Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes

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On 5 September 2012, the document *Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes* was approved by the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches (WCC) at its meeting in Crete as an official statement of the Council. It is only the second WCC position statement on the topic of mission and evangelism and the first for thirty years. So this is a landmark document and it is my pleasure to present it to you.

The new statement is intended broadly to stimulate mission reflection and encourage discerning action by the churches which will fulfill the mission of Jesus Christ. The overall goal of this mission is understood to be ‘that they may have life... in all its fullness’ (John 10:10). More specifically the new statement aims to promote renewed appreciation of the mission of the Holy Spirit as this has come to prominence in recent years, especially the Spirit as the Life-giver as stated in the creed of Nicaea and Constantinople. It highlights the purpose of mission to bring about justice, reconciliation and inclusion of the marginalized. It also re-imagines the Church in the power of the Spirit as missional – that is, life-affirming and life-giving – and evangelical – that is authentically proclaiming the good news in word and deed.

The WCC and the CWME

The document was produced by the World Council of Churches’ Commission on World Mission and Evangelism. The origins of the CWME lie in the World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh 1910. This event was the vision of American Methodist, John R. Mott, General Secretary of the World Student Christian Federation, supported by the Scottish Presbyterian Joseph Oldham. It was convened by leaders of almost all the Protestant denominations and most Protestant mission agencies. Its aim was ‘To consider Missionary Problems in relation to the Non-Christian World’. It was not easy

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2 Subtitle of the Edinburgh 1910 conference. The research reports that informed the deliberations of the conference and its proceedings were published as *World Missionary Conference, 1910, Vols. 1-9* (Edinburgh: Oliphant, Anderson and Ferrier, 1910). For the background and history of the conference, see
to get these many different church bodies together and this was done of the understanding that there would be no discussion of theology – only ‘the science of missions’ – and no decision-making. However, one decision was made: to form a continuation committee which became the International Missionary Council (IMC). The IMC brought together mission boards of churches and mission agencies through national mission councils.

In a parallel development, the Edinburgh 1910 conference stimulated the movements for Life and Work and Faith and Order that agreed from 1937 to form of the World Council of Churches, which was eventually constituted in 1948.\textsuperscript{3} The IMC at first continued alongside the WCC. It held conferences on mission themes in Jerusalem in 1928; Tambaran, Madras in 1938; Whitby, Canada in 1947; Willingen, Germany in 1952; and Achimoto, Ghana in 1958.

In 1910 the prevailing theology of mission was not questioned but the IMC debates included theological matters and in the post-War era, the IMC developed though its conferences the theology of missio Dei, which was celebrated by David Bosch in his magnum opus of 1991 as the current mission paradigm around which he saw ecumenical consensus.\textsuperscript{4} Missio Dei is a Trinitarian approach that locates mission in the sending of the Son and the Spirit into the world.\textsuperscript{5} This new theology had important practical consequences. First, the topic of discussion changed from ‘missions’ (plural) and their problems to ‘mission’ (singular), its theological basis and nature. Second, the church now changed from ‘being the sender to being the one sent’, as a servant of God’s mission in the world. Third, since mission is from above, then there is no earthly centre from which the gospel is universalised, but mission and church are polycentric and each local church or congregation has a missionary obligation. Fourth, since the church itself is sent, it is missionary by nature and mission should be integral to the life of the church. Fifth, mission is broad in that it encompasses everything God sends the church into the world to do, or even – for more radical interpreters – everything that could be construed as God’s activity in the world whether or not the church is involved.\textsuperscript{6}

The existence of two global bodies – the WCC and the IMC – to which the newer churches had to relate, the financial burden of supporting both, and the theological argument that

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  \item \textsuperscript{3} World Council of Churches, 'History of World Mission and Evangelism', 
  http://www.oikoumene.org/en/who-are-we/organization-structure/consultative-bodies/world-
  mission-and-evangelism/history.html.
  \item \textsuperscript{5} For recent discussion on the origins and meaning of missio Dei, see \textit{inter alia}: Wolfgang Günther, 'The History and Significance of World Missionary Conferences in the Twentieth Century', \textit{International Review of Mission} 92-367 (2003), 521-37; Jacques Matthey, 'God’s Mission Today: Summary and Conclusions', \textit{IRM} 92-367 (2003), 579-87.
  \item \textsuperscript{6} For recent further discussion, see John G. Flett, \textit{The Witness of God: The Trinity, Missio Dei, Karl Barth, and the Nature of Christian Community} (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans, 2010).
\end{itemize}
mission is of the very nature of the church convinced mission leaders that the two bodies belonged together. Eventually the two bodies were integrated at the WCC General Assembly in New Delhi in 1961. The mission work of the IMC was combined with the evangelism desk of the WCC to form the WCC Commission on World Mission and Evangelism. The conferences on world mission continued at least every decade: Mexico 1963, Bangkok 1972-1973, Melbourne, Australia 1980, San Antonio, Texas 1989, Salvador da Bahía, Brazil 1996 and Athens, Greece 2005. In 2010 CWME took part in the centenary conference of the World Missionary Conference, known as ‘Edinburgh 2010’. Even though Edinburgh 1910 had been Protestant and Anglican only, the General Council that organised the centenary project and event also included representatives of the Catholic Church – through the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, Orthodox churches and Pentecostal and other independent churches as full participants.

The World Council of Churches is a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the scriptures, and therefore seek to fulfil together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. WCC documents are commended to the churches for their study and implementation. They have no authority except the intrinsic truth of their content and are not binding for any church, not even member-churches of the WCC. They are consensus documents prepared by representatives of WCC member-bodies, who are mainly Protestant and Orthodox. Since the 1970s there has been growing involvement of Catholics in WCC work. More recently there have been much closer relationships with the World Evangelical Alliance, which includes many Protestant churches that are not WCC members, and with representatives of Pentecostal churches.

The sources used in WCC documents are varied. The Bible and the Creed of Nicaea have a particular place because, together with other official WCC statements, they are the only written authorities shared by the member churches. Reference may also be made to the work of WCC-related bodies and conferences; statements of member churches and documents of other global church bodies, including the Magisterium; and to scholarship.

Since 1961 the CWME has produced two statements that have become official documents of the World Council of Churches. The second document is the one we are looking at today. The first was the 1982 statement, Mission and Evangelism: An Ecumenical Affirmation. EA arose as a response to the two earlier documents, the Lausanne Covenant (1974) by Evangelical Protestants and the apostolic exhortation of

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Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (1975). Both grappled with the question of whether the priority of mission or evangelization should be the more narrowly religious task of calling for conversion and planting churches or the wider social role of addressing the needs of the poor and bringing about social justice which was the subject of heated debate at the WCC Nairobi Assembly in 1975. This was a debate between conservatives and progressives, and in the Protestant world between 'ecumenicals' and 'evangelicals'.

The 1982 document reflected on the theme of the Melbourne conference, 'Your kingdom come' and the insights of contemporary Latin American liberation theology which were expressed there. EA took a holistic approach to mission, highlighting both the call to a clear witness to Jesus Christ and the promised kingdom of God, as well as the mandate to live in solidarity with those exploited and rejected by social and economic systems. This was an attempt to bridge proclamation and social action was reflected in the document’s preference for the term ‘witness’. It insisted on the particular role of the poor and churches of the poor in God’s mission and highlighted the serious challenge the kingdom message threw down to traditional missiology and mission programmes. At the same time it affirmed the church’s call to proclamation, the importance of cross-cultural mission and of planting local congregations as essential to Christian mission strategy. The document coined the expression ‘mission in Christ’s way’ and reflected how Christ’s choice of vulnerability and his way to the cross challenged the use of power, in political, church and mission life. EA was framed in Christological and kingdom language.

**History and nature of the statement**

The Commission for World Mission and Evangelism worked on this new affirmation on mission and evangelism from the time it was reconstituted following the 9th Assembly of the World Council of Churches at Porto Allegre in 2006. The Commission that prepared this document had twenty-five members plus about five WCC staff. The moderator was Bishop Gee Varghese Mor Coorilose, Metropolitan of Niranam, Malankara Syriac Orthodox Church, India. The Commission Secretaries during this period were Revd Jacques Matthey from the Swiss Reformed Church and later Revd Dr Jooseop Keum of the Presbyterian Church of Korea. 25 per cent of the commissioners were representatives from non-member churches. These included Evangelical and Pentecostal church leaders, Catholic representatives. One of the staff members was the Catholic consultant: first Maria Arantxa Aguado and later Professor Dr Annemarie Mayer. The commissioners worked in groups, corresponding to the four main sections of the document. These were coordinated by the drafting group which was chaired by Professor Kirsteen Kim, vice-moderator of the Commission. The final draft of the complete document was scrutinised at the CWME pre-Assembly mission conference in Manila in 2012 and then subjected to a further revision in light of that. The final version

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was unanimously approved by the WCC Central Committee meeting at the Orthodox Academy in Crete in September 2012.

*Together towards Life* is not meant to supersede but to complement the earlier *Ecumenical Affirmation*. The commissioners recognized from the outset the enduring validity of the 1982 document; but since it was written thirty years before, when the global landscape was very different, they considered it an important and urgent task to express an ecumenical theology of mission for today. To give a few examples of the changes: 1982 was before the end of the Cold War, before the so-called era of globalization, before the invention of the Internet, and before the 9/11 event. In 1982 Pope John Paul II had been in office only two years, China had only just embarked on economic liberalization, and Ronald Reagan had just arrived in the White House.

The Commission looked at developments in mission theology since 1982. It focused on selected issues only, rather than trying to be exhaustive. The four areas of study were: the mission of the Spirit, mission from the margins, church and mission, and evangelism. Working groups were formed which drafted the four main sections of the present document. The rationale for this was as follows: The pneumatological emphasis, which also frames the whole document, was intended to complement the Christology of the 1982 document. In addition, the Nicene definition of the Holy Spirit as ‘the Giver of Life’ paralleled and re-expressed the kingdom of God approach of EA.\(^\text{12}\) It also allowed for a direct contribution to the theme of the WCC’s 10th Assembly in Busan, Korea in November 2013, which was ‘God of life, lead us to justice and peace’ and took into account growing ecological concern. The Commission’s involvement in the Edinburgh 2010 project further suggested that a pneumatological approach would have an even broader appeal beyond WCC member-churches to reach all strands of world Christianity. Moreover recent developments in theology of religions had established a pneumatological foundation for dialogue and for collaboration around issues of our common life. Since 1982, and partly as a result of the shift from missions to mission, there had been increasing attention paid to mission as a form of spirituality rather than as a task,\(^\text{13}\) and this also informed the first section and the overall approach of the document.

The theme of ‘mission from the margins’ was partly a development of the 1982 concern for the poor to include all categories of marginalization and to insist that mission is not unidirectional from centre to periphery but that those at the margins are an integral part of God’s mission which is just and inclusive, healing and reconciling. Mission from the margins also recognised the shift in the centre of gravity of Christian populations from the North and West to the South and East and in some cases a reversal in the direction of missionary sending.


The work on mission ecclesiology focused on the enlivening, energising and empowering work of the Spirit for local mission initiatives and also for global movements. It recognises that much migration is Christian and that in this sense also the church is ‘on the move’. The discussion of mission and church was originally intended as the main application of new mission insights and it reflected growing cooperation with the Commission on Faith and Order, which had been working on the question of the nature and mission of the church. As a result, both commissions came to agree on the priority of missio Dei in understanding the church and its integral relationship to unity. So the main challenge of the document became to the church’s evangelistic ministry.

Although CWME includes responsibility for evangelism, in 1982 the term was strongly contested and the Commission had not developed a clear statement on it. Development of this final main section was greatly helped by the production of the document *Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World: Recommendations for Conduct* jointly by the WCC, PCPCU and the WEA, in which the WCC evangelism consultant, John Baxter-Brown was involved. Whereas previous discussion about conduct in evangelism had mostly been in the context of inter-Christian ‘sheep-stealing’, this one sets it within contemporary religious and cultural plurality and awareness of power relations between different groups. In an echo of the 1982 statement, it discusses ‘evangelism in Christ’s way’ which recognises the need for vulnerability and authenticity.

The introduction and conclusion to the document were drafted by Commission Secretary and reworked in consultation with the Moderator and Vice-moderator before being approved by the Commission. Much of it is stimulated by reflection on John 10:1-18, in which the life-giving work and sacrificial care of the Good Shepherd is contrasted with the self-serving and profiteering of the hired hands and the welfare and knowledge of the sheep is paramount. The opening series of faith statements are amplified in the main body of the document and result in a series of affirmations and action points at the end.

**Content of the statement**

*Together towards Life* continues within the theological paradigm of ‘God’s mission’ (missio Dei), which was established in the post-colonial period, and was affirmed by the 1982 Affirmation. That is, ‘Mission begins in the heart of the Triune God’ (§2). Mission is

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the overflow to all humanity and creation of the love which binds together the Holy Trinity and the fullness of life which all three Persons share. Therefore missio Dei is understood in this document to affirm the importance of the Holy Spirit for mission theology. The new statement starts from the premise that, in pneumatological perspective, mission involves discerning the presence and activity of the Holy Spirit and joining in. And it expresses the conviction that the chief sign of the Spirit is the Life lived by Jesus Christ and made available to all through his crucifixion and resurrection.

The document is structured in six parts around different characteristics and symbols of the life-giving mission of the Spirit:

1. Together towards Life: Introducing the theme
2. Spirit of mission: Breath of life
3. Spirit of liberation: Mission from the margins
4. Spirit of community: Church on the move
5. Spirit of Pentecost: Good news for all
6. Feast of Life: Concluding affirmations

1. Together towards Life

The title of the new statement, Together towards Life refers to Life with a capital L: not only biological existence but the life in all its fullness, or abundant life, that Jesus promises (John 10.10). This is life ‘in all its dimensions, including liberation of the oppressed, healing and reconciliation of broken communities and the restoration of the creation’ (§24). Jesus Christ is the Life of the World and the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Life but ‘The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy’ (John 10:10). Together we are struggling against such destruction of life and for fullness of life, including economic well-being and ecological health because, as the document makes clear, ‘A denial of life is a rejection of the God of life’. (§1). We do this ‘together’ because Life is for all and because the whole oikoumene is interconnected in God’s web of life. Together towards Life is an ecumenical affirmation, first, because CWME represents churches from around the world and of different traditions – WCC member churches, affiliated mission bodies, and representatives of other non-member bodies – and, second, because life-giving mission brings us together with the whole creation. Together we join ourselves to the Life-giving mission of Christ through the Holy Spirit. The title also uses the word ‘towards’. This expresses our orientation to Life, and also our expectation, our hope in Christ, ‘the Resurrection and the Life’ (John 11:25). Moreover, it suggests that our mission thinking is still in process, and that our mission activities are evolving in changing landscapes.

The statement begins by identifying ten mission questions arising from the changing landscapes of mission today, which include both widespread individualism, secularism and materialism and at the same time greater appreciation of spirituality in various forms. It highlights ecological concerns and the need for economic injustice. In the
context of many religions and cultural diversity, it discusses the rise of ‘world Christianity’ and the contribution to mission of people from the margins of society. In light of this contemporary context, it addresses ten mission questions, including: How and where do we discern God’s life-giving work that enables us to participate in God’s mission today? How can we reclaim mission as transformative spirituality which is life-affirming? How can the Church renew herself to be missional and move forward together towards life in its fullness? And how can we proclaim God’s love and justice to this generation?

2. Spirit of mission: Breath of life

The same Spirit of God, which ‘swept over the face of the waters’ in creation, descended on Mary (Luke 1:35) and brought forth Jesus. It was the Holy Spirit who empowered Jesus at his baptism (Mark 1:10) and commissioned him for his mission (Luke 4:14, 18). Jesus Christ, full of the Spirit of God, died on the cross. He gave up the spirit (John 19:30). In death, in the coldness of the tomb, by the power of the Holy Spirit he was raised to life, the firstborn from the dead (Rom. 8:11). (§13)

The first main section of the statement – Spirit of mission: Breath of life – establishes the link between the Holy Spirit and mission and introduces the Holy Spirit as the Breath of life. Since the Creation, the Holy Spirit has been the agent of God’s mission to bring Life; Jesus Christ was conceived in the Spirit, lived in the Spirit and gave the Spirit; and because of Christ’s work, at Pentecost the community of disciples was born from above of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God has the power/energy to re-create our world and so mission in the Spirit breathed into us by Christ is life-giving and transformative. ‘The Spirit empowers the powerless and challenges the powerful to empty themselves of their privileges for the sake of the disempowered’ (§33).

What is clear is that by the Spirit we participate in the mission of love that is at the heart of the life of the Trinity. This results in Christian witness which unceasingly proclaims the salvific power of God through Jesus Christ and constantly affirms God’s dynamic involvement, through the Holy Spirit, in the whole created world. All who respond to the outpouring of the love of God are invited to join in with the Spirit in the mission of God. (§18)

The new document sees mission as ‘in the Spirit’, as a form of spiritual life, or a kind of spirituality: ‘transformative spirituality’ (§29–35). Mission in the Spirit ‘has creation at its heart’ (§105; Genesis 1:2; 2:7) and it is good news to for all. Mission is not merely strategy; it is much more than task and activity; it is a spiritual orientation and a way of life. Mission stems from ‘an urgent inner compulsion’ (1 Corinthians 9:16) brought about by God’s Spirit among us. What is more, the Spirit gives the wisdom and discernment (e.g. 1 Corinthians 12:10) which is necessary to follow Christ.
3. Spirit of liberation: Mission from the margins

Jesus began his ministry by claiming that to be filled by the Spirit is to liberate the oppressed, to open eyes that are blind, and to announce the coming of God’s reign (Luke 4:16-18). He went about fulfilling this mission by opting to be with the marginalized people of his time, not out of paternalistic charity but because their situations testified to the sinfulness of the world and their yearnings for life pointed to God’s purposes. (§36)

The second main section – ‘Spirit of liberation: Mission from the margins’ – links the mission of the Spirit with Jesus Christ’s ministry of liberation, and therefore with freedom from oppression and marginalization to participate in God’s mission. ‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me’, said Christ, ‘because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor...’ (Luke 4:18). Jesus Christ opted ‘to be with the marginalized people of his time, not out of paternalistic charity’ but because of their yearning for justice and life with dignity (§36). He called them ‘the salt of the earth’, the light and leaven of the world (Matthew 5:13, 14; 13:33). He identified with them, and the crucified and risen Christ bears the marks of systemic oppression upon his own flesh.

Mission from the margins seeks to counteract injustices in life, church, and mission. It seeks to be an alternative missional movement against the perception that mission can only be done by the powerful to the powerless, by the rich to the poor, or by the privileged to the marginalized. Such approaches can contribute to oppression and marginalization. Mission from the margins recognizes that being in the centre means having access to systems that lead to one’s rights, freedom, and individuality being affirmed and respected; living in the margins means exclusion from justice and dignity. Living on the margins, however, can provide its own lessons. People on the margins have agency, and can often see what, from the centre, is out of view. People on the margins, living in vulnerable positions, often know what exclusionary forces are threatening their survival and can best discern the urgency of their struggles; people in positions of privilege have much to learn from the daily struggles of people living in marginal conditions. (§38)

Those on the margins ‘can often see what, from the centre, is out of view’ (§38). This section of the document points out that the marginalized are not merely objects of mission but they themselves are agents of mission, seeking justice and inclusivity. They are ‘reservoirs of the active hope, collective resistance, and perseverance’ (§39). Therefore, participation in God’s mission ‘requires a commitment to struggle and resist the powers that obstruct the fullness of life that God wills for all, and a willingness to work with all people involved in movements and initiatives committed to the causes of justice, dignity and life’ (§45). In other words, mission is inclusive. The statement declares that ‘All missional activity must, therefore, safeguard the sacred worth of every
human being and of the earth (cf. Isaiah 58) (§42). It must promote healing, wholeness and reconciliation for all of life by the Holy Spirit.

4. **Spirit of community: Church on the move**

The church in history has not always existed but, both theologically and empirically, came into being for the sake of mission. It is not possible to separate church and mission in terms of their origin or purpose. To fulfil God’s missionary purpose is the church’s aim. The relationship between church and mission is very intimate because the same Spirit of Christ who empowers the church in mission is also the life of the church. At the same time as he sent the church into the world, Jesus Christ breathed the Holy Spirit into the church (John 20:19-23). Therefore, the church exists by mission, just as fire exists by burning. If it does not engage in mission, it ceases to be church. (§57)

The third main section of the document focuses on the Holy Spirit as ‘Spirit of Community’ and explains why the Church is ‘on the move’. Because it discerns and derives its direction and energy from God’s Spirit of love, the church is missionary by its very nature. The same Holy Spirit who empowers mission is also the life of the church. In other words, ‘If it does not engage in mission, it ceases to be church’ (§57). ‘Out of this’, the document declares, ‘follows a dynamic understanding of the apostolicity of the church: apostolicity is not only safeguarding the faith of the church through the ages but also participating in the apostolate’ (§58). In keeping with its apostolic ministry, the Church moves and adapts, according to the purpose of God to bring about new life and possibilities for creation to flourish.

Living out our faith in community is an important way of participating in mission. Through baptism, we become sisters and brothers belonging together in Christ (Heb. 10:25). The church is called to be an inclusive community that welcomes all. Through word and deed and in its very being, the church foretastes and witnesses to the vision of the coming reign of God. The church is the coming together of the faithful and their going forth in peace. (§59)

Today the church is in mission in a changed landscape of world Christianity and the statement finds a pressing need to re-imagine the Church as incarnated anew in the life of the world, especially in contexts where people are clamouring for God’s saving grace to make life with freedom and dignity possible for all. It draws attention to migration movements especially, which challenge existing church communities to recognise they are also on pilgrimage and to show hospitality to fellow migrants. Because there is one body, one hope and one Spirit (Ephesians 4:4), there is one mission – God’s mission – and we are called to common witness. And if mission is a response in love to the call of the Triune God, then the Church must demonstrate that love in the way she does mission. So the document states clearly that ‘Authentic mission makes the “other” a
partner in, not an “object” of mission’ (§93) and that ‘Mission is not a project of expanding churches but of the church embodying God’s salvation in this world’ (§58).

5. **Spirit of Pentecost: Good news for all**

‘Evangelism is the outflow of hearts that are filled with the love of God for those who do not yet know him.’ At Pentecost, the disciples could not but declare the mighty works of God (Acts 2:4; 4:20). Evangelism, while not excluding the different dimensions of mission, focuses on explicit and intentional articulation of the gospel, including ‘the invitation to personal conversion to a new life in Christ and to discipleship.’ While the Holy Spirit calls some to be evangelists (Eph. 4:11), we all are called to give an account of the hope that is in us (1 Pet. 3:15). Not only individuals but also the whole church together is called to evangelize (Mark 16:15; 1 Pet. 2:9). (§81)

God’s work in Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit is the gospel of salvation for all. As its fourth and final main section, the new statement focuses specifically on evangelism as bringing ‘good news for all’ in the ‘Spirit of Pentecost’. The document understands that evangelism is mission activity which makes explicit and unambiguous the centrality of the incarnation, suffering and resurrection of Jesus Christ, but without setting limits to the saving grace of God. It seeks to share this good news with all who have not yet heard it and invites them to an experience of life in Christ’ (§80). The document states clearly that ‘Evangelism is not proselytism’ because ‘it is only God’s Spirit who creates new life and brings about rebirth (John 3:5–8; 1 Thessalonians 1:4–6)’ (§82). Rather, ‘Evangelism is the outflow of hearts that are filled with the love of God for those who do not yet know him’ (§81).

Authentic evangelism is grounded in humility and respect for all and flourishes in the context of dialogue. It promotes the message of the gospel, of healing and reconciliation, in word and deed. “There is no evangelism without solidarity; there is no Christian solidarity that does not involve sharing the message of God’s coming reign.” Evangelism, therefore, inspires the building of interpersonal and community relationships. Such authentic relationships are often best nourished in local faith communities and based in local cultural contexts. Christian witness is as much by our presence as by our words. In situations where the public testimony to one’s faith is not possible without risking one’s life, simply living the gospel may be a powerful alternative. (§89)

Evangelism takes place in the context of dialogue and ‘with the expectation of meeting God who has preceded us and has been present with people within their own contexts’ (§94). It not only involves announcing good news in Christ but also affirming the wider presence and activity of the Holy Spirit. However, the new statement also points out that evangelism also requires ‘discernment of spirits’ (1 Corinthians 12:10). ‘We discern
the Spirit of God wherever life in its fullness is affirmed... We also discern evil spirits wherever forces of death and destruction of life prevail.’ (§24). In other words, ‘Evangelism is also a prophetic vocation which involves speaking truth to power in hope and in love (Acts 26:25; Colossians 1:5; Ephesians 4:15)’ (§91). The preaching of the good news today must denounce idols of wealth, consumerism and similar life–negating forces. Because it is ‘communicating the truth in love’ (cf. Ephesians 4:15), ‘authentic evangelism’ is both by word and by deed. 'The love for one another is a demonstration of the gospel we proclaim (John 13:34–35)’ (§86). Evangelism requires self-emptying (kenosis; Philippians 2:7) and vulnerability on the part of the evangelizer, and simultaneously filling with ‘power from on high’ in order to be witnesses to Christ in different contexts today (Luke 24:49; Acts 1.8).

6. **Feast of life**

We are the servants of the Triune God, who has given us the mission of proclaiming the good news to all humanity and creation, especially the oppressed and the suffering people who are longing for fullness of life. Mission—as a common witness to Christ—is an invitation to the ‘feast in the kingdom of God’ (Luke 14:15). The mission of the church is to prepare the banquet and to invite all people to the feast of life. The feast is a celebration of creation and fruitfulness overflowing from the love of God, the source of life in abundance. It is a sign of the liberation and reconciliation of the whole creation which is the goal of mission. (§101)

In light of this exploration of the relationship between mission and the Spirit of Life, ten affirmations about mission and evangelism conclude the document. These are responses to the ten mission questions posed at the beginning. In summary, they are:

1. The purpose of God’s mission is fullness of life (John 10:10) and this is the criterion for discernment in mission.
3. Spirituality is the source of energy for mission and that mission in the Spirit is transformative.
4. The mission of God’s Spirit is to renew the whole creation.
5. Today mission movements are emerging from the global South and East which are multi–directional and many faceted.
6. Marginalized people are agents of mission and exercise a prophetic role which emphasizes that fullness of life is for all.
7. The economy of God is based on values of love and justice for all and that transformative mission resists idolatry in the free market economy.
8. The gospel of Jesus Christ is good news in all ages and places and should be proclaimed in the Spirit of love and humility.
9. Dialogue and cooperation for life are integral to mission and evangelism.
10. God moves and empowers the church in mission.

These affirmations are followed by a call to the churches to join ‘together towards Life’:

The Triune God invites the whole creation to the Feast of Life, through Jesus Christ who came “that they may have life, and may have it in all its fullness” (John 10:10, REB), through the Holy Spirit who affirms the vision of the reign of God, ‘Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth!’ (Isaiah 65:17, KJV). We commit ourselves together in humility and hope to the mission of God, who recreates all and reconciles all. And we pray, ‘God of Life, lead us into justice and peace!’ (§112).

**Significance of the statement**

*Together towards Life* was the centre-piece of the plenary session on mission at the WCC General Assembly on 5 November 2013 in Busan, Korea. It is being actively disseminated globally and ecumenically at a church level, for example by a *Practical Guide*. It has already been the subject of many discussions, including a consultation with the Roman Catholic Church and the basis of a European Ecumenical Study Course. *Together towards Life* will be the foundation for the deliberations, outputs and actions of the new CWME and inform the policy and future direction of the WCC. Like the 1982 statement, which endured for thirty years, the new document will be the key point of reference for anyone wanting to know and engage with the WCC approach to mission and evangelism. It is likely to be required study for training of church workers and education of clergy in mission.

In my view, the new statement on mission and evangelism is significant in many respects. I have already drawn attention to its broad appeal, its attention to the margins, its orientation of the church to mission, and its clear statement on evangelism. More than this, the fact that it was cast in an explicitly pneumatologically-defined framework makes it unique among WCC documents. The primary association of the Spirit with life in all its fullness overcomes many of the false dualisms that dogged twentieth-century theology of mission: spirit versus matter; righteousness versus justice; inculturation versus liberation; exclusivism versus inclusivism, especially where other faiths are concerned; and action versus spirituality. Furthermore, its reference to many other spirits, energies and powers, adds a dynamic and engaged dimension to pneumatology, making it truly missional. The overriding theme of ‘joining in with the Spirit’ (§110) through a process of affirming and discerning of the many spirits in our plural world (§§ 24-28) is a fresh and relevant development of the theology of *missio Dei*. 