

Christian Conference of Asia (CCA)
Association of Christian Institutes for Social Concerns in Asia (ACISCA)
Board of Theological Education of Senate of Serampore College (BTESSC)
Ecumenical Christian Centre (ECC)

International Consultation on 'Wider Ecumenism as Prophetic Witness'

Communique

We, the participants who attended an international consultation on 'Wider Ecumenism as Prophetic Witness' organised jointly by the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA), Association of Christian Institutions for Social Concerns in Asia (ACISCA), Board of Theological Education of Senate of Serampore College (BTESSC) and the Ecumenical Christian Centre (ECC) and hosted by the ECC from 7 to 10 August 2018 at the Ecumenical Christian Centre in Whitefield Bangalore India, tried to understand the challenges in terms of moving beyond traditional understanding of ecumenism as ecclesial unity. Wider ecumenism embraces all God's creation in the household of God. We are called to understand that the parameters of ecumenism go wider and embrace all God's creation in the *oikoumene*. The earth is the Lord's and we are part of God's creation to be prophetic witnesses.

During the deliberations of the consultation we, the 110 participants comprising theologians, missiologists, ecumenical enablers, theological students, social activists, lay and clergy representatives from different ecclesiastical traditions – Protestant, Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Pentecostal and Evangelical in Asia and other parts of the world, analysed and understood the reasons and factors of divisive forces hindering the life affirming principles and values in our communities and societies. We are aware of the fact that we have been called to speak truth prophetically to powers, and not to bow down to the powers and principalities. However, we often fail to respond to the call for prophetic witnessing.

The biblical understanding affirms ecumenism as the whole inhabited earth. The reinterpretation of *oikoumene* in the light of the Trinitarian approach will bring a paradigm shift towards a more inclusive, interdependent and relational ecumenism. Receptive ecumenism turns the question and asks what one's church or religious organisation can learn from the other, with integrity, rather than teaching and imposing on others.

In a world of ecological degradation where unbridled development creates conflict with the surrounding habitat, we are called to prophetically recognise our kinship with all creation. Inter-religious relations and dialogue celebrate diversity through action, education, advocacy and service rather than simply tolerating religious differences. Sharing one's own faith with others is a duty of discipleship. We observe that the theology of wider ecumenism should be further discussed and constantly evaluated in the light of emerging contexts and responding to the call for prophetic witnessing.

We are committed to explore the possibility of cooperating with other religions for strengthening wider ecumenism in the household of God. Wider ecumenism should always contribute to promote peace with justice in the spirit of Trinitarian love as prophetic witness to the whole world. All work to promote wider ecumenism needs to be contextual as well as religio-culturally, and ecologically sensitive in a spirit of understanding each other's way.

We affirm our belief that Jesus Christ calls us to be engaged in prophetic witnessing in the context of wider ecumenism. We believe that God's work is universal in its impact. Therefore, God cannot be confined to what is taking place within the structures of Christianity although the Church is vital to God's mission in the world. We affirm that to see God at work in a universal sense implies that Christians need to have a humble approach to other religions. In the light of a Cosmocentric approach to wider ecumenism, we acknowledge the revelation of aspects of Truth, Light and Life in other religions.

We affirm that Christians have to recognize God's image in all religious traditions. The ecumenical question is markedly different in Asia as the context is decisively different from that of in many other parts of the world. Christians in Asia cannot be insensitive to the tremendous contributions the other religions are still making to the shaping of Asian culture. There is a need for dialogue with other faiths to understand each other better and learn mutually as love is the essence of the Trinity and in Trinitarian faith we engage with each other to make prophetic witness to the Truth that Christ teaches us. We affirm that wider ecumenism and the *missio Dei* have deep hermeneutical links and pave the way towards the unity of the entire *oikoumene*.

(ECC, Whitefield, Bangalore, India/10 August 2018)