

INTERNATIONAL DISCIPLES OF CHRIST - REFORMED DIALOGUE
REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION OF A CONSULTATION BETWEEN
THE WORLD ALLIANCE OF REFORMED CHURCHES
AND
THE DISCIPLES ECUMENICAL CONSULTATIVE COUNCIL

Westminster College, London, United Kingdom, March 24-26, 2003

Reported by Rev. Hugh Davidson and Dr. Olivia Masih White

Participants:

WARC: Hugh Davidson, United Kingdom
Setri Nyomi, Switzerland/Ghana
Bishop D. K. Sahu, India
Olivia Masih White, U.S.A.

DECC: Carmelo Alvarez, U.S.A.
David Thompson, United Kingdom
Shemett Smith, Jamaica
Robert Welsh, U.S.A.

Written and oral reports from Setri and Robert were shared as part of the agenda of our meeting. The following are the highlights of our discussion:

Setri reported that WARC officers had endorsed and approved the report of the January 2002 dialogue and also approved the re-convening of this dialogue group to explore responses from each body. Since the executive committee last year was more of a pastoral visit to Indonesia, the report was received by members of the executive committee but formal action will only be taken only at the executive committee meeting in Italy in July 2003.

Robert Welsh reported that the January 14-16 2002 Report was presented to DECC during their meeting in July 2002. Olivia Masih White represented the WARC during their meeting. DECC welcomed the report and had significant discussions on it. In that July 2002 meeting DECC proposed the following wording for the first recommendation in the January 2002 meeting report:

"The goal of this relationship between WARC and DECC should now be the development of a comprehensive partnership in pursuit of the visible unity of the church".

The WARC delegation agreed with this new wording.

In reviewing the 2002 report, we discussed the preparation of brief statements from WARC and DECC on our common history. Setri and Robert will see that statements consisting of 3-4 pages from each body are prepared for the 2004 meetings of the respective bodies. WARC's 24th general council will meet in Accra, Ghana July 30 - August 13 2004 under the theme "That they may have life in fullness". The International DECC will take place on July 23-26 2004 in the Brighton, England. The tentative theme for the conference is "Building Bridges . . . of Understanding, Justice and Peace".

Robert also reported that since DECC is not a programme body, establishing a joint youth office will not be appropriate. They realized that it was merely a recommendation and not a mandate. WARC on the other hand is both

relational and programmatic.

DECC had been involved in ecumenical work through the WCC. WARC also affirmed the importance of working with the WCC where possible.

We reviewed the message from the consultation of United and Uniting Churches held in The Netherlands, September 11-19 2002 and discussed the questions raised by the churches.

We discussed the concept of "visible unity". We raised questions such as who we are? What can we do to show our visible unity? Are we called to be different? What does our comprehensive partnership mean? What does it mean to have reformed identity? How do we affirm our ecumenical identity? WARC's department of theology is responsible for such ecumenical and theological questions and can provide necessary input for these dialogues.

Since the Iraq war had started while we met, considerable time was given in discussing the situation in Iraq. We heard from Setri and Olivia about the WARC team visit to Baghdad, February 18-22 2002. Both delegations expressed dismay at this course of action by the political leaders. In the light of this we discussed the need for interfaith dialogue. Setri reported on WARC's interfaith consultation in 2002 in Jakarta, Indonesia.

WARC has sent a letter of invitation to DECC to send a delegation to Accra, Ghana to attend the 2004 general council. DECC will be doing the same for their international conference to be held in the United Kingdom.

We discussed our respective dialogues with the Roman Catholic Church. DECC just finished the third phase of their dialogue which was published in their publication *Mid-Stream*, Volume 41, No.4, October 2002. WARC's report is in the process of being completed. It was decided to study both of these documents for commonality and differences. On the basis of this we can decide together on a future course of action.

In the light of these discussions we submit the following recommendations:

1. To accept the change in wording as suggested by DECC to read as "the goal of this relationship between WARC and DECC should now be the development of comprehensive partnership in pursuit of the visible unity of the church".
2. To reaffirm the recommendation of including a brief statement on our history in the preparatory documents for WARC 24th general council in 2004 and the Disciples international conference in 2004 in the UK. These brief statements (3-4 pages) should be submitted by the end of 2003.
3. A team from each body should be invited as participating observers to each other's general council and international conference.
4. A small group of participants should be invited to study and compare the documents of each other's results from the dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church in order to identify the commonality and differences and to make recommendations for the future. This future may include cross-representation on future bilateral dialogues.
5. To support the suggestion of the 7th International Consultation of United and Uniting Churches that the Christian World Communions should reflect on questions raised by the United and Uniting Churches (IV C last paragraph) and to identify the values and burden to churches in their participation in CWCs.
6. To endorse initiation of interfaith dialogue, whenever possible, taking special care to avoid competition and repetition.
7. To encourage DECC to utilize WARC resources produced in preparation for the general council.
8. To encourage DECC to utilize WARC resources, such as the gender manual and economic justice material, and to share the information about the dialogues with the local churches.
9. To convene a follow up meeting of this dialogue group after Summer 2005.