



churches in dialogue commission
conference of european churches

News Bulletin on Mission 3^d Issue, June 2010

Edinburgh 2010, the five-day Conference marking the 100th anniversary of the World Missionary Conference of 1910 opened its doors on June 2nd, 2010 at the Pollock Halls campus of Edinburgh University. An approximate number of 300 delegates from 65 countries around the world, representing 115 denominations and 202 organizations, affirmed the common call to “Witnessing to Christ Today”, our common call to mission.



Opening Celebration - Edinburgh 2010

Photo: Gary Doak

The first two Plenary Sessions of the Conference included insights on “Mission in long perspective” and “Mission worldwide”, offering a retrospective view of the last one hundred years of mission and

case studies of contemporary initiatives in Christian witness, exploring the question of what mission is. The third, closing, Plenary Session worked “Towards a Common Call”, bringing together the key issues and priorities for the churches, as resulting from the plenary debates and the six parallel sessions of the Conference’s Study Process.

Foundations for mission, Mission among other faiths, Mission and postmodernities, Mission and power, Forms of engagement, Theological education, Christian communities, Mission and Unity and Mission Spirituality were the nine themes that debated and refined the key issues and priorities which were raised in the pre-conference report.

The mission desk secretary of CEC has been involved in Theme Eight of the Study Process, on Mission and Unity: mission and ecclesiology, as a convener. During the Conference the Theme of mission, unity and ecclesiology was discussed in two sessions by a number of delegates, who focused their debates on the issues and priorities in relation to this question. Primarily, among the *issues* for the churches when discussing Mission and Unity were the following key points: power and the territorial freedom for mission, the fact that

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being a healing community we all share a role in God's mission, and it is also important to have lay leadership in mission; additionally, delegates highlighted the importance of BEM documents, agreeing that theology should be rooted in context, experience and biblical faith and in learning through dialogue and sharing of good practice stories. Moreover, they debated on the relation between spirituality and secularism, unity and diversity, as well as church, mission and nature.



Parallel Session, Track 1, Theme 8, Edinburgh 2010, Photo: Gary Doak
Dr Matthew Cook

The delegates spent the next session discussing the *priorities* of the churches in relation to Mission, Unity and Ecclesiology. The main priority points developed as follows: continue building on the work of Faith and Order on ecclesiology and mission, while affirming that past and present conflicts should result in growth with respect to confident action by all the people of God. Unity needs humility and recognition of a common vulnerability; therefore churches are encouraged to repent of past practices that were disrespectful, ignorant, or violent. Delegates also highlighted the importance of ministerial and missional formation,

raising the question of methodology in relation to institutional and organic structures of ecumenism; at the same time it is essential to promote unity at the grass-roots levels, learning from those new to the ecumenical dialogue, recognizing their gifts.

Based on the above findings, the conveners submitted the Contribution of Theme Eight to the “Common Call” of Edinburgh 2010 Conference:

“From across six continents and after one hundred years we come in praise and thanksgiving to God, Father Son and Holy Spirit, for those who have preceded us, and those who will follow us, as participants in the missio Dei trinitatis and for their commitment to that unity for which Christ prayed; so that the world might believe.

As churches we acknowledge our failures; the abuse of power and money, territorial exclusivism, individualism, inadequate respect for other cultures and surrender to secularism. So too, recalling Christ the host at the banquet of the Kingdom and His super-abundant generosity towards the poor, the outcast, and the stranger, we have much to repent; in our lack of hospitality towards one another.

We invite churches, mission societies, ecumenical and evangelical bodies to a process of deep reflection on the meaning and call of mission as hospitality. In particular, we encourage, local and national councils and alliances of churches to take initiatives in welcoming churches in Diaspora and in creating opportunities for mutual learning, exchange and common witness in the one Body of Christ. We also encourage closer co-operation and dialogue towards convergence in our respective

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and joint statements on mission and ecclesiology. We commend for further study, for example, the 'Code of Conduct on Conversion', 'The Nature and Mission of the Church', 'The Whole Church', and the results of bi-lateral dialogues on relevant themes."

The "Common Call" document, bringing together the contributions of all nine Study Themes and the plenary sessions, offers interesting points for reflection and action.



Closing Plenary session, Edinburgh 2010, "Towards a Common Call",
Dr Michael Kinnamon

Photo: Gary Doak

In this, we are called to bring forth our witness and do evangelism in a way that manifests God's love, righteousness and justice for the whole creation. Building friendship, seeking reconciliation and practicing hospitality, we are called to authentic dialogue, respectful engagement and humble witness among people of other faiths. Young people, women and men are called to share power and responsibilities fairly, overcoming the asymmetries and imbalances of power that divide

churches and societies. Valuing the biblical, apostolic foundation of missionary efforts we celebrate the furthering of the gospel around the world. Underlining the importance of theological education for the future of mission, we are called to accompany each other for mutual growth in faith and understanding. Our witness needs to be a manifestation of love in God's grace, embracing all creation. Belonging to the Body of Christ through Baptism, we are challenged to see to each other's diversity, and engage in our common task of mission. With the transformative power of the Holy Spirit we are all invited to be part of God's mission.

The "Common Call" was affirmed on June 6th 2010 in the Church of Scotland Assembly Hall by representatives of world Christianity. For the document and more information on the Conference see www.edinburgh2010.org

The new Churches in Dialogue Commission (CiD) of CEC held its first meeting at the Ecumenical Institute of Château de Bossey, Switzerland, between 7 and 10 June 2010. H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios of Sassima (Ecumenical Patriarchate) was elected Moderator of the Commission, and Canon Elizabeth Fisher (Church of England) was elected Vice-Moderator. This year's challenging topic was on the "Visions on the Unity of the Church". The discussion on the theme included three presentations. Rev. Dr Andreas Hunziker, Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches, who focused more on the Leuenberg Agreement and the relation between unity and the

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message of justification in the world, given that this message would be actual in the life of the church. Bishop Dr Matti Repo from the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Finland discussing the visible unity of the church related the question of unity with the possibility to celebrate Eucharist together, as long as sufficient agreement would be achieved within a fellowship of churches on the matter. Rev. Dr Sorin Selaru offered his perspective from the Romanian Orthodox Church. He discussed unity on the basis of the Holy Scripture and the Holy Tradition, the model of unity of the Church of the 1st millennium, and elaborated further on “Unity and Diversity” versus “Open Sobornicity”.

The discussion that followed developed on the question of unity and fellowship, as well as unity and diversity. Understanding diversity as “otherness”, an interesting debate took place on what the limits of diversity could be and where one places the center of gravity when reflecting on “reconciled diversity”. Unity based on fundamental truths of faith, out of which flows the Tradition of Christ, was another interesting point that was made. Another issue discussed was the question of unity based on the confession of fundamental faith truths.

Moreover, during the meeting, the mission secretary presented her annual report as well as the future activities of the mission desk. Following that, members of the Commission proposed and established an adhoc group for the evaluation of the mission post. By the end of the CiD meeting they presented their findings in plenary.



CiD Commission, 7-10 June, 2010, Bossey, Switzerland

In their evaluation, the CiD members strongly endorsed the work undertaken by the mission secretary thus far, and suggested the continuation of the mission work carried out on the grounds that mission is central not only to the life of the churches, but also very essential for the work of the Commission.

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