

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE MISSION PROJECT

Jet den Hollander

This report updates you on the progress of the WARC Mission Project directions and programmes since the 2007 meetings of the Mission Project Advisory Committee and the WARC Executive Committee in Trinidad. But before summarizing these, pages 3-6 briefly recap the ideological framework (vision, context and methodological principles) to make clear why we do what we do. Since the start up of the project in January 2006, major emphasis has been placed on the facilitation of mission empowerment processes between WARC member churches, in the conviction that it is in action that churches discover how best to shape their mission praxis for today, and in cooperation with other churches that the inherent unity of the "Body of Christ" becomes visible.

This report is an update of the "Progress report for stakeholders" that was sent to all Mission Project partners in November 2008.

Vision of Mission

Our world is burning and we all know it. But what we sometimes lack is urgency, something of that deep longing with which the disciples asked: "Lord, is it now that you are going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"¹ They had seen in Jesus something beautiful, a new way of living and relating for all, and they yearned for it with passionate longing. This same urgency can be heard in David Bosch's characterisation of mission as "that dimension of our faith that refuses to accept reality as it is and aims at changing it."² Or, as the Mission Project policy document (Evian, 2005) phrases it:

*Mission means
joining that large band of pilgrims
that is following
the man of Galilee
towards the beckoning future
of a world
where justice and peace
embrace each other,
daring to look at ourselves,
our world and our relationships
in the mirror of that new world
and addressing
the gap between vision and reality
with all the love, passion,
patience and wisdom
which God has placed at our disposal.*

Joining the band of pilgrims. Mission requires personal decisions but is not something that is undertaken individually. It is a consciously stepping into that global movement which is the church of all ages. This means encounter and relationship with fellow pilgrims and a common search for new expressions of mission in unity.

Beckoned by the future. What pulls us forward is the vision of a better world. We see glimpses of it here and there and most vividly in the man of Galilee. Mission means movement from where we are to where we are meant to be, not because we are so commanded but because we cannot resist God drawing us into that new future.

¹ Acts 1:6

² Davis J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm shifts in Theology of Mission*, MaryKnoll N.Y., Orbis Books, 1991, p XV

Daring to look. But it takes courage to look in the mirror of that new world, to face ourselves and our relationships and see the gap between vision and present. Here Calvin's dual emphasis on human sinfulness and God's grace can be liberating.³ It prevents us from harbouring the illusion that it is us who are called to bring about the Kingdom and then despairing over our failure to do so even when giving our very best. *Sola gratia* means acknowledging that grace is not the reward but the pre-requisite for our ability to make a difference.

Assessing and addressing the gap. Because of and in response to God's grace we can indeed participate in the *Missio Dei* and become God's ears and eyes, hands and feet in the world. Mission involves analysis of that world, comparing with each other what we see from our particular angles, drawing out implications for mission action and, empowered by the love, passion, patience and wisdom of the Spirit, moving forward into the future together.

Working definition of mission

In this vision the primary mission frontier is not between faith and unbelief, as earlier centuries phrased it. The primary frontier is sin, in the biblical sense of all that causes alienation, broken relationships, missed opportunities and unrealised identities. Understood this way, mission envisages change (conversion, turning around) not only in people outside but also within the church. In line with this the Mission Project uses the following working definition of mission:

Mission involves, on the one hand, assessing and addressing all that which separates people from God, each other and creation. Put in biblical terms, we are called to name and deal with "sin" in all its dimensions, that is: personal as well as structural sin. At the same time mission involves living out, proclaiming and celebrating all that which reconciles people with God, each other and creation.

What this concretely means for the mission praxis of churches depends on what a church in its context identifies as the main factors preventing fullness of life for all in that context, and how it interprets these local realities in relation to the global context.

The global context which shapes our mission foci

Today there are threats to life in fullness that we urgently need to address, locally and nationally as well as internationally. Some of these have directly shaped the WARC Mission Project agenda.

Neoliberal economic systems

Today's financial crisis only highlights what many have experienced for a long time, viz. that current economic structures and practices have detrimental effects on people and creation. The new power blocs are not as neatly identifiable with nation states as the colonial empires were, but once again economic-political-military strategies and cultural-psychological colonisation are intertwined in sophisticated systems. And whether the systems are called "empire" or not, they erode people's sense of identity and capacity to shape their world in the same ways that the earlier empires did.⁴ Following the 24th General Council of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches in 2004 and the resulting "Accra Confession", WARC's Covenanting for Justice in the Economy and the Earth Project is facilitating further exploration of how the issues at stake in the Accra Confession play out in different contexts and how member churches might develop concerted action for economic and ecological justice. In the Mission Project the emphasis is on reinterpreting mission in the context of justice action and on stimulating mission action-reflection projects in this respect. A related programme focus is international mission relations. To what extent do they still mirror the power relations of the economic and political systems, and how might transformation be achieved?

Fragmentation

Implied in the above is a second concern on the Mission Project agenda, which is the exclusion, fragmentation and conflict bred by globalisation. Christopher Duraisingh has described the phenomenon of

³ It has often been noted that for Calvin mission and evangelism were not really an issue, at least not in the traditional sense. However, for a contemporary understanding of what is involved in following and proclaiming Jesus Christ, his teachings are full of precious gems.

⁴ On the correlation between inner power (to be) and outward power (to do) and their erosion in the colonial systems, see Allan Boesak, *Farewell to Innocence; A Social-Ethical Study of Black Theology and Black Power*, Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1977, notably p 42, 43.

the two opposite forces at play today: on the one hand the centrifugal force of alienation and fragmentation, and on the other hand the centripetal force of assimilation and homogenization.⁵ The world is increasingly divided in opposing camps, which pitch us over against one other and encourage retreat into closed, exclusive identities. At the same time global communication, markets and interests link us together in a worldwide net, though with little respect for diversity and particularity. Given the fragmentation and conflict which both forces ultimately lead to, Duraisingh points to the vital importance of mission as reconciliation. In a world that is characterised by plurality everywhere, it is essential that we learn to live constructively with differences. Instead of seeing the other – the one who is different from me – either as someone who must become just like me or as an enemy to be ignored or destroyed, we must learn to take the other seriously as “other”, as someone whose differences complement me and through whom I become authentically myself. The recent election of the first black President in the United States of America showed some interesting dynamics in this respect. Given the Enlightenment legacy of thinking in opposites and polarities rather than in complementarities (something is either wrong or right; someone is either a prophet or a heretic), reconciliation involves more than the intention to be conciliatory, especially in Europe where Enlightenment legacies are deeply ingrained. It requires a shift in understanding reality and a recognition of the limitations of one's own perspectives, both within and outside the church. In the Reformed family, unproductive ways of dealing with differences and conflicts have led and are still leading to much non-cooperation, isolation, disunity and division. For this reason mission in unity is the undergirding thrust of all our programmes. Also, one of the six programme areas is to explicitly search with Reformed churches for new expressions of mission in unity.

The related issue of interfaith dialogue is on the agenda as part of the mission reinterpretation that is inherent in all that the project facilitates. In today's world it is no longer possible to speak of mission and not take the multi-religious society utterly seriously.

Migration

With unprecedented numbers of refugees and displaced persons living in countries other than the one they and their family originated from, migration is a mission issue in more than one sense. There are the humanitarian, developmental and ethical questions to be addressed because migrants, regardless of their religious affiliation, often belong to the part of society that is marginalized, exploited, exposed to discrimination and xenophobia, and without the rights or access to facilities which longtime residents have. Their plight therefore challenges WARC member churches worldwide to a ministry that supports and stands in solidarity with immigrants, in search of quality of life for all.

For churches in the North there are additional challenges. As churches that used to send missionaries “to the ends of the earth”, the increasing presence of people “from the ends of the earth” in their midst challenges them to critically reassess their inherited notions of themselves and others, and by implication their notions of mission. Why is it, for example, that immigrants coming from Reformed churches in the South do not find their partner church in the North to be open and welcoming? Why is the North keen to organize exposure visits abroad to learn from partners in the South, but often does not see the representatives of these churches on their doorstep, let alone recognize them as partners in mission? Studies on alterity or *otherness* in multi-cultural societies highlight some of the dynamics at play here, and why the stranger next door is likely to be more frightening than the stranger faraway.⁶ A further challenge is presented by immigrant groups of other denominations, including many of Pentecostal background, which are focussed on mission and evangelism with a vigour that few Reformed churches match. Given the unprecedented growth of Pentecostalism from zero to over 500 million Christians in just one century, it is a force in Christianity which the Reformed family cannot but take seriously. Moreover immigrant churches often play a vital role in social integration and community development, thus engaging in forms of witness that are specific to their identity as ethnic minorities. Thus they offer an essential complement to the ministries carried out by the older churches. A further missional challenge is posed by immigrant believers from Islam, Buddhist or Hindu traditions, who

5 Christopher Duraisingh, “Mission Towards Reconciled and Intercontextual Communities”, *International Review of Mission*, Volume XCI, No 363, October 2002

6 Eg Theo Sundermeier, “Aspects of Interreligious Hermeneutics”, *Towards an Intercultural Theology. Essays in Honour of J.A.B. Jongeneel*, Martha Frederiks, Meindert Dijkstra and Anton Houtepen, Eds, Meinema, Zoetermeer Nederland, 2003, p 67-75. Also Werner Kahl, “A Theological Perspective: The Common Missionary Vocation of Mainline and Migrant Churches”, *International Review of Mission*, Vol XCI, No 362, July 2002, p. 328-341.

represent different ways of understanding God and salvation and as such bring the for most people abstract and distant interreligious dialogue of the 1970s down to the practical level. How do we help congregations to revisit their understanding of God's mission and God's partners in mission in the context of the multi-religious neighbourhood?

The rise of right-wing politics and racial attacks in many countries further highlights the importance of indeed learning to deal constructively rather than destructively with the *otherness* of fellow citizens, and for the churches to urgently address the range of missiological challenges implied in the increasingly multi-ethnic and multi-cultural societies. It is a challenge that the North cannot afford to ignore, but also a challenge the churches do not need to address alone but can explore in the context of and with support from partners worldwide. In view of this the Mission Project facilitates networking between churches and organizations that explore these questions, and enables the production of case studies in this area of work.

Postmodernity

A fourth concern with implications for our mission agenda is postmodernity and the crisis of knowledge, especially as it manifests itself in the North. Many western Christians go through a period of embarrassment over matters of faith and mission that go deeper than an undigested missionary past or a secular frame of reference. There is today a profound confusion over what to make of the Christian faith as such.⁷ From the empirical rationality and certainties about truth in previous centuries the West has moved into a period of doubt, relativism and distrust of universal truth claims and meta-narratives. In such a context, what do we do with Jesus the Saviour of all humankind, and mission to the ends of the earth or even to your neighbour next door? The dilemmas are of course much more complex, but one symptom of postmodernity is that for many the faith claims of previous generations can no longer automatically become their own, let alone be shared with others. For this reason reinterpretation of the "what" of mission and the return to the root words of our faith - God, world, salvation, eschaton, creation, redemption, Jesus Christ, and the Spirit as the main actor in mission - is part of all Mission Project programmes.

Six programme areas

In view of these global concerns and the missiological challenges they raise, the Mission Project has six broad areas for action:⁸

- I. Mission study, reinterpretation and empowerment
- II. International mission relations
- III. New expressions of Reformed unity
- IV. Relations and cooperation of historic and immigrant churches, especially in the North
- V. Theological education for mission in unity
- VI. Documentation and networking

Given the small size of the Mission Project, is not possible to coordinate major programmes in all six programme areas at the same time. The Advisory Committee sets the priorities at three face to face meetings (May 2006, October 2007, May 2009) and through conference calls and correspondence.⁹

Methodological principles

Programmes in the six areas above are developed in line with the nature of the Mission Project as having both missiological and educational dimensions. The following principles apply:

- The Mission Project is a catalyst for renewal processes. Once a renewal process is on its way, the Mission Project brings its involvement to a close.

7 See eg J. Andrew Kirk and Kevin J. Vanhoozer, Eds, *To Stake a Claim. Mission and the Western Crisis of Knowledge*, New York, USA, Maryknoll, 1999.

8 These are based on findings and emphases of the mission study process in WARC regions from 2000, the Mission Section meetings at the 24th WARC General Council and the Mission in Unity Project 1999- 2005.

9 Normally the Advisory Committee meets only every other year but the 2007 meeting was brought forward from 2008 to coincide with the WARC Executive Committee Meeting in October 2007, in order to save on time and finances.

- Renewal involves change, which is never easy. The project seeks to contribute to a climate of openness and mutual acceptance within which ecclesiological and missiological exploration and reorganization may take place.
- Starting point for the development of programmes is the mission vision, praxis and priorities of the churches involved. Different contexts require different entry points into mission, unity, renewal or solidarity action.
- On-the-ground initiatives are central elements of the overall programme. This includes assisting churches as they equip local congregations for mission.
- Inclusiveness and participation of women and youth as well as justice action are integral to WARC's understanding of mission and will be fostered and interpreted missiologically in all programmes.
- Mission empowerment between churches will be actively facilitated. This has implications for the number of programmes that can be facilitated at the same time, as empowerment processes tend to be time and finance intensive.

Main programmes of the WARC Mission Project

The pages below describe the programmes in the six programme areas as prioritized by the Mission Project Advisory Committee. Most programmes run for several years. Often there are areas of overlap. Two special opportunities have significantly contributed to where the emphases were placed since early 2006:

1. The Edinburgh 2010 study process.¹⁰ This ecumenical action-reflection process around different themes provides momentum for several Mission Project programmes. For example, the Edinburgh 2010 question of what in our understanding and practice of mission and unity has changed or remained the same - and why - since the times of our great-grandparents around 1910 is adding special impetus to the intercultural Pilot on Mission Today (programme 4 below). The Edinburgh 2010 theme of "Mission and Power" informs the study on Partnership in Mission (programme 6 below). As a broad-based ecumenical process, Edinburgh 2010 also provides new opportunity to develop programmes with other denominations.
2. A funding arrangement with the United Church of Canada and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). This unexpected offer in March 2006 for an initially two year, multi-lateral mission and justice initiative made it possible to develop a comprehensive project that otherwise would have been financially impossible. In 2007 the United Church offered a one year extension. See under programme 1 below, the Making a Difference Project 2006-2009.

1. Mission study, reinterpretation and empowerment

1. The Making a Difference Project (MADIP) 2006-2009

The development and coordination of this special project has become a major undertaking of the Mission Project for its first three years, as it was possible to incorporate several programmatic foci into one mission empowerment project that would serve as a test model. So transforming international relations, searching for new expressions of mission in unity, immigrant issues and rethinking mission were all built into the MADIP programmes.

MADIP was designed with three WARC churches - the Presbyterian Church in Rwanda (PCR), the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA) and the United Protestant Church of Belgium (UPCB) -

¹⁰ "Edinburgh 2010" stands for a process and an event. The 2010 study process engages organisations, churches and theological faculties worldwide in analysis and appraisal of what has been done in "mission" and "ecumene" since Edinburgh 1910, the world mission conference which birthed the modern ecumenical movement. The studies focus on nine themes and a number of transversals. The study process will culminate in the Edinburgh 2010 event (June 2-6, 2010) when a small but representative group from all denominations and continents will celebrate together and thank God for what God has done over the past century, through and sometimes in spite of the Church. Moreover the event will have moments of repentance for what has proven to be against God's will, develop a vision for mission in unity today and commit to God the witness of the churches in the 21st century. Several sessions, including the opening and closing worship, are scheduled to take place in the Assembly Hall of New College, the venue of the 1910 conference. Of the 700 delegates places, 32 have been allocated to WARC/REC. The Mission Project anchors WARC's involvement in Edinburgh 2010. The Mission Project Secretary represents WARC on the Edinburgh 2010 international council and programme planning committee.

Document 8.1

which already had some experience of working together. The aim was to deepen these relations by developing new ways of engaging together in mission at different levels of the church. Programmes targeted youth, marginalized persons, local congregations and the environment. Besides the three MADIP churches, several other churches participated in aspects of the project.

MADIP's overall focus was peace, reconciliation and justice action with special reference to dealing constructively with ethnic and race differences. In Belgium as in post-apartheid South Africa and post-genocide Rwanda, issues of race and ethnicity pose urgent challenges to the churches that cannot be addressed separately from issues of economic injustice and marginalization as addressed in WARC's Accra Confession. MADIP built on what the three churches were already doing in these respects. In each programme the undergirding missiological questions were: How does this activity make a difference to the lives of those involved and to situations of injustice, marginalization and division? How are participants in the programmes empowered to make a difference? And how do their actions result from, and impact on, their vision and practice of mission?

The evaluation meetings in July 2008 made clear that the expertise and learnings of each church had indeed impacted the mission efforts of the other two, either by direct involvement in each other's mission on the ground or by joint reflection. WARC news releases (July 1 and 18, 2008) and an article in the September 2008 issue of WARC's *Update* communicated highlights. Main findings and decisions at the evaluations included:

- MADIP Programme 1: intercultural youth camps in 2006 (Congo - Brazzaville) and 2008 (Belgium): These summer camps were made integral part of MADIP. They have enabled about 75 young adults from five different countries to build relationships, grapple with economic and ecological issues in particular contexts, explore their faith and understanding of mission and identify steps forward as youth in mission. Problems in obtaining Schengen visas meant that in 2008 fewer youths have benefited than projected. But the interaction and learning has been extra-ordinary according to the participants.
- MADIP Programme 2: Literacy work with marginalized people, particularly women. This started in all three countries in 2006 and will be concluded in 2009. The programmes have made a significant difference, both for those enrolled in the courses and the self reliance activities (about 700 in total) and for those who managed the programme. Besides learning to read, write and do maths, participants have gained confidence and learned to read their own reality more critically. In each context there were examples of structures (in church, society and families) that were challenged because of participants posing new questions and functioning in new ways. The programmes also generated new ways of ecumenical and interfaith cooperation.
- MADIP Programme 3: A Joint Action Team (JAT) programme in South Africa. The short preparation period has meant it was not possible to achieve all objectives fully. Nevertheless it was a considerable step in the process of conscientization on mission and the issues of the Accra Confession, according to the Uniting Reformed Church of Southern Africa that hosted the programme. The team, consisting of Marilyn Camaclang from The Philippines, Brian Handel from South Africa, Diana Rosa Ramos Garcia from Cuba and Karangwa Valens from Rwanda, was highly motivated, brought a wealth of experiences and did a outstanding facilitation job with the congregations, notwithstanding problems of housing, transport, computer access and a rather broad scope of congregations. During the mid-term evaluation in February the team's approach was refined to ensure optimum engagement of the host congregations with the issues at stake. In July the general secretaries of the three MADIP churches indicated that the JAT methodology but also the exchange and cooperation through MADIP generally had enabled mutual empowerment and mission in postcolonial mode. For example, inherited notions of sending and receiving mission personnel were challenged at local and national level of the churches. The fact that the team came in solidarity but with "empty hands" inspired fresh thinking on mission sharing and meant that the issues of the Accra Confession could really find local expression. WARC's partnership with mission round tables was strengthened as both the Council for World Mission and the United Evangelical Mission recruited a member for the team, from Cuba and the Philippines respectively. For WARC, a Joint Action Team by its very nature as an intercultural, interracial mission team is an

embodiment of the partnership we seek. The Team's work was both goal and method: a specific way of achieving specific goals but also the intentional practising of patterns of sharing and relating as the eschatological community, where all will live and work in true interdependence.¹¹

- **MADIP Programme 4: CO2 offsetting through solar panel installation on schools**

The high carbon dioxide pollution from the international flights taken in the context of MADIP runs counter to what the project seek to achieve ecologically. MADIP leadership agreed that the funds needed to offset the pollution caused by our flights would be invested in solar energy systems for schools in Rwanda and South Africa during the first half of 2009. At the Ecole Secondaire de Rwahi in Rwanda the installation work of the solar panels has begun. In South Africa URCSA has enlisted the help of the South African Council of Churches to finalise the feasibility study and proposal.

Besides full evaluation reports, a wallet with four booklets on the different aspects of MADIP is in preparation for the wider Reformed family. The final months of the project have also been used for ongoing literacy work and follow up with the South African congregations that worked with the Joint Action Team.

2. Making a Difference Project 2009-2013 planned, then cancelled

In May 2007, the United Church of Canada (UCC) had invited the Mission Project to submit a proposal for a second multi-country mission empowerment project, this time for a four year funding cycle of CHF 100,000 per year, from April 2009 – March 2013. The October 2007 Advisory Committee meeting approved the concept plan for what was temporarily called "MADIP II". The project would, like its predecessor, concentrate on drawing out the missiological implications on aspects of the Accra Confession, this time with a dual focus on ecological as well as interfaith issues. These foci had emerged in discussions with Advisory Committee members and a number of WARC churches. Subsequently four churches began working with the Mission Project on designing "MADIP II", ie: the Union of the Armenian Evangelical Churches in the Near East (UAECNE), the Kiribati Protestant Church, the Christian Church in South Sulawesi and the Protestant Church in the Netherlands. Each of these had climate change and/or interfaith relations high on their agenda. However in March 2008 the United Church of Canada regretfully informed the Mission Project that governmental changes had led to a major revision of the UCC-CIDA grant system, with the result that most of their multi-lateral funding arrangements for 2009-2013 had to be cancelled, including MADIP II. The cancellation was disappointing for all partners involved, including for the United Church of Canada itself. UCC believes strongly in intercultural empowerment and had high hopes for the multi-lateral project that WARC had put on the table.

3. Survey of contemporary mission statements

The survey is an attempt to draw out convergences but also the specific insights which our Reformed tradition brings to the ecumenical discussion on mission, evangelism and unity today. The findings will be a contribution to Edinburgh 2010 study process. A first study was undertaken in the United States during 2007. In October 2008 a discussion with the International Reformed Theological Institute (IRTI) in Amsterdam explored how to involve international IRTI students in the coordination of this study in different regions. A plan of action is tabled at the Mission Project Advisory Committee preceding the 2009 Excom meeting.

4. Edinburgh 2010 Intercultural Pilot Project on Mission Today

This study was initially developed in 2006 in Cameroon as a mission in unity programme at local level, to enable local Christians to reflect on their calling in an ecumenical and ethnically mixed study group. Once placed in the context of Edinburgh 2010, it attracted interest of national councils of churches in Argentina and The Netherlands and thus developed into a three country project. At present the Cameroon, Argentinean and Dutch councils are each working with three or four local ecumenical groups. The central question of the study to be explored by these test groups is:

“How do we, as an ecumenical group of local Christians, understand and practise our calling as followers of Jesus Christ today?”

¹¹ See the section «Mission empowerment in the context of the WARC Mission Project 2006-2010» in the Joint Action Team Handbook 2008, pages 1-2.

The local reflections are developed on the basis of concrete mission engagement of the participants but also in comparison with the mission praxis of their great-grandparents around 1910. During July 2009 the local groups within a country will gather for a one-off encounter to enable national cross-fertilisation. In November 2009 the national findings will be brought together in an international writers' workshop in Argentina and be developed into an intercultural contribution to Edinburgh 2010 Theme 4 on "mission and unity today". The comparative nature is central to the study, as it is in light of the views, perspectives and findings of others (nearby, faraway and in the past) that each pilot will "see" new questions as well as new aspects to its own findings. Herein lies the justification of doing the study both in historical and in intercultural perspective. In 2008 the Lutheran World Federation joined WARC in facilitating this programme programmatically and financially.

5. Edinburgh 2010 pilgrimage on unwritten mission history

The Mission Project is coordinating the development of an ecumenical pilgrimage to be walked during the Edinburgh 2010 event (June 2-6, 2010). The pilgrimage will bring to life untold mission history between 1910 and 2010 as lived out by Christians in different places and of different traditions, and engage the pilgrims in reflection on their own mission commitments today. Different confessional traditions are contributing the stories that will be acted out at the "stations" of the pilgrimage. The pilgrimage – in the form of panels to be placed around a campus – is prepared so that it can be set up as well at the WCRC Council in Grand Rapids and the preceding Calvin Colleges' mission conference from 15-17 June 2010, if so desired.

II. International mission relations

6. Study on Partnership in Mission

This study grew out of concerns raised in earlier years over the inhibiting impact of many international relations on local mission and ecumene initiatives. It is a contribution to the 2010 theme of "Mission and Power" and focuses on how and why partnership in mission as conceived in the 60s and 70s did, or did not, happen and what are the lessons we can draw for today's context. In March 2008 a working group consisting of Advisory Committee members from the Council for World Mission, the World Council of Churches, the Lutheran World Federation and WARC developed a plan of action. In 2008-9 the Mission Project secretary tested out ideas and questions during key meetings of the Council for World Mission, the CEVAA Community of Churches in Mission and the Project Council meeting of the Lutheran World Federation. The process of gathering partnership studies of member churches is ongoing. Late in 2009 an expanded working group will interpret the findings and develop the global contribution for the 2010 study process.

III. New expressions of Reformed unity

7. Case studies on models of unity and reconciliation

Churches often devote considerable time, energy and creativity to overcome conflicts or inherited divisions in the hope of moving towards new levels of community, cooperation and reconciliation. As the wider Reformed family can benefit much from studying how a particular church has gone about analysing its situation, identifying appropriate methods to address the situation or the problem, implementing its approach and building upon the outcomes, the Mission Project facilitates systematic analysis and documentation of processes and learnings.

Two unity and reconciliation case studies will be finished during 2009. In 2007 and 2008 Mission Project staff met with the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands to develop the framework for a study on its union processes since 1965. In December 2007 some financial assistance for the writing process was provided by the Mission Project. The draft study is tabled at the Advisory Committee meeting. In 2006 the Presbyterian Church (USA) did preliminary work on a case study based on its Peace, Unity and Purity of the Church process (PUP study). The PUP findings offer insight into ways of dealing with conflict and disagreement that do not lead to division and splits, something which is of great importance for the Reformed family. In February 2009 a time line and approach were agreed between the Mission Project and the PC(USA) Office of the General Assembly. The case study will be made available in 2009. Meanwhile *Occasional Info no 2* (July 2007) gave readers a foretaste of what the PUP study was all about.

Other case studies are in the exploratory stage. One is on the Takum Peace process in Nigeria, another on the union process that led to the Protestant Church in the Netherlands, and a third on a reconciliation process in a Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa. The hope is that later this year the drafting of these fascinating stories can begin.

8. Ukraine and Belarus accompaniment

Following a 2006-2007 evaluation of the earlier Mission in Unity initiative in these countries, the WARC Europe Council at its meeting in January 2008 has accepted responsibility for accompaniment of the Reformed churches there. The setting up of a working group that includes representatives of the churches in the Ukraine and Belarus is still under discussion. Emphasis is now on short term programmes rather than a 50% facilitator. Following involvement of the Mission Project in the evaluation process and the drafting of a mandate for the working group, our input is from now on in a consultative capacity only.

IV. Relations and cooperation of historic and immigrant churches in the North

It may be noted that the Making a Difference Project described above incorporates this focus, especially in the literacy work carried out by the United Protestant Church in Antwerp which is increasingly multi-cultural. Assyrian women who fled repression in Turkey in the 1990s found in the Antwerp Bible study / literacy group a safe place to tell their stories. Belgian group members learned to accept that they cannot solve other women's problems, but that listening can empower the other to find new solutions. Their stories vividly brought to life some of the main issues on the Mission Project agenda: identity and renewal issues (the "if the grain dies" experience of growing together into something new - *kenosis*), distinguishing between frontiers to be crossed and frontiers to be respected, and challenging the status quo as part of our mission and justice agenda.

Meanwhile two further initiatives were developed. First, a further case study. In 2003-5 the MIU Project encouraged the CRCNA to write one of the case studies in the series on experiences and learnings with immigrant-mainline church relations. The CRCNA agreed but its study turned into a book "Learning to count to One", rather than a booklet that could be easily copied and distributed among WARC membership. We are therefore currently transforming this book into a case study, in cooperation with the CRCNA.

Second, the possibility of a Consultation with the East Asia Region of the Council for World Mission on immigrant-mainline church relations is under discussion. Different models of immigrant-mainline cooperation will be explored. A plan of action will be tabled at the AC meeting.

Overall, networking has continued between different groups in Europe which seek to enable greater cooperation between different immigrant churches and the older churches. Some Advisory Committee members are actively involved in workshops and study days in this area of work. The Executive Secretary made a presentation at the diaconal working day of the United Protestant Church in Belgium (November 2008) on Intercultural identities and mission in unity, following a preparatory article entitled "Magnets, Migrants and Missiological challenges".

V. Theological education for mission in unity

9. Theological education for mission and unity

Theological education plays a key role in the process of mission interpretation, equipping for, relating to and sharing in mission. The way in which students are trained can become a help or a hindrance in overcoming divisions (between churches, clergy and laity, women and men) and the equipping of congregations for mission in unity. The earlier Mission in Unity case studies on theological education are revisited by the WARC executive secretaries for the Mission Project and for Theology. A proposal will be discussed at the May 09 Advisory Committee on the best way to use these materials in order that they foster the search for more cooperation and missiological depth in theological education.

10. Consultation on women, mission and theological education

A further ecumenical contribution for the Edinburgh 2010 study process was the November 2008 consultation on women, mission and theological education, coordinated by the World Council of Churches in cooperation with WARC, LWF and the WSCF. Some 30 mission practitioners and theological educators met at the Ecumenical Institute in Bossey to analyse women's involvement in mission and theological education today, in their interconnection and in comparison to the situation in 1910. The Mission Project was involved in both planning and implementation. The report is currently being drafted by WCC staff and is due to be available from WARC staff at the May meetings.

VI. Documentation and networking

This programme area represents the project's commitment to document and widely share samples of mission renewal and cooperation that are undertaken by WARC member churches, and to highlight some of the issues at stake as churches and groups seek to develop as interdependent missional churches. Also, to facilitate networking between resource people in different countries working on the same issues. Examples of this during the period under review:

- Christmas and Summer mailings with the *Occasional Info*, to 800 contacts worldwide including all WARC member churches and mission contacts.
- Articles for WARC's *Update* and other periodicals.
- Two news releases in July 2008
- Revision of the Mission Project web pages
- Face to face encounters with groups and contacts passing through Geneva.
- Participation of AC members and/or executive secretary in meetings / workshops, such as the WARC Europe (January 2008), Community of Churches in Mission-CEVAA (October 2008), General Secretaries' meeting and Mission Personnel meeting of the Council for World Mission (November 2008 and December 2008).
- Programme visits to WARC member churches and partner organizations as requested, such as the diaconal working day of the United Protestant Church in Belgium mentioned above.

Mid-term evaluation

As resolved by the Trinidad Executive, the WARC Officers appointed a team of three to carry out the mid-term evaluation of the Mission Project. Between November 2008 and March 2009 Dr Meehyun Chung (Mission 21), Dr Gunilla Gunner (WARC Exec and Mission Project AC) and Mr Muhungi Kanyoro (immediate past director ECLOF) had two face-to-face meetings in Geneva to design an evaluation instrument (questionnaire in English, Spanish and French), to do interviews and to study the background documents of the project. The questionnaires were analysed by an outside researcher. The team's report has been sent to the Mission Project Advisory Committee and the WARC Officers in accordance with the mandate. The main recommendation is to continue the Mission Project also after 2010.

Resourcing the Mission Project

New funding partners were found during 2007-8. The fact that since 2006 six churches from the global south have signed up as project sponsors is not only financially but also missiologically important because it breaks with traditional patterns of mission giving and receiving. Here it may be noted too that our main financial partner, the Council for World Mission, is composed of churches predominantly from the global south. Efforts to further increase the global ownership of the mission project continue.

Another reason to rejoice is the fact that new sponsorship in November 2008 meant that the 2007 deficit (caused by a missed programme grant deadline) was offset. Moreover, sufficient funds were carried over into 2009 to ensure that the various programmes projected for 2007-8 but delayed because of the funding uncertainties can now be carried out in the 2009-2010 period.

In terms of human resources, the project is blessed with the efficient work of Ms Veronika Darras who serves as the administrative assistant for both the Mission Project (30%) and the office of Theology and

Document 8.1

Ecumenical Engagement (50%) since December 2008. Veronika succeeds Ms Margaret Richard (Sep 06-Feb 08) and Ms Ming Patthey (Jul-Sep 08) to whom the Mission Project is grateful.

Thanks be to God for the gracious leadership of our Moderator, Rev Lilia Rafalimanana, who continued her oversight even as her country Madagascar was in turmoil. I also give thanks for the members and alternates of the Advisory Committee, the evaluation committee, the funding partners and all who have been programmatically involved in the Mission Project over the past one and a half years. Regarding the latter, a special mention is due to those who gave shape and expression to the Making A Difference Project 2006-2009, our first and truly experimental empowerment project: the MADIP coordinators Rev. Jimmy de Wet in South Africa, Ms. Anysie Uwimana and Mr. Rubyagiza Sophonie in Rwanda and Ms. Margreet Swankhuisen and Rev Marcel Pool in Belgium, as well as the MADIP Joint Action Team named in point 1 above. They, together with the resource persons in their countries, have truly made a difference.

A last word from Calvin

Renewal in mission, building bridges and rethinking faith takes time. There are no standard methodologies. Since 2006 the emphasis in the Mission Project has been in particular on mission action-reflection processes that allow participating churches and individuals to develop - in action, with others and by trial and error - their identity as interdependent missional Christians and churches. Calvin might have approved, for as he pointed out to his contemporaries: "True knowledge of God comes from obedience to God".¹² It is in the process of doing God's will, of concretely engaging in mission, that we gradually find out what God's will is and what our mission, our church and our unity should look like.

¹² Calvin, *Institutes I*, 6.2: "Omnis recta cognitio Dei ab oboedientia nascitur"