

Introduction to the Summary of Responses to *The Nature and Mission of the Church (TNMC)*

Between 2005 and March 2010 Faith and Order received 82 responses to *The Nature and Mission of the Church* (Faith and Order Paper No 198). These responses came from churches (25), bilateral dialogues (1), councils of churches and ecumenical organizations (9), councils and associations of mission and the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches (5), academic seminars (10) and academic institutions (1), as well as individual theologians (18). There was also a response from the Just and Inclusive Communities programme of the World Council of Churches, and the 12 reports of the group discussions on *The Nature and Mission of the Church* during the Faith and Order Plenary Commission Meeting at Crete, October 2009.

The responses vary in style of writing, format, length, and the method they choose to examine the document. Some respond directly to the questions provided on p. 12 of *The Nature and Mission of the Church*; others take into consideration these questions, but choose to respond to specific aspects of the text; others totally ignore the questions posed. There are in total 23 responses that react to the questions posed in the document: 17 church responses, one bilateral response, three responses that belong to the category of councils of churches and ecumenical organizations, one response that falls into the category of academic seminars, and one response from the individuals category.

The summary of each response presents its highlights and most important points that it is believed will be helpful for the future revision of the document and the continuing work of Faith and Order on ecclesiology. In the cases of very detailed and analytical responses, where many issues are raised and discussed, the basic outline and main ideas of the response are provided and there is an indication for the reader to refer to the full text.

It must be underlined that the summaries are based on the English texts of responses that are going to be published by Faith and Order (the original texts are used when the response is written and submitted in English, whereas English translations by the WCC Language Services are used for those responses submitted in other languages). In addition, there is an indication of the number of pages of each response, based on the format and font the responses will be published in by Faith and Order, so as to give the reader an idea of the supporting material that is behind the brief presentation of themes in the summaries.

In any case, it has to be remembered that the summaries do not replace the actual responses. Thus, the readers – the drafters of the future document in particular – are encouraged to study the details of each response carefully, so that the churches, commissions, institutions, ecumenical bodies and individuals who responded to the text do not feel their voices went unheard. To that end, attention needs to be given to the already agreed statements, ecumenical and other theological documents that the responses point to as helpful for the revision of *TNMC* text and the advancement of the ecumenical dialogue.

To assist in the work of summarizing the responses, the following abbreviations have been used: *TNMC* (*The Nature and Mission of the Church, A Stage on the way to a common statement*, Faith and Order paper no 198), *TNPC* (*The Nature and Purpose of the Church, A Stage on the way to a common statement*, Faith and Order paper no 181), *BEM* (*Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, Faith and Order Paper no 111), F&O (Faith and Order), NT (New Testament), OT (Old Testament), T&t (Sources of Authority: Tradition and traditions, F&O study project), MDC (Moral Discernment in the Churches, F&O study project), PCPCU (Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity), WCC (World Council of Churches).