

Inter-Orthodox Consultation for a Response to the Faith and Order Text “The Church: Towards a Common Vision”

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In 2013 the Commission on Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches (WCC) published the text entitled “The Church: Towards a Common Vision”¹ (TCTCV) as a result of several years of research, consultation and discernment in field of ecclesiology. An important part in the process of formulating this document was the consultation of WCC member churches and further Faith and Order Commission constituencies at their different levels. Already when the text reached a preliminary level and has been published under the title “The Nature and Mission of the Church,”² churches, academic and ecumenical institutions etc. were invited to formulate comments and proposals for improving the text. A consultation held 2-9 March 2011 in Agia Napa/Paralimni, Cyprus, and hosted by His Eminence Metropolitan Vasilios of Constantia-Ammochostos featured several concrete and precise proposals for redrafting the text.³ The final text of TCTCV incorporated many of the suggestions made at the Agia Napa/Paralimni consultation.

The WCC Central Committee in 2012 which received the final version of TCTCV and sent it also to WCC member churches “to encourage further reflection on the Church and seek their formal responses to the text.” As a response to the call of WCC Central Committee, an inter-orthodox consultation with participation of Eastern and Oriental Orthodox hierarchs, priests, deacons, university professors, lay (male and female) and youth took place in Paralimni, Cyprus from 6-13 October 2016, upon the invitation of WCC and thanks to the gracious hospitality of His Eminence Metropolitan Vasilios of Constantia-Ammochostos.

The goal of the consultation was to formulate a common Orthodox response to TCTCV. This response is encapsulated in the final document

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¹ Faith and Order Paper no. 214, Geneva, 2013.

² Faith and Order Paper no. 198, Geneva, 2005.

³ See *Revista Teologica* 2, 2011, p. 222-247 where I published the response of the Inter-Orthodox consultation in March 2011, as well as its communiqué both in English and in Romanian translation.

issued after the consultation. It contains many ideas taken from the previous response formulated by the Inter-Orthodox Consultation from March 2011 as well as new reflections to the final form of TCTCV as the text was redrafted afterwards. The Communiqué of the consultation presents the entire program of the consultation. Both documents (final document and the communiqué) are published here for information and consideration.

World Council of Churches Inter-Orthodox Consultation

World Council of Churches
Inter-Orthodox Consultation
For a Response to the Faith and Order Text

The Church: Towards a Common Vision

(Faith and Order Paper no. 214, Geneva, 2013)

Paralimni, Cyprus, 6-13 October 2016

Introduction

1. We participants in the Inter-Orthodox Consultation which took place in Paralimni, Cyprus from 6--13 October 2016, coming from Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox Churches, are grateful for the opportunity to enter into a serious and respectful study of Faith and Order Text "The Church: Towards a Common Vision" [TCTCV].⁴ We recognize this Text as the product of a long and careful process, conducted by theologians from various church traditions and confessions represented in the WCC Commission on Faith and Order.

2. The Inter-Orthodox consultation reflected on a number of responses to the TCTCV Text including an official response from the Russian Orthodox Church and others responses from Orthodox theologians and theological faculties. It is clear that TCTCV is not meant to replace existing ecclesiologies, but rather to contribute to a better understanding of ecclesiology and to bring them closer for the sake of the unity of the Church. Participation by the Orthodox in the process of theological discussion surrounding TCTCV should not be interpreted as an acceptance or affirmation of

⁴ Faith and Order no. 214, World Council of Churches Publications, Geneva, 2013.

everything contained in the Text. We affirm that as the Orthodox Church participates in bilateral as well in multilateral dialogues never imply any theological concession in matters relating to Tradition, ecclesiology and faith.

3. By its nature as a Faith and Order convergence Text, TCTCV is an eclectic presentation of perspectives on ecclesiology from different Christian traditions. As such, its methodology, vocabulary and theology differ from Orthodox ecclesiology at many points and in significant ways. At the same time the active participation of Orthodox in the preparation of the text is evident and there is a significant degree of convergence with Orthodox ecclesiology.

4. TCTCV is a valuable tool for helping Christians of different traditions and confessions expand their understanding of the ecclesiology and grow closer to one another. It is useful for this stage on the ecumenical journey, precisely for the reason that it presents ecclesiology in ways that are both familiar and foreign to each community. By drawing together multiple perspectives and stating them in ways that are not necessarily the traditional expressions, the text offers each tradition the opportunity to see with the eyes of the other and therefore to better understand both itself and the others. TCTCV is a useful tool for discussion and growth in relationships between Christians.

5. We are hopeful that the present response constitutes a worthy representation of Orthodox reactions to TCTCV. The present text does not intend to constitute a comprehensive Orthodox ecclesiology, but rather to offer a few insights emanating from our Churches' Tradition. It is offered to the WCC Faith and Order Commission as a contribution to its further work, and is respectfully forwarded to our Churches for their consideration, further elaboration and responses.

Chapter I: God's Mission and the Unity of the Church

6. We affirm the emphasis throughout the Text on the responsibility of the Church to follow Christ's command to make disciples of all nations (cf. Mt. 28: 19). The proclamation of the Gospel, the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ through restored communion with God, other human beings and the creation is a joyful privilege.

7. This core feature of Orthodox identity was emphasized in the Message of the Orthodox Primates Synaxis in 2008:

“... we underscore first and foremost, the importance of the duty of Mission for the life of the Church, and in particular for the ministry of us all, in accordance with the final commandment of the Lord: “you will be my witnesses not only in Jerusalem, but throughout Judaea and Samaria, and to

the uttermost parts of the earth” (Acts 1:8). The evangelization of God’s people, but also of those who do not believe in Christ, constitutes the supreme duty of the Church. This duty must not be fulfilled in an aggressive manner, or by various forms of proselytism, but with love, humility and respect for the identity of each individual and the cultural particularity of each people. All Orthodox Churches must contribute to this missionary effort, respecting the canonical order.⁵

It is important that Christ’s command to make disciples of all nations not be used by any group as a justification for the proselytism of other Christians.

8. For historical reasons Orthodox Churches have sometimes been unable to carry out effective mission efforts, but this should not be understood as an indifference to the proclamation of the Gospel. This is one area in which the Orthodox Church is challenged by this document to be faithful to her own missionary theology and heritage.

9. In §6⁶, we welcome the affirmation that the Gospel has been embodied into the language and culture of the various peoples where the Church has been established. The life of the Orthodox Church, with its many different cultural expressions of the Gospel, while maintaining a unity of faith, is a witness to this reality. These various expressions of the Orthodox Church in different contexts reflect the diversity and beauty of the One Church. As Christians we are challenged to discern together how this process will continue in the 21st century as the Church engages the dynamic cultures in which it finds itself and proclaims the Gospel in places, and to peoples where the Church is not yet established.

10. We would like to express a caution about the expression “new way of being the church” in §7. We understand that this reflects the technical vocabulary of the emerging churches, expressing the need to find culturally appropriate ways of being the church in the 21st century. However, it is very important that this “new way of being the church” truly be “faithful to what has been received from the beginning”.

11. Paragraphs 9 and 10 identify the challenges related to churches being able to “recognize in one another the authentic presence of ... the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church”. This is a serious concern for the Orthodox, and it cannot be solved by avoiding it and assuming that churches already do recognize one another as church. It is not possible for the Orthodox to move forward on the ecumenical journey without greater consensus on this matter.

⁵ Message of Orthodox Primates of the Orthodox churches (12 October, 2008, Phanar), paragraph 3. See <http://www.ec-patr.org/docdisplay.php?lang=en&id=995&ta=en>

⁶ All references to paragraphs (§) in this document are to TCTVC paragraphs.

12. With sorrow we must say to our ecumenical partners that it has become much more difficult to recognize other Christian communities as churches because of radical “changes in doctrine, practice and ministry” (§9) that have been made. Even more troubling than the changes in particular practices are the changes in hermeneutics and epistemology used to justify them. When the Holy Scriptures and the Tradition of the Church are reinterpreted and reconstructed in order to support positions directly contrary to what has been believed and taught at all times, everywhere and by all, it becomes increasingly difficult to recognize these Christian communities as churches. Therefore basic affirmations such as the “conviction that Scripture is normative” (§11) and the profession of the creed (§22) become meaningless.

Chapter II: The Church of the Triune God

13. Although Chapter II reflects progress in the use of terminology and has, to some certain extent, followed the proposals of the Agia Napa Consultation (2011), from an Orthodox point of view further theological elaboration is desirable.

14. We affirm the use of biblical teaching and the guidance of Holy Spirit for the ecclesiological insights over the course of history, as well as the importance of “living Tradition” (§11 and 38); yet, throughout the Text, this “living Tradition” does not really seem to have been understood by our ecumenical partners, despite the significant WCC consultations that have elaborated this very important theological notion. A weak ecumenical memory has contributed to this problem.

15. We affirm the Trinitarian perspective of the Christocentric vision of the Church. The Church, as the Church of Christ, is also the Church of the One God in Trinity. We appreciate the further references to the work of the Holy Spirit in the Church as the Giver of gifts for the common good, although the role of the Spirit in the life of the Church should have been more deeply elaborated.

16. From an Orthodox point of view, greater attention should have been given to the content and the meaning of “mutual accountability” (§18). Certainly, “mutual accountability” should reflect the basic principles of the constitution and rules of the WCC concerning relations between the member churches, as well as the Toronto, Evanston and Montreal Statements.⁷

⁷ For Toronto statement see <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/central-committee/1950/toronto-statement> ; for Montreal statement, see the Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order (Montreal 1963), report on “Scripture, Tradition and Traditions”, §39, in Günther Gassmann, ed., *Documentary History of Faith and Order 1963-1993* (Faith and Order paper no. 159, Geneva, World Council of Churches, 1993); for Evanston state-

17. We appreciate the use of biblical language for the Church as people of God, Body of Christ and Temple of the Holy Spirit, as well as the fundamental criteria of faith and sacraments of initiation to become members of this Body.

18. We affirm the confession of the marks of the Church as expressed in the Nicaean-Constantinopolitan Creed (381): “One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic”.

Nevertheless:

a. The oneness of the Church is presented in a very general and insufficient manner and can easily be misunderstood. In a multi-religious environment, for instance, the affirmation that the Church is one because God is one could lead to misunderstandings. Not enough emphasis is given to the fact that the unity of the Church is achieved and maintained through the confession of one and the same apostolic faith, participation in the sacraments, and apostolic succession.

b. The holiness of the Church is only vaguely presented, and the reason for its essential holiness is not specified, nor is it plainly stated that sin is absolutely excluded from its nature.

c. The Catholicity of the Church is not founded on the “abundant goodness of God”, as it is stated (§22), but according to Orthodox ecclesiology it is based on the confession of the one faith in the mystery of the incarnate Christ, in one Baptism in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and in the participation in the Holy Eucharist.

d. The Apostolicity in the Text (§22) is based mostly on the fact that “the Father sent the Son to establish it [the Church]”, and “the Son, in turn, chose and sent the apostles and prophets”. Although it is admitted that “infidelity in worship, witness or service contradicts the Church’s apostolicity”, nevertheless it is not clearly stated that the apostolicity of the Church consists not of apostolic succession simply through ordination, but also through confessing the same apostolic faith.

19. We welcome the affirmation of the Church as *mysterion* according to New Testament teaching (cf. 1 Timothy 3: 16), although the notion of the Church as mystery (*mysterion*) may be expressed differently in other Christian traditions, as explained in §26. We encourage further theological reflection on the notion of the Church as mystery (*mysterion*).

20. We focused as well on the issue of legitimate diversity and it is noted that “diversity in faith, in worship and in moral and ethical practice has

ment, see the Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches, report “Our Oneness in Christ and our Disunity as Churches”, Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois, New York, USA, 1954.

limits”⁸, but beyond them diversity becomes division. For the Orthodox understanding, the limit to legitimate diversity is the one apostolic faith. In this context, we affirm what the Text states (especially in the question following §30 “Legitimate and divisive diversity”) that, “two things are lacking: a) common criteria, or means of discernment; and b) such mutually recognised structures as are needed to use these effectively.”.

21. Although §31 and §32 are concerned with the communion of local churches yet the understanding of local church does not correspond to Orthodox ecclesiology.

Chapter III: The Church: Growing in Communion

22. We appreciate that TCTCV stresses the dialectics of eschatological-historical nature of the Church anticipating the Kingdom of God, guided by Holy Spirit to its full eschatological realization. But from the Orthodox point of view, it should not be understood in the sense that the Church will be fully realized only at the end of time (*eschata*), while remaining an incomplete and sinful reality in any given time of its history (§ 33).

23. The Orthodox Church identifies itself with the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church as it is expressed in the Nicaean-Constantinopolitan Creed. This identification is to be seen both ontologically and historically. Ontologically, this reality could be articulated using different theological terminology of being, i.e., the notion of subsistence. Historically, this identification is expressed in the *Synodikon of Orthodoxy*: “as the prophets have seen, as the Apostles have taught, as the Church has received, as the teachers have set forth in dogmas, as the whole world has understood, as grace has shown forth, as truth was demonstrated, as falsehood has been banished, as wisdom was emboldened, as Christ has awarded: thus do we believe, thus we speak, thus we preach Christ our true God... .”⁹

24. The crucial point for us is the historical identity of the Orthodox Church with the Church instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ, the Church of the Apostles, the Church of Ecumenical Councils, and the validity of apostolic succession expressed in and safeguarded by the historic episcopate which “teaches correctly” (cf. D. Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom).

25. In response to §35, the Orthodox affirm that the Church is Holy. Being the Body of Christ, the Church cannot sin despite the sinfulness of its individual members. Therefore, we strongly affirm that there is a “continual

⁸ Agia Napa Document, 2-9 March 2011, paragraph 25.

⁹ See http://oodegr.co/english/ekklisia/synodoi/synodicon_of_orthodoxy.htm or <http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/religion/3262978/posts>

need for Christian self-examination, repentance (*metanoia*), conversion, reconciliation and renewal" (§ 36).¹⁰ At the same time, in the course of history one can discern how distortions in faith and order led to separations of some ecclesiastical communities from the one Church.

26. Therefore, one of the urgent issues for the Orthodox is further study on the question of the "limits of the Church". "That question pertains to many important ecclesiological and pastoral issues, such as the recognition of sacrament of baptism outside the Orthodox Church, and the varied practices among the Orthodox worldwide testify to the still unsettled nature of this question, despite canonical norms that have been in place since the late fourth century, as the Agia Napa report states."¹¹

27. The Orthodox accept the historical name of other non-Orthodox Christian churches and confessions that are not in communion with them and believe that their relations with them should be based on an objective clarification of the whole ecclesiological question, particularly to the issues related to sacraments, grace, priesthood, and apostolic succession.

28. It is in light of the above-mentioned statement that we consider chapter's 3 section B "Growing in the Essential Elements of Communion: Faith, Sacraments, Ministry". The restoration of communion between the Orthodox Church and non-Orthodox Christian Churches and Confessions requires unequivocal and unambiguous agreement about the fundamental principles of the life of the Church, as it is expressed in "The Church: Local and Universal" (1990) quoted in TCTCV §37 "The ecclesial elements required for full communion within a visibly united church – the goal of the ecumenical movement – are communion in the fullness of apostolic faith; in sacramental life; in a truly one and mutually recognized ministry; in structures of conciliar relations and decision-making; and in common witness and service in the world".¹²

29. TCTCV admits that "these attributes serve as a necessary framework for maintaining unity in legitimate diversity" (§37). Accepting this statement, we stress that legitimate diversity cannot include any diversity in dogmatic and moral issues.

30. Following the report of Agia Napa consultation¹³, we stress that the Church's authority/*exousia* (cf. Mt. 28: 18), stemming from that of the

¹⁰ This quotation proposes a slight revision: "penitence" is replaced with "repentance" as a better translation of the Greek term "metanoia." "Repentance" and not "conversion" is the English translation of "metanoia."

¹¹ Agia Napa Document, 2-9 March 2011, paragraph 13.

¹² "The Church: Local and Universal", paragraph 25 in *Growth in Agreement II*, p. 868.

¹³ Agia Napa Document, 2-9 March 2011, paragraph 30.

Lord who emptied himself, is different from the world's authority. The exercise of authority within the Church, and of the Church in the world, in the name of Christ and by the Holy Spirit, must be a service (*diakonia*) of love, with no domination or coercion (cf. Mk 10:45; Jn 13:1-16).

31. We support the statement of TCTCV that "authority in the Church in its various forms and levels, must be distinguished from mere power" (§50). We appreciate the reference in the Text to the authority in the Church, which is to be understood as a service of love (*diakonia*) for the growth of church *koinonia* in faith, love and witness (*martyria*) (§49) and also the recognition of the sources of authority (Holy Scripture, Tradition, worship, Ecumenical Councils and local synods), as well as the reference to the lives of saints and the witness of monasticism during the historical course of the Church (§50). The communion of believers or any similar formula is not the appropriate definition of the Church. We agree with what the text affirms elsewhere that witness, sacraments and diakonia (service) are main aspects of being a church. The WCC member churches should seek a common understanding of the normativity of the Ecumenical Councils, based on the work already done by the WCC Faith and Order Commission.

32. We want to assert that there is no episkopé without the bishop. In the New Testament, the person of the bishop defines the function of episkopé (see § 48 and 52).

33. In contradiction to all references of the TCTV regarding the possibility to recognize any authority to multilateral ecumenical dialogues and common statements as their production, for the Orthodox it would not be possible to recognize "a certain kind of authority" (§50) to them. Nevertheless, this does not mean that there is no respect for the outcome of the ecumenical dialogues.

34. Commenting on §55 regarding Primacy, Synodality and Conciliarity in the first millennium, we have reservations concerning the historical description of these issues.

Chapter IV: The Church: In and for the World

35. We as Orthodox understand mission in terms of the essence of the Church: unity, holiness, catholicity and apostolicity. In our response to "The Nature and Mission of the Church"¹⁴ text, we noted that the connection between mission and catholicity was emphasized, while the connection

¹⁴ "The Nature and the Mission of the Church", *Faith and Order Paper no: 198*, 2005, WCC - <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/commissions/faith-and-order/i-unity-the-church-and-its-mission/the-nature-and-mission-of-the-church-a-stage-on-the-way-to-a-common-statement>

between mission and unity was in need of further reflection and elaboration. In TCTCV, this connection was acknowledged. Furthermore we would like to underline that in the Orthodox understanding catholicity cannot be based on contextual circumstances, as expressed in §65.

36. An adequate definition of mission still needs further clarification. As in our response to “The Nature and Mission of the Church”, we would like to emphasize the importance of service (*diakonia*) in mission. We understand *diakonia* as it is expressed in the Gospel of Mathew: “Then He will answer them, saying, ‘Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me’ (Mt. 25: 45). However, the Church cannot be reduced to a diaconial organization. We call for deeper theological reflection on *Diakonia*.

37. We cannot affirm the teaching of salvation without believing in Christ and Baptism. Therefore as the Text refers on religious pluralism in § 60 cannot be accepted by the Orthodox, as it goes against the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ who said, “whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned” (Mk. 16:16). With respect for human dignity and dialogue with people of other religions and faiths, one may search for “whatever elements of truth and goodness are present in other religions” (§ 60).

38. For the Orthodox Church moral issues are “church dividing” (§ 63) within the ecumenical movement. This is not because of a legalistic fixation on a moral code but it is based on the belief that the moral teaching of the Church is rooted in theology and Christian anthropology. Christian moral norms are not simply philosophical, social and cultural constructs: they express fundamental realities about the relations between God and human beings. This is particularly true in the area of human sexuality, which has become so very controversial. The Text repeatedly suggests the Gospel as the fundamental source for moral norms. We fully agree with that, but we would caution against any conflicting understanding of law and Gospel which would make the Gospel an antinomian principle. We must not use the Gospel as a license for behavior that is not consistent with Christian identity in Jesus Christ. The reference that “*koinonia* includes ... also shared moral values” (§62) in a convergence document could be understood as a project aimed at transforming the confessional Christian communities, which are called to change or even neglect their traditions.

39. We would strongly affirm the need for Christians to “be accountable to each other with respect to their ethical reflection and decisions” (§ 62). In this regard it is very difficult to understand how some Christian groups can make ethical and moral decisions which are radical departures from the

unbroken Christian tradition of 2,000 years, disregarding the objections of other Christians, even those within their own communions. Flagrant violations of the principle of mutual accountability reflect an absence of love and make the ecumenical journey more painful. As a result, those Orthodox who participate in the ecumenical process are subjected to criticism and pressure from within their own tradition.

We praise God the Father who *“placed all things under His feet and appointed Him to be head over everything for the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills everything in every way”* (Ephesians 1: 22-23).

“THE CHURCH TOWARDS A COMMON VISION”

Faith and Order Paper No. 214

Paralimni, Cyprus, 6-13 October 2016

Communiqué

1. The consultation met from 6 to 13 October 2016, with the goal of responding to *“The Church: Towards a Common Vision”* (TCTCV), *Faith and Order Paper No. 214*, WCC, Geneva, 2013, in the Holy Metropolitanate of Constantia-Ammochostos in Paralimni, Cyprus, upon the invitation of the World Council of Churches (WCC), and thanks to the gracious hospitality of H. B. Archbishop Chrysostomos of Cyprus and of H. E. Vasilios, Metropolitan of Constantia-Ammochostos. H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios of Sasima (Ecumenical Patriarchate) and H.E. Metropolitan Bishoy of Damietta (Coptic Church) co-moderated the encounter. H.E. Metropolitan Vasilios, former moderator and presently member of the WCC Faith and Order Commission, received and hosted the participants in his diocese. Thirty hierarchs, priests, deacons, university professors, lay (male and female) and youth, coming from Eastern Orthodox Church and Oriental Orthodox Churches, as well as representatives of the WCC Faith and Order Commission, were present. Some of the participants in this meeting are also members of the WCC Faith and Order Commission. The consultation heard and discussed positions of several Orthodox Churches and theologians as well as papers, addressing the TCTCV Text. A similar consultation held 2-9 March 2011 in Agia Napa/Paralimni and hosted by Metropolitan Vasilios, featured several concrete and precise proposals for redrafting the Text *“The Nature and Mission of the Church.”* The Text of TCTCV incorporated many of the suggestions made at the Agia Napa/Paralimni consultation.

2. The WCC Central Committee in 2012 received the Faith and Order Text no. 214, entitled *“The Church: Towards a Common Vision”*, and sent

it to the churches “to encourage further reflection on the Church and seek their formal responses to the text” (TCTCV, Foreword, p. vi) until the end of this year. The Text seeks to express common convictions about the role of the Church, its nature and mission, and to identify issues and ecclesiological difficulties which continue to divide the churches today. This Text has already been sent officially to the WCC member churches, inviting them to study and evaluate the document as well as to offer their reactions and responses. The purpose of this consultation is to formulate a common Orthodox response to TCTCV Text.

3. Convening such an Inter-Orthodox consultation is not new: several similar consultations have been planned and organized by the WCC in the past, facilitating the process of a common Orthodox response – but also contribution – to major WCC studies. Members from almost all the Eastern Orthodox Church and Oriental Orthodox Churches participated at this consultation. Present from the Eastern Orthodox Church were: the Ecumenical Patriarchate, Patriarchate of Alexandria, Patriarchate of Antioch, Patriarchate of Jerusalem, Patriarchate of Moscow, Patriarchate of Serbia, Patriarchate of Romania, Church of Cyprus, Church of Greece, Church of Albania, Orthodox Church of Finland, and the Orthodox Church in America. Present from the Oriental Orthodox Churches were: the Armenian Apostolic Church, Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin, Armenian Apostolic Church, Holy See of Cilicia, Coptic Orthodox Church, and the Syrian Orthodox Church of Malankara. In addition, local organizers, guests and WCC staff participated.

4. Along with discussion on a series of various topics, the program included daily prayers and several visits to local parishes and monasteries. On 6 October, an opening morning prayer was celebrated in the chapel of Agia Anna in Paralimni. At the opening session, H.E. Metropolitan Prof. Dr. Genadios of Sassima, after greeting all participants, conveyed the prayers and the best wishes of H.A.H. Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, and expressed gratitude and warm thanks to Metropolitan Vasilios and his staff for his generous hospitality, extended regularly to inter-Orthodox and ecumenical gatherings, and he also highlighted his contribution to finalizing the Text. Rev. Dr Odair Pedroso Mateus, director of the Faith and Order Secretariat, read a message from Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit, general secretary of the WCC. In his message, the general secretary greeted the participants and expressed his gratitude to the host and to the co-moderators. He also expressed his confidence that the response “formulated on behalf of the Orthodox member churches shall constitute a valuable document in the process of reception of ‘The Church: Towards a Common Vision’ in the life of our WCC fellowship.”

5. On Sunday, 9 October all the members attended the Divine Liturgy which was concelebrated at Saint George's Cathedral in Paralimni, by Metropolitans Vasilios, Gennadios, Seraphim of Zimbabwe and Angola, Archbishop Theophanes of Gerasa and many clergy. After the Liturgy, the members of the consultation travelled to Nicosia where they visited the Cathedral of Saint John the Theologian at the Archbishopric of Cyprus, and were welcomed by Archbishop Chrysostomos II who offered an official lunch. Metropolitan Gennadios thanked him, on behalf of the participants, for the great hospitality expressed in many ways and several times. A pilgrimage visit to St. Thekla women's monastery followed. Unfortunately an attempt to conduct a visit to the occupied area of Cyprus was prevented by the occupying authorities, who refused at the border to admit the group.

6. On Tuesday, 11 October the participants visited the church of the Mother of God the Theotokos (Panaghia Angeloktisti), the tomb of Saint Lazarus and the monastery of Saint Raphael and Saint Marina.

7. Participants expressed warm thanks and gratitude to the WCC general secretary, and to the director and staff of WCC Faith and Order Commission for preparing and organizing this consultation.

8. After intensive discussion and thorough consideration of TCTCV Text, the consultation issued a common response which will be submitted to WCC Faith and Order Commission.

Paralimni, 12th October 2016.