

MARKS OF OUR COMMITMENT

The Preamble of the NCCC states that as member communions we “covenant with one another”. All our traditions recognize God’s covenant, but speak of it in different ways. For some communions, to speak of covenant is to speak of mutual commitment; for others, covenant defines the relationship between God and the believing community. Although Christians speak in different ways, there is real, if imperfect, community among all of us who confess Jesus as the Christ.

Life Together: Our life and work as a community of communions is grounded in the confidence that our unity is God’s gift. As the NCCC, we are an expression of the churches as they intend to live out and witness to that unity as a reflection of God’s reconciling love for all the world. We strive to make clear our commitment to Jesus Christ in every aspect of our work, locally, nationally and internationally. We reach out to all Christians in reconciliation.

To express mutual faithfulness, as member communions we will:

- Receive the ecumenical calling as essential to our own identity;
- Perceive the renewed NCCC as an expression of our search for visible unity and common mission;
- Encourage all our governing bodies, agencies and staff members to understand and live out unity and mission as integrally related responses to the Gospel;
- Make the financial and human resourcing of our life and common mission undertaken in the Council a high priority; and
- Nurture and motivate our own constituents to engage more fully in the demanding tasks of unity and mission.

Membership in the NCCC: Membership in the NCCC will involve churches separately as member communions and together as the NCCC in developing relationships of mutual commitment.

I. Specifically, there are certain benchmarks for internal actions by member communions which will contribute to the most effective life and work together as the NCCC. These suggest that each communion should do the following:

- A. Convene regularly its representatives to the NCCC (Governing Board, unit and sub-unit program committees and other functional parts as appropriate) at least once a year to help develop common goals and purposes by which the communion will live in a community of communions and to share information about conversations on church unity and mission activities undertaken with other communions;
- B. Engage its representatives to the NCCC in informal discussion of issues coming before them for decision in the NCCC, thus enhancing common public witness;
- C. Use its communication channels to inform and educate its members and encourage their participation in the Council’s life and work;
- D. Educate for and about ecumenism as part of ongoing programs, and design its educational work from an ecumenical perspective;
- E. Invite officers of the Council, representatives from other member communions, and its own delegates to the Council to speak at the communion’s regular stated meetings;
- F. Share with the NCCC information about union conversations and mission activities undertaken between itself and one or more other communions;

- G. Contribute at least the minimal amount of undesignated funding requested, pledged, if possible, on a biennial basis; and
- H. Report regularly to the community of communions on the steps taken to follow through on pronouncements and actions agreed to by the NCCC.

II. In turn, it is our intention to fashion and maintain a community of communions which effectively enables us together to do the following:

- A. Recognize that those things asked of each member communion can be achieved only when the community itself supports each member and the whole ecumenical movement through leadership, empowerment, listening and understanding;
- B. Act in word and deed as a common fellowship in accordance with policies, priorities, and guidelines commonly agreed to by the community as a whole;
- C. Seek continually to include other communions in the expression of witness, nurture and unity;
- D. Seek to encourage every program unit to participate fully in the ecumenical life of the Council;
- E. Make decisions in a participatory style which recognizes, affirms and uses the gifts of all within the community;
- F. Provide clear and open information to the churches about the Council's overall policies, programs and finances in order to ensure the Council's credibility as a faithful steward of the churches' resources and to interpret the life and work undertaken through the Council;
- G. Seek cooperative action and planning with other ecumenical organizations through which NCCC members work, thus enhancing mutual effectiveness;
- H. Support the unity conversations of all Christians seeking to achieve the ecumenical vision;
- I. Hold all of our Council units and staff accountable for the tasks of making visible the unity of the church and education for unity and mission;
- J. Work on the foundation of a clear articulation of the Christian faith so that our activities for justice, service, peace, and unity are interpreted in terms that respect and, when possible, reconcile the theological differences among our member communions while making progress towards a common expression of our faith in Jesus Christ.
- K. Assist in the development of education from an ecumenical perspective.

Ecumenical witness is a priority of the churches, locally, regionally, nationally and globally. Whenever our communions work together, we experience the meaning of a community of communions. Such a community expresses itself not only in the NCCC, but also in the life and work of local and regional councils of churches, other national councils, the World Council of Churches and other ecumenical groupings. The NCCC therefore strives to enhance the total ecumenical witness by offering, as appropriate, the support of the council to each member communion's participation in that witness.