

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2018  
REPORT OF THE ECUMENICAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE**

**APPENDIX I**

***Local, Universal and Shaped by the Mission of God: An Ecumenical Policy for the Church of Scotland: A Theological Basis***

1. Theological Identity: Three Affirmations
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3. What do we mean by 'Local' and 'Universal'?
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**1. Theological Identity: Three Affirmations**

1.1 Identity: The Church of Scotland affirms that it 'is part of the Holy Catholic or Universal Church...worshipping one God...in the Trinity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost...adoring the Father...confessing our Lord Jesus Christ, the Eternal Son...trusting in the promised renewal and guidance of the Holy Spirit...adheres to the Scottish Reformation; receives the Word of God which is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as its supreme rule of faith and life; and avows the fundamental doctrines of the Catholic faith founded thereupon.' (Article I)<sup>1</sup>

That is, the identity of the Church of Scotland is rooted in the economy of God as expressed in the life of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, which is itself rooted in the life of God as expressed in the Trinitarian nature of God. The life of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church is embodied in the life of the visible community of the people of God called into being by the Word of God and celebrating Baptism and the Lord's Supper as signifying the one covenant of grace freely offered by the Lord Jesus Christ. Further, the identity of the Church has been shaped by the historical reality of the life of the Church as a Reformed church and understands itself to be *ecclesia reformata, semper reformanda*.

1.2 Unity: The Church of Scotland affirms that it believes 'it to be the will of Christ that His disciples should be all one in the Father and in Him, that the world may believe that the Father has sent Him'. (Article VII)<sup>2</sup> This affirmation is grounded in the prayer of Jesus found in the Gospel of John and the prayer may be said to encapsulate the heart of ecumenism. Jesus prays for those who will follow in the apostolic succession:

*I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. (John 17: 20-21 (NRSV))*

The prayer of Jesus for the unity of the disciples ('that they may all be one') is in order to realise the mission of Jesus ('so that the world may believe that you have sent me'). Jesus prays for unity in order to enable that mission with unity itself understood as an expression of an integral relationship between the Father and the Son ('just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you'). The identity of the Church of Scotland, as expressed in the *Articles Declaratory*, is in this sense bound up with its understanding of what Jesus intends as he prays to the Father.

1.3 Union: The Church of Scotland affirms that it has historically been obligated since 1929 'to seek and promote union with other Churches in which it finds the Word to be purely preached, the sacraments administered according to Christ's ordinance, and discipline rightly exercised'. (Article VII)<sup>3</sup> This affirmation is grounded in the distinctively Scottish and Reformed affirmation that there are three 'notes of the true Kirk'. The three 'notes' are; 'the Word to be purely preached, the sacraments administered according to Christ's ordinance, and discipline rightly exercised'.<sup>4</sup> The extent to which the Church has recognised and fulfilled this obligation is a moot point. Equally, the historical context in which the Article was framed has changed beyond recognition. This being so, we can reasonably seek to interpret the obligation in the light of the present and future situation of the Church within contemporary Scotland.

## 2. What do we mean by 'Ecumenical'?

2.1 The use of the term 'ecumenical' to describe the work of the Church implies that there is a widely understood and accepted definition of what the term means, and that the concept of 'ecumenism' is itself comprehensively understood. However, experience suggests that this is not necessarily the case and that we might wish to ask: What do we mean by 'ecumenical'? There are 15 uses of the word *oikoumene* in the New Testament. So, for example, it is used in Matthew 24: 14, Luke 4: 5; 21: 26, Acts 17: 31, Romans 10: 18, Hebrews 1: 6 and Revelation 3: 10; 12: 9; 16: 14 in reference to "the whole world". Meanwhile, there is a connotation of "empire" with reference to the Roman Empire in Luke 2: 1 and Acts 17: 6, and a probable sharing of these connotations of "whole world" and "empire" in Acts 11: 28; 19: 27; 24: 5. In Hebrews 2: 5 the usage suggests that the present world order; the present *oikoumene*, stands in contrast to the world order that is to come; the *oikoumene mellousa*.

2.2 The term begins to acquire a connotation and significance closer to our modern usage in the Second Century AD, when *The Martyrdom of Polycarp* (c.155 AD) refers to 'the catholic church throughout the *oikoumene*' (5: 1; 8: 1; 19: 2), which may be regarded as the first linkage of the concept of *oikoumene* with that of 'the catholic church'.<sup>5</sup> That usage may be said to be formally incorporated within the conciliar language of the Catholic church in the reference within the Canons of the Council of Constantinople (381 AD) to an 'ecumenical synod'. (Canon 6) At this point, Visser 't' Hooft suggests that 'the word "ecumenical" acquires the special connotation of that which is accepted as authoritative and valid throughout the whole Church'.<sup>6</sup> In so doing, he references the 'ecumenical councils' which are considered to embody the authoritative teaching of the Church. The Orthodox and Catholic traditions of the Church receive seven councils (325-787 AD) as being ecumenical and thus authoritative, with the Catholic tradition recognising a further series of general councils thereafter.<sup>7</sup> Within the Reformed tradition, Calvin affirms that we receive Nicea, Constantinople, Ephesus and Chalcedon (325, 381, 431 and 451 AD respectively).<sup>8</sup> A further development in connotation occurs within the Lutheran communion when the *Formula of Concord* (1577, Latin edition) designates the Creeds of the Church (Apostles', Nicene and Athanasian) as: *Tria symbola catholica et oecumenica*.<sup>9</sup> Thus, the Creeds are designated and understood as 'ecumenical' in significance.

2.3 These developments in the connotation and significance of the term 'ecumenical' may be said to have led to it acquiring a range of complementary meanings; *catholicity*, *conciliar* and *creedal*, with the core underlying sense of reference to "the whole world".

2.4 With respect to the significance of the term within the modern ecumenical movement, and its particular association with institutional ecumenism, we can point to a range of initiatives in the period immediately prior to and immediately following the First World War. In the first instance, we may highlight the World Missionary Conference held in Edinburgh in 1910 and note that it is understood as marking 'the symbolic starting point of the modern ecumenical movement', albeit that 'there were no Roman Catholic or Orthodox delegates present'.<sup>10</sup> We shall return to our understanding of 'mission' in due course and note that in a very real sense the model offered by Edinburgh 1910 has served as the essential basis for conceiving the pattern of the assemblies and councils of international ecumenical bodies since then.

2.5 Thereafter, and following the cessation of War, we may discern an existential urgency in addressing the collapse of normative understandings of social and political order, particularly to the extent that the pre-War social and political order was understood to have been founded on a normative Christian basis with the Church Universal understood as embodying that norm.

2.6 Thus, alongside Edinburgh 1910 and the missionary concern which animated it, the 20<sup>th</sup> Century ecumenical movement can be understood as developing out of two further distinctive strands: "Life and Work" and "Faith and Order", which then came together in the formation of the World Council of Churches in 1948.<sup>11</sup> The "Life and Work" strand may be said to have begun to self-consciously understand its work as 'ecumenical' from at least 1925 onwards with the Life and Work Conference in Stockholm of that year speaking of its work as '*communio in serviendo ecumenica*'; an ecumenical communion in service to the Life and Work of the Church.<sup>12</sup> Equally, this understanding begins to be replicated in the Faith and Order Conference in Lausanne in 1927.<sup>13</sup> Further to this, Visser 't' Hooft suggests that the Oxford Life and Work Conference of 1937 'did much to give the word wider currency and to establish its wider and more substantial meaning'.<sup>14</sup> The Report of the Conference states:

*The term “oecumenical” refers to the expression within history of the given unity of the Church...The thought and action of the Church are...oecumenical, in so far as they attempt to realize the Una Sancta, the fellowship of Christians, who acknowledge the one Lord.*<sup>15</sup>

Visser t’ Hooft suggests that:

*From that time on the term has been used in both the traditional sense of “concerning the Church as a whole”, and in the modern sense of “concerning the relationship of different Churches” and “expressing the consciousness of the wholeness of the Church”.*<sup>16</sup>

2.7 The coalescing of these senses of the term may be said to be embodied in the various publications associated with the first Assembly of the World Council of Churches which was held in Amsterdam, Holland in August/September 1948.<sup>17</sup> The ecumenical usage and template now embodied, subject to evolution and development, may be said to provide the essential parameters within which institutional ecumenism is to be understood. To that extent, the term ‘ecumenical’ may be said to have acquired a further connotation and significance, such that ‘ecumenical’ is widely, and often, primarily, understood as referring to *institutional* bodies whose goal is the enabling of the call to ‘visible unity’.

The Constitution of the World Council of Churches states:

*The World Council of Churches is a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the scriptures and therefore seek to fulfil together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit...The primary purpose of the fellowship of churches in the World Council of Churches is to call one another to visible unity in one faith and in one Eucharistic fellowship, expressed in worship and common life in Christ, through witness and service to the world, and to advance towards that unity in order that the world may believe.*<sup>18</sup>

2.8 Equally, that model, evolved and developed and adjusted to scale and context, has, in essence, provided the template for the range of institutional bodies that the Church of Scotland has become a member of: Action of Churches Together in Scotland (ACTS); Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI); Churches Together in England (CTE); the Conference of European Churches (CEC); the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE), and; the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC).

2.9 Within the Scottish, and the wider British and Irish, context, the Swanwick Declaration issued on 4 September 1987,<sup>19</sup> and the consequent document: *Churches Together in Pilgrimage* published in 1989,<sup>20</sup> may be said to represent that adjustment to scale and context and to provide the template for the ecumenical bodies that the Church of Scotland primarily relates to within Scotland and the British Isles: ACTS<sup>21</sup> and CTBI,<sup>22</sup> with these bodies coming into being on the basis of the template on 1 September 1990. The “Churches Together Model” has effectively shaped the Church of Scotland’s ecumenical engagement since 1990 and explicitly forms the basis of the Ecumenical Policy of the Church adopted by the General Assembly in 2005, with a commitment to ACTS being an integral part of that Policy.<sup>23</sup> Within that timeframe, it will be recalled that the period 1996-2003 saw the development of the Scottish Churches Initiative for Union (SCIFU) and that the proposals for union as developed within SCIFU were not adopted by the General Assembly in 2003.<sup>24</sup> As noted, the “Churches Together Model” was endorsed by the General Assembly in 2005 and, in the period since then, it would be reasonable to suggest that the Church has understood its ‘ecumenical’ commitments primarily in terms of its relationship to institutional bodies.

2.10 As noted, the reception of the review of ACTS is ongoing with the outcome to be determined by a process of interaction between the nine Member Churches: Church of Scotland; Congregational Federation; Methodist Church in Scotland; Religious Society of Friends (Quakers); Roman Catholic Church; Salvation Army; Scottish Episcopal Church; United Free Church of Scotland, and; United Reformed Church. Equally, it should be observed that the present membership of ACTS is constituted by what may be regarded as a relatively limited range of church life within our nation and that it does not include churches from the Orthodox, Pentecostal or Baptist traditions amongst others. Further, it does not include a number of churches within the wider Scottish Reformed community.

2.11 In summing up our reflection upon: ‘What do we mean by ‘Ecumenical’?’, we note that the term has itself developed and acquired particular connotations over time. Equally, we should not foreclose our

minds to the thought that it might be subject to further evolution and development in the light of the contemporary situation of the church in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Insofar as any such evolution and development does occur, integral to it must be the sense that it better enables us to comprehend the unity which Jesus prays for in John 17: 20-21 and, within the Scottish context, to understand our identity as part of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.

### 3. What do we mean by 'Local' and 'Universal'?

3.1 In speaking of the 'local' church, we assume that the reference is immediately and univocally understood to refer to a particular sort of community located in a particular place. Indeed, within the Church of Scotland we understand our distinctive vocation in terms which are founded on a conception of what it is to be located in a particular place and to exercise a particular form of ministry. Article III of the *Articles Declaratory* states:

*As a national Church representative of the Christian Faith of the Scottish people it acknowledges its distinctive call and duty to bring the ordinances of religion to the people in every parish of Scotland through a territorial ministry.*<sup>25</sup>

That is, the Church understands its calling to be one in which we exercise a ministry in particular localities ordered according to a parochial, or local, pattern.

3.2 What then is the relation of the local and parochial to the life of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church? *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* (TCV) devotes considerable attention to this relationship and does so within the context of the affirmation that:

*The Church is fundamentally a communion in the Triune God and, at the same time, a communion whose members partake together in the life and mission of God (cf 2 Pet. 1:4), who, as Trinity, is the source and focus of all communion.*<sup>26</sup>

3.3 Essentially, TCV resources our understanding of the 'local' church as a relational body within the communion of the universal Church. At the most basic conceptual level it states:

*[T]he local church is simply the congregation of believers gathered in one place to hear the Word and celebrate the Sacraments.*<sup>27</sup>

3.4 With that basic conceptual understanding, the local community of the Church is understood to be a place where:

*Every Christian receives gifts of the Holy Spirit for the upbuilding of the Church and for his or her part in the mission of Christ. These gifts are given for the common good (cf. 1 Cor. 12:7; Eph. 4:11-13) and place obligations of responsibility and mutual accountability on every individual and local community and on the Church as a whole at every level of its life.*<sup>28</sup>

3.5 That is, each member of the Church of Jesus Christ is gifted for service of the mission of Christ in the context of the local community to which they are called with that community standing in relationship to the Church conceived universally. With respect to the mission exercised by the Church, it states:

*The Gospel needs to be proclaimed in languages, symbols and images that are relevant to particular times and contexts so as to be lived authentically in each time and place.*<sup>29</sup>

3.6 That is, the Gospel is seen to be authentic precisely because it is contextualised in particular localities and cultures. However, such contextualisation should not lead to a situation in which one particular form of the authentic articulation of the Gospel is imposed in another cultural context. Thus, a 'legitimate diversity' with respect to cultural forms of expression must be recognised.

3.7 In seeking to hold this insight in a dynamic and creative tension, TCV states:

*At the same time, unity must not be surrendered. Through shared faith in Christ, expressed in the proclamation of the Word, the celebration of the sacraments and lives of service and witness, each local church is in communion with the local churches of all places and all times.*<sup>30</sup>

3.8 To this point, TCV has essentially affirmed the place of the 'local' and stated that it stands in a relation of communion to other local communities. How then does it more fully state the nature of that relationship? That is: 'What is the relationship of the 'local' to the 'universal'?

3.9 In seeking to develop its understanding of the 'communion of local churches', we recall the basic conceptual insight that the 'local church is simply the congregation of believers gathered in one place to hear the Word and celebrate the Sacraments', and hear TCV when it affirms:

*The ecclesiology of communion provides a helpful framework for considering the relation between the local church and the universal Church...Culture, language and shared history all enter into the very fabric of the local church. At the same time, the Christian community in each place shares with all the other local communities all that is essential to the life of communion. Each local church contains within it the fullness of what it is to be the Church.*<sup>31</sup>

3.10 In so affirming, we may hear an echo of the *Scots Confession* where it affirms that it is in the 'the true Kirk' that 'the Word...be purely preached [and] the sacraments administered according to Christ's ordinance'.<sup>32</sup> That is, the local 'Kirk' is the place in which 'the congregation of believers gathered in one place to hear the Word and celebrate the Sacraments'. Equally, we further hear the *Scots Confession* when it confesses:

*This Kirk is Catholic, that is, universal, because it contains the chosen of all ages, of all realms, nations, and tongues... who have communion and society with God the Father, and with His Son, Christ Jesus, through the sanctification of His Holy Spirit.*<sup>33</sup>

Equally, it affirms:

*It is therefore called the communion... of saints, who, as citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem, have the fruit of inestimable benefits, one God, one Lord Jesus, one faith, and one baptism.*<sup>34</sup>

3.11 What then of the relationship of the 'local' to the 'universal' within the life of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church?<sup>35</sup> In seeking to maintain the dynamic and creative tension between the 'local' and the 'universal', TCV says of the 'local' (and necessarily, of the 'universal'):

*It is wholly Church, but not the whole Church. Thus, the local church should not be seen in isolation from but in dynamic relation with other local churches. From the beginning communion was maintained between local churches by collections, exchanges of letters, visits, eucharistic hospitality and tangible expressions of solidarity (cf. 1 Cor. 16; 2 Cor. 8:1-9; Gal. 2:1-10). From time to time, during the first centuries, local churches assembled to take counsel together. All of these were ways of nurturing interdependence and maintaining communion. This communion of local churches is thus not an optional extra. The universal Church is the communion of all local churches united in faith and worship around the world. It is not merely the sum, federation or juxtaposition of local churches, but all of them together are the same Church present and acting in this world.*<sup>36</sup>

3.12 The dynamic and creative tension between the 'local' church and the 'universal' church is the relationship through which the 'universal' is realised in the particularity of the 'local' and the 'local' embodies the 'universal'. This theological insight echoes the biblical insight:

*For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. (1 Corinthians 12: 12-13 NRSV)*

3.13 In seeking to summarise an understanding of the 'relationship between local and universal Church' shared by many churches, TCV states:

*They share the understanding that the presence of Christ, by the will of the Father and the power of the Spirit, is truly manifested in the local church (it is "wholly Church"), and that this very presence of Christ impels the local church to be in communion with the universal Church (it is not "the whole Church").*<sup>37</sup>

3.14 Within this vision of the local church, each 'local' church in Scotland is the place in which 'the congregation of believers gathered in one place to hear the Word and celebrate the Sacraments'. In that place, the 'local' church is to live out its vocation in mission, worship and pastoral care and in so doing to represent Jesus Christ through the life of the Spirit.<sup>38</sup> That is, within the 'local' church, the prophetic, priestly and royal ministry of Christ is to be lived out by 'the whole people of God'. The calling of 'the whole people of God' is rooted in the covenant of God initiated in God's choice of Israel, and in the covenant renewed by God 'in the ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus and the sending of the Holy Spirit'. (Romans 11: 11-36)<sup>39</sup>

#### **4. What do we mean by 'Shaped by the Mission of God'?**

4.1 We have already referenced the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh 1910 as 'the symbolic starting point of the modern ecumenical movement', and in so doing we highlight the fact that, in the first instance, modern ecumenism was initially shaped in the context of a concern for mission. However, if the term 'ecumenical' has at times been less than comprehensively understood, the terms 'mission', and its more recently conceived and expressed relation 'mission-shaped', might reasonably be said to have been comprehensively over-used. If so, we might ask: What do we mean by 'mission'?

*Together Towards Life* (TTL) begins by affirming:

*We believe in the Triune God who is the creator, redeemer, and sustainer of all life. God created the whole oikoumene in God's image and constantly works in the world to affirm and safeguard life. We believe in Jesus Christ, the Life of the world, the incarnation of God's love for the world (John 3:16).<sup>1</sup> Affirming life in all its fullness is Jesus Christ's ultimate concern and mission (John 10:10). We believe in God, the Holy Spirit, the Life-giver, who sustains and empowers life and renews the whole creation (Gen. 2:7; John 3:8).<sup>40</sup>*

4.2 Having affirmed the relationship of the Triune God to 'the whole oikoumene' created in God's image, TTL then states:

*Mission begins in the heart of the Triune God and the love which binds together the Holy Trinity overflows to all humanity and creation. The missionary God who sent the Son to the world calls all God's people (John 20:21), and empowers them to be a community of hope. The church is commissioned to celebrate life, and to resist and transform all life-destroying forces, in the power of the Holy Spirit. How important it is to "receive the Holy Spirit" (John 20:22) to become living witnesses to the coming reign of God!<sup>41</sup>*

4.3 Given this Trinitarian basis for conceiving the nature of the mission, understood in the first instance as the mission of God, TTL asks:

*From a renewed appreciation of the mission of the Spirit, how do we re-envision God's mission in a changing and diverse world today?<sup>42</sup>*

It answers:

*Life in the Holy Spirit is the essence of mission, the core of why we do what we do and how we live our lives. Spirituality gives the deepest meaning to our lives and motivates our actions. It is a sacred gift from the Creator, the energy for affirming and caring for life. This mission spirituality has a dynamic of transformation which, through the spiritual commitment of people, is capable of transforming the world in God's grace.<sup>43</sup>*

4.4 How can we reclaim mission as a transformative spirituality which is life-affirming?

*God did not send the Son for the salvation of humanity alone or give us a partial salvation. Rather the gospel is the good news for every part of creation and every aspect of our life and society. It is therefore vital to recognize God's mission in a cosmic sense and to affirm all life, the whole oikoumene, as being interconnected in God's web of life.<sup>44</sup>*

4.5 In summary, we may say that within this framework 'mission' is conceived, in the first instance, as: Trinitarian, relational and concerned for the creation as a whole and for our integral part within it. Equally, if

this constitutes the framework for our understanding of 'mission': What inspires our vision of 'mission'? Within TTL, the answer is supplied in the concept of the *missio Dei*, the mission of God.<sup>45</sup> The concept is one that has come to be regarded as axiomatic for our understanding of the nature of mission.<sup>46</sup> Further, we note that it essentially originates within the context of the international missionary movement and, in particular, at the International Missionary Council conference at Willingen, Germany in 1952 where the concept of the *missio Dei* was essentially conceptualised. Thus:

*Willingen is rightly considered as one of the conferences that have had the most lasting influence on ecumenical mission theology.*<sup>47</sup>

4.6 This is so insofar as it resulted in a paradigmatic shift in the work of the international missionary movement; from *missio Ecclesiae* (the mission of the Church) as the primary focus towards a conception of *missio Dei* (the mission of God).<sup>48</sup> The Trinitarian nature of the *missio Dei* concept of mission is stated thus:

*The missionary movement of which we are a part has its source in the Triune God Himself. Out of depth of God's love for us, the Father has sent forth his own beloved Son to reconcile all things to himself, that we and all men might, through the Spirit, be made one in Him with the Father in that perfect love which is the very nature of God.*<sup>49</sup>

4.7 As said, the concept of *missio Dei* has become axiomatic for our understanding as it has evolved and developed in the years since its conception and may be said to offer a paradigm and a common foundation within which we can understand the nature of 'mission'.

4.8 At this point we ought to ask: What then of the relationship of the Church to the *missio Dei*? Before we do so we ought to acknowledge the extent to which the centre of gravity has shifted within world Christianity and that the experience of the Church with respect to mission is one of profound change and is often very different in the non-Western world. One dimension of that profound change is what has been called a "post-Western Christian awakening".<sup>50</sup> Wesley Granberg-Michaelson suggests that:

*Patterns of Christian vitality and witness are shifting in breath-taking ways that are reshaping the globe's religious landscape, and Christianity today seems divided in new ways. On the one hand are those churches, largely in the North, and rooted in the heritage of the East and the West, which have a deep sense of the historic Christian Tradition, and an ecumenical commitment to what the Nicene Creed names as "the one holy catholic and apostolic Church". But these churches find themselves struggling to maintain a resonant and vital witness amidst their modern, or post-modern cultures.*<sup>51</sup>

Granberg-Michaelson continues:

*On the other hand are those churches, located largely in the South (but moving through migration into the global North) which exhibit a vital, even explosive spiritual power, and are propelling a Christian resurgence within their societies and regions of the world.*<sup>52</sup>

4.9 Thereafter, he suggests that this shift is not only 'geographical' in nature 'but also confessional' and notes the growth in modern Pentecostalism as a pervasive phenomenon within global Christianity alongside a re-shaping of the identity of the 'Evangelical community' as it shares in the spiritual renewal predominantly located in the global South.<sup>53</sup> Within 'the global South', 'context shapes a witness that is becoming more holistic, integrating personal evangelism and social justice'.<sup>54</sup> Meanwhile, the churches whose origins lie in the global North and are associated with the Anglican, Orthodox and Protestant traditions, as well as the Roman Catholic Church, and which embody the constituent membership of the World Council of Churches, stand in a relationship to the churches of the global South which is not yet fully articulated. Where these traditions are represented in the global South, they may share in the spiritual renewal being experienced but Granberg-Michaelson contends that:

*[T]he movements of fresh vitality and growth that are shaping the future of global Christianity are largely isolated from the structures of the present ecumenical movement, to the impoverishment of both.*<sup>55</sup>

4.10 In response to this shift in the centre of gravity of Christianity in global terms and to the realignment in theological and confessional terms, there has been the recognition of the need for the creation of a “new space”...to draw those representing the diversity of world Christianity together’ and this has potentially been realised in the creation of the Global Christian Forum (GCF).<sup>56</sup> Following a period of eight years preparation, the GCF met in Limuru, Kenya in November 2007 and has been described ‘as a watershed in modern Christian history’.<sup>57</sup> The genesis and development of the GCF is helpfully set out by Huibert van Beek who scopes the development of three movements within global Christianity: Ecumenical, Evangelical and Pentecostal, during the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. He suggests that:

*The Ecumenical, Evangelical and Pentecostal movements are contemporary with one another...and yet: the Ecumenical movement on the one hand, and the Evangelical – Pentecostal – Charismatic movements on the other, have taken their courses separately and away from each other, largely ignoring each other and sometimes opposing and rejecting one another.*<sup>58</sup>

4.11 van Beek suggests that it is within this context that the GCF has emerged at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and, whilst acknowledging that the GCF model is ‘tentative, provisional and fragile’ suggests that it has created ‘a space where the whole Christian family can gather for the sake of unity and common witness’.<sup>59</sup>

4.12 With this important perspective informing our understanding of the broader experience of mission, let us now ask: What then of the relationship of the Church to the *missio Dei*? TCV states:

*The Christian understanding of the Church and its mission is rooted in the vision of God’s great design (or “economy”) for all creation: the “kingdom” which was both promised by and manifested in Jesus Christ.*<sup>60</sup>

4.13 That, is our understanding of the nature of the Church is rooted in our conception of the *missio Dei*, such that the vision of the Kingdom of God animates and informs that understanding. TCV Continues:

*According to the Bible, man and woman were created in God’s image (cf. Gen. 1:26-27), so bearing an inherent capacity for communion (in Greek *koinonia*) with God and with one another. God’s purpose in creation was thwarted by human sin and disobedience (cf. Gen. 3-4; Rom. 1:18-3:20), which damaged the relationship between God, human beings and the created order. But God persisted in faithfulness despite human sin and error. The dynamic history of God’s restoration of *koinonia* found its irreversible achievement in the incarnation and paschal mystery of Jesus Christ. The Church, as the body of Christ, acts by the power of the Holy Spirit to continue his life-giving mission in prophetic and compassionate ministry and so participates in God’s work of healing a broken world.*<sup>61</sup>

4.14 In this conception of the nature of mission, the Scriptural narrative sets out the intention of God; to create a relationship of communion with those created in the image of God and to do so within the context of the created order. Scripture narrates the faithfulness of God to this intention as revealed through Jesus Christ and ever-renewed by the Holy Spirit. That work of renewal sustains the Church in its ministry and enables it to live out its vocation in mission, worship and pastoral care and, in so doing, to represent Jesus Christ through the life of the Spirit. TCV affirms the thrust of the Scriptural narrative in stating:

*The Holy Spirit came upon the disciples on the morning of Pentecost for the purpose of equipping them to begin the mission entrusted to them (cf. Acts 2:1-41). God’s plan to save the world...*missio Dei*...“the mission of God”...is carried out through the sending of the Son and the Holy Spirit.*<sup>62</sup>

4.15 In essence then, the *missio dei* is expressed within the context of the Scriptural narrative and the Church is located within that as the sphere in which Jesus Christ is embodied and the Holy Spirit gives life to the community remade in the image of God.<sup>63</sup>

4.16 In having set out a narrative account of how we might understand the nature of mission, we might reasonably wish to ask: How do we root such an understanding of ‘mission’ in the context of the ‘local’? One particular approach which has been influential within the Church has been that which has evolved and



developed out of the publication of *Mission-shaped Church* in 2004.<sup>64</sup> Albeit, that the insights presented in *Mission-shaped Church* developed within the context of the mission of the Church of England and the wider Anglican Communion, they have commended themselves to a wider community of interest. At the core of the approach lies the “Five Marks of Mission” which has been commended by and throughout the Anglican Communion.<sup>65</sup> Equally, *Mission-shaped Church* may be said to have provided the catalyst for the “Fresh Expressions” initiative.<sup>66</sup>

The Five Marks of Mission are:

1. To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
2. To teach, baptise and nurture new believers
3. To respond to human need by loving service
4. To transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation
5. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth<sup>67</sup>

4.17 In seeking to place the Marks within the context of the understanding of ‘mission’ and the *missio Dei* developed with reference to *Together Towards Life* and *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*, we see that the opening emphasis on the proclamation of the Kingdom coheres well with the vision of the mission of God focused on the nurturing and discipling of Christian believers within the context of the exercise of a pastoral and prophetic understanding of the Church’s vocation. The integration of the theological basis provided by the concept of the *missio Dei* with the practice of mission in the context of the Church of Scotland and within the broader context of the church within Scotland is a subject surely worthy of further reflection.

4.18 Equally, in reflecting upon the “post-Western Christian awakening” previously alluded to, we note that it is within this context that there has been an evolution and development in the conception of how churches might more effectively relate to one another and specifically so in a context shaped by mission. That context may be said to have been provided by the Global Christian Forum. To the extent that a “post-Western Christian awakening” is taking place and that the GCF is an authentic response to a shift in the centre of gravity and to the realignment in theological and confessional terms of the various traditions within Christianity, we might expect to be able to discern an emerging consensus with respect to the form in which the traditions express their understanding of unity and mission. This would potentially be so insofar as it is the case that ‘context shapes a witness that is becoming more holistic, integrating personal evangelism and social justice’. It is too early to suggest that an agreed consensus on ‘form’ has emerged within the churches in Scotland.<sup>68</sup>

However, insofar as shared context shapes our witness and that we affirm that this ‘witness’ ought to be characterised as holistic and integrative, we might wish to reflect on whether our present context requires us to reconceive our understanding of the model of churches-in-relation most consonant with that context. The “Forum Model” has not yet been conceived within the Scottish context. Equally, the Church of Scotland ought not to conceive of how such a model might be characterised and understood in isolation from our partner churches within Scotland. Nevertheless, in concluding our reflection on ‘What do we mean by ‘Mission’?’, we might reasonably ask if the vocation of the Church is to invite our partners to consider with us how we might better serve the mission of God in the local contexts in which we embody and express the universal vision of the One, Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church.

## 5. Conclusion

5.1 *Local, Universal and Shaped by the Mission of God: An Ecumenical Policy for the Church of Scotland* has sought to place an ecumenical understanding of the work of the Church at the heart of the Church’s self-understanding. To repeat; it is concerned for the very self-understanding of the Church in its local and universal expressions complemented by its self-understanding in relation to the mission of God.

5.2 To that extent, it is conceived in the first instance as a basis for reflection on the nature of the Church rather than as a programmatic statement of strategy or a framework for re-ordering the parishes, presbyteries, Councils and Committees of the Church of Scotland. Nevertheless, were it to fail to raise questions with respect to the latter then it might be judged to have failed in its purpose insofar as reflection on the nature of the Church ought always to raise questions in relation to the life of the Church.

5.3 The pattern of relationships with the various ecumenical bodies to which the Church of Scotland relates cannot exhaust the extent of the Church's 'ecumenical' vision. Nor does the pattern of relationships between the various churches in Scotland, conceived as static and permanently fixed, constitute a sufficient basis for understanding the future vocation and calling of the Church. Rather, *Local, Universal and Shaped by the Mission of God: An Ecumenical Policy for the Church of Scotland* is offered in the light of a concern for the self-understanding of the Church in its local and universal expressions and seeks to complement that self-understanding by placing the Church in its proper relationship to the mission of God. To the extent that it enriches that self-understanding it will have articulated a basis for the Ecumenical Policy of the Church of Scotland.

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/about\\_us/church\\_law/church\\_constitution](http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/about_us/church_law/church_constitution)

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/about\\_us/church\\_law/church\\_constitution](http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/about_us/church_law/church_constitution)

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/about\\_us/church\\_law/church\\_constitution](http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/about_us/church_law/church_constitution)

<sup>4</sup> *Scots Confession*, XVIII, XXV.

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.earlychurchtexts.com/main/polycarp/01\\_martyrdom\\_of\\_polycarp\\_01.shtml](http://www.earlychurchtexts.com/main/polycarp/01_martyrdom_of_polycarp_01.shtml)

<sup>6</sup> Visser t' Hooft, W A, "The Word "Ecumenical" – Its History and Use", in; Rouse, R & Neil, S C (ed), *A History of the Ecumenical Movement I: 1517-1948* (4<sup>th</sup> ed) (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1993), 735-740, 736.

<sup>7</sup> Visser t' Hooft, W A, "The Word "Ecumenical" – Its History and Use", 736-737.

<sup>8</sup> Bouwen, F, "Ecumenical Councils", in; Lossky, N *et al*, (ed) *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed) (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 2002), 373-376, 375. See John Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.9.8.

<sup>9</sup> Visser t' Hooft, W A, "The Word "Ecumenical" – Its History and Use", 737.

<sup>10</sup> Keum, J, "Beyond Dichotomy: Towards a Convergence between the Ecumenical and Evangelical Understanding of Mission in Changing Landscapes", in; Dahle, L *et al*, *The Lausanne Movement: A Range of Perspectives* (Oxford: Regnum, 2014), 383-398, 385-386. The significance of Edinburgh 1910 has been much analysed, in particular; at the Edinburgh 2010 conference to mark the centenary of the former, with the latter seeking to renew missional understanding for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century with the "Edinburgh 2010 Common Call". Kerr, D A & Ross, K R, (ed's) *Edinburgh 2010: Mission Then and Now* (Oxford: Regnum 2009), 233-303, provides an indispensable analysis of "Commission Eight: Cooperation and the Promotion of Unity" of the World Missionary Conference held in Edinburgh in 1910 from Ecumenical, Evangelical, Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Pentecostal perspectives. See also; "Edinburgh 2010 Common Call", 2. On this theme at Edinburgh 2010, see [Jackson, D] (ed), "Mission and Unity – Ecclesiology and Mission", in Kim, K, & Anderson, A, (ed's), *Edinburgh 2010: Mission Today and Tomorrow*, 174-182. On the 'paradigms of mission' underlying Edinburgh 2010 and the "Common Call", see; Kim, K, "Mission in the Twenty-First Century", in Kim, K, & Anderson, A, (ed's), *Edinburgh 2010: Mission Today and Tomorrow*, 351-364.

<sup>11</sup> Braaten, C E & Jenson, R W, *In One Body through the Cross* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B Eerdmans, 2003), 18-26.

<sup>12</sup> G A K Bell (ed), *The Stockholm Conference 1925* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1926), 17.

<sup>13</sup> H N Bate (ed), *Faith and Order: Lausanne 1927* (London: SCM, 1927), 321.

<sup>14</sup> Visser t' Hooft, W A, "The Word "Ecumenical" – Its History and Use", 740.

<sup>15</sup> Oldham, J H (ed), *The Churches Survey Their Task* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1937), 168-169.

<sup>16</sup> Visser t' Hooft, W A, "The Word "Ecumenical" – Its History and Use", 740.

<sup>17</sup> *The Universal Church in God's Design: An Ecumenical Study; The Church's Witness to God's Design: An Ecumenical Study; The Church and the Disorder of Society: An Ecumenical Study*, and; *The Church and the International Disorder: An Ecumenical Study* (All: London: SCM Press, 1948). See also; Visser t' Hooft, W A, *The First Assembly of the World Council of Churches: The Official Report* (London: SCM Press, 1949).

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/assembly/2013-busan/adopted-documents-statements/wcc-constitution-and-rules>

<sup>19</sup> <https://ctbi.org.uk/swanwick-declaration/>

<sup>20</sup> British Council of Churches, *The Next Steps for churches Together in Pilgrimage* (London: BCC, 1989).

<https://ctbi.org.uk/books/churches-together-in-pilgrimage-pdf/>

<sup>21</sup> British Council of Churches, *The Next Steps for churches Together in Pilgrimage*, 49-59.

<sup>22</sup> British Council of Churches, *The Next Steps for churches Together in Pilgrimage*, 79-101.

<sup>23</sup> *Reports to the General Assembly 2005*, 26/13-26/29.

<sup>24</sup> See *Reports to the General Assembly 1998*, 23/14-23/30; *Reports to the General Assembly 2000*, 26/13-26/39, and, *Reports to the General Assembly 2003*, 27/8-27/32.

<sup>25</sup> [http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/about\\_us/church\\_law/church\\_constitution](http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/about_us/church_law/church_constitution)

<sup>26</sup> World Council of Churches, *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* (Geneva: WCC, 2013), 14 (s.23).

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<https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/commissions/faith-and-order/i-unity-the-church-and-its-mission/the-church-towards-a-common-vision>

<sup>27</sup> World Council of Churches, *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*, 18 (s.32).

<sup>28</sup> World Council of Churches, *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*, 12 (s.19).

<sup>29</sup> World Council of Churches, *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*, 16 (s.28).

<sup>30</sup> World Council of Churches, *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*, 16 (s.29).

<sup>31</sup> World Council of Churches, *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*, 17-18 (s.31).

<sup>32</sup> *Scots Confession*, XVIII, XXV.

<sup>33</sup> *Scots Confession*, XVI.

<sup>34</sup> *Scots Confession*, XVI.

<sup>35</sup> World Council of Churches, *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*, 13-14 (s.22).

<sup>36</sup> World Council of Churches, *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*, 18 (s.31).

<sup>37</sup> World Council of Churches, *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*, 18-19.

<sup>38</sup> Wotherspoon, H J & Kirkpatrick, J M, *A Manual of Church Doctrine according to the Church of Scotland* (Rev. Ed.) (London: OUP, 1960), 4-6).

<sup>39</sup> World Council of Churches, *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*, 11-12 (ss.17-19). S.17 states: 'In the call of Abraham, God was choosing for himself a holy people. The prophets frequently recalled this election and vocation in the following powerful formulation: "I will be their God, and they shall be my people" (Jer. 31:33; Ezek. 37:27; echoed in 2 Cor. 6:16; Heb. 8:10). The covenant with Israel marked a decisive moment in the unfolding realization of the plan of salvation.'

<sup>40</sup> World Council of Churches, *Together Towards Life* (Geneva: WCC, 2013), 4 (s.1). We note also the publication of *The Cape Town Commitment: A Confession of Faith and a Call to Action* (2011) (<https://www.lausanne.org/content/ctc/ctcommitment>) and, His Holiness Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* (Vatican City, 2013) and the suggestion that these three mission statements represent a consensus in mission thinking across the theological spectrum. On this theme, see; *International Review of Mission* 104.2 (401) (November 2015), *passim*. See; Keum, J, "Beyond Dichotomy: Towards a Convergence between the Ecumenical and Evangelical Understanding of Mission in Changing Landscapes", in Dahle, L *et al*, *The Lausanne Movement: A Range of Perspectives*, 383-398, 384. Engelsviken, T, "The Role of the Lausanne Movement in Modern Christian Mission", in Dahle, L *et al*, *The Lausanne Movement: A Range of Perspectives*, 26-44, 29-34, gives a complementary account of the historical period covered by Keum.

<sup>41</sup> World Council of Churches, *Together Towards Life*, 4 (s.2).

<sup>42</sup> World Council of Churches, *Together Towards Life*, 4 (s.2).

<sup>43</sup> World Council of Churches, *Together Towards Life*, 4-5, (s.3)

<sup>44</sup> World Council of Churches, *Together Towards Life*, 5, (s.4).

<sup>45</sup> World Council of Churches, *Together Towards Life*, 7 (s.11).

<sup>46</sup> Keum, J, "Beyond Dichotomy: Towards a Convergence between the Ecumenical and Evangelical Understanding of Mission in Changing Landscapes", 398, states: 'First, *missio Dei* is a common foundation of mission. Nowadays, whether evangelical or ecumenical, whether mission thinker or practitioner, almost every mission actor and school has accepted the notion of *missio Dei* as their theological basis of mission.'

<sup>47</sup> Keum, J, "Beyond Dichotomy: Towards a Convergence between the Ecumenical and Evangelical Understanding of Mission in Changing Landscapes", 387.

<sup>48</sup> Keum, J., "Beyond Dichotomy: Towards a Convergence between the Ecumenical and Evangelical Understanding of Mission in Changing Landscapes", 387-388.

<sup>49</sup> International Missionary Council, *Willigen 1952: The Missionary Obligation of the Church* (London: Edinburgh House Press, 1953), 2. It should be noted that the reference to *missio Dei* is primarily with respect to the origin of the concept and not to its subsequent reconfiguration. On the latter, see Bosch, D J, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in the Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991).

<sup>50</sup> Granberg-Michaelson, W, "Foreword", in: van Beek, H, (ed.), *Revisioning Christian Unity* (Oxford: Regnum, 2009), vii-ix, vii.

<sup>51</sup> Granberg-Michaelson, W, "Foreword", vii.

<sup>52</sup> Granberg-Michaelson, W, "Foreword", vii.

<sup>53</sup> Granberg-Michaelson, W, "Foreword", vii.

<sup>54</sup> Granberg-Michaelson, W, "Foreword", vii-viii.

<sup>55</sup> Granberg-Michaelson, W, "Foreword", viii.

<sup>56</sup> <http://www.globalchristianforum.org/index.html>

<sup>57</sup> <http://www.globalchristianforum.org/what-we-do.html>

<sup>58</sup> van Beek, "Introduction", in; van Beek, H, (ed), *Revisioning Christian Unity*, xiv-xx, xv.

<sup>59</sup> Van Beek, "Introduction", xvi. A 'narrative history' of the genesis and development of the GCF is given in; Rowland Jones, S, "The Global Christian Forum – A Narrative History", in van Beek, H, (ed), *Revisioning Christian Unity*, 3-36. In turn; GCF Committee, *Our Unfolding Journey With Jesus Christ: Reflections on the Global Christian Forum Experience* (GCF, 2013) sets out an undergirding theological rationale for the GCF.

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<sup>60</sup> World Council of Churches, *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*, 5 (s.1).

<sup>61</sup> World Council of Churches, *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*, 5 (s.1).

<sup>62</sup> World Council of Churches, *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*, 6 (s.3).

<sup>63</sup> The opening sections of TTL (ss.1-11) develop this understanding of the *missio Dei*, and thereafter s.11 sets out a programmatic statement of the narrative to follow with respect to 'understanding the mission of the Holy Spirit within the mission of the Triune God (*missio Dei*)'. The focus is on 'the Holy Spirit within the mission of the Triune God' is reflected in the four key themes which follow on from ss.1-11, namely: 1) Spirit of Mission: Breath of Life [ss.12-35]; 2) Spirit of Liberation: Mission from the Margins [ss.36-54]; 3) Spirit of Community: Church on the Move [ss.55-79], and; 4) Spirit of Pentecost: Good News for All [ss.80-100].

<sup>64</sup> Archbishops' Council, *Mission-shaped Church* (London: Church Publishing, 2004).

<sup>65</sup> Archbishops' Council, *Mission-shaped Church*, 81-82. The evolution of the "Five Marks of Mission", and of the approach embodied in *Mission-shaped Church*, may be traced through: Anglican Consultative Council, *The Bonds of Affection* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) (London: ACC, 1984), 49; Anglican Consultative Council, *Mission in a Broken World* (London: ACC, 1990), 101, and Archbishops' Council, *Breaking New Ground* (London: Church Publishing, 1994).

<sup>66</sup> <https://freshexpressions.org.uk/>; For a critique of *Mission-shaped Church*, see; Hull, J M, *Mission-Shaped Church: A Theological Response* (London: SCM, 2006). For a critique of Fresh Expressions, see: Davison, A & Milbank, A, *For the Parish: A Critique of Fresh Expressions* (London: SCM Press, 2010). For an approach to the "Theological Basis for Fresh Expressions" within the Church of Scotland, see *Reports to the General Assembly 2016*, 16/35-16/39.

<sup>67</sup> <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/identity/marks-of-mission.aspx>

<sup>68</sup> Granberg-Michaelson, W, "Foreword", vii-viii.