

**EXPERIENCE IN CHRISTIAN FAITH AND LIFE:
Worship, Discipleship, Discernment, Community, and Justice**

**The Report of the International Dialogue between
Representatives of the
World Alliance of Reformed Churches
And
Some Classical Pentecostal Churches and Leaders
2001-2011**

Introduction

1. The first international dialogue between representatives of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and some Classical Pentecostal Churches and leaders was held over a span of five years, 1996-2000. The dialogue led to a concluding report, "Word and Spirit, Church and World," that identified areas of agreement as well as differences in history and theological conviction.¹ The dialogue did much to dispel stereotypes and correct misunderstandings. As the dialogue progressed, both Pentecostal and Reformed representatives were able to recognize in the other the fullness of apostolic faith and witness. Even so, the dialogue partners recognized that tensions between Pentecostal and Reformed communities exist in many parts of the world.
2. Deepening mutual confidence in Reformed and Pentecostal fidelity to the gospel enabled the second round of dialogue to move beyond a comparative theological and ecclesiological method. The dialogue engaged in a common exploration of themes that concern both Reformed and Pentecostal churches. These areas of common concern continue to be expressed differently, but the differences have led beyond contrasts toward mutual enrichment.
3. "Experience in Christian Faith and Life" was selected as the theme for the international dialogue's second round. The theme highlighted the significance of Christian experience within both Reformed and Pentecostal communities. It raised issues concerning diverse evaluations of experience as a source or norm for Christian belief and witness. The theme also enabled the dialogue to move beyond theoretical or ideal formulations toward an examination of constitutive practices within the churches.
4. The general theme focused on a particular area of Christian practice in each year of the dialogue: Worship, Discipleship, Discernment, Community, and Justice. Each of these practices presented questions to both Reformed and Pentecostal communities: What is the role

¹ "Word and Spirit, Church and World: The Final Report of the International Dialogue between Representatives of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches And Some Classical Pentecostal Churches and Leaders 1996-2000," in *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 23:1 (Spring 2001), 9-43 in the *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies*, 2:1 (January 1999), 105-151, and as "Word and Spirit, Church and World: Final Report of the International Pentecostal-Reformed Dialogue," *Reformed World* 50:3 (September 2000), 128-156.

of experience in faith and life? What are the key experiences in faith and life? What are the implications of experience for faith and life? These questions provided a consistent framework for the conversation as it explored aspects of faith and life.

5. The change from contrast and comparison to common exploration suggested a methodology that moves beyond general formulations to serious considerations of the particularities of different contexts. As the dialogue met in various locations, the participants made efforts to learn how particular Reformed and Pentecostal communities engage aspects of the dialogue theme. We hope that the methodology of common exploration will facilitate reception of our findings in Pentecostal and Reformed churches.
6. Following a 2001 planning session under the auspices of the David du Plessis Center for Christian Spirituality at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California, USA, the first session of the Dialogue's second round was held in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, May 16-23, 2002. The theme for the session was "Worship." Preparatory papers were presented by Dr. Joseph Small (USA), "In Spirit and Truth: Experience and Worship in the Reformed Tradition," and Dr. Jean-Daniel Plüss (Switzerland), "Religious Experience in Worship: A Pentecostal Perspective." These papers were helpful in orienting the Dialogue teams to distinctive features of Reformed and Pentecostal worship. Also helpful was the experience of worship at *Pinkster Gemeente* in Amsterdam, one of Europe's oldest Pentecostal churches.
7. In accordance with the intention to relate Dialogue to the local context, delegates met with Dr. Cornelis van der Laan, Professor designate of the Chair of Pentecostal Studies at the Free University in Amsterdam, who made a presentation on the beginnings of the Pentecostal Movement in the Netherlands and the unique history of contacts between Pentecostal church leaders and representatives of the Reformed churches in the Netherlands.
8. The next session was held in San Juan, Puerto Rico, June 5-11, 2003. The theme of this session was "Discipleship." Three preparatory papers facilitated a common exploration of this topic: (1) a collection of brief statements on the Christian life of discipleship from classical and contemporary Reformed writings, (2) a Presbyterian Church (USA) statement, "Growing in the Life of Christian Faith," and (3) a paper written by Dr. Cheryl Bridges Johns (USA), "From Strength to Strength: The Neglected Role of Crisis in Wesleyan and Pentecostal Discipleship."²
9. This session of the Dialogue was generously hosted by the Synod of Puerto Rico of the Presbyterian Church (USA) in close cooperation with the Evangelical Theological Seminary of Puerto Rico and the Office of Theology and Worship of the Presbyterian Church (USA). Participants joined the congregation of Hugh O'Neill Memorial Presbyterian Church for worship on Sunday. They also met with representatives of the Synod of Puerto Rico, the Puerto Rico Council of Churches, and the faculty of the Evangelical Seminary of Puerto Rico. A special session was dedicated to the common Christian witness in the struggle against the presence of a U.S. naval base on Vieques Island, Puerto Rico.
10. Following a one year break due to the General Council of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, the third session was held in Detmold, Germany, May 25-31, 2005. The theme,

² Dr. Cheryl Bridges Johns wrote the Pentecostal paper for this meeting but was unable to attend.

“Discernment,” explored the diverse ways that Pentecostal and Reformed Christians discern the will of God through the Holy Spirit as they seek to follow Jesus Christ. Preparatory papers were presented by Dr. Cecil M. Robeck, Jr. (USA), “Discerning the Spirit in the Life of the Church,”³ and by Dr. Joseph Small (USA), “Ecclesial Discernment in the Reformed Tradition.”

11. The discussion that followed focused on differences and convergences in the ways that Pentecostal and Reformed churches approach discernment and its place in their life and witness. This proved to be the most difficult theme in this round of the Dialogue. From the outset, widely different understandings of discernment made discussion difficult, with each team suspecting that the other lacked appreciation for discernment’s complete biblical, theological, and ecclesial substance. Nevertheless, Dialogue participants built upon prior appreciation of each other’s faithfulness to remain in the conversation. The search for mutual understanding and the willingness to learn from the other led to gradual awareness of considerable common ground. The distinctions that their different approaches to “discernment” revealed indicated the need for continuing conversation, while the commonalities that became evident indicated the possibility of continuing fruitful conversation and mutual learning.
12. This session was generously hosted by the Protestant Church of Lippe in Germany. Dialogue participants were introduced to the life and witness of the Church of Lippe, attended celebrations of the 400th anniversary of the adoption of the Reformed confession in the Lippe region, and met with church leaders. Presentations were made to the Dialogue by two pastors working in the region, Claudia Währisch-Oblau (Church of Rhineland and United Evangelical Mission), and Samuel Odonkor-Quartey (the Lighthouse Fellowship, Bielefeld). The group also worshipped with the Lippe Christian Centre, a relatively new Pentecostal church.
13. In 2006, dialogue participants met in Louisville, Kentucky, USA, May 17-24. The theme of the session was “Community,” and it focused on how Pentecostal and Reformed Christians understand and experience communion (*koinōnia*), (1) in the local congregation, (2) with other congregations, and (3) among Christian churches at the national and international levels. Three preparatory papers facilitated common exploration of this topic. Dr. Paul Haidostian (Lebanon) presented “Communion, Text and Context: the Experience of the Armenian Evangelical Church in the Middle Eastern Reformed Framework.” Dr. Aureo Rodrigues de Oliveira (Brazil) presented “Koinonia: Experiences in Christian Life,” and Dr. Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen (Finland) presented “The Church as the Fellowship of Persons: An Emerging Pentecostal Ecclesiology of *Koinōnia*.”
14. *Koinōnia* expresses itself in the common worship of the triune God, the nurture of the Church, and witness to the world. The discussions that followed revealed welcome convergences in the ways that Pentecostal and Reformed Christians understand and practice Christian communion. Pentecostal and Reformed churches can join forces in common action in order to give praise to their Lord and serve a world in need of salvation, reconciliation, and healing.

³ This paper was originally written for a project of the National Council of Churches in the United States of America and was subsequently published in William Barr and Rena Yocum, Eds, *The Church in the Movement of the Spirit* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994), 29-49.

15. This session of the dialogue was hosted by the Office of Theology and Worship, Presbyterian Church (USA), and met on the campus of the Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary. Participants worshiped at the Anchorage Presbyterian Church in Louisville.
16. Cape Town and Stellenbosch, South Africa provided the backdrop to the May 21-24, 2007 session. The focus of this meeting was "Justice." The paper from the Reformed team, "Doors of Righteousness," which focused on the roots of justice in fundamental theology with special reference to the Confession of Belhar (South Africa 1986) was presented by Dr. Gesine von Kloeden-Freudenberg (Germany). Two presentations were made by the Pentecostal team. Dr. Nico Horn (Namibia) made a presentation on "Pentecostals and Apartheid," and Dr. Japie J. La Poorta (South Africa) presented a paper on "Justice from a South African Perspective: Stories of Hope in the Midst of Enormous Challenges." The ensuing discussion focused on our theological understanding of justice and sanctification and how this understanding is expressed in the lives of churches in different regional contexts within our respective traditions.
17. The discussion of justice in the specific context of South Africa was helpful in moving our conversation away from abstractions and toward the exploration of concrete experiences in the lives of churches that have had to bear witness in difficult and trying circumstances. Both groups agreed that the foundation for righteous living is not to be found in human aspirations but rather, in God's decrees in Scripture, through the life and death of Jesus, and by the power of the Holy Spirit prompting believers to do what is right. Not only was it soon apparent that both traditions have been committed to act justly and compassionately, but that they have already cooperated in various instances providing a common witness and engaging in acts of mercy.
18. The Dialogue was privileged to meet in the facilities of the Theological Faculty of the University of Stellenbosch. We were able to interact with several faculty members over an evening meal, and to experience in a tangible way, something of the new South Africa.
19. With the dialogue sessions behind us, a core group from the dialogue met in Edinburgh, Scotland, May 22-27, 2008 to begin drafting the final report of the second round of the Reformed-Pentecostal Dialogue. Review of the five previous sessions led to deepened discussion and lively interchange. Unfortunately, our time together was so rich that we were only able to produce a very rough draft of the final report. It was decided that the team would attempt to complete the final draft by electronic means.
20. This meeting was held at Carberry Tower, a Church of Scotland retreat near Edinburgh. Our contacts with local churches and colleagues were important. Dialogue participants were pleased to worship at the historic St. Giles Church in Edinburgh.
21. Several events conspired to delay the drafting process, and it was necessary to postpone the conclusion of the drafting process until a face-to-face meeting could be convened. A small drafting group met December 6-9, 2011 on the campus of McCormick Theological Seminary in Chicago, Illinois (USA), to work through the draft report materials and produce a final text that would be accessible to Pentecostal and Reformed churches worldwide. The meeting proved to be more than a mere editorial exercise as conversations were once again both deep and wide-

ranging. It is hoped that the report, which came from that discussion, will now prove useful to the churches and that Reformed-Pentecostal contacts, conversations, and dialogues will continue in a wide variety of settings.

I. EXPERIENCE IN CHRISTIAN FAITH AND LIFE: WORSHIP

*And from the throne came a voice saying
Praise our God, all you his servants,
you who fear him, small and great.
Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude,
like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder,
crying out,
Hallelujah!
For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns.
Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory,
for the marriage of the Lamb has come,
and his Bride has made herself ready.*

Revelation 19:5-7⁴

Biblical and Theological Foundations

22. Christian worship joyfully ascribes all praise and honor, glory and power to the triune God. In worship the people of God acknowledge God as present in the world and in their lives. As they respond to God's claim and redemptive action in Jesus Christ, believers are transformed and renewed. In worship the faithful offer themselves to God and are equipped for God's service in the world.
23. All of Scripture understands worship as the proper human response to the gracious, awesome presence of God. The people of God respond with words and deeds of praise and thanksgiving in acts of prayer, proclamation, remembrance, and offering: "*Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker!*" (Psalm 95:6). Worship of the one true God excludes worship of all other so-called gods and other earthly objects: "*You shall worship no other god, for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God*" (Exodus 34:14). Worship is not only a human act, however, for God's Spirit equips the community for its service. In the name of Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit, the Christian community brings all that has been given by God into its worship of God. "*When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up*" (1 Corinthians 14:26). In the name of Christ and by the power of the Holy Spirit, the Christian community brings all that has been given by God into its worship of God: "*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him*" (Colossians 3:16-17). Worship is not confined to community services of worship.

⁴ The New Revised Standard Version has been used throughout this text.

Rather, worship is the proper shape of human life, on every day and in every place: “*I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship*” (Romans 12:1).

24. From the Torah through the Psalms and the prophets to the Gospels and epistles, worship is both assumed and commanded. The Church is always tempted to turn worship toward its own purposes, but in its temptation the Church is called to respond as Jesus responded to His temptation: “Jesus answered, ‘It is written, *Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him*” (Luke 4:8).

Common Affirmations and Commitments

25. While worship in Pentecostal and Reformed congregations is often different in form and style, significant affirmations and commitments are common to both communities. These shared attributes are lived out in diverse ways within both Pentecostal and Reformed churches, yet they give evidence of mutual theological conviction that suggests possibilities for further discussion on a broad range of ecclesial issues. These convictions are outlined below.

Our Worship Affirms the Centrality of the Word of God

26. The Bible is at the heart of Christian worship for both Pentecostal and Reformed Christians. Scripture plays the primary role in fashioning the liturgy and shaping the reality of congregational worship. The word of God (Scripture) is the unique and authoritative witness to the Word of God (Jesus Christ). The Lord of the Church speaks as Scripture is read, sung, and prayed. Thus, human experience is not a free-floating phenomenon in worship. Human experience is interpreted in light of the word of God. Christian experience is forged in the dialectic between narratives of the Bible and the liturgically celebrated narratives of the worshipping community.
27. The Word of God is the necessary counterpoint to the range of human experiences formed by cultural realities that may be inimical to the gospel. The Bible’s narrative of God’s new Way in the world competes with many of the narratives that are expressed throughout contemporary societies. This cultural reality emphasizes the importance of worship that gives central place to the Bible, and the importance of nurturing Christians who know God’s word fully. Worship that gives only lip service to Scripture is a constant danger to all Christian churches, including our own, that profess formal adherence to Scripture’s norms.

Our Worship Stresses Proclamation of the Gospel through Preaching

28. The Reformed tradition has stressed from the beginning that true and faithful churches are found “wherever we see the Word of God purely preached and heard, and the sacraments administered according to Christ’s institution.”⁵ Although we assess the place of sacraments differently, we agree that it is the gospel – the word of God – that is to be proclaimed, not

⁵ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* IV.1.9.

merely generalized religious sentiments. Pentecostal worship's emphasis on the importance of preaching broadens proclamation to encompass congregational testimony and prophetic gifts.

29. We acknowledge the importance of our response to proclamation. It is not enough that the word is preached; it must also be heard and lived. Personal and corporate response to the gospel engenders faith, renewal, and committed discipleship. In worship itself, response is expressed through repentance, prayer, praise, and offerings. Response is expressed in all of life through love, reconciliation, service, and Christian unity.

Our Worship Is Aware of God's Living Presence

30. Worship is not mere memory of God's past presence among his people; worship is an encounter with the living God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. While human fellowship and experiences of shared devotion are integral to worship, these experiences do not emerge from human capacities but from the sovereign grace of God. Worship does not merely impart information about God; worship is personal and corporate communion with God in which the experience of God's love deepens human love of God with heart, soul, mind, and strength, and broadens human love of neighbors.

31. We underscore the centrality of worship in which persons and congregations *experience* the presence of the *Living God*. A variety of emotional and intellectual experiences can be satisfying and stimulating, but unless worship is focused on the experience of God, it conceals the living Christ and is untrue to the leading of the Holy Spirit. Reformed worship is built upon the expectation that proclamation of the Word and celebration of the sacraments make known the real presence of the living Christ. Pentecostal worship eagerly anticipates encountering the God in much the same way, recognizing His very real presence among those who seek Him.

Our Worship Acknowledges the Indispensable Role of the Holy Spirit

32. It is the Holy Spirit who gathers, gifts, and guides God's people. It is the Holy Spirit who inspires, instructs, and sends the community. Testimony to the powerful, contemporary work of the Holy Spirit is characteristic of Pentecostal worship. It may be less apparent that Reformed worship is also Spirit-shaped; however, the prayers of Reformed churches, like those of Pentecostal churches, call upon the Holy Spirit to illumine worshipers so that they can hear, understand, believe, and live the word of Scripture. Prayers of Reformed churches call upon the Holy Spirit to reveal the presence of Christ in Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Both Reformed and Pentecostal communities believe that the Holy Spirit conceives, establishes, nurtures, and sustains our faith. Both communities emphasize sanctification in the life of faith and the centrality of worship in the growth of Christian faithfulness.
33. Nevertheless, awareness of the vivifying presence of the Holy Spirit is often more apparent in Pentecostal worship than in Reformed worship. Many Reformed Christians acknowledge the need for greater openness to the Holy Spirit, recovering a neglected feature of worship in Reformed congregations.

Our Communities Wrestle with the Challenge of Assessing Critically, the Place of Experience in Christian Worship

34. How do Christian communities distinguish between the experience of the triune God and ordinary human experiences? It is not a simple matter to discern the difference between experiences of the grace of Christ, God's love, and the communion of the Holy Spirit on the one hand, and generic experiences of human anxiety, confidence, emptiness, and fulfillment on the other. What is the relationship between human experience and the experience of God in human life? Is there a danger of mistaking the human spirit for the Holy Spirit?
35. The difficulty and the importance of assessing the place of experience in Christian faith and life come into sharp focus in worship. Shaping worship to meet people's needs or to fulfill people's expectations can lead to worship that is about *us* rather than about *God*. We agree that worship cannot be reduced to a focus upon human needs and aspirations while reducing God to an ally in the achievement of human potential or spiritual advance. Yet just as clearly, worship cannot focus on God to the exclusion of human realities. Although our basic agreement finds different expression in each community, Pentecostal and Reformed Christians both agree on the necessity for critical judgment with the aid of the Holy Spirit.
36. Pentecostal and Reformed commonalities were not always immediately apparent in our discussions. Realization of shared values emerged from several days of spirited discussion, especially in matters of discernment, in which each team expressed characteristics of their worship that are particularly important. These characteristics are not the sole possessions of either Pentecostal or Reformed communities. Some of these characteristics are shared by all. Yet we believe that it is important for each tradition to share features of its worship with the other that are especially dear to it.

Some Important Characteristics of Worship

37. Together, we affirm that worship is grounded in the foundational events of the Father's sending of the Son in the power of the Spirit. Many Reformed churches see this embodied in the "Christmas cycle" (Advent – Christmas – Epiphany) and the Easter cycle (Lent – Holy Week – Easter – Pentecost). This means more than mere attention to the liturgical calendar; rather, it expresses the reality of worship built upon proclamation of the central elements of the gospel. Memory and hope take shape in the present as the Church lives in the grace of Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit. While the liturgical calendar and these Christmas and Easter cycles are seldom used by Pentecostal congregations, we believe that Pentecostals might find some benefit in their rediscovery and look at this as a challenge to Pentecostals around the world.
38. Although orders of worship vary, we acknowledge that our churches all shape worship around the Word of God. Core elements of Reformed worship include *Gathering* (preparation for worship, adoration, confession of sin, and assurance of pardon); *Word* (prayers for illumination, reading of Scripture, preaching, confession of faith); *Thanksgiving* (sacraments, offerings, prayers of thanksgiving and intercession); and *Sending* (charges for mission in the world,

benedictions). Core elements of Pentecostal worship include joyful songs of praise and adoration, celebration of God's saving grace in Christ's incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection, reading of Scripture and preaching, prayers of intercession for healing and other needs, and the potential for personal participation by all through the manifestation of spiritual gifts or charisms such as prophecy, speaking in tongues, and discerning of spirits, among others. In addition to these elements, distinctive features of both Reformed and Pentecostal worship include regular attention to the Old and New Testaments, psalm singing, regular confession of sin, Baptism and the Lord's Supper, corporate affirmations of faith, and simplicity of liturgy.

39. Our worship is not uniform. History, geography, and cultures shape worship differently even within our Reformed and Pentecostal families. Reformed worship in Scotland, in Ghana, and in Brazil may look, sound, and feel different from one another. Similarly, Pentecostal worship differs in Canada, Indonesia, Russia, and Chile. Differences do not destroy the basic continuity of our worship from one setting to another. There is no necessary connection between various cultural elements in worship and the experience of faith. People experience deep joy, repentance, forgiveness, comfort, inspiration, dedication, and more in a variety of liturgical settings.
40. Reformed emphasis upon the experience of the real presence of the living Christ in Word and Sacrament does not neglect the Holy Spirit. Pentecostal experience of the Holy Spirit's empowering presence does not neglect Jesus Christ. To the contrary, Reformed worship prays for the presence of the Holy Spirit whose work transforms Word and Sacrament from human words and actions into proclamations of the gospel and knowledge of the presence of Christ. Pentecostal worship prays that Christ's victory over sin and death will become the victory of all believers.
41. Faithful Christian worship is theocentric. Its focus is on God and God's Way in the world, not upon human aspirations. Nevertheless, the experience of worship affects the experience of those who worship. In worship, the triune God blesses the congregation with the reality of the gospel. People find themselves in the presence of God, and respond with adoration and praise. People receive the promise of forgiveness, and respond with repentance, confession, and joy in God's law. People hear the good news of God's grace in Scripture, and experience what it means to stand within God's salvation history. People confess the faith of the Church and experience themselves included within the communion of saints. People participate in Baptism and the Eucharist and know themselves to be members of Christ's body. People pray and sing and know that the Holy Spirit is at work, building the Church through the expression of spiritual gifts and the development of the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23).
42. Worship is not a passive event designed for spectators. The whole people of God are actively engaged in prayers, the singing of hymns and songs, confession of faith, active listening to Scripture and proclamation, and participation in the sacraments/ordinances. However, Pentecostal worship also makes space for the unexpected, for surprises of silence or tears when the congregation suddenly recognizes a movement of the Holy Spirit among them, as well as in movement of the Holy Spirit through charisms such as prophecy, tongues, interpretation, and discernment, and other charisms. At such points there is an eager expectation that something

significant is taking place. Reformed worship tends to anticipate that the Spirit will act to bring about more private transformation.

43. Clearly, our worship practice does not always match our developed liturgical theology. Our congregations are always in need of re-formation by the Word of God in the power of the Holy Spirit. Participants in this dialogue present here, the best we have to offer from our tradition. Fully aware of our own shortcomings we are able to exercise a degree of charity towards the other. In this way, we call upon both Pentecostal and Reformed communities to renew and deepen their worship of God, for *“the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth....”* (John 4:23a).

II. EXPERIENCE IN CHRISTIAN FAITH AND LIFE: DISCIPLESHIP

Then He said to them all, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.”

Luke 9:23

“A disciple is not above the teacher, nor a slave above the master; it is enough for the disciple to be like the teacher, and the slave like his master.”

Matthew 10:24-25a

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Matthew 28:19-20

Biblical Foundations

44. The terms “disciple” and “disciples” are common in the Gospels, but they are virtually non-existent in the Old Testament. Although the term is missing, the concept is present in the ideas conveyed through the themes of leading and following. In a sense, Abraham was a disciple of God, who appeared to him, spoke to him, and called and sent him to a land that the Lord would show him (Genesis 12:1-4a, 9). Ruth essentially became a disciple of Naomi. In the exchange between them, Ruth demonstrates the depth of her commitment to follow Naomi, her people, and her God when she promises,

*Where you go, I will go;
Where you lodge, I will lodge;
your people shall be my people,
and your God my God.
Where you die, I will die –
there will I be buried.*

Ruth 1:16b-17a

And Elisha became a servant/disciple of the prophet Elijah when Elijah issued his invitation by throwing his mantle upon Elisha (1 Kings 19:19-21). In each case, there was what amounted to a call to follow (whether implied or made explicit), the faith-filled desire to follow or obey, the idea that the one who led had something to impart, and the active commitment to follow that the disciple lived out.

45. The Gospels demonstrate clearly what a disciple is when we watch Jesus call the twelve to Him. “Follow me,” he entreats them (Matthew 4:19; 8:22; 9:9). Thus, discipleship is a process. Jesus calls the twelve and the twelve come. Jesus leads the twelve and the twelve follow (Mark 10:32). Jesus teaches the twelve and while they do not always understand everything at first, the twelve eventually learn (Mark 9:30-32). Jesus grants authority to his disciples and sends them out or commissions them with a task, and they go (Luke 10:3). Discipleship involves commitment, obedience, service, and perseverance. While it is undertaken in the community of others, each disciple responds to the call of Jesus to be *with Him*.
46. Those who follow Jesus are those who hear what he says and receive it (Matthew 13:10-23). The movement from hearing to receiving, whether it is begun through reading, preaching, or teaching the Word of God, is a transformative process. It leads to belief (Acts 10:34-43; 13:13-16, 42-49; 17:10-12) and repentance (Acts 2:37-41). As a result, the first believers “*devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers*” (Acts 2:42).
47. At the end of Jesus’ ministry, He commanded His disciples to go and make other disciples, baptizing them and teaching them what they should obey (Matthew 28:19-20). Each generation, in turn, is challenged to do the same. Those who are disciples are exhorted to continue making yet more disciples, teaching them what they are to know and challenging them in turn, to pass along what they have received to those who follow them (2 Timothy 2:2; 1 Corinthians 15:3-7).
48. The way of discipleship is not to be taken lightly. It is a costly way. Jesus linked discipleship with the way of the cross (Luke 9:23), which requires a daily commitment to continue to follow in the footsteps of Jesus. As such, the way of discipleship anticipates both discipline and accountability. In the end, those who follow Him, those who endure or overcome all things will inherit all things (Revelation 21:7) and are invited to share in Christ’s Kingdom (Luke 10:29-30).

Grace, Gratitude and Obedience

49. Discipleship is communal, centered in worship and expressed in Christian practice. It is lived within the rhythm of grace and gratitude. The grace of Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit come to us as free gifts, unmerited and unpredictable. Neither the goodness of our lives nor the firmness of our faith calls forth God’s response of grace. Faith is both a divine gift and a human response. The faithful grace of God engenders our

faithful response of deep gratitude for this undeserved gift. “Grace evokes gratitude like the voice an echo. Gratitude follows grace like thunder lightning.”⁶

50. We understand sanctification as God’s work of transforming our lives, marked by the continual need for God’s gracious interruption of our lives and the life of the whole Church. We are easily lured by “the way things are,” and so we are in constant need of knowing “the new thing” that God is doing in our midst. The continuing conversion of the Church and its members is the necessary reality of God’s abiding, faithful presence among us.
51. Obedience is the concrete form of our gratitude. We are all called to grateful obedience to the will of God. As disciples we live a life of discipline. This discipline becomes manifest in spiritual practices, mutual responsibility, and mutual accountability.
52. By drawing boundaries, discipline creates a context in which to live out the faith, especially discipline as informed by the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17) and the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:1-7:29). How these boundaries are worked out depends upon our respective contexts, cultures, and congregations. We frequently differ, both on the extent to which boundaries may be prescribed, and the extent to which a discipline is practiced; we agree that however this discipline is practiced, the community must be a nurturing community.

Practices of Discipline

Spiritual Practices

53. **The Life of Prayer:** Prayer is the primary form of our communion with God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Our praying is personal and communal, private and public, liturgical and devotional, fixed and free. We offer our prayers to God the Father through Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. We strive to broaden and deepen prayer in our own lives, and our communities of faith strive to make prayer central to the ordering of the Church’s mission, the shaping of the ministry, and the engendering of hope. Prayers of thanksgiving, intercession, illumination, adoration, lament, and assurance deepen our lives of prayer; these prayers are constituted by their context. While these kinds of prayers are common to both of our traditions, we sometimes differ in the forms that our prayers take. For Pentecostal Christians these forms may include praying silently, praying aloud simultaneously, traveling in prayer, prayers for healing, and praying in the Spirit (in tongues). For Reformed Christians it may include praying the Psalms, with a labyrinth, meditation, and prayers from liturgies from communities such as Taizé and Iona.
54. **The Reading of Scripture:** Christian churches are called to be “Scripture-shaped communities.” Jesus Christ, the Word of God, is made known among us through the word of God written (Bible), the word of God proclaimed (preaching), and the word of God enacted (sacraments). Scripture is central to both proclamation and sacraments/ordinances, so Scripture is essential to the life of every disciple. The biblical witness comes alive and becomes part of our lives only through the inner illumination of the Holy Spirit.

⁶ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* IV/1, 41.

55. Around the world, we embrace Scripture as the life-giving revealed word of God. We, it seems, put on spectacles that illuminate what we see through the lenses of the Scriptures. We are called to deepen our knowledge of Scripture, learn the wisdom of our forebears in faith, listen to the voices of contemporary Christians, and remain open to insights from the whole human community. We are called to move beyond “religious information” as the Holy Spirit leads us into true knowledge of God, honest knowledge of ourselves, and lived knowledge of God’s grace, love, and communion.
56. Many in both of our traditions begin and end each day with the prayerful discipline of Scripture reading. Many participate in common Bible study and mutual interpretation of Scripture. Others also engage in personal study of the Scriptures. Passages of Scripture are committed to memory to help one live out the Christian life in fidelity to the whole of the gospel.
57. **Worshipping God:** Worship is the church’s indispensable practice, the center of its life. Lord’s Day worship, in the fullness of Word and Sacrament, is the constitutive location of God’s call and our response. Worship must not be confined to the Lord’s Day assembly, however, and should never become routine. The community of faith should gather together at many times and places to praise God for God’s providential care, give thanks for Christ’s redemptive work in the world, and to open itself to the movement of the Holy Spirit. Families and individuals may set aside times for worship. Communities of faith strive to be attentive to the Word, so that the presence of Christ may become transparent. Communities of faith also strive to be open to the Holy Spirit, so that the creative presence of the living God prevails in the lives of the faithful.
58. **Mutual Responsibility, Self-Denial, and Integrity:** We belong to God; we do not belong to ourselves. As we are freed from the pretense of self-reliance, we are freed for a holy life. More than being called to endure the hardships that may come our way, we are freed as individuals and communities to take up the cross of Christ as an act of obedience to the leading of the Spirit and an expression of solidarity with all who suffer. Thus we are to be “in but not of the world,” called out by God and sent into the world as “*a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people*” (1 Peter 2:9).
59. **Congregational Nurture:** Congregational nurture has always been an important aspect of the Christian life together. We recognize the importance of gathering together in worship to encourage and provide ministry to the physical, spiritual, and emotional needs of one another. As members of the community, we are encouraged to share our joys and concerns or our testimonies of how God has been working in our lives. We believe that as the Holy Spirit provides us with various gifts or charisms, we are called to use these gifts for the edification of the community and for the world. God calls every generation within the congregation to service. By the power of the Holy Spirit, every member is able to participate in ministry. Thus, we encourage Christian children from an early age to memorize and recite Scripture. We teach Christian youth to read the Scripture publicly, to offer their musical talents, to share the charisms that God has given to them. We invite Christian adults to serve the Church in a variety of capacities and in accordance with their gifts and abilities. As Christians of all ages learn to lead within the worship of the community, the community offers counsel, advice, and

encouragement. Christians of all ages are encouraged to offer themselves completely for God's use and to seek God's "will" for their lives.

60. God knows our names. We are called to know each other's names, never confining people to roles and categories. The whole community is called to recover patterns of mutual care, responsibility, and accountability.
61. **The Exercise of Charisms:** "*We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us*" (Romans 12:6a). While the natural endowments that individuals bring to the community are greatly appreciated and gratefully put to use, the gifts or charisms of the Spirit are more than natural endowments. The Holy Spirit distributes gifts that build up the body of Christ, equip the community for its work of ministry, and bring us to the knowledge of God and "*to the measure of the full stature of Christ*" (Ephesians 4:13b).

Mutual Accountability

Practices of Admonition and Restoration

62. Our discussions made it clear that mutual accountability, particularly with regard to admonition, is a difficult subject. Differences exist between Pentecostals and Reformed Christians at this point. Differences are found not only *between us*, however, but also *within* our respective communities. It is important to realize that admonition begins with self-examination, to which we are all called: "*Examine yourselves, and only then eat of the bread and drink of the cup*" (1 Corinthians 11:28).
63. Based on the integrity of self-examination we are called not to remain silent in the face of sin. Instead, love for one another leads to honesty and forthright dealing with matters. "*If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one. But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector*" (Matthew 18:15-20).
64. A specific reality of these times that cries out for admonition is the scandalous behavior of some who are called to lead the Church. The scandal of the sin itself is compounded by damage to the credibility of the gospel and impediments to its proclamation, leading the Apostle to lament: "*...woe to me if I do not proclaim the gospel!*" (1 Corinthians 9:16).
65. Admonition and restoration present challenges to both Reformed and Pentecostal communities. Although practices may differ widely, commitment to practices of admonition and affirmation has been important in the history of both Reformed and Pentecostal churches. Admonition has never been a goal in itself, for the real objective is not condemnation but restoration (1 Corinthians 5:5), the full harvest of the fruit of the Spirit in the lives of all disciples and the life of the community of Christ's women and men. The Holy Spirit forms within the Christian life the virtues of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-

control (Galatians 5:22-23). The fruit of the Spirit is more than an attitude or emotion. It expresses the fullness of *koinōnia* through concrete actions with neighbors that reflect an intimate relationship with God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Mission and our Call to the World

66. The community of faith and each of its members are called to proclaim the good news of Christ's grace, God's love, and the Holy Spirit's communion. How is the world to hear this gospel without someone to proclaim it (Romans 10:14)? Both individual disciples and the community of discipleship are called and sent to live in Christ and to speak of Christ in such a way that the Savior and Lord is good news for a sin-sick world.
67. At its best, our congregational life has maintained a critical distance from its cultural context. Too often, however, our life together has identified itself with its surrounding culture, assuming a near identity. As Christ's disciples, we are called to analyze and understand the societies in which we live, developing a shared awareness of the ways in which culture both calls for and impedes faithful Christian living. We are *in* the world but not *of* the world.
68. In steadfast hope, the Church looks beyond its own life to the final triumph of God. We must not boast in our limited accomplishments, or despair in the face of disappointment and defeat. Instead, with firm hope in God's new Way, we are called to apply ourselves to present action and strive for a world where God's justice is made known.
69. We focus on mission as our participation in the *Missio Dei*, God's own mission in the world. The Church has been commissioned by Christ to proclaim the gospel in word and deed around the world. All are expected to be a witness to the gospel. As a community, witnessing includes proclaiming the gospel, discipling, baptizing, and teaching (Matthew. 28:19-20). We confess that the power to be witnesses comes from God. It is God, who empowers Christians with the Holy Spirit to be witnesses of Christ (Acts 1:8).
70. The proclamation of the gospel, bringing the good news of the presence of Christ among us, inviting people to be part of God's reconciliation with us. We are invited and we are called to invite others to be part of the ongoing history of God healing of us and the world in which we live. As such, participation in God's mission is a matter of joy, notwithstanding the hardship and sometimes suffering that is also involved in this participation.
71. We also understand that God's mission in the world involves promoting justice and peace-making and we live out our witness in support of these endeavors. We believe that the outpouring of the Spirit on Pentecost created a new community, which has not yet seen its fullness, which is living as "already and not yet." In Christ, this community has overcome divisions caused by differences in language, nationality, race, gender, age, and class (Galatians 3:28). Our churches do respond positively to God's invitation to participate in the ministry of reconciliation, a witness to God in Christ reconciling the world to God's own self (2 Corinthians 5:18-19)

72. We understand that we are called to offer our welcome just as Christ has welcomed us. More than polite openness to strangers and sojourners, Christian hospitality seeks to serve and make visible those among us who are often deemed invisible. In many societies, our churches are challenged to respond to the needs of both documented and undocumented immigrants. Communities of discipleship should strive to develop habits of seeing and embracing “the least of these,” those who are hungry, thirsty, sick, and homeless.

III. EXPERIENCE IN CHRISTIAN FAITH AND LIFE: DISCERNMENT

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God; for many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God.

1 John 4:1-3a

Introduction

73. While there is a long and rich history of the activity known as “discernment” within the Christian tradition, the subject is not always well understood in the Church today. How does the Church discern the “will” of God? How does the Church discern the proper way to worship? How does the Church discern the appropriate boundaries of community? How does the Church discern experience, and more pointedly, the various experiences of its members? How does the Church view discernment with respect to the use of the various charisms or gifts of the Holy Spirit that it has received? How does the Church discern whether a claim that one speaks on behalf of God is genuine or not? How does the Church discern which concerns it should heed and which ones it can rightly or safely ignore? Furthermore, the question of who is empowered to exercise discernment in and on behalf of the community of faith is one that brings various responses.
74. The term “discernment” has more than one meaning. We found this to be the case when we looked at accounts in which we believe discernment was called for and exercised throughout the whole of Scripture. Sometimes it was exercised by an individual. At other times it was clearly exercised by an assembly of believers. Sometimes it had to do with reaching a decision that was not or could not simply be determined by a majority vote, but rather, one that required the participation of the Holy Spirit. On other occasions, it seems to have been exercised through consensus. Sometimes, a leader heard the evidence and then rendered a decision. The people then ratified the decision, believing that this was the voice or will of God and they must heed it. As we looked at the biblical backdrop to the subject of discernment, we found differences in emphasis and interpretation. But we also received help in understanding this often misunderstood and sometimes abused concept.

The Biblical Backdrop to Understanding Discernment

75. Discernment always involves an assessment of facts and it always results in a decision or judgment. As early as the creation account, human beings were given choices. They could obey God and not eat of the tree of life or of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, or they could disobey God and eat the fruit of these trees. Those were the facts that they were given in the Divine command. Their choice involved distinguishing between right from wrong, weighing the choices, and then acting upon the choice that they made. Did God really mean what He said or did God not mean it? That was the question that the serpent raised, but their choice based on their response to the question was clear. They failed to obey what God had commanded and the consequence of breaking communion with God was the loss of equality with one another, banishment, suffering, and death (Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-7, 16-24).
76. In another case, the people of Israel were called upon to discern the Word of the Lord. The confrontation between Jeremiah the prophet and the prophet Hananiah set forth in Jeremiah 28:1-17, is a classic example in which Judah heard conflicting messages and was expected to discern which of them spoke the truth. Both men claimed to speak on behalf of God when they said, "Thus saith the Lord." But only one of them had a genuine Word from the Lord. In the end, the King of Judah and his people failed to recognize or discern, and act upon the truth, and the consequence was the Babylonian captivity.
77. Within the New Testament, the process of discernment also has to do with listening for and hearing the voice of God. Jesus repeatedly told those who followed him, "*Let anyone with an ear to hear listen!*" (Mark 4:9, 23, etc.) Some heard the voice of the Lord and obeyed. Others heard the words of the Lord but did not hear or understand them, that is, they did not discern them and as a result, they did not act upon them.
78. Acts 15:1-35 provides a graphic example of how the earliest Christian community reached the decision *together* that Gentiles could be incorporated into the Church without first becoming Jews. The text states that "*The apostles and elders met together to consider this matter*" (Acts 15:6). Sides had already been drawn and debate on the issue was intense. Once the debate had run its course, the Apostle Peter was granted the floor. He told of how the Gentile, Cornelius, and his household had received the Holy Spirit in the same way that the rest of those gathered had received the Holy Spirit. The group became silent and considered this testimony. After a time, Barnabas and Paul testified "*of the signs and wonders that God had done through them among the Gentiles*" (Acts 15:12b).
79. In the end, the Apostle James responded by reminding them of Peter's words, and noted that Peter's testimony was consistent with the Scriptures they had all received (Amos 9:11-12). James then rendered his decision in the matter. The Gentiles would be welcomed with a minimum of cultural imposition, and he would write a letter setting forth these few things. The text goes on to note that the Apostles and elders then chose representatives to carry the letter to those Gentiles who were becoming Christians, and that the letter explained how the decision not to impose a further burden on these Gentiles had "seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us" (Acts 15:28a). In short, the rest of the community ratified the decision through their participation in this letter, although the decision had been rendered by James (Acts 15:19).

80. Most Christians today, Reformed and Pentecostal included, understand this model of discernment as it has been set forth. And while terms such as deciding, determining, distinguishing, and discerning are used of the activity that is described in this passage, there is also another related aspect of discernment that is found in the New Testament. Two words that describe this aspect of the early Christian community's understanding of discernment are the noun *diakrisis* that is used in 1 Corinthians 12, and the verb *dokimazō* that is found in 1 Thessalonians 5 and 1 John 4.
81. In 1 Corinthians, Paul links discernment to the grace of the Holy Spirit, pointing out that it is the Spirit who grants the “discerning of [alternately translated: ability to distinguish between] spirits” [*diakriseis pneumatōn*] (1 Corinthians 12:8-10). In this passage Paul provides a clear link between the Spirit-given ability to speak various kinds of tongues and the charism of interpretation (verse 10). In the same way, there appears to be a link between those who are given the charism of prophecy and those who are used in the discernment of spirits. This link is more explicit in 1 Corinthians 14:29 when Paul instructs the Corinthians that when they gather for worship they may “Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weigh [literally: discern (*diakrinetōsan*)] what is said.”
82. The verb, *dokimazō* and its derivatives is used in connection with prophetic speech, as for example, in 1 Thessalonians 5:19-22. In this case, Paul instructs the Thessalonian congregation not to despise prophesying but to “test” [*dokimazete*] everything, holding fast what is good while abstaining from every form of evil. Similarly, 1 John 4:1-3a exhorts John's readers to “test the spirits (*dokimazete ta pneumata*) to see whether they are of God....” Here again, the “discernment of spirits” is clearly associated with claims to inspired speech.
83. Another illustration of how this gift seems to have been used may be found in the case of Paul and Silas as they ministered in Philippi. There they encountered a young woman, a fortune-telling slave, who the text says had a “spirit of divination” (Acts 16:16-18). Each day, she would follow them and announce, “*These men are slaves of the Most High God, who proclaim to you a way of salvation.*” What she said was true. But as a fortune teller, her knowledge of who Paul and Silas were and what they did came through this spirit of divination that she had. As a result, Paul finally turned and addressed the spirit (not the young woman), “*I order you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.*” And it came out that very hour.” The link between the discernment of spirits to some form of “prophetic” or “spirit inspired” speech here strongly suggests the pairing of these actions.

Sources of Discomfort between Us

84. It was in our discussion of this second aspect of discernment that provided our greatest source of tension. Some members of the Reformed team wanted to emphasize the account in Acts 15 while members of the Pentecostal team viewed the passages in 1 Corinthians and other epistles as equally important. In the end, the debate allowed us to learn from one another and to appreciate the points that each team wanted to emphasize. It opened up new avenues of discussion and agreement.

85. Our discussion led to the realization, for instance, that while in many ways our cultures, Reformed and Pentecostal are quite similar; in other ways they are very different. While Pentecostals speak easily about the exercise of gifts or charisms such as prophecy, tongues, the interpretation of tongues, and the discernment of spirits, they are relatively unaccustomed of thinking of “discernment” primarily in the decision-making process of a denominational Assembly. Pentecostals agree with Reformed Christians that the decision-making process such as that outlined in Acts 15 is a valid example of discernment within the Church. Where we differed, and this may in part be due our particular emphases, was that Pentecostals are equally convinced that there is a need for the gift of “discerning of spirits” in assessing the voice of God when it is reflected in claims to gifts such as prophecy, tongues, the interpretation of tongues, words of wisdom, words of knowledge, and the like.
86. What we note even in these differences is that the “discernment of spirits” or the shorthand term “discernment” is a process or activity that both of our communities take seriously. We note that both of us anticipate hearing the voice of God. Both of our communities understand that what God says to us is to be taken seriously. Where we are prepared to hear the voice of God, that is, the means by which we anticipate that God may choose to speak is not always shared in the same way.
87. Reformed Christians think of the primary locus for decision-making being the legitimate exercise of discernment, undertaken in light of the Scriptures and especially within the community of faith. But many Reformed Christians have difficulty understanding why Pentecostals insist on discerning spirits, prophesying, or exorcising demons as a result of a discernment process, and they have many questions about the value and exercise of some of the charisms listed in Paul’s charismatic catalogues. They worry about what they view as the subjectivity of Pentecostal actions and experiences in these things. The result was that we took extra time together to explore Pentecostal understandings of the gift of prophecy and the discerning of spirits with the hope of gaining greater clarity on where we agreed and where we disagreed on the subject of discernment.
88. The claim to be engaged in prophetic activity or for churches to speak prophetically to one or another social ill is a common claim, especially among Christians from churches that emerged from the sixteenth century Reformation. This is not the case among Pentecostals. Sometimes this leads to criticism of Pentecostals that suggests that they are not sufficiently socially engaged. But Pentecostals view prophetic speech in a more traditional way.
89. In Exodus 4:14-16 we find the paradigmatic appearance of the Hebrew term *nabi’*, which is translated as *prophētēs* in the Septuagint.⁷ God spoke to Moses and asked Moses to carry a message to Pharaoh. When Moses excused himself, God commissioned Aaron to do so. “*He [Aaron] indeed shall speak for you [Moses] to the people; he shall serve as a mouth (literally, nabi’ or prophētēs) for you, and you shall serve as God for him.*” Thus, Moses provided Aaron with the message and Aaron acted as the message bearer, the prophet. The prophet or prophetess simply conveys to his or her recipients, the words that he or she has been given.

⁷ The feminine equivalent to the masculine form *nabi’* is *nabi’ah*. It is applied, for instance, to Deborah the prophetess in Judges 4:4. The role and function is the same regardless of gender.

Thus, Pentecostals understand the gift of prophecy to constitute a means even today, by which they may hear the voice of God.

90. The Apostle Paul noted that a variety of gifts or charisms have been given to the Church by the Holy Spirit for the “common good,” among them the gift of prophecy (1 Corinthians 12:8-10; Romans 12:6-8). Recognizing the need for order within the worshipping community (1 Corinthians 14:33, 40), Paul also set down guidelines for its proper use. Those who had been given such words were to be given the opportunity to present them to the community. They were to state them in an orderly fashion, allowing others to speak as well. The community was to be attentive to these words, but they also were expected to discern or test the message that was conveyed (1 Corinthians 14:29-32; 1 Thessalonians 5:19-22).
91. These guidelines took into consideration the person who prophesied, the process involved in the proclamation, and the proclamation that was given. Who is the person who claims to speak on behalf of God? The community needed to know. Is the person who prophesies willing to be governed by the rules set down, giving way to others, allowing his or her words to be tested, not causing division in the Body of Christ by claiming either a lack of self-control due to the influence of the Holy Spirit or using the “charism” to draw attention to him/herself? Does that person proclaim a “gospel” that is different from that taught by the Apostles? Anyone who refused to submit to these guidelines and thereby claimed unwarranted authority over the community, or who disagreed with the faith of the apostles, was to be ignored (1 Corinthians 14:37-38; 1 John 4:1-3; Galatians 1:9b).
92. All such words must be tested to see whether they conform to Scripture. No prophetic word is accepted that contradicts the word of God that we find in Scripture. No prophetic word is accepted as providing a normative revelation for all Christians, whether by addition or deletion. These gifts most often bring to remembrance those things that Jesus taught, in keeping with Jesus’ promise of the Holy Spirit’s role (John 14:26) and applies them in ways that are consistent with Paul’s teaching in 1 Corinthians 14.
93. Fully consistent with Paul’s understanding of charisms, the writer of 1 Peter 4:10-11 mentions charisms in a way that for Pentecostals suggests that prophetic activity, that is, conveying a message from God to another, holds both a narrow and a broader meaning. In this passage, all charisms are summed up under two rubrics. There are charisms of speech and there are charisms of service. Such charisms as “prophecy,” the “word of wisdom,” “word of knowledge,” “utterances in tongues,” the “interpretations of utterances in tongues” and the “discernment of spirits” are to be handled as “oracles of God” and as such may be classed under the broader rubric of “charisms of speech” or even “prophetic speech”.
94. Gifts that fall under this umbrella of “prophetic speech” (including dreams and visions or even an occasional audible voice) are recognized within Pentecostal churches as potential sources for hearing God’s voice, though they too, must always be discerned. They are never allowed to compete with Scripture. Scripture, as understood and interpreted within Pentecostal and Reformed communities alike is viewed as divinely inspired (1 Timothy 3:16), as the word of God written, with a universal ability to speak to all generations, peoples, and cultures. It holds a unique and normative role for the whole Church.

95. Prophetic speech is different. It may provide an edifying, encouraging, or consoling word (1 Corinthians 14:3), give specific direction (Acts 13:2), or even disclose the secrets in an unbeliever's heart (1 Corinthians 14:24-25). Such words, however, are limited to specific times, places, and circumstances. Agabus' prophecy of a worldwide famine has already been fulfilled (Acts 11:28), as has his prophecy concerning Paul's captivity in Jerusalem (Acts 21:10-11). While the Christian community is encouraged to listen carefully to such messages, they are not to be accepted at face value. They must first be tested or discerned in keeping with the revelation of Scripture before they can be accepted as having any value within the community.
96. Even with these guidelines in place the meaning of a prophetic word is not always immediately clear. *Discernment may require further research or knowledge.* That is why Jesus told His disciples that the fruit of a prophet's life bears watching. Many false prophets may appear, but good fruit does not come from a bad tree (Matthew 7:15-20). Jim Jones, a minister from the United States, provides a vivid contemporary example of one who made prophetic claims, but who ultimately led hundreds to their deaths in Guyana. It is important for the congregation to know who claims to speak on behalf of God, how his or her life is lived (the test of fruit), and whether the hand of God can be seen in that person's life.
97. *Sometimes discernment requires interpretation.* Paul's actions with respect to Agabus provide a case in point. Agabus gave a prophecy that seemed to call into question Paul's journey to Jerusalem (Acts 21:10-14). Agabus took Paul's belt, and bound him with it. He then prophesied, "*Thus says the Holy Spirit, 'This is the way the Jews in Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and will hand him over to the Gentiles'.*" The people heard Agabus' word as a warning that Paul should not go on to Jerusalem (Acts 21: 12). Paul, however, informed them that he had been "bound by the Spirit" to make this journey (Acts 20:22; 21:13). While the people understood the prophecy as a warning, Paul apparently viewed it as a word to the people that he would not be returning because his work lay ahead of him between Jerusalem and Rome. He held the key to that interpretation because he alone knew what the Holy Spirit had been saying to him before Agabus' message came.
98. *Sometimes discernment takes time.* This may require patience and faith, especially if an action is called for based upon a prophetic promise. God promised Abraham that if Abraham would follow him, he would receive great blessing (Genesis 12:1-3), but Abraham died in faith, believing the word of God centuries before the promise would be fulfilled (Hebrews 11:8-19). While prophetic words may foretell some reality, it may be years before that reality comes to pass. In 1994, the "Memphis Miracle", sometimes described as a prophetic event, brought Pentecostals together who had been estranged over racial issues for nearly a century. They listened to the prophetic call for confession, forgiveness, and healing. The process of forgiveness and healing began at that meeting, but its implementation continues today. Similarly, the *Kairos Document* played a prophetic role in the abandonment of apartheid in South Africa, though it continues to seek fulfillment to this day.
99. A prophetic word is ultimately considered to be valid when it is fulfilled. Such was Agabus' prophecy regarding the worldwide famine that resulted in the Jerusalem offering long before

the prophecy came to pass during the reign of Claudius Caesar (Acts 11:28-30). This point of discernment is important to remember in light of recent claims by some that the Lord would return by a specific date (Matthew 24:36; 25:13).

100. Finally, while many Pentecostals live in secular societies and in societies that have become desacralized, they have managed to retain their sense of the sacred and as a result, they are often countercultural. They continue to embrace a cosmology involving spirit beings that is similar to that portrayed in the Bible, and which may be found in many cultures from Africa to Asia. Pentecostals contend that they do this precisely because Jesus did so. While this way of looking at the cosmos may be understood in different ways among Pentecostals, with some emphasizing spiritual warfare, others deliverance ministry, and still others the miraculous healing power of Christ, the question of the discerning of spirits takes on a form that appears strange in societies where the boundaries of the sacred are unclear, or where the society has become secularized such as it has in Europe or North America.
101. On the whole, Pentecostals look for a holistic understanding of life that speaks to the physical, psychological, and spiritual needs of people. In their quest for a holistic understanding, they may engage in social ministry, ministries of compassion, prayer for healing, the identification of evil in demonic form, and even exorcism. They do not typically embrace the idea of demonic possession as the first response to whatever it is that ails you, but they do not dismiss it out of hand. Thus, they understand the charism of discerning spirits to be a tool that may play a legitimate role in making such identifications and distinguishing them from physical or psychological ailments.
102. In light of this discussion, it seems clear to us that the Scriptural witness to discernment is difficult for many Christians to understand today, especially in secularized and desacralized societies. In such societies, many of the things that Christians have believed through the centuries as having their origin in the spiritual world have been re-interpreted or simply set aside. As a result, the language of the New Testament does not always resonate in these cultures with the same meanings that the New Testament writers held. The language of the Bible, thus, requires skillful interpreters in the contemporary culture so that all may hear the voice of God and be blessed by obeying that voice. But the task of interpretation also requires those who can discern that the message has not been changed even though the words that communicate it have.

Common Affirmations: Discerning the Voice and Will of God

103. We agree that God continues to speak today through the Word and through the Holy Spirit. This means that God speak through the narrative of the Bible, and God employs other means as well. We agree that it is important for the Church to recognize God's voice wherever it is spoken and to distinguish between the means by which God speaks and the norms of God's revelation. In a fragmented world, and a too often fragmented Church, there is a critical need for shared discernment of the shape of Christian faith and life.

104. Other aspects of this discussion, however, were more difficult. Our difficulties emerged, in part, because our traditions tend to emphasize only certain aspects, partial understandings of discernment and we found that in some important ways we define discernment differently. Our sense of estrangement over the issue stems, in part, from the fact that the term “discernment” is not commonly found in the language of the classic Reformed theology and spirituality that developed from the sixteenth century period of the Reformation, and which taught until recently that spiritual gifts ceased with the close of the apostolic age. Contemporary Reformed use of “discernment”, therefore, tends to be limited to personal spirituality or to group process. Pentecostals, however, understand discernment to continue to be found not only in the decision making processes that govern Christian gatherings, but also within the charismatic contexts akin to those portrayed within Scripture itself.
105. Both of our traditions are conscious of the extent to which human depravity tends to lead us to conform to the world through self-deception. Hence, the Church as well as every Christian needs constantly to be open to the transforming power of the triune God. “*Do not be conformed to this world,*” exhorted the apostle, “*but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God – what is good and acceptable and perfect*” (Romans 12:2). Consequently, our churches emphasize God’s gracious call either to continuous conversion or to a process of conversion and sanctification. As we think of the wider meaning of discernment, we agree that the discerning process enables members of the Christian community to make practical, moral, ethical, social, and theological decisions that they believe are consistent with the “will” of God.
106. We agree that in this world, the Church is called to live in a different way. The Church is called to perceive God’s coming reign, and be led by the movement of the Holy Spirit to follow the risen Christ. The whole Church, each congregation, and every believer is called to discern God’s gracious and demanding will in order that ecclesial, congregational, and personal discipleship may be known and lived. This is a matter of Christian obedience and hope for all of us.
107. The primary place to hear the voice of God is in communities that are shaped by Word and Sacrament through the leading of the Holy Spirit. The personal *and* communal search for the will of God cannot be excluded from one another. Both in small group *and* large community, study and conversation are necessary to the faithful exercise of obedience. We believe that the Holy Spirit enables the individual believer *and* the Christian community *together* to make decisions in keeping with the “will” of God through the use of Scripture as the life-giving, divinely revealed word of God. Through preaching within the community, daily Bible reading alone and together, prayer alone and together, we echo mutual concern as well as the hope as we listen to Scripture and other voices that the community discerns as conveying the voice of God, through the power of the Holy Spirit.
108. We are agreed that the assembled congregation should be understood as playing an indispensable role in discerning and hearing the voice of God. It is only in the midst of the Christian community that we are truly equipped to, “*Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation*” (Mark 16:15b).

How We Have Been Challenged?

109. While it is clear that there is much about discernment on which we agree; our differences also need to be acknowledged and appreciated. We acknowledge from the outset that we are hardly strangers from one another. Some Reformed Churches in various parts of the world have embraced the charismatic realities to which Pentecostals bear witness. Some Pentecostal churches are deeply informed by Reformed theology. But we do not always concur on how “discernment” or the “discerning of spirits” plays out within our respective communities, especially where different cosmologies in place, or where secularization has occurred, or where the society has been largely desacralized. It is through understanding our differences that we might have something new to offer to one another.
110. This dialogue on the theme “Experience in Christian Faith and Life” has fulfilled a fundamental purpose in ecumenical dialogues. We were summoned out of the safe confines of our own traditions and challenged to explore features of another tradition that could enrich us. The challenges are not simply personal, but should be taken up by our respective faith communities as well. Challenges were particularly apparent around the subject of discernment.
111. Reformed churches have been challenged to discern more clearly the personalized aspects of evil in the world. Churches in the global north are often hesitant to speak about evil spirits or the reality of Satan. Many Christians restrict social immorality, mental disorders, brutal conflicts, and physical ills to natural causes that are only and always to be addressed through legal or scientific interventions. Unwillingness to acknowledge the possibility that some disorders may have spiritual origins leads to a loss of confidence in the redeeming power of God and the healing power of faith. Reformed churches are challenged to probe more deeply the scriptural acknowledgement of personal, aggressive evil in the world.
112. Reformed churches are challenged to make room in their church life – particularly in worship – for authoritative words to be spoken by anyone in the congregation. Protestants talk about “the priesthood of believers,” and Reformed Protestants have included in their polities two ordered ministries that most churches regard as laity – elders and deacons. Yet authoritative speech in congregational life is most often restricted to the church’s ministers, or restricted to authorized councils and committees. Pentecostal openness to unplanned prophetic words opens the whole community to Spirit-inspired utterances from the whole community.
113. Reformed churches are challenged to recognize the presence and legitimacy of “Pentecostal elements” in Reformed worship and church life, particularly in the global south. Pentecostal influence in worship is more than stylistic, and Pentecostal influence in features of congregational life such as healing and fervent personal prayer is more than programmatic. While traditional Reformed worship and patterns of church life remain appropriate in many churches, anticipation of different movements of the Holy Spirit is also appropriate in many churches.
114. Pentecostals are challenged to take more seriously the process of discernment within their personal, congregational, and denominational lives. It is often the case that people who

claim to speak for God but do not bear the fruit of that relationship are allowed to speak freely and with authority. Greater care needs to be taken to assess the integrity of those who claim to speak on behalf of God and to self-proclaimed prophets. Greater disciplinary care needs to be taken of those whose “prophetic” claims fail to pass the test of fulfillment.

115. Pentecostals are also challenged to identify more clearly the ways in which they are both open to hearing the voice of God and the ways in which they distinguish between those voices that speak God’s word to them and those that do not. The fact that Jesus likened the movement of God’s Spirit to the blowing of the wind (John 3:8) suggests that the ways and times when the Holy Spirit moves are not always predictable. This fact seems to have contributed to some forms of ecclesial institutionalization, even forms of theology that establish borders outside of which the Holy Spirit is not seen to be at work. This is the case even among Pentecostals, and it calls for greater Pentecostal reflection on the work of the Holy Spirit in the individual, the local congregation, the universal Church, as well as the world.
116. In the end, illustrations drawn from the daily lives of these two Christian families on how they discern the voice and will of God may provide valuable insights not only for one another, but also for the whole Church so that it might “grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body’s growth in building itself up in love” (Ephesians 4:15-16).

IV. EXPERIENCE IN CHRISTIAN FAITH AND LIFE: COMMUNITY

They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Acts 2:42-47

We declare to you what was from the first, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life – this life was revealed, and we have seen it and testify to it, and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us – we declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you also may have koinōnia with us; and truly our fellowship (koinōnia) is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.

1 John 1:1-3

Introduction

117. During the first decade of the twenty-first century, Pentecostal and Reformed Christians celebrated landmark events. In 2006, Pentecostals and others from around the world celebrated the centenary of the Azusa Street Revival, a crucial event in global Pentecostalism. Viewed as a source of renewal for the church catholic, the intention of the Azusa Street Revival was not to divide but rather to unite the church in its faithful witness. In 2009 Reformed and others observed the 500th anniversary of the birth of John Calvin. Like Luther before him, Calvin's passionate commitment for reform of the church was coupled with commitment to the church's unity. And yet, division of the church multiplied so that Calvin became the forebear of a distinct ecclesial tradition. Pentecostal and Reformed Christians continue to couple renewal of the church's faith and life with a desire for the visible unity of Christ's church congregationally, denominationally, and trans-denominationally.
118. Scripture shows us a particularly fruitful way of understanding life in community that opens the church to reform, renewal, and life together. The New Testament Greek word *koinōnia* is a subtle and suggestive term that is usually translated by a number of words such as *communion, fellowship, participation, partnership, sharing, contribution, and taking part*. The variety of translations suggests the richness of the term – no one word can capture the range of meanings – yet readers of the New Testament in translation may be unaware that one Greek term underlies seemingly disparate terminology.

Biblical and Theological Insights into Community

119. Holy Scripture testifies to the experience of a body of believers called to follow the crucified and risen Jesus, learning from him and testifying to his saving lordship. The risen Christ charged this community to go into the whole world, proclaiming the gospel, making disciples, and teaching the way of the Lord. From the first, new disciples *devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship [koinōnia], to the breaking of bread, and to the prayers* (Acts 2:42). The faith and life of believers was shaped around mutual abiding – abiding in Christ, and through Christ, abiding in one another (John 15:1-11). Their abiding in Christ opened up their relationship with the Father (“*As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us*”.... John 17:21a) and the Holy Spirit (“*When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father,*”.... John 15:26a). This *koinōnia* of the community is communion, the fullness of God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – and thus, communion in the unity of the gospel. As Paul wrote to the community in Corinth, so he writes to us, “*If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing (koinōnia) in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind*” (Philippians 2:1-2).
120. Oneness in “*the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion [koinōnia] of the Holy Spirit*” (2 Corinthians 13:13) is central to the many New Testament texts relating to the experiences and practices of *koinōnia* in the New Testament. These biblical texts open us to the blessings of communion in spiritual, social, and even material levels. They suggest rich personal encounters of mutual support and strengthening. They bear witness to solidarity through suffering and need. Throughout, *koinōnia* is the gift of the Father, through

the Son, in the power of the Holy Spirit. Yet *koinōnia* is also the task of the community. Paul wrote to Philemon words that are now addressed to us: “*When I remember you in my prayers, I always thank my God because I hear of your love for all the saints and your faith toward the Lord Jesus. I pray that the “sharing (koinōnia)” of your faith may become effective when you perceive all the good that we may do for Christ*” (Philemon 4-6). Our call to communion with Christ, in Christ, is a call to costly discipleship, for we are to “*know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing (koinōnia) of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death*” (Philippians 3:10).

121. We affirm that the rich and varied uses of *koinōnia* are appropriate ways to describe what is fundamental to the life of the local church – the deep, intimate, abiding relationship with God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and our deep, intimate abiding relationships with one another. However, it would be a misreading to suppose that *koinōnia* indicates fixed communal forms. Various communities of faith in diverse times and places shape their life together in reliance on the Holy Spirit who guides the Church into all truth (John 16:12-13). Yet forms should reflect the deep structures of *koinōnia* grounded in the one God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Living out the fullness of *koinōnia* presents churches with joys and challenges, touching on the whole of the community’s life, spiritual, social, and material. Embodied *koinōnia* overcomes tendencies to disregard or demean sisters and brothers in Christ. The “communion of the Holy Spirit” in charismatic gifts and offices within the whole fellowship of the church corrects excessive individualism. *Koinōnia* in the truth and in truthful living makes replaces moral ambiguity with disciplines of love. Understanding the Church as a *koinōnia* in faith, hope, and love gives new urgency to healing the wounds of congregational, denominational, and Church division.
122. *Koinōnia* is God’s gift, but our embodiment of *koinōnia* is not a given. The faithful life of the community is dependent on the creative and sustaining power of the triune God, yet our human experiences, no matter how rich and profound, bring within them the limitations and fragilities of the human situation. We are too well acquainted with the reality of discord and division in congregations, denominations, and the worldwide Church. Christian *koinōnia* in Word and Sacrament, in the Spirit’s gifts and callings, can become marks of separation. *There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all who is above all and through all and in all* (Ephesians 4:4-6), yet we must be summoned again and again to lead lives worthy of our calling and to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:2-3). We know the promise of *koinōnia*, but we do not yet possess its fullness.

Communion and the Worshipping Community

123. When Christians gather in community around Word and Sacrament/Ordinance to worship God and be nurtured in faith, they answer their calling to be the body of Christ. They acknowledge the grace of God that brings them together and sends them out in the power of the Holy Spirit to be witnesses to the world. As we explored the biblical witness to *koinōnia* we soon found that although while we come from different ecclesial traditions and from various

parts of the world, our talk about this important theological concept was deepened by our experience of the reality of communion among us.

124. We are aware that *communion* continues to be a central element in current ecclesiological and ecumenical discussion. We believe that our dialogue contributes to this discussion by focusing on *koinōnia* in the congregation and among congregations. The congregation is the basic form of the Church (Matthew 18:20), although the congregation is not in itself a sufficient form of the church.
125. Throughout the centuries, Christians have assembled to worship God, saying and doing the things that identify them as the people of God, the body of Christ, the temple of the Holy Spirit. In the worshiping community, God's gift of *koinōnia* is expressed in the reading of Scripture and the celebration of Sacraments/Ordinances, in proclamation and testimony, in praise and lament, in thanksgiving and intercession, in offering and healing, in reconciliation and service. This *koinōnia* is not the community's creation, but rather the gift of God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. As God draws people into communion with Himself, and thereby into communion with one another, communion is widened as congregations are drawn into communion with other worshiping communities locally, regionally, and globally.
126. Within Pentecostal and Reformed congregations, communion becomes deeper as Christians share their lives in Christ together. Congregations at their best allow people to be known personally. Many congregations function as extended families in Christ as relationships are transformed and expanded. People in the gathered community pray for and with each other, bear one another's burdens, grieve and celebrate together, hold one another accountable, and challenge each other as they respond to God's grace. Congregations extend personal care to those who are vulnerable and in need. Communities of faith may experience powerful movements of the Spirit in healings of body and spirit. Communion is far more than mere togetherness and exceeds the human capacity for communal ties. *Koinōnia* is constituted and empowered by the grace of Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit.
127. *Koinōnia* is embodied in the community's worship. Communion is visible in the flowing waters of baptism, the sharing of bread and wine in the Lord's Supper, in the rhythms of prayer and praise. Communion is tangible in joys and concerns, mutual affirmation and admonition, communal ministry and mission. In a wide variety of worship styles shared across ecclesial traditions, communion is seen and touched and heard and tasted. The *koinōnia* of brothers and sisters in worship continues as God sends people into homes, workplaces, and schools to live within his mission of witness and service. Communion is strengthened day to day as people of the congregation pray, study, and share meals. Embodied communion, grounded in worship, is built up in continuing service to God, to one another, and to the world.
128. Although communion is first experienced and expressed in the worship and ministry of local congregations, it cannot remain there. Communion presses beyond the congregation to embrace other congregations. Communion among congregations is lived out in denominational relationships, associations for cooperative mission, inter-denominational fellowship, and ecumenical engagements. All of these interactions are movements toward the visible unity of Christ's church. The formation of denominations, the reunion of separated churches, the

establishments of Para-church organizations for witness and service, and various ecumenical movements are each aspects of a continuous effort to fulfill God's will for the life and witness of the church. Our Lord prays that we "*may all be one...so that the world may believe*" that the Father has sent the Son (John 17:20-23). The unity of the whole community of faith is not sought for institutional or pragmatic reasons, but as a witness to the fractured world of *koinōnia* with the one God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – and with neighbors near and far.

129. Visible expressions of Christian communion are numerous, and commitment to the full *koinōnia* of the Church varies among the various Christian families. While we must acknowledge the endurance of historic breaches and fault-lines within the Church, every manifestation of *koinōnia* comes from God and displays to the world the ways of Christians love both within and beyond the community. The life of communion generates new relationships marked by solidarity, mutuality, and shared life with the triune God.
130. As we have reflected on *koinōnia* as a constitutive reality of Christian community, we have acknowledged that its rich biblical and theological substance has not been fully matched by the actual lives of our churches. Yet we have much to share that can enrich the character of communion within and beyond the congregation. We can explore the depth of God's covenant of grace, from Abraham through Sinai to the new covenant sealed in Christ's blood that establishes new relationships among God's covenant people. We can explore the riches of the Spirit's gifts, poured out at Pentecost and poured out today that build up the one body of Christ. We can explore the Nicene Creed's marks of the church – unity, holiness, catholicity, and apostolicity – in congregations, denominations, and the Church universal. We can explore the reality of the Church as the people of God, the body of Christ, and the temple of the Holy Spirit. As we probe these elements of our common heritage, we will be drawn into realities of *koinōnia* that we have not yet imagined.

Nurturing Communion

131. Communion is God's gift, freely given, manifesting the new relationship between believers and God, and among believers. *Koinōnia* is nothing less than a new way of being, marked by love for God and for one another. A scribe asks Jesus, "*Which commandment is the first of all?*" Jesus answers, "*The first is, 'Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.'* The second is this, '*You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*' There is no other commandment greater than these" (Mk 12:28-31). This teaching establishes a life together that draws others toward God and toward new life in community. As the light of *koinōnia* shines in the world, others see it, give glory to God, and witness the possibilities of new life in God's community, (Matthew 5:14-16).
132. God's gift of communion, freely given, is intended to be freely received. The "apostolic benediction" at the conclusion of 2 Corinthians voices both a fact and a hope: "*the communion koinōnia of the Holy Spirit be with you all*" (2 Corinthians 13:13). *May* the communion of the Holy Spirit that *is* with *us* (singular), be with *us* (plural). God's gift of communion calls forth active personal and communal participation by its recipients. *Koinōnia*

must be both embraced and nurtured. Scripture repeatedly calls members of the Christian community to live a life worthy of their calling, and to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (see Ephesians 4:1-3), and to live lives that are worthy of the gospel (see Philippians 1:27-2:11).

133. Our churches encourage spiritual disciplines that nurture the community's life, for we realize that communion may be impaired or broken by a lack of attention to the ongoing work of "*building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ*" (Ephesians 4:12b-13). *Koinōnia* in congregations and among congregations, in denominations and among denominations, in ecclesial traditions and among ecclesial traditions, must be received, maintained, and strengthened so that *all* will know that "*if anyone is in Christ there is a new creation....*" (2 Corinthians 5:17a).
134. Shared community standards are central to *koinōnia*. The church needs norms of faith and faithfulness that identify the community as Christ's women and men. Scripture is the God-given norm that governs all other community standards. It bears authority in the lives of individual believers, the gathered community, denominational structures, and the church catholic. Scriptural norms are accompanied by creeds and confessions that summarize the biblical witness and by church polities that embed scriptural patterns of faith and life in particular contexts. Scripture, confessions, and patterns of ecclesial governance set both aims and boundaries of community life. Together, they call us to put aside works of the flesh and to nurture the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:16-26), to put to death earthly things and clothe ourselves with righteousness (Colossians 3: 5-17).
135. The Church experiences continual challenges to truth and truthful living. Disturbances and disruptions within the community of faith are ever present. Social and cultural realities of race, ethnicity, gender, nationalism, sexuality, money, and power can threaten the Church from without. Ecclesial realities of, immorality and sin, biblical illiteracy, theological confusion, mistakes and errors, heresies and apostasy all threaten the church from within. The community is called to be in but not of the world, and so the genuine *koinōnia* of Christian communion requires constant discernment of the ways in which the community is faithful or unfaithful to the gospel.
136. There are degrees of communion within and among Christian communities. Regional judicatories (dioceses, districts, conferences, presbyteries, etc.) do not always enable relationships among congregations, denominations are all too often arenas of conflict that lead to splits, and church families are often content to live in isolation from other church families. Nurturing the divine gift of communion among the people of God is essential if we are to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Communion as Witness to the World

137. *Koinōnia* expresses the relationship of the body of Christ to its Head, as well as fellowship within the believing community. Christian communion must also bear witness in

the world to the reality of human communion with God and the reality of human communion within a new community of peace and joy.

138. The *koinōnia* of the community witnesses to the world that the Church is God's creation, that it lives under the Lordship of Christ, and that it is sustained in the power of the Holy Spirit. The Church is not its own; it is centered in God's new Way, it is sent into the world by Christ, and its life is shaped by the Spirit. The *koinōnia* of the community witnesses to the world that new life in Christ is a reality that overcomes the world's discord and division. Yet the community's failures to embody *koinōnia* are also a witness – a negative witness – to the world. When the world sees little more than its own reflection in the Church, God is dishonored and the gospel is obscured. Unity in the Christian community proclaims God's grace, love, and communion; fragmentation in the Christian community simply echoes the world's tired message of indifferent division. Our Lord prays now for the unity of his people so that "*the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me*" (John 17:23b).
139. The fullness of communion is not visible in self-satisfied, self-sustained, independent congregations and denominations. God calls solitary communities to discover the joy of shared faith in the shared space of communion among many communions. Although unique creativity is found in the particular histories and cultures of particular communities, these are meant to be shared so that all communities are enriched: "*Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good*" (1 Corinthians 12:4-7). Within this Spirit-graced reality, communities offer mutual affirmation and mutual admonition so that fidelity to God's purpose may be sustained. *Koinōnia* does not imply uniformity, but expresses the harmony of genuine unity.
140. One expression of *koinōnia* in the New Testament is suggestive for the life of Christian communities. Paul encouraged the small churches that he had established to provide aid to the community in Jerusalem. "*For, as I can testify,*" Paul wrote to the community in Corinth, "[the churches in Macedonia] *voluntarily gave according to their means, and even beyond their means, begging us earnestly for the privilege of "sharing, (koinōnia)" in this ministry to the saints – and this, not merely as we expected; they gave themselves first to the Lord and, by the will of God, to us*" (2 Corinthians 8:3-5). Communion among congregations goes far beyond thinking well of each other, or establishing diplomatic relationships, or even joining together in conciliar relationships. Deep patterns of mutual responsibility and accountability find material expression in the generous sharing of resources. Distributing money was the issue at hand in the early church, and may be a mark of communion's actuality, but communion in material resources is only one tangible verification of genuine *koinōnia* in the communities' full resources of energy, intelligence, imagination, and love.
141. The communion of God's people is expected to have an unconditional serving and healing radiance in the world near and far, that conveys to all who witness it, the good news of forgiveness and reconciliation in Christ. The light that is to shine through communion flows

from communion of the Church with God, and communion among believers, and communion among communities of believers.

142. *“I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus, for in every way you have been enriched in him, in speech and knowledge of every kind – just as the testimony of Christ has been strengthened among you – so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revealing of the Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful; by him you were called into the fellowship (koinōnia) of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord”* (1 Corinthians 1:4-9).

V. EXPERIENCE IN CHRISTIAN FAITH AND LIFE: JUSTICE

*Let justice roll down like waters,
and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.*

Amos 5:24

Introduction

143. The kingdom of God, that is, God’s reign, is the Way of justice in the world. “Justice” strives for the creation of a commonwealth in which harmonious relationships abound. For Pentecostal and Reformed churches, the journey toward justice comes in response to God’s righteousness, God’s call for and work of justice.
144. Many Pentecostals are tempted to spiritualize the subject of justice and dismiss justice as politicized, and hence, as a polarized term. Pentecostal preaching about the kingdom, the poor, and deliverance from oppression is often communicated with a limited biblical and inadequate theological understanding of justice that hinders many Pentecostal churches from addressing various structures of injustices or envisioning a just society.
145. Many Reformed believers are tempted to eclipse the theological grounds for the Church’s commitment by moralizing it. It is too often reduced to the assertion of rights and the adjudication of competing claims. In recent decades, a theological basis for the term “justice” has often been lacking in the Reformed world.
146. In our dialogue we found the greatest commonality about justice as a subject when we focused on a concrete situation that dealt with the topic, rather than discussing the subject abstractly. Our churches have sought to be faithful to this call and have responded in different ways in various places around the world, searching for effective ways to pursue a commonwealth of peace.
147. Hence, Pentecostal and Reformed Christians experience God’s call to justice as a gift because it helps them to be just, whereas they could not achieve justice on their own. As Christian individuals and communities, we want others to act justly towards us but are aware how rarely this happens. At the same time, other people and churches expect us to act justly towards them, but we seldom achieve more than partial justice. We long for God’s

righteousness and recall that it is first and foremost a gift of God's grace and through this grace God helps us to establish justice.

Biblical Foundation

148. Scripture presents the world in a new light. God's reign, God's new Way, is portrayed in astonishing visions of life. Relationships in the world are transformed.

*The wolf shall live with the lamb,
the leopard shall lie down with the kid,
the calf and the lion and the fatling together,
and a little child shall lead them.
The cow and the bear shall graze,
their young shall lie down together;
and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.
The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp,
and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den.
They will not hurt or destroy
on all my holy mountain;
for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord
as the waters cover the sea.*

Isaiah 11:6-9

God's righteousness leads toward a peaceable kingdom, composing harmonies within creation so that life can flourish. All relationships are re-ordered by God's loving embrace. More than a hope toward which we press, God's peaceable kingdom it is already "upon us." Jesus read from the prophet Isaiah,

*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me
because he has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.*

Luke 4:16-19⁸

149. When Jesus finished the reading of this text, he proclaimed, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4:21) Again, when asked whether Jesus was the bringer of the kingdom, Jesus told them to "Go and tell John what they had seen and heard: *the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have good news brought to them*" (Luke 7:22). The advent of Jesus is the coming of the kingdom. The 'way things are' is supplanted by God's new Way: God's righteousness, God's rule, takes hold in the midst of an unjust world.

⁸ The text that Jesus read, which is quoted in Luke 4:16-18, was Isaiah 61:1-2.

150. God graces the world with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in which the alienation of Babel is overcome. Peoples once separated by nationality and confused by the inability to comprehend different languages hear the good news together. In the Spirit, social divisions between young and old, slave and free, men and women, are overwhelmed by the Spirit, who is poured out on all (cf. Acts 2:1-21). The gift of the Holy Spirit created a new life and community as believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to communion, breaking bread and praying together, holding all things in common. The visible shape of this new Way in the world was met with favor by those who saw what occurred (cf. Acts 2:42-47).
151. The advent of God's kingdom opens a new Way for those who have been reconciled in Christ. All people are called to repent, and to trust God's "new thing" that has been created through Christ Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit. "*All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us*" (2 Corinthians 5:18-19).
152. Both Scripture and Christian tradition have much to say about justice, and the Church's responsibility to do justice and to seek justice is clear. Scripture and Christian tradition, however, do not equate God's justice with fairness, nor do they assume that justice is established through the adjudication of competing claims to certain rights. Justice/righteousness (Hebrew *tsedeq* / Greek *dikaionē*) has much more to do with relationships than it does with rights, covenants than with laws, peace than with verdicts, communion than with competition.
153. The concept of "justice" is not a simple, self-evident concept. Alasdair MacIntyre's inquiry draws attention to "the intimidating range of questions about what justice requires and permits, to which alternative and incompatible answers are offered by contending individuals and groups within contemporary societies." He goes on to point out that "underlying this wide diversity of judgments upon particular types of issues are a set of conflicting conceptions of justice, conceptions that are strikingly at odds with one another in a number of ways."⁹ The Church's acceptance of popular assumptions about justice blocks its capacity to discern distinctive Christian contours of justice and to live them out in faithfulness to God, and in witness to the world around it.
154. In the end, real or genuine justice is God's justice. More than the product of human effort or the result of human ingenuity, God's justice is given in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. Yet, by God's grace we are joined to Christ and to one another as the body of Christ, gifted by the Spirit to conform no longer to the pattern of this present world, but to be transformed by the renewal of our minds so that we may discern God's "will" (cf. Romans 12:2). In this way, we are set free in righteousness to reach or strive toward God's world-to-come.

⁹ Alisdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), 1.

155. Paul's familiar words set forth God's gift of justice and our calling to participate in the divine mission. Because this new Way in the world is God's Way, brought by Christ and directed by the Holy Spirit, we are called to participate in His ministry of reconciliation, breaking down the dividing walls of hostility (Ephesians 2:14-22). This ministry often involves ensuring food for the hungry, drink for the thirsty, shelter for the homeless, clothing for the poor, care for the sick, and liberation for captives of various kinds (Matthew 25:34-40). We are called to love neighbor and enemy alike (Matthew 5:44-45a).
156. God's new Way has come and we are called to turn our lives around and trust that we can live as people whose justification and sanctification rest in Christ's mercy and the Holy Spirit's power. As Christ's people, the unrighteous are both made righteous and enabled to live righteously; the unjust are both justified and empowered to act justly. Yet the gospel's proclamation is never fully realized in our individual lives or in our life together. So we yearn for the reconciliation of the world and the advent of the realm of God's rule as we pray to our Father, "*Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth...*". It is in our prayer that we receive again the good news of God's reign, ache again for the coming of the kingdom, and pray again for the faithfulness to do God's will.
157. "*And what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?*" (Micah 6:8). The justice, for which we strive, is the God-given reality of God's peace or wholeness (*shalom*), not our limited views of right relationships and our dominion. And yet our striving is marked by the responsibility to work in practical action for human justice and a commonwealth that advances God's *shalom*.
158. "*We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now*" (Romans 8:22). Our hope for the fullness of the God's realm, the wholeness of God's righteousness, the vitality of God's economy of abundance is expressed in the Church's worship and in our prayers, "Thy kingdom come" and "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."
159. The foundational preaching of Jesus remains central to the message and mission of the Christian community today. "*Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent and believe in the good news'*" (Mark 1:14b-15) Together we rejoice that the time is now full, that God's reign has commenced among us, and that we can repent and have faith in this good news. We thank God that the time is now, that God's new Way in the world has begun, and that we are called to turn around and trust this new path.

Theological Insights

160. Justice, justification, and sanctification are intertwined. Justification sets us free from the bondage of sin and death. Sanctification enables us to be conformed to Christ and participate more fully in God's call to righteousness. Justification and sanctification shape us in a just way of being. God releases human beings from their self-centeredness, setting us free to do good to others. Because of God's liberating presence in history and the human

incapability to engineer history, the justice in which we share comes from God and serves the kingdom of God.

161. The christological grounds for justice are located in the connection between the justification of sinners, the sanctification of believers, and their resulting just actions. God as the source, inspiration, and measure of justice brings it to all “by reconciling the world” to God in Jesus Christ. Justice comes from God who has initiated the world’s reconciliation back to God; God has reconciled the world to God through Christ. God has welcomed us into the ministry of reconciliation and has “given us the message of reconciliation”. As Christ’s ambassadors of reconciliation, we have been selected by God to be the channels of the God’s appeals to the world. (2 Co 5:17-21).
162. The pneumatological grounds for justice are located in the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost, and the inauguration of the Church. At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit enabled the Church to act justly in society which was fractured by divisions along racial, ethnic, gender, class, and linguistic lines. At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit empowered the Church to overcome these divisions and to introduce new ways of relating, while at the same time promoting personal and social righteousness. Pentecost illuminated the need for and the reality of justice.
163. Together, our churches are called to reflect critically upon our actions as churches in light of God’s call to justice, and God’s justifying and sanctifying grace. Our churches have been involved in perpetrating injustice within our communities, especially through nationalism, racism, sexism, classism, and other sources of difference such as ability or disability. We commit ourselves to a live of repentance and a reliance on God’s mercy and grace.

Experience of Suffering in the World

164. Christians have been called to act justly in all aspects of our lives. Any Christian who remains silent in the face of suffering grieves God. In various countries, the experience of suffering is exemplified in the injustices perpetrated by the official government. While we are sometimes complicit in supporting immoral governments, there have often been persons in our traditions that were steadfast in resisting these governments, and they suffered greatly for it. As the people of God, we must, on the one hand, be committed to pray for those in leadership, but we must also be willing to speak out against and resist injustice when we see it.
165. Our experience in South Africa reminded us of the role that our churches played in erecting, sustaining, dismantling and overcoming the unjust system of apartheid. On the other hand, we were especially inspired by the role of our churches in transitioning to a post-apartheid church and society. The churches, both congregations and denominations of South Africa, were pivotal in promoting reconciliation over retribution in the wake of apartheid. The Church was vital in designing and leading the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa. In addressing past injustices, the Commission gave a critical place to truth-telling and public confession, granted forgiveness in terms of amnesty for those who confessed, and understood that these spiritual practices would advance the healing of the society and of the people. By restoring relationships that apartheid had severed, reconciliation served as a

political alternative to the racial separatism that marked apartheid and supplied a new basis for multiracial unity. Reconciliation was a factor in overcoming enmity, fostering new relationships, engendering trust, cultivating friendship, facilitating healing, and securing justice.

166. In other countries, we heard from speakers that shared with us topics such as the plight of migrant Christians in Europe, the atrocity of human trafficking, and persistence of religious persecution. Issues of human suffering are manifested in structural, social, and political levels. We are called through Scripture to defend the orphan, the stranger, and the widow, and we are admonished to contend for justice. Examples exist in the inequities in economic systems that impose conditions, which stifle the ability of countries and persons to thrive financially. Emphasis on economic gain without due regard for the welfare of the people among whom such activities are undertaken can create situations of suffering for innocent people. Other examples of injustice may be found in such things as mining activities that pollute drinking water and destroy farmland, exposing the people to health hazards and depriving affected communities of their livelihood. Still others may be found in the many societies that are plagued with the epidemic of HIV/Aids, which adversely affects families, congregations, and communities.
167. We are called to speak out against these types of violence and be in solidarity with these victims. There are places around the world where our churches are committed to providing for those who are political, economic, and religious refugees, that is, strangers in our midst. We are called as a people to do as Jesus commanded us, in Matthew 25: 35-40 to provide for those who are in need, while being “salt” and “light” in the world (Matthew 5:13-16).
168. We recognize that there are competing visions of justice. Within our traditions we find declarations of justice, even from global gatherings, that respond theologically to particular unjust situations. In these documents, we challenge specific instances of injustice and enter into solidarity with those in pursuit of justice. Grounded in the Holy Spirit as Liberator, the yoking of holiness and righteousness, and the inclusion of the anointing which embraces the liberating presence of the Holy Spirit, these declarations attempt to give voice to God’s desire for love and harmony in the human community. These confessions awaken the conscience, focus our vision, and inspire some to take more active roles by engaging in specific acts of justice. Addressing issues of injustice is meant to move the Church beyond merely confessing into a level of humility and brokenness before God and one another that results in change and renewal. God and history will be the judge of the long-term impact and relevance of making justice integral to this witness.
169. The work for justice involves a participation in God’s ongoing work and it flows out of our worship of God. One dimension of worship that plays a critical role in our understandings of righteousness is prayer. Both of our traditions take seriously the efficacious character of prayer. Prayer provides the opportunity to make the needs of the people known. Prayers of intercession on behalf of victims of injustice are a regular part of our liturgies. When we pray “Thy will be done,” we are reminded that God desires justice, it is God who calls us to be just and to act justly, and that it is to God that we must turn for the wisdom and power to act justly.

170. Times for personal testimonies are frequently set aside for people to give reports of reconciliation that has been taking place in their lives. Not only is the testimony an opportunity for the individual to lead the congregation into the worship of God through praise for righteous acts, it is also an opportunity to provide reports that include updates on the status of actions that offer glimpses into God's world-to-come.
171. As part of our worshipping life, our heritage reminds us that there has been an emphasis on the congregation's personal relationship to the poor. It is the Lord's desire that the Christian congregation recognize the poor as *its own*. Through baptism and communion, we bear witness to the God's *shalom*.
172. In conclusion, we proclaim that the commonwealth of justice is God's Way of justice in the world. Justice is a gracious gift from God who has called us to participate in His ministry of reconciliation. The work for justice is a participation in God's Way, in God's movement. We journey toward justice in repentance and service into God's work of justice and the commonwealth of *shalom*.

Conclusion

173. The second round of the Reformed-Pentecostal Dialogue began with the intension to discuss "Experience in Christian Faith and Life". The decision to address specific practical issues between our two Christian traditions brought a different accent to our discussion because the first round paid attention to areas of agreement and differences in history and theological conviction. Consequently, our meetings from 2001-2011 focused more on the "us", who we are *together*, rather than on those things that distinguish us from one another. Furthermore, we discussed differences in approach or understanding. The inevitable question that followed was, "What does this mean for us?" rather than, "What might this mean for them?" The group also made an effort to think globally, including points of views that hopefully represent our respective communities in other parts of the world.
174. The second round of dialogue has shown that there is common ground in many aspects in the experience of faith and life in our respective churches. Differences in conviction and practice are not to be understood as an excuse for anyone to do "what is right in their own eyes" (Judges 17:6). Rather, different emphases should serve as a challenge for us to find understanding and to engage together in various activities as they present themselves. Such a commitment is appropriate between Pentecostals and their Reformed brothers and sisters. On the basis of these findings, we recommend the continuation of talks between our churches.

Pentecostal Participants

Dr. Daniela Augustine 2002 (Bulgaria/Czech Republic)
 Dr. Anthea Butler 2001, 2003, 2005-8 (USA)
 Rev. Dr. David Daniels (Co-Chair) 2001-3, 2005-8, 2011 (USA)
 Dr. Nico Horn 2007 (Namibia)

Rev. Dr. Harold D. Hunter 2002-3, 2006 (USA)
Rev. Dr. Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen 2006 (Finland/USA)
Rev. Dr. Japie Lapoorta 2007 (South Africa)
Rev. Dr. Julie Ma 2002, 2005 (South Korea/Philippines)
Rev. Dr. Wonsuk Ma 2002, 2005 (South Korea/Philippines)
Dr. Jean-Daniel Plüss 2001-3, 2005-8, 2011 (Switzerland)
Rev. Dr. Cecil M. Robeck, Jr. 2001-3, 2005-8, 2011 (USA)
Rev. Dr. Joseph Suico 2006 (Philippines)

Reformed Participants

Rev. Dr. Peter Donald 2006, 2008 (Scotland)
Rev. Dr. Paul Ara Haidostian 2001-2, 2005-8 (Lebanon)
Dr. Marsha Snulligan Haney 2003 (USA)
Rev. Dr. Odair Pedroso Mateus 2001-3, 2005-6, (Switzerland/Brazil)
Mrs. Nolipher J. Moyo 2002-3, (Zambia)
Ms Yvette Noble Bloomfield 2006 (Cayman Islands)
Rev. Dr. Aureo Rodrigues de Oliveira 2002-3, 2005, 2007, (Brazil)
Rev. Dr. Cephas Omenyo 2002, 2005, 2007, (Ghana)
Rev. Dr. Joseph D. Small (Co-Chair) 2001-3, 2005-8, 2011 (USA)
Rev. Dr. Cornelis van der Kooi 2006-8 (Netherlands)
Rev. Dr. Douwe Visser 2011 (Netherlands/Switzerland)
Rev. Dr. Gesine von Kloeden 2001-3, 2005, 2007-8, (Germany)

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