

Keeping up with the movement of the Holy Spirit –
 Memorandum on ecumenism
 For the General Synod of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands
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Introduction

In her meeting of April 2007 the synod discussed the note "Ecumenism from A to Z" in the presence of a number of ecumenical guests. The synod board promised to provide the synod with a memorandum in line with the discussion. The choice has been made not to rewrite the note "Ecumenism from A to Z" but to present the synod with a new memorandum in which justice is done to the reflection and discussion up till now. This memorandum was written making use of:

- 'Ecumenism from A to Z' (from Aduard to Zimbabwe, from Zevenhuizen to Australia), discussion note Ecumenism on behalf of the general synod of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands;
- 'The ecumenical movement', a book by Dr. Leo J. Koffeman, published by "het Boekencentrum";
- 'Learning to live out of wonder', the policy of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands;
- the policy 2005-2008 of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands for de Church Ministries

However, this memorandum can be read apart from these publications.

The composition of the memorandum is as follows.

1. First a preliminary design is made of the developments in the past decades which call for a rethinking of ecumenism and which at the same time provide the framework for policy development.
2. This is followed by theological starting points.
3. After these two frame defining chapters follows the application of a number of concrete policy spheres. Successively:
 1. Ecumenism on local level
 2. Ecumenism in the Netherlands with special attention for the Council of Churches
 3. Religious contacts in the Netherlands and the relation with the Roman Catholic Church
 4. Worldwide ecumenism
 5. Existing relations and partnerships
 6. Cooperation
 7. Authorization of vicars
4. The memorandum concludes with several appendixes.

This is a memorandum on structures. The execution and detailing are the responsibility of the synod board in dialogue with management, direction and the program managers. Various points call for further reflection, further development in other points is dependable on the dialogue with partners and the memorandum can only point towards the desirable direction.

1. Social and religious developments

In ecumenism many people have the ecumenical movement of the end of the 19th and 20th century in mind, although new developments ask for an adjustment of that image. A number of those developments are mentioned here. But first we make a preliminary design of the ecumenical movement in the 19th and 20th century.

At the start of the ecumenical movement in the 19th century various missionary movements in Europe and North-America play a role aside from the international contacts and organizations of young women and men and of Christian students. They look for cooperation in order to spread the Gospel worldwide. Before long the missionary conference of Edinburgh in 1910 will be commemorated, this may very well be considered to be the start of the ecumenical movement. But churches as well are searching each other. Since 1875 reformed churches are meeting in what later became the WARC. So within the institutionalized churches as well there is an awareness of the need for cooperation, leading to the foundation of the World Council of Churches. Ecumenism always kept this double character and positive correlation of institute and movement.

The agonies of the First and Second World War have, specifically in Europe and North America, awoken the notion among Christians that they are obliged to fulfil a special responsibility in the restoration of contacts which have been destroyed in the wars and to contribute to the rebuilding. In this climate the United Nations developed, the European Union was established and the World Council of Churches was founded. In the Netherlands additionally a process of denominational desegregation started and in many areas social organizations cooperated and merged crosswise through denominations. In spite of confessional and political differences, which played a role from the start and are the cause of different worldwide ecumenical families, this awareness of social responsibility is a common characteristic of the ecumenical efforts of the 20th century. In this light it is no surprise that important themes of the ecumenical movement are related to questions of peace and righteousness, like the after-effects of the worldwide decolonization-process, Apartheid, the poverty-problem and development cooperation, themes which draw attention also outside the own circle. Western churches feel a special responsibility for this in view of their involvement 'for better or worse' in the colonial relations, which dominate international politics well after World War II and which ligature to the spirit of renewing starting to go through Europe since the sixties. In those years ecumenism can not be seen apart from the "great stories" which put their mark on the social and theological discussions.

The ecumenical movement does not only consist of a mutual effort for peace and righteousness. There is also a deep awareness of the need for continuation of the theological dialogue with one and other, to determine mutual faith-differences and differences about conception of church- and profession and to investigate their theological, historical and social roots. Ecumenism also has a lot to do with religious doctrine and tradition, because ill-understood differences in the past all too often led to preconceived opinions and schisms. Certainly in a multi-religious and secularizing world the question on the nature of Christian identity in ecumenism is essential. Finally, the manifesting form of ecumenism is mainly a correlation between the large international assemblies and the national and local level. In these assemblies, church leaders, scientists and politicians come together; they offer important impulses for the basis. They have example function and in many cases bring a climate change about within their rank and file, through which openness for fellow-Christians in the direct neighbourhood originates. The broadly shared fundamental theological reflection on ecumenism is the cause that many local vicars feel free to lead their congregation into setting up contacts with sister-congregations and parishes. The Conciliatory Process in the nineties of the last century is a good example of this "classic" ecumenism as correlation between institute and movement on the one side and the top and basis on the other.

There are several religious and social developments we will outline in the next paragraph, which call for a renewed reflection on ecumenism.

1.1 Church reunion

Renewed reflection on ecumenism within the Protestant Church of the Netherlands can not be seen apart from the unification in 2004, in which two protestant traditions, i.e. the Lutheran and the Reformed¹, came together in one Church. This unification as form of visible unity took a lot of effort and did not come about smoothly. Admitted was that there were no theological impediments for unification. At the same time factors of church orderly, sociological and cultural nature appeared to play an important role in the lives of churches and people, in spite of their unity of faith. The reunion in 2004 turns out not to be the final stage of a long-time process, but an important intermediate stage of a continuing understanding of the own protestant identity in a church which is connected with the Lutheran and the Reformed tradition.

These experiences give colour to the thinking on ecumenism and the position of the Protestant Church within the ecumenical movement. In the Netherlands the arrival of the Protestant Church changed the religious map and

¹ In this memorandum with the Church order we distinguish the Lutheran and the reformed tradition from one and other. With 'reformed' we point out the broader tradition in which for example Methodists, Remonstrant, Mennonites, Baptists, Pentecostal Movement and according to some the Anglicans can be counted.

therefore the mutual relationships among churches. The Protestant Church looks within these new perspectives to a renewal of the contacts with on the one side the "small" reformed churches and on the other side the Remonstrant Brotherhood and the Mennonite Society, in the knowledge that the religious developments have not left these churches unaffected. Internationally we, as Protestant Church, have a different position since the unification within our "families" of WARC and LWF. We know of the difficult road to visible unity and we know of the fruit of effort. We know that the Lutheran and the Reformed origin is no longer a reason for church separation. Differences in theology, church understanding and culture can be overcome if the will to do so is present.

1.2

Individualization

The ongoing individualization of men and growth of a network-society led to a much looser connection with and often an aversion against institutions, authorities and formal organizational associations. This broad social phenomenon, which also affects other social organizations, has a double effect on traditional ecumenism. First the faithful is hardly interested anymore in what the church management does on behalf of him or her. For the personal position it is no longer of interest to know which contacts the church management is or is not maintaining. The institute church is for the personal religious understanding or the personal ethics hardly of interest, at best as far as the local congregation is concerned. In the second place people are not really interested anymore in the dogmatic position the own church takes in the ecumenical debate. Conclusion: both nature and content of the 'traditional' ecumenical contacts do not encounter broad interest on the basis.

1.3

Experience-aspect of believing

Lack of interest for a by the church defined dogma is reinforced by the emphasis on the experience-aspect of believing in the present culture. Believing has become an individual matter, by which one seeks others for togetherness and the sharing of rituals and emotions. The religious doctrine in that is for many people of less or no interest. As follows people are less interested in church membership ('if any at all'), but much more in the possibility of creating atmosphere and a shared feeling with others. This goes even more for youth. EO youth-days and also ecumenical movements like those of Taizé and Iona turn out to be much more appealing and inspiring to young people. The great emphasis on spirituality and on the feeling aspect of believing means at the same time a diminished interest for questions of faith outside the word of personal experience. Believing relates to the vital questions of the personal existence, linked to the personal biographic situation. In view of that one looks for a religious community of congenial. Without dogmatic disconnection from others, there is also no need for contacts outside of the own circle of faith. This inside directed view is often reinforced by the effort it takes to make the own community function with the limited number of people and the limited means available.

1.4

Pentecostal Movement and Evangelicals

The Evangelical Alliance was founded in 1846 and the movement of Evangelical Christians spread mainly from North America to other parts of the world. There is a strong emphasis on bible-faithfulness and personal ethics. The Pentecostal Movement is comparable in several aspects but has other roots. The main difference is that the Pentecostal Movement as well as the charismatic movement starts from the principle of baptism with the Holy Spirit. Her origin is in the 19th century in Europe and North America and the movement took its official shape after a number of 'revivals' in the beginning of the 20th century, in Wales in 1902 and in North America in 1907. This movement experienced a fast growth in America with a remarkable involvement of the black communities. In the ecumenical discussion in the 20th century 'Evangelicals' have been placed opposite of 'ecumenicals' and the demarcation lines are showing especially around the giving or not giving attention to social and sociological questions and the level of emphasis to the missionary assignment. Meanwhile in the other parts of the world as well the 2nd and 3rd generation of the Pentecostal Movement and the Evangelicals has come up and the origin of the movements is of less importance than the context in which they take shape. This led to a growing attention for social and sociological questions and in several aspects they take this further than the 'ecumenicals', this is probably partly because they make a stronger link between personal and social ethics. An example is the Micha-campaign².

The demarcation lines are no longer about the question if there is a 'social gospel' or not, but sooner about the question what social problems and which ethical starting points are central. At the same time the attention for the missionary assignment came again strongly into the picture within the traditional churches.

There is another remarkable shift which applies to the Netherlands anyway, which is that the Pentecostal movement and the Evangelical movement do not grow so much by the number of people who were not yet Christians, but mainly by Christians from other denominations who feel attracted to them. Not even that much by

² This worldwide campaign summons Christians to take their responsibility for the fighting of poverty and injustice in the world. Mostly organizations and churches with an evangelical character take part. 'Kerk in Actie' cooperated in the development of the Micha-class on poor-relief.

changing their membership but by connecting participation in the Evangelical movement with the memberships of the churches they belong to. This also has a strong influence on the institutionalized churches like the Protestant Church.

1.5

Migrant-churches in the Netherlands³

In the Netherlands there are over 800,000 migrant Christians who, partly from garages and sports halls put their very own stamp on Christianity in the Netherlands and colour the presence of religion within the society. Most of these old churches (like the Moluccan churches and the Moravian Church) and some of the new churches (like the Acts Revival International Church and other churches of African origin) are united in SKIN, Together Church in the Netherlands. They are in their many-colouredness of origin and confession an ecumenical association in itself. Many of these churches reckon themselves among the Evangelical movement or the Pentecostal churches and often have a strongly witnessing and missionary form of being-church. They confront the Protestant Church with the global economic discrepancies, with ethnic and cultural differences and let us, from a personal relationship with Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour, take a look at ourselves with regard to individualisation, secularization and post-modernism.

1.6

Social changes in the Netherlands

The political and religious climate in the Netherlands has radically changed since the seventies of the previous century. The "great stories" are over. There is no broadly supported desire for renewal anymore, which was so typical for the ecumenical movement. The Protestant Church (in a given case her predecessors) has lost her central position in society and plays just a modest role. The influence she had on state and society is mostly lost. She has had to find to her cost how religion itself disappeared nearly from the public debate and became a purely private matter. After that process was completed in the course of the nineties, a renewed interest for religion developed in society, not in the least because of the arrival of Islam. The broad and renewed interest for religion however for many Dutchmen does not mean a renewed interest in churches. People do not obviously look for the traditional religious institutions to shape their religion. At the same time we notice that, around social problems like the introduction of the Law for social welfare, on a local level coalitions of churches develop which are broader than any existing ecumenism.

1.7

Worldwide changes

Since the seventies of the last century worldwide economical and religious balances of power have changed radically. Shifting, which were often difficult and painful within ecumenism as well. The western churches had to abandon their position as missionary churches and mother-churches and had to accept that they became truly partner-churches. Intended or unintended, the western churches used to be the 'religious power' within ecumenism. That dominant position had to be acknowledged and abandoned and that was hard. Fact is that the centre of gravity of Christianity in numbers of Christians has shifted in the past century from Europe and North America to other continents. The western theology, long-time leading in worldwide ecumenism, had to step back in order to make room for the strongly emerging Pentecostal Movement worldwide. In addition other world-religions, especially Islam, grew much more important. For the Christian communities worldwide the time of neo- or post-colonial relations has definitely passed, even if this notion does not yet get through sufficiently. Ecumenical contacts are now based on equality.

In world-economics new superpowers announce themselves, like India, China, Russia and Brazil. The self-evident supremacy of the USA and Western-Europe has come to an end. Europe has to be redesigned after the fall of the Soviet Union and her vassal-states. The fast extension of the European Union calls for a new orientation on the own continent. The ongoing globalisation as well led to a stronger need for reflection on and profiling of the private identity, which becomes evident from the renewed interest for national and regional identities and the reflection on the own religious tradition.

1.8

Democratization of (religious) contacts

A completely other aspect is technical science, until late in the twentieth century airplanes were the only (expensive) opportunity to bring people worldwide into contact with each other. With the arrival of internet and e-mail it is possible to make contact with everyone worldwide at any moment. Especially young people are active in the internet. Linked to a broad accessibility of air traffic this led to a democratization of contacts. Contacts need no longer go through official authorities and institutions but often arise from personal meetings and bonds of people in the framework of study, job or otherwise being abroad. Not always do these contacts lead to a connection with the work of the institutes. Within Europe a lot of bilateral religious contacts, started in the years of the Cold War,

³ The synod of the Protestant Church spoke in 2001 on the migrant-churches in connection to the memorandum 'Born in Sion'.

exist between congregations of the Protestant Church and congregations in Eastern-European countries. Equally with religious congregations outside of Europe more often bilateral contacts develop, which are (can be) supported by the program Interactive of Kerk in Actie (*Church in Action*).

1.9

Recapitulating

In view of the continuation of the memorandum and as recapitulation a number of issues from the above sketch are lifted out.

- The unification of the three "Samen-op-Weg-kerken" in 2004 is an important and gladdening fact in the history of ecumenism. The Protestant Church in the Netherlands has by the way of her origin a special position in ecumenism, especially in the relation between reformed and Lutheran traditions and the organizations of WARC/REC and LWF.
- The renewed fascination for religion in our society led to an open interest for and a free admittance to various religious traditions. On the other hand there is little interest for institutionalized religion. Both developments mean a radical change of the ecumenical climate in our church.
- In the history of ecumenism youth always played an important role. The renewed fascination among youth for believing and their worldwide orientation through internet and travelling makes them presently as well to important partners in the ecumenical movement.
- The shift of power in the world and the changes in Europe, especially since the fall of the socialist states and the increased meaning of Islam, make reorientation on the role of the churches and religions in Europe desirable and inevitable.
- The ongoing globalisation and the decline of the borders between people reinforce the want and the need for reflection on the own tradition, not with the purpose of desolation, but as location and orientation.
- Also under influence of the strong growth of the Pentecostal Movement and the Evangelical trend within worldwide Christianity a reflection on the foundation of ecumenism and its connection with the missionary assignment of the church is desirable.

2.

Theological starting points

With these developments and changes in mind and in a view of the future there is every reason to engage again in the dialogue on ecumenism within the church. We start that dialogue from theology. We outline a number of theological starting points, which can be a manual for the further reflection and may offer support for policy. The structure of this chapter is as follows:

- 2.1 We start with the double intention which determined the thinking from the start of the ecumenical movement, namely the wellbeing of the world and the unity of Christianity.
- 2.2 Subsequently we react to the two theological approaches which made their mark on the thinking about ecumenism, namely ecumenism as the work of the Holy Spirit and ecumenism as shape of the body of Christ.
- 2.3 Next follows the meaning of concrete ecumenism for church, congregation and theology, ecumenism as a learning process and the long-winded effort it takes.
- 2.4 Further the aspect of mutuality in ecumenism.
- 2.5 In this paragraph something about the three necessary dimensions of ecumenism.
- 2.6 Finally the visual unity of churches.

2.1

Unity of church and blessing for the world

In the beginning of the ecumenical movement an organization is founded for the cooperation in the area of social questions (Council for Life and Work). At the same time a movement develops which is directed at the unity of faith and church, spirituality and liturgy (Council for Faith and Order). With these two organizations at the start of the ecumenical movement it becomes clear that within Christianity there is for one thing a consciousness of a mutual responsibility for the world. On the other hand there is the awareness that this mutual responsibility in and for the world also has its consequences inwards, for the churches themselves. Ecumenism is the request for (visible) unity of the churches in awareness of brokenness of the body of Christ and in desire for opportunity of combined worship and experience of faith. At the same time ecumenism can not ignore the 'oikumene' (literally: 'the entire inhabited world'). After all we can not accept division, expulsion and conflicts and the failing of piece, righteousness and intactness of creation to come.

Therefore starting point for ecumenism remains the orientation on both of these aspects: the unity of the church and well-fare of the world, without the one being instrument for the other. In ecumenism it is about the mission of the church as shape of the body of Christ⁴ in the world which becomes visible in the cooperation in the area of diaconal and missionary questions and in the work on the (visible) unity of the churches. The ecumenical movement is a search for unity and community and cooperation⁵. The essence in this memorandum is mainly unity and community. The design of ecumenism in the cooperation in the area of diaconal and missionary questions and the meaning of those for the questions for unity and community will be addressed in other policy documents⁶.

2.2

Keeping up with the movement of the Holy Spirit

We believe that God has made himself known in the world in Jesus Christ. The church, which consists in and of the congregations, is by virtue of the work of the Holy Spirit shape of the living body of Christ in the world. Beside this God makes tracks in the world through the work of the Holy Spirit. These are two movements from one source which do not coincide and can not exist without each other. Both movements are involved in each other in the search for unity and community. It is the assignment of the church as shape of the body of Christ to be taken along in the movement of the Spirit and to follow Christ in the world and thus to represent. On the other hand the church needs to have an eye for the work of the Spirit in the world, outside of the church, to hear over and over again what the Spirit says to the churches and thus permanently to get to know Christ in a new way. The movement of the Spirit can not be claimed by the church and ecumenism as the movement of the Spirit does not coincide with the church and religious institutions. Openness to what happens outside of the church is necessary, not only from a 'marketing' point of view, but also because it generates new impulses to church and faith. "...but test the spirits whether they are of God..." (1 John 4: 1 – KJ21). The dialogue with other religions and philosophies can be carried on from this perspective, in the faith that the Holy Spirit is active in the way that people worldwide are looking for wholeness and meaning of their existence. The faith in the working of the Holy Spirit in the many different cultures and contexts worldwide means to the church the admission of perhaps entirely new and strange approaches for community and unity. The in the churches desired, experienced and confessed community and unity are put under tension by the faith in the work of the Holy Spirit. And the for the church familiar shapes of

⁴ 1 Corinthians 12 describes the unity of 'The body of Christ': 'For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body'.

⁵ The Church Order XVI mentions these three elements: unity, community and cooperation.

⁶ Precisely the connection of these three approaches has shown to be of great significance in ecumenism. It is therefore important to explicitly mention and consider the ecumenical dimension in policy in the area of missionary and diaconal questions.

faith and the connected institutions are put under tension, uncovered and renewed⁷ as well by the faith in the work of the Spirit. To practise ecumenism is always: 'Learning to live out of wonder'.

2.3

Ecumenism as a learning process

With the double intention (see 2.1), namely the unity of the church and the well-fare of the world we would immediately want to get busy with ecumenical programs and projects. But in stead of drive modesty is suitable. Ecumenism is no one-way communication, in which we have a final message with concrete purposes. We do not determine without the knowledge of our partners what is beneficial and what way to take towards unity. Other churches have other objectives and notions. In other cultures and from other histories other interpretations of the Gospel and tradition originate. To our partner churches are therefore often other objectives and programs of importance than to us.

Ecumenism can therefore be described as a learning process⁸. Encounter in ecumenism means an ongoing process of re-calibration and redefining of the own Christian faith. Ecumenism means that we are open for new experiences and new interpretations of the Tradition and of our own traditions. This also goes for the reformed and Lutheran confessing traditions, which are united in the Protestant Church. Combined projects like the intercultural reading of the bible and the personal encounters in the framework of, amongst others, diaconal and missionary programs are inspiring and of great importance for this learning process.

2.4

Mutuality

Ecumenism as learning process is the direct consequence of the recognition that ecumenism is based on mutual relations with partner churches. This means mutual exchange and influencing of conceptions, visions and analyses⁹ and bilateral exchange of materials and work force. Mutuality means dialogue, the readiness to listen and bringing private notions and practises up for discussion and change. In and from the private context each partner shapes the search for unity and community. Mutuality is in equality and mutual dependence, while at the same time from the ecumenical history in a number of aspects there certainly is an asymmetrical relation in which power plays a part. In a relation that acknowledges and discusses dominant powers, all parties involved learn to speak about the unity in Christ with one and other in a new and enriching manner.

As a result of globalization the contexts of ecumenical partners are more and more intertwined which on the one hand simplifies the involvement on each other, on the other hand possibly strengthens the tension resulting from worldwide conflicts of interest. In the encounters sound the painful history of colonialism and of the economical disproportion in the world. The intertwinement receives shape and content in the ecumenical relations and in cooperation projects, bilateral as well as multilateral and where possible in form of tri- or four-angle relations through several continents. Cooperation will always be able to lead to misunderstanding and tension, but it does not change the principle of mutuality, which should be the guiding principle in ecumenism.

2.5

Three dimensions in ecumenism, a triptych

In his description of ecumenism L.J. Koffeman¹⁰ distinguishes between theological, religious and spiritual dimensions of ecumenism and indicates that one-dimensional ecumenism is impossible. In the policy all dimensions should be addressed and interconnected and these dimensions should be visible in the policy in the area of missionary and diaconal questions.

- a. The theological dimension relates mostly to the mentioned re-calibration and redefining of Christian faith in the encounter with one and other. The first responsibility for this dimension of ecumenism is in theology, which is not church bound but should however be related to the churches. As for the church as well as for the theology there is a challenge to maintain the bond between church and theology, so that the learning process which is called ecumenism does not become an academic matter or reduces ecumenism within the church to "ecumenism of the heart".
- b. In the religious dimension it is about creating space for theological thinking, for the search for visible unity in the shape of, amongst others, associations and the mutual recognition of baptism, communion and profession. This conversation accentuates up till now on the discussion on being-church, and on the re-arrangement of the organization and shape of the interdenominational ecumenism. Because there is less interest for the institutional aspect of religion in this time, it is important to pay special attention to this

⁷ In its memorandum 'Mission in Context' the LWF describes the church as 'oikumene-community' in dialogue and cooperation with people of other religions and convictions which also call the world their 'oikos'. In this dialogue and cooperation the church is prepared to take the truth claim of the other seriously and to change the private conceptions. To the church is this combined search for truth 'a trustful venture into the unknown'.

⁸ Bert Hoedemaker, Anton Houtepen en Theo Witvliet – Oecumene als leerproces (Ecumenism as learning process). Zoetermeer 1993, p. 265.

⁹ Compare Church Order article X-5 on mutuality regarding "understandings and experiences".

¹⁰ L.J. Koffeman: De oecumenische beweging (The ecumenical movement). Publ. Kok, 2005.

dimension of ecumenism. Where this dimension is forgotten one under-appreciates that the church and with that the proclamation of the Gospel in the world needs structures and that unity is also a matter of organization.

- c. The spiritual dimension is mostly in the level of the personal experience and engagement in faith, hope and love. Here are the questions about the relation of individual spirituality and joint worship and on our relation with the new religiousness for which namely the evangelical and Pentecostal movement seem to be more sensitive. This dimension of ecumenism has the wind behind it, because many people have an open mind for religion again and orientate themselves freely and broadly in their spiritual search. On the other hand people also have a need for enforcement of their own identity. This can lead to a protection from other religious experiences than the own, to the withdrawal in a group of kindred spirits. This dimension as well is therefore not self-evident within ecumenism. Our own reformatory tradition – which is broader than the Lutheran and the reformed – has experienced a reevaluation of the spiritual dimension during the past years, amongst others in the recent friendly relation with the Pentecostal Movement in the Netherlands.

It will be a challenge to find the correct balance between the three dimensions of ecumenism in the coming years, in the own church as well as in ecumenism.

2.6

Visible unity of the churches

In the seventies and eighties of the last century an important theological and religious discussion in ecumenism was on baptism, communion and profession. The objective of this discussion was the effort for consensus on these points. On baptism a partial consensus was achieved, but for profession and Eucharist it turned out to be much more difficult. Based on these experiences the accent in the ongoing discussion shifted from the notion 'unity' to the realization of unity as 'community' (koinonia). Community is easier connected with diversity and the recognition of pluriformity or even pluralism than 'unity'. In the Leuenberger Konkordie is spoken of 'unity in reconciled diversity' in the Lutheran and reformed churches.

The private confessional identity is not given up in this approach of ecumenism, but entered as an aspect of more comprehensive community. In this connection we speak of a layered or phased religious community, in which the concrete perspective is kept open fundamentally. This approach can be the guiding principle in the discussion with the Roman Catholic Church. The question is how the principle of 'unity in reconciled diversity' relates to the thinking of 'communio' within the Roman Catholic Church. Is it possible that the thinking in terms of layered or phased religious community plays a part in that discussion? The difficulty in that discussion is that the perspective on 'unity of the church' for the Roman Catholic Church is already defined and there is no possibility for an open discussion on the realization of 'complete unity' and the necessary conditions. That does not alter the fact that two years ago a discussion on profession was consciously chosen within the Council of Churches, from the awareness that ongoing ecumenism can not constantly avoid difficult topics. And from the understanding that within the separate churches as well the profession is a neglected point of reflection, to the detriment of ecumenism. It would be desirable that the Council of Churches continues the reflection on profession.

Visible unity is also shaped in the 'ecumenical charter' from 2001 of the European Church Conference and the European bishops' conference. This Charta Oecumenica is an ongoing inspiration for ecumenical and religious decision-making.

3.

Concrete policy spheres

For the further policy definition the following theological starting-points apply:

1. Ecumenism seeks the visible unity of churches and well-fare of the world.
2. The church as shape of the body of Christ professes the working of God's Spirit in and outside of the church.
3. Ecumenism is in the centre of tension of the relation between institute and movement.
4. Ecumenism is a learning process.
5. Ecumenism is mutuality.
6. Ecumenism is characterized by three dimensions: theology, church and spirituality.

Herewith ecumenism belongs to the core of being-church. Based on these starting points we address a number of concrete policy spheres of ecumenism, namely:

1. ecumenism at local level,
2. ecumenism of the church in our own land,
3. one-on-one contacts with other churches and the relation therein with the Roman Catholic Church,
4. international ecumenism,
5. partner relations within worldwide ecumenism,
6. cooperation relations,
7. qualification of vicars of other churches.

3.1

Ecumenism on local level

As explained in chapter 2 there is talk of a great openness towards other religious communities. On the other hand there is less interest for the religious and theological dimension of ecumenism. Therefore there are chances and threats for the active experience of ecumenism among church members.

The local congregation under management of the own consistory has an important responsibility to establish content and shape of the own ecumenical policy. The content concerning starting point is the text of the Church Order, especially article I.1. With that is said that of each congregation may be asked to keep the notion alive of forming part of the Protestant Church. Congregations do not exist in themselves but are part of the one Protestant Church. And in continuation they are part of the catholic church of all times and places. After all, the Protestant Church confesses that she can not perceive herself outside of the connection of tradition and the worldwide Christianity. Thus the ecumenism of cordial contacts between fellow believers in the personal sphere in the local congregation can be connected with being-church as learning, worshipping and serving community. A community linking itself with the ends of the earth and the ravel skirts of society. That is about re-calibration and redefinition of faith, of Scripture understanding, of conceptions on church and profession and on the joint vocation in the world. In that it is the freedom and challenge of each congregation to shape this agenda together with other local churches, social organizations and other religions and philosophies in the own residence, and where possible with churches over the borders. For the local congregations as well the changed context, as described in chapter 1, is a known fact and it is self evident to view existing ecumenical contacts in this light; certainly regarding the presence in the own environment of migrant churches, the Pentecostal Movement or Evangelicals.

This process can be stimulated and supported by the (local) Council of Churches, by congregation advisors and with the implementing-organizations of the modalities¹¹. The classical board can play a part when congregations inform each other within the classis and ask for information about experiences and the realization of their ecumenical policy. In this way can be promoted that local initiatives influence the position of the national church in her ecumenical contacts. The objective should be that the ecumenical agenda of the church is as well determined by the agenda developed at local level in the contacts with sister churches, other Christian factions, social organizations and other religions.

3.2

National ecumenism

For the Protestant Church in the Netherlands the Council of Churches remains the first ecumenical platform. The Council of Churches as community of 17 Christian churches is an important institution in the Netherlands regarding the visibility of ecumenism. In 2007 the Council determined a policy for the period 2007-2011 that agrees with the recommendations of the Charta Oecumenica. The ecumenical dialogue and the service to society or otherwise: committing faith and joint action are the central points in it. The Council works with deliberation- and project-groups in which the Protestant Church participates. For the broader ecumenical dialogue the Council organizes a yearly consideration with other churches and church communities or associations of communities.

¹¹ "Modality" is the Dutch ecclesiastical term for diverse faith-based movements in the Protestant Church. One of them, the Reformed Alliance, has its own ministries for evangelism, youth work and mission. There is a very extensive cooperation between these ministries and the office of Church Ministries.

The Protestant Church readily keeps supporting the work of the Council of Churches and will devote itself to:

- a combined agenda on the three dimensions of spirituality, church and theology;
- a combined agenda in the area of vocation in the world;
- the possibility to organize contacts with the local and the world ecumenism through the Council;
- an office to take the lead in these processes.

Within the Council is agreed who will take primary responsibility in the execution of parts of the agenda and in which manner.

Within the Council of Churches the Protestant Church will also advocate to call together all Christian churches and factions in the Netherlands similar to the Global Christian Forum (see under 3.4). This can be done by shaping and broadening and reinforcing the regular gatherings which are held under the title 'Deliberation of Churches' in that direction.

3.3

Religious contacts in the Netherlands

Aside from her participation in the Council of Churches the Protestant Church develops bilateral relations with other churches, particularly including other churches of the reformed faith, the migrant churches, the Roman Catholic Church and also the Pentecostal churches and the Evangelical Alliance. These various ecumenical networks can be shaped in the cooperation in diaconal and missionary area, in association agreements, in recognition of baptism, in granting qualifications to preachers/vicars of other churches to officiate in worship and administer the sacraments and in Eucharist-hospitality. Officiating in worship also includes the religious confirmation and blessing of a marriage. It is mainly important to work on solutions for the trigger zones around baptism and marriage in interdenominational and inter-religious relations. These questions can be brought before the Council of Churches with the request to put the issue on the agenda of the Deliberation of Churches.

The unification of the three Samen-op-Weg-churches in 2004 is an important and gladdening fact in the history of ecumenism. The Protestant Church in the Netherlands has a special position within ecumenism because of her way of coming into existence, especially in the relation between the reformed and Lutheran traditions and the organizations of WARC/REC and LWF.

The Protestant Church in the Netherlands, as the largest protestant church, feels a special responsibility in the discussion with the reformed convictions within the so called "small ecumenism", as well as with the other sister churches as the Remonstrant Brotherhood and the Mennonite Society.

The recent association agreement with the Covenant of free Evangelical Churches in the Netherlands might be able to serve as an example for these relations in the future. Also the responsibility in the discussion with the Samenwerkende Kerken in Nederland (transl.: *Cooperating Churches in the Netherlands*) (SKIN) requires separate mentioning. New is the contact with the Pentecostal movement that was recently settled and that can be deepened and intensified further.

In such one-on-one-contacts specific themes can be addressed. These themes can relate to religious aspects of ecumenism, like recognition of baptism or profession. Amongst the member-churches of the Council of Churches we have ecumenical recognition of baptism¹². The smaller reformed denominations recognize the validity (not always the legality) of each others baptism. In relation to the Pentecostal Movement, Evangelicals and Baptists there is asymmetry. The Protestant Church recognizes the once administered baptism. In reverse the baptism administered to children usually is not recognized. This is not only a disqualification of the baptism administered to someone, but also an (unintended) disqualification of the church someone originates from.

Beside that the question of confirmation of baptism is going on within the Protestant Church: how do we stand towards active members who want a confirmation with water of the baptism administered to them as a child? The unique and once only character of baptism demands a profound (religious) discussion in the Protestant Church as well. The synod board has asked advice of an ad hoc committee.

The relation with the Roman Catholic Church

The relation with the Roman Catholic Church needs special attention. For congregations and parishes namely the dimension of spirituality and experience is an important issue. Meeting each other, worshipping, praying and learning together, cooperation in poor relief and missionary presence is possible in many congregations and the Church Order offers enough space for that. The delicate dilemmas often develop around the administration of the sacraments and the profession. These dilemmas are related to the differences of conception on the meaning of what we say if we speak with the Nicea-Constantinople confession of 'one holy, catholic and apostolic church'. We recognize that the Roman Catholic Church is in full catholic and apostolic church, but this recognition is not mutual, as recently became clear in a document of the congregation of religious doctrine.

¹² Shortly after the discussion of the memorandum eleven churches in Germany (EKD, RC, Orthodox, Old-Catholic, Anglican, Methodist) have agreed to mutual recognition of baptism in future. The "Arbeitsgemeinschaft Mennonitischer Gemeinden", as other churches who only recognize adult-baptism, remains outside of the agreement.

It is painful to have to establish that there is no real recognition from the side of the Roman Catholic Church, while at the same time the discussions between the synod board and the bishops (in 2003 and 2006) were held in a good atmosphere. Good personal contacts however do not offer the necessary perspective on community and unity. It remains necessary to appeal to the Roman Catholic Church on her monopolistic attitude in ecumenism, which is at right angles to the starting point of mutuality.

An important factor is that in the Protestant Church is made no distinction on the basis of gender or sexual disposition in the admittance to the profession. To the Roman Catholic Church – apart from that also for the Orthodox churches – this is unacceptable and here is an important topic for the dialogue.

In relation to the reports of Lima on baptism, Eucharist and profession is the continuation of the dialogue on profession and mainly on the meaning and form of the 'episkopè', the pastoral care inevitable. This in realization that also within the own united church the discussion on the bishop, anyway on the Episcopal functions, anyway on a rethinking on directing within the church has not become silent.

For the worldwide ecumenism the approach of the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodoxy can be viewed upon as a hopeful signal. If the schism of 1054 actually is resolved there might come space for a renewed discussion on the outset of the reformation of 1517. The agreement in 1999 of the LWF and the RCC concerning the doctrine of justification is therefore a first step.

3.4

Rethinking the worldwide ecumenical networks

The World Council of Churches was established on 23rd of August 1948. Mainly protestant and Anglican churches from Europe and North-America became members. Later many churches from Asia and Africa and further all orthodox churches entered. After the fall of the wall the orthodox churches in the WCC took a stronger and more independent course. A number of orthodox churches even left the WCC (and the CEC). With that the WCC became in practise an organization with a protestant and an orthodox block.

The synod board, Kerk in Actie (*Church in Action*), ICCO, the Dutch members of the Central Committee of the WCC, the management of the Church Ministries and the Council of Churches participate in the "World-Council-consultation" of the Protestant Church. In this consultation has been spoken for some time now of the necessity to reduce the number of international ecumenical organizations and come to a simplification of the worldwide ecumenical traffic. World-ecumenism benefits from a joint vision, simpler processes, less consultation, less duplication, less competition and the saving of time and money.

In the rethinking of this complex matter two lines play a part. These two lines can be defined with the words "context" and "confession". Both lines, schematic, are about the relation between the whole and the parts.

In context it is about the question if the emphasis in ecumenical contact will be on the private context, that is to say Europe, or on worldwide organizations.

In confession it is about the question if the emphasis will be on the private large confessional families (like LWF and WARC/REC) or direct on the broad ecumenism (in which also the RCC, the Eastern Orthodoxy, the Pentecostal family play a part). This schematic term of the situation is no more than an aid to clarify a number of options:

- a. The developments within Europe are a reason to pay more attention than in the past to the ecumenical contacts within Europe in view of the rethinking of the role of the churches and religions therein. In the ecumenical relations in Europe the context of secularisation and post-modern culture play an important part and furthermore Europe is the continent where the religious division has her roots. Here is more emphasis on the encounter with the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox tradition.
- b. The global developments (globalisation, migration, asymmetric economical relations, climate change, the relation between the world religions) are reason to keep emphasizing the worldwide ecumenism over borders of confessions. Here is more emphasis on the encounter with the Pentecostal Movement and with churches understanding the Gospel in another context.
- c. The renewed interest for the own roots and tradition are a reason for explicitly holding on to the bond with the own confessional world-families.

In this connection we advocate the following choices.

1. Intensification of the contacts within Europe on account of the reflection on the role of Christianity in the modern secular and multi-religious reality. Here we choose context. For Europe this would mean that the ecumenical discussion will mainly continue in CEC and in CPCE/Leuenberg.
2. Reflection within the two private worldwide confessional families on the authenticity and the meaning of these traditions for Christianity and for the welfare of the world. Within these families of WARC/REC and LWF the Protestant Church will keep on raising the question in which way the visible unity and closer cooperation can be promoted further. Here the choice is for the own tradition in view of intensification of ecumenism.

3. Maintaining contacts with churches and Christians from other contexts worldwide. Partly these contacts take place in partner-conferences and within the families (see 2). For another part the World Council of Churches is the obvious organization for such contacts. Within WCC the Protestant Church will raise the question if the WCC can direct itself more than now towards the bringing together of worldwide families and regional contextual associations and in future decline to be a collection of separate member-churches.

In this connection there is separate attention for the worldwide ecumenical network of the recently established Global Christian Forum. This Forum announces itself as the renewing player in the field because Protestants, Orthodox, Roman Catholics, Evangelicals and Pentecostal Movement participate and thus all Christian families meet each other there. The initiative derives from 1998 and is coming from Konrad Raiser, at that time the secretary general of WCC. The Forum is no organization and has no membership. It is about participation, encounter and exchange and from that it has another character, more a learning-process and less 'political', than the institutional ecumenism. It appeals stronger to youth. After a number of regional meetings the first global assembly took place in Nairobi in November 2007. It is still unclear how this Forum will develop but it deserves to be stimulated.

3.5

Relations and partnership in worldwide ecumenism¹³

Ecumenism is shaped in inter-religious relations which are mainly of a professional-administrative character and in cooperating-relations in the various programs of the Church Ministries. This is a complex of more or less formal arranged relations and networks. For that personal meetings as well as agreements and understandings are of importance. It is not just about congenial and there is a lot of movement and dynamic regarding colouring and duration.

In the relations with the partners it is important to keep in mind that the relation is mutual and is decided from two sides. Some 'partner-churches' feel reduced with such a title to a merely business cooperating-relation for projects. A relation is not only a relation until money is involved. Partners and we hope for a form of partnership that is not about money, but about mutual visiting, sharing of religious experiences, praying with and for one and other and the exchange of care and expectation. Relations between churches are not only in the meeting of church leaders, but have to be supported from the basis of the churches. These contacts can be shaped bilaterally as well as in partner-conferences. The partner-conference in Indonesia in September 2007 was very valuable and can be a model for similar partner-conferences in other parts of the world¹⁴. From various congregations and classes and around emanated staff members there are relations with churches and congregations elsewhere in the world. It is important to keep this in mind as forms of partnership in which the Protestant Church invests.

3.6

Ecumenism of cooperation

Outside of the ecumenism of the church that lies mainly in administrative-professional contacts there is ecumenism which is shaped in the cooperation of the executive work of the Church Ministries in the various programs¹⁵. With the words of *Learning to live out of wonder*: "Ecumenism must be focussed. Our purpose in that will be missionary presence."

For example through the memberships of organization allied with the ecumenical associations in the area of diaconal and missionary work (like Eurodiaconia, CCME, ACT and AprODEV) and by participation and financial contribution (like the project group Arme Kant van Nederland = *Poor Side of the Netherlands* and the Social Politics Team of the CEC).

On cooperation Charta Oecumenica (II.4) formulated in 2001 the starting point 'that churches on all levels of religious life act jointly if the conditions are present and if there are no reasons of faith or greater effectiveness speaking against it'. Therefore there is a lot to be said to address (a part of the) programs and projects within the alliances of the global and regional ecumenical organizations, provided that the private religious involvement does not get sidetracked and with the realistic notion 'that can not be done, what can not be done'. Important conditions for the organization of this cooperation are transparency, mutual responsibility, joint decision-making and participation. We formulate our own questions and purposes regarding the own context and partners are free to comment critically on that. We actively look for community and unity with the cooperation-partners in formulating definition of problems and purpose regarding global context and 'shared concerns'. By experience our western need for planning and effectiveness is often at daggers drawn with the more charismatic approach of projects from our partners. Reciprocity turns out to be a hard school on this subject as well. We choose not to start

¹³ For this also see appendix 1

¹⁴ For example on an extra day before or after the conference or assembly of an ecumenical organization.

¹⁵ Since January 1st 2008 the Ministry of Services has been transformed and works with four programs and a equipment-centre. Ecumenical work-relations in the area of diaconate, education, development-cooperation, mission and liturgy are maintained from these programs. For example: diaconal cooperation of congregations with other partners belong to Kerk in Actie (in land); ecumenical initiatives to have youth take a look over the border in relation with the program 'Togetthere' belong to JOP and Kerk in Actie (abroad); the role of religion in conflicts belongs to Kerk in Actie (abroad); support of congregations (at their request) in developing new ecumenical initiatives belongs to Kerk in Ontwikkeling (*translation: Church in Development*); here the program Interactive of Kerk in Actie can also play a part. Also see annotation 6.

'private' programs or projects in the area of activity of our partners and Kerk in Actie will preferably involve a religious partner from the area of activity in her projects. Where a partner can not consent in this the commitment of an intense dialogue has to be undertaken¹⁶.

Where the global context comes in view we strive for support of a part of the programs and projects in tri- or four-angle relations from several continents. Explicitly the churches and/or Christians from the respective countries and continents present in the Netherlands are involved, amongst others through SKIN.

Examples of 'shared concerns' as in the partner-conference in Indonesia in September 2007 emerged, are the problems of poverty and the relation between Christians and Muslims. Everyone is occupied with these problems in their own way within the private context, but at the same time it is a global problem and the challenge for the future is to involve each others experiences and conceptions.

3.7

Authority of vicars¹⁷

The Protestant Church in the Netherlands has a number of bilateral relations with other churches, which are defined in ordinance 14-4 as 'special relations'. These bilateral relations or special relations can – aside from encounter and cooperation in ecumenical organizations – according to ordinance 14-4 be shaped further in the mutual authorization of vicars to administer Word and sacraments.

After the unification there was no more clearness on the content of the relations: especially there, where before May 1st 2004 relations with a similar religious community, but with a different realization were maintained.

This unclearness is especially felt in the question on the authorization of vicars of other churches in and outside of the Netherlands to officiate in a worship of a congregation of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands. Based on the present policy there can be no unambiguous answer to the question for:

- the realization/capacity of the authority of vicars of churches, with which the predecessors of the Protestant Church had various agreements,
- the authorization of vicars of churches that – as does the Protestant Church in the Netherlands – take part in the Church Community of Leuvenberg (and have a pulpit- and Eucharist-community as well as a mutual acknowledgement of the ordaining) and
- the authorization of vicars of the churches with which we maintain a mission-relation or those originating from mission (see chapter V of appendix).

This unclearness can be removed by establishing that:

- *vicars* and other having authority to administer Word and sacraments,
- of the other previously intended churches (churches with which 'special relations' were maintained before May 1st 2004, churches of the Church Community of Leuvenberg and 'mission-churches')
- *are authorized to administer Word and sacraments* in a worship of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands (in the sense of ordinance 3-9-1).

We could consider to decide that the confirmation of ministers of the church remains reserved to those who are (have been) allied with the Protestant Church in the Netherlands.

¹⁶ This does not diminish the fact that ICCO can start projects with NGO's in the area of activity.

¹⁷ See appendix 2

4

Appendixes

Appendix 1

Church – church relations

Foreign church-church-relations are about an inspiring field, in which it is hard to operate. In the Netherlands the various pre-histories and traditions of the three Samen op Weg-kerken come in, which continues in the culture of the Protestant Church.:

- by means of the Lutheran World federation the ELK considered itself linked in faith and Eucharist-community with all member-churches of the LWF. Aside from that relations were maintained by the Synod Committee or by other committees;
- the GKN had a number of official ecumenical relations established by the mutual synod-decisions of the churches involved;
- the NHK had a great number of relations of temporarily varying intensity which were not officially recorded in synod-decisions maintained by various players in the field (synod board, mission-council, general diaconal council, council for the relation with other churches)¹⁸.

In the Church Order of the Protestant Church the choice was made to place the church-church relations in the scope of the decisions of the mutual synods of the churches involved¹⁹. At the same time was agreed that all existing relations would be 'taken along' in the union. The ecumenical practise however, is sometimes more complicated than the church-order theory. A joint history can not be undone by the lacking for whatever reason of a synod decision²⁰. It does not fit our culture of movable and changing networks, in which a latent relation can suddenly become actual, to take synod-decisions for all these relations or the termination of them (afterwards). Furthermore there are relations of local churches and classical meetings with partners without existing of a record and which are certainly important for ecumenism.

From Dutch point of view a certain classification of church-church relations can be desirable:

- churches with which we work towards unity,
- churches with which have programmatic cooperation,
- churches with which we are linked by special bonds of confession or history.

The second group of relations usually coincides with the third. By cooperation a joint history develops. The reverse is not always true: the third group of relations does not always coincide with the second. For churches with which the Protestant Church has a special bond of confession or history it may be painful if (for several, to us legitimate, reasons) there can be no more programmatic cooperation in Kerk in Actie.

On administrative-professional level it is about memberships of general ecumenical organizations (like the Council of Churches, World Council of Churches, LWF, WARC) and about contacts with partner-churches. Here we give a record of this broad ecumenical "inheritance" of the three Samen op Weg-churches without further specification. Later this will be surveyed in more detail. The working relations in the various programs have been left out of the record written below.

I-Associations of which the Protestant Church serves as a member²¹

RvK = Council of Churches in the Netherlands

The Council of Churches is a community of 17 Christian churches in the Netherlands. The Roman Catholic Church as well is member of the Council. The Council was established in 1968.

WCC = World Council of Churches

The World Council of Churches has 349 members and covers 560 million Christians in 110 countries.

The World Council was founded in 1948.

WARC = World Alliance of Reformed Churches

214 Churches are members of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, of which there are 39 members in Europe. The WARC covers 75 million Christians. The WARC was founded in 1970 as a merger of previous organizations.

REC = Reformed Ecumenical Council

39 Churches in 25 countries are members of the Reformed Ecumenical Council REC, with a total of 12 million Christians. Of the member-churches there are 27 which are also members of the WARC. The REC was founded in 1946.

In 2010 WARC and REC will merge in the World Reformed Communion.

¹⁸ The list of the invited churches (33) for the partner conference in Indonesia which was held in September 2007 was longer than the list in the appendix of the Memorandum A-Z (24).

¹⁹ Ordinance 14-4-1.

²⁰ If from now on relations would only exist on the basis of synod-decisions a large part of the ecumenical tradition of the NHK would perish.

²¹ On the websites of the various organizations can be found which churches have a membership.

LWF = Lutheran World Federation

150 Churches in 78 countries are members of the Lutheran World Federation, with a total of 68 million Christians. The LWF was established in 1947 and is the successor of the previous Lutheran World Convention.

CPCE (or GEKE) = Community of Protestant Churches in Europe

105 Churches are members of the European church-community CPCE. They are Lutherans, Reformed, Waldenses, Methodists, Moravian brothers and also 5 emigration churches from Latin-America.

CPCE is based on the Leuenberger Konkordie of 1973 in which the schism between reformed and Lutheran churches has been corrected. There are 105 member-churches in Europe which have a relation of Word and sacraments-community and seek cooperation in diaconal and missionary work.

CEC (or KEK) = Council of European Churches

126 Churches are members of the European Churches Council (CEC). These are Orthodox, Protestant, Anglican and Old-Catholic Churches and 43 connected organizations from all countries of the European continent. The CEC was founded in 1959.

CWM = Council for World Mission

The World Mission Organisation CWM has 31 member-churches of which 5 in Europe. The CWM was founded in 1977 as a merger of three organizations for mission in the reformed tradition, the oldest of which was established in 1795.

II-International bilateral relations of the Protestant Church²²

Region/ country	Relation	WCC	LWF	REC	WARC	CPCE	CEC	CWM	Program Relation Kerk in Actie
AFRICA									
Cameroun	Eglise Evangélique au Cameroun	WCC			WARC				Yes
	Eglise Fraternelle Luthérienne du Cameroun (EFLC)	WCC	LWF						Yes
Congo	Eglise du Christ au Congo								Yes
Lesotho	Lesotho Evangelical Church	WCC			WARC				Yes
Ghana	Presbyterian Church of Ghana	WCC			WARC				Yes
Namibia	Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia	WCC	LWF						No
Namibia	Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia	WCC	LWF						No
Nigeria	Evangelical Reformed Church of Christ			REC	WARC				Yes
	Presbyterian Church of Nigeria	WCC			WARC				Yes
Rwanda	Eglise Presbyterienne au Ruanda	WCC			WARC				Yes
Zambia	Reformed Church of Zambia	WCC		REC	WARC				Yes
South-Africa	Reformed Church in Africa	WCC		REC					No
	Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa	WCC			WARC				Yes
--	Communauté Baptiste au Centre d'Afrique (CBCA)								Yes
Egypt	Coptic Evangelical Church								
Ethiopia	Kale Heywet Coptic Church	WCC	LWF						Yes
ASIA									
Indonesia	Gereja-Gereja Kristen Jawa	WCC		REC	WARC				temporary: emergency relief
	Gereja Kristen Indonesia Jawa	WCC			WARC				temporary: emergency relief
	Gereja Kristen Indonesia Sumut								yes: completion of financing
	Gereja Kristen Sumba (GKS)	WCC		REC	WARC				Yes
	Gereja Kristen Injili di Tanah Papua (GKITP)	WCC			WARC				Yes
	Gereja Protestan Maluku (GPM)	WCC			WARC				Yes
	Gereja Maseh Injili di Timor (GMIT)	WCC			WARC				No
	Gereja Maseh Injili Sangihe Talaud (GMIST)	WCC			WARC				Yes, through SAG*
	Gereja Maseh Injili Minahasa (GMIM)	WCC			WARC				Yes, through SAG*
	Kerapatan Gereja Protestan Minahasa (KGPM)								Yes, through SAG*
	Gereja Maseh Injili di Bolaang Mongodow				WARC				Yes, through SAG*
	Gereja Protestan Indonesia Gorontalo				WARC				Yes, through SAG*
	Gereja Protestan Indonesia di Buol Toli Toli				WARC				No
	Gereja Protestan Indonesia Donggala				WARC				Yes, through SAG*
	Gereja Kristen Sulawesi Tengah				WARC				Yes, through SAG*
	Gereja Kristen Sulawesi Selatan (South Sulawesi)				WARC				Yes
	Gereja Kristen di Luwuk Banggai (GKLB)				WARC				Yes, through SAG*
	Gereja Kristen Jawi Wetan (GKJW) (Eastern Java)	WCC			WARC				Yes
	Banua Niha Keriso Protestan (Nias, BNKP)	WCC	LWF						Yes

²² This survey does not guarantee completeness

Region/ country	Relation	WCC	LWF	REC	WARC	CPCE	CEC	CWM	Program Relation Kerk in Actie
Scotland	Scottish Church								
Slovakia	Reformed Church of Slovakia	WCC			WARC	CPCE	CEC		Yes
Spain									
Portugal									

= relation of the GZB

*SAG = Regional Council of Churches North and Central Sulawesi

III-Association-agreements of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands

-Alt Reformierte Kirche in Germany

-Bond van Vrije Evangelische Gemeenten in Nederland (*Covenant of free Evangelical Churches in the Netherlands*)

In dialogue about an association-agreement:

-Indonesische Kerk in Nederland GKIN (Indonesian Church in the Netherlands).

Other special agreements:

-With the Indonesian Christian Community in the Netherlands PERKI a dialogue is going on about the status of congregation of special nature.

-With the Moluccas Evangelical Church and the Temporary-congregation Geredja Protestan Maluku di Belanda a synod committee has been formed.

-The Urdu-speaking congregation in Rotterdam is part of the Reformed Church in Rotterdam Centre.

-The Protestant congregation Amsterdam Bijlmermeer-Gaasperdam has a special relation with the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, in the sense that the vicar of the Protestant Congregation also works as vicar in the Presbyterian Church.

-The Protestant Church has a 'memorandum of understanding' with the Presbyterian Church of Ghana.

IV-Other relations with Churches and ecumenical organizations in the Netherlands

(some are not represented in the Council of Churches)

- COGG = Contact Institute for the Reformed Conviction

Participants are the Christian Reformed Churches in the Netherlands and the Dutch Reformed Churches and the Protestant Church. Beside that some organizations are represented and some individuals serve as private members.

- SKIN = Samen Kerk in Nederland (*Together Church in the Netherlands*)

- Charismatic Work-community Netherlands

- Evangelical Alliance

- Pentecostal Movement

Appendix 2 Note on authority of vicars

Concerning:

Qualification of vicars of other churches in worship of congregations of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands

I.

Cause

1. The question on the authority of vicars of other churches in the Netherlands and abroad to officiate in worship of a congregation of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands is asked regularly. These questions are asked by
 - vicars of the regarding other church
 - consistories (and/or members of consistory), wishing to invite a certain vicar or being asked to let a certain vicar officiate (for example in a baptism- or marriage-service).
2. Answering these questions is usually not easy, because the question if a vicar is or is not authorized is also depending on the relationship of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands with the churches the vicar in question belongs to.
3. Since the unification there is only partially sight on the relations (and the concrete substance of those) of Protestant Church in the Netherlands with other churches in the Netherlands and abroad. The absence of a complete picture of the relations of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands with other churches (and of the meaning of a certain relation for authorization in congregations of our church) brings in it train that constantly has to be examined (and/or deliberated) for each 'individual case' what is and is not 'allowed'. A negative answer is often cause for reactions of incomprehension of the vicar concerned as well as in some cases of the 'management' of the church involved, especially if there is cooperation in international associations with this church.
4. This statement is meant to give some clearness on (and create space for) officiating of vicars of (certain) other churches in worship of congregations of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands.

II.

Church-Orderly arrangement

5. According to Ordinance 5.5.1 are authorized to officiate in a service of a congregation belonging to the Protestant Church in the Netherlands among others: 'the vicars belonging to a church community in the Netherlands or abroad *with which the Protestant Church in the Netherlands maintains special relations*, in accordance with the authorizations these vicars have in their own church community and according to the rules set by the general synod'.

N.B. In this note it is not about who are allowed to officiate in ecumenical worship, i.e. services organized by and under mutual responsibility of a congregation of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands and one (ore more) other local church community(ies): in these services they who have authorization to do so in their own religious community (Ordinance 5-2-3) can officiate.
6. The formulation of Ordinance 5-5-1 refers to Ordinance 14-4, the article regarding *special relations*. The general synod can enter into and maintain closer relationships with churches with which the Protestant Church in the Netherlands is attached by bonds of confession or history (Ordinance 14-4-1). A special relation can be shaped
 - by an arrangement regarding the mutual granting of guest-membership to members of churches and
 - by *the mutual authorization of administering Word and sacraments to vicars*.If it has been agreed that vicars have mutual authorization to administer Word and sacraments it is possible to arrive at a further-going arrangement (execution of other tasks in the Protestant church in the Netherlands and making the seeking of pastorate available).
7. The Protestant Church in the Netherlands as such has not (yet) entered into special relations in the sense of Ordinance 14-4 with other churches.
8. The Protestant Church in the Netherlands did incorporate the 'special relations' of the Dutch Reformed Church, the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands and the Evangelical-Lutheran Church in the Kingdom of the Netherlands:

'The relation to churches, organizations and offices which – under whatever name – had a relation with the NHK, the GKN or ELK before May 1st 2004, will, starting that date, be continued by the Protestant Church in the Netherlands, unless specifically determined otherwise and save later amendment by rights' (Transition condition 47).

III.

Obscurity in the explanation/application of the Church-Orderly rules regarding 'special relations'

9. In the Church-Order the conception 'special relations' is used in a number of articles. The special relations have or have not been further specified and elaborated in the decisions of (respective) synod(s) as meant under 8 and/or in the various church-orderly conditions.

10. The notion 'special relations' got a broad realization in the agreement on 'guest-members' (in Ordinance 2-3), which was not meant or applicable in the agreement regarding 'the vicar' (Ordinance 5-5):
 - a. Article 1-2 of the general agreement on guest-membership gives a broad realization to the notion 'special relations': this regards all members of the Council of Churches and a number of other church communities mentioned by name.
 - b. The churches mentioned in Ordinance 5-5 are not the same churches as mentioned in article 1-2 general agreement guest-membership, not with all of these churches (amongst those the Roman-Catholic Church-province, the Salvation Army, Quakers, etceteras) were made agreements on 'mutual authorization to vicars to administer Word and sacraments'.
 - c. In itself it is not unusual that – for acceptance as guest-member – members of a larger circle of church-communities are eligible than for admission to the pulpit.
 - d. With certain other churches on the other hand, which are not mentioned in the arrangement on guest-membership, there are more or less officially recorded agreements on mutual officiating in worship.
11. Vicars belonging to a church-community, in the Netherlands or abroad, with which the Protestant Church in the Netherlands maintains a special relation are authorized to 'officiate' in services of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands. The notion 'officiate in services' does not (fully) indicate which office-acts may be accomplished by these vicars of other churches.
This needs further specification, namely
 - based on the authorization these vicars have in their own church-community and
 - by the rules set by the general synod (Ordinance 5-5-1)

N.B. The authorization 'to officiate' as meant in Ordinance 5-5-2 'does not include administration of baptism and Eucharist, to take profession of faith, to install ministers of the church, to conduct marriage and to proclaim the blessing'.
12. The rules which were set by the various (general) synods in view of officiating in service and the authorization to accomplish office-acts were different in the NHK, GKN and ELK.

IV.

Present Policy in answering the question on authorization of vicars of other churches

13. Answering the question on authorization of a vicar of another church takes place in accordance to (1) the agreements made by the predecessors of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands – NHK, GKN and ELK – and (2) the policy maintained by NHK, GKN and ELK.
14. In practise this boils down to:
Vicars of churches with which there was a 'special relation' (based on a synod-decision) before May 1st 2004, are authorized to officiate – and in this case it implies the administration of Word and sacraments:
 - Covenant of free Evangelical Churches (NHK, GKN)
 - the Mennonite Society (NHK)
 - the Remonstrant Brotherhood (NHK)
 - the United Protestant Church in Belgium (NHK, GKN – the reformed agreement does not seem to include right away the authorization to officiate in services)
 - the Moravian Brothers in the Netherlands (ELK).

(N.B. For GKN additionally applied the arrangement that vicars and candidates from foreign churches (of reformed confession and administration), temporary residing in the Netherlands, were allowed to officiate in service, but *only* if they were in possession of a written declaration of the ecumenical delegates. This condition did not return in the Church Order of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands.)

 - Further are authorized to officiate – here the administration of Word and sacraments is included – the vicars of the member-churches of the Lutheran World Federation (ELK).

Finally in a number of cases there is such a special relation with another church that vicars of such a church are authorized to officiate – and here as well the administration of Word and sacraments is included – without an explicit decision of the general synod or before the prescribed procedure is completed in full:

- the Moluccan Church in the Netherlands, with which from time to time combined synod-assemblies were held (penta-synod),
- the Reformed church of Suriname (NHK; there was an initial decision of the general synod, but the procedure was not completed),
- the Church of Scotland (NHK, where most of the vicars of the English-speaking congregations of our church come from),
- the Reformed/Calvinistical Church of Hungary (NHK, GKN – there is a decision to engage into 'special relations', but the procedure was not completed entirely).

V.

Policy for further (complementary) specification

15. Since the unification the question arose a number of times if more space can be offered than just
- to vicars mentioned under IV
 - to officiate (administration of Word and sacraments).

V.1 Churches with which there is mutual authorization 'to officiate' in services

16. Church-community of Leuenberg

First of all this regards churches which are part of the "Church-community of Leuenberg" – just like the Protestant Church in the Netherlands.

17. The Konkordie of Leuenberg (kvL) says about the realization of religious community amongst other things:

- (29) Religious community in the sense of this Konkordie means that churches of different confirmation based on obtained consensus in understanding the Gospel, offer each other community in Word and sacrament and pursue the largest possible community in testimony and service to the world.
- (30) In consenting with the Konkordie and observance of the bond to the applying confessions or in observance of their (own) traditions the churches declare to:
- (33c) grant each other *pulpit- and Eucharist-community*. This includes mutual recognition of ordainment and enables inter-celebration.

Subsequently the following is decided on the organizational consequences:

- (42) By declaration of the religious community there will be no *prejudgement* on separate religious agreements and questions between churches and within the churches. *The churches however must observe the Konkordie in these arrangements;*
- (43) Generally applies that the declaration of pulpit- and eucharist-community and the mutual recognition of ordainment do not suspend the applying regulations in the churches on installation of vicars, the execution of service of the vicar and the regulations for congregational life.

18. The pulpit- and Eucharist community and the mutual recognition of the ordainment mentioned under 33.c KvL, can be explained (and are understood as such by other churches) as 'the mutual authorization of administration of Word and sacraments to vicars' (compare formulation of Ordinance 14-4-3).

What has been declared in point 42 KvL requires further private arrangements of the churches.

19. Keeping in mind the ecumenical openness the Protestant Church in the Netherlands pursues (also in her Church Order) it is obvious to consider item 33c KvL as 'the mutual authorization of administration of Word and sacraments to vicars'.

This means that as policy can be established that

- vicars and others who are authorized to administer Word and sacraments (be aware, not preaching-consent-holders),
- of other churches belonging to the *church-community of Leuenberg* (there is a list of churches belonging to the church-community of Leuenberg)
- are authorized to the *administration of Word and sacraments* in a service of a congregation of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands (see further under V.2).

20. Churches with which mission-relations exist and/or have originated from mission

For these churches as well applies that it is really not clear if vicars of these churches temporarily residing in the Netherlands have authorization to administer Word and sacraments in congregations of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands. Vice versa it seems to be self-evident that vicars of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands who are visiting the (mission) churches involved and/or are temporarily residing in the relative country (for example Indonesia) can officiate in worship in congregations of the relative church.

This is somewhat peculiar, especially if we keep the starting point of mutuality of relations in the Church Order (Ordinance 14-7-3) in mind.

21. With regard to churches, with whom the Protestant Church in the Netherlands or the predecessors of the PCN has (had) a mission-relation the same policy could be followed as has been phrased as for the churches belonging to the church-community of Leuenberg.

It is important to have a list made up of these 'mission-churches' in order to provide clarity with regard to the vicars of these churches about the authority they do (and do not) have in congregations of our church.

V.2 Concrete realization of authorization to officiate

22. In practice it is not always clear what the authorization to officiate respectively the authorization to administer Word and sacraments concretely means. The authorization to administer Word and sacraments is often understood as proclamation of the Word and administration of baptism and Eucharist.

According to article IV-3 HKO where has been established that vicars are – aside from the proclamation of the Word and administration of sacraments - entrusted with the service of prayer, application of public

confession, confirmation of ministers of the church and the religious confirmation and blessing of a wedding.

According to article 10 GKO it is the task of the vicar – aside from the administration of the Word and the administration of the sacraments – the pronouncement of the blessing, and leading all other professional work in the services, like amongst other application of public confession of faith, confirmation of ministers of the church and confirmation of weddings.

In article 21.1 General Ordening LKO is established that the professional work of the vicar includes: complete pastoral care over his congregation(s) especially by administration of Word and sacraments, spiritual welfare...

23. The conditions of Church Order and Ordinances of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands presume another – broader – realization of the 'authorization to administer Word and sacraments'. In Ordinance 3-9-1 has been determined that vicars are entrusted with the administration of Word and sacraments by

- Proclamation of the Word;
- Leading worship;
- Administration of baptism;
- Administration of Eucharist;
- Application of public confession;
- Confirmation of ministers of the church and introduction of those who are appointed in a service;
- Leading weddings and services of mourning and commemoration.

24. 'Mutual authority to administer Word and sacraments' can, in view of what has been determined in Ordinance 3-9-1 – as far as the Protestant Church in the Netherlands is concerned – apply to more than just the administration of the Word and the administration of baptism and Eucharist.

N.B. This applied as well for the NHK: the authorization of vicars of other churches, with whom special relations existed, including the authorization 'to administer Word and sacraments, to the service of prayer and to the religious confirmation and blessing of a wedding (Ordinance 20-3-2a and 20-10-1 HKO), but not the authority to apply public confession of faith and confirmation of ministers of the church.

25. In Ordinance 5-5-1 the authority of vicars of other churches to officiate is specified, namely 'according to the authority these vicars have in their own church-community and to the *'rules set by the general synod'*. This condition provides the general synod with the possibility to set further rules.

For example could be determined that the authority of vicars of other churches does not include the confirmation of ministers of the church. After all, this involves a (professional) act, by which the coming vicar, elder or deacon is confirmed in a profession *in (a congregation of) the Protestant Church in the Netherlands*. It is conceivable to reserve this professional act to those who are (were) linked to (a congregation of) the Protestant Church in the Netherlands.

N.B. In the association-agreement with the Covenant of Free Evangelical Churches in the Netherlands respectively the Gereja Kristen Indonesia Nederland has been included that vicars are mutually authorized to:

- Administration of Word and sacraments and
- Accomplishing of other professional work in the partner-church, amongst other the ordaining in a given case the confirmation of vicars.

It should be considered that an association-agreement is an advanced form of cooperation than just the granting of mutual authorities.

T.M. Willemze
Utrecht, February 2008

Appendix 3 **Synchronization on ecumenism**

The ecumenical policy of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands is established by the general synod and the execution of that policy rests with the synod board. However, this self-evidence does not offer enough support to deal with the obstinate reality. A number of aspects are:

1. The ecumenical contacts of the local church need funding, a part of the total of the as quota produced money. Therefore we yearly need to determine an amount, in consideration of the other spending of the quota-money. Drawing up a budget is in the first place task of the management of the Church Ministries, grounded on the total policy for the Church Ministries. With this ecumenism is also a responsibility for the management of the Church Ministries, which delegates this for a major part to the direction, namely where the supervision on the expenses is concerned.
2. On behalf of the church Kerk in Actie (where possible in cooperation with ICCO) maintains contacts with religious partners worldwide on support of projects in the area of mission and world diaconia. In practice there can not always be made an exact distinction between ecumenical contacts and support-contacts.

If ecumenism of the local church is concerned the following institutions are involved in one way or another:

1. the synod board
2. the management
3. the direction
4. program managers

Business is settled and synchronized in periodical consultation. It is not surprising that tension can develop resulting from the various responsibilities, in spite of everyone's involvement with the work of the church. That tension is not necessarily negative; it can be stimulating as well. But it is also important to mention the mutual relation as careful as possible in order to prevent stalemate.

In view of this mutual relation a number of starting positions can be mentioned:

1. Ecumenism is no relief aid and no mission.
2. The ecumenical contacts are guiding. This means to say that there can be no support of projects in the area of diaconate or mission without the knowledge of partner-churches in the country involved.
3. Maintaining ecumenical contacts abroad is a task of everyone who travels on behalf of the church, therefore also for those who travel first of all in connection with support-projects like the employees of Kerk in Actie.
4. Everyone who was in any way involved, reports the ecumenical contacts he or she had to the general secretary of the synod.
5. With the determination of the budget the Small Synod also determines the budget available for ecumenism. It is the duty of the direction to supervise this budget.
6. Important themes occurring in ecumenism are always discussed in the consultation mentioned before, under responsibility of the synod board. Consensus is the goal. If this is impossible the synod board has the casting vote in observance of the determined budget.
7. Written report by the Church Ministries to the (small) synod and information by the synod board to the synod.
8. The synod board is always informed in case of visits of foreign delegations in the scope of cooperation and a reception by (members of) the synod board is arranged.
9. In case of visits abroad in the scope of cooperation the synod board is invited to participate in the delegation or to represent the church (for example for the 100-year-anniversary of a partner-church).
10. "Briefings" and advice will be provided by the Church Ministries when the synod board receives invitations for visits, conferences and such abroad before the start of the journey.

Appendix 4 Financing ecumenism

First and foremost is that finances have to follow policy and in immediate addition we can not live beyond our means. This asks for a policy in which we can prioritize and for good fund-raising.

The quota and the ecumenism-collection are sources of income for national and international ecumenism. Which part of the quota is available for ecumenism is determined by the synod based on the budget set by the management. It concerns the administrative-professional level shaped in memberships of general ecumenical organizations (Council of Churches, World Council of Churches, LWF, WARC etceteras) and in contacts with partner-churches.

Next to that there is ecumenism in the executing work of Kerk in Actie (and ICCO), for example through memberships of to the ecumenical alliances linked organizations in the area of diaconal and missionary work (such as Eurodiaconia, CCME, ACT and Aproved) and by participation in and financial contribution to programs and teams (such as the project-group Poor Side of the Netherlands and the team Social Politics of the CEC). Policy and budget for this are established in the separate programs.

In further consultation the synod board and the direction of the Church Ministries determine in which way and with which amount Kerk in Actie participates in financing the own involvement in ecumenical work on administrative-professional level.

An amount of € 293,800 is taken up in the budget 2008 for memberships and contributions to alliance-organizations and an amount of € 30,000 for activities like travels and conferences. In case of shrinking budgets there will be a proportional cut down expenses, written out the consequences of reorganization of international ecumenism in the future.

Appendix 5

Abbreviations

ACT	Action by Churches Together is an organization in which churches and development organizations allied with churches cooperate in the area of emergency.
APRODEV	Aprodev has been founded in 1990 and is the Association of development organizations in Europe allied with the World Church Council. Both ICCO as Kerk in Actie (Church in Action) are members.
CCME	Churches Commission on Migrants in Europe was founded in 1964. At present discussions with CEC are finalized in order to function as a committee of CEC starting 2009. Kerk in Actie (Church in Action) is a member of CCME.
CEC / KEK	Conference of Churches
COGG	Contact Institution Reformed Religious Conviction
CPCE / GEKE	Community of Protestant Churches in Europe
CWM	Council of World Mission
ELK	Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Kingdom of the Netherlands
GCF	Global Christian Forum
GKN	Reformed Churches in the Netherlands
ICCO	Inter-church organization for Development Cooperation
Iona	Spiritual ecumenical monastery on the isle of Iona at the Scottish coast
JOP	Youth Organization of the Protestants Church in the Netherlands
LWF	Lutheran World Federation
NGO	Non Governmental Development Organizations
NHK	Netherlands Reformed Church
PERKI	PERsekutuan Kristen Indonesia; founded in 1938 as successor of the organization of Indonesian Christian Youth, which was founded in 1930. PERKI has 30 departments in Europe, of which there are 8 in the Netherlands
REC	Reformed Ecumenical Council
RKK	Roman Catholic Church
RvK	Council of Churches
SKIN	Together Church in the Netherlands
Taizé	Spiritual ecumenical community in northern France
WARC	World Alliance of Reformed Churches
WCC	World Council of Churches