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Report of the Commission on Christian Unity

The General Synod is responsible for the ecumenical relations of the Reformed Church in America (Book of Church Order [BCO], Chapter 1, Part IV, Article 2, Sec. 5; 2017 edition, pp. 65-66). In response to the full sweep of Scripture toward the unity of believers, and to fulfill its constitutional responsibility, General Synod has constituted the Commission on Christian Unity to oversee ecumenical commitments, to present an ecumenical agenda to the church, and to carry out ecumenical directives given by the General Synod. Since its creation in 1974 (MGS 1974, R-6, pp. 201-202) and its adoption by General Synod in 1975 (MGS 1975, R-4, pp. 101-102), this commission has served General Synod by coordinating a range of ecumenical involvements that reach all levels of mission in the RCA. The commission’s responsibilities are defined by the BCO in this way:

1. The commission shall initiate and supervise action with respect to the Reformed Church in America’s membership in or affiliation with ecumenical bodies.

2. It shall engage in interchurch conversations and appoint ecumenical delegates to other church bodies.

3. It shall inform the church of current ecumenical developments and advise the church concerning its ecumenical participation and relationships (Chapter 3, Part I, Article 5, Section 3b; 2017 edition, p. 110).

The commission also seeks to educate the RCA on ecumenical matters and advocates for actions and positions consistent with RCA confessions and ecumenical practices, as outlined in “An Ecumenical Mandate for the Reformed Church in America,” adopted by General Synod in 1996 (MGS 1996, R-1, p. 197). General Synod may also refer ecumenical matters to the commission for study and implementation.

RCA Ecumenical Involvement: An Overview

The RCA holds a historical commitment to active involvement in ecumenical conversation and cooperation with churches throughout North America and around the world. It is both a charter member and active supporter of historic ecumenical bodies like the World Council of Churches and the National Council of Churches and is a driving force behind bold and needed new ecumenical initiatives like the Global Christian Forum and Christian Churches Together. In this work, the RCA is variously represented by staff and by ministers, elders, and members—elected or appointed, paid or volunteer—who have committed their gifts and time to promote a greater witness to the unity Christians have in Christ as they witness to the grace and gospel of Jesus Christ alongside believers around the corner and around the world. Periodically throughout the year, and especially following participation in ecumenical events or meetings, these appointees provide brief reports to the Office of the General Secretary and to the Commission on Christian Unity.

This ecumenical work the commission does on behalf of the RCA is anchored in and shaped by the direction of the whole of the RCA. In this complex and changing time for the church, in which so many, locally and globally, are trying to figure out how best to witness to the gospel of Christ, and in which we in the RCA are seeking to invest our whole selves into the work of “Transformed & Transforming,” we believe deeply in our clearly-stated commitment to “working with all the partners that God provides.” The commission is dedicated to advancing the work and ministry of the RCA through this commitment to partnership; moreover, the commission believes the witness and influence of the RCA can be similarly transforming around the globe at this point in history.
This commission assumes the task of synthesizing this material into its own comprehensive report, which it presents each year to General Synod. The first portion of the commission’s report provides an overview and summary of the RCA’s formal ecumenical work worldwide through conciliar groups and its impact on the ministry and witness not only of these groups but also of the RCA itself. In the second part of this report, the commission presents reasons for celebration, lament, and profession at this moment in this church’s history, as the church continues to struggle with its response to Jesus’s prayer “that they may all be one” (John 17:21).

**World Council of Churches**

The largest and oldest organized expression of the modern worldwide ecumenical movement, the World Council of Churches (WCC) “is a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the scriptures, and therefore seek to fulfill together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is a community of churches on the way to visible unity in one faith and one eucharistic fellowship, expressed in worship and in common life in Christ.”

The WCC gathers its community from 345 churches in 110 countries, representing more than 500 million Christians worldwide. Member churches (or denominations) consist primarily of those from the historic Protestant churches and the Orthodox traditions, including most of the world’s Orthodox churches and scores of Anglican, Baptist, Lutheran, Methodist, and Reformed churches, as well as many United and independent churches. While the bulk of the WCC’s founding churches were European and North American, today most member churches are in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Latin America, the Middle East, and the Pacific. However, some major parts of world Christianity, including churches from evangelical and Pentecostal traditions, have little or no relationship to the WCC. The Roman Catholic Church is also not a member of the WCC, though it does participate in various theological dialogues and cooperate in some other ways.

The WCC’s highest legislative body, its assembly, meets approximately every seven years; it gathered most recently in Busan, South Korea, in October 2013, under the theme “God of Life, Lead Us to Justice and Peace.” The Central Committee is the continuing body that implements WCC policies enacted at the assemblies, reviews and approves programs, establishes the budget, secures financial support, and generally oversees the work of the WCC between assemblies.

The work of the WCC is not simply programmatic or related to formal initiatives. At times, its work is to provide a Christian witness in ways that perhaps no other group in the world can do. “Together toward Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes” is one example. This comprehensive study seeks to both affirm and challenge the church’s biblical and trinitarian commitment to mission and evangelism, even as it sets our efforts in the rapidly changing contemporary context, the relevance of marginalized peoples to mission, and the larger purposes of mission and evangelism in God’s own mission of love to the world. It is available directly from the WCC, and it could be an excellent study resource for congregations.

Olav Fykse Tveit, an ordained pastor in the Church of Norway, is the general secretary of the WCC. This year marks the 70th anniversary of the WCC. For more information on the work and mission of the WCC, see www.oikoumene.org.
World Communion of Reformed Churches

The World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) and the Reformed Ecumenical Council merged to form the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) in June 2010. The RCA was a charter member of the former WARC and enthusiastically worked to support the coming together of these two ecumenical bodies into one.

This renewed fellowship of Reformed, Presbyterian, Congregational, Waldensian, United, and Uniting churches is a network of 230 Protestant churches in 108 countries with a combined estimated membership of 80 million people that is, in its words, “called to communion, committed to justice, that all may experience the fullness of life in Jesus Christ.”

The WCRC may be best known worldwide for the Accra Confession, a groundbreaking statement issued at the General Council of the then-WARC in Accra, Ghana, in 2004, declaring that Christians are called by biblical teachings to be advocates for social, economic, and ecological justice. The text of the Accra Confession can be found at wcrc.ch/accra.

The 26th General Council of the WCRC took place in June 2017 in Leipzig, Germany, with the theme “Living God, Renew and Transform Us.” The council dealt with issues of justice, church unity, and world renewal. More than a thousand delegates, observers, staff, and invited guests gathered in Leipzig, making it the largest international ecclesial event in Germany during the Reformation Jubilee (commemorating 500 years since Martin Luther ignited the Reformation). During the General Council, the WCRC associated with the “Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification,” a document initially forged between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Lutheran Federation that has since also been affirmed by the World Methodist Council. The General Council also celebrated the signing of the “Wittenberg Witness,” a document crafted between the WCRC and the Lutheran World Federation that expresses a commitment to Christian unity as Reformed and Lutheran Christians live and work together to further a common Christian witness to a broken and troubled world.

The RCA's Lisa Vander Wal was chair of the General Council Planning Committee. During the General Council, she was elected to serve as vice president of the WCRC. The commission wishes to publicly commend her for the important leadership she is providing to the worldwide church through her multifaceted work with the WCRC. The commission also thanks Monica Schaap Pierce, Stacey Duensing, and Carlos Corro for their participation in the General Council in Leipzig as RCA delegates.

For more information on the WCRC and its work, see http://wcrc.ch.

Global Christian Forum

The Global Christian Forum (GCF) is a prominent example of a new form of worldwide ecumenical dialogue and influence that is for the first time drawing world leaders from evangelical, historic Protestant, Orthodox, Pentecostal, Catholic, and African Instituted churches into a new place of relational—rather than structural—fellowship. Formed quietly in the 1990s, with RCA involvement from the very beginning, the GCF is responding to the rapid shift in global Christianity marked by new vitality and growth in the churches in the Global South, often in Pentecostal and evangelical expressions that have no links to broader ecumenical bodies. From the start, the WCC, the Vatican’s Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, the World Evangelical Alliance, the
Pentecostal World Fellowship, and others have been supportive of the GCF’s work. Wesley Granberg-Michaelson has supported its development and continues to serve on its steering committee. Granberg-Michaelson also served as co-chair of the search committee for a new executive secretary.

In February 2018, the GCF announced that Casely Essamuah was selected as its next secretary. Originally ordained in the Methodist Church in Ghana, Essamuah has worked for the last 13 years as the global missions and local outreach pastor of Bay Area Community Church in Annapolis, Maryland. Essamuah describes himself as “evangelical and ecumenical.” Originally from Africa and now ministering in North America, he views himself as a “bridge-builder” between the churches in the Global North and Global South. Essamuah will take up the position in July 2018, following the retirement of Larry Miller, who has led the GCF for the last six years. Essamuah was presented as secretary-elect to the third Global Gathering of the Global Christian Forum in Bogota, Colombia, on April 24–27, 2018. Attending the Global Gathering as representatives of the RCA were Wes Granberg-Michaelson, Stacey Duensing, and Lee DeYoung.

For more information about the third Global Gathering, visit www.globalchristianforum.org/bogota.html.

National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA

Since its founding in 1950, the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA (NCC) has been a visible presence for ecumenical cooperation among Christians in the United States. The 37 NCC member communions—from a wide spectrum of Protestant, Anglican, Orthodox, evangelical, historic African American, and Living Peace churches—include 45 million people in more than 100,000 local congregations in communities across the nation. The RCA was a charter member of the NCC.

By necessity, the work of the NCC has evolved in dramatic ways over the last decade in response to a precipitous decline in revenue. NCC general secretary and president James E. Winkler presides over a very differently-structured organization than the one that existed a generation ago. Still, the NCC continues to offer an important witness to the power of a shared voice among Christians. The newest multi-year initiative of the NCC focuses on ending racism. The initiative was launched with a rally in Washington, DC, on April 3–5; nine members of the RCA attended. The NCC continues to respond to other urgent issues that Christians face, most recently mass incarceration and interreligious relations with a focus on peace. The RCA has placed members on the NCC’s Convening Tables on Interreligious Relations; Justice and Advocacy; and Christian Education, Faith Formation, and Leadership. The commission thanks Norma Coleman-James, Jeffrey Hubers, and Monica Schaap Pierce for their ongoing service on these Convening Tables.

The website of the NCC is www.nationalcouncilofchurches.us.

Christian Churches Together

Formed in 2007, Christian Churches Together (CCT) is the broadest Christian fellowship in the United States. It represents members from the Catholic, Orthodox, historic Protestant, historic Black, evangelical, and Pentecostal families of Christian churches. In addition, its membership includes six national organizations: the American Bible Society, Bread for the World, Evangelicals for Social Action, Habitat for Humanity, Sojourners, and World Vision. It’s this mix of churches and religious organizations that makes the CCT unique among North American ecumenical organizations. CCT calls itself and
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its member churches “to celebrate a common confession of faith in the Triune God; to
discern the guidance of the Holy Spirit through prayer and theological dialogue; to provide
fellowship and mutual support; to seek better understanding of each other by affirming
our commonalities and understanding our differences; to foster evangelism faithful to the
proclamation of the gospel; to speak to society with a common voice whenever possible;
and to promote the common good of society.”

In 2017, Christian Churches Together held a special gathering in Garden Grove, California,
to discern the mission and future of CCT. With the theme “Beloved Community,”
speakers and participants engaged in dialogue over how to have difficult conversations in
community, racial reconciliation, and what it means to be a church for the poor. The RCA
delegation consisted of Earl James, Don Poest, and Monica Schaap Pierce. Schaap Pierce
also serves on the Steering Committee of CCT.

Among the many benefits of participating in CCT, RCA delegates laud the annual gatherings
as opportunities to build personal relationships with people across the church in the U.S.,
to come to a more nuanced understanding of the differences and commonalities between
communions, to grow together in Christ, to deepen spiritual wisdom, to identify new
possibilities for a shared witness, and to act as a unified voice in speaking to contemporary
culture on issues of spirituality, life, justice, and peace.

Carlos Malave is the executive director of CCT, which has its offices in Indianapolis,
Indiana. The CCT’s website (www.christianchurchestogether.org) provides additional
information about its mission and activity. There you will also find common statements on
poverty, immigration reform, racism, and evangelism.

RCA – Formula of Agreement Relationships

In 1997, the Reformed Church in America, in conjunction with its Reformed ecumenical
partners the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and the United Church of Christ, approved
a historic agreement with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America known as the
Formula of Agreement. This landmark agreement brought the four churches—already
partners in a number of ministries, both in North America and around the world—into full
communion with each other.

Since that agreement, the working relationships between the churches have remained close
and vibrant, if not always very public. For example, Daniel Meeter serves as a member of
the church council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Paul Janssen serves
on the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)’s ecumenical committee, and representatives from
the Formula of Agreement churches serve as corresponding delegates to this body each
year. While the commission regularly looks for means of cooperation between the partner
denominations, it also acknowledges that, in fact, much ecumenical work between these
denominations happens at the local level, where Reformed and Lutheran congregations
join in ministries of worship, education, and service. Behind the scenes, denominational
staff from the respective churches meet both to support each other in their respective work
and to plan for possible joint historic streams of Protestant Christianity at a time when
their common witness makes the gospel of Jesus Christ more available to more people in
more places.

Roman Catholic–Reformed Dialogue

The eighth round of Roman Catholic–Reformed dialogue began in 2013 and concluded in
2017. Included in the dialogue were representatives from the U.S. Conference of Catholic
Bishops, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the United Church of Christ, the Christian Reformed Church in North America, and the Reformed Church in America. The RCA was represented by Allan Janssen, Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, and Monica Schaap Pierce.

The dialogue focused on ecclesiology—particularly the roles of the Trinity, covenant, Word and sacrament, mission, unity, and diversity in the life of the church. The dialogue also examined ecclesial ministry and oversight and uncovered a unifying affirmation that ecclesial ministry and oversight are undertaken personally and collegially in service to the church, not just for the church’s own sake, but for the sake of the world God so loves.

The report of the dialogue, which is titled “The One Body of Christ: Ministry in Service to the Church and the World,” concludes with three important acknowledgements. First, the dialogue partners acknowledge that

[A]ll of our traditions see ministry as service to God through Christ, in the church and in the world, rooted in our common baptismal vocation. We further understand that ministry is exercised in both personal and collegial ways, and is undertaken in the context of the priesthood of all believers, who together share in the mission of proclaiming the Kingdom of God. Although we ordain to different offices and have different requirements for ordination, none of that negates our acknowledgment of this fundamental reality.

Second, we acknowledge that God calls and appoints people to exercise the ministry of oversight (episkopé) in the church, and that this is primarily a service of love for the sake of the unity of the church, undertaken in obedience to Jesus Christ, for the sake of the gospel. We acknowledge that this oversight has significant pastoral as well as administrative functions. We acknowledge that this ministry of oversight exists in all of our communions. The forms differ, but the essential functions are very similar. We have learned that, among Reformed communions, the functions that are often (in the Roman Catholic Church) lodged in the person of a bishop are distributed among other individuals and collective groups, but the functions remain. We have learned that, in the Catholic Church, bishops function in a collegial and consultative manner, both with other bishops and with the priests and laity under the bishop’s oversight. We hold this to be one of the most helpful insights and significant fruits of this dialogue.

Third, we acknowledge that all of the baptized are baptized into the one body of Christ. As the Catechism of the Catholic Church states, those “who believe in Christ and have been properly baptized are put in a certain, although imperfect, communion with the Catholic Church.” This leads to an implicit acknowledgment of one another as communions of believers. We acknowledge that the body of Christ is present in all of our communions. While there are still challenges to full recognition and to full, visible communion, we can and must recognize in one another the work of God, the presence of Jesus Christ, the movement of the Holy Spirit, our mutual service to a broken world, and our fidelity to the gospel that we all profess. It is our prayer that these acknowledgments become a foundation for eventual mutual recognition.

Following recommendations made in the report, the commission urges churches to reflect on the gifts that both the Reformed and Catholic churches have received from one another through the dialogue’s exploration of the mission of the church and the church’s ministry. Among these,
• That all of our churches acknowledge that many of the church-dividing issues from the Reformation era, such as those related to ministry and especially the office of the bishop, no longer pertain to the teaching and practice of the Catholic Church (see “The One Body of Christ,” chapter three, for further details).
• That all of our churches acknowledge and affirm the collegial and conciliar nature of oversight in the Catholic Church.
• That all celebrate our shared understanding that the purpose of ministry is service to both the church and world.
• That all acknowledge that, although it is expressed differently, we share the conviction that the act of ordaining marks a distinctive change in the one ordained vis-à-vis the community and that this is deeper than a change of function.
• That ministers from other churches be invited to be present as witnesses at ordinations and installations, just as the previous round of dialogue has encouraged for the sacrament of baptism.
• That Reformed ecclesiastical bodies and Roman Catholic bishops in local communities find ways to meet together, to learn from one another, to identify convergences in their practice of serving their communions, and to collaborate in service to the world.

The commission commends “The One Body of Christ” to churches for study. The text can be found on the RCA ecumenical webpage, www.rca.org/partners. The ninth round of dialogue will commence in the fall of 2018 with a focus on the relationship between justification and justice. The prospectus for the ninth round can also be found at www.rca.org/partners.

Christian Unity at Home and Abroad

The commission continues to focus time at each meeting exploring the explosive growth of Christianity in the Global South—the continents of Africa, South America, and Asia, where the Christian church is growing at a remarkable pace. As a commission, we believe that the witness of Christianity in the Global South has much to teach us in North America and in the RCA, and we are committed to discussing this reality and its possible impact on and lessons for the RCA. Just as the RCA was at the forefront of the ecumenical movements of the twentieth century, the RCA also needs to be deeply involved in these new realities for the twenty-first century.

The commission remains committed to the biblical mandate of unity in Christ and in joining with the work of the Holy Spirit as the gospel continues to cross boundaries of geography, society, and culture. What is also clear, however, is that ecumenism in this new reality is not the work of the commission alone, nor simply the work of a denomination. These changing patterns of global Christianity have produced the unexpected opportunities of “glo-cal” (global + local) ecumenical work. Many of the communities in which the RCA has congregations are now home to new immigrant Christian gatherings, the result of a global movement that brings millions of immigrants to the United States and Canada each year—75 percent of whom are Christian. Many of the groups have ties to churches in their country of origin, but not here. The ecumenical challenge, then, rests not only in formal groups or structures, but also locally, even reaching into each congregation with this challenge: to engage ecumenically in our own communities by exhibiting both the meaning and importance of radical Christian hospitality. In practicing such hospitality, local churches often find themselves recipients of remarkable grace and compassion. The commission will continue to hold this need before the church.

Additionally, many ministers of Word and sacrament, along with their congregations,
participate in local ecumenical expressions such as ministerial associations and councils of churches. Many such associations are long-standing, offer member pastors support on many levels, and engage together in mercy and justice projects. Historically, the Commission on Christian Unity has not engaged those local expressions. In the future, the commission might connect with those associations and councils to promote and enhance learning, identify opportunities for wider impact, and explore together how the denominational mandate for the commission can serve local Christian unity efforts, perhaps especially given the enormous “glo-cal” trends, emergencies, and climate.

Reflecting on its mandate for Christian unity, the commission is concerned about fissures of disunity within and among local churches and in the RCA as a whole. Diversity of thought is realistic and healthy. Diversity is realistic because the church is comprised of a multiplicity of people with sundry gifts bestowed by the Holy Spirit. Diversity is healthy because through these diverse gifts, creativity emerges, and with it, fresh approaches to upholding sacred traditions as well as addressing new issues in changing times. Diversity is not inimical to unity. Rather, the unity that has already been established in Christ comes to its fullest expression through the various gifts of the faithful, which are unified in their service to the gospel.

The Reformed Church in America has a long history of collaborating with other Christians of diverse cultures, histories, gifts, and beliefs. Whether in hospitals founded by missionaries, in a local vacation Bible school hosted with neighboring churches, or in dialogue with other communions, we partner with other believers in order to advance Christ’s mission on earth. Our common, unifying work is a response to Jesus’s prayer that we “may all be one” (John 17:21). In the Bible, Christian unity is described as a gift and a call. It is a gift that has already been realized by Jesus Christ, who has broken down the dividing walls of hostility (Ephesians 2:14). It is a call to bear one another’s burdens so as to make visible to all a unity that God already sees (Galatians 6:2).

Yet within our denomination, we have turned away from the gift of oneness. Stymied by fear and pride, we have fallen short of our call to manifest the unity that we have in Christ. Rather than modeling wholeness within the Reformed Church in America, we have allowed walls to be built up and hostilities to fester. The ecumenical pursuit of Christian unity is deficient without internal concord. It is inconsistent for us to reach out in ecumenical relationships while failing to reach across our own denomination to extend hospitality and strive for compromise.

The urgent work of reconciliation and cooperation within our denomination requires renewed strength and courage, which we can only find in God. It necessitates trust in and openness to the Spirit. It demands an unqualified, intentional, and prayerful commitment to heal the brokenness of the body of Christ. As a commission, we prayerfully urge our denomination to seek a deeper and more authentic expression of the oneness we have in Christ. Christian unity, while universal in God’s promise, must begin at home.

**Celebrating, Lamenting, and Professing Christian Unity**

In light of the RCA’s rich history of ecumenical involvement at home and abroad, there is much to celebrate in terms of accomplishments toward making whole what has been fractured. There is also much to lament when we consider the ways in which the unity of Christ’s church has been broken and disunity continues to foment. Therefore, we celebrate, lament, and profess our commitment to Christian unity.
We celebrate ...

… the recent strides toward unity with Catholic, Lutheran, and Methodist Christians through the association of the World Communion of Reformed Churches with the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ) in July 2017.

- With the WCRC’s association with the JDDJ and accompanying Statement of Association, Reformed Christians worldwide join efforts to reconcile Catholic and Protestant understandings of a doctrine that has divided the church for the past 500 years.
- With the association with the JDDJ, Reformed Christians not only affirm but enrich the existing consensus by adding our distinctive emphases to the doctrine of justification, particularly the Reformed emphases on the connection between justification and union with Christ and the link between justification and justice. (For the text of the Statement of Association and further information about the background and decision-making process, see http://wcrc.ch/jddj.)


- As the document states, “Together, we celebrate that we are one in Christ, sharing a common Reformation heritage and a common faith. We are united in confessing the gospel of Jesus Christ. We rejoice that there is no longer any need for our separation; our differences are not church dividing. We give thanks for the examples of those Lutheran and Reformed churches that have already declared church communion and now bear common witness together by sharing in worship, witness, and work for the world.” We celebrate this witness as a foundation for greater collaboration and partnership in ministry and mission between Lutheran and Reformed Christians. (The text of the Wittenberg Witness can be found at: http://wcrc.ch/news/lwf-and-wcrc-sign-the-wittenberg-witness-as-wcrc-joins-jddj.)

… the fruits of the U.S. Roman Catholic–Reformed Dialogue, which include a mutual acknowledgement that “all of our traditions see ministry as service to God through Christ, in the church and in the world, rooted in our common baptismal vocation. We further understand that ministry is exercised in both personal and collegial ways, and is undertaken in the context of the priesthood of all believers, who together share in the mission of proclaiming the Kingdom of God.” This current state of mutual acknowledgement might serve as the basis to determine how acknowledgement of each other’s ministries might lead to the mutual recognition of each other as “church” and, further, might serve as a step on the path to full, visible communion.

We lament ...

… that we live in a fragmented world. The church’s disputes and divisions have contributed to some of these problems. We are unable to sit down at the same Lord’s Table and set an example to the world of what it looks like to be united in Christ. A fragmented Christian witness exacerbates the fragmentation of the world. As the Commission on Christian Unity, we are committed to seeking unity in all forms.

- As part of our responsibility for caring for Christian unity, it is incumbent upon us to name the times and circumstances in which we have not lived together in unity as members of Christ’s church.
• 1 Chronicles 12:32 says, “Of Issachar, those who had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do, two hundred chiefs, and all their kindred under their command.” We lament the occasions when we have known what we ought to do as followers of Christ who are called to seek unity, yet have not done it. This, we believe, grieves the heart of God.
• The “Wittenberg Witness” states, “Together, we acknowledge, confess and lament that divisions still obscure our unity and hamper our witness. We regret that through our history we have too often formed divisive habits and structures, failing to discern the body of Christ. Injustice and conflict scar and scandalize our one body.”

We profess …


We rejoice in the gift of unity: already realized in Jesus Christ.

We accept the task of unity: being made visible in the church.

We believe the promise of unity: to be fulfilled in the new creation.

THEREFORE,
We covenant to demonstrate our unity in Christ by maintaining the bonds of peace, speaking the truth in love, and bearing one another’s burdens.

We pledge to seek the unity of the church through communing with other Christians in worship and work, cooperating with other Christians in councils of churches, and uniting with other Christians in faith and order.

We promise to serve the unity of the world by proclaiming the gospel of peace and reconciliation, sharing the earth’s goods with the poor and hungry, and seeking justice among the nations.

Until the unity which God now sees may be clearly visible to all, so that the world may know that Christ was sent to demonstrate the perfect and everlasting love of God.

Acknowledgments

The commission wishes to formally acknowledge the involvement of Dena Robins, who is leaving the commission. Michael Hardeman will assume the role of moderator of the commission for the 2018–2019 work year.

Finally, the commission expresses its profound appreciation for the inspired and capable work of our ecumenical associate, Monica Schaap Pierce.