

Communique Consultation June 2002

TOWARDS A GLOBAL CHRISTIAN FORUM

A consultation towards a Global Christian Forum took place at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California from June 15-20, 2002. Among the 55 participants were representatives from various Orthodox (Eastern and Oriental), Catholic, Anglican, Reformation Protestant, Pentecostal, Evangelical, and African Instituted churches as well as interchurch organizations.

The idea of a Forum, first suggested in the mid-1990s, grew out of a concern that has been growing in different parts of the Church to bring more voices into the search for the reconciliation and cooperation of Christians and their churches. An initial meeting to test the concept was held at the Bossey Ecumenical Institute in Switzerland, 26-29 August 1998. Another meeting to seek the advice and participation of representatives of the Evangelical and Pentecostal churches took place at Fuller Seminary, 9-11 September 2000.

The Forum is understood as a process of bringing Christians from around the world to a common table in an informal atmosphere; it is not to be another organization. Its stated purpose is to create an open space in which representatives from a broad range of Christian churches and interchurch organizations, which confess the triune God and Jesus Christ as perfect in His divinity and humanity, can gather to foster mutual respect, to explore and address together common challenges.

For this consultation at Fuller Theological Seminary two themes were central: unity and mission. The participants spent two days introducing themselves, sharing their own spiritual journeys as well as the experience of their churches and organizations. The next two days were spent discussing the concerns and challenges they face.

Among the concerns that surfaced and were frankly discussed were the following: the problems of different approaches to the Scriptures; the place of tradition; often unacknowledged, in the different churches; the need to understand each other's use of Christian vocabulary; the movement of the Spirit in today's world; proselytism and religious freedom; and the new cooperation between churches who are in dialogue with each other or are together suffering persecution. Panels and plenary discussions addressed two issues; one session looked at evangelization from a variety of perspectives; another focused on breakthroughs to interchurch relationships, as well as barriers to reconciliation.

The participants were pleased by the open process of the consultation and grateful for the opportunity to meet Christians from different church traditions and parts of the world. Moved by the honest sharing of concerns, the participants seek to continue this process of bringing diverse Christians together so that they may discover each other as brothers and sisters in the Lord. They hope to expand the participation in the Forum process by planning future meetings both regionally and internationally.

Pasadena, June 2002