Report on “RENEWAL IN MISSION”
WCC Uppsala Assembly, 1968

I. A MANDATE FOR MISSION

1. We belong to a humanity that cries passionately and articulately for a fully human life. Yet the very humanity of man and of his societies is threatened by a greater variety of destructive forces than ever. And the acutest moral problems all hinge upon the question: What is man? We Christians know that we are in this worldwide struggle for meaning, dignity, freedom and love, and we cannot stand aloof. We have been charged with a message and a ministry that have to do with more than material needs, but we can never be content to treat our concern for physical and social needs as merely secondary to our responsibility for the needs of the spirit. There is a burning relevance today in describing the mission of God, in which we participate, as the gift of a new creation which is a radical renewal of the old and the invitation to men to grow up into their full humanity in the new man, Jesus Christ.

2. Men can know their true nature only if they see themselves as sons of God, answerable to their Father for one another and for the world. But because man refuses both the obedience and the responsibility of sonship his God-given dominion is turned into exploitation, and harmony into alienation in all his relationships. In this condition man, with all his amazing power, suffers an inescapable dread of his own helplessness and his deepest cry, albeit often unrecognized, is for the Triune God.

3. Jesus Christ, incarnate, crucified and risen, is the new man. In him was revealed the image of God as he glorified his Father in a perfect obedience. In his total availability for others, his absolute involvement and absolute freedom, his penetrating truth and his triumphant acceptance of suffering and death, we see what man is meant to be. Through that death on the Cross, man’s alienation is overcome by the forgiveness of God and the way is opened for the restoration of all men to their sonship. In the resurrection of Jesus a new creation was born, and the final goal of history was assured, when Christ as head of that new humanity will sum up all things.

4. But the new manhood is not only a goal. It is also a gift like all God’s gifts it has to be appropriated by a response of faith. The Holy Spirit offers who takes the Word of God and makes it a living, converting word to men. Our part in evangelism might be described as bringing about the occasions for men’s response to Jesus Christ. Often the turning point does not appear as a religious choice at all. Yet it is a new birth. It sets a pattern of dying and rising which will continually be repeated. For we have to be torn out of the restricted and perverted life of <the old man>. We have to <put on the new man> and this change is always embodied in some actual change of attitude and relationship. For there is no turning to God which does not at the same time bring a man face to face with his fellow men in a new way. The new life frees men for community unabling them to break through racial, national, religious and other barriers that divide the unity of mankind.

5. Mission bears fruit as people find their true life in the Body of Christ, in the Church’s life of Word and Sacrament, fellowship in the Spirit and existence for
6. The meeting with men of other faiths or of no faith must lead to dialogue. A Christian’s dialogue with another implies neither a denial of the uniqueness of Christ, nor any loss of his own commitment to Christ, but rather that a genuinely Christian approach to others must be human, personal, relevant and humble. In dialogue we share our common humanity, its dignity and fallenness, and express our common concern for that humanity. It opens the possibility of sharing in new forms of community and common service. As Christians we believe that Christ speaks in this dialogue, revealing himself to those who do not know him and connecting the limited and distorted knowledge of those who do. Dialogue and proclamation are not the same. The one complements the other in a total witness. But sometimes Christians are not able to engage either in open dialogue or proclamation. Witness is then a silent one of living the Christian life and suffering for Christ.

7. Man is one indivisible whole. Science today furnishes us with constantly increasing knowledge about man’s inner being and his interdependence with society. We must see achievements of greater justice, freedom and dignity as a part of the restoration of true manhood in Christ. This calls for a more open and humble partnership with all who work for these goals even when they do not share the same assumptions as ourselves. But it also calls for a clearer acceptance of the diversity of gifts of the spirit within the Church. <He gave some to be apostles>—the bearers and strategists of the Gospel in a modern age, <some to be prophets>—to equip the saints for their ministry in the world and to be the protesting conscience of society, <some to be pastors>—to heal spiritual and psychological ills, <some to be evangelists>—the interpreters of the Gospel for the secular man or the man of another faith, <some to be teachers>—equipped with biblical light on contemporary perplexities. Each, knowing his need of the gifts of the others, contributes his own in a single, saving outreach to bring men to the measure of the fullness of the stature of Christ.

II. OPPORTUNITIES FOR MISSION

1. The Church in mission is the Church for others
The Church in mission is for all people everywhere; for those who have not heard the Gospel and for those who have; for those who, unknowing, serve the <man for others>, and for those who name his Name and yet turn away from his mission; and even for those who reject the church, and yet continue to wait for the new humanity.
Since the Church is for others, its mission must both challenge and include men and women where they are:

- a Reformed banker in Zurich and his Roman Catholic colleague in Buenos Aires
- a Baptist policeman in the Congo, an Orthodox teacher in India
- a Methodist professor at Columbia, a Lutheran art student at the Sorbonne
- a pastor evangelist in New Guinea, a minister in industrial Tokyo
- a Spanish migrant worker in Holland, a West India bus conductor in London
- a nurse in Johannesburg, a housewife in Moscow
- a hungry child in Rio, an unemployed farm worker in Mississippi.
Localities for mission are such in variety and setting—where there is human need, an expanding population, tension, forces in movement, institutional rigidities, decision-making about the priorities and uses of power, and even open human conflict.

2. Here we describe a few priority situations for mission today

a) Centres of power
Centres of power control human life for good or evil. Increasingly men struggle over this control. For example, the mass media can be employed for either powerful communication or deceitful manipulation. All existing centres of power such as government, business, industry, military establishments, labour, and churches, must be called to account for their uses of power, especially by those affected. Frustration grows in proportion to human powerlessness and lack of dignity. For the sake of the new humanity the powerless must exercise power.

b) Revolutionary movements
The longing for a just society is causing revolutions all over the world. Since many Christians are deeply rooted in the status quo they tend to be primarily concerned for the maintenance of law and order. Where the maintenance of order is an obstacle to a just order, some will decide for revolutionary action against that injustice, struggling for a just society without which the new humanity cannot fully come. The Christian community must decide whether it can recognize the validity of their decision and support them.

c) The University everywhere is in change
The quest for a society and a meaningful life ahead is erupting in all places of higher learning and research. Student rebellions reflect the insistence that maturing students share in decisions about the form and content of university life. In the intellectual centres of an emerging world culture, such movements require Christian presence and witness.

d) Rapid urbanization and industrialization
All over the world men are on the move from tribal village to township, from rural area to urban sprawl. The migrant worker, the sufferer from racial prejudice in housing, the child in a crowded school, the lonely student in his crowded dormitory, the watchers of the TV screens, the inmates, nurses and medical specialists of the hospital wards—all these make the emerging urban centres a locality for mission. The material handler shifting ingots of steel; the woman assembling a transistor; the manager racing against time and spending his Sunday planning production targets—all these are in need of seeing the inter-relatedness of their role with that of others in building a just industrial society.

e) Suburbia, rural areas
The pupil in rural areas, starving for education; the village pastor, looking for his young people who have moved to the town; the farmer struggling to develop intermediate agricultural technology; the prematurely aged labourer in an area of famine—and the prematurely retired and bored pensioner; suburban wives trapped in the small world of their children and chores—these too constitute localities for mission where there are pressures for conformity, social prejudice and the threat of a clouded future.
f) Relations between developed and developing countries
Centres of decision and forces of public opinion influencing the relations between the developed countries and the developed countries are a locality for mission, which demands new motivations and a new international missionary strategy.

g) The Churches as an arena for mission
The words of proclamation are doubted when the church’s own life fails to embody the marks of the new humanity. The church is rightly concerned for the world’s hundreds of millions who do not know the Gospel of Christ. It is constantly sent out to them in witness and service. But that concern becomes suspect when the church is preoccupied with its own numerical and institutional strength. It is called to be the servant body of Christ given to and for the world.
Too many of our discussions are about the internal concerns of our fellowship; too many statistical forms ask only about the budget and fluctuations in attendance and not about outreach and service. Too often we send only doctors and teachers where today’s need calls also for town planners. Traditional mission board structures tend to commit the churches to institutional continuity. Too many traditional churches neglect relationships with independent, rapidly growing indigenous Christian movements. The Christian community desperately needs renewal, lest it become a spiritual ghetto, unaware of its true responsibilities.

3. How to find criteria for missionary priorities
Because the world is always changing, it is always necessary to evaluate missionary priorities. That evaluation will often require willingness to face loss in prestige and finance and detachment from monuments of faithfulness in mission localities of the past. We suggest the following criteria for such evaluation:

– do they place the church alongside the poor, the defenceless, the abused, the forgotten, the bored?
– do they allow Christians to enter the concerns of others to accept their issues and their structures as vehicles of involvement?
– are they the best situations for discerning with other men the signs of the times, and for moving with history towards the coming of the new humanity?

III. FREEDOM FOR MISSION

A new Stance needed in Church Life
Mobilizing the people of God for mission today means releasing them from structures that inhibit them in the Church and enabling them to open out in much more flexible ways to the world in which they live. In this world we need to meet others, across all the frontiers, in new relationships that mean both listening and responding, both giving and receiving. This necessitates:
1. A continuing re-examination of the structures of church life at all levels, i.e. the local parish, the denominational synods and conferences and their agencies, the councils of churches at national, regional and world levels. All these must ask, not <Have we the right structures for mission?> but <Are we totally structured for mission?>
2. A re-examination of the variety of tasks to which the people are called in their ministry in the world. Laymen and women express their full commitment to mission, not primarily through the service they give within the church structures, but pre-eminently through the ways in which they use their professional skills and competence in their daily work and public service. We need to employ all the gifts God has given to his people—whether it be gifts of proclamation, or healing, or
political activity, or administration, or running a home, etc. We need to explore how, in the diverse roles in which we find ourselves, we can creatively and with integrity express our full humanity—whether it be as young people, or women, or members of minority groups, or people in positions of authority, and so on. In all these, we need to recognize what is our Christian obedience in the total ministry of the Church.

3. A re-examination of the whole scope and purpose of theological education. This is to be seen as preparation of the whole people of God for their ministry in the world. The training of the clergy cannot be considered apart from the training of the laity and both should be understood as one enterprise. This means:
   a) Clergy need to be trained in an understanding of the world in which the people will minister and of their own responsibility for pointing the people to that ministry and equipping them for it.
   b) Lay training needs to be understood in terms of preparing the people for the increasing complexity of their ministry in the world.
   c) Provision must be made for training both clergy and laity for specialized tasks.

**The Church in the Local Situation**

Though some believe that the basic structures of church life are given and therefore unchangeable, others are convinced that all institutional forms of church life are provisional and open to change. In a given locality the ministry of the church may be exercised in many forms, including congregations, chaplaincies, health and welfare services, youth projects, political and economic pressure groups, functional and professional groups and others. These have often inherited a pattern of life which was the response of a past generation to a situation which is now fast changing. In all the contemporary localities of mission, we must find new and effective ways in which the Gospel can be proclaimed today and understood in all these areas of life. This will mean:

1. that the congregation must recognize its own missionary role in proclaiming the Gospel in word and deed as a caring community for all whom they meet across the different frontiers. Related to this community there need to be groups which will help individuals to feel accepted and to accept others. There people will find through dialogue a common basis for their task and be encouraged to develop new forms of service within the social structures for the sake of their fellow men;
2. that there will be a programme of education which at all levels directs people towards their ministry in the world. This needs to be rooted in a biblical understanding of mission, so that people share the encouragement and insights which Bible study can give;
3. that we get to know the social structures in order to cooperate with all the forces working for good and to discover new tasks needing to be done;
4. that we discover the creative possibilities in the points of tension, conflict and decision in society, and try to make real our profession of love through the active pursuit of justice;
5. that teams come together to undertake specific tasks in society;
6. that we encourage a global understanding of the ministry of the Church.

No local situation or ministry is sufficient unto itself. No local group can isolate itself from the larger structures of planning and decision-making in society. It is in response to these that the Church needs to express its ministry in new ways, for example:

a) The need for specialization is recognized in areas of special concern such as education, rural development, industry, leisure, automation, the mass media.

b) Specialization without coordination is useless. There need to be joint planning and action between the diverse agencies involved in the localities as part of a total coordinated strategy of mission.
The Worldwide Situation
The missionary societies originated in a response of a past generation to the call to take the Gospel to the ends of the earth. Changing political, economic and ecclesiastical circumstances demand new responses and new relationships. Our understanding of the mission in six continents means that the resources of the whole Church in terms of men, money and expertise are available for the use of the whole Church. Their deployment must be determined by need and not by historic relationships or traditional procedures. This means in terms of structures and relationships:

1. Experiments in new forms of witness and service must be encouraged. Initiatives for such experiments may come from any quarter, but should, where possible, be carried through by joint consultation and strategy.
2. The old division between sending and receiving churches is now breaking down. More creative relationships between churches, and between churches and mission boards have developed. Now we must move to multilateral relations and decision making. These relations will be of many kinds, some national, some regional and some worldwide.
3. Where people and resources come from outside a community they must be related to the needs of that community and incorporated into its life. Mutual understanding and relationships have to be built up between the Church in the local situation and those who bring the resources of skill and technical knowledge from outside. In this sharing the unity of all Christians in each place can be deepened, tested and realized.

Never go it alone
There is but one mission on all six continents. This makes it now imperative that Christians engage effectively in joint planning and action in both local and international situations. Only ecumenical cooperation can be adequate for the immensity of our task.

Some joint action for mission has already taken place, but the churches are still too reluctant to implement the call to joint action sounded so strongly in 1963 at the Mexico City Meeting of the Commission of World Mission and Evangelism. Present structures obviously do not provide adequate vehicles for developing joint strategy. We must determine to find ways in which joint action can become operative. We urge consultation with regional and national councils, mission boards and societies and churches, resolved to find ways and means for such joint planning and action. We recommend that more specific areas be marked out as soon as possible for experiments in ecumenical action.

In fact, we find it impossible to envisage any situation where it would not be more effective to act together across all frontiers rather than going it alone.

In a world where the whole of mankind is struggling to realize its common humanity, facing common despairs and sharing common hopes, the Christian Church must identify itself with the whole community in expressing its ministry of witness and service, and in a responsible stewardship of our total resources.

The Certain Hope
Called as we are to take up our responsibility for mission in the future which God opens up before us, we do so in firm and certain hope that the new humanity revealed in our risen Lord and Saviour will surely come to its glorious fulfilment in him. So we humbly serve, in patience and in joy, confidently expecting his final victory.