

O God, holy and eternal Trinity,
we pray for your Church in all the world.
Sanctify its life; renew its worship;
empower its witness; heal its divisions;
make visible its unity.
Lead us with all our brothers and sisters,
towards communion in faith, life and witness
so that, united in one body by the one Spirit,
we may together witness to the perfect unity of your love.
Amen¹

A view from the past

Mary Tanner

It is hard for me to express how grateful I am for your invitation to be with Faith and Order again, which has been so much a part of my life for almost 40 years, to be with so many dear friends with whom I have travelled on this journey, not least among them my one time fellow Vice- Moderator, His All Holiness Bartholomew, and to be here in this special Academy in Crete which has been so hospitable to Faith and Order over the years. But as I thank you for this gift, I can't help recalling that Bishop Oliver Tomkins, a founder Director and one time Moderator of the Commission, when he was invited back to the Plenary Commission in Norway, in 1985, began his address by saying that he saw his role as being 'an exercise in the veneration of relics'! I must surely by now qualify to be with dear Bishop Oliver, a relic of the past. But relic or not, I am delighted to be here and to be a part of a meeting which I sense, if we are open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, could be the beginning of a new phase in Faith and Order's history, not just for us here, but for the fellowship of churches in the WCC, and for the whole ecumenical movement.

It was here in Crete in 1984, inspired by the story of Paul and the seas and winds of Crete, that our Moderator, John Deschner, talked of throwing out an anchor and drawing ourselves to it. He talked of our anchor being a Fifth World Conference on Faith and Order. For the next years we would orientate our work and draw ourselves to that anchor.² Perhaps once again in Crete we shall throw out an anchor and in the next years draw ourselves to it. It could be to another World Conference in 10 years – 26 years after the Fifth World Conference in Santiago. Or the anchor might be to thrown to 2027, to the centenary of the First World Conference in Lausanne. But I am getting ahead of myself.

When your Director invited me to speak he asked me to do **three things**: To reflect first on how we got here: then on what difference Faith and Order has made: and lastly to think a bit about where we might go from here.

I How did we get here?

As I read through reports from Edinburgh 1910 to the latest minutes of the Commission I was struck by an overwhelming sense of the profound spiritual ethos of Faith and Order from the

beginning until now. At the missionary conference in 1910 Anglicans met for a daily eucharist and at one of those services, Bishop Charles Brent of the Philippines, came up with the idea of a world conference on faith and order to begin to explore honestly points of agreement and points of difference. Conceived in a moment of prayer, Faith and Order's work has been grounded in prayer ever since. The sessions of the First World Conference in 1927 were punctuated by prayer and I remember the moment at the Lima meeting when the Moderator Nikos Nissiotis asked the Commission if *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* was 'mature' enough to go to the churches. Everyone raised their hands in agreement and the whole meeting rose silently, giving thanks for reaching that special moment in the ecumenical movement – I don't think any of us could have known then just how important that text would prove to be. I remember too how in the nineties the Commission prayed its way to the Fifth World Conference in Santiago de Compostela with the prayer with which I began today and how often people recall the experience of being together in that pilgrim city in a spirit of attentive waiting together upon God. It's hard to read through the pages of Faith and Order's history without being struck by a deep spirituality, grounded in prayer, which blossoms in friendships and in an experience of fellowship which inspires commitment to unity. Faith and Order is not an arid academic exercise in the production of texts of clever compromise, whatever some of our critics may say.

Listen to this from The Call to Unity from Lausanne:

God desires unity... our desire (is) to bend our wills to his...God's Spirit has been in the midst of us...His presence has been manifest in our worship, our deliberations, and our whole fellowship. He has discovered us to one another. We have dared and God has justified our daring. We can never be the same again.³

So, in a very real sense the answer to the question - 'how did we get here?' - is by the grace of God, by the wind of the Spirit blowing in the Faith and Order sails.

The inspiration for the First World Conference came in a moment of prayer. In every pamphlet Bishop Brent wrote between 1910 and 1927 to convince others of the need for work on faith and order issues, he wrote in Greek and Latin – 'may they all be one, so that the world might believe'. The *raison d'être* of the faith and order movement was, and remains, unity for God's sake and the world's sake, in obedience to Christ's prayer. Its agenda is to study and find convergence in areas that were the cause of division. The search for agreement in faith which is 'sufficient and required' for unity, and the patient search, as Oliver Tomkins called it, for an agreed 'picture' of the unity we seek, or rather, as we would say today, the unity that is God's gift and our calling, lie at the heart of our endeavour.

Two years before the First World Conference, the Life and Work movement met in a World Conference in Stockholm. There were those, I think there still are, who were convinced that the way for Christians to get together was to co-operate on social, industrial and political issues, while agreeing to disagree on matters of faith and order. 'Service unites but doctrine divides' was the unhelpful slogan that was bandied around. Thankfully, the two movements in 1948, and later the missionary movement in the 60's, came together in the World Council of Churches, providing the appropriate and potentially enriching context in which the faith and order agenda could flourish.

In its Constitution the first of the functions of the World Council is described as: 'to call the churches to the goal of visible unity in one faith and in one eucharistic fellowship expressed in worship and in common life in Christ'.

The By-Laws of Faith and Order tell us:

the aim of Faith and Order is to proclaim the oneness of the church of Jesus Christ and to call the churches to the goal of visible unity in one faith and eucharistic fellowship, expressed in worship and in common life in Christ, in order that the world may believe.⁴

So, we might put it that the Faith and Order Commission is to be ‘the conscience’ of the Council – to keep it focused on its own primary task – ‘to call the churches to the goal of visible unity’, or as others have described it, to be ‘the handmaid’ of the Council. When we say that Faith and Order is the ‘conscience and handmaid’ of the Council we don’t mean that it is the conscience of some bureaucratic institution in Geneva. That would be to misunderstand what the WCC is. The World Council of Churches is a fellowship of churches, of necessity, served by an organisational structure in Geneva. To speak of the World Council is to speak of the churches themselves, not of some separate entity over against the churches. So Faith and Order is ‘the conscience’ of our churches keeping them fixed on the goal of unity and a ‘handmaid’ to help them understand those issues that continue to be the cause of division. We shall only be successful in the task entrusted to us if we are a listening Commission. We must listen to the larger faith and order movement outside this Commission, not least of all as it is focused in the bilateral conversations. We must listen to the other streams of ecumenical endeavour focused here in the World Council. And we must listen to the response that churches make to our work. As William Temple said ‘any authority Faith and Order has, will consist in the weight it carries with the churches by its wisdom.’ ‘Transformative conversation’ must be the hallmark of our working style in the Commission, with the other streams of ecumenical endeavour, and with the churches.

If only we had oceans of time to travel together from Lausanne, to Edinburgh, to Lund, to Montreal, to Santiago, arriving here at Crete, time to ponder the rich resources of documents and to meet some of the giants on the faith and order journey: Charles Brent, William Temple, Patriarch Athenagoras, Nikos Nissiotis, Letty Russell, Peggy Way, Christian Howard, Max Thurian, Jean Tillard, Desmond Tutu, Wolfhart Pannenburg, a young Kirill, a young Bartholomew and a young Benedict. The personal and relational are crucial to the work of Faith and Order and fundamental for our understanding of the nature of the communion of the Church. I’d like us to see how the community around our table has expanded: more church traditions gathered, including the Roman Catholic Church after Vatican II; a shift from north to south; and a more just representation of women. Each new presence around the table has brought new perspectives and depth to our work. Remember to make room for new voices around the table here, and expect to learn from our younger theologians, who are not with us to be simply passive receivers. The younger theologians have often seen the point of our discussion, been most passionate for the endeavour, and made the most constructive comments for future agenda. Go and read their letter from Santiago or, more recently, from Kuala Lumpur.⁵ But now to answer the second question John put to me.

II How faithful have we been and what have we achieved?

i areas of difference

Let’s consider **first** how successful have we been in wrestling with those issues that were causes of division. The agenda was set for us in 1927 and most of our work since has been in continuity with what Lausanne began: work on the nature of the Church; the common confession of the faith; the ministry; the sacraments; the structures of authority, the nature of the Church and the call to unity.⁶ Conversations around the table were at first comparative in approach, with each church explaining its own understanding and practice to others. This was appropriate when churches were coming out of their isolations and getting to know one another. Some very important advances in understanding were made at Lausanne, not least of all, perhaps

surprisingly, in the fruitful discussions on episcopacy, councils of presbyters and councils of the faithful, many agreeing that all must have a place in a re-united church.

At the Third World Conference in Lund in 1952 it was proposed to abandon the theological method of listing and analysing the varying beliefs of different churches, the comparative method, and to seek for common convictions that underlay them. The breakthrough was made possible by the advances in biblical scholarship, the renewed interest in the patristic period, as well as the contribution of the liturgical movement. The Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order in Montreal in 1963 helped the churches to understand that the one Tradition (with a capital T) is witnessed to normatively in Scripture and transmitted, by the Holy Spirit, in and through the traditions of each of the churches.⁷ Churches were able to overcome the old divide between those who held all was given in Scripture, *sola scriptura*, and those who looked to Scripture and Tradition for guidance. The way was now open for Faith and Order to move from the comparative method to the convergence-consensus method. Theologians from very different traditions discovered that it was possible to go back together to Scripture, to the earliest common Tradition of the undivided Church, consider the traditions of separated churches and then move to re-state together their common faith afresh for today. In this enterprise some were helped to let go of some heavy denominational baggage. This opened the way for the production of a new type of ecumenical agreed statement, the convergence-consensus statement.

Recently a question has been forming in my mind about this new direction that Faith and Order took in the 60's. Did the move to convergence methodology mean that we left the comparative method behind without realising its value and the particular contribution it might still make? The latest encouraging impetus in what is called 'receptive ecumenism' relies heavily on the comparative, rather than the convergent method.⁸ But hold that question and I'll return to that later.

By the 1970's the Commission had come to identify **three requirements** for the visible unity of the Church: **the common confession of the apostolic faith; common sacraments and ministry; and ways of deciding together and teaching with authority.**⁹ I already recalled that extraordinary moment in Lima when the Commission agreed that the convergence document **Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry** was 'mature enough to go to the churches'.¹⁰ But it wasn't just the maturity of the theological convergence on sacraments and ministry expressed in BEM that was significant. It was also the brilliance of the questions put to the churches that were to accompany BEM. The questions asked whether the churches could recognise in the text 'the faith of the Church through the ages'. If they could, churches were invited to consider what implications that might have for their own worship, educational, ethical, spiritual life and witness and what reforms were required of them. And they were asked to consider what closer relations might be forged with those who could also recognise in BEM 'the faith of the Church'. So, with BEM published the Commission now moved to engage the churches at 'the highest level of authority' in transformative conversation and to challenge them to move from convergence in faith to convergence in life – to engage in reception. The conversation did take place. Six volumes of responses bear witness to that. And Faith and Order prepared a response to the responses.¹¹ Some reforms were undertaken by some churches in the looking glass of BEM. Some new relationships were forged using the building blocks of BEM. Of course we might wish that more churches had been part of the conversation and we might wish that more agreements of closer fellowship had been built on BEM. Nevertheless, what did happen was nothing less than one of the miracles of the ecumenical movement.

It was time now to turn to one of the other requirements for unity: **the common confession of the apostolic faith** - but how to approach it? In 1927 the World Conference had talked of 'the

Christian Faith which is proclaimed in the Holy Scriptures and witnessed to and safeguarded in the Ecumenical creed, commonly called the Nicene, and in the Apostles' Creed, which Faith is continuously confirmed in the spiritual experience of the Church.¹² The Commission took the Nicene- Constantinopolitan Creed as a prism through which it could first look back to the faith grounded in Scripture and then consider, in light of that faith, the present challenges to the faith in different ecclesial and cultural contexts. Out of this exploration the Commission offered an explication of the faith.¹³ The object was never to brow beat all into saying the words of the Creed but, rather, much more imaginatively, to help us recognise and confess together, in our words and in our living, 'the faith of the Church through the ages'. There was a romantic hope that our leaders might gather in Jerusalem to sing together our common faith focused in the creed – a symbol of our unity in faith.

Perhaps the churches were suffering now with an overload of ecumenical tasks – responding intensely to BEM, as well as to the many bilateral agreed statements that were being published. Or maybe it was a lack of imagination, a failure to understand the dynamic and potential of the faith study. Sadly, what might have proved a vital text for the fellowship of churches in the World Council itself never got the attention of BEM. I'm glad that it has recently been republished. It would provide a marvellous document to plan an Assembly of the WCC around.

Although a start had been made as early as the 1970's on the third requirement for visible unity – namely **common ways of deciding and teaching with authority** – the work never reached a state of maturity of the other two items.¹⁴ One disappointment I have about my time as Moderator was my failure to get the Commission to do substantive work on this third requirement.¹⁵ However, a look through Faith and Order documents would show that there is important material there to build upon. I'm glad that Faith and Order is currently working on this agenda. It's not only that this item is one of the three requirements for visible unity but it's especially important today because all our churches are struggling to understand how to decide and discern in common and how to teach with conviction when confronted with issues, not least of all moral issues, that threaten further division.

It was what happened in the 1970's that was to change the texture and ethos of Faith and Order's work and infuse its motivating vision. The Commission was more and more drawn into collaborative studies with other parts of the Council's agenda, studies on racism, the handicapped and the community of women and men. These studies had a profound effect on all of the work of Faith and Order and ultimately on its view of the visible unity of the Church. For many of us they breathed new life and credibility into our work. The Programme to Combat Racism in the 70's, for example, showed clearly that if the Church was to be a 'prophetic sign' and an 'effective instrument' in the struggles of this world then churches had not only to overcome doctrinal differences but were required to overcome all forms of apartheid and discrimination in their own internal lives. This was not a secular agenda but a profoundly ecclesiological agenda – one of unity and mission. Divisions in the community of the Church were often re-enforced by language, liturgical practice and church ordering.¹⁶ Faith and Order came to see that unity and renewal cannot be separated: they belong together. We have to be 'renewed together into unity in the deepest fabric of our lives.'¹⁷ The same lesson came from the study, 'The Community of Women and Men in the Church'.¹⁷ What at first seemed to be a women's liberation struggle, taken over from the secular women's movement, was shown to be a profoundly ecclesiological matter with implications for our understanding of God, of men and women created and redeemed in the image of God, our language, symbols and imagery, our ways of doing theology, of celebrating the sacraments, our ministry and our exercise of authority. It was an ecclesiological issue. In a similar way, more recently, the programme on Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation resulted in new thinking on the Church as 'moral community', and unity came to be

understood as ‘costly unity’, and ‘costly commitment’ together to the Gospel’.¹⁸ The renewal studies produced insights that seemed to breathe new life into the understanding of the unity God is calling us to live in and for the world. One of the most often passages quoted from BEM illustrates this:

The eucharistic celebration demands reconciliation and sharing among all those regarded as brothers and sisters in the one family of God and is a constant challenge in the search for appropriate relationships in social, economic and political life...All kinds of injustice, racism, separation and lack of freedom are radically challenged when we share in the body and Blood of Christ ...As participants in the eucharist, therefore, we prove inconsistent if we are not actively participating in this ongoing restoration of the world’s situation and the human condition.¹⁹

The integration of these studies wasn’t easy and was often resisted but they helped the Commission to understand what sort of Church would be a ‘prophetic sign’ and ‘effective instrument’ in the world. All of this work of relating the church to the human community, the Church to the world, was drawn together in the report with that title.²⁰ It still repays study. I remembered those exciting times in our work when I read this recent comment from Michael Kinnamon : ‘What so captivated me when I went to work for the WCC in 1980 was that, in order to do justice to the Council , you had to say BEM and PCR in the same breath. Racism, we were arguing, is a denial of the very nature of the Church, while the eucharist is the very foundation of the Church’s calling to racial, justice’.²¹

There are so many other studies of Faith and Order which could be used to answer John’s second question to me – ‘What have we achieved?’ - not least of all the work on ecumenical hermeneutics and its vision of the Church as a dialogical, hermeneutical community. Sadly, there’s no time to tell of the work on baptism, conciliar fellowship, ethnicity, anthropology or moral discernment with their sharp challenges to ecclesiology and their insights into what sort of unity God requires of us. There’s no time to tell of the regular assessment of the bilateral dialogues in the Bilateral Forum.²² This is something that deserves more attention in the future than we have given it. No time to tell of our accompanying United and Uniting Churches, or our preparation of materials for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. Faith and Order has never been idle, though it may sometimes have undertaken too much and been in danger of losing its focus.

So, have we been faithful in studying things that divide us? You can each judge for yourselves but I think Faith and Order can be proud of its work even if there are questions: did we move too quickly and leave comparative work behind; did we pass too quickly from BEM to the apostolic faith study; were we too slow in working on the third requirement for visible unity; did we neglect at times the insights of other parts of the WCC’s agenda that could have enriched our work; were we sometimes too protective, seemingly arrogant and introverted; did we listen to all the voices around the table with equal respect; were we intentional and persistent enough in pursuing conversations with the churches?

ii visible unity

But to answer more fully John’s question ‘what have we achieved?’ we need to return to our mandate which requires us to hold before the fellowship of churches **the goal of visible unity**, to keep focused on the sort of unity God requires of us. This is not a separate agenda from those issues of faith, sacraments and ministry that we have been looking at. Each has something to contribute to our understanding of the kind of unity God requires of us. I remember being greatly helped at our meeting in Budapest by Metropolitan John Zizioulas who insisted that all of

Faith and Order's work has implicitly been related to the nature of the Church. There can hardly be any discussion of problems pertaining to church unity without an implicit, or explicit, reference to the nature of the Church.²³

Oliver Tomkins suggested at Stavanger that one of the great contributions of Faith and Order has been the patient search for an agreed 'picture' of the nature of the unity we seek. I'm glad Oliver used the term 'picture'. I often use the term 'portrait'. We are not talking about espousing a model of unity – 'organic union', 'reconciled diversity', or 'united not absorbed'. To proclaim the oneness of the Church of Christ, Oliver said, involves facing the question – 'What kind of unity does God command of His Church?' He went on to say that 'the World Council of Churches can have no neutrality on whether this question is answered or not'. We must not let events force on us various kinds of Christian co-operation as the goal. If we don't find the right form of Christian unity we shall find ourselves remaining content with forms of organisational ecumenical life which leave untouched the central requirements of the Church's life.²⁴

Faith and Order has offered the World Council, at its Assemblies, statements on the unity we believe God is calling us to live. New Delhi, 1962, remains inspirational with its formulation in a sentence of Pauline length and complexity. It describes the 'all in each place' united with the 'all in every place' and 'in all ages', so they can act and speak together as occasion requires.²⁵

In 1991 Faith and Order prepared a statement for the Canberra Assembly, *The Unity of the Church as koinonia: Gift and Calling*, which brings together the insights of the renewal studies, with the three requirements for unity. It emphasises the rich diversity that belongs to unity and makes a valiant attempt to respond to the pressing question of limits to diversity.²⁶ The most recent Assembly Statement from Porto Alegre, now before our churches, *Called to be the One Church*, is important but not scintillating and not without its ambiguities!²⁷ The *koinonia* of the Church is expressed in faith and sacraments, reconciled ministry and common life, linked together in each place through a conciliar fellowship of churches. These Assembly statements, prepared by Faith and Order, but influenced by Assemblies, have been ways in which Faith and Order has been faithful to its mandate to keep the goal of visible unity before the fellowship of churches. How to draw the churches into transformative conversations around these statements remains a challenge.

But we have done more than produce short portraits in words, important markers as these have been. The Commission began preparing for the Fifth World Conference in 1993, in Santiago, by asking- 'Where are we, where are we going in the ecumenical movement in the search for visible unity?' The title of the Conference was our answer to our own question – 'Towards *koinonia* in faith, life and witness'.²⁸ This title enabled the Conference to harvest the work it had done on faith, sacraments and embryonic as it was, on bonds of communion (structures of grace), together with the inspiration from the renewal studies, into its picture of visible unity, grounded in the divine Trinitarian life. And the concept of *koinonia*, not a model of unity but the very essence of divine/human unity, the nature of the Church, was taken to breathe new life into the portrait of visible unity. So long as we were firmly grounded in our trinitarian faith, the communion of God's own life and love, there could be no doubt about the goal of visible unity. The message from Santiago was clear: 'There is **no turning back** from either the goal of visible unity or from the single ecumenical movement that unites concerns for the unity of the Church and concern for the engagement in the struggles of the world.'²⁹

It was from this that the work on ecclesiology became the central task of the Commission after Santiago, issuing in - *The Nature and Purpose of the Church*, now revised in *The Nature and Mission of the Church*.³⁰ Notice that both are sub-titled: a *stage on the way to a common statement* a modest claim

for the work and, perhaps, leading us to expect a further revised statement. The latest statement has continued to harvest the work on faith, sacraments, ministry, and to deepen thinking significantly on the third requirement of unity with its reflections on personal, communal and collegial oversight, conciliarity and, for the first time, a bold reflection on the ministry of primacy. The document includes strange 'boxes', in which are highlighted remaining issues requiring transformative conversations. This comprehensive, though not exhaustive, ecclesiological statement, was seen by the Commission to serve as a basis for locating and exploring outstanding controversial issues. The vision is large - the Church in the purposes of God: its order of priority - God the world the Church. The section on mission is perhaps the weakest part of the document which may encourage Faith and Order to continue the collaborative work with CWME begun in Hungary earlier this year.³¹ And the younger theologians at Kuala Lumpur told us that what was missing was an interweaving of theological formulations with ethical reflections. They feared that these formulations would go to waste if they were not integrated into the realities of our lives.³² The process of engaging the churches in conversation around the statement has begun but has not sparked the energy comparable to the response to BEM. Does this say more about the times we live in, the other pressing agendas before our churches, or perhaps even the loss of a commitment to visible unity?

So, what have we achieved? I dare to answer with thankfulness for all those who have contributed over many years - 'Faith and Order has achieved much'. Churches do understand one another better because of our work.³³ Some churches have renewed their lives and have shared in service because of our work. Some new partnerships, new forms of closer communion, have been formed, using as building blocks, our work on issues that divided us and on the vision of unity we have articulated - in North America, in Southern Africa, in Australia, in Europe. The ecclesial landscape has change in response to our work. We live beyond the limits of the landscape our grandparents knew.

III Where do we go from here?

So, to John's last question to me - 'where do we go from here?' We cannot give up on our mandate. Our motto needs to be 'continuity with freshness'. We must find a way to build on what we have received or else it will evaporate. We must keep focussed on the visible unity of the Church - a unity in faith, sacraments, ministry and connected life for the sake of effective service and credible mission. But there was a timely warning from your Moderator, Metropolitan Vasilios, when he implied that there is a danger in over-emphasising 'visible'. The unity we seek is, as Santiago, affirmed a *koinonia* which both is grounded in and reflects God's own life, in whom we live and move and have out being as Church. Our insistence on visible unity is not an empty slogan for bandying around that can mean everything or nothing, not some 'kissy, kissy smiling unity' based on compromise, a papering over the cracks. If we don't keep a convincing vision alive, who will? We have to go on out of our experience offering to the Council in its organisational sense and to the fellowship of churches a motivating vision of visible unity. We can't be committed to visible unity in some vague sense without being able to give some account of it and some suggestions for the way we are to travel. That means we have to find ways of nurturing transformative conversations around *The Nature and Mission of the Church*, and the Porto Alegre statement: conversations among ourselves, with the other parts of the Council, and with the churches in the fellowship in their very different cultural contexts. Church has to speak to church and context to context. We have to be more intentional and more sustained in this conversation, as we were with the BEM conversation, and find ways to help those who have little resources for conversation.

If I were a politician, I would say that getting a voice at the next Assembly is crucial. If I were a schemer I would say now is the time to assert pressure as the plans for the Assembly are being

put in place. We could remind those who plan the agenda that the last Assembly commended the Porto Alegre Statement to the churches for their response. The larger an Assembly is, the more diverse the agenda and overwhelming the market place options are, the more we need to hear clearly the central aim of the Council, the goal of visible unity – the goal which gives purpose to its manifold agenda items. The ecumenical movement is much larger than the World Council of Churches. But the peculiar vocation of the Council, as distinct, for example from the Global Christian Forum, is to call the churches to the goal of visible unity.

2. **Secondly**, to be faithful to our mandate we have to go on working at those neuralgic issues that still keep us apart. We shall have to revisit expectantly some of the places we have already been: episcopacy and apostolicity, recognition of baptism, and we shall have to think more deeply about the relation of the local to the universal, what living a connected life entails and how, when deep differences divide the Christian community, we can stay together and discern together the mind of Christ - what place prophetic witness demands and what place restraint? The Church ought to be the place where those with sharp differences can meet at the foot of the Cross and struggle with and through the pain of difference within the divine mercy that sustains us all. And the hermeneutical question will always be there. We need new insights into how to think of these things in the light of today's world and contemporary scholarship.

3. And there is a **third** thing – reception - the new holy word of the ecumenical movement, as Gunther Gassmann called it. We have to go on challenging our churches to receive the fruits of our work into changed lives and relationships, just as we did through the BEM process. But there is a new emphasis in receptive ecumenism emerging. I referred to this earlier when I suggested we may too easily have passed from comparative method of conversation to the convergent/consensus method, thereby by-passing the rigour of really getting to know one another by listening to the gifts the other has to offer to us, and by explaining the gifts we think our tradition has to offer them. If we listen deeply we may come to recognise what is missing in our own lives and how we could be made more catholic, by receiving what others have safeguarded in their lives and mission – recognition and reception. Bishop Kallistos Ware adds that in offering the gifts from our traditions we may recognise things we have neglected in our own gifts. Others have much to learn from the Orthodox about conciliarity, *sobornost*. In giving this gift the Orthodox themselves may see that conciliarity has often become atrophied and theoretical in their own lives. 'As Christian communities we need each other in order to be ourselves'.³⁴ That is the message of 'receptive ecumenism'. Faith and Order needs to think about this new ecumenical impetus and what it says about the way of comparative conversation. It may just be that to return to this at times would enrich our understanding both of unity and the rich diversity of gifts that belong to unity.

Final Reflections

So, don't forget the mandate of Faith and Order, pursue it in continuity with the treasures you inherit but with all the freshness that your ecclesial and contextual experiences have to offer. You are to be both 'the conscience and the handmaid' of the fellowship of churches that is the World Council of Churches. You, like every new Commission of Faith and Order, have questions to ask yourselves. Does Faith and Order still believe in the call to unity – a unity made visible? Does it believe still that its task is to hold that before the fellowship of churches? And if so are you prepared to go on expending energy working with your academic rigour and your creative imaginations on those issues that divide and seeking together to articulate on behalf of the fellowship of churches a vision of that unity that God wills to give us and that God desires us to live in and for God's world? What is sure is that the world with all its brokenness and violence, the creation with all its beauty and devastation needs signs of reconciliation between those who have hated and killed one another and walked alone. They need to hear us say – 'I do have need

of you' and they need examples of reconciled life. A divided Church disguises from humanity its own possibility, its own destiny. The question of unity is not a choice we are free to make, it is a Gospel imperative. Let's use the winds of Crete to send us on our way. Let's set our compass perhaps to another World Conference, and perhaps even beyond that to the centenary of the First World Conference in Lausanne in 1927.

Mary Tanner, July 2009

¹ Santiago Prayer in *On the Way to Fuller Koinonia, Santiago de Compostela 1993*, ed. Thomas F. Best and Gunther Gassmann, Faith and Order Paper 166, WCC Publications, Geneva, p. xii.

² *Minutes of the Standing Commission 1984, Crete*, Faith and Order Paper 121, WCC, Geneva, 1984, p. 73ff.

³ *Faith and Order, Proceedings of the World Conference, Lausanne, August 3-21, 1927*, ed. H.N.Bates, SCM, London, 1927, p. 460 ff.

⁴ *Faith and Order at the Crossroads: Kuala Lumpur 2004*, Faith and Order Paper 196, ed. Thomas F. Best, WCC Publications, Geneva, 2005, pp.450 ff.

⁵ *On the Way to Fuller Koinonia*, ed. Thomas F. Best and Gunther Gassmann, Faith and Order Paper 166, WCC Publications, Geneva, 1994, pp 162-163; *Faith and Order at the Crossroads: Kuala Lumpur 2004*, Faith and Order Paper 196, ed. Thomas F. Best, WCC Publications, Geneva, 2005, pp.4 and 5.

⁶ *Faith and Order Proceedings of the World Conference, Lausanne, August 3-21, 1927*, ed. H.N.Bates, SCM, London, 1927.

⁷ *The Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order, The Report from Montreal, 1963*, ed. P.C.Rodger and L.Vischer, Faith and Order Paper 42, SCM Press, p.50ff.

⁸ *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning: Exploring a Way for Contemporary Ecumenism*, ed. Paul D. Murray, OUP, 2008.

⁹ The triad first appeared in the Plenary Meeting in Bangalore as 'Consensus in the Apostolic faith; mutual recognition of baptism, the eucharist and the ministry; and structures making possible common teaching and decision-making.' *Sharing One Hope: Commission on Faith and Order, Bangalore, 1978*, Faith and Order Paper 92, WCC, Geneva, p.243.

¹⁰ *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, Faith and Order Paper 111, WCC Publications, Geneva, 1982.

¹¹ *Churches Respond to BEM: Official Responses to the 'Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry Texts'*, vols. I-VI ed. Max Thurian, Faith and Order Papers 129,132,135,137,143,144, WCC, Geneva, 1986-1988 and *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry 1982-1990: Report on the Process and Responses*, Faith and Order Paper 149, WCC Publications, Geneva, 1990.

¹² *Faith and Order Proceedings of the World Conference, Lausanne, August 3-21, 1927*, ed. H.N.Bates, Section IV, Para 28.

¹³ *Confessing the One Faith*, Faith and Order Paper 153, WCC, Geneva, 1991.

¹⁴ *How does the Church Teach Authoritatively Today?* Faith and Order paper 91, in *Ecumenical Review*, Vol.31, 1971, Geneva, p.77ff..

¹⁵ Moderator's Report, *Minutes of the Standing Commission, 1994, Cret Berard*, Faith and Order Paper 167, WCC, Geneva, p7ff.

¹⁶ *Breaking Down the Walls: Statements and Actions on Racism, 1948-85*, ed. A. van der Bent, Geneva, 1986.

¹⁷ *The Community of Women and Men in the Church, The Sheffield Report*, ed. C.Parvey, WCC, Geneva, 1983.

¹⁸ *Ecclesiology and Ethics*, ed. T.Best and M.Robra,, WCC, Geneva, 1997.

¹⁹ BEM, E20.

²⁰ *Church and World: The Unity of the Church and the Renewal of Human Community*, Faith and Order Paper 152, WCC, Geneva, 1990.

²¹ Michael Kinnamon, General Secretary of the NCC, USA, Opening Address to the UN Advocacy Week, November 17, 2008.

²² See Reports of Bilateral Forums 1-10. It is true that what was feared did not happen. There has not been competition between bilateral and multilateral conversations. They have learnt from one another and BEM has provided a strong point of reference for many conversations. Nevertheless, there is much more to be gained from a more rigorous assessment and learning from one another. That is a very proper role for Faith and Order, the handmaid of the wider faith and order movement.

xxiii Suggestions for a Plan of Study on Ecclesiology, John of Pergamon, in *Faith and Order 1985-1989, The Commission Meeting at Budapest 1989*, Faith and Order Paper 148, ed. Thomas F. Best, WCC, Geneva, 1989.

²⁴ Oliver Tomkins *ibid.* p21.

²⁵ We believe that the unity which is both God's will and his gift to his Church is being made visible as all in each place who are baptized into Jesus Christ and confess him as Lord and Saviour are brought by the Holy Spirit into one fully committed fellowship, holding the one apostolic faith, preaching the one Gospel, breaking the one bread, joining in common prayer and having a corporate life reaching out in witness and service to all, and who at the same time are unite with the whole Christian fellowship in all places and all ages in such wise that members and ministries are accepted by all, and that all can act and speak together as occasion requires for the tasks to which God calls his people. *New Delhi Speaks*, SCM, 1962, p.55.

²⁶ *Signs of the Spirit, Official Report , Seventh Assembly*, ed. Michael Kinnamon, WCC Publications, Geneva, 1991, pp 172-174.

²⁷ *God, in your grace... Official Report of the Ninth Assembly of the World Council of Churches*, ed. Luis N. Rivera-Pagan, WCC Publications, Geneva, 2007, pp.255-261.

²⁸ *On the Way to Fuller koinonia, Official Report of the Fifth World Conference on Faith and Order, Santiago de Compostela, 1993*, Faith and Order Paper 166,ed.Thomas F. Best and Gunther Gassmann, WCC Publications, Geneva, 1994.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 225.

³⁰ *The Nature and Purpose of the Church: A Stage on the Way to a Common Statement*, , Faith and Order Paper 181, WCC Publications, Geneva, 1998. *The Nature and Mission of the Church: A Stage on the Way to a Common Statement*, Faith and Order Paper 198, WCC Publications, Geneva, 2005.

³¹ The Joint Meeting in Bereckfurdo, Hungary, earlier this year was a promising beginning for collaboration and mutual inspiration.

³² *Faith and Order at the Crossroads,Kuala Lumpur 2004*, ed.Thomas F.Best, Faith and Order Paper 196, WCC Publications, p.4ff.

³³ *BEM at 25: Critical insights into a continuing legacy*, ed. Thomas F.Best and Tamara Grzeldze, Faith and Order Paper 205, WCC Publications, Geneva, 2007.

³⁴ *Kallistos Ware, Metropolitan of Diokeia*, Receptive Ecumenism:An Orthodox Perspective, in *The Society for Ecumenical Studies*, March 2009, pp.20-23.