



Conference of European Churches
Churches in Dialogue Commission

Why a Mission News Bulletin of CEC?

The issue of Mission has been a permanent concern for CEC which confesses through the Charta Oecumenica that “the most important task of the churches in Europe is the common proclamation of the Gospel, in both word and deed, for the salvation of all”. Mission and Evangelism, Mission in a secularized context, Mission and Unity, Mission as the task of the whole Church, Mission and theological Dialogues, Mission and the cooperation between Churches and missionary Agencies, Mission and Proselytism were only some of the topics addressed by CEC during the last period of time. The outcome of this work has so far

been communicated to the Churches and missionary Agencies in Europe mainly through detailed reports published following specific meetings. In order to share more regularly recent developments, reflections and suggestions in relation to the issue of Mission with all European actors in this field, the Churches in Dialogue Commission (CiD) through its working programme “Researcher in European Mission” decided to publish a Mission News Bulletin. Ms Kyriaki Avtzi as coordinator of this CiD working program is collecting and editing all the articles for this publication. Churches and Mission agencies are welcome to share with us materials to be published through this Bulletin. We

wish this new publication a successful beginning as a platform for active sharing of information.

Revd Prof. Dr. Viorel Ionita,
CiD Director

“New and Emerging Mission Movements in Europe today” was the theme of the consultation organized by the mission desk of the Churches in Dialogue Commission of CEC in cooperation with the Nova Research Centre of Gloucester-UK, between 7-11 June 2009, in Pullach, Germany. While drawing no line of distinction between the movements and the churches but seeing them as theologically the same, both being expressions of the mission activity in Europe, participants

explored their implications for missiology in a post-Christian, post-secular Europe, identifying common challenges and opportunities. The term “new” gave a sense of innovation and experimentation, whereas the term “emerging” was connected to the qualities of these movements. Trends such as “believing without belonging” and “belonging without believing” were identified as contemporary forms of spiritual experience with significant effect on the developments of mission work in Europe.



Pullach, Germany, 7-11 June 2009

Part of the discussions evolved around the need for a stronger theological dimension to mission, which would help ease the division between mission and church mainly observed in the

west. Relating to ecclesiology and missiology the main questions raised were how God’s mission works and if the latter corresponds to the churches’ action or God’s mission as greater than the Church itself. Viewing the Body of Christ as the agent of God’s mission the question of unity in diversity within cultural expression came up, highlighting the importance of collaboration and solidarity between mission movements and the Church as far as missionary activity is concerned.

“*Witnessing to Christ in Europe today*” was the theme of the workshop on mission organized by the Churches in Dialogue Commission, during the 13th General Assembly of the Conference of European Churches (CEC), held in Lyon 15-21 July 2009. Acknowledging the priority of mission in Europe, member churches and associated organizations were called to reach greater unity with regard to our call to mis-

sion. The workshop addressed issues such as the empowerment of the churches in the secular world, while at the same time emphasizing spiritual contexts.

These are the challenges of how to witness Christ within popular culture (e.g. atheistic propaganda, financial crisis) and how to re-commit the churches to their common task of mission in Europe today. The participants of the workshop examined questions in relation to the importance of mission in the agenda of CEC and of its member churches, the way CEC’s work on mission could be shaped in the following 6-7 years, and the pre-conditions needing to be met in order to ensure the most effective contribution of CEC to the Witness of Christ in Europe today.



Opening Worship, 13th CEC
Assembly; Lyon

“Mission has to be one of the strategic objectives of CEC”. With this widely expressed and commonly accepted appeal the discussion began on “Witnessing to Christ in Europe today”. Participants acknowledged that regardless of the diverse understandings and aspects of mission existing around the churches in Europe, mission is always a part of our identity - preaching and living the Gospel, and a priority for many CEC member churches. Understanding mission as the very nature of

the church, thus a priority for all, delegates suggested that CEC should be the platform where member churches share their experiences, ideas and resources in order to strengthen, inspire and motivate each other in spreading the Good News of the Gospel. Important remarks were made on the way mission work should be carried out, identifying mission as part of our Christian identity rather than simply an activity. CEC was seen as the place where the churches of different confessions could learn to mutually trust one another and collaborate in honesty, overcoming occasional unfortunate competitive and proselytizing tactics. To this end it was suggested that the mission desk be strengthened so as to enable and facilitate the exchange of experiences and understandings of mission and the cooperation on our common objective: to experience anew the power

of the Gospel, which transcends all barriers and can reach even those who have distanced themselves from the Church.

“Mission and Unity: Ecclesiology and Mission” is the study paper on Theme 8 of the Edinburgh 2010 study process, comprised of nine themes. Celebrating the centenary of the World Missionary Conference (Edinburgh in 1910), the project of Edinburgh 2010 aspires to offer the new perspectives of mission in the 21st century. The conveners of Commission 8 (Revd Dr. Darrell Jackson of the Nova Research Centre, Revd Dr. László Gonda of CWME and Ms. Kyriaki Avtzi of CEC) worked with the Commission for World Mission and Evangelism (CWME) of the World Council of Churches (WCC) for the elaboration of a study paper on mission, unity and ecclesiology. After

a drafting group meeting in Bossey (17-19 June 2009), the conveners met for the final revision of the text in Gloucester (1-3 October 2009). After a historical overview from 1910 to the present, the paper examines the recent context of mission and church given the current global developments and then goes back to the biblical and theological foundations of mission in unity. The second half of the paper explores the understanding of ecumenical evangelism, the sharp concern of proselytism over against religious freedom, and the existing tension between evangelism and prophetic witness. It closes with the call to become with the power of the Holy Spirit healing and reconciling communities, being at the same time a call to experience unity in diversity in a constructive interdependence.

“The most important task of the churches in Europe is the common proclamation of the Gospel, in both word and deed for the salvation of all”. The widespread lack of corporate and individual orientation and falling away from Christian values challenge Christians to testify to their faith, particularly in response to the quest for meaning which is being pursued in so many forms. This witness will require increased dedication to Christian education (e.g. catechism classes) and pastoral care in local congregations, with a sharing of experiences in these fields. It is equally important for the whole people of God together to communicate the Gospel in the public domain, which also means responsible commitments to social and political issues.

We commit ourselves,

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

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