

1st Colloquium Statement

Towards Transformative Ecumenism

I. Introduction

On 15-17 July 2013 forty concerned global Christians engaged in ecumenical action at various levels gathered at Kwangrim Seminar House in Pocheon, Korea for the International Theological Colloquium for Transformative Ecumenism. Those gathered felt the ecumenical movement was at a turning point that it needed to take and focused on the future of the ecumenical movement – especially as it impacts, inspires, and enables collaboration between peoples' movement of the global South and all who are united in ongoing struggles to affirm life and to dismantle persistent, disproportionate, and systemic threats to life, justice, and peace. The occasion/premise of this gathering was a permeating sense of the deep crisis within the ecumenical movement characterized by a dearth of prophetic, intellectual, and moral substance and a dissonance with the peoples' movements for life, justice, and peace. Those gathered joined in lamenting the human greed for resources and power that drive the most serious threats that face our communities.

The specific objectives of this gathering were:

- To plant seeds of a transformative ecumenical movement that will grow out of people, their lives, and their struggles;
- To work for an ecumenical movement that has a clear vision as to how to heal a divided church and world;
- To free the ecumenical movement from patriarchal, bureaucratic, and business oriented leadership devoid of calling, spirit, and respect for the whole creation.

The following queries guided three papers presented during the meeting and conversations during the gathering:

- How to re-juvenate the ecumenical movement out of the prophetic bankruptcy of ecumenism;
- How to re-define ecumenism itself outside of intellectual bankruptcy of ecumenical spirituality and vision;
- How to re-shape the leadership out of moral bankruptcy of ecclesiastical leadership

While this group focused on short-term and institutional strategies of engagement with the World Council of Churches through the 10th Assembly in Busan, Korea (2013), this group was also focused on a long-term project and expanded interest. The group gathered as the first of eight colloquia to be held over the next eight years to ignite and invite a transformative ecumenism that walks in solidarity and partnership with peoples' movements around the world.

II. Our Conversations



The following provides a window into the content of our conversations during this colloquium, specifically highlighting the three keynote contributions, group conversations, and plenary interventions according to the focal queries.

A. Prophetic Ecumenism: How to Rejuvenate Ecumenism from Prophetic Bankruptcy.

The ecumenical movement as we know it is undergoing a prophetic bankruptcy, due to its current inability to pay heed to authentic voices in the midst of various crises in today's world. This is manifested in the overemphasis on bureaucratic, structural and institutional concerns that prevents the ecumenical movement responding adequately to issues of justice and peace. Reclaiming the ecumenical prophetic voice must come from the movement's ability to embody the voice of marginalized people. The cries of those who are marginalized urge the movement to speak prophetically to the life-threatening powers of Empire, which are all-pervading and which present themselves in the guise of economic globalization and military hegemony.

Failing to confront these powers is failing God and all of creation, as well as failing our ecumenical vocation. Rejuvenating the ecumenical movement requires a new purpose and direction, allowing the Spirit to breathe life back to the movement and re-engage with the power of marginalized people. We must engage in a double-strategy approach of counter-culturally denouncing the current economy of greed while at the same time announcing an economy of life embedded in the egalitarian, interdependent, shared-oriented praxis giving alternatives to the forces of globalization and the so-called free market. As Jesus turned the tables in the temple, the ecumenical movement should take the side of the oppressed as God has done throughout history. The World Council of Churches' General Assembly in Busan has the opportunity to be a kairotic moment in the history of the ecumenical movement. The very theme of the Assembly "God of life, lead us to Justice and Peace" is not just a heading. It is a non-pietistic prayer, a cry from the margins where poverty, oppression and displacement reside and its claim is as much upon the ecumenical movement as it is upon the wider world. Hearing these cries during the assembly will mean being ready again for a spirit-led ecumenical movement. We aspire to reshape our tired EcuMENism so that it can be more inclusive and responsive to people from the margins rather than church bureaucrats. Participants in the colloquium have identified the following major tenets to promote a process to rejuvenate the ecumenical movement from a prophetic point of view:

- The language and metaphors of the current ecumenical movement still reflect a colonial heritage and is often fraught with terminologies that do not reflect theologies of the Holy Spirit and do not connect people to the movement. Language should go beyond the written word, be more contextual, inclusive and reflect the struggle against Empire. Language should go beyond dichotomies (i.e. West/Non-west; Center-Margin), especially when they are warped images (i.e. how can the majority of people be the margins?);
- The current financial architecture of the ecumenical movement is based on the assumption that those who have control of the money own the money. There is a huge difference between creating and managing money. Money creation and management has colonial and capitalist implications: the justice concerns of the Global South are often outweighed by the financial vested interests of the Global North who use their monetary power to set the agenda;



- The institutional ecumenical movement does not necessarily correspond to the real ecumenical movement. Prophetic work is being done at the margins of the church by movements that we may not define as ecumenical. Rejuvenating the ecumenical movement entails creating new spaces for people from the margins to occupy the structures of ecumenism;
- We need to understand the movement as a living organism going through different seasons, experience renewal and rebirth and accepting death as a natural phase of its cycle. The ecumenical movement should be acknowledged as a holistic organism where body, spirit and soul are parts of the same entity and should not be seen as compartmentalized;
- We must recognize the different layers of the ecumenical world which include the ecumenical elite, congregations working ecumenically and the grassroots. The latter two are the ones that embody prophetic ecumenism and yet have less access to institutional ecumenism;
- The ecumenical movement should afford space to those who do not express themselves through rational and academic means but articulate their faith and their commitment to justice in a different way;
- We need to raise questions about whether we can renew the institution or if we should look for an alternative to an institutionalized movement;
- We need to raise the question about whether the WCC as we know it, an institution formed in the wake of World War II, still has historical and contextual validity. We need to go beyond the institution of the WCC;
- We need to emphasize a relational ecumenicity, rather than an institutional one. We need to harness a theology of hospitality and create processes of solidarity;
- We need to look at who is missing around the table when decisions are being made. We cannot speak on behalf of the voiceless, we must create spaces for people to have a voice;
- We must be a risk-taking community embracing the demands of those revolting against the elites, we need to clear the temple. We must overturn the tables but do it with a plan, a project for the future. This project must include a Post-Busan project and affirm an ecumenism of concrete actions.

B. Ecumenical Spirituality and Vision: A Fresh Reflection on Ecumenism in the 21st Century

We feel a deep intellectual crisis in the ecumenical movement. Our language is stale, concepts are increasingly irrelevant, and our spirits are stifled because we are not focused on the challenges to life posed by the new world order that confronts and distorts us. Nor are we responding adequately to what we feel the Spirit is doing to bring transformation. Our vision is too limited to the narrow, abstract world of the Church and needs to be expanded by an openness to the life of the Spirit within the whole Creation. This will bring us new conceptual frameworks and hermeneutics that can invite a transforming ecumenical ethos which can take root at many levels.

We offer these emerging ideas and insights as they came through our papers and discussions.

- *Empire*. We are dismayed that the ecumenical family still cannot see the deliberate systematic exploitation of people and planet by dominant political



economic and military systems. Technocratic and scientific 'powers' have brought about a profound change in the whole world and purport to offer the answers to all our troubles. But we persist in this analysis that imperial forces are at work co-opting us and fundamentally corrupting the life of the earth and all who live upon it. Many of our churches and leaders are captive to its seducing vision of power and purpose, while many of us suffer from the negative consequences of pollution and poverty. The present ecumenical movement is hesitant to address this fully as we continue to focus ecumenism as an ecclesiological concern, rooted in the outmoded context of the nation state. A transformed ecumenical movement is called to give its life and spirit to resisting this empire and offering alternative visions of life, challenging the legitimacy of technocratic power.

- *Pneumatology.* We see the doctrine of the Holy Spirit offering us new impetus for fresh ecumenical action. The Spirit brings life and transforms life, but we see that all of life is at stake in the current crisis. We hear the Spirit groaning for life and inviting our compassionate response. In the Spirit's power we can begin to find renewal for the struggle for justice. The Holy Spirit also enlightens our understanding of ecumenism, for the Spirit moves in the church but also beyond the church. The Spirit makes our margins new centres and helps us take up new positions at the edges of our world. As we begin to address this crisis through the life of the Spirit we anticipate discovering new understandings and spiritualities that hallow life
- *Macro-ecumenism.* We felt our praxis of ecumenism is too narrow and limited. The Spirit invites us to new dialogue with our neighbours as we discover many new partners in the common search for peace and justice. If there is to be peace on the earth, the world's religions need to develop new postures towards each other. As we look at the Middle East, Asia, Africa and also Europe, we see the tensions that exist there often hinge on Muslim-Christian relations. The present ecumenical movement has largely ignored this. Thus we see the vital importance of Muslim-Christian ecumenism in the light of the conflict that exists and is exploited between us. The urgent need for dialogue extends to all the world's faiths and to those secular movements seeking peace and justice. Through such dialogue and solidarity new vision and vigour can grow that will transform our common life together.
- *Cross textual – cross fertilization.* This calls for new methods of sharing and interpreting. As ecumenism has become stifled by focusing on doctrinal matters, so dialogue between the faiths has been hampered by not focusing on our common search for peace and life. Indeed, we often misrepresent each other as forces of death and damnation. This new ecumenism needs to engage more companionably with our neighbours and movements of other faiths and read our Scriptures and share our experiences together and build new communities of peace and life. We seek to read and honour our own Scriptures expecting cross textual readings to cross fertilise our understandings and praxis.
- *New concepts and methodologies.* We feel a crisis in our language and discourse, finding our traditional ecumenical language is inadequate to express the pain of Creation, or give true expression to the hopes of grass root movements as they seek to bring life in their own contexts. Our language is so constrained by the narrowness of ecclesiology that it is insufficient to capture the radical breadth and breath of the Spirit's life. We look to wisdom methodologies like Ubuntu,



Sang Saeng, and Convivencia to offer us these new concepts and insights for transformative ecumenism. This will entail fresh intellectual endeavors arising from different spiritual perspectives that till now the present ecumenical movement has largely censured and ignored.

- *Confluence and counter convergence.* We are not inventing a new movement, God's Spirit is at work in the struggles of the people and the pain of creation. People are not suffering passively but actively challenging unjust regimes and powers and celebrating grace and life. We are called to leave our safe ecclesial home to journey to and with these movements without co-opting them to our institutional needs. In this confluence of struggling, celebrating people the Spirit is at work, and we are called to become one more channel and movement in this rolling river of justice. This moves us beyond the unity-diversity discourse and invites us to see ourselves in a confluence of movements, converging for life to counter the forces of death. In the many forms of encounter awaiting us we particularly see the need for fresh ecumenical encounters south-to-south, that better express the current character and vitality of world Christianity than the Geneva defined structures we have employed, till now.

C. Ecumenical Leadership

The ecumenical movement and the churches are generally vested in the dynamics of power and money. There is an increasing bureaucratization of the movement. Corporate logic has infiltrated and taken over ecumenical governance resulting in ecumenical leadership that is not rooted in the struggles for life for people and God's creation. For this and many reasons ecumenical leadership and formation require renewal, therefore the emergence of any new breed of ecumenical leaders must experience radical metanoia that facilitates hermeneutical repentance.

- We seek an ecumenical leadership which embodies competency, commitment, compassion, consistency, connectedness, and integrity and shares a covenantal leadership which exercises servanthood;
- We need new models of leadership. The ecumenical movement needs to have leadership which can exercise power, confront power, shares power and can lay power down;
- New generations of leaders should be developed out of communities through South-South exchange and exposure programmes. We need to fast-track roving ecumenical education for new, creative, life affirming models of ecumenical leadership as well as postulate other models of ecumenical leadership by encouraging new people to participate;
- We seek to promote ecumenical and theological language or fresh expressions of ecumenism coined through relationality not elitism;
- We also need inclusive leadership and ecumenism crossing boundaries of religion in favour of life in fullness.

III. Proposals for Our Way Forward



We have discerned an urgent need for ecumenism to be transformed, and for our model of ecumenism to be transformative. This means changing our current structures and patterns of ecumenism, especially within the institution of the WCC. However, it also seeks an understanding and praxis of ecumenism that is transformative and partners itself with the many justice movements around us.

- The fruits of ecumenism should not simply be greater understanding but a deeper transforming and conforming of our lives and structures to the life of God's Spirit bringing justice, joy and peace. We need an including wide ranging sharing of our visions of what is transformative ecumenism that grows from the insights of the justice movements, our biblical and theological heritage and our discernment of the Spirit's life amongst us.
- We were disappointed to meet to address these concerns and critique within a group that was imbalanced, with more men than women. Our task is always to ensure an inclusive process that means we can learn from the full gifts and insights of God's people.
- We need to make an invitation to those who are not here, who are already struggling, to join us in developing this transformative ecumenical movement. This is a forum for developing new models of ecumenical sharing so we should consider how to invite people from other faiths and from justice and grassroots movements to participate in shaping this transformed and transformative vision.
- Plans are in place to create a safe meeting place for the group to explore and critique the Busan agenda and use it as an opportunity to press for changes in the WCC's current practice. Further plans can be made in the light of what occurs within Busan.

The work we have done, the concerns and passions we have shared will set us in a new direction and in new relationship, through which the Spirit can blow and old bones and structures be transformed into new life and liveliness. Transformation is not in our power but is the Spirit's gift when we come together seeking the justice and peace God offers the whole inhabited earth.



Living out Transformative Ecumenism

I. Introduction

This is the statement of the second International Theological Colloquium for Transformative Ecumenism, 8-11 June 2014, Manila, Philippines. This Colloquium was born with the critical reflection of our times and of the crisis of ecumenical movement itself:

“The ecumenical movement is in crisis – a deep crisis painfully felt everywhere. It is a crisis brought by a prophetic bankruptcy in terms of the movement, an intellectual bankruptcy in terms of the ecumenical spirit and vision, and a moral bankruptcy in terms of the leadership. The ecumenical movement is no longer strongly rooted in the people and it does not speak a prophetic voice which echoes in the realities of people’s struggles for life. The ecumenical movement no longer produces a new and heart-beating vision for the church and the world that are deeply divided and wounded. The ecumenical leadership has suffered from patriarchal, bureaucratic, and business-oriented mindedness that lacks the sense of calling and devotion. And yet, the world is still suffering from injustice, violence, and war. People are crying for water, food, and life in dignity. Indeed, the whole creation has been groaning in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. What can we do about it? Where do we go from here?” —Statement of the first Colloquium in Pocheon, Korea, July 2013.

We concluded in the first Colloquium in Pocheon that we have discerned an urgent need for ecumenism to be transformed and for our model of ecumenism to be transformative. This means changing our current structures and patterns of ecumenism, especially within the institution of the WCC. However, it also seeks an understanding and praxis of ecumenism that is transformative and partners itself with the many justice movements around the world.

This time, we met with the title and aim of “Living out Transformative Ecumenism.” We gathered as activists and theologians committed to a model/way of ecumenism that seeks justice and peace. We were hosted by the NCCP to whom we express deep gratitude and joy, for their spirituality and praxis shows us the core of Transformative Ecumenism. We set ourselves the following objectives

- To develop transformative ecumenism as an alternative to conciliar ecumenism
- To deepen and consolidate agenda, concept, participation of transformative ecumenism
- To critically reflect on the Busan Assembly and to envision the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace in the light of transformative ecumenism
- To strengthen and expand the network of transformative ecumenism

We met on the edge of Conciliar Ecumenism, feeling vexed that justice is marginalised from the ecumenical movement. Here we encountered Transformative Ecumenism as the partnership that is formed in mission from the margins. Transformative Ecumenism was revealed to us as the solidarity of people who resist their marginality and offer it as the locus of new insight and blessing. In a shifted shaken setting we began to offer some ideas for what it means to live our Transformative Ecumenism as distinct from the restriction of Conciliar Ecumenism.

The problem of Conciliar Ecumenism is not fellowship per se but fellowship without movement, not unity per se but unity without justice. Indeed, “... communion[fellowship] is not simply the union of existing churches in their current form.”(*The Church*, article 13) The emphasis on fellowship and relationship has imprisoned, isolated and marginalized the movement of ecumenism. The essence of Transformative Ecumenism is movement; it is the movement of the Spirit that destroys all the barriers between churches, between the church and the world, between antagonistic human communities in the world, and between human world and the Creation - in order to reconcile us all to God.(Eph. 2:16)

We find ourselves in the wilderness, and realise it is a holy place, full of strange and painful hope. We know from our tradition that the wilderness is where God begins a new history, God’s new works. It is where God speaks, where God resides. It is the Holy Place. Transformative Ecumenism is a movement that seeks to return to the wilderness. Transformative Ecumenism is “wilderness ecumenism” that needs to be lived out with others who-pilgrim there. Using the form developed in the new mission statement, Together Towards Life, Transformative Ecumenism is “Ecumenism from the margins.”

II. Philippines solidarity visits

Transformative Ecumenism is already amongst us in Spirit and in truth. We have contextualized ourselves into the life and struggle of Filipino peoples so that we can envision a Transformative Ecumenism that is rooted in the ground. Our exposure visits demonstrated powerfully the models of Transformative Ecumenism that we want to advocate and share. The resilience, resistance and justice centred faith of the movements we met and of the NCCP was inspiring and humbling. Here is a place where a people-centred and creation-centred faith and spirituality feeds a deep vision and praxis of justice. We visited three different situations and movements.

One group joined the 'Protest Action of Indigenous Peoples and Peasant against massive land grabbing.' This is a protest organised by the Dumagat indigenous peoples of the Southern Tagalog Region in the Province of Rizal, Palaw'an and Cuyonen in the Province of Palawan and the Mangyan people in the Island of Mindoro, south of Manila. Their land is being taken both by corporations and by government in the name of economic development that is not shared with the peoples whose land it is. Colloquium participants joined the indigenous peoples, peasants, and fisherfolks protesting outside the Philippine's House of Representatives.

The second group visited the community located at Barangay Nagpayong, Pasig City, East of Manila. It is an urban poor community whose land and rights are being eroded and denied by urban development projects. This has led to demolition of homes and businesses to make way for new building work. Workers are being made to work in unfair and dangerous conditions. Participants met with the community under the umbrella of the Alliance of Nationalist and Genuine Labour Organization (ANGLO-KMU).

The third group met with Migrante International Community. Migrante International is an alliance of progressive organizations composed of overseas Filipinos and their families. Migrante International upholds and advances the rights and welfare of overseas Filipinos within the framework of the Filipino people's struggle. Participants met with the family of Marilou Ranario, a domestic helper imprisoned in Kuwait, who was saved from death sentence because of collective action of the community.

Our solidarity visits pointed up that the crises of each particular place echoes the interconnected global crises and our need for an economy of life and a unity of purpose that seeks peace and justice. The exploitation of migrant workers, the denial of rights to poor urban communities and indigenous peoples, echo the stories of others peoples and communities around the world. We see in it the failure of the nation-state to adequately protect their populations, especially their wilful neglect of poor communities. We witnessed also the power and dignity of the Filipino people as they seek to resist these oppressive forces and call their government and leaders to account. It was inspiring to see and to reflect that this is what unity is for, as a means to resist evil and injustice.

III. Biblical insights

We listened to a number of presentations through the Colloquium and discerned a range of ideas and themes. Thus we sought to connect these ideas and themes with biblical themes as we attempt to deepen our analysis and articulation of Transformative Ecumenism.

1. Jesus and an indigenous, Canaanite woman (Matt 15: 21 – 28)

Transformative Ecumenism speaks to our most divided realities. In this encounter between the indigenous woman and the foreigner Jesus, we see our self-important patterns of faith shaken up and our settled views about 'the other' overturned. This disturbing text confronts us with the historic racism of Jesus' era. He leaves the 'pure' space of Israel's land and crosses into Tyre & Sidon: a land often condemned and its people, who were the indigenous land dwellers, denigrated and despised (Isa 23, Ezek 26, Joel 3, Amos 1). A woman comes, whose daughter is sick, and her determination, self-possession and resilience usher in the healing of her daughter and the shaking of patriarchy. She confronts and converts the disciples, the reader and, maybe, Jesus himself. Jesus quotes the racist attitude of his day, asking if it is right to give the children's bread to the dogs. This indigenous woman shows deep dignity and power, confronts the patriarchal words of Jesus' time so that he rejoices and blesses the transformation she has begun. The disciples are astonished as they have attempted to do all they can to rule this woman's request out of order, as not fitting to the movement of Jesus, for she asks

for the healing of one for whom they care nothing. This strong powerful woman reveals an ecumenism that Christ blesses which breaks the boundary of race and faith and gender.

2. The counter King and the Magi (Matt. 2: 1 – 12)

Our reflections on Transformative Ecumenism confront us with the pursuit and practice of power by the state, by corporations and by the churches. Thus we found ourselves reading the account of the Magi coming from Asia to worship the new counter king, exposing the cruel and tyrannical nature of the puppet King Herod. Their wisdom, emerging from beyond Israel's borders, reveals the ancient promise of Israel's faith as current and timely. Yet, the birth of the counter king, Immanuel, was hidden from Israel's own wise counsellors who had allied themselves with the Court and the ruthless king Herod. So steeped were they in the power of the Court that the priests and counsellors could not see the promise of the Christ-child coming true in their own time and place. So, God chooses to transform our vision of power through the birth of a vulnerable child, witnessed by foreigners with their eastern wisdom and their pilgrimage through the wilderness. In their wake we are left to wonder what journeys we are to make towards the God of life, and with whom.

3. The feeding of the 5000 (John 6: 1 – 14)

Transformative Ecumenism emerges at a time when we have had enough of the patterns and practices of Conciliar Ecumenism and are hungry for something more. Yet, it is not clear if we are truly prepared to risk the little we have to be transformed. Jesus' confident promise to feed the 5000 strikes the disciples as ridiculous because they cannot believe they have the resources to feed so many. With no money what can be done? Yet, a small child steps forward with two fish and five loaves and the drama of transformation unfolds. The disciples looked to money to solve their problem, Jesus looked to the act of faithful sharing and demonstrated something the disciples were ready to prevent because they would not believe.

We are the ones who are called to witness to the gift of transformation begun by Jesus, and continued through his Spirit. Of us it should be said that there is neither Jew nor Gentile, slave nor free, male nor female, but a new creation in Christ. (Gal. 3:28, 2 Cor. 5:17) Yet we see the current conciliar ecumenical movement wasting our gift and calling and neither honouring or seeking the transformation the overflowing Trinity of love lives to share.

IV. Key features and practices of living out Transformative Ecumenism (TE)

1. To live out TE is to respond to the call from the margins to seek justice

We belong to a faith tradition that is built around the memory of the One who defied the power and glory of the contemporary political and religious establishments and instead embraced the marginalized people and communities. We are called to be an alternative community by the One who asserted the act of a widow who gave only two small copper coins as greater than those who gave huge sums; applauded the prayer of the scorned tax collector as more acceptable than that of the glorified Pharisee; valued the faith of the despised gentile than of those of his own centuries-old religious tradition; rewarded the poor Lazarus with a seat next to Abraham in his parable while the arrogant rich man was left to thirst forever; defied the protocols and traditions of rituals and propriety for the sake of the healing of the sick; and taught his disciples that to have and wield power is to be a servant and even goes to extent of being one by washing their feet on the night before he was killed. In fact, much of the biblical tradition itself is so much of this, despite some assertions on the contrary, unveiling to us the locale of God's presence and power among the Last, the Lost and the Least. These for Jesus are God's VIPs, and not the Majesties, Eminences, Excellences and Holinesses. However, many of us in our churches and church organizations are too preoccupied with our desire to rub shoulders with the powerful and the prominent even as we call ourselves the community that belongs to the One who got killed for rubbing them on the wrong side. The issues and concerns of the marginalized people only receive marginal response. But it is in the company and the call of marginalised people that ecumenism becomes vital, radical and relevant.

2. To live out TE is to live inclusively in solidarity with each other

Justice and inclusion go together, unity needs diversity to properly reflect the web of life that God has made. Justice raises up the least and makes first the last. There can be no justice unless it is open to all and for all and

embraces all because all of life is under threat. It is cruelly ironic that our unity movement has become so exclusive and so far removed from the peoples' justice movements. We are neither "walking together" nor "working together" for justice. Ecumenism needs to settle beyond the borders the church has marked out between churches, between the church and the world, between the world and the Creation. We are migrating people seeking new relationships with all and offering new vision on all of our identities. We see TE becoming a reality where dignity and diversity is respected as gender roles and relationships are transformed and the gifts, calling and leadership of differently abled people expressed, women honoured and positive practice of masculinities expressed. TE begins to unfold when young and older people voice their vision of the movement Jesus started, and take it forward in their own style. TE is the positive invitation of our diverse human identities inviting all to share who they are distinctively without fear of threat or rejection. We are all fragments of the image of God and of the communities of the earth, all waiting to be gathered up in the Spirit and transformed. (Romans 8) This inclusiveness embraces people of all faiths and none, a deep ecumenism that can claim to be the beginning of the full transformation God has promised. It also reaches beyond the human neighbours we have and gathers all the web of life. TE also needs to honour the mission of creation and to see that the Oikomene includes the diversity of all life, and with all life we need to seek a partnership of justice and peace.

3. To live out TE is to actively seek first the kin-dom of God

In order to be inclusive TE is participative and activist. This is in stark contrast to the bureaucratic and technical ecumenism practiced by the churches and the conciliar ecumenical movement, which largely seeks to manage and facilitate unity among confessional traditions. TE is fundamentally concerned with power and poverty, justice and peace revealed to us in the peoples' suffering and struggles. Such things cannot be managed, but must be embodied and embraced. We look to the passion and conviction of those who wrestle, demonstrate and even suffer and die for justice and align ourselves with them. TE seeks justice for the poor and the earth, is turned towards Creation and the marginalised and actively seeks our common liberation into life in fullness. (John 10)

4. To live out TE is to empower mutually.

TE is empowering as we enter into solidarity and companionship with people inside and outside our faith traditions. TE seeks to be empowering, for it flows from an activist stance that makes partnership with the people and does not co-opt them to our institutional desires and goals. This partnership is mutually empowering, so that a platform is made for all to raise their cries and voice their vision of justice. Once we are rooted in the peoples' struggles the Spirit's accompanying power flourishes and grows. For all Conciliar Ecumenism's claims to seek mutuality we find in a different story in meetings and over money. Donors deny mutuality disempowering justice movements by their insistence on their right to control and decide how money is used, despite their claim to be seeking justice with those on the ground. We witness manipulated agendas still and can see no way for our brokenness to be transformed if the steps to justice are denied or undermined by vested interest amongst our own brothers and sisters. We have experienced in the Philippines the power that flows in tears, song and movement when people act together for justice and peace denied them by authorities of any domain.

5. To live out TE is to live out the subversive nature of the Gospel.

TE is ecumenism from the margins, with those at the margins. The Philippines shows us that to partner with people is to risk becoming an enemy of the state and also an enemy of the church. We lament to witness that such women and men of faith and integrity, committed to justice and peace are threatened by the government, and even killed termed communists and insurgents. It is made all the worse when leaders in the community of faith malign and suspect them and their faith. It is clear that still many churches do not grasp the subversive nature of the Gospel to all Empire. While the ecumenical movement has raised this voice, elements of the church inside and outside it continue to deny the wholeness of Christ's vision of life in fullness and the challenge this brings to our politics and economics and to our ecclesiology and theology. The wider ecumenical movement concerns itself with internal - organisational and bureaucratic matters, seeking always to perpetuate itself, rather than propagate a deep and wide ranging vision of justice for the marginalised peoples and the exploited earth. TE sees our institutions as fleeting and provisional but our vision of justice and peace persistent and eternal. This is to subvert power in all its forms as we seek a transforming unity actively denied by those who maintain the status quo.

6. To live out TE is to be rooted in the dynamic spirituality of life.

The Christian unity movement grew out of the negotiations of the Christian power blocs, all of whom were settled in history and nature, arising from national contexts and majority identities. This is not what Christianity is anymore. TE understands itself to be a migrant perspective, derived with those who find themselves migrants and minorities in an often inhospitable land and church. TE stands under the eschatological tension of the now and not yet, articulating a vision of justice and peace yet to be fully incarnated. Thus it remains open to new and hybrid forms of shared life and witness. At the margins, in the journey, through the wilderness, from the movement TE offers us a dynamic spirituality of life. The wilderness through which we travel is a holy place, and we are sent there by God as we leave behind the places of false security that the church has built for itself through the ecumenical movement. This is to partner TE with the vision of Mission in the Spirit that the WCC has begun to espouse and the transformative spiritualities that underlie it.

7. To live out TE is to live and love, struggle and celebrate always hopeful in God's power to transform

TE is apparent in our contexts, our biblical story and theological heritage, we are offering it as an alternative to the routinized bureaucratized model of Conciliar Ecumenism that predominates because we are hopeful that God's Spirit is moving, shaking and shifting. In an unjust world, what can be more hopeful than joining those who struggle for justice? In a divided world, what can be more hopeful than an ecumenism that is inclusive? In a despairing world, what can be more hopeful than an ecumenism that is active? In a siloed world, what can be more hopeful than an ecumenism that is empowering? In an elitist world, what can be more hopeful than an ecumenism that is subversive? In an entrenched world, what can be more hopeful than an ecumenism that is dynamic? In a domesticated ecumenism what can be more hopeful than reclaiming its radical heritage and transforming its current practices and structures? Thus in a world of brokenness we need spiritualities and practices of transformative unity that bring healing and hope. TE flows from the peoples' struggles for justice, honours the struggles of the poor and the earth for life, and offers us hope instead of the despair and disappointment many feel in the ecumenical movement today.

V. Conclusion

To live out TE is to reclaim our transformative heritage in the ecumenical movement. While we find ourselves in some contention with the conciliar ecumenical powers and structures, at a global, regional and national level, we are committed to working in it to renew its life and work. We testify to the significance of the ecumenical movement in many contexts and settings when justice has been at the centre of its life. In global gatherings, in national movements, and in local action churches in unity have strived for peace and justice and been important partners with those at the margins seeking change and transformation. We have a rich heritage to honour and to renew. We mourn the moribund atmosphere to ecumenism and feel the tension of giving our energy to renew such movements or beginning to create alternatives to the Conciliar Ecumenism movement. But we remain determined to share ideas and critique that we believe can transform the Conciliar Ecumenism movement's life and practice and centre it back on justice and peace as its core and purpose.

In our discussions of TE as a justice movement, a counter cultural movement to Conciliar Ecumenism, who see the journey from the margins and in the wilderness as something to seek and face in partnership with other companeros committed to justice we see that the WCC invites a pilgrimage:

"We intend to move together. Challenged by our experiences in Busan, we challenge all people of good will to engage their God-given gifts in transforming actions. This Assembly call you to join us in pilgrimage. May the churches be communities of healing and compassion, and may we see the Good News so that justice will grow and God's deep peace rest on the world."—Message of the 10th Assembly

It is not clear to us what this really means and how such a pilgrimage will practically and purposefully develop. We see language and ideas that reassure us that the language of justice is honoured. We are not convinced that the methodologies and praxis of justice will emerge through a process which is largely bureaucratic and internal to the churches. Its intention seems not to be the outworking of justice and peace, but the renewal of the ecumenical movement's structures and institutions. Yet we see in TE that we are determined to walk together, work together, struggle together, live out justice and peace together. This is the sense we make of 'pilgrimage.'

We anticipate this will shake up our structures and lead us into new spaces for justice to thrive as a deep ecumenism flourishes. We urge the churches in all their forms and manifestations to discover deep ecumenism and refresh the church's ecumenical vision and practice. This will lead us into dialogue with people of all faiths and none, and into taking action on the ground, partnering with the many movements struggling for justice and peace for humanity and the earth.

VI. Our next steps

We see our next tasks as a mixture of research and advocacy work in addition to deepening and developing the inclusiveness of the movement.

Research

- Begin some research to identify other TE movements and to examine where TE is in practice, as we have witnessed it in the Philippines for example.
- Develop a number of TE teams to look at publication, communication and Spirituality
- Explore issue of new ecumenical financial architecture

Advocacy

- Workshops and training sessions aimed at theological students and educators and young people to form transformative ecumenical leadership
- Develop new vision and structures within the WCC and CE movements

Network

- Widen the circle of participants
- Invite key leaders of key global people movements

In the coming year the Core group with others seek:

- To ensure TE is deep ecumenism our next colloquium must have the participation new partners from the peoples' movements, from other faiths and none and from young people. To devise new methodologies for participation and contribution.
- To seek publication of our analysis and critique
- To develop a comprehensive statement of our vision of TE

We are committed to putting this statement to action at our various contexts and are bent to ensure that this process in the direction of transformative ecumenism does not end up in shelves.

Topical Report of the 3rd International Theological Colloquium for Transformative Ecumenism

“Growing Together in Transformative Ecumenism”

11th – 16th January 2016

Lutheran Uhuru Hotel and Conference Centre Moshi, Tanzania

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because He anointed me to preach the good news to the poor, proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed” Luke 4:18.

Inspired by the biblical text above, Transformative Ecumenism attempts to build a justice centred unity movement, making partnership with the mission that those at the margins of our world and church call for and lead. The signs of the times call urgently for a new spirit of ecumenism that extends beyond the church’s boundaries and internal affairs. Mission from the margins of our world calls for a deeper unity of action, purpose and change.

1. Preamble

Challenged by ever growing global injustice, violence and threats to the lives of many, concerned about the lack of a clear, prophetic and justice-driven response by the current institutional expressions of the ecumenical movement, and inspired by a triune God who proclaimed shalom and life over and against death, 32 women and men from various regional and professional backgrounds, activists, theologians, church leaders, came together for a colloquium at the Lutheran Uhuru Hotel & Conference Centre in Moshi, Tanzania, from 11-16 January 2016, for further reflection and strategizing on the emerging concept and praxis of Transformative Ecumenism (TE).

The colloquium is the third in a series of consultations, with the previous ones being held in Seoul, South Korea, and Manila, Philippines. Aims of the colloquium were:

- a) “to extend our vision of Transformative Ecumenism into the African context as a further part of the revitalization of the Christian story from the South,
- b) “to continue the process of critical engagement with Conciliar Ecumenism”,
- c) “discerning strategies and actions by which we can invite the renewal of ecumenical vision and praxis through the WCC work” (Concept paper for the Third Theological Colloquium).

In order to do so, the colloquium set out

- a) to build on the findings of the two previous colloquia and to deepen an understanding of it and
- b) to come up with strategies that foster a ‘growing together in transformative ecumenism’.

Like in the previous colloquia point of departure of reflection for action was the respective regional context in which the colloquium took place and its particular challenges. Bible studies, devotions, presentations, group-and plenary work as well as story-telling, music and dance shared people’s struggles for survival and justice and linked them with expressions of TE.

2. Contextual Realities of Transformative Ecumenism

The broad vision of transformative ecumenism is rooted on the quest for a more proactive movement that challenges systems and structures that prey and turn human life and all living beings as commodity. During the colloquium participants listened and engaged with human and environmental challenges common in Africa as a continent, Philippines, Middle East, Africans in Diaspora and other global forces that work against common humanity. Some of the challenges include; abject poverty, HIV/AIDS, forced migration, violent conflicts, proliferation of fire-arms and light weapons, human and drug trafficking, gender disparity and violence, climate change, land grabbing, food insecurity, poaching and destruction of wildlife, racial, casteism, social discrimination, xenophobia and fear of the other, etc. Some of the notable forces that militate against the common good of all are; the current economic system that concentrates bulk of the global capital resources in the hands of few at the expense of the huge majority; the highhandedness of the so-called world powers; heavy weaponisation and militarisation of peace making and maintenance; extreme religious fundamentalism and radicalism; global conspiracy against Palestine-Israel; local and global political and social systems and structures that exclude and inflict sufferings on others. These realities are speedily challenging the idea of the common life of humanity and living beings made by God.

3. Intersecting conversation on TE – Emerging themes

The colloquium offered participants the opportunity to reflect and digest on issues that are considered critical for the growing of a life centred transformative ecumenism. Some themes emerged during the colloquium that requires deeper reflections and application in this renewed ecumenical quest. The themes are discussed as follows;

3.1 Passionate leadership

Leadership in TE is of essential value. In order to promote, protect and nurture life, transformative leadership needs to be purpose-driven, see it as its main task to serve the life of community and find a people- and justice-centred answer to the question why a certain person is occupying a certain office. Transformative leadership requires preparation and the readiness to embed leadership in the contextual struggles, visions and challenges of people. Leaders need to be able to read the signs of time. Transformative leadership requires passion for issues of justice and life. Leaders need to be humble and be prepared to be in uncomfortable places and be led by those who are the experts of their own situation. Transformative leadership is based on a servanthood-model and needs strategic positioning in the agendas of communities as well as in advocacy-approaches. Theological education and training centres could be a basis for transitional leadership formation.

3.2 Authentic Solidarity:

It was discerned that the need for transformative ecumenism should compel us to be in active solidarity with those in the margin through denunciation and confronting of evil structures and forces that marginalised and excludes other humankind from experiencing fullness of life and destruction of the environment. Therefore, our solidarity actions both at the local and global levels have to be inspired by strong convictions as an authentic participation in the mission of God, with the awareness that issues of justice, human dignity and vitality of life are central to ecumenism that is transformative.

3.3 Deeper ecumenism:

TE invites us to step beyond the classical ecumenical space that is confined to inner-Christian, inter-denominational engagement and unity. TE acknowledges and lives out a broader interfaith-relation and –cooperation for justice and the common good. Therefore, TE is anchored in the notion of our common life and the inherent value of each and every human being and the earth. TE also needs to develop a life-centred eco-ecumenism that honours the connectedness of all the communities of the earth.

3.4 Reliable networking & Interconnectedness:

The need to build life-affirming networks and interconnectedness at local and global levels that transcend religious and cultural, socio-economic, political and geographical boundaries remains cardinal in the expression transformative ecumenism. While recognising that network brings out people's strength, it has to be acknowledged that can also be misused and abused. Therefore, transformative ecumenism facilitates honest, transparent and accountable networks constructed on reliable relations. It is important that more and more churches at the grassroots take it as obligation to step out, connect and network with other churches and other religious groups within their communities in order to response to common issues together. Likewise at national and global levels, life-centred networks and social movements should be initiated with the overarching objective of exposing and confronting unjust systems.

3.5 Celebrating Inclusivity:

TE acknowledges and celebrates life in all its diversity and delights in and acknowledges different and distinctive identities. Inclusive communities are welcoming spaces where people can find spaces of belonging irrespective of, for example, age, gender, sexual identity, ethnicity and culture, nationality, religious background, geographical location and so-called able-bodiedness. TE fosters the essential unity of humankind and denounces excluding and denigrating practices that violate the God-given rights of a person. TE-driven communities are more likely to be found as tent-dwellers in unsettled places in the wilderness than in cathedrals occupying the market-places.

3.6 Self-Critique and Reflection:

It was acknowledged that in one way or the other each of the participants have contributed to the maintenance of the status quo of the conciliar ecumenism. However, persuaded by conviction of repentance and need to offer selves as tools for an ecumenism that is transformative in nature and methodology. Therefore, Transformative Ecumenism demands that as participants in this vocation of transforming a world confronted with dehumanising forces to also seek God's guidance and align our actions with that of God. Transformative Ecumenism also requires that we remain authentically prophetic in our ecumenical engagements by refusing to conform to the patterns of the empire and other institutionalised forces.

3.7 Rethinking ecumenism:

TE as a faith-driven movement towards justice and life requires a shift of location – in hermeneutical as well as in geographical terms: from the board rooms to the streets and from dogma to life. Life and lives matter, therefore TE is based on a transformative understanding of the notion of Trinity: God, creator and sustainer of life, Christ, liberator and overcomer of all that endangers life, and the Spirit, calling towards a celebration of life in its fullness. Unfolding from the Trinitarian Being of God is justice and sanctity of life– as a promise but also as part of the

missio Dei that we are called to embark upon. Human unity in terms of just and life-fostering relationships is at the centre of ecumenism, not the overcoming of doctrinal differences and conversions in teaching and liturgy. TE takes its lead from the everyday struggles for survival, dignity and justice and walks with those marginalized, robbed of opportunities, of access, of participation, of rights.

4. Existing and emerging transformative spaces: Further growing towards TE

The 1st and the 2nd International Colloquium on TE have highlighted the need for TE and have started a process of conceptualizing the term. The 3rd Colloquium has put an emphasis on questions of implementations and of communicating the concept. As a dissident and transformation-oriented movement that delights in the manifold expressions of the life-seeking Spirit, as a kairoic and prophetic movement and as part of the already existing ecumenical movement in its various expressions TE has been *en route* where people are already on the move towards justice: in people's movements as well as in congregations, in faith-based inter-religious consortiums as well as in neighbourhood meetings, in established institutionalized ecumenical structures as well as in newly emerging grassroots initiatives.

TE as an emerging movement is de-centralized and located at and led by the agenda set by marginalized people. More than a structure it is an inclusive movement of those heading and struggling for life in justice and fullness for all. In order to encourage more and more people to join the movement:

- A) TE “chapters” and networks need to be established in the different regions, connecting people and issues,
- B) a webpage needs to be designed that offers general information on TE, serves as a platform for best practices and stories of struggle and hope shared by communities and individuals,
- C) social media need to get employed in order to interact with each other and allow for organizing justice-oriented activities,
- D) material needs to get developed that could be used for the training of leadership in TE as well as material that speaks to communities and congregations in their struggles for life, justice and dignity,
- E) artistic and cultural expressions that immediately relate the struggles, joys and hopes of communities need to be collected,
- F) people in leadership positions, especially younger leaders in people's movements, churches and other faith-based bodies should receive information about TE and be invited to join in the process,
- G) mentoring should be offered to especially younger leaders,
- H) mutual visits and partnerships between local movements and organizations to foster mutual encouragement and learning should happen.

Growing together towards TE is a journey of many steps. To grow further we need to explore the praxis and spirituality of TE. This should be our aim in a wider forum of exploration when we meet next. As an African proverb says: If you want to go fast, go alone. But if you want to go far, go together. We intend to go far in issues of justice, dignity and life, and we intend to do so together with those who share the same vision and commitment.

Moshi, 15 January 2016