalization. The following are some of the definitions. Globalization is:

A "process which has led to the **creation of a single**, international (global) financial or capital **market**. It happened in stages over the last twenty or thirty years and its effects are nothing short of revolutionary" (Christopher Lind 1995:31).

The **absorption** of all countries and systems **into one**... a larger increase in the volume, speed and complexity of financial and direct investment flows and a multiplication of financial markets, again involving greater integration of developing countries..." (Peter Tulloch 1998:101).

[It] refers to **trade** as well as financial capital, their global **mobility**, their **speed of growth** and their **volume**. Globalization also implies the **weakening of national** and regional policies as well as the increasing role-played by technological innovations and value added information. Globalization refers as well to knowledge generation and **accumulation**, and above all to a central drive for the conquest of markets and a greater **commodification** of a greater variety of products and services. Finally globalization also implies cultural imperialism and the homogenization of US pop culture and the English language as universal mileposts for cultural exchange (Yassine Fall 2000: 76-77).

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<sup>1</sup> A sermon preached at the ECLof meeting "The African Regional Workshop", Harare, 28 July to 4 August 2001

The third stage of colonialism that appeared under the label of globalization ... is **more hegemonic**: market was introduced as an exclusive agency for individual and social mediation... and **money with capital M** is promoted as the storehouse of value, rather than a medium of exchange... **Market now has control** over social, economic, political and cultural relationships of people. (EATWOT-Asian Theological Conference 2000: 218)

### **Analysis of the definitions**

Some of the phrases that reappears amongst these different writers are “**creation** of global market...”//”the **absorption** of all...into one..”// “the **weakening** of national, regional or state...” Words that characterize globalization are “**market, speed, ’greater volume, ’information, ’finance, ’ and ’commodification..**” These words give us a picture of this global village economy.

But when we talk about the globe and we speak of globalization as the creation of a single market economy, an integration of all into one, it may seem this is not total opposition to God’s will: Didn’t God create the world, the earth, the globe—whatever you may wish to call it, as one? Didn’t God create all things in the earth as connected and interdependent? I am sure we would all agree that God never created nations or boundaries. If we agree, should we not, then be celebrating globalization as the final realization of God’s will for the world? Should we not be celebrating that finally human beings have realized that the earth was created as one by God and for all?

Indeed, God created the earth—this globe interconnected and interdependent. But when we speak of globalization we have to ask if it respects God’s garden—its goodness, its interconnectedness, its sacredness? We have to ask if it seeks to keep the earth and all its forms of life sacred. We have to ask if it seeks to empower all people—regardless of the race, gender, nationality, age, and class—as God intended when God created the heavens and the earth. We need to ask if it is sustainable. We need to ask if it promotes good custodianship—highlighting that we do not own the earth; rather that the earth and all that is in it belongs to God. The resources of the earth have been loaned to us, not only to use but also to repay back with profit! Indeed Lucas Vischer holds that there is an ecological prize that is paid in globalization. He points out that:

The World Trade Organization has established a committee on Trade and Environment, but it is no surprise that this body is seen as an element alien to the WTO, with its impact on its work... Agreement which set or seem to set limits to production, trade and consumption contradict the spirit of free competition, which underlines the project of globalization. They will be combated at all levels in the name of competitiveness. Again and again the thesis is defended that the conservation of resources and protection of the environment in general can be safely be left to the mechanism of the world market (1998: 42)

For us to celebrate globalization, we also need to ask: who is globalising and who is getting globalized. Can we say all the members of the earth community are equal actors, or do we have some being acted upon? Can we say all the members of the earth communities have access to the resources that God put under our custodianship? Who is creating the global village, absorbing all into one and weakening nations: Who is doing it and why?

Answering the question of what gave birth to globalization, Mohau Pheko holds that labor in transnational companies (TNC's) home countries was becoming more expensive. **The search for more profits became the search for cheap labor.** This gave rise to the strategy of export-oriented production in developing countries where labor costs lower than in the USA or Europe. Production was to take place in the developing world...and then exported to the USA and Europe."

The search for access to all countries, logically led to the promotion of "**trade liberalization**" that is, policies "which would allow goods and services and money to move easily across the borders" (90). These policies have led our governments here to seek to "attract foreign investors' to come and do business in our countries, to create jobs for us—so we hear. Globalization has also led to what is often referred to as deregulation and privatization. **Deregulation** is the move to "reduce the state role as a producer and provider of services and promoter of social welfare (92)." **Privatization** refers to the selling of state assets to the private sector and the withdrawal of the state...to allow the private sector to take over these areas" (92)

Needless to say, the globalization advocates can give us impressive pictures of the wonders of globalization. Those who oppose it, paint an equally horrible picture of globalization. No one denies that some reap profit from globalization—for it was created for such. It is the process and the prize at which these profits are reaped that is highly contested. It is therefore important for us members of the earth community and all those who believe that the earth and everything in it belongs to the Lord, to ask: "whose village is this "global village"? Is it God's village? What are the values of the global village economy? The answers to these questions will determine for us, if globalization is consistent with the ethics of God's good garden for all people and for all forms of life on earth. Let us glance at some of the **ethics** of globalization and its **effects** on people to judge if it abides by the rules of God's garden.

### **You shall judge globalization by its ethics and effects**

Undoubtedly, the above descriptions highlight that globalization is about "maximization of profits," mostly by companies from developed countries. It was from its beginning a search for profits that has led to the breaking down of national boundaries, the weakening of state, privatization, deregulation and trade liberalization. What do we people of Africa and third world gain? We have been told that privatization creates high productivity. We constantly hear that the TNCs come here to create jobs for us. But, clearly they are not so charitable as they are made to appear. They are pursuing the maximization of profit and come into our countries to pursue this vigorously. In developed countries TNCs "companies demand that unions "roll back" their wages and benefits or they will move their plants to...Mexico." (Linda 1995:40) In developing countries the "jobs created by TNCs "are low skilled, badly paid and unprotected by labor and health regulations," (Pheko 2000:93).

Unfortunately, this means that the average person in Third world loses many other benefits as their own business cannot compete with the seemingly cheaper TNCs; they lose their social welfare benefits as their nations and governments succumb to the demands of globalization policies of deregulation and privatization. It also means that while companies from the developed countries can take their business to developing nations where labor will be cheaper, the same is hardly applicable to developing countries & Africa. It is hardly possible for the developing nations to move and settle their business in developed nations—for they could not afford it there. With the weakening of the state, the question now is who provides health, education, social security and other social services if all is increasingly privatized in developing nations? Who ensures that all that the environment is protected from abuse? Could we say globalization creates a more just earth and allows all members of the earth community the right to live? I believe it is not difficult for us to answer no. But let us hear what researchers in globalization say about its ethics and effects.

According to the Asian theological Conference, which highlights that globalization has defied market beyond human dignity,

Market now has control over social, economic, political and cultural relationships of people. ...Success in the market, however, was translated in relation to one's ability to convert all realities into commodities. Therefore, **people** are turned into labor or prostitute, **nature** as land or raw materials or golf parks and **culture** as souvenirs in the international tours market...

Christopher Lind, whose research focused on the impact of globalization on Canadian farmers, writes that, the ethics of globalization are characterized by competitiveness, domination and indifference, as opposed to cooperation, solidarity and compassion (39). According to Lind

the net effect of this... elevation of **competitiveness** as the dominant moral norm is to subordinate questions of social justice to questions of economic efficiency. Instead of asking what is the most economically efficient means of establishing a just society, we are now asking how much social injustice are we prepared to tolerate. (1995: 40)

But we must not forget that globalization was designed to maximize profit by its architects—who indeed harvest good harvests. Pheko thus writes: “the new World trade system is both complex and contradictory. Research shows an overwhelming advantage for the highly industrialized countries, giving a potential trade expansion of \$139 billion to the EU, Japan and USA. Africa on the other hand will actually suffer losses of 2.6 billion” (91) She further points out that

While TNCs gain the largest share of this global expansion, the income gap disparities between the riches 20% of the world has grown from appropriation of 1.30 in the 1960's to 1.62 in the 1990'S. On a total of 3.9 billion people, 70% women have to survive on the equivalent of \$2.00 per day, \$715 PER ANNUM. There are 358 billionaires mainly in the North some in the South...who own more than the combined income of 40% of the world's population (92).

This position is also held by Tolluch, who points out that, “although statistics show a general increase in economic welfare, relative income distribution has worsened in many cases,” 103.

We know and can see that those who are globalising the world are not seeking to uphold the dignity of all the members of the earth community—they are not seeking to maintain the balance and sacredness of all members. They are not seeking to ensure the equal participation of all and to maintain liberating interdependence of all. They are not seeking to promote good custodianship. They are not seeking to promote justice to all. Globalization is clearly inconsistent with the ethics of God's garden, for it is not seeking the earth all its members sacred to God, but is driven by a search for profit that destroys the environment and people alike.

Many of us may very well feel powerless over such a highly powerful force and sometimes hidden force, that has come to define our lives and God's world. What should we do? Should we go with the saying, that if you cannot beat them, join them or shall we assert the ethics of God's garden? I believe that it is now more than ever that we must assert the ethics of God's good garden for all members of the earth community. We must underline that when God created the earth, God saw to it that all was good. That is all members were created sacred, with liberating interdependence as well as with the right to life. We must assert that our role as members of the earth community is to ensure that the earth and everything in it remains good.



## **Let your kingdom come on earth as in heaven**

Since the earth and everything in it, was created by God, there is an undeniable sense in which the globe belongs to God. There is a sense in which realizing this means that the global economy should be created through the values of God's intention for the world. That is, **the global village should be God's Global Village. It must be God's good garden:**—its resources must remain accessible to all people regardless of gender, race creed, political beliefs or socio-economic status. But the human economic, political and social development must protect and sustain the integrity of God's creation as a whole.

For this, I would like us to remind ourselves one of the most popular biblical texts; namely, the Lord's Prayer. It is said that one day, the disciples of Jesus said to him, "Teach us how to pray, (Lk 11:1). In response, Jesus said, "Pray in this way:

Our Parent/Father in heaven  
Hallowed be your name.  
Your Kingdom come  
**Your will be done**  
**On earth as it is in heaven**  
Give us this day our daily bread  
And forgive us our debts  
As we also have forgiven our debtors  
And do not bring us to temptation  
But rescue us from the evil one (Matt 6: 9-13)

I think it is significant that the disciples of Jesus, those who were always with him; those who got the benefits of the secrets of the kingdom (Mk 4:10-11), at one point said to Jesus, "teach us how to pray." Are there moments that we the believers need to learn how to pray, despite our longstanding relationship with God? Indeed so. Jesus was not surprised by this request but taught the disciples how to pray—a prayer that we still recite many times over. This indeed is the only prayer that Jesus taught to us, the church. I believe that the fact that we recite it many times, underlines that it carries some of the most central ethics of God's good garden. We need to listen again to the Lord's prayer and the challenges it puts to our Christian lives in this age of the global village.

One of the lines that I find quite instructive in the Lord's prayer is, "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven," v.10. Many times as communities of faith, when confronted with a corrupt world, an unjust world, we do not hesitate to say, "this world is not my home, I am just passing by." When we confront poverty, we say, "I long to gain my treasures waiting—up on the other side, beyond tomorrow." We do not hesitate to sing that "I am going, to a city, where the streets, with gold are laid, where the tree of life is blooming and the roses never fade..." We have no lack of songs about heaven, which tell that there will be no sorrow, no pain, no lack, no enmity, no injustice, no death. Many times this helps us to ignore or to tolerate the injustice that surround us. As someone has said, we walk with our feet in heaven—where all is good, where justice prevails. I congratulate you as the Christian church that in whatever way that we imagine heaven we have imagined it as a perfect place—where the tree of life is blooming!

However, I am glad also to remind you that far from the image of heaven making us to be indifferent to suffering, corruption, injustice, poverty here on earth—it should challenge us otherwise. If we walk with our feet in heaven, we should bring that heaven here on earth. We must bring the blooming tree of life down to this earth. Jesus has taught us to pray that **God's will in heaven should be established here on earth as well.** When we pray this prayer, everyday, we are not, as people have said, pouring ourselves with opium of inactivity. Rather, we are pledging to be partners with God in working for the establishment of heaven here on earth. We are saying, every time when we say these words, "Our God, here we are. We are ready to be the soldiers of your kingdom here on earth. We are ready to build heaven on earth. We are ready to be custodians of the earth. We are ready to keep the earth and all its members sacred."

It follows that as worshipers, those who pray that “the will of God should be established on earth as in heaven,” we should be poised to resist the injustice of globalization, by entering and making business deals that counteract its ethics of domination, indifference, competitiveness, destruction of the earth and of maximization of profit. That is, we must counteract globalization ethics that disregard that all forms of life on earth are sacred to God. We must counteract the policies of globalizations that deny many members of the earth community to have access to its resources—by asserting the ethics of God’s good Garden. We must counteract globalization by promoting and insisting on the ethics of earth sacredness, earth goodness, social justice, solidarity and sharing, participation and custodianship and liberating interdependence for all the members of the earth community. Heaven must be established on earth.

As we go back to our respective homes, contexts, countries, programmes and projects—we shall be carrying our business in contexts of a global village economy. Many of us live in countries that are still actively working on trade liberation, deregulation and privatization policies. Many of us live where trees and forests have been destroyed in pursuit for profit. Many of us live in political contexts where our economies have been drastically affected by structural adjustments—a process championed by multilateral financial institutions to pave the way for globalization. But well—I send you to brighten the corner of your residence by upholding the vision of God’s good garden. I send you back to reclaim the global village as God’s global village—the good garden that must nurture us all as we struggle to maintain its sacredness.

May you hear God calling you out from your hiding—and realize that we are not powerless against the forces of globalization that are invading our countries and world.

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**Plan of Action:  
The Ecumenical Response to HIV/AIDS  
in Africa**

**GLOBAL CONSULTATION  
ON THE ECUMENICAL RESPONSE  
TO THE CHALLENGE OF HIV/AIDS IN AFRICA**  
*Nairobi, Kenya - 25-28 November 2001*

“...the global HIV/AIDS epidemic, through its devastating scale and impact, constitutes a global emergency and one of the most formidable challenges to human life and dignity, as well as to the effective enjoyment of human rights, which undermines social and economic development throughout the world and affects all levels of society – national, community, family and individual....

Africa, in particular sub-Saharan Africa, is currently the worst-affected region, where HIV/AIDS is considered a state of emergency which threatens development, social cohesion, political stability, food security and life expectancy and imposes a devastating economic burden, and that the dramatic situation on the continent needs urgent and exceptional national, regional and international action.”

— *Declaration of Commitment*  
*United Nations General Assembly Special*  
*Session on HIV/AIDS*  
*25-27 June 2001*

“It is now common knowledge that in HIV/AIDS, it is not the condition itself that hurts most (because many other diseases and conditions lead to serious suffering and death), but the stigma and the possibility of rejection and discrimination, misunderstanding and loss of trust that HIV positive people have to deal with.”

— *Rev. Canon Gideon Byamugisha*  
*Namirembe Diocese, Anglican Church of*  
*Uganda*

“He was despised and rejected by others; a man of sorrows and acquainted with infirmity; and as one from whom others hide their faces he was despised, and we held him to no account. Surely he has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases; yet we accounted him stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his bruises we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we all have turned to our own way, and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth. By a perversion of justice he was taken away. Who could have imagined his future? For he was cut off from the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people. They made his grave with the wicked and his tomb with the rich, although he had done no violence and there was no deceit in his mouth.”

- *Isaiah 53, 3-9 (NRSV)*

## **Preamble**

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This Plan of Action is the outcome of a dialogue between three groups of partners: churches, ecumenical and church-related organizations in Africa; churches, ecumenical and church-related organizations in Europe and North America; and the World Council of Churches. The Plan is part of the response, by these groups of partners, to the urgent challenge presented by the epidemic of HIV/AIDS: a challenge to which all religious organizations have been struggling to respond, which is depopulating Africa faster than any calamity since the slave trade.

Churches engaged early with HIV/AIDS, and many have excellent care, education and counseling programs. In spite of this, in most parts of Africa, the situation continues to deteriorate. Accordingly, this Plan seeks not to replace existing actions by churches, but to add an extra, ecumenical dimension. The church is an influential and powerful institution, with the potential to bring about change. The intention is that its activities become more effective, efficient and sustainable as a result of greater coordination, better networking, strengthened communication, and also improved mechanisms for working together, building on each other's experience and success, and avoiding unnecessary duplication of effort.

But the challenge to the churches is felt at a deeper level than this. As the pandemic has unfolded, it has exposed fault lines that reach to the heart of our theology, our ethics, our liturgy and our practice of ministry. Today, churches are being obliged to acknowledge that we have – however unwittingly – contributed both actively and passively to the spread of the virus. Our difficulty in addressing issues of sex and sexuality has often made it painful for us to engage, in any honest and realistic way, with issues of sex education and HIV prevention. Our tendency to exclude others, our interpretation of the scriptures and our theology of sin have all combined to promote the stigmatization, exclusion and suffering of people with HIV or AIDS. This has undermined the effectiveness of care, education and prevention efforts and inflicted additional suffering on those already affected by the HIV. Given the extreme urgency of the situation, and the conviction that the churches do have a distinctive role to play in the response to the epidemic, what is needed is a rethinking of our mission, and the transformation of our structures and ways of working.

This Plan does not call for uniformity. Africa is the home of many realities, and what works in one place may not work in another. What it does attempt to achieve is a new and realistic initiative which will make it possible for church leaders and their congregations to speak honestly about HIV and AIDS, and to act practically in response to it.

“When my cousin was dying of AIDS, he found it easy to tell his family and friends about the disease. In his final days we gathered the family together to say goodbye, and discussed with Mathunya the plans for his funeral. We asked him what he wanted to happen at the service, and he said, ‘I want you to tell them the truth that I died of AIDS.’ So we planned a service that could celebrate his life and educate those who came to the funeral, especially the young people.

At his funeral, my grandmother walked to the front of the church and laid her hand on her grandson’s coffin, and said, ‘My grandson no longer has to suffer with AIDS.’ Then, with her hand still on his coffin, she turned to the pulpit and said to the preacher who was about to preach to the people gathered in the church, **‘Now...talk to them freely about this disease. To us it is not a shame.’**”

We have heard the urgent plea, **“Now...talk to them freely about this disease.”** In committing ourselves to this Plan, this is what the churches are saying.

The churches are living with HIV/AIDS. God’s children are dying of AIDS. As people of faith we have done much, and yet there is much we have avoided. We confess our silence. We confess that sometimes our words and deeds have been harmful and have denied the dignity of each person. We preach the good news “that all may have life”, and yet we fear that we have contributed to death.

It is time to speak the truth. It is time to act only out of love. It is time to overcome fatigue and denial. And it is time to live in hope.

The churches have strengths, they have credibility, and they are grounded in communities. This offers them the opportunity to make a real difference in combating HIV/AIDS. To respond to this challenge, the churches must be transformed in the face of the HIV/AIDS crisis, in order that they may become a force for transformation — bringing healing, hope, and accompaniment to all affected by HIV/AIDS.

We have learned some practical lessons. We cannot speak of “them” and “us” when it comes to HIV/AIDS. The pain and fear of this disease have touched us all, but people living with HIV/AIDS are our greatest resource. We must no longer speak of “victims” in terms that diminish the courage, dignity and gifts of people living with HIV/AIDS. And we must be ready to work with all people of goodwill.

As churches, we must now take up their responsibility to overcome stigma and discrimination within our own structures, while being a voice of moral strength demanding that our communities, nations and wider society respect the rights and dignity of people living with HIV/AIDS and condemn acts that stigmatize. The truth is that we are all made in the image of God. This means that discrimination is a sin, and stigmatizing any person is contrary to the will of God.

All cultures have both positive and negative aspects. In the ecumenical response to HIV/AIDS, we must build upon those aspects of culture that promote healing and wholeness, and not shirk from challenging others which violate the dignity of any person or promote or allow death. We have work to do and lessons to learn from our reflections on culture and the ways in which it intersects with Christian ethics.

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<sup>1</sup> Rev. Prof. Maake Masango, at the WCC Global Consultation on HIV/AIDS, Nairobi, November 2001

The gravity of the HIV/AIDS epidemic has helped to expose the systemic issues that foster social injustice and inequality, and multiply the loss of life to AIDS:

- Violence and conflict
- Poverty
- Unjust trading practices
- Debt
- Gender inequality.

On its own, tackling these issues will not solve the crisis: and yet the daily death toll will not be reversed unless these issues are also confronted and addressed.

We have heard the urgent plea, “**Now...talk to them freely about this disease. To us it is not a shame.**” In committing ourselves to this Plan, this is what the churches and ecumenical organizations are preparing to do.

## **Vision**

**With this Plan of Action, the ecumenical family envisions a transformed and life-giving church, embodying and thus proclaiming the abundant life to which we are called, and capable of meeting the many challenges presented by the epidemic. For the churches, the most powerful contribution we can make to combating HIV transmission is the eradication of stigma and discrimination: a key that will, we believe, open the door for all those who dream of a viable and achievable way of living with HIV/AIDS and preventing the spread of the virus.**

## **Commitments**

### *Theology and ethics*

1. We will condemn discrimination and stigmatization of people living with HIV/AIDS as a sin and as contrary to the will of God.
2. We will urge our member churches to recognize and act on the urgent need to transform ourselves if we are to play a transforming role in the response to HIV/AIDS.
3. We will launch a global effort to stimulate theological and ethical reflection, dialogue, and exchange on issues related to HIV/AIDS. Issues will include:
  - Sin and sinner, stigma and stigmatized
  - Sexuality
  - Gender
  - Love, dignity and compassion
  - Confession and repentance.

This reflection will continue to challenge us to suggest guidelines for transformation of our churches, and support our search for an ecclesiology that will help us to address the issues raised by the response to HIV/AIDS.

### **People living with HIV/AIDS**

1. We will ensure that people living with HIV/AIDS are supported so that they may be actively involved in all activities of the churches, as an essential resource: especially in areas of work which relate to education, training, prevention, advocacy, theological reflection and program development.



## **Education**

1. We will seek out current and accurate information on HIV/AIDS, and develop systems for ensuring that it is widely available throughout the churches.
2. We will teach that stigma and discrimination are sinful, and that people living with HIV/AIDS and affected by the disease are invited and welcomed in our churches and communities. Here they are valued and affirmed members of our family, and resources in our common journey.
3. We will fulfill our teaching role on sex and sexuality, breaking the silence created by discomfort and tradition. Our teaching needs to give special emphasis to gender issues, including: the empowerment of women and girls; the necessity for men to change their behavior and take responsibility for containing the spread of HIV; respect for the dignity of each individual; and sex education that helps people to understand the health benefits of counseling and testing, and of abstinence, faithfulness, and protected sex.
4. We will promote the revision or creation of new curricula for theological institutes or seminaries so that they support the aims of this Plan.
5. We will develop educational programs on the various ways in which HIV is transmitted. These will engage: members of congregations, church-related organizations, people living with HIV/AIDS, health workers, NGOs and other stakeholders. These programs will be developed in a participatory manner, and will be based on accurate information about the facts of HIV/AIDS, while recognizing the link to culture and local realities. They will go beyond formal education to informal educational activities for youth, women and men and other creative approaches including utilizing liturgy as means of educating.
6. We will promote and develop the capacity of the churches to carry out specialized research on those aspects of the pandemic where they can make a unique contribution.

## **Training**

1. We will develop curricula and training materials designed to share knowledge and skills on human sexuality and HIV/AIDS at all levels within the churches. We will ensure that existing resource materials for training and education are accessible, shared, utilized, and adapted as needed.
2. We will mainstream the issue of HIV/AIDS in the training of bishops, clergy, elders, lay leaders, church staff, youth, chaplains, and others in the areas of:
  - breaking the silence on issues of sex and sexuality;
  - overcoming stigma;
  - creating and enhancing awareness (theology, HIV/AIDS education, sexuality, anatomy);
  - counseling on HIV/AIDS;
  - care giving;
  - talking about and guiding others in discussing HIV/AIDS;
  - liturgy, worship and preaching;
  - entering into dialogue about HIV/AIDS and culture; HIV/AIDS and gender; HIV/AIDS and children; HIV/AIDS and poverty and
  - networking.

This training will provide very practical tools.

3. We will re-examine the ways in which we utilize institutions of education and training, so that they are more relevant in this era of the HIV/AIDS epidemic.
4. We will encourage and equip a new generation of church leaders to engage the churches on issues related to HIV/AIDS, with a special emphasis on youth and women.

## **Prevention**

1. We will promote effective means of prevention, practices that save lives, and behavior that minimizes the risk of infection. In doing so, we will support the churches' historic commitment to faithfulness and abstinence, while recognizing that life may present us with contexts in which these ideals are unachievable.
2. We will always lift up, as the priority, those who are most vulnerable to the risk of infection, people living with HIV/AIDS, and those persons who are more broadly affected by HIV/AIDS.
3. We will encourage networking (among churches, faith-based organizations, international and non-governmental organizations, institutions of higher education, and governments) which aims to build relationships, and which maximizes the benefit and efficiency of prevention efforts.
4. We will promote voluntary testing and counseling. These play an important part in HIV education, offering constructive advice on life-protecting behavior, and clearing the way for resolutions regarding abstinence and faithfulness. They also help to overcome stigma. As churches, however, we will engage in dialogue and question the practice of mandatory testing (pre-marital and other forms) and its consequences for the person who is diagnosed as HIV positive.
5. We will encourage and support creative prevention programs. These might include, clubs in parishes, schools and hospitals, especially for girls, and the utilization of schools as information and counseling centers.

## **Care and counseling**

1. We will recognize the heroic work done by caregivers and volunteers, and find ways of supporting them and honoring their ministry.
2. We will support existing care and counseling structures in the community, seeking to develop community-based methodologies. We will explore ways of building a movement of care that originates from communities.
3. We will provide training in counseling for clergy and laity to enable them to work with people living with HIV/AIDS.
4. We will become caring, safe and supportive communities for people living with HIV/AIDS.
5. We will encourage congregations to make buildings and property available for the support, training and care for people living with and affected by HIV/AIDS.

## **Support**

1. We will support local congregations in caring for child-headed families and all vulnerable children, especially orphans. We will also help widows, widowers and caregivers who have responsibility for children, especially those elderly people who are caring for grandchildren, or left destitute by the death or sickness of adult children.
2. We will explore ways of expanding or strengthening outreach in those areas of life where particularly vulnerable people are to be found, such as prisons, the army, police forces, frontier towns and conflict areas.
3. We will encourage our churches to initiate or collaborate with income generation programs for people living with and affected by HIV/AIDS, especially families caring for orphaned children.
4. We will encourage and support networks of HIV positive clergy where they exist.

## **Treatment**

1. We will advocate for access to health care, and to drugs to treat opportunistic infections, relieve pain and distress through palliative care, and prevent mother to child transmission.
2. We support the efforts of those who are campaigning for access to anti-retroviral drugs.
3. We will strengthen church-related hospitals and clinics that are providing treatment and pharmaceuticals to

people living with HIV/AIDS.

4. We will explore and promote the contribution that traditional medicine and wisdom can offer as a therapeutic resource.

### **Advocacy**

1. We will engage in the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance's international campaign to respond to the challenges of HIV/AIDS and encourage churches and ecumenical organizations to participate actively within the framework of the Alliance. We will contribute to developing the suggested strategies of the campaign into practical actions on the ground that are relevant to the local context, and that can be enacted at all levels (community, local, national, regional, global).<sup>2</sup>
2. We will encourage a strong declaration on issues related to HIV/AIDS by the World Council of Churches, and by regional and national councils and their member churches, with the intention of stirring up public opinion to respond with appropriate outrage and action to the epidemic and its consequences, and also to the stigmatization of people living with HIV/AIDS.
3. We will develop policies at all levels of church governance that respect the rights, promote the dignity, and ensure care and support for people living with and affected by HIV/AIDS.
4. We will be present at, actively participate in, and coordinate ecumenically with key regional and international events and conferences and government meetings on HIV/AIDS.
5. We declare HIV/AIDS a human rights crisis. We will promote understanding and advocacy for the rights of all who are affected by the HIV/AIDS pandemic.
6. We will promote the implementation of the "Declaration of Commitment", of the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS (25-27 June 2001), monitor its implementation and hold our governments accountable for their commitments.

### **Gender**

1. We will challenge the traditional gender roles and power relations within our churches and church institutions which have contributed to the disempowerment of women, and consequently to the spread of HIV/AIDS.
2. We will combat sexual violence, abuse and rape in homes, communities, schools and conflict/war situations.
3. We will address gender roles and relations in families that contribute to the vulnerability of women and girls to HIV infection.
4. We will support organizations that help young women to negotiate safer sexual relationships.

### **Culture**

1. We will commit ourselves as church to reflect on positive and negative aspects of culture, identifying harmful practices and working to overcome them. In particular, we will recognize the ways in which culturally supported behavior can make women, girls and also boys more vulnerable to HIV.
2. We will propose alternative rites and rituals in place of harmful practices.
3. We will challenge our churches, ourselves, and the structures to which we relate, to examine and address culture, traditions, and practices that enable the spread of HIV.

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<sup>2</sup> See Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance Plan of Action, November 2001 [www.e-alliance.ch](http://www.e-alliance.ch)

## **Liturgy**

1. We will reframe the language we use to ensure that it is non-stigmatizing and gender-inclusive.
2. We will develop, utilize and share appropriate liturgical materials that include funerals and memorial services.
3. We will develop and utilize in our liturgical life services which underscore:
  - Giving thanks;
  - Repentance;
  - Solidarity with all people living with and affected by HIV/AIDS, condemning discrimination and stigmatization as a contrary to the will of God
  - The church as a community of care and support for people living with and affected by HIV/AIDS.

## **Resources**

1. We will use more effectively the many resources<sup>3</sup> of the African churches.
2. We will mobilize a major commitment of resources, both from Africa and from the North.
3. We will develop mechanisms to co-ordinate resources.

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<sup>3</sup> See detailed summary in Consultation Report, Nairobi

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## **Mechanisms**

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This Plan of Action represents the commitment of churches, ecumenical and church related organizations in Africa; churches, ecumenical and church related organizations in Europe and North America; and the World Council of Churches to common urgent and effective response to HIV/AIDS in Africa.

This response, as defined in the Plan, will require a new level of cooperation and creativity, as well as the strengthening of capacity and the developing of mechanisms at all levels.

These mechanisms will be set up in line with the following criteria:

1. To create a central facilitating point in the WCC;
2. to put into place regional resource support and facilitation for churches, ecumenical organizations and church-related organizations;
3. to ensure national capacity for resource support and facilitation for churches, ecumenical organizations and church-related organizations;
4. to use existing structures of churches, ecumenical organizations, and church-related organizations (international, regional and national) wherever possible;
5. to provide technical resource support at key points;
6. to ensure creative communication and networking, making best use of electronic communication;
7. to establish an international reference group to accompany the implementation of the plan;
8. to ensure fundraising channels and mechanisms that maximize ease of access to funding and which take into consideration local limitations and realities.

These mechanisms are intended to operate in such a way that they support churches, ecumenical and church related organizations, and strengthen their response to HIV/AIDS.

It is the responsibility of each church, ecumenical and church related organization to own this plan and ensure that it is implemented.

## ***Next Steps***

1. All participants will take initiatives to implement the plan
2. The Director of Issues and Themes of the WCC, Dr Sam Kobia, and the Programme Executive for Health and Healing, Dr Manoj Kurian will, in collaboration with the International Planning Group and the steering group of this consultation, prepare a comprehensive programme proposal for decision by the WCC Executive Committee at its meeting February 2002.
3. The WCC will distribute the Plan of Action to all relevant member churches, ecumenical and church related organizations together with the decision of the Executive Committee.
4. The WCC will ensure that the necessary mechanisms are agreed and put into place.

**PLAN D'ACTION :  
La Réponse Œcuménique aux Défis du  
VIH/Sida en Afrique<sup>1</sup>**

**COLLOQUE MONDIAL SUR  
LA REPONSE OECUMENIQUE AUX DEFIS DU VIH/SIDA  
EN AFRIQUE**

*Nairobi, Kenya – 25-28 novembre 2001*

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<sup>1</sup> Traduit de l'anglais, Service linguistique du COE

« ... l'épidémie mondiale de VIH/sida, en raison de son ampleur et de son incidence dévastatrices, constitue une crise mondiale et l'un des défis les plus redoutables pour la vie et la dignité humaines ainsi que pour l'exercice effectif des droits de l'homme, compromet le développement social et économique dans le monde entier et affecte la société à tous les niveaux – national, local, familial et individuel ... »

« ... l'Afrique, en particulier l'Afrique sub-saharienne, est actuellement la région la plus touchée, ... le VIH/sida y est considéré comme créant un état d'urgence qui menace le développement, la cohésion sociale, la stabilité politique, la sécurité alimentaire et l'espérance de vie et constitue un fardeau dévastateur pour l'économie, et ... la situation dramatique du continent exige que des mesures exceptionnelles soient prises d'urgence aux niveaux national, régional et international. »

*Déclaration d'engagement  
Session extraordinaire de l'Assemblée générale  
des Nations Unies sur le VIH/sida  
25-27 juin 2001*

« Chacun sait aujourd'hui que dans le cas du VIH/sida, ce n'est pas la maladie elle-même qui fait le plus mal (car bien d'autres maladies causent de graves souffrances et finalement la mort) : ce sont au contraire la stigmatisation, le risque de rejet et de discrimination, l'incompréhension et la méfiance auxquelles les personnes séropositives sont en butte. »

*Le chanoine Gideon Byamugisha  
Diocèse de Namirembe  
Eglise anglicane d'Ouganda*

« Il était méprisé, laissé de côté par les hommes, homme de douleurs, familier de la souffrance, tel celui devant qui l'on cache son visage ; oui, méprisé, nous ne l'estimions nullement.

En fait, ce sont nos souffrances qu'il a portées, ce sont nos douleurs qu'il a supportées, et nous, nous l'estimions touché, frappé par Dieu et humilié.

Mais lui, il était déshonoré à cause de nos révoltes, broyé à cause de nos perversités ; la sanction, gage de paix pour nous, était sur lui et dans ses plaies se trouvait notre guérison.

Nous tous, comme du petit bétail, nous étions errants, nous nous tournions chacun vers son chemin, et le Seigneur a fait retomber sur lui la perversité de nous tous.

Brutalisé, il s'humilie ; il n'ouvre pas la bouche, comme un agneau traîné à l'abattoir, comme une brebis devant ceux qui la tondent : elle est muette ; lui n'ouvre pas la bouche.

Sous la contrainte, sous le jugement, il a été enlevé, les gens de sa génération, qui se préoccupent d'eux ? Oui, il a été retranché de la terre des vivants, à cause de la révolte de son peuple, le coup est sur lui.

On a mis chez les méchants son sépulcre, chez les riches son tombeau, bien qu'il n'ait pas commis de violence et qu'il n'y eût pas de fraude dans sa bouche. »

*Es 53, 3-9 (TOB)*

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## **Préambule**

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Le présent plan d'action est le résultat d'un dialogue mené entre trois groupes de partenaires : les Eglises, les organisations qui leur sont rattachées et les institutions œcuméniques d'Afrique ; les Eglises et leurs organisations et les institutions œcuméniques d'Europe et d'Amérique du Nord ; et le Conseil œcuménique des Eglises. Ce plan est un élément de la réponse de ces groupes de partenaires face à la situation d'urgence créée par l'épidémie de VIH/sida. Toutes les organisations religieuses s'efforcent tant bien que mal de lutter contre ce fléau, qui est en train de dépeupler l'Afrique plus rapidement que toutes les calamités survenues dans ce continent depuis le commerce des esclaves.

Les Eglises se sont engagées très tôt dans le combat contre le VIH/sida ; plusieurs d'entre elles possèdent d'excellents programmes de prise en charge, d'éducation et de conseils. En dépit de ces efforts, la situation continue à se détériorer dans la plupart des pays d'Afrique. En conséquence, le présent plan ne vise pas à remplacer les activités existantes des Eglises mais plutôt à y ajouter une dimension supplémentaire, œcuménique. L'Eglise est une institution puissante et influente : elle a le pouvoir de changer les choses. L'objectif est donc de rendre son action plus effective, plus efficace et plus durable grâce à une coordination plus étroite, à un meilleur fonctionnement des réseaux, à un resserrement de la communication et à une amélioration des mécanismes de collaboration ; il faudra en outre utiliser l'expérience et les succès des uns et des autres et éviter la répétition inutile des efforts.

Mais les Eglises sont interpellées à un niveau plus fondamental encore. A mesure qu'elle se propageait, la pandémie a exposé des lignes de fracture qui s'étendent jusqu'au cœur de notre théologie, de notre éthique, de notre liturgie et de notre pratique du ministère. Aujourd'hui, les Eglises sont obligées de reconnaître qu'elles ont contribué activement et passivement – bien qu'involontairement – à la propagation du virus. Parce que nous avons du mal à parler de questions touchant la sexualité et les relations sexuelles, il nous est souvent pénible d'aborder honnêtement et avec réalisme le problème de l'éducation sexuelle et de la prévention de l'infection. Notre tendance à exclure les autres, notre interprétation de l'Écriture et notre théologie du péché ont contribué ensemble à encourager la stigmatisation et l'exclusion des personnes vivant avec le VIH et le sida et par conséquent à accroître leur souffrance. Ces tendances et ces attitudes ont sapé nos efforts de prise en charge, d'éducation et de prévention et infligé des souffrances supplémentaires aux personnes déjà touchées par la maladie. Etant donné l'extrême urgence de la situation et notre conviction que les Eglises ont un rôle distinctif à jouer dans le combat contre l'épidémie, nous devons repenser notre mission et transformer nos structures et nos méthodes de travail.

Le présent plan n'exige pas que nous agissions d'une manière uniforme. L'Afrique abrite des réalités fort diverses, et ce qui convient pour un endroit ne marchera pas nécessairement ailleurs. Mais ce que nous nous proposons de faire, c'est de prendre une initiative nouvelle, qui tienne compte des réalités et qui permette aux responsables d'Eglises et à leurs fidèles de parler honnêtement du VIH et du sida et de prendre les mesures pratiques qui s'imposent pour combattre la maladie.



« Lorsque mon cousin se mourait du sida, il n'avait aucune difficulté à parler de la maladie avec sa famille et ses amis. Les derniers jours, nous avons réuni toute la famille pour dire adieu à Mathunya et discuter avec lui des préparatifs de l'enterrement. Nous lui avons demandé comment il voulait que le service funèbre se déroule, et il nous a dit : « Je veux que vous leur disiez la vérité, que je suis mort du sida ». Nous avons donc organisé un service qui célébrerait sa vie et éduquerait ceux qui étaient venus à l'enterrement, spécialement les jeunes.

Pendant le service, ma grand-mère s'est dirigée vers l'avant de l'église, a mis la main sur le cercueil de son petit-fils et a dit : « Pour mon petit-fils qui avait le sida, les souffrances sont finies. » Puis, la main toujours sur le cercueil, elle s'est tournée vers la chaire et a dit au prédicateur qui allait s'adresser à l'assistance : « **Maintenant...parlez-leur ouvertement de cette maladie. Pour nous ce n'est pas une chose honteuse.** »<sup>2</sup>

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Nous avons entendu cet appel urgent : « **Maintenant...parlez-leur ouvertement de cette maladie.** » Au moment où nous nous engageons à réaliser ce plan, voici ce que disent les Eglises.

Les Eglises vivent déjà avec le VIH/sida. Des enfants de Dieu meurent du sida. En tant que croyants, nous avons fait beaucoup, mais nous avons aussi évité de faire beaucoup de choses. Nous confessons notre silence. Nous confessons que parfois nos paroles et nos actes ont fait du mal et privé des individus de leur dignité. Nous prêchons la bonne nouvelle « afin que tous aient la vie », et pourtant nous craignons d'avoir contribué à la mort de certains.

L'heure est venue de dire la vérité. L'heure est venue d'agir uniquement par amour. L'heure est venue de surmonter la fatigue et de cesser de nier les faits. Et l'heure est venue de vivre dans l'espoir.

Les Eglises ont des forces, elles ont une crédibilité et elles sont enracinées dans des communautés. Cela leur donne la possibilité de changer réellement quelque chose dans la lutte contre le VIH/sida. Pour relever ce défi, il faut qu'elles se transforment elles-mêmes face à cette crise, pour devenir moteurs de changement et apporter guérison, espoir et soutien à toutes les personnes touchées par le VIH/sida.

Nous avons appris quelques leçons pratiques. Nous ne pouvons plus dire « eux » et « nous » en parlant du VIH/sida. La douleur et la peur causées par cette maladie ont touché chacun de nous, mais les personnes vivant avec le VIH/sida sont notre plus grande ressource. Nous ne devons plus parler de « victimes » en des termes qui minimisent le courage, la dignité et les dons de ceux qui vivent avec la maladie. Et nous devons aussi être prêts à travailler avec toutes les personnes de bonne volonté.

En tant qu'Eglises, nous avons maintenant le devoir d'éliminer la stigmatisation et la discrimination existant au sein de nos propres structures et de réclamer en même temps avec force et autorité morale que nos communautés, les nations et la société dans son ensemble respectent les droits et la dignité des personnes vivant avec le VIH/sida et condamnent toute action qui stigmatise les malades. La vérité est que nous sommes tous créés à l'image de Dieu. Il s'ensuit que la discrimination est un péché et que la stigmatisation de qui que ce soit est contraire à la volonté de Dieu.

Toutes les cultures présentent des aspects positifs et des aspects négatifs. Dans notre réponse œcuménique aux défis du VIH/sida, nous devons bâtir sur les traditions culturelles qui favorisent la guérison et l'intégralité, et dénoncer sans hésiter celles qui privent les gens de leur dignité, qui tolèrent la mort ou y conduisent. Nous devons consacrer beaucoup de travail à cette réflexion sur la culture et les diverses manières dont elle recoupe notre éthique chrétienne, et nous aurons beaucoup d'enseignements à en tirer.

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<sup>2</sup> Le pasteur Maake Masango, au Colloque mondial du COE sur le VIH/sida, Nairobi, novembre 2001.

La gravité de l'épidémie de VIH/sida a aidé à exposer au grand jour des problèmes inhérents à des systèmes qui favorisent les injustices et les inégalités sociales et sont responsables d'une multiplication des décès dus au sida. Ce sont :

- la violence et les conflits
- la pauvreté
- les pratiques commerciales injustes
- la dette
- les inégalités entre les hommes et les femmes.

Certes il ne suffit pas d'examiner ces questions pour mettre fin à la crise; mais on ne réduira pas le nombre de décès quotidiens tant qu'on ne fera pas face à ces problèmes et qu'on ne cherchera pas à les résoudre.

Nous avons entendu cet appel urgent : « **Maintenant...parlez-leur ouvertement de cette maladie. Pour nous ce n'est pas une chose honteuse.** » En s'engageant à mettre en œuvre ce plan d'action, voici ce que les Eglises et les organisations œcuméniques s'approprient à faire.

## Vision

**Avec ce plan d'action, la communauté œcuménique exprime sa vision d'une Eglise transformée et porteuse de vie, incarnant et donc proclamant l'abondance de vie à laquelle nous sommes appelés, et capable de relever les nombreux défis présentés par l'épidémie. Pour les Eglises, la contribution la plus importante qu'elles puissent apporter au combat contre la transmission du VIH est l'élimination de toutes les formes de stigmatisation et de discrimination. Nous sommes convaincus que c'est la clé qui ouvrira la porte à toutes les personnes qui rêvent de trouver un moyen de vivre aussi dignement que possible avec le VIH/sida et d'empêcher la propagation du virus.**

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## Engagements

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### Théologie et éthique

1. Nous dénoncerons la stigmatisation des personnes vivant avec le VIH/sida et la discrimination envers elles comme étant des péchés et des actes contraires à la volonté de Dieu.
2. Nous prions instamment nos Eglises membres de reconnaître qu'il est urgent de nous transformer nous-mêmes si nous voulons jouer un rôle dans la transformation des attitudes envers la maladie, et de prendre les mesures nécessaires.
3. Nous ferons de grands efforts, à l'échelon mondial, pour stimuler la réflexion théologique et éthique, le dialogue et l'échange d'expériences sur des questions touchant au VIH/sida, par exemple celles-ci:
  - le péché et le pécheur, la stigmatisation et le stigmatisé
  - la sexualité
  - les rôles sociaux respectifs des hommes et des femmes
  - l'amour, la dignité et la compassion
  - la confession et la repentance.

Cette réflexion devra nous inciter sans cesse à suggérer des lignes directrices pour la transformation des Eglises et alimenter notre recherche d'une ecclésiologie sur laquelle baser notre action face aux défis de l'épidémie.

### **Les personnes vivant avec le VIH/sida**

1. Nous veillerons à ce que les personnes vivant avec le VIH/sida reçoivent le soutien dont elles ont besoin, afin qu'elles puissent participer à toutes les activités des Eglises, pour qui elles représentent une ressource essentielle, spécialement dans ce qui touche à l'éducation, la formation, la prévention de la maladie, la défense des causes, la réflexion théologique et l'élaboration de programmes.

### **Education**

1. Nous chercherons à obtenir des informations exactes et à jour sur le VIH/sida et élaborerons des systèmes assurant l'accès le plus large à celles-ci dans toutes les Eglises.
2. Nous enseignerons que la stigmatisation et la discrimination sont un péché, et que les personnes vivant avec le VIH/sida et touchées par la maladie doivent être invitées et accueillies dans nos Eglises et dans nos communautés, où elles seront reconnues et appréciées comme des membres de notre famille et des compagnons de notre voyage commun.
3. Nous remplirons notre rôle d'éducateurs en matière de sexualité et de relations sexuelles, brisant le silence, causé par la gêne et la tradition, qui entoure ces questions. Nous mettrons l'accent sur les rôles sociaux spécifiques des hommes et des femmes, notamment sur la nécessité de donner aux femmes et aux filles les moyens de gérer elles-mêmes leur vie, et de convaincre les hommes qu'ils doivent modifier leur comportement et qu'il leur incombe à eux aussi de freiner la propagation de l'infection. Nous enseignerons le respect dû à chaque personne. Nous aiderons les gens à comprendre les bienfaits pour leur santé que constituent les services de consultation et d'analyse, ainsi que l'abstinence, la fidélité et la prise de précautions pendant les rapports sexuels.
4. Nous encouragerons la révision et la création de programmes d'études destinés aux instituts et séminaires de théologie, afin qu'ils soient en accord avec les objectifs du plan.
5. Nous créerons des programmes d'éducation sur les divers modes de transmission de l'infection, pour lesquels nous engagerons la participation de paroisses, d'organisations rattachées aux Eglises, de personnes vivant avec le VIH/sida, d'agents sanitaires, d'ONG et d'autres parties prenantes. Nous élaborerons ces programmes selon la méthode participative et les baserons sur des informations exactes et factuelles au sujet du VIH/sida, tout en reconnaissant les liens qui existent avec la culture et la réalité locales. Outre une éducation de type classique, ils offriront des activités moins structurées destinées aux jeunes, aux femmes et aux hommes, sans oublier des méthodes créatives comme l'emploi de la liturgie comme véhicule d'enseignement.
6. Nous encouragerons les Eglises à faire des recherches spécialisées sur les aspects de la pandémie sur lesquels elles peuvent exercer une influence spécifique et les aiderons à développer leur capacité dans ce domaine.

### **Formation**

1. Nous élaborerons des programmes de formation et des matériels éducatifs sur la sexualité humaine et le VIH/sida et encouragerons leur diffusion à tous les niveaux dans les Eglises. Nous veillerons à ce que les matériels éducatifs existants soient accessibles à tous, partagés, utilisés et adaptés selon les besoins.
2. Nous intégrerons la question du VIH/sida dans les programmes de formation des évêques, des membres du clergé, des anciens, des responsables laïcs, du personnel administratif des Eglises, des animateurs de jeunesse, des aumôniers et autres responsables. Ces programmes couvriront les sujets suivants:

- briser le silence qui entoure ce qui concerne la sexualité et les relations sexuelles;
- vaincre la stigmatisation;
- faire prendre conscience du problème et mieux comprendre ses divers aspects (théologie, éducation sur le VIH/sida, sexualité, anatomie);
- offrir des services de conseils sur le VIH/sida;
- prendre les malades en charge;
- parler de la maladie et animer les discussions sur le sujet;
- utiliser la liturgie, le culte et la prédication;
- établir le dialogue sur les liens entre le VIH/sida et la culture, le VIH/sida et la vulnérabilité respective des hommes et des femmes, le VIH/sida et les enfants, le VIH/sida et la pauvreté;
- travailler en réseaux.

Cette formation fournira des instruments éminemment pratiques.

3. Nous réexaminerons la manière dont nous utilisons les institutions pédagogiques et les centres de formation existants, pour mieux les adapter aux besoins de l'ère de l'épidémie de VIH/sida.
4. Nous encouragerons une nouvelle génération de responsables ecclésiastiques à engager les Eglises dans des discussions et des activités relatives au VIH/sida, spécialement en ce qui concerne les besoins des jeunes et des femmes, et nous leur donnerons les moyens de le faire.

## **Prévention**

1. Nous préconiserons des méthodes efficaces de prévention, des pratiques qui ne mettent pas la vie en danger et des comportements qui minimisent le risque d'infection. Ce faisant, nous soutiendrons l'attitude de l'Eglise qui au cours de son histoire a toujours recommandé la fidélité et l'abstinence, tout en reconnaissant que la vie nous met parfois dans des situations où il est impossible de réaliser cet idéal.
2. Nous soutiendrons toujours en priorité les personnes les plus vulnérables au risque d'infection, les personnes vivant avec le VIH/sida et celles qui sont touchées plus ou moins directement par la maladie.
3. Nous encouragerons le travail en réseaux (dans les Eglises, les organisations confessionnelles, les organisations internationales et non gouvernementales, les établissements pédagogiques et les gouvernements) afin de nouer des relations et de maximaliser les bienfaits et l'efficacité des efforts de prévention.
4. Nous encouragerons les gens à aller volontairement consulter un médecin et se soumettre à des analyses. Ces visites jouent un rôle éducatif important, car on y offre des conseils constructifs sur des comportements à adopter qui ne mettent pas la vie en danger et on y prépare les gens à prendre la résolution d'être fidèles à leur partenaire ou de s'abstenir de relations sexuelles. Elles aident aussi à vaincre la stigmatisation. Toutefois, en tant qu'Eglises, nous chercherons à ouvrir le dialogue et contesterons la pratique de la visite obligatoire (pré-nuptiale ou autre), avec ses conséquences pour la personne chez qui on a diagnostiqué la séropositivité.
5. Nous encouragerons et soutiendrons les programmes de prévention novateurs, tels que la création de clubs destinés spécialement aux filles, dans les paroisses, les écoles et les hôpitaux, et l'utilisation de locaux scolaires comme centres d'information et de consultation.

### **Soins et services de conseils**

1. Nous reconnâtrons avec gratitude le travail héroïque accompli par les personnes, souvent bénévoles, qui s'occupent des malades du sida; nous nous efforcerons de les épauler et d'honorer leur ministère.
2. Nous soutiendrons les structures de prise en charge et les services de conseils existant déjà dans la communauté et chercherons à mettre au point des méthodes à base communautaire. Nous explorerons les moyens possibles de créer un mouvement de prise en charge des malades qui émane de la communauté.
3. Nous offrirons une formation de conseillers à des membres du clergé et à des laïcs afin qu'ils puissent travailler avec des personnes vivant avec le VIH/sida.
4. Nous deviendrons des communautés d'accueil offrant sécurité et soutien aux personnes vivant avec le VIH/sida.
5. Nous encouragerons les paroisses à mettre leurs locaux et leurs installations à disposition pour le soutien, la formation et les soins aux personnes vivant avec le VIH/sida et touchées par la maladie.

### **Soutien**

1. Nous aiderons les paroisses locales à s'occuper des familles dirigées par des enfants et de tous les enfants vulnérables, spécialement les orphelins. Nous aiderons les veufs, les veuves et les personnes qui ont des enfants à charge, notamment les personnes âgées qui prennent soin de leurs petits-enfants ou qui sont dans le dénuement à la suite du décès de leurs enfants adultes.
2. Nous examinerons la possibilité d'étendre ou de renforcer notre action dans les milieux ou les endroits où les gens sont particulièrement vulnérables, par exemple dans les prisons, l'armée, la police, les villes frontalières et les zones de conflits.
3. Nous encouragerons nos Eglises à élaborer des programmes, ou à collaborer avec des programmes existants, destinés à produire des revenus pour les personnes vivant avec le VIH/sida et touchées par la maladie, spécialement pour les familles avec des orphelins à charge.
4. Nous encouragerons et appuierons le travail des réseaux de membres séropositifs du clergé là où ils existent déjà.

### **Traitement**

1. Nous militerons pour l'accès aux soins de santé et aux médicaments nécessaires pour traiter les maladies opportunistes, soulager la douleur et l'angoisse par des soins palliatifs, et pour prévenir la transmission de la maladie de la mère à l'enfant.
2. Nous appuierons les efforts des personnes qui militent en faveur de l'accès aux médicaments anti-rétroviraux.
3. Nous épaulerons les hôpitaux et dispensaires rattachés aux Eglises qui offrent un traitement et des médicaments aux personnes vivant avec le VIH/sida.
4. Nous étudierons et encouragerons la contribution que la médecine et la sagesse traditionnelles peuvent apporter au traitement de la maladie.

### **Promotion des causes**

1. Nous participerons à la campagne lancée par l'Alliance œcuménique "agir ensemble" pour répondre aux défis du VIH/sida et encouragerons les Eglises et les organisations œcuméniques à y prendre une part active, dans le cadre de l'Alliance. Nous nous efforcerons d'appliquer sur le terrain les stratégies proposées par cette campagne en tenant compte du contexte local, et ce à tous les échelons, communautaire, local, national, régional et mondial.<sup>3</sup>
2. Nous encouragerons le Conseil œcuménique des Eglises, les conseils régionaux et nationaux et les Eglises membres à faire une déclaration claire et ferme sur les questions relatives au VIH/sida, afin de susciter dans l'opinion publique une indignation et une réaction appropriées face à l'épidémie et à ses conséquences et à la stigmatisation des personnes vivant avec le VIH/sida.
3. Nous élaborerons des orientations, à tous les échelons de direction des Eglises, visant à promouvoir le respect des droits et de la dignité des personnes vivant avec le VIH/sida et touchées par la maladie, et à leur assurer l'accès aux soins et au soutien dont elles ont besoin.
4. Nous assisterons et participerons activement aux conférences et événements cruciaux sur le VIH/sida organisés aux niveaux régional et international, ainsi qu'aux réunions gouvernementales, et coordonnerons notre activité avec celle d'autres membres de la famille œcuménique.
5. Nous déclarons que le VIH/sida constitue un grave péril pour l'exercice des droits de l'homme. Nous militerons pour que les droits de toutes les personnes touchées par la pandémie soient compris et défendus.
6. Nous encouragerons l'application de la "Déclaration d'engagement sur le VIH/sida" de l'Assemblée générale des Nations Unies (25-27 juin 2001), surveillerons sa mise en œuvre et demanderons des comptes à nos gouvernements sur la manière dont ils auront respecté leurs engagements.

### **Rôles sociaux respectifs des hommes et des femmes**

1. Nous mettrons en question les rôles sociaux attribués traditionnellement aux hommes et aux femmes et les relations basées sur le pouvoir existant dans nos Eglises et nos institutions ecclésiastiques, relations qui ont privé les femmes de leur autonomie et contribué de ce fait à la propagation du VIH/sida.
2. Nous combattons la violence sexuelle, les mauvais traitements et les viols commis au foyer, dans la communauté, dans les écoles et dans les situations de conflits et de guerres.
3. Nous aborderons la question des rôles sociaux respectifs des hommes et des femmes et des relations au sein de la famille qui rendent les femmes et les filles vulnérables à l'infection par le virus.
4. Nous soutiendrons les organisations qui aident les jeunes femmes à exiger que leurs partenaires prennent des précautions lors des rapports sexuels.

### **Culture**

1. En tant qu'Eglise, nous réfléchissons aux aspects positifs et négatifs des différentes cultures; nous détecterons les pratiques dangereuses et chercherons à les éliminer. Spécifiquement, nous devons constater que certains comportements acceptés culturellement peuvent rendre les femmes, les filles et les garçons plus vulnérables au VIH.
2. Nous proposerons d'autres rites et rituels en lieu et place des pratiques dangereuses.
3. Nous enjoindrons nos Eglises, nos membres et les structures auxquelles nous sommes reliés, d'examiner et de mettre en question les traditions et pratiques culturelles qui permettent au virus de se propager.

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<sup>3</sup> Voir "Alliance œcuménique 'agir ensemble'" – Plan d'action, novembre 2001, [www.e-alliance.ch](http://www.e-alliance.ch)

## **Liturgie**

1. Nous reformulerons le langage que nous utilisons, pour éviter qu'il ne stigmatise ou exclue qui que ce soit.
2. Nous élaborerons, utiliserons, échangerons et diffuserons des matériels liturgiques appropriés, qui comprendront entre autres des services funèbres et des cultes à la mémoire des victimes de la pandémie.
3. Nous élaborerons et utiliserons dans notre liturgie des services qui mettront l'accent sur les éléments suivants:
  - Gratitude
  - Repentance
  - Solidarité avec toutes les personnes vivant avec le VIH/sida et touchées par la maladie, et dénonciation de la discrimination et de la stigmatisation comme étant contraires à la volonté de Dieu
  - L'Eglise comme communauté de soins et de soutien pour les personnes vivant avec le VIH/sida et touchées par la maladie.

## **Ressources**

1. Nous utiliserons plus efficacement les nombreuses ressources<sup>4</sup> que possèdent les Eglises africaines.
2. Nous demanderons un important engagement de ressources aussi bien de la part de l'Afrique que de la part des pays du Nord.
3. Nous mettrons au point des mécanismes de coordination des ressources.

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<sup>4</sup> Voir le sommaire détaillé dans le Rapport sur le colloque de Nairobi.

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## **Mécanismes**

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Par le présent plan d'action, les Eglises, les organisations qui leur sont rattachées et les institutions œcuméniques d'Afrique; les Eglises, leurs organisations et les institutions œcuméniques d'Europe et d'Amérique du Nord, et le Conseil œcuménique des Eglises s'engagent à apporter une réponse commune, urgente et efficace aux défis du VIH/sida en Afrique.

Cette réponse, telle qu'elle se définit dans le plan, exigera un degré plus élevé de coopération et de créativité, un renforcement de la capacité des participants à le mettre en œuvre et la mise en place de mécanismes appropriés à tous les niveaux.

Ces mécanismes seront élaborés selon les critères suivants:

1. créer au COE un centre ayant pour fonction de faciliter le travail des participants;
2. mettre en place des services régionaux de soutien technique afin de faciliter le travail des Eglises, des organisations qui leur sont rattachées et des organisations œcuméniques;
3. au niveau national, veiller à ce que les pays aient la capacité nécessaire pour soutenir et faciliter le travail des Eglises, des organisations qui leur sont rattachées aux Eglises et des organisations œcuméniques;
4. utiliser les structures existantes des Eglises, des organisations œcuméniques et de celles qui sont rattachées aux Eglises – à l'échelon international, régional et national – partout où cela sera possible;
5. offrir un soutien technique à des moments cruciaux;
6. veiller à ce que la communication et le travail en réseaux se fassent avec imagination, en tirant le meilleur parti possible de l'informatique;
7. établir un groupe international de référence pour accompagner l'exécution du plan;
8. s'assurer que les canaux et les mécanismes d'appel de fonds facilitent au maximum l'accès au financement et prennent en compte les réalités et les limites locales.

Ces mécanismes sont conçus de manière à soutenir les Eglises, les organisations œcuméniques et celles qui sont rattachées aux Eglises et à renforcer leur travail face aux défis du VIH/sida.

Il appartient à chaque Eglise, à chaque organisation qui lui est rattachée et à chaque institution œcuménique d'adopter ce plan et de faire en sorte qu'il soit exécuté.

### *Etapes suivantes*

1. Tous les participants prendront des initiatives pour la mise en œuvre du plan.
2. Le directeur du secteur "Etude et action" du COE, M. Sam Kobia, et le responsable du programme "Santé et guérison", M. Manoj Kurian, en collaboration avec le Groupe international de planification et le Comité directeur de ce colloque, prépareront une proposition de programme détaillée, qui sera soumise pour décision au Comité exécutif du COE à sa session de février 2002.



3. Le COE distribuera le plan d'action à toutes les Eglises membres, aux organisations œcuméniques et à celles rattachées aux Eglises que cela concerne, et leur communiquera en même temps la décision du Comité exécutif.
4. Le COE veillera à ce que les mécanismes nécessaires soient approuvés et mis en place.

**TERCEIRO SEMINÁRIO LUSÓFONO  
CÍRCULO LUSÓFONO DE MULHERES TEÓLOGAS  
LUANDA, ANGOLA**

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**Eva Cosme**

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**Nota de abertura**

De 25 de setembro à 2 de outubro de 2001, decorreu o Seminário Internacional de Mulheres Teólogas<sup>1</sup> sob o tema: **Mulheres Africanas Contra A Discriminação Ética, Igualdade, Justiça, Dignidade (Tiago 2: 4.9)**

Participaram do referido evento uma representante do Conselho Mundial de Igrejas, Pauline Muchina, uma representante dos Estados Unidos da América, Jane Mayer, a Coordenadora do Círculo Francófono de Mulheres Teólogas, Helene Yinda, duas delegadas do Brasil, Maria do Carmo, e Rosane Presth, sete delegadas de Moçambique e 40 delegadas de Angola.

A Sessão solene de Abertura foi presidida pela Rev Eva Gomes, Coordenadora do Círculo Lusófono, na Igreja Metodista Central de Luanda; sua Mensagem baseou-se no texto bíblico que norteou os trabalhos do Seminário (Tiago 2,4.9). A mensageira exortou os presentes a primarem pela união porque para Deus não existe distinções de raças, tribos ou posições sociais.

**Mulheres africanas contra a discriminação**

De maneira geral, em todas etapas, seja histórico ou sócio-económico, a mulher Africana saiu sempre a mais prejudicada. Por um lado, a cultura da maior parte dos grupos étnicos está baseada fortemente pela tradição e costumes que elevando a mulher em determinados aspectos, não consegue conceder-lhe o estatuto de igualdade, primando este facto pela injustiça que lhe retira, na maior parte das vezes, a dignidade de ser humano que é. Tudo porque a África não tem tradição democrática.

A África precisa se reencontrar e, neste reencontro, um passo bastante forte será o resgate dos valores éticos morais e Culturais, inerentes à idiossincrasia, dos seus povos bem como, serem os Países africanos capazes de proporcionarem a sua integração numa dimensão do género e sua total aceitação. Enquanto que os Países do norte já visualizam a sua união, face ao processo da globalização, a África divide-se e esquece-se que sempre procurou unir esforços ganhou muito mais do que perdeu!, palavras de Dr. Josefa Webba no acto de abertura, fazendo síntese daquilo que a mulher Africana experimenta à séculos sem fim.

**Clamor pela paz**

O momento fulcral do encontro foi na altura que se partilhou experiência sobre a questão da solidariedade, na altura dirigida pela irmã Jane Mayer. Esta partilha suscitou sentimento que há muito estavam calcados o que motivou na elaboração de uma

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<sup>1</sup> Para mais informações sobre a criação do Círculo Lusófono de Mulheres Teólogas Africanas, veja Ministerial Formation, no.88, janeiro de 2000, págs.35-46.

carta aberta onde as mulheres angolanas em oração e clamores assim como as mulheres vindas de outros Países presentes no encontro prestaram solidariedade às angolanas unindo esforços para findar com a guerra e em uníssono exigem:

- Cessar fogo bilateral e imediato
- Cessar o envio de armas à Angola à troca de petróleo e diamantes
- Que a comunidade internacional respeite na prática a capacidade dos Angolanos de solucionarem o conflito e ajudá-los no sentido de alcançar a paz, ao invés de enviarem milho e feijão que os angolanos podem cultivá-los, cessando a guerra.
- Basta de guerra e violência.

### **Encerramento**

A mensagem de encerramento foi proferida pela Pastora Gabriela Mucavele que exortou as mulheres a primarem pela unidade promovendo sempre a paz. Rendemos eterna glória à Pastora. Que sua alma descanse em paz (nota dos editores: a Dra. Musimbi Kanyoro, coordenadora do Círculo de Mulheres Teólogas Africanas enviou mensagem de condolências às mulheres de Moçambique).

### **Avaliação**

O encontro produziu os efeitos desejados segundo a opinião dos participantes ao evento assim como dos convidados. Era visível a satisfação e alegria em seus rostos. E nós Círculo Angolano e Lusófono louvamos a Deus por ter permitido que a actividade fosse realizada com êxito e que fôssemos inspiradas com o poder do Espírito Santo para produzirmos o que produzimos com auxílio de todas presentes.

**SEJA O NOME DE DEUS LOUVADO!**

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### **REFLEXÕES DE ROXANE PLETSCH**

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**São Leopoldo, Brasil, 20 outubro 2001**

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O Terceiro Seminário do Círculo Lusófono, em Luanda, Angola, foi patrocinado pela equipe de Educação e Formação Ecumênica/Programa de Educação Teológica Ecumênica do Conselho Mundial de Igrejas.

Diversas denominações e países estiveram representados. Do Brasil participaram Rosane Pletsch (IECLB) e Maria do Carmo Moreira Lima (Metodista). Esta foi a primeira vez que teólogas brasileiras participaram do Círculo.

Cabe destacar que esta iniciativa é de grande importância, na medida em que se propõe a formular e publicar a teologia africana, perpassada pelo viés de gênero. Na reconstrução dos países africanos e no resgate da cultura destes povos, nada mais prudente do que reformular e recriar também a teologia, na medida em que esta é, ainda, de influência européia, especialmente, de Portugal. No contexto africano, as mulheres teólogas têm tido um papel importante na prática pastoral e, conseqüentemente, também na formulação teológica. Isso, no entanto, nem sempre se torna conhecível, pois, na maioria das vezes, estas experiências práticas-teóricas não são publicadas. As mulheres, em Angola, há muitos anos são pastoras. Elas, junto com os seus colegas pastores, estão re-descobrimo o Evangelho da liberdade e da paz. Num contexto marcado por trinta anos de guerra e, atualmente, início de uma guerra no Afeganistão, nada mais atual do que destacar a mensagem

evangélica da paz. Em Angola, a paz tem motivado o ecumenismo entre as igrejas cristãs, as quais cada vez mais descobrem que a mensagem evangélica precisa adentrar-se na sociedade de uma forma geral, ampla para ali gerar transformação. Em Angola, a paz é o fermento que pode levedar a massa e o sal que poderá preservar a sociedade livre de guerras e conflitos étnicos. Quando o conteúdo da paz ganhar as ruas, as casas, as famílias, certamente armas de guerra serão criativamente transformados em instrumentos de justiça, o que em Angola significa, entre outras coisas, o término da guerra, o término do envio de armas de fogo, como as minas, por parte de outros países, como no caso do Brasil e Estados Unidos, a possibilidade de cuidar, morar e sobreviver da agricultura, atualmente abandonada, devido o perigo de explosões de minas, clandestinamente colocadas em solo Angolano. Neste contexto, é importante destacar que Angola não possui nenhuma fábrica de armas e, catastróficamente, está hoje tomada por minas e outros instrumentos de guerra. Trata-se dos efeitos de uma economia bélica globalizada.

Em Angola, as mulheres têm se dirigido a Deus e ao/a próximo/a em oração e ação, no sentido de colocar-se um fim à guerra e aos conflitos étnicos. São elas que mais sentem a dor de perderem filhos/as, companheiros, irmãos/ãs, amigos/as nesta interminável e injusta guerra. Elas se tornam viúvas e também responsáveis pelo cuidado de filhos e filhas órfãos de pais. As mulheres têm compaixão com cada criança órfã que perambula pelas ruas de Angola, por cada pessoa que perdeu um órgão de seu corpo e que hoje rasteja para poder se locomover. Trata-se de uma tragédia que as mulheres não mais agüentam e que nunca conseguiram aceitar.

O Seminário contribuiu enormemente para apoiar e fortalecer este compromisso evangélico e ético, tanto por parte das pastoras e da igreja cristã em Angola, quanto das demais pessoas que participaram do referido Seminário e das igrejas lá representadas.

O desafio que o contexto Angolano e, de uma forma geral, o africano, apresenta diz respeito a todas as nações. Cabe lembrar que a exploração e morte do povo africano vem de longa data e remonta o período da colonização, esta ainda tão atual quando se percebe o grande número de europeus que comercializam petróleo, diamantes e outras riquezas de Angola. No Seminário ficou claro que Angola e África de um modo geral, deverão ter devolvida a sua liberdade. E mais, que a justiça terá que ser feita. Para as mulheres teólogas, não há dúvida de que a promessa divina da justiça pode até ser retardada pelas forças do mal, mas um dia será cumprida, pois trata-se da Palavra de Deus.. “Assim será a palavra que sair da minha boca; não voltará para mim vazia, mas fará o que me apraz e prosperará naquilo para que a designei”, Is. 55. 11. O povo africano acredita e tem certeza de que um dia as perdas que os anos de colonização representam serão restituídas e que destes países se levantará um povo que, enfim, poderá viver em paz. As mulheres teólogas se empenham pelo povo africano, procuram valorizar sua cultura, religiosidade e sua forma de vida. Trata-se de uma teologia contextualizada, engajada e que, nos dias recentes, em que se vivencia o início de mais uma grande guerra, torna-se bastante atual para as igrejas cristãs dos diversos países.

Cabe destacar também que as participantes do Seminário assumiram o compromisso de dar visibilidade e expressão à teologia africana. O contacto com o Programa de Educação Teológica Ecumênica do Conselho Mundial de Igrejas e com as mulheres responsáveis pelo Terceiro Seminário do Círculo Lusófono é de importância fundamental neste processo. Este é o começo de uma caminhada que pode levar-nos a novas descobertas.

São Leopoldo, 20 de outubro de 2001

Rosane Pletsch

**THIRD SEMINAR OF THE LUSOPHONE  
CIRCLE OF CONCERNED AFRICAN WOMEN THEOLOGIANs  
LUANDA, ANGOLA<sup>1</sup>**

*Eva Cosme*

**Opening remarks**

From September 25 to October 2 of 2001, the Third Seminar of the Lusophone Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians<sup>2</sup> took place in Luanda, Angola guided by the theme: “African Women Against Ethnic Discrimination: Equality, Justice, Dignity” (James 2:4-9).

Participating in this event were representatives of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians Helene Yinda (Cameroon) and Pauline Muchina (Kenya), Jana Meyer (a friend of the Circle from the USA); two guests from Brazil, Maria do Carmo and Rosane Pletsch, seven women from Mozambique and 40 from Angola. Eva Gomes, coordinator of the Lusophone Circle, presided over the formal opening session at the Central United Methodist Church of Luanda. Her message was based on the text that guided the work of the seminar (James 2:4-9), exhorting those present to prepare for unity because for God there are no distinctions of race, tribes or social positions.

**African women against discrimination**

In general, throughout all stages whether historical or socio-economic, African women have always suffered the most discrimination. On one hand, the culture of the majority of ethnic groups is strongly based on traditions and customs which, while elevating women in certain aspects are not able to give them equal status. This is due primarily to the injustice which in most cases takes away from women the dignity of being human, and which is exacerbated because Africa does not have a democratic tradition.

Africa needs to rediscover itself, and in this rediscovery a strong step will be the recovery of ethical, moral and cultural values which are inherent to its people and the capacity of African countries to integrate these into the dimension of gender and acceptance of women. While the countries of the north have already visualized their union in the face of the process of globalization, Africa divides itself and forgets that whenever it has tried to unite its efforts it has always gained much more than it lost. This was expressed at the opening event in the words of Josefa Webba, synthesizing the experience of African women throughout endless ages.

**Cry for peace**

The defining moment of the gathering came while sharing experiences on the question of solidarity, during the discussion facilitated by Jana Meyer. This sharing gave way to feelings that had been buried for a long time and which inspired the writing of an open letter. In this letter the Angolan women prayed and cried out together with women coming from other countries who gave their solidarity to the Angolan women, joining efforts to end war and in unity to demand:

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<sup>1</sup> Translated from Portuguese by Jana Meyer, USA.

<sup>2</sup> For more information on the creation of the Lusophone Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians see *Ministerial Formation*, No. 88, January 2000, pg. 35-46

- Immediate bilateral cease fire
- End the arms trade to Angola in exchange for oil and diamonds
- That the international community respect in practice the capacity of the Angolan people to resolve the conflict and to help them to attain peace, rather than simply sending them maize and beans which Angolans could grow themselves if the war ended
- Enough of war and violence

### **Closing**

The closing message was given by pastor Gabriela Mucavele of Mozambique who exhorted the women to prioritize unity through constantly promoting peace. We give eternal glory to our pastor, who passed away in December 2001. May her soul rest in peace. (Editor's note: Dr. Musimbi Kanyoro, coordinator of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians sent a message of condolences to the Mozambican women).

### **Evaluation**

The meeting produced its desired effects according to the opinion of the participants as well as the invited guests. The satisfaction and happiness was visible on their faces. We the Angolan Circle and the Lusophone Circle praise God for having permitted that the activity was successful and that we were inspired by the Holy Spirit to produce what we produced with the help of those present.

**May God's name be praised!**

### ***REFLECTIONS BY ROSANE PLETSCH Sao Leopoldo, Brazil, October 20, 2001***

The Third Seminar of the Lusophone Circle, Luanda, Angola was sponsored by the Education and Ecumenical Formation Team/ Ecumenical Theological Education Programme of the World Council of Churches.

Diverse denominations and countries were represented. Brazil was represented by Rosane Pletsch (IECLB) and Maria do Carmo Moreira Lima (Methodist). This was the first time that Brazilian women theologians participated in the Circle.

It is worth noting that this initiative is of great importance in the sense that it aims to develop and publish African theology which takes into account the gender perspective. In the reconstruction of African countries and in the recovery of the culture of these peoples, there is nothing more important than to reformulate and recreate theology still under European influence, especially of Portugal. In the African context, women theologians have had an important role in pastoral ministry, and consequently, in developing theology. This, however, is not always widely known, because in most cases these practical-theoretical experiences are not published. In Angola, there have been women pastors for many years. They together with their male colleagues have been rediscovering the Gospel of freedom and of peace.

In a context marked by 30 years of war, and the present war in Afghanistan, nothing is more relevant than to emphasize the gospel message of peace. In Angola, peace has been a motivating force for ecumenism among the Christian churches, who are discovering that the evangelical message must insert itself into society so that it can generate transformation there. In Angola, peace is the yeast that can make the bread rise, and the salt that can preserve a society free from wars and ethnic conflicts. When the message of peace wins over the streets, the homes, the families, then surely the weapons of war will be creatively transformed into instruments of justice, which in Angola means, among other things, the end of war, the end of sending weapons such as landmines to Angola by other countries such as Brazil and the United States, the possibility to

make a living from agriculture, which is currently abandoned because of the danger of mine explosions, which are hidden in the Angolan soil. In this context, it is important to highlight that Angola does not have any weapons factory yet is today being catastrophically inundated by landmines and other instruments of war. These are the effects of a globalized war economy.

In Angola, women have turned to God, and to their neighbors in prayer and in action, to put an end to war and to ethnic conflicts. It is the women who most feel the pain of losing children, partners, sisters and brothers, and friends in this endless and unjust war. The women become widows and also become responsible for taking care of orphan children. The women have compassion for each orphan child that wanders in the streets of Angola, for each person that lost a body part and who today struggles to get around. This is a tragedy that the women can no longer support and have never been able to accept. The Seminar contributed enormously to support and strengthen this evangelical and ethical commitment, both on the part of the women pastors and the Christian church of Angola, as well as the other persons that participated in the Seminar and the other churches that were represented.

The challenge presented by the context of Angola, and that of Africa in general, says something about and for all nations. It is worth remembering that the exploitation and death of the African people dates from a long time ago, and includes the period of colonization, which still continues given the great number of Europeans which trade in oil, diamonds, and other riches of Angola. In the Seminar it was clear that Angola and Africa in general should have their freedom returned to them. And further, justice must be done. For the women theologians there is no doubt that while the divine promise of justice may be delayed by evil forces, yet it will be fulfilled one day, because it is the Word of God: “so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and succeed in the thing for which I sent it” (Isaiah 55:11 NRSV.) The African people believe in the certainty that one day the losses which the years of colonization represent will be restored and that from these countries a people will be lifted up who, finally, will be able to live in peace. The women theologians work for the African people, seeking to value their culture, religiosity, and form of life. This is a contextualized and engaged theology, which in recent days, in view of the start of yet another major war, has become very relevant for the Christian churches of many countries.

It is important to note that the participants of the Seminar have taken on the commitment to give visibility and expression to African theology. The contact with the Ecumenical Theological Education Programme of WCC and the women responsible for the Third Seminar of the Lusophone Circle is of fundamental importance in this process. This is the beginning of a journey that has the potential to lead to the discovery of important paths.

**TRIBUTE TO Dr. CHARLES W. FORMAN<sup>1</sup>**

*Gerald Anderson*

It is a real privilege to be invited to give a tribute to our colleague and friend Charles W. Forman on the occasion of his retirement from the Board of the Foundation for Theological Education in South East Asia (FTESEA).

As I did some research on Charles in preparation for writing this tribute, I read several articles about him in various dictionaries and encyclopedias. In the process, I was quite shocked to read the article about him in the new *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, which says that Charles died in 1997. Immediately I called him on the telephone to see how he was feeling. And I am pleased to say that just ten days ago we helped Charles celebrate his 85<sup>th</sup> birthday.

We are so glad that you are still with us, Charles, so that we may honor you for the huge contribution you have made to the FTESEA.

I can still recall very clearly the first time I saw Charles Forman. It was during the academic year 1954-55 and I was a senior at Boston University School of Theology. In those days we had a required one-semester course in World Missions taught by Dr. Fred Field Goodsell, who had recently retired as the Executive Vice President of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions and he was serving as a visiting professor at the School of Theology. One day in the classroom Dr. Goodsell told us that we had a visitor who would speak to us. He was the then new Professor of Missions at Yale Divinity School, Dr. Charles Forman. I recall that I was impressed with how eloquent he was, how thin he was, and how young he was. I am still impressed with how eloquent he is and how thin he is at age 85.

All of us who have had the privilege of serving on the Board of FTESEA with Charles are conscious of *how much* the FTESEA owes to him for his years of service and stewardship in this endeavor. But some of you may not know much about Charles's background before he joined the FTE, so let me just briefly review his career.

Charles was born in India in 1916, where his parents, his grandparents and great-grandparents all served as Presbyterian missionaries. (Forman Christian College in Lahore, is named for his grandfather). After receiving a Ph.D. in history from the University of Wisconsin, he went to Union Theological Seminary, New York, where he met Janice Mitchell, a fellow student. They were married, graduated from Union Seminary, and went in 1945 as Presbyterian missionaries to India, where Charles taught for five years at North India United Theological College (which he describes as a small school with a big name). After that he became the successor to Kenneth Scott Latourette at Yale Divinity School where he served as Professor of Missions for 34 years.

In the late 1950s, Charles had a leave of absence from Yale so that he could serve for a year and a half as assistant to Charles Ranson on the staff of the Theological Education Fund (TEF) of the International Missionary Council.<sup>2</sup> During this period Charles traveled the world to examine the needs of theological education. Two events are memorable from that period.

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<sup>1</sup> This tribute was shared at a luncheon at the annual meeting of the Foundation for Theological Education in South East Asia (FTESEA) at 475 Riverside Drive, New York, NY, December 13, 2001.

<sup>2</sup> Editor's note: Theological Education Fund (TEF) was initiated by the International Missionary Council (IMC) based in London in 1958. Later when IMC joined the World Council of Churches (WCC) in 1961, TEF became a programme of WCC. It is the predecessor programme of Programme of Theological Education (PTE), today known as Ecumenical Theological Education (ETE).



The first came when a small plane carrying Charles crashed in the jungles of Brazil and he was marooned with the pilot for three days before they were rescued. Understandably, that was a “memorable experience.”

It was also during that period, while visiting Nommensen University in Sumatra, in 1959, that he first came to know about the work of FTESEA. Then in 1960 he first attended an FTESEA meeting, as a guest, representing the TEF.<sup>3</sup> But it was in 1964 that he joined the board of FTESEA as a Member-at-Large, and in 1966 he joined the FTESEA Policy Committee. This was during the time when Henry P. Van Dusen was Chairman of FTESEA. From 1965 to 1971 Charles was chairman of TEF, and during that same period he was also chairman of the Commission on Ecumenical Mission and Relations of the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.

Then in 1970 he became chairman of FTESEA, in which position he served for nineteen years. And since 1990 he has been a member of the board and of the executive committee. So Charles has served on the board of FTESEA in one capacity or another for 37 years, from 1964 to 2001 (probably longer than any other person in the history of FTESEA).

As he looks back over the years, Charles says that his biggest effort for the FTESEA came in the 1970s, when he was asked by the Board to go to a meeting of Association of Theological Education in South East Asia (ATESEA) in Singapore, with a proposal to establish a new structural process for decision-making about grants, which would largely turn over the decisions to a Resource Commission within ATESEA. It is noteworthy that this initiative came from FTESEA, and was not in response to a request from Southeast Asia. It was, of course, warmly received and implemented by ATESEA, and it remains as the standard operating procedure to this day.

In 1972, while Kosuke Koyama was Executive Director of ATESEA, Charles went to Indonesia as part of an accreditation team and visited every seminary in Indonesia. He also visited all the member schools in Myanmar on this same trip. Charles attended assemblies of ATESEA in 1972, 1977, and 1989. In all of these associations he was tremendously impressed with the member schools in South East Asia, their high standards, and their commitment to contextual education, much of it carried on in the midst of political struggle and, in some situations, persecution of the churches. He is also grateful for the outstanding leadership in ATESEA given by Kosuke Koyama, Emerito Nacpil, and Yeow Choo Lak.

Charles represented FTESEA in meetings of the World Council of Churches' Program on Theological Education in Fiji in 1987 and in Prague in 1988. And he worked with Marvin Hoff and Ching-fen Hsiao on the FTESEA advancement committee in 1994.

This is only an overview that highlights *some* of the most notable aspects of the service and leadership given by Charles to FTESEA over the last 37 years. It is an impressive record of a distinguished career in the service of the global church. All of us are grateful to you, Charles, and we wish you God's richest blessing in the years ahead.

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<sup>3</sup> Editor's note: The relationship between FTESEA and ETE (formerly TEF and PTE) has continued over the years and two staff persons of ETE were present at the luncheon honoring Charles Forman.