

World Council of Churches
COMMISSION ON FAITH AND ORDER

*Faith and Order Plenary Commission
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MODERATOR'S ADDRESS

**THE TURNING OF A CENTURY: ITS OPPORTUNITIES AND ITS
CHALLENGES FOR THE FAITH AND ORDER MOVEMENT**

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Introduction

As I join those who have spoken before me in the series of opening addresses today, let me begin mine by welcoming you all to this gathering on behalf of the Officers and Secretariat staff of Faith and Order. Distinguished guests, consultants and members of the Plenary Commission representing your respective churches: your presence at this meeting is by itself a sign of your interest in promoting the Unity of the Church of God. Let me also welcome the new General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, the Reverend Dr. Samuel Kobia, who came to address us this morning. This is one of his first meetings of this nature and we are glad to have him here. We pray that Almighty God will give you, Reverend General Secretary, the strength and wisdom to carry out your duties and to lead the work of the World Council in your capacity as its Chief Executive Officer. Our special welcome goes also to the General Secretary of the Christian Conference of Asia, CCA, for his kind words of welcome and of encouragement to us this morning.

This is not the first time that the Plenary Commission meets on Asian soil. In 1978, this Commission met in Bangalore, India. There it came up with three requirements indispensable to reaching the visible unity of the church, namely, "common understanding of the apostolic faith; mutual recognition of baptism, eucharist and ministry; and agreement on a common way of teaching and decision making."¹ This was critically important at that time when the ecumenical movement was still laying the foundation of agreements on issues that divide the church. The voices of hope to which the Commission listened in Bangalore more than twenty five years ago, are the same voices to which the same Commission will listen once again here in Kuala Lumpur, with even more eagerness to call the churches to visible unity at each place and, indeed, in all places in our broken world.

I cannot go further in this opening address without expressing our profound gratitude to the National Council of Churches of Malaysia through its General Secretariat for their kind invitation to host the Plenary Commission of Faith and Order in their beautiful city of Kuala Lumpur. The hospitality we have been experiencing since we have been in this city helps to create conditions that are conducive for carrying out the tasks which lie before us in the next ten days. Kuala Lumpur will have, I am sure, its place in the history of Faith and Order movement. Not only will it play an important role now and contribute its insights linking the Eighth and the Ninth Assemblies of the World Council of Churches; it will also be remembered for many years to come.

This Kuala Lumpur meeting is a special meeting in many respects. We meet here as Plenary Commissioners for both the first and the last time since our nomination by the Harare Assembly of the World Council of Churches in December 1998. You have been receiving the minutes of the Standing Commission,² as well as the Information Letter that the Faith and

¹*Sharing in One Hope: Bangalore 1978*, Geneva, Faith and Order Paper No. 92, 1978.

² The Standing Commission, sometimes called Board, has held four meetings since the last Assembly of the World Council of Churches. See *Minutes of the Meeting of the Faith and Order Board*, 15-24 June 1999, Toronto, Canada, Faith and Order Paper No. 185; *Minutes of the Meeting of the Faith and Order Standing Commission*, 30 September-7 October 2000, Matanzas, Cuba, Faith and Order Paper No. 188; *Minutes of the Meeting of the Faith and Order*

Order Secretariat issues annually from Geneva and various circulars on specific subjects of our common interest. All this has kept you informed of the Faith and Order agenda since the last Assembly of the World Council of Churches. This Kuala Lumpur meeting is also special because it is held at a strategic moment in the history of humankind and therefore also that of the ecumenical movement. It is one of the first important gatherings of the twenty-first century. We are going to reflect on what this commission has achieved in its rich history of almost eight decades, and look beyond the present to make both short-range and long-range plans for the Faith and Order agenda. We bring with us to this meeting both the memories of the past and the high expectations and hopes of our churches for this new century. Kuala Lumpur as one of its inaugural gatherings is expected to offer answers to questions such as “where do we come from?” and “where are we going?” in the Faith and Order movement and in the modern ecumenical movement.

In such a historical context, I would like briefly to make some reflections on the transition we are all experiencing between the twentieth and twenty-first centuries and on its implications for the work of Faith and Order. There are certain events which happen only once in the life of an ordinary individual or of a generation. We are privileged to be the witnesses of such a turning point in the modern history of humankind! The twentieth century was known as the century of world wars, holocaust, weapons of mass destruction, regional wars, genocide, and of individuals and families – indeed whole nations -- living with the HIV/AIDS pandemic. It was the century of colonialism and neo-colonialism, of apartheid and racial segregation, and of ecological devastation unprecedented in Earth’s history. However, the same century was characterised by a degree of progress never realised before. Think of the industrial revolution; the creation of the United Nations; widespread acceptance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; founding an International Tribunal; the de-colonisation of peoples; and remarkable improvement in areas of transportation by road, sea and air. It was a century in which health care and communication by means of electronic technology reached an unprecedented degree of development. The transition between the two centuries marks changes in the lives of individuals, institutions and nations, of societies, and cultures. The churches cannot help being affected by this process of transformation.

Nonetheless, in this climate of rapid changes and uncertainty, people have sometimes the impression of stagnation in the ecumenical movement. Rather than stagnation, however, it might be better to speak of a paradigm shift in modern ecumenism. Konrad Raiser chose to put such a shift in these terms:

To speak of “paradigm shift” in the ecumenical movement may sound like trendy jargon. It can in fact be asked whether in the more recent history of the ecumenical movement there has ever been one generally accepted paradigm for the theory and practice of ecumenism. The various profiles the original movements which give rise to the present institutional framework of the World Council of Churches are still, it seems, discernible. And the different confessional traditions have still today their own entry points and contacts with the ecumenical life of the church. On the other hand, there is, or at least was, some evidence of an ecumenical paradigm, which could appeal to basic fund of common beliefs, values and modes of behaviour. It is precisely this which is being challenged in this period of uncertainty.³

The modern ecumenical movement emerged out of diversified approaches to the question of Christian unity. The turning of the twentieth century, so rich in ecumenical events, offers a spectrum of opportunities as well as challenges for the work of Faith and Order. How are the churches going to use these opportunities and how are they going to address these challenges in the new century? This is the right time to propose answers to these fundamental questions.

Standing Commission, 9-16 January 2002, Gazzada, Italy, Faith and Order Paper No. 191; *Minutes of the Meeting of the Faith and Order Standing Commission*, 3-10 July 2003, Strasbourg, France, Faith and Order Paper No. 193.

³ Raiser, K., *Ecumenism in Transition: A Paradigm Shift in the Ecumenical Movement?* Geneva: WCC Publications, English ed. 1991, p. 33-34.

The Twentieth Century, the Century of the Church

In the twentieth century, it was the missionary movement of the preceding century that became the entry point for understanding what the Church is. Several events played important roles. At the turning point from the nineteenth century, the meeting of the South India missionary conference, held at Madras in 1900, was one of the first events to set in motion the new ecumenical approach and vision both of the mission of the Church, and of the Church itself. But the most well known missionary event was the world conference which took place in Edinburgh in June 1910, an event viewed by many as the beginning of the ecumenical movement we know today. At that time, John R. Mott, one of the architects of the modern ecumenical movement envisaged the mission of the church in the perspectives of "confronting the world as a unity by the Christian church as a unit." In that initial stage of the ecumenical movement the efforts to understand the church were based not on what the church was (its nature), but rather what the church was doing in the world (its mission). The passion for the unity of the church in the twentieth century was prompted by the consciousness of a need for *unity in the mission of the church* throughout the world.

In addition to these efforts toward unity in mission, there was also another type of effort toward unity in the life of the churches in the early twentieth century. The experience of international conflicts which led to armed confrontation in 1914 did not leave the churches unconcerned, because this confrontation on the world scale provoked immense human suffering and social catastrophe. It was amid divisions and strife among nations that the churches felt the need to contribute toward a just and lasting peace in the world. The Stockholm Universal Conference on Life and Work, held in August 1925 was one of the first fruits of churches' involvements in international affairs and social concerns. Archbishop Nathan Söderblom of the Lutheran Church of Sweden, one of the leading figures of the early modern ecumenical movement, gave strong leadership to the conference which expressed the hope that "the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of all people will become more completely realised through the Church of Christ." The emphasis was on the Church's *unity in service*, avoiding theological -- and especially doctrinal issues -- considered as dividing factors.

It was the Faith and Order movement that began to address doctrinal, theological, and other issues connected with division and *unity of the Church*. Together with the missionary movement and the movement for Life and Work, the Faith and Order movement had contributed in its own way to the shape of the modern ecumenical movement, even before the creation of the World Council of Churches. It continues, through its programmes of study, world conferences and direct assistance to the churches and ecumenical bodies in their dialogues and search for unity, to play its role as stipulated in its by-laws:

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

Since its first World Conference, Faith and Order has been committed to putting the Church as top priority on its agenda. Among the seven subjects discussed in the Lausanne World Conference in August 1927, the delegates focussed their attention particularly on the Church; its nature, its message to the world, its common confession of faith, its ministry, and sacraments, and its calling to unity.⁵ This inaugural World Conference on Faith and Order commended, among other documents, the 1920 encyclical letter of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, "Unto the Churches of Christ Everywhere," that was described by Willem Visser't Hooft as "an initiative which was without precedent in church history." In this encyclical of the holy synod of the Church of Constantinople, two measures were envisaged for the rapprochement "between various Christian churches:"

First, we consider as necessary and indispensable the removal and abolition of all the mutual mistrust and bitterness between the different Churches which arise from the tendency of some of them to entice and proselytise

⁴ *Minutes of the Meeting of the Faith and Order Standing Commission*, Matanzas, Cuba, 2000, Faith and Order Paper No. 188, p. 138.

⁵ Paul A. Crow, Jr. "The Legacy of Four World Conferences on Faith and Order," in *The Ecumenical Review*, Vol. 45, No. 1, 1993, p. 13-26.

adherents of other confessions.... After this essential re-establishment of sincerity and confidence between the churches, we consider, second, that above all, love should be rekindled and strengthened among the churches, so that they should no more consider one another as strangers and foreigners, but as relatives, and as being a part of the household of Christ and 'fellow heirs, members of the same body and partakers of the promise of God in Christ' (Eph. 3:6)."⁶

The creation of the World Council of Churches in 1948 was inspired by the Faith and Order and Life and Work movements. These voices and calls to the unity of the Church joined together to create this World Council, the most international and inter-confessional expression of the modern ecumenical movement. The founding movements have become Commissions in the framework of the World Council of Churches, without losing their identifiable visibility and structures. These structures allow them to incorporate the participation of churches and church organisations that are outside the present structures of the World Council of Churches.

This sketchy outline concerning the place of the church in the twentieth century would certainly be incomplete without express mention of the Roman Catholic Church and its involvement in the search for Christian unity. The "ecumenical council for the universal church" as intended by the Pope John XXIII, later on known as Vatican II (1962-1965), was the most extraordinary event in the life of the Roman Catholic Church during the twentieth century. Vatican II, convoked by this pope and continuing after his death during the Council under the leadership of his successor, Pope Paul VI, renewed the life of this church and its relations with other churches and ecclesial communities. Of course impressions may vary concerning an event of such magnitude as Vatican II, but in the eyes of many observers, this unprecedented Council was a providential occasion of spiritual and apostolic renewal. The theme of "the church" was the focus of the Council round which all other themes were organised. The results, communicated in key documents such as *Lumen Gentium* and *Gaudium et Spes*, reflected the inspiration of the same theme. It has been repeatedly said that without this 21st General Council in the history of this worldwide church, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to understand the life of the Roman Catholic Church today, its present theological orientations, enriched liturgy, ministries in the church, and approaches to missionary enterprise as well as ecumenical involvement. It should be also said that since 1968, the Roman Catholic Church is officially represented and actively participates in all Faith and Order studies and thus becomes, in that capacity, partner with member churches and other bodies of the World Council of Churches. All this has been possible, in my view, thanks to the new direction that Vatican II had given to the Roman Catholic Church.

From Harvesting to Convergence in Sharing

In the Faith and Order movement, occasions have been given to the churches from time to time to assess the commitment to Christian unity. The world conferences on Faith and Order have been the most appropriate ecclesiastical body for these occasions.⁷ The last of these conferences was held in Santiago de Compostela, the Spanish city of pilgrims, in 1993. It was a true world conference not only because churches sent their delegations from all over the world, but also because of the involvement of churches in visible unity shown in their messages of clear support. The conference received messages of encouragement from the Holy Father, John Paul II; His All Holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew; His Holiness Patriarch Alexy II of Moscow and all Russia; The Most Reverend and Right Honourable George Carey, Archbishop of Canterbury; and Jane Dempsey Douglass, President of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches.

⁶ Kinnamon, M. et al (eds), *The Ecumenical Movement: An Anthology of Key Texts and Voices*. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1997, p. 12.

⁷ During almost eight decades Faith and Order held five world conferences: Lausanne (1927), Edinburgh (1937), Lund (1952), Montreal (1963), and Santiago de Compostela (1993).

Santiago de Compostela has developed a comprehensive understanding of the Canberra Assembly of the World Council of Churches' 1991 Statements on the Unity of the Church as *Koinonia: Gift and Calling*.⁸ This assembly issued seven calls to all the churches:

- to recognise each other's baptism on the basis of the BEM document;
- to move toward the recognition of the apostolic faith as expressed through the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed in the life and witness of one another;
- on the basis of convergence in faith, baptism, eucharist, and ministry to consider, wherever appropriate, forms of eucharistic hospitality; we gladly acknowledge that some who do not observe these rites nevertheless share in the spiritual and experiential life in Christ;
- to move towards recognition of ministries;
- to endeavour in word and deed to give common witness to the gospel as a whole;
- to recommit themselves to work for justice, peace, and the integrity of creation, linking more closely the search for sacramental communion of the church with the struggles for justice and peace;

to help parishes and communities express locally in appropriate ways the degree of communion that already exists.⁹

This statement was first prepared by the Faith and Order Commission on the request of the World Council of Churches' Central Committee. One of the tasks of Santiago de Compostela was to make a synopsis of the various studies showing their relation to the vision of the unity of the church as *koinonia*. Mary Tanner expressed these perspectives in her paper on the achievements of Faith and Order between Montreal and Santiago de Compostela in these words:

One task must be to review and harvest the work, summed up in the three studies: *Confessing the One Faith; Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry; and Church and World*.³ These are not three unrelated studies: faith is expressed in liturgy as well as in creed; in life as well as in word; and we are sent out from liturgy to witness in faithful discipleship in the common round of daily life. The agenda of these three studies is inextricably bound together: each relates to one of the 'characteristics' or 'requirements' of visible unity.¹⁰

The end of the twentieth century has offered opportunities never experienced before in relationships among the churches. Never before have the churches come up with collaborative initiatives in the way they have done in the last fifty years. This has encouraged us, as Commissioners, to play our role as the instrument of churches to promote Christian unity. The experience of harvesting the work of Faith and Order in its numerous studies has tremendously contributed to moving the churches toward a new step in sharing. Let me mention a few examples I consider as areas in which the churches have moved to the step of sharing in *koinonia*: Convergent documents such as *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry* and *Confessing the One Faith*, but also a document such as "Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification" signed by the representatives of the Roman Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation" were unimaginable at the beginning of the twentieth century. The forum on bilateral conversations has become an important instrument of reflection, exchange, and sharing. The emergence of United and Uniting churches within the same country as the union of two or more previously separated denominations is understood as result of life in *koinonia* and as a visible sign of unity. These unions are taking place not only among churches of the same confessional family but also among churches coming together from different confessional backgrounds. At the turning of the century we have experienced the existence and continuous creation of national councils of churches, establishment of the Joint Working Group (JWG) between the World Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic Church and of countless other ecumenical organisations. While churches are not yet ready to celebrate the eucharist together in many places, including during some ecumenical gatherings, we

⁸ Gassmann, G. (ed.), *Documentary History of Faith and Order 1963-1993*. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1993, pp. 3-5.

⁹ Gassmann, G. (ed), *op. cit.*, p. 5.

¹⁰ Best, T., and Gassmann, G., (eds.), *On the Way to Fuller Koinonia: Official Report of the Fifth World Conference on Faith and Order*. Faith and Order Paper No. 166. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1994, p. 20.

nevertheless have noted signs of ecumenical sharing in visible unity at the local level, including eucharistic hospitality, in many places in the world. The week of prayer for Christian unity is also such a sign. Those are clear indications and examples of convergence the Faith and Order movement is experiencing both in theological and doctrinal documents and in sharing faith, life in Christ and witness in the world.

The Learning Experience of Changes

The turning of the last century offered both encouraging opportunities for sharing and challenges as well. During this crucial period under consideration, the biggest lesson we have learned is how to live and grow in unity within a changing world. With respect to the international community, we have seen spectacular changes in all sectors of the modern society: the cold war has given way to a “détente” between East and West. This allowed nations, in developed as well as in the developing countries, to resolve international conflicts in a more humane manner. The Berlin wall fell in November 1989 without armed confrontation. In the so called third world, the wind of independence has been blowing since 1960 across the continent of Africa, for instance, up to the liberation of Nelson Mandela and the instituting of democracy in South Africa in 1994. Eastern Europe has experienced the same wind for individual liberty as well as the emergence of socio-professional groups. The end of the twentieth century was known also, in economic terms, as “the era of global economy.”¹¹ It became, however, a world where billions of people are excluded from economic opportunities, where wealth continued to be transferred from poor countries to the most rich. Human rights have been continually violated, especially those of the most vulnerable in our populations, such as the mentally and physically challenged, children, and women.

Churches are not spared in the modern social mutation. The changes in international affairs and relations have had their impacts on the churches, both negatively and positively. The impact of socio-economic and political changes produces negative effects for the churches when these identify themselves with the questionable positions of people holding economic and political power. The consequence of such identification is the loss of church identity and vitality. On the other hand, the changes can be an opportunity for the churches to improve the understanding of their very nature and therefore of their mission in the world. Changes in social environment sometimes call on individual Christians and churches to raise their prophetic voices on behalf of the voiceless. In this context of witness, the World Council of Churches has gone through an internal restructuring and prioritising of programmes. The process was known as “Towards a Common Understanding and Vision of the World Council of Churches” (CUV). As explained by the Moderator of the WCC Central Committee, Aram I, Catholicos of Cilicia, the purpose of the CUV process was motivated by the following fundamental question:

How can the WCC as an instrument of the ecumenical movement best serve the churches in their continuous search for visible unity and in their common witness in a rapidly changing world? This same concern has also determined, sustained and oriented the programmatic work of the Council.¹²

In a changing world and a changing ecumenical environment, the question of the ecumenical vision for the churches is fundamental. The World Council of Churches as an instrument of the churches to serve this movement, came up with the CUV policy document to prepare itself and member churches for the numerous challenges of the twenty first century.

As far as Faith and Order is concerned, the role of the Plenary Commission has slightly modified. In the past the role of the Plenary Commission was defined in the Faith and Order by-laws as follows:

The Plenary Commission will have as its primary task theological study, debate and appraisal. It will initiate the programme of the Faith and Order

¹¹ See for instance an analysis made by Rob van Drimmelen in his book dedicated to Philip A. Potter, *Faith in a Global Economy: A Primer for Christians*. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1998.

¹² Kessler, D. (ed) *Together on the Way: Official Report of the Eighth Assembly of the World Council of Churches*. Geneva: WCC Publications 1999, p. 45.

commission, lay down general guidelines for it, and share in its communication to the churches.¹³

There has been a concern in the past concerning the role of the Plenary Commission in the course of the Faith and Order activities. In the process of the restructuring of the World Council of Churches and the changes which have been taking place in the ecumenical movement, the new role of the Plenary Commission reads in the Faith and Order revised by-laws as follows:

The Plenary Commission shall provide a broader frame of reference for the activities of the Standing Commission and in particular provide a forum for theological debate and a source of membership for participation in study groups and consultations. The members of the Plenary Commission will share in communicating the programme of Faith and Order to the churches.

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Therefore, for the first time in a new way and probably a new style, the Plenary Commission is going to play its role of forum for theological debate here in Kuala Lumpur. In this respect, I foresee a number of challenges before us within Faith and Order Commission. Based on opportunities the turning of the century has offered, I mention three challenges I consider important for our gathering here.

First, there is the challenge of losing focus on the aim of Faith and Order which is to call the churches to move together towards visible unity, as result of diversity of studies imposed by the experience of changes. In the recent years, Faith and Order has been tasked by its ecumenical constituencies to work on development of specific and collaborative subjects of common interest and of ecumenical imperative; however, such important requests which continue to grow in number, combined with the new role of the Commission as a forum for theological debate, may run the risk of reducing the debate to a purely academic exercise whose practical results are non-existent.

Second, the theme of Kuala Lumpur meeting, "Receive one another as Christ has received you for the glory of God" (Romans 15:7) is an extremely rich theme. It is a call. It is a gift. It is one of the best summaries of what *kononia* could mean. The challenge before us here at this meeting and beyond, as far as this theme is concerned, is double. On one hand we need to relate our various studies to the theme, and on the other hand, the theme itself calls on the work of Faith and Order to be more meaningful for the faith, life and witness of the churches engaged in the Faith and Order movement, beyond convergence in documents.

Third, I come from Africa with an African experience. The work of Faith and Order is not yet well known on that continent. However, the church is growing not only in Africa but in the southern hemisphere in general, in the so-called third world. One of the changes we have experienced in the twentieth century was precisely the growth of the church in the newly evangelised parts of the world. In the opinion of majority of Christians today it is repeatedly said that the future of the Church of Jesus Christ is above all found in the third world. This is, among others, the conclusion reached by Bühlmann.¹⁵ Here is the challenge for ecumenical hospitality and reception: for the "younger churches" of this continent and the third world in general, such a prediction is very often taken as a compliment instead of being considered as a challenging responsibility. The "mother churches" of the Northern hemisphere continue to exert excessive denominational influence on what Bühlmann called the Third Church of the

¹³ *Minutes of the Meeting of the Standing Commission 6-14 April 1984*, Crete, Greece, Faith and Order Paper No. 121, p. 92.

¹⁴ *World Council of Churches Central Committee: Minutes of the Fiftieth Meeting*, 26 August-3 September 1999, Geneva, Switzerland, p. 161.

¹⁵ Bühlmann, W., *The Coming of the Third Church: Analysis of the Present and Future of the Church*, 5th printing. New York: Orbis, 1982. (The German original book = *Es kommt die dritte Kirche: Eine Analyse der Kirchlichen Gegenwart und Zukunft*. There is an Italian edition as well, *La Terza chiesa all porte*, 1974). According to this author, if the first millennium was the period of the First Church, that of Eastern Europe, the second millennium is that of the Second Church, that of the Christian West. As for the third millennium, this will be the one of the Third Church of the third world. See also Yemba Kekumba, "The Experience of the Holy Spirit in Today's African Context" in *Andover Newton Review*, Vol. 2, No. 1, 1991, p. 27, 31.

third millennium. Denominationalism is one of the big obstacles in the way of Christians – and in the way of the churches – who would receive one another as Christ has received them.

A Tribute to the Faith and Order Programmers and Staff

The work of Faith and Order is carried out by two specific groups of people that I would like to mention as I conclude this opening address. The first group consists of members of the Standing Commission which includes Officers. They are constitutionally tasked to initiate, implement, prepare general guidelines of the programme of Faith and Order and to guide and supervise staff in their work. Many of these theologians and church leaders from a variety of Christian traditions are present in this hall today. A few of them are now resting in God's eternal peace. We are grateful to Standing Commissioners for their perseverance in constantly reminding the churches, through the new and ongoing studies, of their vocation to move together toward visible unity.

The second group to which our tribute goes is the Secretariat staff. These women and men play a key role in the implementation and development of the Faith and Order programmes as well as in ensuring the continuation of its work. As far as the staffing of Faith and Order is concerned, the period between Moshi and Kuala Lumpur was characterised, among other things, by a considerable reduction. Two executive secretaries have left the Secretariat since: Dr. Peter Bouteneff of the Orthodox Church in America and Rev. Dr. Dagmar Heller of the Evangelical Church in Germany. The most critical time in this reduction of staff was in the year 2000 when the Secretariat of Faith and Order had to function with only four full-time members. Yet, the work continued to be carried out effectively and with dedication. Fortunately, the situation has gradually improved. Today, eleven capable women and men, including two part-timers and one intern staff member ensure the continuation of our work in the Secretariat.

As you heard during the presentation of his report, the Rev. Dr. Alan D. Falconer, now concludes his service as Director of the Faith and Order Secretariat. In addition to the Director, Mrs. Renate Sbeghen, the longest serving Administrative Assistant in the Secretariat, will officially retire at the end of this meeting. We will have time later in the meeting to bid these two dedicated servants of the Faith and Order movement farewell. For now let me extend, on behalf of all of us gathered here today, our sincere gratitude to all members of the Standing Commission and staff for their commitment and dedication, and for the time and energy they always invest in the preparation of the many meetings that Faith and Order is tasked to organise, and the many documents it plans to produce.

Footnotes

¹ *Sharing in One Hope: Bangalore 1978*, Geneva, Faith and Order Paper No. 92, 1978.

² The Standing Commission, sometimes called Board, has held four meetings since the last Assembly of the World Council of Churches. See *Minutes of the Meeting of the Faith and Order Board*, 15-24 June 1999, Toronto, Canada, Faith and Order Paper No. 185; *Minutes of the Meeting of the Faith and Order Standing Commission*, 30 September-7 October 2000, Matanzas, Cuba, Faith and Order Paper No. 188; *Minutes of the Meeting of the Faith and Order Standing Commission*, 9-16 January 2002, Gazzada, Italy, Faith and Order Paper No. 191; *Minutes of the Meeting of the Faith and Order Standing Commission*, 3-10 July 2003, Strasbourg, France, Faith and Order Paper No. 193.

³ Raiser, K., *Ecumenism in Transition: A Paradigm Shift in the Ecumenical Movement?* Geneva: WCC Publications, English ed. 1991, p. 33-34.

⁴ *Minutes of the Meeting of the Faith and Order Standing Commission*, Matanzas, Cuba, 2000, Faith and Order Paper No. 188, p. 138.

⁵ Paul A. Crow, Jr. "The Legacy of Four World Conferences on Faith and Order," in *The Ecumenical Review*, Vol. 45, No. 1, 1993, p. 13-26.

⁶ Kinnamon, M. et al (eds), *The Ecumenical Movement: An Anthology of Key Texts and Voices*. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1997, p. 12.

⁷ During almost eight decades Faith and Order held five world conferences: Lausanne (1927), Edinburgh (1937), Lund (1952), Montreal (1963), and Santiago de Compostela (1993).

⁸ Gassmann, G. (ed.), *Documentary History of Faith and Order 1963-1993*. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1993, pp. 3-5.

⁹ Gassmann, G. (ed), *op. cit.*, p. 5.

¹⁰ Best, T., and Gassmann, G., (eds.), *On the Way to Fuller Koinonia: Official Report of the Fifth World Conference on Faith and Order*. Faith and Order Paper No. 166. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1994, p. 20.

¹¹ See for instance an analysis made by Rob van Drimmelen in his book dedicated to Philip A. Potter, *Faith in a Global Economy: A Primer for Christians*. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1998.

¹² Kessler, D. (ed) *Together on the Way: Official Report of the Eighth Assembly of the World Council of Churches*. Geneva: WCC Publications 1999, p. 45.

¹³ *Minutes of the Meeting of the Standing Commission 6-14 April 1984*, Crete, Greece, Faith and Order Paper No. 121, p. 92.

¹⁴ *World Council of Churches Central Committee: Minutes of the Fiftieth Meeting*, 26 August-3 September 1999, Geneva, Switzerland, p. 161.

¹⁵ Bühlmann, W., *The Coming of the Third Church: Analysis of the Present and Future of the Church*, 5th printing. New York: Orbis, 1982. (The German original book = *Es kommt die dritte Kirche: Eine Analyse der Kirchlichen Gegenwart und Zukunft*. There is an Italian edition as well, *La Terza chieza all porte*, 1974). According to this author, if the first millennium was the period of the First Church, that of Eastern Europe, the second millennium is that of the Second Church, that of the Christian West. As for the third millennium, this will be the one of the Third Church of the third world. See also Yemba Kekumba, "The Experience of the Holy Spirit in Today's African Context" in *Andover Newton Review*, Vol. 2, No. 1, 1991, p. 27, 31.