

“Come and See.”

A Brief Introduction and Explanation to a Newly Published Faith and Order Document

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Summary

This short article presents briefly the process of developing the idea of “Come and See” as a Faith and Order paper and to describe the process of its writing, adoption and publication. The second part presents its content and reception at the WCC level and beyond. The aim of this article is to accompany the Romanian translation of “Come and See.”

Keywords

Come and See; Faith and Order; Pilgrimage; Ecclesiology; Inter-Religious dialogue; Ecology.

I. Introduction

Revista Teologica published in its last issue¹ the Romanian translation of the first part of the Faith and Order paper number 224, entitled *Come and See. A Theological Invitation to the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace.*² In the present issue of the same periodical the second part of the Romanian translation is published. Already a note³ was placed at the end of the first part of the Romanian translation announcing to the readers of *Revista Teologica* that the second part of the translation will be accompanied by an introductory and explanatory study.

Such a presentation of *Come and See* is absolutely necessary, not only for the Romanian landscape, but also for the wider ecumenical one, as unfortunately the World Council of Churches (WCC) published the text of this Faith and Order paper - as usual for Faith and Order papers - without any introduction or foreword from the WCC General Secretary or of the Faith and Order director.⁴

¹ *Revista Teologică* 4, 2019, p. 253-261.

² WCC Publications, Geneva, 2019.

³ *Revista teologică* 4, 2019, p. 261.

⁴ My question on this matter, addressed in written via email to Rev. Dr. Odair Pedroso Mateus, Director of Faith and Order Secretariat, remained un-responded.

II. Idea and Development of “Come and See”

The meeting of the newly constituted Commission on Faith and Order, gathered, after the 10th WCC General Assembly from Busan, Korea, at the monastery of Caraiman, Busteni, from the 17th to the 24th of June 2015 and was aimed to form the study groups of the newly constituted Commission on Faith and Order to identify possible areas of research and theological reflection. Three Study Groups were formed. Study group I was divided into three sub-groups: 1. Theological and Ecclesiological Foundations of Pilgrimage, Justice and Peace; 2. Living the Gospel of Jesus Christ in a Pluralistic World; and 3. Christian Responsibility and Hope for a Broken World. The moderators of the Study Groups were Rev. Dr. Sandra Beardsall, United Church of Canada and Rev. Dr. Jaeshik Shin, Presbyterian Church of Korea.

The aim of sub-group 1, as stated in the minutes of the Commission meeting in Busteni Monastery was to make “a significant contribution to the overall WCC theme of Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace by collaborating with the theological working group of the Reference Group on the Pilgrimage that is being established to foster this theme throughout the entire WCC ... Its goal is to produce in a relatively short time (within two years) a short yet substantial ecclesiological and theological contribution, first of all, to the understanding of pilgrimage, a concept not so familiar to all Christian communities, and then to relate the notion of pilgrimage to the pursuit of justice, peace and the protection of creation.”⁵ The same report stressed the need for closer cooperation between the three sub-groups of Study Group I, as well as with the Theological Study Group and Theological Reference Group for the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace.⁶ As the work of the Study Group started,⁷ cooperation with the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs and with the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism and with the Programme on Inter-Religious Dialogue and Cooperation proved to be necessary, useful and fruitful.

As the work of the Study Group developed, after proper consultation, all members agreed that “the best strategy would be to combine the three sub-groups, and to work collectively on the theological foundations statement for the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace.”⁸ The writing of “Come and See” has been done in several steps. It

⁵ Minutes of the Meeting at the Monastery of Caraiman Busteni, Romania, 17-24 June 2015, Faith and Order Paper No. 222, p. 53.

⁶ Ibidem. Three members of the Study Group I attended a meeting of the PJP Theology Study Group which took place in Jerusalem in February 2016.

⁷ Part of the presentation here is based also on my own experience as staff member of the Secretariat of the Commission on Faith and Order assigned to staff Study Group I which produced “Come and See.”

⁸ Minutes of the Meeting at the eMseni Christian Centre Benoni, near Pretoria, South Africa 15-21 June 2017, Faith and Order Paper No. 223, p. 24.

involved two important meetings: one in Tagaytay, Philippines and another one in Aberdeen, Scotland.

II.1. Meeting in Tagaytay, Philippines

The first one took place in October 2016 in the Philippines (at Angels Hills Retreat Centre in Tagaytay). There attended twelve members of the Study Group I. Prof. Dr. William Henn (Roman-Catholic Church) a member of the Study Group, prepared in advance a draft of the text which was discussed during the meeting. Each of the subgroups added new sections aimed to reflect their own interests. The main result of the meeting was that the document was extended and deepened with further biblical, patristic and historical references. Topics of the other two sub-groups, i.e. care for the earth and diakonia became part of the advanced draft document.

This meeting was organized in Tagaytay at the invitation of the Philippine Independent Church, a WCC member church from the Philippines with a particularly interesting history.⁹ Some members of the Study Group attended, after the meeting a conference on “Catholicity and Globalization” organized at the headquarter of Philippine Independent Church in Manila, with the cooperation of the Union of Utrecht and participation of the head of this union, Archbishop Joris Vercammen and representatives of several old-catholic churches from Europe. Union of Utrecht and the Philippine Independent Church have a similar history, as both separated from the Roman-Catholic Church and have a special interest in reflecting on catholicity from various perspectives. The presence of Faith and Order commissioners, especially of Prof. Dr. William Henn, an outstanding roman-catholic ecclesialogist gave a positive dynamic to the conference.

II.2. Meeting in Aberdeen, Scotland

Another important step in finalizing „Come and See” was the meeting of six members of the Study Group and some staff from the Faith and Order secretariat in Aberdeen, Scotland. They reviewed and refined an advanced version of the document. It is worth mentioning here that the meeting was hosted by Prof. Dr. Thomas Greggs in his private home. The final form of the title was decided in Aberdeen. Some parts of the document were made livelier and inviting, in the hope that it will have a meaning beyond the WCC constituency. Connections between “Come and See” and other WCC documents, especially with TCTCV were made more explicit, as several quotations were introduced in the body of the document.

II.3. Adoption and publication

After the meeting in Aberdeen, the advanced draft of “Come and See” was further discussed and revised among the members of the Study Group as well as

⁹ See <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/member-churches/philippine-independent-church>

within the Faith and Order Secretariat. Several footnotes were introduced and their details corrected. The final version was presented to The Commission on Faith and Order gathered in June 2017 in Pretoria, South Africa, for final approval. After a lively discussion on the aim and content of “Come and See,” this was approved with the suggestion to make some minor changes. They were operated by the co-moderators of the Study Group in cooperation with the Secretariat on Faith and Order.

The published text of “Come and See” was launched within the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism` meeting which took place in Helsinki, Finland from 16th to 22nd May 2020.¹⁰ The Moderator of Faith and Order Commission, Rev. Dr. Susan Durber who attended the event declared that the “ecumenicity” of “Come and See” “lies in its method rather than in its object” as the Commission showed no fear for theological discussion at its deepest level. The main intention of the Study Group which authored this document was “to bring together the best of our various traditions, and the complexity of our contexts, to offer a theological foundation, a road on which the churches might go on pilgrimage together.”¹¹

The work of Study Group I will continue by developing two other texts which will stay in a strong connection with Come and See”: “Come and See: Witness and Serve: Proclaiming the Peace of the Lord Jesus Christ in a Religiously Plural World” and “Cultivate and Care: An Ecumenical Theology of Justice for and within Creation.”¹² We look forward to receiving and commenting on them.

III Title, Structure and Content

„Come and See” is in fact a Biblical quotation.¹³ These are the words addressed by our Lord Jesus Christ to Andrew and to another companion, as they have seen Jesus and asked him “Teacher, where do you live?” The answer of Jesus was “Come and See.” They went to see and “stayed with Jesus the rest of the day” (John 1: 39-41). The “Come and See” story from the New Testament is an inspiring one: it is not only about coming or going and seeing, it is also about staying, learning and witnessing. After this experience, Andrew went to his brother Peter and told him: “We have found the Messiah!” (John 1:41). Faith and Order document “Come and See” is an invitation addressed to churches to join the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace launched by WCC. It is, as the subtitle underlines, “a theological invitation.” This indicates the fact that

¹⁰ <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/press-centre/news/come-and-see-text-exemplifies-a-new-way-of-working>

¹¹ Ibidem

¹² Minutes of the Commission on Faith and Order Meeting at in Nanjing, China, 13-19 June 2019, p. 48.

¹³ A Basic google research reveals the fact that « Come and See » is also a Belorussian anti-war movie produced in 1985. It is also a Christian website from Nazareth (www.comeandsee.com).

"Come and See" will try to indicate some basic elements for a theology of pilgrimage. As the last paragraph of the introduction states "In this text, we will offer perspectives on pilgrimage from the Christian tradition, and from two significant issues affecting the churches as we journey through the world: moving toward a just and sustainable world, and searching for peace in interreligious relationships. A theological account of pilgrimage can help us to find the links between the healing of creation and of relationships in the world."¹⁴

"Come and See" is structured in six parts. The first part is in fact an Introduction which contains five paragraphs that explains the purpose of the document, makes the necessary links with the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace and indicates the main theological directions of the content. Part II is entitled "Pilgrimage: Perspectives from the Bible and Christian Traditions" and it contains two different chapters: A. Perspectives from the Bible (6 paragraphs) and B. Perspectives from Christian traditions (5 paragraphs). The first chapter, on perspectives from the Bible, indicates Biblical elements which might stay at the basis of a theology of pilgrimage. It affirms firstly that "journey and pilgrimage are found at the heart of the scriptures" (paragraph 6). The main Biblical elements identified as journey and/or pilgrimage are: the call addressed by God to Abraham and Sarah to leave their kinfolk and follow God to a land that God would show them (cf. Gen. 12: 1-9); liberation of the Jewish people from slavery in Egypt and God's accompaniment through the desert to the Promised Land (paragraph 6); the psalms as "songs of pilgrimage" used as prayer songs by the Jews in journeying up to Mount Zion (paragraph 7); the fundamental idea of the prophets which describes "the messianic age as the streaming of all nations toward Jerusalem (paragraph 8); journey as "a significant metaphor for interpreting gospel narratives": Jesus on movement as "an itinerant teacher"; journeying with Jesus by taking up one's cross (paragraph 9); Jesus journeying back and forth to Jerusalem (paragraph 10); Jesus as "the way, the truth and the life" (cf. John 14:6) (paragraph 11). There is one indication regarding the first Christians: they are called exiles on the earth, a reference used for the Jews and now transferred to the followers of Jesus.

Chapter two of this second part indicates the following sources from the Christian tradition related with pilgrimage and its theology: the fourth Century's pilgrimage of Egeria from western Europe to Egypt and Palestine (paragraph 12); pilgrimage as a "spiritual metaphor": The Epistle of Diognetus describes Christians as "resident aliens"; Moses' ascent to Mont Sinai describes as a journey of faith by Gregory of Nyssa (paragraph 13); journeying into the wilderness to pursue ascetic life by some Christians in the post-Constantinian period when Christianity became increasingly privileged and the role of monasticism as "ascetic pilgrimage"; the example of Margery Kempe, a fourteenth-century English women who went on

¹⁴ Come and See 5.

“extensive pilgrimages that also fed her interior mystical life” (paragraph 14). Paragraph 15 indicates some corrupted aspects in which pilgrimages took throughout history, such as consumerism, acquisitiveness, injustice or violence. The next paragraph underlines the “spiritual blessings” of pilgrimage and it stresses the fact that this old religious tool found new expressions and evaluation in the eyes of newly developed forms of global Christianity, such as African Instituted Churches.

Part III, entitled “A Theology for the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace” contains five paragraphs. It is the core part of the document and developed a theology of pilgrimage in connection with and on the basis of the major chapters of theology. Paragraph 17 builds a theology of pilgrimage, starting with Triadology, Christology, Pneumatology, Anthropology and Eschatology. It affirms that the “ultimate source” of pilgrimage is “the love of the Triune God.” Connections with the other chapters of theology are indicated only briefly. Paragraph 18 has an emphasis on the ecclesiological dimensions of pilgrimage. They are presented in a more developed way. There are connections with celebration of sacraments, especially the Eucharist. Paragraph 19 presents the “ecological dimensions” of pilgrimage: “each human being and, indeed, the whole of humanity, can be said to be on a kind of pilgrimage from creation to the final fulfilment of justice and peace.” The same paragraph indicated the value of pilgrimage as “being attentive to and walking in solidarity with fellow travelers” i.e. those marginalized, discriminated and excluded. The next paragraph continues on the same theme of protecting the environment. „The abuse and destruction of the environment is an offense against God and an injustice to people of the present and of future generations.” The argumentation constructed in this paragraph ends with the following conclusion: “Thus pilgrimage involves honouring the integrity of creation in the journey toward a just and sustainable life on earth.” Paragraph 21, the last one of this third part has communion in its center, both between peoples and churches, as well as between peoples and God and between peoples and creation.

The fourth part, entitled “Justice and the Challenge of Moving toward a Sustainable World” contains four paragraphs. Paragraph 22 states that a just and sustainable world requires repentance and reconsideration of many practices and habits from every one of us. Justice for human beings goes hand in hand with justice for the entire creation. The emphasis of paragraph 23 is on creation and its relationship with the Creator. “In Jesus, the entire history of salvation, beginning from the creation itself, is revealed as a kind of pilgrim journey toward the eschatological reign of God, a rule of justice, peace, and a joy that is given by the Holy Spirit” (Rom 14:17) – concludes this paragraph. Paragraph 24 introduces the development of „concrete proposals” how churches should “engage in prophetic activity to counter injustice and violence, affirming human dignity and the integrity of creation.” The last paragraph of this fourth part of the document “Come and See” develops some ideas of how “the

movement toward unity serves the healing of the whole inhabited world.” The last part is more ecclesiological, pointing out the role that churches shall play in the ministry of healing. The Document “The Church Towards a Common Vision” is quoted.

Part V “Peace: Living the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ in a Religiously Plural World” has five paragraphs. Paragraph 26 speaks about the peace of Christ proclaimed by Christians. Christians are called to bring the peace of Christ to the whole world. The meaning of this peace is a complex one, containing “truth, memory, repentance, justice, forgiveness, and love”¹⁵ Paragraph 27 speaks about the openness of the community of the “Pilgrim Church” to all complex realities of today. It is just an opening paragraph to the next one which speaks about the relationship of Christians and churches with the religiously plural world we live in. The frame described by this paragraph is, on the one hand the commandment of Jesus given to his disciples to proclaim the Gospel and baptize in the name of Trinity those who believe (Matt. 28: 19-20) and the freedom to choose religious affiliation. It speaks about “the co-pilgrimage of all creation with whom the church shares the world and inviting the world to participate in the good news.” (cf. Rom. 8:22-23). Paragraph 29 quotes again *The Church Towards a Common Vision* for underlining the fact that “today Christians are more aware of the wide array of different religions other than their own.” Freedom of religion and human dignity are sustained with two New Testament episodes: encounters of Jesus with the Syro-Phoenician woman and with the Samaritan woman. The previous paragraph (30) of this part describes the different situations in which Christian life over the world. Some are in powerful situations, as others are minimally tolerated or even persecuted. Throughout history Christian were persecuted and sometimes became persecutors, as Christians benefited from the kindness and protection of people of other faiths. The aim of this paragraph is to introduce the notion of *martyria* and to pledge for tolerance and respect of fundamental human rights.

The last part of “Come and See” (part VI) entitled “Together on the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace” contains three paragraphs. It has a concluding character. Paragraph 31 explains the title of the document and affirms that by choosing the theme of Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace, “the WCC has not only affirmed the desire to move together, but also it affirms that its movement is directed toward the reign of God.” Paragraph 32 expresses the hope that the development of a theology of pilgrimage, as it has been done in this document, may help to “overcome a characterization of the ecumenical movement which has sometimes placed efforts to

¹⁵ A quotation from the document issued by the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism “Missions as Ministry of Reconciliation, 39. See <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/other-meetings/mission-and-evangelism/preparatory-paper-10-mission-as-ministry-of-reconciliation>

seek unity in doctrine in competition with efforts to collaborate in service.” ”Being together on pilgrimage implies that Christian service is rooted precisely in our common faith in God’s saving and renewing plan for the world” is the hope expressed in this paragraph. The last paragraph of *Come and See* is an invitation: “The Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace invited our churches to offer together, even now, their shared willingness to be open to the new ways in which the Spirit is responding to the petition which countless Christians around the world pray every day: Thy will be done.”

Reception of “Come and See”

In the report of Study Group 1: the Church on a Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace in Today’s World, presented in Nanjing China by Co-Moderator Prof. Dr. Sandra Beardsall called “Come and See” “a remarkable achievement and a useful text.”¹⁶ Also she mentioned that “the document is being widely talked about and well received within the World Council of Churches.”¹⁷ Indeed, “Come and See” was presented to several WCC bodies, like The Permanent Committee on Consensus and Collaboration, and it was well received. Also the affirmation that “Come and See” is “exemplary of Faith and Order’s collaboration with other expressions of WCC, particularly the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism”¹⁸ is quite definitory for the process of writing such a consistent document just in two years.

The Orthodox might appreciate “Come and See” for its consistent appeal to history and for several examples taken from patristic writings. It is a consistent theological text and a good example that ecumenical texts could and should be deeply rooted in meaningful theological reflection, otherwise becoming a mere ideology.

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III. A Theology for the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace

17. The Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace is not ultimately directed to a particular holy place but rather toward the fulfilment of the reign of God. It finds its ultimate source in the love of the Triune God, who has created the world, who empowers and renews it through the Holy Spirit, and who perfects and reconciles all things in Christ

¹⁶ Minutes of the Commission on Faith and Order Meeting at in Nanjing..., p. 7.

¹⁷ Ibidem.

¹⁸ Ibidem.

at the end of time. Jesus Christ enters into the world through his incarnation. His journey on earth takes him through the cross to his resurrection and exaltation in glory, as portrayed in the Christological hymn of Philippians 2:5-11, so as to redeem and transform creation. He reconciles all things in himself (Col. 1:15-20) and hands over the kingdom to the Father so that God may be all in all (1 Cor. 15:24-28). The Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace not only has this Christological foundation, but also a pneumatological basis. The churches move together, energized by the Holy Spirit, whom Christians confess to be "the Lord and giver of life" in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed. The Spirit of truth leads the churches to a vision of God's will for human relationships, it moves them to discern the will of God within the various contexts in which they find themselves, and it empowers them to serve that design by prophetic witness and action in their various societies. This pilgrimage can be understood to imply and necessitate a theological anthropology, that is, to teach about and express the dignity and destiny of human beings as created in God's image, redeemed in Christ, and sanctified by the Spirit. Concern for justice, peace, and care for creation necessarily flows from the way Christian faith understands the relation of human beings with God, with one another, and with nature. The pilgrimage can find its origin and rationale in Jesus' inauguration of the reign of God, as well as its eschatological goal in the hope for its full realization. As God led the people of Israel to freedom through the desert in a cloud by day and fire by night, and as Jesus leads his disciples forward to the new promised land with the words "follow me," so the churches, under the empowerment and guidance 18 19 of the Holy Spirit, move together to follow him toward the fulfilment of the new heavens and the new earth (cf. Rev. 21).

18. Pilgrimage also has ecclesiological dimensions. It means living in communion with other disciples of Jesus, nourished by hearing the Word of God, and celebrating the sacraments of faith. Christian existence is a shared pilgrimage undertaken as God's people. The pilgrim people of God experience a foretaste of the heavenly banquet every time they join in celebrating the eucharist. Luke's gospel highlights several other ecclesiological themes in this regard. Jesus tells of how a master sends his servants out to bring in guests from the highways and the byways – from the periphery – to share in the banquet he has prepared (Luke 14:15-24), while it is on their journey to Emmaus that some disciples recognize the Lord in the breaking of the bread (Luke 24:35). Although in the current state of their division the churches have not yet arrived at the point in which all are able to celebrate the Lord's Supper together, since reconciliation with God and with one another is at the heart of the Lord's Supper, many Christians find this to be a moment, not only to pray for, but also to become strengthened and equipped to serve the Lord as messengers and agents of the gospel of justice and peace.

19. The theology of pilgrimage also has social and ecological dimensions.¹⁹ Each human being and, indeed, the whole of humanity, can be said to be on a kind of pilgrimage from creation to the final fulfillment of justice and peace. Pilgrimage involves being attentive to and walking in solidarity with fellow travelers: especially victims of war and brutality, victims of religious intolerance, refugees and migrants who are compelled to flee their homes, those exploited by unjust economic practices, those oppressed because of race and ethnicity, those who have suffered sexual violence or human trafficking, families in distress, children and youth who live in despair, and those who are marginalized by society. Throughout the scriptures, voices of prophecy and truth come from those who are poor and disinherited, who suffer, and who have been enslaved and imprisoned. It is from these sites of God's visitation – from society's margins – that a new world will take shape, and it is here that the pilgrimage needs to take shape. Not only are these the places where humanity encounters God as liberator, the margins are also privileged spaces where God reveals God's self as the just God who desires the fullness of all life. The margins are also spaces where Christians live and witness to their faith. Within and from the margins God calls Christians to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ.

20. The abuse and destruction of the environment is an offense against God and an injustice to people of the present and of future generations. For this reason, the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace has a strong ecological dimension, recognizing the unique position that human beings hold, in terms of taking responsibility and ensuring that life is not violated. When Christians marvel at life and the diversity in the creation, there is a sense of God's greatness, and that everything that exists has inherent value. Thus, pilgrimage involves honouring the integrity of creation in the journey toward a just and sustainable life on earth.

21. Journeying together on pilgrimage creates unity in our differences. It invites individuals to conversion side by side with their brothers and sisters. The experience of pilgrimage can strengthen communion within and between our churches. The Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace invites churches to greater communion with one another in responding to their common calling to serve as agents for that justice and peace, which are essential dimensions of the reign of God, inaugurated by Jesus and realized in the Holy Spirit. Since the experience of pilgrimage promotes and enhances

¹⁹ After quoting the canticle that Zechariah prayed at the birth of his son John the Baptist (Luke 1:78-79), the 10th Assembly of the World Council of Churches announced the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace with the words: "Economic, ecological, socio-political and spiritual challenges confront us. In darkness and in the shadow of death, in suffering and persecution, how precious is the gift of hope from the Risen Lord!" See "Message of the 10th Assembly of the World Council of Churches: Join the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace," paragraph 5, in *Encountering the God of Life*, (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2014), p. 36, ed. by Erlinda N. Senturias and Theodore A. Gill, Jr.

unity, it is related in an essential way to justice and peace, both of which make actual the relationships between God, humanity, and the world that embody the divine design for creation.

IV. Justice and the Challenge of Moving toward a Sustainable World

22. Throughout the world, Christians encounter many situations that cry out for justice and peace. Moving toward a just and sustainable world requires repentance for those interpretations of creation and providence which sometimes have been distorted and corrupted by the logic of domination. The care or abuse of God’s earth and its resources is not merely one justice issue to be set alongside other justice concerns. Rather, reverence for God’s creation is of foundational importance for all existence and identity. Justice for suffering human beings cannot be sought apart from the context of living in a way that is respectful of the environment. Justice is not an abstract reality to be realized within human community alone, but it is how we as humans and as Christians live in the web of life in reciprocity with all human beings, other creatures, and the rest of creation. In anticipation of the fullness of the reign of God, all of creation groans because of the threats to justice and well-being – threats that are especially present among marginalized communities and endangered environments.

23. God created the world and saw everything that God had made was very good (Gen 1:31). God is not distant or detached from creation; in fact, creation implies relationship: “The whole earth is full of God’s glory” (Isa. 6:1-3). The scriptures testify that creation is God’s first act of revelation, and this first act reveals God as not only Creator of the earth, but as present in creation. God the Creator is present in and continues to work with humans and all creatures, the land, rivers, and seas to give life and hope. God wants the whole creation to have life in its fullness (John 10:10). God’s providential journeying with creation continues with a covenant relationship with all creatures (Gen. 8:20-22). In Jesus, the entire history of salvation, beginning from the creation itself, is revealed as a kind of pilgrim journey toward the eschatological reign of God, a rule “of justice, peace, and joy that is given by the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 14:17).

24. The challenge of moving toward a just and sustainable world calls the churches to develop concrete proposals and engage in prophetic activity to counter injustice and violence, affirming human dignity and the integrity of creation.²⁰ Among

²⁰ Our churches and their leaders have given forceful commendation to a just and sustainable world. See, for example, Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople, who is sometimes called the “Green Patriarch” for his environmental efforts (see <http://spiritualecology.org/contributor/his-all-holiness-ecumenical-patriarch-bartholomew>); and Pope Francis in his encyclical *Laudato Si’* (Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si’* of The Holy Father Francis on Care for our Common Home, May 24, 2015, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html).

the deplorable effects of injustice and violence, which have drastic effects especially upon people living in poverty and augur tragic consequences for future generations, is the degradation, objectification, exploitation, and commercialization of God's creation. The earth suffers from the assault by pollution of air and water. Global warming has had disastrous effects upon human life, requiring migration at an unprecedented scale, causing widespread eviction of indigenous peoples from their ancestral lands, leading to a breakdown of traditional values and land-centred spirituality. The oppression and marginalization of people living in poverty and the degradation of creation are profoundly interrelated.

25. In the context of the suffering of creation and of those living on the margins, the movement toward unity serves the healing of the whole inhabited earth. "The Church was intended by God, not for its own sake, but to serve the divine plan for the transformation of the world. Thus, service (*diakonia*) belongs to the very being of the Church."²¹ The intention of the gospel includes the liberation of God's creation. St. Paul emphasizes this holistic perspective when he affirms, "If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation; everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new" (2 Cor. 5:17). The church's unity flows from this profound promise. If the churches are to be in pilgrimage together, it can only be in the context of journeying toward the unity of the church within creation. Work for the healing of creation is not an end in itself. Christians know that the life of this world as it is will cease. Nevertheless, as *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* pointed out, they are called to promote here and now the summing up of all things in the perfection of the life and love of God.²²

V. Peace: Living the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ in a Religiously Plural World

26. The peace that Christians proclaim is the peace of Christ, "the peace which passes all understanding" (Phil. 4:7). The Hebrew word *shalom* points to the wholeness of justice and reconciliation in the flourishing of all creation. Peace is not simply an absence of discord. Christians are called to bring the just and reconciling peace of Christ to a contemporary world divided by greed and inequality and torn apart by religious and secular fundamentalisms. In the journey of faith, Christians share together the hope of reconciliation, which is a complex process of "truth,

²¹ *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*, 58, (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2013), Faith and Order Paper 214.

²² *Ibid.*, 43.

memory, repentance, justice, forgiveness, and love.”²³ This means that they do not simply withdraw from those who are different from themselves or even from their enemies (cf. Matt. 5:44), but that they are impelled by the love of Christ to move toward and encounter the other with Christ’s reconciling love. “Love encompasses the whole process of reconciliation as the very sign of its authenticity.”²⁴

27. The pilgrim Church is not a community closed in on itself; rather, it is called to share the joyful news of the gospel in a vibrant and inviting way in the complex realities of today. This is even more evident as contemporary societies become increasingly characterized by a secularized spirit which marginalizes or entirely dismisses faith in God. We are called to proclaim Christ and the gospel of justice and peace in a humble, respectful, and dialogical way which, at the same time, is confident, faithful, and relevant to the cultures of the various societies around the world today.²⁵

28. Scripture proclaims both that God desires the salvation of all human beings, and that there is only one mediator, Jesus Christ, “who gave himself as a ransom for all” (1 Tim. 2:4-5). According to the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus commissioned his disciples to proclaim the good news to all: “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you, and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age” (Matt. 28:19-20). Each of the four gospels closes with such a mandate and the Church has, throughout the ages, been dedicated to proclaiming in word and deed the good news of salvation in Christ. There is need further to consider the way Christians move together and how witness happens with truthfulness and integrity in a pluralist context. This should occur in a way which shares the gospel without imposing it on others, recognizing the co-pilgrimage of all creation with whom the church shares the world and inviting the world to participate in the good news (Rom. 8:22-23).

29. As *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* observes, “Today Christians are more aware of the wide array of different religions other than their own and of the

²³ Mission as Ministry of Reconciliation, 39. (<http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/other-meetings/mission-and-evangelism/preparatory-paper-10-mission-as-ministry-of-reconciliation>).

²⁴ Ibid., 57.

²⁵ See “Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World: Recommendations for Conduct” of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, the World Council of Churches and the World Evangelical Alliance, approved on 28 January 2011, and available at: <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/interreligiousdialogue-and-cooperation/christian-identity-in-pluralistic-societies/christianwitness-in-a-multi-religious-world>.

positive truths and values they contain.”²⁶ As an issue of justice, Christians acknowledge the freedom of religious conscience as one of the fundamental dimensions of human dignity.²⁷ Jesus’ encounter with the Syro-Phoenician woman (Mark 7:25-30) and the Samaritan woman (John 4) suggest the need to respect human dignity as Christians walk and engage in dialogue with others across religious difference. They can share the riches of the Christian faith without making judgments which belong to God alone. Christian witness should always be respectful of those who hold other beliefs, realizing that as Christians approach dialogue and witness to the faith with humility, they may learn something more about their own faith from such interaction and from the experience of others. “Sharing the joyful news of the truth revealed in the New Testament and inviting others to the fullness of life in Christ is an expression of respectful love.”²⁸ As Luke 10:5-6 reminds us, the proclamation of the reign of God involves the proclamation of peace: in a world of violence and death enacted for religious reasons, Christians seek to witness to the peace of the Prince of Peace, who brings life in abundance.

30. We recognize that across the world, Christians find themselves in different situations in terms of the power they have in society. Where Christians live in a society in which they possess power, they engage in dialogue and witness from a safe and confident place. However, such confidence and safety are not the situation of many Christians who are minimally tolerated as a group or find themselves persecuted. From the earliest times, the Christian tradition has linked witness and persecution, as the word *martyria* testifies. In situations in which Christians face threats, intimidation, and persecution, they find themselves united in the faithful witness of the holiness of their lives in Christ in taking up their cross and following him (Mark 8:34). All Christians are called to remember before God the martyrs of the faith and to pray for those facing persecution at the hands of violence enacted in the name of religion. At the same time, Christians join in confessing the inhospitality and persecution that some Christians have at times enacted when they have been in positions of power. We also recognize that there are members of other religious traditions who have offered and continue to offer kindness and hospitality to Christians who find themselves as strangers in their own lands.

²⁶ The Church: Towards a Common Vision, 60. On questions relating to this topic, see “Religious Plurality and Christian Self-Understanding” (2005) at: <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/othermeetings/mission-and-evangelism/preparatory-paper-13-religious-pluralityand-christian-self-understanding>.

²⁷ By the term “freedom of religious conscience” is meant not only religious freedom but the freedom to practice one’s religion fully within the bounds of one’s conscience as a fundamental human right.

²⁸ The Church: Towards a Common Vision, 60.

VI. Together on the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace

31. In the account of the calling of the first disciples in John 1:38-39a, Jesus asks the disciples what it is they desire. They reply that they wish to know where he is staying. The invitation that Jesus offers in response is, "Come and see." The Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace invites the churches to follow Jesus, and to journey together toward visible unity so we may come and see where he abides. The word "pilgrimage" suggests movement, a source and a goal, a way that is followed and sought, and a journey. In choosing the theme Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace, the WCC has not only affirmed the desire to move together, but also it affirms that its movement is directed toward the reign of God, that it is a transformative way of faith and life, and that it is a journey which churches take together with other companions and in the context of the whole world.

32. This document extends a theological invitation to the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace. A theology of pilgrimage offers the opportunity to adopt a dynamic vision of the Church and of ecumenism. The questions which appear in the introduction to this statement (#2) call for a positive response. Walking and acting together for justice and peace may and often do have a profound effect on efforts to cooperate with God's grace, which impels churches toward visible unity. Such journeying together in faith and in hope may and often does inspire churches to resolve their differences and to recognize more fully each other's faith and ministry. Walking together, even now while not yet fully united, can and often does build community among Christians. Very importantly, it can help to overcome a characterization of the ecumenical movement which has sometimes placed efforts to seek unity in "doctrine" in competition with efforts to collaborate in "service." Being together on pilgrimage implies that Christian service is rooted precisely in our common faith in God's saving and renewing plan for the world. Empowered by the grace and guidance of the Holy Spirit, the people of God may respond together to Christ's invitation to "Come and see."

33. One way of summing up the extent and scope of God's saving design may be found in the Letter to the Ephesians: "He has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ ... to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth" (Eph. 1:9-10). The Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace invites our churches to offer together, even now, their shared willingness to be open to the new ways in which the Spirit is responding to the petition which countless Christians around the world pray every day: "Thy will be done."