

THROUGH DIVINE LOVE: THE CHURCH IN EACH PLACE AND ALL PLACES

United Methodists and Roman Catholics have been in conversation for forty years, both in the United States and, worldwide, through the World Methodist Council dialogues with the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. These dialogues and the relationships of our parishes and congregations across the world have been very fruitful for Christ's mission in the world and for deepening the communion we share as we move in pilgrimage toward that full visible unity for which we so earnestly pray.

We are happy to present to our communities and their leaders this sixth round of our United States dialogue in hopes that the readers will continue to learn as we have about the faith we share as two churches in this country. We pray that the recommendations enable a deepening of our common faith and common mission in each place and in all places around the world.

We share a vision of visible unity in our common pilgrimage outlined in the early days of our work together with other churches in the twentieth century ecumenical movement:

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 Savior 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 united with the whole Christian fellowship in all places and ages in such wise that ministry and members are accepted by all, and that all can act and speak together as occasion requires for the tasks to which God calls his people. It is for such a unity that we believe we must pray and work. (World Council of Churches Assembly, New Delhi, 1961)

This was the first Assembly to which the Catholic Church sent delegated observers. From then until now, Catholics, United Methodists and scholars from other churches have worked to deepen our common understanding of the Church and to lay the ground work for that full communion for which Christ prayed.

This text we that we present to you is a significant, if modest, contribution along that pilgrimage. The scholars have sought to deepen our understanding of the Church as it is called to unity in each place and every place, by clarifying our common faith in the Church as a communion, our different understandings of the Church global and local, and where our common and different perspectives touch on the sacramental and missional dimensions of the Church as a communion. The text is designed to be read by our church leaders in particular, and to be a resource for the formation of priests, ministers and educators in our churches. We hope it will be used widely in local theological dialogue groups.

While this text does not attempt to resolve all of the difficult questions of faith that still divide United Methodists and Roman Catholics, it does help us to understand those differences in a more positive way and suggests avenues to further help in the resolution of disagreements. However, more importantly it helps us to learn from one another, appreciate one another's convictions and celebrate the deep unity that binds us together in mission and faith.

We hope the readers who study this text together will have the same deep sense of spiritual communion we have had in our prayer, study and work together in serving the unity of our churches. We trust that the recommendations will enhance relationships that are already strong among our people in many parts of the world. Finally we hope that this study will stimulate even deeper exploration of the faith we share and the challenges to build ever stronger bonds of communion among our people and our churches.

As cochairs of the dialogue, we are grateful to the scholars who provided the research that has made this text possible. We appreciate the work of the international dialogue which has produced important agreements on which this text is built. And, above all, we are appreciative to the sponsoring bodies, the US Conference of Catholic Bishops and the United Methodist Church, to whom this report is tendered, for their vision and commitment in providing this work in service to the Kingdom.

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1 Through divine love manifest in Jesus Christ, in each place and all places that Christians gather for worship and service Roman Catholics and United Methodists rejoice in and seek to deepen the communion they already share. Both churches practice Baptism and Eucharist in Christ, preach the Gospel handed down by the apostles, and provide religious education for their people. They both bring the Gospel to the unchurched. They both seek to serve the needs of the poor and marginalized in their neighborhoods and globally.

2 Yet, even though bound by the Spirit, we as churches are not in full sacramental communion. We do not share in common decision making, and we are not yet one in as many areas of mission and service as possible. In many cities of the U.S. and throughout the world Roman Catholic and United Methodist communities often worship separately, yet within blocks of each other.

3 Churches existing in the same neighborhood, such as Peachtree Road United Methodist Church and Christ the King Cathedral Church in Atlanta, Georgia, face the same local challenges. Some of the members of these communities know each other well and the pastors may be acquainted, yet they only occasionally pray together or share resources and engage in joint projects while seeking to serve the needs of their communities.

4 Just as United Methodists and Roman Catholics exist side by side in local communities, so too do they exist side by side as churches on a global scale and face similar new challenges, such as the worldwide AIDS epidemic and the globalization of a market economy. Both churches also face opportunities as Christian churches continue to grow in many parts of Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

5 Each of these churches exists in communion with a Lord whose being, presence, and power transcend this world. Each of them in their own way claim continuity with the church founded by Jesus Christ. They are in partial communion with one another, but they lack the fullness of visible unity willed by the Lord. The scandal of division raises questions about the fidelity of these churches to the expressed desire of Christ. On a practical level the division hampers their effectiveness in proclaiming the Gospel and in addressing the pressing global challenges that they face.

6 Bound together in Christ, proclaiming one Gospel, we celebrate and seek to strengthen the unity that now exists between us. At the same time, our desire is to move toward the greater unity to which God calls us.

A. The Work of This Dialogue

7 Given this call to strengthen our unity, this sixth round of U.S. United Methodist and Roman Catholic dialogue seeks to articulate a vision of the church as *koinonia/communion*. An ecclesiology of communion provides a lens through which we pursue our common and divergent understandings of the nature of the church local and global. This shared vision of the church as a partnership of divine love also calls us to learn from one another, identify issues in need of attention in our own traditions, and seek to identify movement forward toward greater agreement as a result of our dialogue.

8 We, the participants in this dialogue (see Appendix 1), understand by this biblical image, the church as a communion, a community reflecting the communion of

the three persons of the Triune God. We have come to a sense of having a common vision of the church as communion. We have articulated, together, this communion as a participation in the divine life in the church through sharing of a common faith, a common sacramental life, bonds of love and communion, and a common witness, proclaiming the Gospel to the world. We understand that this *koinonia/communion* is expressed and lived out on a universal and a local level, among all in each place.

9 United Methodists and Catholics recognize themselves to be in real, if yet imperfect, communion. We contribute to deepening this communion through this dialogue on the local, global, and universal dimensions of the church. We found this to be a challenging task insofar as we often differed, sometimes in complex and subtle ways, in how we understood these basic terms and concepts.

10 In this dialogue we address this common vision through four pressing tasks. First, we recognize the unity that we now share. Second, we acknowledge the need for ongoing renewal and reform in each tradition. Third, we seek greater unity in order to be faithful to the will of Christ and the needs of the world today. Fourth, we identify the call to continue the dialogue as we persist in seeking full, visible communion. These tasks inform all of our discussion throughout this text.

11 The experience of participating in the dialogue was for many of us a discovery and celebration of the unity that does exist between us. As we discussed various dimensions of *koinonia*, we experienced ourselves becoming a community through worship, eating together, and listening to each other's life stories. Through receptive listening we soon found that we had gifts to offer each other. This mutual gift exchange not only provided a way ahead on the journey, but gave us a deeper understanding of our own traditions.

12 We want to emphasize that the theological reflections, insights, comparisons, and challenges that follow in this document are closely related to the process by which we arrived at these statements. Our experience was challenging. Not all issues have been resolved or even addressed. Our study and the agreements disclosed here did not come easily. Given this qualification, however, we can truthfully say that we experienced among ourselves a remarkable level of trust and a significant sense of community. We all became undeniably aware of experiencing an "other" who is deeply Christian. We felt the pain of not receiving Eucharist together and we experienced in a compelling way the "yearning to be one."¹ The friendships that we formed with each other through Christ and the Spirit provided a context that fanned the flames of our motivation to work through the sometimes tedious issues of structural and doctrinal differences.

13 Our work builds upon the achievements of earlier dialogues, both the five previous rounds between the United Methodist Church and Roman Catholics in the United States, as well as the seven international rounds of the Joint Commission for Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Methodist Council. We are grateful for the work of these dialogues, which have established points of convergence as well as clarifying remaining points of divergence in our traditions. These previous dialogues have established an ecclesiology of *koinonia*, or communion, as a framework for fruitful ecumenical dialogue. (see Appendix 2)

14 Building on this foundation, our dialogue focused on the relationship between local and global manifestations of the church through the lens of communion ecclesiology. Many of the significant remaining differences between our traditions are

related to ecclesiology. An ecclesiology focused on the biblical and patristic category of *koinonia* holds much promise for achieving shared understanding and appreciation of the nature and purpose of the church in each place and in all places.

B. Emerging Theological Insights

15 The concepts of *communion* and *connection* emerged from our dialogue as expressions of *koinonia*. Although both concepts are present in each tradition, participants came to understand that they take on different meanings in the context of each tradition, reflecting differences in history and emphasis. These concepts point to an understanding of the church as a web of interwoven relationships and provide a way to move closer to a shared vision of the church. Claiming these concepts as central to each tradition also provides both Catholics and United Methodists opportunities to affirm their common faith in a dynamic relationship between the local expression of the church and the church universal as it exists in each place throughout the world. The exact nature of this relationship differs somewhat in each tradition.

16 Our central theological insight, that we share in many and deep ways the vision of the church as a communion, constitutes a significant change in perspective on the church and helps us to see the nature of the church in a new light. Through our experience of dialogue, through considering deeply various ways in which communion is expressed through our church structures and through sacramental theology and practices, we came to recognize in a concrete and specific manner that the things we share in our distinctive ways of being Christian are more numerous and more profound than we had previously realized.

17 A comparison of our structures revealed a surprising amount of overlap. Our consideration of the theological dimensions of these similarities led us to focus on the significance of the implications of our already existing interconnectedness as expressed in a common Baptism and in a common mission. This led to a discussion of the dynamic interrelationship of the church considered as a community of the baptized, as a Eucharistic community, and as a community in mission. We grew more and more in the consciousness that our differences are today lived out within the context of a shared ecclesial vision in the face of common challenges.

18 The issues that yet divide us are serious ones. We United Methodists and Roman Catholics need to do the hard work of addressing them in the best manner that we can as we work and pray for that fuller unity which can finally come only as a gift from God. We hope that our own experience of dialogue and cooperation might serve as an invitation to United Methodists and Roman Catholics throughout the world to greater joint efforts in prayer and in works.

II. COMMUNION ECCLESIOLOGY: A SHARED VISION OF THE CHURCH IN EACH PLACE AND ALL PLACES

19 Communion ecclesiology is a broad approach to understanding the church that holds much promise for a renewed appreciation of what the church is and is called to become. This approach to understanding the nature and purpose of the church represents a recent, yet complex, theological development. Though it has ancient roots, it has emerged in the past few decades among Orthodox, Protestants, and Catholics as a theological category with great potential for fostering the renewal of each church within its own tradition as well as for ecumenical insight and reconciliation.

20 Communion ecclesiology understands the church most basically as a communion among human beings with God. The church originates in the loving friendship shared among Jesus and his disciples. These relationships are formed within the matrix of Jesus' relationship with the Father and the sending of the Holy Spirit. Those who live in Christian community share in the life and love of the three persons in one God. These relationships ultimately embrace all human beings as well as all of God's creation.

21 Communion ecclesiology involves the retrieval of both scriptural and patristic witness of the early Christian centuries. The Scriptures are, of course, of critical importance, but it is not simply the Scriptures as read through historical-critical methods but above all the Scriptures as received by the early church and as interpreted today within the context of ongoing, lived tradition that inform communion ecclesiology. Communion ecclesiology affirms a vision of the church as partnership that prevailed throughout the early centuries, prior to the major divisions that continue today.

22 As in the case of communion ecclesiology, the existence of a great deal of diversity within that vision is inherent in the vision itself. As the Orthodox and the Catholics split, and then later the Catholics and the Reformers, hard divisions took the place of a unity that transcended and held together a legitimate diversity. Communion ecclesiology represents an attempt to retrieve elements of the church testified to in Scripture and lived out within the early Christian centuries. For example, Paul's proclamation of many gifts but the same Spirit served to address divisions in the early church and demonstrate God's call for unity within the Christian family. The biblical and patristic vision of communion provides a methodology for thinking about ecclesial traditions that goes beyond the Protestant-Catholic divides and the East-West schism, and points to a hopeful ecumenical future.

A. Biblical Foundations Of Communion Ecclesiology

23 Communion ecclesiology has deep roots in the New Testament, especially in the theology of St. Paul. The meaning of *koinonia* and its importance for an ecumenical ecclesiology have been discovered and investigated thoroughly in the last two or three decades. *Koinonia* means partnership and communion with somebody by a common sharing in something or somebody. Those who belong together in the Body of Christ and share in the Gospel are not private shareholders of the coming salvation, but have become true partners and form a communion which is founded in and shaped by the One to whom they belong.

24 The communion of the church is based on God's call "to be partners with his Son" (I Cor 1:9) and on the gift of the "communion of the Holy Spirit." (II Cor 13:13) It lives by its sharing in the blood and in the body of Christ (I Cor 10:16) and by its sharing in the Gospel and in the Spirit. (Phil 1:5; 2:1) When James, Cephas, and John gave to Paul and Barnabas "their right hands . . . as a sign of partnership," they agreed to be in full communion although they still may have had different opinions on the doctrine of justification and felt themselves called into a different type of mission.

25 Such a communion (*koinonia*) has practical implications; it means also to share resources, spiritual blessings as well as material things. (Rom 15:26f; II Cor 8:4; 9:13) This is an expression of a basic communion especially where it is threatened by theological differences, as in the case of the church in Jerusalem and the churches of St. Paul. An ideal picture of such an all-encompassing *koinonia* of the church is shown in Acts 2:42-47. I John 1:3-7, too, underlines how the communion with one another in the

church depends on the common partnership with God, the father, and his son, Jesus Christ.

26 The strongest and most important scriptural use of *koinonia* is found in the metaphor of the church as the “Body of Christ” which is foundational in both our traditions.² To be “baptized into one body” and to “drink of one Spirit” (I Cor 12:13) constitutes the church as the Body of Christ as well as its “sharing in the blood of Christ” and its “sharing in the body of Christ” (I Cor 10:16) at the Lord’s Table. The metaphor of the church as “Body of Christ” is especially important for our consideration of the church “local” and “global.” In some instances this image clearly reflects the organic nature of the church and its members at one place. (cf. Rom 12:3-8; I Cor 12:12-17) But it also speaks of the church as a whole. (cf. Eph 1:22-23; 4:4,15f; Col 1:18)

27 This is not only a theoretical statement. The various references to local churches, such as the church in Antioch (Acts 13:1), Ephesus (Acts 20:17), or Philippi (Phil 4:15), provide a vision of an ecumenical church in which each community is part of a vast web of interrelated communities of believers anchored in their various local settings, connected by the missionary endeavors of St. Paul and co-workers, but also by a deep sense of *koinonia*, a communion which reaches beyond the boundaries of their own tradition and includes other churches, especially the church in Jerusalem. (Rom 15:25-27; II Cor 8 and 9)

28 For both of us, the United Methodists as well as Roman Catholics, Scripture provides a foundation for an understanding of the church as connection and communion. This retrieval of a vision of the early church, prior to divisions and as an example of unity in diversity, confirms our shared conviction.

B. Three Dimensions of a Shared Vision

29 United Methodists and Roman Catholics share a conviction that divine love, expressed through the activity of the Triune God, is at the heart of and makes possible Christian life. Love defines the nature of the partnership between God and humankind. Thus, shaped by love, our lives are to be patterned to reflect love (*imago Trinitas*). This love is a gift of divine grace.

30 This larger vision of the church takes shape through three dimensions: 1) the affirmation that Christian life is grace-filled or has a sacramental quality; 2) that the church itself can be described as a communion between God and humankind and among the members of the church; and 3) that the church can be described as a communion of communions. The divine love that enables us to live in partnership with each other also calls us to a common mission to witness to and proclaim this love in the world. United Methodists and Roman Catholics affirm commonalities and differences in their understandings of these three dimensions of an ecclesial vision.

1. The Sacramental or Grace-Filled Nature of Christian Life

31 The concept of a grace-filled life emerged as a central idea in Catholic and United Methodist ecclesiology. This affirmation of the centrality of grace is expressed in our understanding of the nature of the church as a community brought into being as a gift from God. Our traditions use different language to describe how this reality is experienced in the Christian life in general, and more specifically, through the church. These differences in language also reflect differing theological emphases.

a. Roman Catholic Emphases

32 Catholics introduced into our dialogue the descriptive phrase “sacramental consciousness” as an expression of the affirmation of the pervasiveness of grace. On one level, “sacramental consciousness” can express an ongoing mode of Christian experience in the church and in the world. Catholics emphasize their awareness of living in a reality that has been created by God, redeemed by Christ, and which is sustained by the Spirit. Catholic participants referred to an awareness of the grace-dimension of all created reality, whether ecclesial or secular, whether “sacraments” or not, as “sacramentality.” On another level, sacramental consciousness can highlight how sacraments themselves can never be adequately understood merely on the level of mechanical processes. Sacraments engage the subject through ritual in a graced, transformative experience that takes place in a world of meaning informed by narrative, community, and practice. While acknowledging a sacramentality of the world and of human experience, at the same time Catholics affirm the privileged place of the seven sacraments and the objective reality of the grace they mediate through Christ.

b. United Methodist Emphases

33 United Methodists found that the concept of “sacramental consciousness” had much in common with their historic emphasis on of the centrality of grace in the Christian life. United Methodists affirm the pervasiveness of God’s grace and, following John Wesley, articulate a varied and rich understanding of grace. Contemporary Methodists resonate especially with the association of sacramental consciousness with a recognition of the awesome goodness of God’s creation.

34 Grace is “God’s love toward us,” offered as a “free and undeserved gift.”³ United Methodists emphasize that human beings are ever in need of divine grace. Grace goes before us and allows us to respond to God. In a sense, all grace is “prevenient” in that God initiates relationship with us. It is also grace that makes us aware of our need for repentance. Through grace, Christians receive God’s forgiveness and are put into a right relationship with God and thus others and through the continuous gift of grace they grow in grace and holiness of heart and life.⁴

35 Although God’s grace can come to us in a myriad of ways, United Methodists affirm that God has designated certain channels through which grace is surely and readily available. These “means of grace” include acts of worship, such as prayer and reading of Scripture, the sacraments, “conferencing” or conferring together on matters of faith, and works of mercy. While United Methodists hold that the sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist were instituted by Christ, they also affirm that God can use any means to convey grace. The means of grace are not simply instrumental but shape and form the Christian life, facilitating and maintaining our relationship with God and one another. Even so, they are always means and never the desired ends.

c. Shared Perspectives

36 Both Catholics and United Methodists affirm that God’s grace can be communicated through the gathered community of the faithful, encountering the face of Christ among the poor, the reading and proclamation of the Word, and in the celebration of the sacraments through material means, such as bread, wine, and water. Both United Methodists and Catholics affirm the presence of grace available through the church local and universal and in the dynamic interaction of these two dimensions of the church.

37 United Methodists and Catholics, at their best, share a consciousness of living in a graced-filled world which, though fraught with suffering and tragedy, is ever more so abundant with meaning and purpose and love. A sacramental consciousness binds together our everyday experiences of church and of world. The eschatological dimension of that consciousness reminds us that the fullness of God's reign is both here and yet to come. As Christians await the fullness of God's coming reign, they are also called to attend to and nurture the signs of this reign in our midst.

2. *The Church as Communion*

38 The concept of communion, which is at the heart of communion ecclesiology, provides a common language through which United Methodists and Catholics can talk to each other about the nature of the church. More specifically it provides a way to explore further the relationship between local, global, and universal dimensions of the church. Roman Catholics and United Methodists both affirm a dynamic relationship between the local expression of the church and the church universal as it exists in each place throughout the world.

39 Communion ecclesiology was used in the formation of the World Council of Churches in 1948. It later became an important term in Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox theologies and dialogues. In more recent years, it has become a key concept throughout the ecumenical movement. The biblical concept of *koinonia*, however, and the Wesleyan concept and practices of connection are fundamental to United Methodist approaches to ecclesiology. In this document, the term "communion ecclesiology" is used as a translation of "*koinonia* ecclesiology."

40 The word "communion" is a term which, like the word "church," has several legitimate meanings that often overlap and interpenetrate. It is a rich term that at times is valuable more for its varied references than for its precision. "Communion" can refer to the relationship among the persons of the Trinity; to human relationships with each other through Christ; to the Spirit's activity in a local church or diocese understood as a gathering of people in Christ; to the Eucharist itself; to the network of relationships in creation; and to various forms of solidarity in a grace-filled world.

a. Catholic Emphases on Communion

41 Roman Catholics link communion ecclesiology with the Second Vatican Council. The word "communion" was used many times in the conciliar documents. The 1985 Synod identified communion as the Council's main doctrinal and pastoral focus. The precise phrase "communion ecclesiology" emerges later for Catholics as a retrospective label that brings together the Council's key theological developments.

42 There are different versions of communion ecclesiology operating among Catholic theologians, and Catholic versions tend to have characteristics that distinguish them from other Christian versions. All versions emphasize that the church consists primarily in relationships that exist among human beings and God through Christ and the Holy Spirit.

43 For Catholics, communion ecclesiology has functioned as a tool for overcoming both overly juridical and overly sociological concepts of the church. The church cannot be understood theologically if it is approached as if it were simply a modern institution or corporation. The human, social dimensions of the church are real, and they need to be addressed seriously in any attempt at understanding it. Communion ecclesiology, while attending to these dimensions, places its primary focus on divine and

human interrelationships. It retrieves Trinitarian and Pneumatological dimensions of ecclesiology. It re-centers the Eucharist at the heart of the church. Personal interconnectedness lies at the heart of what the church is. Spirit-filled love, acceptance, forgiveness, commitment, and intimacy constitute the church's very fabric.

44 Catholic ecclesiology of the early modern period (1563-1943) focused on juridical concepts of structure and authority. It is of especial importance to Catholics that communion ecclesiology values church structures at the same time that it puts them in the service of relationships of human beings with God and with each other through Christ and the Spirit. It encourages a dynamic vision of church that includes the horizontal and the vertical, the historical and the eschatological, both internal community and external mission. For Catholics the communal and collegial dimensions of communion find expression in the personal ministry of bishops, among whom the bishop of Rome carries a particular role in ensuring this communion.

45 Communion ecclesiology, moreover, has offered Catholics a perspective that discovers an already existing though imperfect communion among other churches and ecclesial communities. Preconciliar ecumenical efforts for Catholics took place within a framework that emphasized the Roman Catholic Church as the one true church amid a variety of heretical sects. The communion ecclesiology associated with Vatican II creates an atmosphere in which both unity and diversity are treasured. Protestants are recognized as fellow Christians who are in partial though not full communion with Catholics. Communion ecclesiology seeks unity, not through the eradication of diversity, but through an appreciation of a legitimate range of diversity. Communion ecclesiology treats the particular not as a barrier to the universal, but as the only pathway to it. Communion ecclesiology seeks ecumenical unity not by eliminating all differences to arrive at abstract commonalities, but by seeking frames of reference that can hold legitimate diversities in tension, thus providing a way forward in ecumenical dialogue.

46 This concern for a dynamic interrelationship between unity and diversity applies in a special way to the dynamic interrelationship between universal and particular manifestations of the Catholic Church. At the heart of communion ecclesiology is the understanding of each local church or diocese as a "communion" of those who share in the love of Christ. This love is expressed sacramentally when the Eucharist is celebrated.

b. United Methodist Views of Connection

47 The idea of connection, which reflects the biblical concept of *koinonia*, is a central feature of Methodist identity and practice.⁵ Connectionalism is a unique form of relationship that developed within Methodism and is closely related to a communion ecclesiology. It is at the heart of United Methodist identity and is experienced in the systems of Christian conferencing, episcopacy, itinerant ministry, property, and shared mission.

48 Throughout the history of Methodism, connectionalism has functioned as a precept of Wesleyan theology, as a vision of the church, and as a missional principle.⁶ United Methodists believe this practical, theological vision is an important contribution that Methodists worldwide can make to the global church through the ecumenical movement.

49 For John Wesley, structural expressions of connection were a means to organize a fast growing and often lay led reform movement in the Church of England. Later, these same practices became structures of a separate church. Methodist

ecclesiology did not arise from particular doctrines that shape structure, but rather as an expression of the Christian life that gives rise to structures that shape and nurture this experience. In the United Methodist tradition ecclesial structures are not ends in themselves, but serve to form Christians in a life of love

50 Two characteristics of this movement that continue to shape current ecclesiology and practice, are (1) a desire to kindle in believers a holiness of heart and life as a response to divine love and (2) patterns which facilitate partnership or connection between believers and form them in this life of love. Thus, the theological understanding of connection as an expression of divine love through which Methodists are bound to God and to one another is lived out through structures and practices such as itinerant ministry and conferencing together at all levels of The United Methodist Church and connection.

51 Early Methodists gathered in small groups of class meetings or “bands,” thus forming a renewal movement within the Church of England.⁷ Through these small groups, persons were schooled and shaped through prayer and exhortation, and they encouraged each other to express the divine love they experienced to others in the world, especially those deprived and in need. John Wesley asserted that authentic Christian life flows out of love and that genuine human love can exist only in response to an awareness of God’s love within the believer.⁸ Wesley continually stressed that vital piety and social holiness are expressions of divine love that must be held together. This essential combination of piety and holiness continues to be central to the character of Wesleyan life.

52 Lay leaders and lay preachers, assisting in the evangelical mission of spreading “Scriptural holiness” throughout the land, were in “connection” with Mr. Wesley and also “conferenced” with him. This connection not only provided a way of organizing the movement, but also assured Wesley’s authority to assign preachers and provided some doctrinal unity in the movement.⁹ This connection provided both accountability as well as identity to the “people called Methodist.” Conferencing began as a conversation within the connection and between leaders and John Wesley about matters of doctrine and faith. This Christian conferencing initially included the fellowship of believers and rightly ordered conversations, both of which were means through which grace was communicated.¹⁰ This practice was evident in all levels of organization, the class meetings, bands, and societies. Wesley considered “conferencing” a discipline of “holy conversation” and a means of grace. To ensure their character and purpose, Wesley appointed leaders who would “itinerate,” often among widely scattered communities.

53 John Wesley developed a vision of the “world as my parish” to describe the call for preachers to proclaim the Gospel wherever and whenever there was a need. This vision has always been at the heart of the motivation for developing and expanding the connection. Recently Wesleyan and Methodist scholars are engaging in a retrieval of the historical understandings of connection in order to revive the commitment to communion that is at the heart of these practices and to restore the celebration of the Lord’s Supper, a sign of connection and communion, as a regular centerpiece of Sunday worship.¹¹ The sense of connection also serves to reinforce the relationship of the local and global church.¹²

c. Emerging Issues

54 Although *communion* and *connection* point toward a shared vision, these images also reveal some differences in theological understanding of the relationship between the local and universal church. The distinctive nuances of these images reflect the unique history of each church. Catholicism understands itself to be universal in time and space as a church in which the one true church subsists. United Methodism sees itself as a part of the one true church of Jesus Christ. This fundamental difference in ecclesial self-understanding played a major role throughout our discussions.

55 It remains highly significant, however, that both United Methodists and Roman Catholics understand divine love as central to the nature and purpose of the church. This love leads one into partnership, connection, or communion with other believers. The sense of communion or connection is expressed through its structures.

56 Wesley's insistence that the Christian life is made possible and shaped by the divine love of the Triune God finds resonance in Roman Catholic articulations of communion ecclesiology. This conviction that the purpose of the church is to foster *koinonia* between believers and the Triune God and among believers as related to all human beings and to all of God's creation is at the heart of Roman Catholic and United Methodist understandings of the church.

57 Communion ecclesiology does not in and of itself deliver final resolutions for the differences that it helps to clarify. It does, however, provide a common vision of the church and enhances our motivations for resolving our differences as it brings these differences to light. It increases our appreciation of the depth and importance of what United Methodists and Catholics do share, making the barriers to our unity more and more difficult to tolerate. It helps us to see our own limitations and failings, strengthening our resolve to change. The hopes associated with communion ecclesiology, therefore, concern not just external ecumenical relations but also the internal renewal of our churches. The internal renewal of our churches, of course, remains a key element in making ecumenical progress.

3. *The Church as a Communion of Communions*

58 United Methodists and Catholics understand the church as a communion of communions. The local congregation is part of a diocese or Annual Conference. Dioceses and annual conferences are structurally bound to one another and are in communion with their counterparts around the globe. The bishops in both churches, though understood differently, are instruments of this communion by their collegiality with one another, their service to their own churches, and their service to the unity of the church.

59 Catholics and United Methodists recognize in the New Testament a variety of churches in full visible communion with one another. The four Gospels emerged from the experiences of different apostolic churches. The epistles are addressed to different churches, addressing different needs, all expressing the communion of the churches in diverse contexts, grounded in communion in Christ. Early in the history of the churches, differences were resolved in councils, through the communion among local churches represented by their bishops, and eventually by creeds and the canon of Scripture.

a. *Catholic Emphases*

60 The Catholic Church understands itself as a communion of Eucharistic communities. Though no one by itself exhausts the fullness of Christ's church, when understood in their interconnectedness the entire church is present in the local church. Each

diocese is in communion with all of the other Catholic dioceses, or communions. This communion within Catholicism manifests itself on many levels. For example, there are Eastern Churches in full communion with the Latin Church, but which have their own heritage of liturgy, theology, spirituality and canon law.

61 These churches share the same faith, the same sacramental life, and common bonds of authority. Communities of vowed religious live out in a special way the universal call to holiness in which all the baptized share. Various lay associations and movements of renewal take on distinctive tasks for the building up of the one church. The many gifts of the same Spirit give the church a basic charismatic structure through which all members contribute and benefit in diverse ways. Communion is also found in the fundamental bonds of love as lived out in everyday life among Catholics who belong to the same local church.

62 These fundamental bonds of love are celebrated sacramentally in the Eucharist. Local churches, here understood as dioceses, are presided over by bishops who are themselves representatives and agents of communion. The communion among the dioceses themselves, still understood with reference to the fundamental bonds of love that unite its members, is represented through the interconnections of the bishops, who represent each local church, in communion with each other, with and under the bishop of Rome. The church is thus understood as a “communion of communions.”¹³

63 The dynamic interrelationship between the universal church and the local church is thus both structural and personal. The universal church is “in and formed out of the churches.”¹⁴ The local churches are “in and formed out of the church.”¹⁵ These churches, local and universal, are bonded in Christ’s love. Although the theological and practical implications of this understanding have yet to be adequately expressed and lived out, the ecclesial and ecumenical consequences are potentially of great magnitude. This new attention to the reality and importance of the local church signals changes in authoritative practices that can be expressed in more mutual and reciprocal interchange among various forms of ecclesial community. Former concern for uniformity, understandable in the face of modern challenges, can give way to the vital interplay of unity and diversity. Such developments can help not only with the internal reform of the Catholic Church but also with stirring the ecumenical interests of other Christians.

64 The Vatican II documents describe how bishops form a “college” and, together with the pope as their head, act in a “collegial spirit.” The term “collegiality” has come to express this sharing of authority among the bishops with the pope. In broader Catholic contexts, “collegiality” refers to a consultative and participatory manner of decision-making in a community. Collegiality points to a dynamism, the fundamental drive within the church to express itself in a conciliar manner. The pope carries the primacy within the College of Bishops precisely because of his role as a fellow bishop, but presiding from the local church of Rome. “Each bishop represents his own church, whereas all of them together with the pope represent the whole church in a bond of peace, love and unity.”¹⁶

b. United Methodist Emphases

65 The United Methodist Church understands itself as a “connectional” church. Connectionalism “in the United Methodist tradition is multi-leveled, global in scope, and local in thrust.”¹⁷ The “connectional” nature of the church is an important part of United Methodist identity and is experienced in systems of episcopacy, itinerancy, property, and shared mission. Connectionalism is not just an organizational structure, but at its best “is a vital web of interactive relationships” which links United Methodist congregations to

one another.¹⁸ In addition, this web of relationships links United Methodists with all Christian churches. The United Methodist Church does not use the concept of “partial communion,” but simply understands itself to be in connection or communion with the universal church of Jesus Christ and thereby with all branches of Christian Church.

66 United Methodist congregations are in connection, or communion, with one another and are linked to one another through the organizational structure of the Annual Conference, a decision-making body composed of “charges” (consisting of one or more congregations), that exists within the boundaries of a specific geographic area, under the leadership of a residential bishop.

67 United Methodist Annual Conferences located in many parts of the world are in connection to one another and linked through the structure of the General Conference. The General Conference is the highest legislative body of the United Methodist Church and is composed of an equal number of clergy and lay delegates generally elected by the Annual Conferences. The General Conference convenes every four years to determine the ministry and policies of the denomination.

68 The bishops serving the Annual Conferences together form the Council of Bishops. The bishops of the United Methodist Church are called to “lead and oversee” the spiritual and temporal affairs of the United Methodist Church as it proclaims Jesus Christ and seeks to continue his mission in the world. Bishops are charged both to guard the faith and to “be a sign of unity” as they carry out the ministry of the General Conference. Within the wider communion of communions the bishops support and encourage the ministry of all Christians.

69 United Methodist connectional identity has ecumenical implications. In recent years, participation of United Methodist bishops, other clergy, and laity in ecumenical councils, shared ministries, and other organizations has been well supported and seen as constitutionally required. The Preface of the UMC Constitution states: “The church of Jesus Christ exists in and for the world, and its very dividedness is a hindrance to its mission in that world.” The connection is vital because it serves the unity and mission of, first the denomination, and then the whole Church of Jesus Christ.

c. Emerging Issues

70 Even before United Methodists and Catholics have resolved questions of the sacramental nature of the bishops and presbyters, the balance of lay and clerical participation in leadership, and the roles of women in ministry, we dialogue participants see a wide range of shared understanding and practice of the church. Furthermore, much can be learned from one another as we consider both our deep similarities and our significant points of contrast concerning the global, universal, and local dimensions of the church.

71 As churches with global structures, no matter how asymmetrical, dialogue participants acknowledge that communication, solidarity, and dialogue remain possible and desirable. Dialogues on national and diocesan/Annual Conference levels can address issues of common witness and specific tensions. United Methodist and Catholic bishops and their colleagues can serve the unity of the church in their regional areas of responsibility. National and local agencies can collaborate in the work of education, mission, evangelization, social service, and social witness. Universities and seminaries, through their ecumenical theological research, together and in our individual traditions, can create the biblical and theological foundations for our unity. The ecumenical learning

of one regional or national area is a resource for other local churches. Bonds of communion are built up among all and in each place, so that personal lay and ministerial relations can be reinforced by Episcopal, conference/diocesan, and national structures of mission and dialogue.

72 The asymmetry of the relationship need not be an obstacle to unity but can be a cause for mutual learning, enrichment, and challenge. United Methodism can contribute to the dialogue by its rich experience through the ordination of women as well as through its practical understandings of connection. Catholics can learn from the participation of lay leadership in United Methodist governance at every level. United Methodists can learn from Catholics to cultivate a passion for full visible unity. The long centuries of Catholic mission history is a common resource for the churches together as they pursue the challenging task of adaptation, cross-cultural global communication, and inculturation in the worldwide human family. United Methodist experience of local church inculturation in the American, democratic context is a resource for Catholicism with its similar structures. Catholicism's long practical and theological experience with global structures of interdependence is a resource for an increasingly global United Methodist Church.

73 Both churches pray for humility as they face the future together, before God, as fellow pilgrims in each place and across the globe, seeking the will of God for the church and its unity, and for a mission that will bring the healing love of Christ to the whole human community.

III. STRUCTURES OF COMMUNION AND CONNECTION

74 For both Roman Catholics and United Methodists, a vision of the church as communion or connection takes concrete form through the structures by which the life of the church is organized. It became clear in our conversations that these structures of communion and connection are not simply practical strategies, but reflect theological convictions about the nature of the church and the precise relationship between the church's local, universal, and global dimensions.

75 Communion ecclesiology has functioned for us as a lens that has illumined the similarity in our structures relating the local and global church. United Methodists and Catholics share the belief that the Christian church born at Pentecost is a church that transcends all human boundaries and divisions. Church structures should reflect the universality of the Gospel message and the call to global mission that transcends all national or ethnic boundaries.

76 United Methodists and Catholics see in the church of Jesus Christ a community of local churches that are responsible to one another and to their shared communion in Christ. The church as Body of Christ finds its expression not only in the local church but also in the communion between and among churches. The church finds a significant locus of organization and authority on the level of conference or diocese. Individual believers and congregations make significant contributions to the authoritative processes, but the locus of church-wide decision making rests elsewhere.

A. The Church Local and Global

77 To move toward agreement on the nature of the church in each place and all places it is necessary to clarify terms. Although many terms will be defined in the

glossary and clarified throughout this document, here we focus on the terms “local,” “global,” and “universal” when applied to the “church.”

78 Catholics and United Methodists agree that the local church does not exist apart from the universal church. Communion implies that congregations, dioceses/Annual Conferences, and wider areas of responsibility are interdependent. This holds for collegial expressions of responsibility, such as in General Conference and in episcopal synods, as well as for personal responsibility, such as the role of individual bishops in carrying out their duties.

79 Both United Methodists and Catholics use the term “universal/catholic” to mean that the church is “spread throughout the whole” world in space and time, and embraces the fullness of the apostolic faith. This is what we confess when we say the “one, holy, catholic and apostolic church” in the creed.¹⁹ “Global” and “universal” are not interchangeable, and have distinct meanings in our different traditions.

80 Evident in our review of terms are differing theological and structural understandings of the nature of the church local, global, and universal in both traditions. Yet, both churches share a common heritage with all Christians “grounded in the apostolic witness to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.”²⁰

a. Roman Catholic Emphases: Local Church

81 In official Catholic documents, the “local” church denotes the diocese in the context of the universal church. For Catholics, therefore, “local” church is most often used to refer to the diocese. A diocese is a geographical area, including a number of communities under the leadership of a bishop, including clergy, religious, and laity:

A diocese is a portion of the people of God which is entrusted to a bishop to be shepherded by him with the cooperation of the presbytery. Thus by adhering to its pastor and gathered together by him through the Gospel and the Eucharist in the Holy Spirit, it constitutes a particular church in which the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church of Christ is truly present and operative.²¹

82 “Local church” is also sometimes used in theological conversation to mean an area in which the Gospel has been inculturated, like the Church of the Ukraine, as distinct from the global church that is inculturated in multiple variations throughout the world:

As the Catholic Church teaches in the Second Vatican Council:

It has come about through divine providence that, in the course of time, different churches set up in various places by the apostles and their successors joined together in a multiplicity of organically united groups which, while safeguarding the unity of faith and the unique divine structure of the universal church, have their own discipline, enjoy their own liturgical usage and inherit a theological and spiritual patrimony.... This multiplicity of local churches [dioceses], unified in a common effort, shows all the more resplendently the catholicity of the undivided church. . . .²²

In popular, non-technical conversation, the “local” church can at times be understood as the parish as distinct from any larger type of grouping.

b. United Methodist Emphases: Local Church

83 The term “local church” for United Methodists means the congregation in a specific community. The Book of Discipline states that “The local church provides the most significant arena through which disciple-making occurs.”²³ The local church is the “strategic base” from which members move out into the community and larger society in

ministry. “It is primarily at the level of the local church that the church encounters the world.”²⁴ The local church is called to “minister to persons in the community where the church is located,” worship, service, and education. Local churches are also called to be in partnership with other local churches for the care of the world and the exercise of the worldwide ministry of the church.²⁵

84 The Annual Conference is understood as the “basic body” of the church. Historically the Annual Conferences were the base of the missionary work in an area. An Annual Conference, today, is both the annual decision making body composed of ministers and lay persons, and a geographical area composed of many congregations under the leadership of a bishop with the district superintendents. The purpose of the Annual Conference is “to equip the local churches for ministry and provide a connectional ministry beyond the local church.”²⁶

c. United Methodist Emphases: Universal and Global Church

85 United Methodists understand the “global” church as being simultaneously a sociological, geographical, and theological reality. Organizationally, the United Methodist Church has Annual Conferences spread throughout the United States, Europe, Africa, and the Philippines. Beyond these Annual Conference structures, United Methodism expresses itself in mission in many other places throughout the world. United Methodists emphasize a perspective that includes a worldwide mission.

86 The term “universal” church, which for Methodists includes all Christians, is identified as the Body of Christ and as the Communion of Saints. One is a member of the universal church primarily through faith and Baptism, rather than through visible church structures:

The church is a community of all true believers under the Lordship of Christ. It is the redeemed and redeeming fellowship in which the Word of God is preached by persons divinely called, and the sacraments are duly administered according to Christ’s own appointment.²⁷

The United Methodist Church understands itself to be “a part of the church universal, which is one Body in Christ.”²⁸

d. Roman Catholic Emphases: Universal and Global Church

87 Official Catholic teaching does not use the phrase “global church.” The terms used are “particular church,” referring to the diocese, and “universal church.” The meaning of “universal” church in Catholic documents is complex and many-layered. As considered in the present world, the universal church includes all Catholics led by the College of Bishops with the pope as their head. This universal church, however, is not simply a federation of dioceses, but possesses its own identity and unity.

88 Catholics are influenced in their understanding of the term “universal church” by their reaction to the Reformation-style concept of the “invisible” church in contrast with the “visible” church. Up through much of the twentieth century, Catholics had emphasized the close identity of the church universal and the “visible” Catholic Church centered in Rome. *Lumen Gentium* built upon Pius XII’s *Mystici Corporis* (1943), which expressly moved toward integrating the “visible” and the “invisible,” with its emphasis on the church as a sacrament. Catholics understand the visible, sacramental elements of church life, including ministry and bonds of communion, as essential to the fullness of the Church.

89 In *Lumen Gentium* the church universal is identified with the church that Christ founded. The church that Christ founded is a mystery not easily defined, and so is expressed by many scriptural images such as God's tillage, living stones, and the Body of Christ. This church of Christ is said to "subsist in" the Catholic Church:

The one mediator, Christ, established and constantly sustains here on earth his holy church, the community of faith, hope and charity, as a visible structure through which he communicates truth and grace to everyone.... This church constituted and organized as a society in the present world, subsists in the Catholic Church, which is governed by the successor of Peter and by the bishops in communion with him. Nevertheless many elements of sanctification and of truth are found outside its visible confines. These elements, as gifts belonging to the church of Christ, are forces impelling towards catholic unity.²⁹

In this passage the "universal" church is on one level the Body of Christ, which includes all elements and dimensions of the church that Christ founded. In this present world, the "universal" church "subsists in" [continues to exist in its institutional integrity in] the Catholic Church led by the pope and the bishops in communion with him. *Lumen Gentium* and *Unitatis Redintegratio* recognize the existence of other "churches" and "ecclesial communities" that are in partial but not full communion with the Catholic Church. Catholics recognize a real, if imperfect, communion with the United Methodist Church.

90 Roman Catholics claim an intimate connection between the universal church as founded by Christ and the Roman Catholic Church. The Roman Catholic Church envisions itself as being in direct sacramental continuity with the Church as it emerged and developed in the first Christian millennium and does not yet recognize the same level of continuity in the Reformation churches. For centuries prior to the Second Vatican Council, the Catholic Church, understood as including various eastern churches, identified itself with the church that Christ founded and thus with the Mystical Body of Christ. Those who claimed to be Christians but who did not belong to the Roman Catholic Church were labeled as schismatic, heretics, and/or sectarians.

91 The Second Vatican Council opened up the ecumenical door with the "subsists in" passage quoted above. One should be careful, however, not to underestimate the degree and gravity of the connection still being claimed between the Catholic Church and the Church founded by Christ. Roman Catholics have even tended to use the phrase "universal church" to refer either to the entirety of churches in communion with Rome spread throughout the world or to the church conceived mystically as the Body of Christ and the Communion of Saints.

92 A concept that dialogue participants came to call "ecclesial vitality" led us to grasp more fully the Catholic understanding of their relationship with various churches. Implicit in the teaching of Vatican II is a traditional theological distinction between the Catholic Church's possession of the "fullness of the means of salvation," on the one hand, and the effective appropriation of these means in the actual life of the church. Catholics have for centuries held that their claim to a special ecclesial integrity lay in their belief that they have the fullness of means, understood in terms of the apostolic faith, the sacramental life of the church, and communion with the bishop of Rome. From a Catholic perspective, this does not preclude the possibility that other churches and

ecclesial communities, while lacking some objective means of salvation, might in fact provide a more vital context for living out the Christian life.

93 Though not a technical term, Catholic theologians use the “global church” in both an ecumenical sense and in a restricted Catholic sense. In its ecumenical sense, “global church” refers to all Christians throughout the world. In its restricted Catholic sense, “global church” refers to the same entity as the “universal church as it exists in the present world.” “Universal church,” however, is primarily a theological term, whereas “global” church highlights the social and cultural dimensions of the church. The “global church” is usually juxtaposed with the “local church” in theological writing that focuses on issues related to inculturation.

B. Structural Comparisons

94 Catholics and United Methodists found there to be many significant differences in their structures of authority, in their patterns of how authority is exercised, and in how their patterns and structures are related to Scripture, tradition, and the will of Christ. In the midst of these differences, however, we found also some parallels that represent a surprising complementarity.

95 These parallels can perhaps best be grasped by comparing the United Methodist bishop and the Annual Conference with the Catholic bishop and the diocese. We found it significant that for both churches this level of organization represents a fundamental ecclesial unit, as distinct from congregationalist modes of organization.

96 For United Methodists the Annual Conference as a body represents the highest authority within its jurisdiction in many specified areas³⁰ and thus has many similarities with the authority invested in the Catholic bishop. The United Methodist bishop carries out the will of the Annual Conference, although with no sacramental authority. The representatives at the Annual Conference are elected by members of United Methodist congregations. For the greater part of the year, however, when the Annual Conference is not meeting, the United Methodist bishop functions as the appropriate authority in implementing the decisions of the conference.

97 For Catholics, the bishop’s role in the diocese must be understood both sacramentally and juridically. These two dimensions can be distinguished but not fully separated. The bishop sacramentally represents Christ in the diocese and is therefore able to teach and govern in Christ’s name.

98 There are assemblies, synods or pastoral councils in dioceses, which are consultative to the bishop. Participation of the laity and presbyters in the mission of the local, diocesan church is strongly encouraged by means of these conciliar structures.

99 For both United Methodists and Catholics, the diocese or conference is a basic level on which significant authority rests. Both the diocese and the conference possess a high degree of autonomy. However, both United Methodists and Catholics recognize a wider level of communion. For United Methodists this is expressed through the General Conference and the Council of Bishops as well as, though not authoritatively, in the World Methodist Council. For Catholics, the college of bishops with and under the Bishop of Rome expresses this communion. General Conference church agencies and congregations of the Roman curia also serve the global interdependence of the churches. Movements and religious communities are also elements of communion.

100 Catholic dioceses are subdivided into parishes, but parishes and deaneries are not autonomous units. Parishes are integral units of the diocese as local church. A pastor

is sent forth as a representative of the bishop. Pastoral councils work with the pastor in an advisory capacity. Each diocese has a presbyteral (priest) council that advises the bishop. Pastors are called to work collegially with their parishioners, and bishops are called to work collegially with their priests.

101 United Methodist Annual Conferences are subdivided into districts and congregations. United Methodists place greater emphasis on the role of the congregation as the “local church.” Congregations are consulted concerning who their minister will be, but in an itinerant system of ministry, it is the bishop who makes the final decision and sends forth the pastor to the congregation. In terms of participation in Annual Conference actions, members of local churches choose their representation to the Annual Conference where all decisions are made by equal numbers of clergy and lay with the bishop as the presiding officer.

102 For both United Methodists and Catholics, then, the basic unit of the church is the conference/diocese which, practically speaking, sustains and services congregations/parishes. For both, the conference/diocese has historically been the seat of authority, and for both the level of the congregation/parish has been a focus of theological attention. For both, the actual dialogue of how decisions are made has involved a dynamic interchange between these two levels.

103 In spite of the obvious differences between the two, we found this similarity to be significant. Also highly significant is the type, amount, and quality of connections that exist, for both United Methodists and Catholics, among conferences/dioceses. Central to the understanding of both of our churches and their mission is the catholicity/universality of the church, embodied in concrete structures of life, governance, teaching, and mission.

C. Principles of Participation and Subsidiarity

104 Both United Methodists and Catholics showed great interest in the topic of how church structures can retain their theological and sacramental dimensions while at the same time being flexible and responsive to the mission and to the specific needs and legitimate expectations of people living in various cultures in the contemporary world. Both United Methodists and Catholics are very aware of how their own ecclesial structures are distinct from congregationalist modes of organization. Both churches operate with a significant number of central structures that have real authority and responsibility. Both churches approach authoritative structures in ways that are different from “town-hall democracy.” Neither church accepts that a broad-scale “democratization” of church structures carried out uncritically would represent a sign of growth.

105 Two principles we used in our approach to church structures are participation and subsidiarity. Both indicated the interdependence of the whole people of God in an understanding of the church as communion. For both the Catholic and Methodist churches, there is collaboration between laity and those who are ordained in ecclesiastical decision making and in pastoral care.³¹ An example of this collaboration is the existence of finance councils in both our churches. A common direction toward a theology of collaboration or participation, however, does not minimize the differences of style, power, and organization. United Methodist laypersons have over time achieved a greater role in the decision making within the governance structures of the local and general church than have their Catholic counterparts.

106 The United Methodist Church's structures and patterns of authoritative practices are comparatively more "participatory" than those of the Catholic Church. Both Catholics and Methodists expressed the sense that it would be good for Catholics to reflect more deeply upon the theme of "participation" so associated with the Second Vatican Council. Both Methodists and Catholics acknowledge, though, that a greater emphasis on "participation" requires also great attention to the formation of those who would participate as Christian disciples.

107 Moreover, both Catholics and United Methodists highly value the application of the "principle of subsidiarity" within their communities, whereby functions, services, and decisions that are appropriate to individuals or smaller groups are actually carried out by them. It is unjust and harmful to *koinonia* for higher authorities or larger communities to deprive people of their rightful responsibilities. For example, the local parish or congregation is responsible for the stewardship of its resources. However, consultation and authorization of a wider circle of communion/connection is needed to build a religious education building.

108 What ties all of these themes together is an understanding of the church's authority that realizes we ourselves are not our own Lord and that listens for the voice of the Holy Spirit in a variety of locations. Such a view of authority encourages a wide range of input; fosters a dynamic interplay between the local and the universal; recognizes the importance of various intermediary levels of authority between the global and the local; values legitimate and healthy diversity; provides for checks and balances; and allows for strong, effective authority while militating against the dangers of clericalism and authoritarianism.

IV. DYNAMICS OF ECCLESIAL COMMUNITY

109 Communion ecclesiology provides a means for examining various implications of our shared yet distinctive sacramental-ecclesial vision. The sacramental life is a life lived in a grace-filled communion with God and others. United Methodists and Catholics both proclaim that the church itself is sacramental, because it effects and signifies the presence of Christ in the world today. United Methodists and Catholics also affirm, though with some important differences, Baptism, the proclamation of the Word, and the Lord's Supper to be at the heart of the church. Both recognize the importance of mission as a dimension that permeates every aspect of the church's being. Whereas the proclamation of the Word is not a divisive issue between us, our respective understandings of Baptism, Eucharist, and mission command our attention. In order to address these differences, we seek to reclaim our shared heritage.

110 Throughout Scripture and the writings of the patristic authors, dynamic interconnections among community membership, Eucharist, and mission are evident. Paul says, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because the loaf of bread is one, we, though many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf." (I Cor 10:16-17)

111 Pope Leo the Great also emphasizes the connection between Eucharist and membership: "The partaking of the body and blood has no other effect than to make us pass over into what we receive."³² Augustine affirms: "Since you are the Body of Christ and His members, it is your mystery that is placed on the Lord's table, it is your mystery

that you receive... Be what you see, and receive what you are.”³³ John Chrysostom makes even clearer the connection between Eucharistic community and justice:

Do you wish to honour the body of Christ? Do not ignore him when he is naked. Do not pay him homage in the temple clad in silk, only then to neglect him outside where he is cold and ill-clad. He who said: “This is my body” is the same who said: “You saw me hungry and you gave me no food,” and “Whatever you did to the least of my brothers you did also to me” ... What good is it if the Eucharistic table is overloaded with golden chalices when your brother is dying of hunger. Start by satisfying his hunger and then with what is left you may adorn the altar as well.”³⁴

112 The lens of communion ecclesiology helps us to see the dynamic interrelationship among Baptism, Eucharist, and mission. In speaking of the church local and global as a communion, it is clear that these elements are related in a dynamic way that both of our traditions see as essential to the nature of the church. Comparing similarities and differences on individual questions can aid in technical understanding of the two traditions. However, only a dynamic consideration of how these matters are all interconnected can give a sense of how near and yet how far full communion seems to be.

113 Having gained insight by reflecting on how our ecclesial structures embody connection and communion, we turn to consider how such *koinonia* is also expressed through our sacramental theologies and practices. How do our sacramental practices and ecclesial structures interrelate? We reflect upon the dynamic interrelationship of the church considered as the community of the baptized, as a Eucharistic community, and as a community in mission.

A. Baptism and Ecclesial Community

114 As we discussed our respective understandings of the “local” and “global” church, we came to realize that we were faced with questions about Baptism. Into what is one baptized? For both United Methodists and Catholics it is clear that one is baptized into “the church.” But what is this “church” into which one is baptized? The United Methodist-Catholic differences in understanding the church universal described earlier are reflected in different understandings of the relationship between Baptism and Christian communion.

a. United Methodist Emphases

115 In the understanding of United Methodists, when one is baptized in the name of the Triune God one becomes a member of the universal church, the Mystical Body of Christ, the Body that includes all those from various Christian traditions who remain faithful to Christ. Seen in one perspective, one is a member of the universal church primarily through faith and Baptism. Seen in another perspective, however, this church is also understood by United Methodists as being formed concretely and particularly by those actual historical persons who have been and are being faithful. For this reason, the church thought of as the Communion of Saints, comprised of all the holy, both those who have died and those who are living, a concept very present in the hymns of Charles Wesley, remains a key concept for United Methodist ecclesiology.

116 Consistent with John Wesley, United Methodists continue to understand Baptism as the means that “God designated for applying the benefits of the work of Christ in human lives.” United Methodists affirm that the Holy Spirit is at work in the lives of persons prior to Baptism, through Baptism, and throughout one’s life.

Recognition of this activity of the Holy Spirit leads to a profession of faith and to an affirmation of the promises made in Baptism.³⁵

117 United Methodists understand Baptism as “the sacrament of initiation and incorporation into the body of Christ.”³⁶ Through Baptism “we are brought into union with Christ, with each other, and with the church in every time and place.”³⁷ Through the Service of Baptism in any local United Methodist Church, one becomes a member the universal (catholic) church, and of the United Methodist Church.³⁸ The service of Baptism occurs during the regular service of worship of the gathered community and requires a pledge on the part of the entire congregation, as well as the parents or sponsors, to provide for the Christian nurture of those who are baptized. United Methodists affirm that we live out the commitments and promises of baptism through participation in the priesthood of all believers.

118 The United Methodist Church today continues to be inspired by Wesley’s vision of a church of true disciples that cuts across existing divisions. One’s membership in the United Methodist Church can be differentiated (though never separated) from one’s membership in the Body of Christ. Membership in the United Methodist Church is an excellent but not necessary mode of being a member of the Body of Christ. United Methodism stands as one holy avenue in the midst of other holy avenues of living out the Gospel of Jesus Christ received primarily through Scripture and tradition and applied through reason and experience.³⁹

b. Roman Catholic Emphases

119 A person “baptized Catholic” is understood to enter into the universal church thought of simultaneously and barely distinguishably as both the Catholic Church and as the Body of Christ. On another level, though, the person baptized a Catholic becomes simultaneously a member of a local church, which in this context can also be called the diocese. This is not a lesser level of membership but one dimension of membership in this multi-dimensional church.

120 For a Catholic to belong to a diocese, then, is to simultaneously belong to the entire Catholic Church as well as to the Communion of Saints and thus be connected to God through Christ and the Spirit. These interpenetrating levels of ecclesial membership are distinguishable, though less sharply than for United Methodists, who clearly differentiate their participation in a particular faith tradition from their belonging to the Mystical Body of Christ. For Catholics, full initiation includes Confirmation and Eucharist, which has rich ecclesial implications.

c. Issues and Emerging Insights

121 To this point we have stressed differences. United Methodists clearly distinguish between, though they do not separate, the United Methodist Church and the Church understood as the one that Christ founded. Catholics, although respecting the existence of churches and ecclesial communities with which they share imperfect communion, stress historical continuity between the Catholic Church and the one that Christ founded.

122 However, the similarities concerning Baptism are also critically important.⁴⁰ For both United Methodists and Catholics, Baptism is a means of sanctifying grace. We emphasize, moreover, that we accept each other’s Baptism. A United Methodist who becomes a Catholic does not need to be re-baptized, nor does a Catholic who becomes a United Methodist. Although in one regard this is an obvious fact, when discussed within

the context of our lack of Eucharistic sharing, the mutual acceptance of Baptism appears very striking. United Methodists and Catholics recognize different emphases in our understanding of Baptism. These different emphases, however, do not stand as a barrier to our mutual acceptance on this issue.

123 Yet another very deep similarity exists. Both United Methodists and Catholics affirm that Baptism incorporates one into the Body of Christ. Without denying the importance of the differences in how we understand the connections between our structures of authority and communion with the universal church, we find this point similarly worthy of pause. This similarity takes on considerably more weight in the light of Vatican II's "subsists in" distinction between the Catholic Church and the church founded by Christ. Whether one interprets the resulting distinction as very small or quite large, the space between an absolute identification and some type of distinction has significant implications. We already recognize each other as sacramentally baptized followers of Christ. We both acknowledge each other as members of the Mystical Body of Christ. We already share a significant degree of communion with each other through our membership in Christ's Body.

B. Eucharist and Ecclesial Community

124 Reflecting on the church in each place and in all places through the lens of communion ecclesiology leads also to insights concerning some important similarities and differences in our respective Eucharistic traditions. In the Eucharist Christians celebrate and experience our relationship of love with God and with each other. How do our theologies, structures, and practices connected with the Eucharist reflect similar and different understandings of how church members relate with God, with each other, with other Christians, and with other human beings on local and global levels? And how may we forcefully address those differences?

a. Roman Catholic Emphases

125 We have already established that for Catholics the basic structural unit is the diocese as local church (§ 81 – 82). As a Eucharistic community, however, the diocese is much more than a mere organizational structure. A diocese is, ideally speaking, a Eucharistic communion of Christians who are united with each other through the love of Christ. The ecclesiological and sacramental implications of this understanding are manifold.

126 By mid-second century, the fullest expression of catholic communion came to be understood as the Eucharistic assembly with the bishop presiding. The emergence of the office of bishop as the chief minister of teaching, governance, and worship took place rapidly in the face of various sects, movements, and other bishops considered to be heretical. The Second Vatican Council speaks of the office of the bishop being grounded in the will of Christ for the church.⁴¹ Its development was widely accepted as a gift from God, and the leadership of bishops, understood as the successors to the apostles, was accepted as normative for Christian faith and worship.

127 There is no Eucharist apart from the office of bishop as head of the diocese. The sacrament of Eucharist and the sacrament of Holy Orders are inextricably linked. Each diocese is a communion of love celebrated in the Eucharist as presided over by the bishop. The bishop is invested with the fullness of the sacrament of orders. When a priest celebrates the Eucharist in a parish, the priest does so both *in persona Christi capitis* (in

the person of Christ as head) and as representative of the bishop. In each Eucharistic assembly, the entire church is present:

The bishop . . . is “the steward of the grace of the supreme priesthood,” above all in the Eucharist, which he himself offers, or ensures that it is offered, and by which the church continues to live and grow, from which the church ever derives its life and on which it thrives. This church of Christ is really present in all legitimately organized local groups of the faithful, which, united with their pastors, are also called churches in the New Testament.⁴²

In worship, as well as in teaching and governance, the bishop, as emphasized in the new Code of Canon Law, acts as an agent of communion.

128 Catholics emphasize how, in an ecclesiology of communion, Eucharist properly functions both as building up the unity of the church and as a sign of an already existing unity.⁴³ In *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, John Paul II, while praising the desire for Christian unity, states: “Precisely because the church’s unity, which the Eucharist brings about through the Lord’s sacrifice and by communion in his body and blood, absolutely requires full communion in the bonds of the profession of faith, the sacraments, and ecclesial governance, it is not possible to celebrate together the same eucharistic liturgy until those bonds are fully reestablished.”⁴⁴ He regards Eucharistic sharing in the absence of such bonds to be “an obstacle, to the attainment of full communion.”⁴⁵ John Paul II’s stance brings out how, for Catholics, the Eucharist theologically represents the unity in the love of Christ among those bonded together in the same faith, the same sacraments, under the guidance of the same leadership.

129 Furthermore, the pastoral practice of the Catholic Church takes account of the function of the Eucharist in building up unity with other Christians when it acknowledges the bonds of communion that already exist and when it recommends: “by way of exception and under certain conditions, access to these sacraments may be permitted, or even commended, for Christians of other churches and ecclesial communities.”⁴⁶

130 In recent years Catholics have tried to emphasize how their structures and offices are in the service of communion. Some of their structures and offices, however, are understood as sacramentally and integrally part of the very communion that they serve. With the Eucharist, as with Baptism, the various interpenetrating layers and dimensions of the church being signified are difficult to distinguish because of their complex interrelationships. A consideration of these interrelationships, however, can help point to the way in which Catholics experience deep and intimate connections among Baptism, Eucharist, and mission.

131 The presence of the entire church in the local Eucharistic assembly finds expression in the text of the Eucharistic Prayer I of the Roman Canon when it brings to mind particular people and groups. Prior to the prayer of consecration, there is mention of the holy Catholic Church; of the pope and of the bishop of the diocese by name; of all who hold and teach the catholic faith; of those named in special intention; of all gathered here; of Mary; of Joseph; of apostles, martyrs, and various saints, many by name. After the prayer of consecration, there is mention of Abel, Abraham, and Melchizedek; of those who have died, naming some by special intention; and again mention of the apostles and martyrs, and all the saints, with some being named; there is also explicit mention of the Father and the Holy Spirit.

132 The word “presence” in the above paragraph is being used analogically. The presence of those who entered through a doorway is distinct from the presence of the pope which is distinct from the presence of the apostles and martyrs which is distinct from the various modes of Christ’s presence. Still, the Eucharistic prayer evokes a deep sense in which the “Church of Christ is really present” in local churches. *Lumen Gentium* further expresses the presence of the entire church in the local church in its discussion of the Communion of Saints:

It is especially in the sacred liturgy that our union with the heavenly church is best realized; in the liturgy, the power of the holy Spirit acts on us through sacramental signs; there we celebrate, rejoicing together, the praise of the divine majesty, and all who have been redeemed by the blood of Christ from every tribe and tongue and people and nation (see Apoc 5:9), gathered together into one church glorify, in one common song of praise, the one and triune God. When, then, we celebrate the eucharistic sacrifice we are most closely united with the heavenly church; when in one communion we honor and remember the glorious Mary ever virgin; St. Joseph; the holy apostles and martyrs and all the saints. (*LG* 51)

133 For Catholics, therefore, each local Eucharistic assembly declares its connectedness with the universal church in all of its manifestations. Both the church spread throughout the world and the heavenly church are joined with each local assembly in a single hymn of praise. The church in each place represents sacramentally the church in all places. In a deep sense, though one which is marred⁴⁷ by lack of full communion with other Christians, the Eucharistic assembly manifests the presence of the entire church into which a Catholic is baptized and from which a Catholic is sent forth in mission.

b. United Methodist Emphases

134 United Methodist sacramental understandings and practices are grounded in the larger Christian tradition. This heritage consists of multiple strands of tradition, which include the church’s roots in the Anglican Church, which itself emerged from the Catholic Church. In addition, the multiple strands of tradition, such as The Evangelical Association and The United Brethren in Christ, which are a part of history of the United Methodist Church as it has developed in the United States, influence Eucharistic theology and practice.⁴⁸

135 John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist movement, drew from the Eucharistic theology of the Anglican Church, in which he remained a priest until his death. Wesley stressed the importance of Holy Communion as a “means of grace” through which Christians are formed in a holy life. He celebrated the Lord’s Supper more than once per week, which was significantly more frequent than the common practice in the Church of England. He urged all Methodists to frequent Communion.

136 The separation of Methodists in America from the Church of England impacted Eucharistic practices. Though Wesley insisted on the duty of “constant communion,” this was seldom possible on the frontiers of a newly developing country. The celebration of Lord’s Supper was central to any service of worship for Wesley. With a shortage of ordained clergy, lay preachers often presided over Sunday services. Itinerant ordained clergy traveled from one Methodist community to another to administer the sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist. This meant that many communities celebrated the Lord’s Supper only quarterly (four times a year). This

quarterly practice, which began for very practical reasons, became established and the practice of more frequent communion that Wesley advocated was dropped.

137 United Methodists have been working toward reforms in Eucharistic theology and liturgical practice. United Methodist services of Word and Table, the result of efforts begun in the 1960's, were adopted by the 1984 General Conference and included in the *United Methodist Hymnal* approved in 1988. The return to weekly celebration of both Word and Table, advocated by Wesley and recommended in the 1998 *Hymnal*, is affirmed as the normal pattern of Christian worship in *This Holy Mystery: A United Methodist Understanding of Holy Communion*, accepted by the 2004 General Conference. This document articulates current United Methodist Eucharistic theology and practice and “reflects United Methodism’s efforts to reclaim its sacramental heritage and be in accord with ecumenical movements in sacramental theology and practice.”⁴⁹ United Methodist understandings of Holy Communion must be understood within the larger context of United Methodist theology in which God’s grace is central.⁵⁰

138 Consistent with this Wesleyan tradition, contemporary United Methodists view Holy Communion as a “means of grace.” Although divine grace can come to us in any way that God desires, United Methodists affirm that God has designated certain “means” or channels through which grace is reliably available.⁵¹ United Methodists continue to affirm John Wesley’s understanding of the means of grace which he described as “outward signs, words or actions ordained of God, and appointed for this end to be the ordinary channel where he [God] might convey to men [and women] preventing, justifying, or sanctifying grace.”⁵²

139 Consistent with the larger Christian tradition, United Methodists understand Holy Communion as a sacrament instituted by Christ and given to the church. This sacrament, which sustains and nurtures us on our journey to salvation, uses tangible and material objects as instruments of grace. Consistent with their Wesleyan heritage, United Methodists teach that Holy Communion is not simply a remembrance of the last supper and affirm that Jesus Christ is “truly present in Holy Communion,” though it may not be possible to fully explain this presence.⁵³ While not affirming the doctrine of transubstantiation, United Methodists do “believe that the elements are essential tangible means through which God works.”⁵⁴ United Methodists are clear that the Communion ritual “makes them (elements) be for us the body and blood of Jesus Christ so that we may be for the world the body of Christ redeemed by his blood.” Holy Communion is a “re-presentation, not a repetition of the sacrifice of Christ.”⁵⁵ Through the action of the Holy Spirit, Holy Communion becomes a vehicle of God’s grace. Holy Communion connects us with all Christians so that the one Body “is fully realized when all its many parts eat together in love.”⁵⁶ This sacrament points to the future as well as the past. United Methodists commune not only with those standing beside us, but “with the saints of the past who join us in the sacrament” and we become “partakers of the divine nature” in this life and the life to come.⁵⁷

140 Questions of who can serve at the table and who is called to the table are also addresses in *This Holy Mystery*. Elders are charged to “administer the sacraments of Baptism, the Lord’s supper and all other means of grace”;⁵⁸ however, the *Book of Discipline* also provides for others to preside under specific conditions.⁵⁹

141 United Methodists practice what has been called an “open table.” This practice is under-girded by a theology of grace. *By Water and the Spirit* affirms:

“Because the table at which we gather belongs to the Lord, it should be open to all who respond to Christ’s love, regardless of age or church membership.”⁶⁰ This affirmation is grounded in the Wesleyan tradition which has always recognized that Holy Communion may be an occasion for the reception of converting, justifying, and sanctifying grace. At the same time all are invited, no one is pressured to come to the table.

142 The invitation to the table, which includes words of confession and pardon, and which precedes reception of the sacrament, also provides further context for understanding United Methodist practices of an open table. The invitation to Holy Communion invites all to the table who seek to live in relationship with the Triune God and one another. All who respond in faith to the invitation are to be welcomed.⁶¹ Unbaptized persons who respond by grace to the invitation are urged to be instructed in and receive Baptism as soon as possible, as a sign of the conversion that has occurred in the reception of the Eucharist.⁶²

143 Through Holy Communion, United Methodists are called to the table and sent into the world. Through this sacrament the Holy Spirit “works to shape our moral and ethical lives.” Through this sacrament we are nurtured in the ongoing process of conversion and grow in “personal and social holiness and are empowered to work for healing, compassion, reconciliation, justice, and peace.”⁶³

c. Issues and Emerging Insights

144 Although Catholics and United Methodists differ over issues of the relationship between membership in the church and sharing at the table, they agree on many other points of Eucharistic practice and theology. Some theological differences between United Methodists and Roman Catholics exist in the understanding of the nature of Christ’s presence in the Eucharist; both churches, however, affirm Christ’s real presence. United Methodists affirm with Catholics that the Lord’s Supper is one of the sacraments instituted by Christ. Both churches view the Eucharist as a type of sacrifice, and both view Holy Communion as the communion of the church.⁶⁴ Both churches see the Eucharist as making present the one, unrepeatable sacrifice of Christ.⁶⁵

145 Historically, the Eucharist has held a central place in the ecclesial understandings and practices of Catholics and of many other Christians, including United Methodists. For Catholics, the Eucharist is the source and summit of Christian life. The local church is defined as a Eucharistic community. In the Eucharistic assembly, the entire church joins in praise and thanksgiving. The universal church is often described as a communion of Eucharistic communities.

146 Both United Methodists and Catholics in the dialogue affirmed this aspect of the church. As noted above, United Methodists have been developing a Eucharistic practice and a more clearly articulated sacramental theology. This development parallels the point made elsewhere that United Methodists acknowledge a need to grow in an appreciation of the sacramental dimensions of their own structures and practices, which are not simply functional. Connectionalism and itinerancy, for example, have ecclesiological and sacramental meanings that go beyond their practical utility.

147 The liturgical renewal has drawn Catholics to a richer understanding of the universal dimension of the church in its celebration of the Eucharist and in the bonds of communion with other Christians. Catholic developments of lay participation; vernacular, biblically rich liturgical life; communion under both kinds; and a more scriptural understanding of the presence of Christ and his sacrifice, have made Catholic

faith clearer to Protestant Christians. This renewal leads to a hunger for full ecclesial communion and the celebration of the Eucharistic communion it signifies.

148 United Methodists affirm that various means of grace are of great importance. In reclaiming the historic understanding of the Lord's Supper and Baptism as means of grace, United Methodists seek to forge a stronger link between the sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion. Methodists affirm the sacramental dimensions of the means of grace, not as ends in themselves but as channels that nourish Christian living in God's grace. United Methodist understanding of the Lord's Supper as a converting means of grace shapes our practices of table fellowship and has implications for our ecumenical relations.

149 In this dialogue, United Methodists invited Catholics to understand Methodist practices of communion as continuing the faith of the church in Christ's real presence and in the celebration understood as the memorial of Christ's once and for all sacrifice. They invited Catholics to recognize the centrality of unity in mission for United Methodist practice as well as an openness to communion and continuity in ordained ministry as integral to communion at the Table.

150 Catholics were invited to appreciate the missionary imperative that moved Wesley to establish an ordained ministry separate from the Anglican episcopacy, and to enable the spread of the Gospel where Eucharistic ministers were not available. They further invited Catholics to recognize that the practice of open communion and open table are grounded in theological convictions, and are not merely pragmatic and cultural accommodations.

151 Catholics invited United Methodists to understand the connection between Catholic views of the church as communion and Eucharist as central symbol of and means through which this communion is realized. For Catholics Eucharistic communion symbolizes ecclesial communion in space and time, with God, with one another, and with the worldwide community,

152 Catholics invited United Methodists to understand Catholic Eucharistic practices as grounded in an understanding of the church as a universal communion symbolized by global solidarity and the apostolic succession of bishops and not as a practice of exclusion. Catholics invited United Methodists to see how the Eucharistic prayer confessed by those who receive communion in the Catholic Church entails commitments of faith not shared by all United Methodists.

153 These issues in the above paragraphs remain important and unresolved questions. For many Christians separation at the Lord's Table is the most painful sign of our brokenness. Our shared conviction of the centrality of the Eucharist in our lives urges us to deepen our mutual appreciation of each other's tradition, and work toward resolving these honest differences in our understanding of our Eucharistic faith. This entails bridging our gap in the understanding of the church and sacrament, our contrasting understandings of what it means to receive at the table, and our differences concerning who presides at the Eucharist.

154 Reflecting deeply on the significance of the communion United Methodists and Catholics share in Baptism and in mission lends urgency to resolving the remaining issues that would make ecclesial, ministerial, and Eucharistic sharing possible. We have come to understand the relationship of our Eucharistic practice to our different understandings of the church and its bonds of communion: "Holy Communion expresses

our oneness in the body of Christ, anticipates Jesus' invitation to feast at the heavenly banquet, and calls us to strive for the visible unity of the church."⁶⁶

155 Though our emphases may differ, both of our traditions agree that the Eucharist is not to be merely a self-contained celebration of communal grace, but that the Eucharist sends forth the people of God in mission to the world. The Catholic term "Mass" is derived from the Latin *missio*, meaning "to send forth." The Christ whose presence is celebrated at the Eucharistic table is the same Christ who sends his disciples into the world. United Methodists in particular have emphasized that the church must not only take seriously its mission, but in a deep sense the church is defined as a community-in-mission.

C. Mission and Ecclesial Community

156 Considering the church in each place and all places through the lens of communion ecclesiology leads to some insights concerning the topic of mission. To what extent do United Methodists and Catholics share in the same mission? How do our local and global structures and practices foster our mission? To what extent does our lack of full communion as churches hinder our mission? In what ways might we collaborate fruitfully in the carrying out of our mission? What steps might help us to move in the direction of full, visible communion? United Methodists and Catholics share a common vision of mission, which we work out, however, with different emphases. We believe together that we are called to be the Body of Christ in the world. We live this out in the centrality of Christian living, sharing the good news, active ministry in the community, dialogue, and social transformation.

a. United Methodist Emphases

157 Methodism began as a movement with a mission. Many United Methodist structures and practices grew out of practical concerns regarding how to live and spread the Gospel. The early Methodist movement developed bands, classes, and love feasts. Practices of itinerancy, connection, and conferencing find their origins in practical strategies for coordinating and guiding the mission.

158 Fostering the mission provided the basis for hard decisions such as ordaining bishops to serve in America, even though this entailed a split with the Church of England.⁶⁷ The missionary zeal and passion of John Wesley and other early Methodists stand as a source of inspiration today. Although United Methodism grew to be not only a movement but a church itself, it continues to appreciate its roots as a mission. Present day United Methodists emphasize that church structures exist always in the service of mission.

159 Wesley often spoke of the overarching mission of Methodism as "saving souls," "spreading scriptural holiness across the land," and transforming "almost Christians" into "altogether Christians."⁶⁸ Wesley also insisted that grace evokes both personal and social holiness and the two must go together. He opposed slavery in the United States, and he advocated for the impoverished. Throughout his life he preached and practiced a serious reading of the warnings to the rich in the New Testament, advising his hearers to earn all they can, save all they can, and give all they can.

160 Although United Methodists have not always followed Wesley to the letter, they continue to affirm the dynamic relationship between personal and social forms of holiness. As the *United Methodist Book of Discipline* states:

. . . personal salvation always involves Christian mission and service to the world.

By joining heart and hand, we assert that personal religion, evangelical witness, and Christian social action are reciprocal and mutually reinforcing.⁶⁹

This sense of mission and service to the world is grounded in and pursued by the worshiping community as it nurtures personal holiness through “means of grace” such as searching the Scriptures, prayer, and the Lord’s Supper. Thus there is a dynamic relationship between the sacraments as a means of grace and mission as an expression of grace.

161 For United Methodists, to live in God’s grace and to help others to live in God’s grace are at the heart of the church’s mission. All else is subordinate. All else can be treated as practical strategies for achieving this end.

b. Roman Catholic Emphases

162 *The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* spoke of the Catholic Church’s “solidarity and respectful affection for the whole human family.”⁷⁰ It expressed the mission of the church as “to be as a leaven and, as it were, the soul of human society, in its renewal by Christ and in its transformation into the family of God.”⁷¹ It finds a theological basis for the Church’s mission in the Church’s sacramental nature as a communion: “The encouragement of unity [among human beings] is in harmony with the deepest nature of the church’s mission, for it is in the nature of a sacrament—a sign and instrument—that is of communion with God and of unity among all men.”⁷²

163 Catholic mission as expressed at Vatican II thus finds its grounding in an ecclesiology of communion. Mission is not just something the church does, but it is really about the life of the church itself in all aspects. As Pope John Paul II wrote in *Redemptoris Missio*, “mission is a single but complex reality, and it develops in various ways.”⁷³ It cannot be reduced to “proclamation” for example, even though proclamation is said to be the permanent priority in mission.⁷⁴ No one of its constituent elements can by itself fully capture what mission is. Mission is the vehicle for communicating church and living out what it means to be a church understood as a communion. In addition to proclamation, the evangelizing mission of the church includes daily Christian witness, social advocacy, social service, community-building, and the quest for unity.

164 Catholics thus affirm with United Methodists that mission is at the heart of the church. The first statement of *Ad Gentes* in the Principles of Doctrine is, “The Pilgrim church is missionary by her very nature, since it is from the mission of the Son and the mission of the Holy Spirit that she draws her origin, in accordance with the decree of God the Father.”⁷⁵ The Preface of *Ad Gentes* sets the stage for this assertion: “Divinely sent to the nations of the world to be unto them a universal sacrament of salvation, the church, driven by the inner necessity of her catholicity, and obeying the mandate of the Founder (c.f. Mark 16:16) strives to proclaim the Gospel to all.” The purpose of the church’s mission is the restoration of all humankind and creation to God.⁷⁶

165 In the official church documents that address the nature of mission, the Trinitarian source of mission is underscored: mission originates from the love of God the Father, participates in the mission of the Son, and is empowered by the Holy Spirit. The church in mission most particularly understands itself as continuing the mission of Christ.

c. Issues and Emerging Insights

166 Although we differ concerning the relationship between ecclesial structures and mission, both United Methodists and Catholics emphasize the importance of ecclesial

structures serving mission. Both affirm that the heart of the church's mission is the continuation of Christ's mission. United Methodists and Catholics realize that we share a common mission. We are baptized not only into a local church, and not only into a universal church, but we are also baptized into mission. We are baptized into daily Christian living in a world that we both inhabit. In our dialogue the question arose: if United Methodists and Catholics recognize each other's Baptisms, and if we share a common mission, does that move us, with some force, toward a common table?

167 As Catholics ask United Methodists to reflect more deeply upon the centrality of the Eucharist and upon the implications of the sacramental dimensions of their own structures and ministries, so United Methodists ask Catholics to reflect more deeply upon how being a community-in-mission requires institutional flexibility and creativity. As United Methodists have been reflecting on and deepening a theological grounding of their Eucharistic practices, so Catholics can point to strong evidence that they have been sharpening their focus on mission. Several of the Vatican II documents, as well as Paul VI's *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, John Paul II's *Redemptoris Missio*, and the writings of many contemporary Catholic theologians, have placed significant emphasis on this matter.

168 In our discussions we came to appreciate that both Catholics and United Methodists experience what is perhaps a healthy tension between what it means to be a sacramental community focused on the quality of its internal life and what it means to be a community-in-mission. In addition to a long and extensive history of missionary work, the Catholic tradition has also experienced in many regions long periods in which it was the predominant faith. There are some strains of Catholic ecclesiology and Eucharistic theology that emphasize the quality of the internal life of the community to the relative neglect of missionary outreach. For some local churches at some points in history, the primary focus has been on the pastoral care of souls more than on evangelization or social outreach.

169 To be a church in each place and in wider places of vocation in the world gives United Methodists and Catholics an opportunity to be present with people in need and to offer resources for mutual mission. Both must address more fully the question of our responsibility and accountability to God and to each other and to the social and cultural realities of the world today.

170 An issue impacting both churches is the increasing ambiguity of the political and economic process of globalization. The phenomenon of "globalization" is the subject of concern as it is being increasingly employed to describe the rise of a global economy. The political and economic consequences of this form of globalization on local communities, human welfare in general, and the environment are often negative. Exploring the implications of globalization for a global church becomes increasingly important as a consequence of these developments.

171 To be the church in and for the world requires us to attend to challenges presented by the contemporary context. These challenges may take different shape in each local community. Economic, racial, and social injustices in the midst of increasing poverty and violence, international health crises such as HIV/AIDS, ecological concerns, and local and international migration are among the immense challenges facing nations all over the world. Both United Methodists and Catholics, being global churches, have a moral and ethical obligation to generate and sustain communities that will respond to these challenges. Our shared vision of communion and connection calls us and can

enable us to confront together these global challenges. The stakes are high, for the survival and transformation of the world are at stake.

C. LIVING OUT THE VISION OF COMMUNION

172 Taking seriously a vision of the church as *koinonia* has led us to identify these four pressing and ongoing tasks. First, United Methodists and Catholics must affirm and celebrate the unity that now exists. Second, pressed by the urgency of this common mission, each tradition is called to ongoing reform and renewal. Third, we exercise this unity to increase our endeavors of common mission to be faithful to the call of Christ and the demands of our world today. Fourth, this process of internal reflection will call us to ongoing dialogue to continue to address the issues that still divide us and to take steps, no matter how small, forward to full visible communion.

A. The Unity That We Now Share

173 The partial communion we have explored in our common vision and in our similar structures open up concrete ways in which this communion can begin to be lived out by all in each place. United Methodists and Catholics can affirm that we share a common vision of the church as *koinonia*, and a common call to manifest God's love for the healing and redemption of this world. Both United Methodists and Catholics share a deep sense of God's grace operative in this world.

174 In spite of our disparity of size and history, we have found a surprising degree of similarity in our structures on the global and local levels. We have discovered a theology of communion and connection that inform these structures. We have claimed our common Baptism as a basis for appreciating the already existing unity. We have experienced similar tensions in our attempts to live out our sense of mission.

175 Our clergy already collaborate in ministerial organizations in the communities. Our leadership often collaborate in councils of churches, interfaith organizations, and consortia at the state, national and global levels. United Methodists and Catholics together can lead and enhance this expression of our common Baptism and common sense of connectedness, thus challenging the individualism of American society. The increasing religious illiteracy in our American culture provides United Methodists and Catholics an opportunity to work together on common educational programs.

176 Given this agreement, we recommend that our churches demonstrate this existing communion by:

- Celebrations of shared Baptismal renewal and mutual recognition of Baptism on a regular basis;
- Shared programs of education and spiritual renewal where these do not already exist together, and a deepening of these opportunities with a clear focus on our common faith and the goal of full, visible unity where they do exist;
- Lifting up in prayer our concern for one another, for the healing of tensions in one another's churches, and support for the ministers and people in each place and all places;
- Building opportunities for dialogue on every level of United Methodist and Catholic life for all in each place, where these do not yet exist, and making them known to all of our people where they are not known;⁷⁷
- Inviting one another to participate in local structures of participation and governance, such as diocesan synods and annual conferences, to help one another evaluate the mission and ministry of these instruments of communion;

- Creating covenants, coordinating committees and other instruments of joint common mission, ecumenical renewal and spiritual dialogue in local congregations;
- Developing ecumenical support groups for ecclesial lay leaders, clergy, and bishops to serve the reform, renewal, and unity of United Methodist and Catholic leaders;
- Working together for shared evangelization, as well as for works of mercy and justice;
- Exploring together such stark differences in our attitudes such issues as papal ministry, lay participation in governance, and sacramental and missional emphases of our bishops in their service to the unity of the church.

B. Renewal and Reform in Each Tradition

177 The urgency of the call to a common mission to face the challenges of our contemporary world impels us to continue to attend to that which separates us. Both churches need to overcome tendencies toward certain forms of juridicism, by which some structures are made ends in themselves. Both churches need to see the Spirit at work among all their members as they seek to discern the demands of the Gospel, rather than focusing on their internal struggles. Both churches need to reflect more deeply on the relationship between structure, theology, and practice. Doctrinal understanding in both traditions will need to develop in the light of this larger vision. Taking seriously a vision of the church as *koinonia* will draw our attention to issues of governance, participation, and power. How might the vision of communion lead to a renewed theology of ministry that takes seriously the mission of all the baptized? How might a vision of communion challenge us to a greater appreciation and practice of inclusivity while remaining deeply grounded in our Christian identity?

178 United Methodists are challenged to see more deeply the sacramental implications of their structures. United Methodists are also challenged to reaffirm the connection between sacraments and mission as means of grace and dimensions of personal and social holiness. Roman Catholics need to grow more fully in the direction of subsidiarity and participation. Ecumenism is a costly commitment, calling for acknowledgement of the lights and shadows of our history, repentance before God, and a renewal of heart, mind, and institutional forms in the church. The mystery of the church is embodied in time and space. In the full communion we seek, we dare not lose any of the gifts with which the Holy Spirit has endowed our communities in their separation.

179 Given our learnings about our similar structures, our churches might be challenged in the following ways.

The United Methodist Church should consider its own renewal and repentance by:

- Learning from Roman Catholics about the firm connection between sacraments and mission as means of grace and as dimensions of personal and social holiness;
- Being inspired by the sensitivity of Roman Catholics for the presence of God in worship and in the sacramental action of the church;
- Calling United Methodists to take seriously the results of Methodist dialogues, including those with Catholics, through lay and ministerial education;
- Learning from Roman Catholics that the desire to preserve unity entails holy trust in those who have been charged to guide the church;

Educating people about the present teaching of the Roman Catholic Church and thereby stripping away old prejudices and breaking down deep rooted caricatures. For example, challenging United Methodists' misunderstandings of Catholic theology and practice of the Eucharist;

- Appreciating the spiritual formation that informs the devotional practice of Catholic life.

180 The Catholic Church should consider its own renewal and repentance by:

- Learning from the participatory character of the United Methodist governance and ministry structures, including the collaboration of women and men, lay and clergy;
- Benefiting from United Methodists' experience by inviting them to Catholic universal, national, diocesan and parish synods, conferences, and councils as observers to these assemblies;
- Enhancing the influence of documents intended for the universal church by consultation with ecumenical partners, including United Methodists, and with bishops around the world who are engaged in ecumenical dialogue;
- Dispelling Catholics' caricatures of United Methodist doctrine and practice. For example, Catholics are often unfamiliar with Methodist Eucharistic piety and their tradition of belief in Christ's real presence in Holy Communion. In sacramental life, Catholics should apply their guidelines on sacramental sharing⁷⁸ on the basis of our dialogues⁷⁹ and current United Methodist sacramental teaching;⁸⁰
- Assuring that Catholic seminaries, lay ecclesial ministry and deacon training programs, and catechetical materials consider the results of Catholic dialogues,⁸¹ including those with United Methodists, so they become, as Pope John Paul II says, "a common heritage";⁸²
- Developing disciplines for putting faith into practice and developing holiness of heart and life, inspired by the life and works of John Wesley.

Both should see that their seminaries collaborate and seek genuine ways to teach alongside one another.

C. Unity for Faithful Mission: Living Toward a New Future

181 The possibilities of common witness in Christian mission are manifold. The church documents of the last three decades mention opportunities for common prayer and worship, common work for justice, common prophetic countercultural witness, and common material and spiritual support. There are also opportunities for common artistic ventures, common use of the media, common efforts at Bible translation, exchange of professors, and common theological education and theological research. In addition, we are called to common efforts of inculturation, common witness to the Gospel in the midst of persecution and support of those persecuted, common participation in interfaith dialogue, common reconciliation efforts in situations of conflict, and—with some reservation—common efforts at evangelization.

182 Given the imperative for common mission of all, in each place, we encourage initiatives presently underway and new opportunities for deepening common witness by:

- Supporting common mission study and outreach programs where they exist and promoting them where they do not;
- Collaborating together in outreach to the unchurched and in styles of evangelization that hold together individual conversion and social holiness;

- Working together in the renewal of worship and its role in moving the Christian into witness and action in the community, through programs like collaborative work on the Christian Initiation for Adults;
- Addressing together global challenges, through joint public witness and congregational collaboration in transformative action;
- Providing regional leadership, together, in those ecumenical councils and agencies in the community committed to enabling all Christians to engage in common witness.

D. Call to Continue the Dialogue: Issues to be Resolved

183 We, the members of the dialogue, do not think of ourselves as naive optimists. We have tried to nurture a realistic hope. We accept, if sometimes grudgingly, that much will be required of us before declaring ourselves in full communion with each other. Even though we recognize one another as fellow Christians, sharing a common Baptism, a common mission and common commitment to dialogue, there remain, of course, many significant differences between us.

184 Our exploration of the theology of the church as communion, global and local, the unity of all in each place has led us to some learning about one another, about the shape of the unity we seek in full communion, and about the issues we must resolve as we follow Christ's pilgrimage toward full communion. As we consider these issues, we draw on the previous U.S and international bilateral dialogues that have identified points of convergence and divergence in our traditions (see appendix 2).

The issues that we identified include:

- The meaning of sacramentality and its relationship to the mediating role of the church;
- The shape of the unity we seek, those areas of agreement in faith and structure that are necessary for full communion;
- The understanding of ordained ministry, its transmission and meaning for the universal visible communion of the church, and the roles of women, men, and youth in the church's ministry;
- The structures of authority, collegial and personal, and how they serve the unity of faith, sacramental life, and witness;
- New ways of being church, beyond old patterns of Catholic and United Methodist behaviors of today;
- The means of preserving communion, establishing limits of communion, and enforcing the discipline of the church while maintaining unity in diversity; and
- The mutual understanding of our common heritage of Christian history of the first millennium.

We are hopeful, on the basis of what we have learned from one another in this dialogue, that our churches under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit can find ways of resolving those issues that have divided us over the centuries.

VI. Conclusion

185 In this dialogue, as we reflected together on our understanding of ourselves in communion through divine love manifest in Jesus Christ, we came to new insights about our own traditions and each other's tradition. We think that the United Methodists in our dialogue can now grasp with some sympathy why certain structures are sacred to Roman

Catholics in a way that they did not grasp before. We think that the Catholics in our dialogue can now grasp with some sympathy why United Methodists have historically preferred practical solutions to ecclesiological debate. Each of us can see with some sympathy historical reasons behind our contemporary differences.

186 We have chosen to dwell upon the unity that we already share. We believe that recent developments in theology and practice in both of our traditions justify this choice. We have for centuries accepted each other's Baptism. We have for centuries shared greatly overlapping missions. We are growing in our appreciation of each other as Eucharistic communities with similar structures facing common challenges. For this we celebrate and give glory to our triune God.

187 United Methodists and Catholics are united in the conviction that we live by the grace of God and are called to be the Church. At the same time, how we live as church expresses the dynamic character of our mission to share this grace with others in the world. That is our common responsibility. We long for a greater unity in order that we might enjoy more fully the fruits of our communion in Christ and that we might be better instruments of God's work in the world. Christian unity is both a gift and a task. As a gift given by God, it has already a certain wholeness. As a task given to us, there remains much to be done in each place and in all places.

¹ United Methodist Catholic Dialogue, *Yearning to be One: Spiritual Dialogue between Catholics and United Methodist*. (Washington: US Catholic Conference in conjunction with Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 2000), 37.

² See *Lumen Gentium* 7. Quotes from and references to *Lumen Gentium* and other Vatican II documents are taken from Austin Flannery, O.P., ed., *Vatican Council II: Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations* (Northport, N.Y.: Costello Publishing Company, 1996). Hereafter referred to in text as (LG). *Vital Congregations – Faithful Disciples: Vision for the Church* and *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church 2000* (Nashville, TN: The United Methodist Publishing House, 2000) (hereafter referred to as BOD), par 125-130. Also see Walter Klaiber and Manfred Marquardt, *Living Grace: an Outline of United Methodist Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001), 321.

³ *This Holy Mystery: A United Methodist Understanding of Holy Communion* adopted by The General Conference of The United Methodist Church Thursday, May 6, 2004. *This Holy Mystery*, I-200 <http://www.gbod.org/worship/hcfinal-w.pdf> (THM)

⁴ Following Wesley, United Methodists describe the forms of grace as prevenient, convicting or converting, justifying, and sanctifying. For further discussion see Henry H. Knight, *The Presence of God in the Christian Life: John Wesley and the Means of Grace* (Metuchen, New Jersey: Scarecrow Press, 1992).

⁵ Russell E. Richey, "Connectionalism: End or New Beginning" in Russell Richey, William Lawrence, Dennis Campbell, eds. *Questions for the Twenty First Century Church*, United Methodism and American Culture, Volume 4 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999), 313.

⁶ Russell E. Richey, "Introduction" *Connectionalism*, United Methodism and American Culture, Volume 1 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997), 3.

⁷ The Methodist Episcopal Church was established in the United States in 1784, in part in response the historical exigency of the American Revolution, which resulted in the absence of Church of England priests available to administer sacraments to Methodists.

The Methodist Episcopal Church is a predecessor to the current United Methodist Church. See Richard P. Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodist* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995).

⁸ Randy Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, Abingdon Press, 1994), 192.

⁹ Richard P. Heitzenrater, "Connectionalism and Itinerancy: Wesleyan Principles and Practices," in Richey, *Connectionalism*, 23.

¹⁰ Knight, 1992, p. 5.

¹¹ See for example Bruce Robbins, David Carter, "Connexionalism and *koinonia*," One in Christ, 34:4, 1998: 320-336.

¹² Brian E. Beck "Connexion and Koinonia: Wesley's Legacy and the Ecumenical Ideal," in Paul Chilcote, ed. Rethinking Wesley's Theology for Contemporary Methodism (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1998).

¹³ This phrase is associated with the work of Jean-Marie Tillard, particularly his *Church of Churches: An Ecclesiology of Communion*, trans. R.C. De Peaux (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992 [French orig. 1987]). See also *LG 23*.

¹⁴ *LG 23*.

¹⁵ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Communio Notio*, para. 9. *Origins* 22 (25 June 1992) 108-12; see also John Paul II, *Address to the Roman Curia*, 20-XII-1990, n. 9: as quoted, p. 5.

¹⁶ *LG 23*.

¹⁷ BOD, par.130.

¹⁸ BOD, par.130.

¹⁹ Other meanings of the term universal/catholic include "orthodox" as opposed to "heretical"; "worldwide" as opposed to "local"; "intended for all" as opposed to esoteric; and "inclusive" as opposed to "sectarian."

²⁰ BOD par.101.

²¹ *Christus Dominus* 11:1,

http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651028_christus-dominus_en.html (accessed May 20, 2005)

²² *LG 23*.

²³ BOD, par. 201.

²⁴ *Ibid.* par. 202.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.* par. 601.

²⁷ *Ibid.* p. 21.

²⁸ BOD 4, article IV, See par. 105, 1303. The Book of Discipline provides some perspectives on the nature of the global church. However, multiple understandings are present within the life of the church. Both the United Methodist Council of Bishops and The General Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns have made statements on the global nature of the [UM] Church. Cf. Bruce W. Robbins, *A World Parish? Hopes and Challenges of the United Methodist Church in a Global Setting* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2004).

²⁹ *LG 8*.

³⁰ See BOD, par.601-652.

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- ³¹ See, e.g., *The Code of Canon Law*, (Washington, D.C. : Canon Law Society of America, 1996) canons 129 § 2, 492, 517 § 1 and 1277. (CIC)
- ³² Pope Leo the Great, *Serm.* 63, 7, PL 54, 357 C.
- ³³ St. Augustine, *Sermon 272*, PL 38:1246-1248.
- ³⁴ John Chrysostom, *In Evangelium S. Matthaei, hom.* 50:3-4, PG 58, 508-509.
- ³⁵ *By Water and the Spirit: A United Methodist Understanding of Baptism* adopted by the 1996 General Conference of the United Methodist Church, p.1
- ³⁶ Ibid.
- ³⁷ Ibid.
- ³⁸ BOD, par. 215.
- ³⁹ "Our Theological Task," BOD 101-104.
- ⁴⁰ *Yearning*, 33.
- ⁴¹ LG 18.
- ⁴² LG 26.
- ⁴³ *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism, Origins*, 23:9, July 25, 1993, #129. (Directory)
http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/documents/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_25031993_principles-and-norms-on-ecumenism_en.html
- ⁴⁴ John Paul II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, # 44
http://www.vatican.va/edocs/ENG0821/_INDEX.HTM
- ⁴⁵ Ibid.
- ⁴⁶ Directory, #129.
- ⁴⁷ "Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on Some Aspects of the Church Understood as Communion," CN note 20, 108-112.
- ⁴⁸ THM, p. 5-6.
- ⁴⁹ Ibid., 3.
- ⁵⁰ See THM, 6-7.
- ⁵¹ Ibid. I-200.
- ⁵² John Wesley, *The Means of Grace*, II.1 in *John Wesley's Forty Four Sermons* (London: Epworth Press 1944, 1977), 136.
- ⁵³ Ibid.
- ⁵⁴ Ibid.
- ⁵⁵ Ibid., 8.
- ⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 20,21.
- ⁵⁷ Ibid., p.9.
- ⁵⁸ BOD, par. 331.
- ⁵⁹ BOD, par. 330, 331, 340, 341
- ⁶⁰ *The Book of Resolutions of the United Methodist Church 2000* (Nashville: TN. The United Methodist Publishing House), 814. (BOR) See also THM, 14.
- ⁶¹ Ibid., 14.
- ⁶² (Service of Word and Table I and II, *United Methodist Hymnal*).
- ⁶³ THM, 35.
- ⁶⁴ Ibid. I-202.
- ⁶⁵ World Methodist Council Roman Catholic, *Denver Report* # 83.
- ⁶⁶ THM, I -229
- ⁶⁷ BOD, par.139.

⁶⁸ See Ted A. Campbell, “John Wesley on the Mission of the Church,” in *The Mission of the Church in Methodist Perspective*, edited by Alan G. Padgett (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellon Press, 1992), 56.

⁶⁹ BOD, par. 101, p. 47

⁷⁰ Quotes from and references to the *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (Gaudium et Spes)* # 3. Hereafter referred to in text as (GS).

⁷¹ Ibid. 40.

⁷² GS 42; see also LG 1.

⁷³ *Redemptoris Missio*, # 41. (RM)

http://www.vatican.va/edocs/ENG0219/_INDEX.HTM

⁷⁴ Ibid. 44.

⁷⁵ Quotes from and references to the *Decree on Missionary Activity (Ad Gentes)* # 2. Hereafter referred to in text as (AG).

⁷⁶ AG 6; RM, 9,10.

⁷⁷ *Yearning to be One*.

⁷⁸ Directory, #129-131, 160.

⁷⁹ United Methodist – Roman Catholic Dialogue, “Eucharistic Celebration: Converging Theology – Divergent Practice,” in *Building Unity*, ed. by Jeffrey Gros and Joseph Burgess (New York: Paulist Press, 1989), 307-322.

⁸⁰ THM

⁸¹ Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, “The Ecumenical Dimension in the Formation of Pastoral Workers,” *Origins*, 27:39, March 19, 1998, 653-661.

http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/documents/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_16031998_ecumenical-dimension_en.html

⁸² John Paul, *That They All May Be One (Ut Unum Sint)*, *Origins*, 25:4, June 8, 1995, #49 – 72, 80.

http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25051995_ut-unum-sint_en.html

Appendix I

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APPENDIX 2: Relationship to Results of Previous Dialogues

The five previous rounds between the United Methodist Church and Roman Catholics in the United States, as well as the seven international rounds of the Joint Commission for Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Methodist Council, have vigorously pursued the goal of full, visible communion.

The U.S. dialogues have been particularly helpful in exploring the interconnectedness among ecclesiology, sacraments, and ministry. In 1976, the dialogue issued “Holiness and Spirituality of the Ordained Ministry.” This document discussed the holiness of the church as both a gift and a task and explored ways in which ordination can be understood as a sacramental activity. In 1981 the dialogue produced “Eucharistic Celebration: Converging Theology—Divergent Practice.” Here explicit connections were made between eucharistic practices and implied ecclesiologies. The trend in Methodism toward more frequent communion was interpreted as signifying an ecclesiological shift. Common understanding of the role of the Holy Spirit was identified as a ground for exploring the interrelationship between ecclesiology and the nature of the eucharistic sacrifice. The document called upon Catholics to appropriate more fully the range of images of the church expressed in the documents of Vatican I.I. Methodists were called upon to appropriate more ecumenical understandings of the church, and n particular to come to grips with a more sacramental understanding of church and ministry. In 2000, the U.S. dialogue put forth a practical tool for ecumenical work, *Yearning to be One*, which focuses on achieving mutual understandings in the areas of baptism, worship, and mission.

The world-level dialogues have helped to establish *koinonia* ecclesiology as a fruitful avenue for ecumenical progress. In doing so, they reflect a harmony with multi-lateral projects sponsored by the World Council of Churches, such as the 1991 Faith and Order meeting in Santiago de Compostela, the proceedings of which have been published as *On the Way Toward Fuller Koinonia*, as well as the 199? statement, *The Nature and Purpose of the Church*. In the 1986 *Towards a Statement on the Church*, the authors wrote:

We have found that *koinonia*, as both a concept and experience, is more important than any model of church union than we are yet able to propose For believers it involves both communion and community. It includes participation in God through Christ in the Spirit, by which believers become adopted children of the same Father and members of the one body of Christ sharing in the same Spirit. And it includes deep fellowship among participants, a fellowship which is both visible and invisible, finding expression in faith and order, in prayer and sacrament, in mission and service.” (#23)

They name several models according to which fuller *koinonia* might be achieved, conceiving of different ecclesial traditions: as *typoi* of the variety of expressions of church in the New Testament; as religious orders with their own charisms and heritages; as sister churches; and as distinct rites in a manner analogous to the relationship between the Roman rite and eastern rite churches. The authors go on to examine the episcopacy, the papacy, and apostolicity in ecumenical perspective. They affirm the theological attention being given to reception of doctrine in Roman Catholic circles.

Towards a Statement on the Church itself built upon earlier world-level dialogues. The 1971 Denver statement discussed the topics of Eucharist, ministry, and authority. The 1976 Dublin statement addressed open communion, apostolic ministry, and episkope. The 1981 Honolulu report explored the role of the Holy Spirit in the church and various types of church authority.

Subsequent documents of the world-level dialogue have developed further issues within the framework set by *Towards a Statement on the Church* with its focus on *koinonia* ecclesiology. Recognizing that Methodists and Catholics already share a communion, though as yet an imperfect one, the 1991 document, *The Apostolic Tradition*, focused on Baptism and Eucharist, and named the sacramentality of ordination an issue of special importance. The 1996 statement, *The Word of Life*, roots an understanding of revelation and faith within an ecclesiology of communion. This document addresses many subjects of direct interest to our present dialogue, such as the nature of the church as a communion in mission, various expressions of communion, and the importance of the church universal.

The 2001 document, *Speaking the Truth in Love*, uses *koinonia* ecclesiology as the framework for appreciating diverse approaches to church teaching authority. This document also explores many topics of direct relevance to our present dialogue, including the means of grace, the sacramentality of ordained ministry, the fallibility of human efforts, apostolic oversight, the involvement of lay people in decision-making, and various authoritative structures particular to either Methodist or Catholic history and tradition.

These dialogues have established already many points of convergence in our traditions and have sharpened our understanding of remaining points of difference. They have offered mutual challenges. They provide a rich heritage that clarifies what growth has been achieved and what issues remain. They give a sense of why certain questions have become critical for further progress. They set the stage for dialogues to become continually more focused without having to reinvent the wheel each time.

GLOSSARY

Annual Conference: The Annual Conference is understood as the “basic body” of the United Methodist church. Historically the Annual Conferences were the base of the missionary work in an area. An Annual Conference, today, is both the annual decision making body composed of ministers and lay persons, and a geographical area composed of many congregations under the leadership of a bishop with the district superintendents. At the Annual Conference, the Bishop “fixes” the appointment of clergy to congregations.

College of Bishops (Catholic): By virtue of their consecration and hierarchical communion with the bishop of Rome (the pope) and each other, bishops in the Catholic Church are part of the College of Bishops. The College of Bishops, in communion with the pope as head of the college, has full authority over the church.

Council of Bishops (United Methodist): By virtue of their election and consecration, bishops in the United Methodist Church are members of a Council of Bishops. This is the collegial expression of Episcopal leadership in The United Methodist Church and is composed of all bishops, active and retired, in the USA and in other nations where The United Methodist Church is organized. The Council of Bishops meets at regular intervals and is charged with the oversight of the spiritual and temporal affairs of the Church.

Deanery (Catholic): Parishes in a Catholic diocese may be grouped together in deaneries. Deaneries foster communication among parishes and common pastoral action.

Diocese: The diocese is a territorial division of the Catholic Church, a portion of the church presided over by a bishop. Catholics understand the diocese to be the local church, in which the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church of Christ truly exists and functions. A diocese is further divided into parishes.

General Conference: The General Conference is the highest legislative body of the United Methodist Church and is composed of an equal number of clergy and lay delegates generally elected by the Annual Conferences. The General Conference convenes every four years to determine the ministry and policies of the denomination. The legislation of the General Conference constitutes the *Book of Discipline* and its pronouncements are in the *Book of Resolutions*.

Itinerancy / Itinerant System: Itinerancy grew out of John Wesley's conviction that long term pastorates were not beneficial to the preacher or the congregation. In the United Methodist Church pastors are appointed to their churches by the bishops and all ordained elders are subject to annual appointment.

Religious / Religious Communities (Catholic): "Religious Life" designates a state of life in the Catholic Church. Members of religious institutes of men or of women, in general, profess three vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. Religious institutes differ in charism and ministry, and they may be international, national or local (in a particular region or diocese).

Roman Curia: The Roman Curia assists the Pope in his ministry. The Roman Curia is composed of several offices, known in general as congregations, councils, secretariats and tribunals. It acts in the pope's name and by his authority.

Second Vatican Council / Vatican II: The Second Vatican Council, held from 1962 to 1965, was a worldwide council of all the bishops in the Catholic Church that had a

tremendous impact on the life of the church. The documents of the council re-orient Catholic understandings, to name a few, of the church, scripture, ecumenism, liturgy and the relationship of the church to the world.

“Subsists In”: “Subsists in” is a technical phrase in Catholic ecclesiology that refers to the teaching of the Second Vatican Council that the Church of Jesus Christ, from the point of its founding by Christ, has continued to exist in the Roman Catholic Church in full possession of those means of sanctification and truth necessary for the fulfillment of its mission (See *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*, no. 8). The teaching was intended to avoid an absolute identification of the Church of Christ with the Roman Catholic Church.

World Methodist Council: The World Methodist Council is an international federation that connects Methodist and Wesleyan churches by fostering mutual support and united witness. It has no legislative powers and works essentially through volunteers.