

E D U C A T I O N F O R E C U M E N I S M

Excerpts from the Nairobi reports and the report of the Core Groups of Unit III Sub-units on "Education for Ecumenism":

I. WCC Basis and Functions

"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 World Council of Churches is constituted for the following functions and purposes:

- (i) to call the churches to the goal of visible unity in one faith and in one eucharistic fellowship expressed in worship and in common life in Christ, and to advance towards that unity in order that the world may believe;
- (ii) to facilitate the common witness of the churches in each place and in all places;
- (iii) to support the churches in their world-wide missionary and evangelistic task;
- (iv) to express the common concern of the churches in the service of human need, the breaking down of barriers between people, and the promotion of one human family in justice and peace;
- (v) to foster the renewal of the churches in unity, worship, mission, and service;
- (vi) to establish and maintain relations with national councils and regional conferences of churches, world confessional bodies, and other ecumenical organizations;
- (vii) to carry on the work of the world movements for Faith and Order and Life and Work and of the International Missionary Council and the World Council on Christian Education."



## II. Nairobi Emphases

### 1. From Hearing on Unit III:

"Education in a true ecumenical spirit includes both the courage to criticize and to be criticized and the solidarity and conciliar fellowship of Christians which is rooted in the unity of all Christians in the common hope and belief in Christ."

### 2. From Programme Guidelines Committee:

"The Quality of a Truly Ecumenical Fellowship"  
All programmes of the WCC should be conceived and implemented in a way which enables the member churches to grow towards a truly ecumenical, conciliar fellowship. In this respect, the programmes of the WCC should become living expressions of the covenant relationship among the churches within the WCC and foster growth towards fuller unity. These programmes should challenge the churches beyond the brokenness of our human situation as well as beyond the partial, incomplete character of our ecumenical efforts towards deeper sustained and sustaining relationships. If this is to happen, all member churches must be helped to participate in the process of ecumenical education that is so fundamental to our pilgrimage. The vision of God's will for one fully committed fellowship in all places and in all ages should continue to be translated into the actual work of the WCC and be incorporated in the witness of the churches."

## III. From Unit III Core Groups report

"A unifying factor that binds together all efforts for our work is the concern for persons in community (men, women, youth and children; families and congregations; renewal movements and laity centres). The basic orientation of the unit is towards people -- their needs and desires, and for meaning in their struggle. The ecumenical movement is, and should continue to be, a movement of people: seeking to witness to the truly ecumenical fellowship, to give expression in common witness and in the incarnation of the Christian faith, and to enable Churches to become communities of hope, reconciliation, and liberation in the struggle for true humanity."

"The unit desires to be more in touch with people in their particular local congregational life. It seeks the widening and deepening of the ecumenical movement through the enlarged participation of people at the grass roots level."



*"The Christian community is placed in the human community to present the total message of Christ and to be a sign of God's liberating power." (Section IV)*

"Yet, the first work of the church in our time in the face of that calling is the work of repentance. We are not what we are called to be. We are not what, by God's grace, we may be. We see yet only dimly the vision of the true humanity which is God's gift. It is just here in the life of congregations and in their inter-action with the culture that the issue of ecumenical education becomes most forceful. The Unit III Hearing identified the focus."

"Education for ecumenism is, in the first instance, the enabling of the whole people of God to participate in the Church's life and mission, to discover Christian unity where they live and work, and to share in the creation of a community of justice and liberation. The laity are the special focus of these efforts. Special attention will be paid by the unit to enhancing the fuller participation of women, youth and children (and other groups who are not full participants now).

The unit and its sub-units will give special attention to ways in which the people of God can work at the transformation of society through such efforts as the youth and social justice, the youth and women's sub-unit programmes in rural areas, the education sub-unit focus upon general education, and the renewal sub-unit's emphasis on equipping people to be dynamic agents of social change."

#### IV. From the report of the Sub-unit on Education

"The sub-unit seeks to enlarge the ecumenical experience of people in the member churches, especially at the local level. As suggested in the introductory material on Unit III, education for ecumenism involves not only understanding of churchly unity but experience of the forces making for unity, justice, liberation and community for all people.

The initial approach of the sub-unit will be to cooperate with regional structures in locating examples and models of effective ecumenical education. It will seek to share these examples and models and provide guidelines for use by member churches and ecumenical bodies.

The sub-unit will seek to draw upon the experience of Faith and Order, Dialogue with Peoples of Living Faiths and Ideologies, and the Joint Working Group of the WCC and the Roman Catholic Church as well as Units I and II. The sub-unit's work is also conceptual and developmental. The Unit III hearing emphasizes the importance of the Education Sub-unit keeping to its commitments to the powerless and



voiceless, the dispossessed, disadvantaged and handicapped persons... It is... further necessary to show more concretely how the new concept of a dialogue-oriented learning and "conscientization" is actually to be put into practice in Sunday schools, religious instruction in schools, confirmation classes and adult education."

Geneva  
August 3, 1976