

SECTION 3

PRACTICE OF MISSION

So they drew near to the village to which they were going. He appeared to be going further, but they constrained him, saying, "Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent." So he went in to stay with them. When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened and they recognized him; and he vanished out of their sight. They said to each other, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the scriptures?" And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven gathered together and those who were with them, who said, "The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!" Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread. Luke 24:28–35





SECTION 3

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3.1. The whole church in mission

The church understands mission as a faithful expression of its calling, namely to point to and participate in God's in-breaking reign in Christ Jesus. The mission of the church, in its different forms and aspects, aims at transformation, reconciliation, and empowerment in and of the world. Mission is God's gift to every baptized person, as well as to the whole church: from the congregation, to the national church, to the worldwide communion of churches. The whole church (i.e., every member) participates in mission, for mission is not the prerogative of a few professionals or a few wealthy congregations and churches. Mission by proxy is a foreign concept in the mission of God, meaning that the church cannot outsource its missionary role any more than it can outsource its worship and sacramental life. Mission is also the calling of the whole church, not only individuals, and thus is the responsibility of the whole household of God, the communion of the sent.

Engaging in mission from the perspective of the communion of the sent (and also of the saints) leads the church to faithful *martyria* as it stands together in all places at all times in common witness. As the church practices mission as a communion, and not only as isolated individual congregations or churches, solidarity and partnership in mission will develop and competition and wasteful duplications will cease. Lutheran churches, for instance,

when participating in God's mission as a communion of Lutheran churches, will reap the blessings of shared mission resources. The mission endeavor itself will benefit from the wealth of experience gleaned from around the world and from different generations of Christians.

Since mission must be contextual for the faith to be rooted in people's real life experience, every church assumes primary responsibility for mission in its immediate locality and region. However, because of the apostolicity and catholicity of the church, proximity does not mean exclusive ownership of the practice of mission. Mission remains God's mission; thus, individual Christians or families from different parts of the world may receive a call, from God through a sister church, to share mission responsibility with another church in a different geographical location or sociocultural situation. From this perspective, the role of and training for specialized ministries for international partnership in mission are very important. Care must be taken, however, that calling cross-cultural witnesses as missionaries, co-workers, or advisers does not divide the communion into "sender" and "receiver" churches.

Given the increasing complexity of today's contexts of mission, partnership in mission is more crucial than ever before. New models of partnership that promote equal participation and sharing of responsibility are being tried. Churches in the North and the South are now talking about *accompaniment* in mission. As the word accompaniment comes from companion, which means "sharing bread together," companion churches in mission share all their resources with one another. As in the Emmaus story, companions share the journey together with all the concerns, pains, hopes, and joys that each one brings. The resurrected Christ, who joins the journey, makes the companionship empowering and transforming for the church and the world.

In some churches, for historical and structural reasons, mission is still carried out through independent, church-related agencies. This practice needs further and deeper theological reflection in light of the ecclesiological understanding of the church as missional. In order to avoid blurring the roles and responsibilities of the church itself in God's mission, some mission agencies have taken the initiative to challenge the church to reflect on the nature of the church as missional. Integrating mission into church structures, locally and globally, as well as bringing together witnessing through word and deed into one structure, would be part of the discussion.

Word empowered and Spirit led, the church knows that mission flows from its nature as a witnessing community.

3.2. The missional church in action

For the missional church, mission is not only what the church does (missionary activities), but also the church at work. Word empowered and Spirit led, the church knows that mission flows from its nature as a witnessing community. The ministry of the church in its various forms plays a central role in equipping the church for mission as a worshipping, messenger, serving, healing, and oikumene community.

3.2.1. A witnessing community

The church, as a witnessing community, points to the in-breaking of God's reign in Christ in the world, using all the spiritual gifts (*charismata*) that the Holy Spirit has generously bestowed upon it. According to 1 Corinthians 12, the church is endowed with spiritual gifts for the strengthening of the communion/fellowship (*Koinonia*), for the proclamation of the gospel

(*Kerygma*), and for service and healing (*Diakonia*). As a witnessing community, the church cannot participate faithfully in God's mission without these gifts, lest mission become a mere human enterprise. A church in

mission is a gifted (*charismatic*) church for a transforming, reconciling, and empowering mission.

A worshipping community

As a worshipping community the church points to the reality and presence of God's gracious reign in Christ, which calls together and sustains, through Word and Sacraments, a faithful community of forgiven sinners. In and of itself, a praying, confessing, and celebrating community is a sign of God's in-breaking reign.

The worshipping community also points to the future with God, an eschatological reality that is coming towards the present. Thus, the church prays for and expects that God's new reality will break forth in its worship. Because of what it is and what it expects, the church is empowered through worship for transforming and reconciling mission in the world. Serious planning and preparation for worship services in view of the mission of the church, keeping in mind the spiritual importance of welcoming hospitality, are therefore crucial.

A nurturing community

As a nurturing community, the church sees itself as a learning community and learning in community. The nurturing or discipling of God's people for mission is an important dimension of the mission of the church. Equipping the whole church for mission (Ephesians 4:11–12) includes Christian education and theological education. Christian education provides accompaniment for a lifelong journey of faith. Some churches understand Christian education missiologically as "going deep in order to go wide" and as "teach to reach." Theological education is fundamental for ensuring the continuity of holistic and prophetic ministries that strengthen the church's mission of reconciliation and empowerment. Recent missiological awakening among theological seminaries and Bible schools has caused a shift in curriculum – mission no longer considered as an elective course but as an integral part of all core courses. This shift by no means undermines the role of mission departments or institutes in universities and seminaries. On the contrary, it seeks to enhance their importance as being central to the nurturing ministry of the church.

For the worshipping and nurturing community, prayer is at the center of all that it does. Prayer is the medium through which the church places its trust in

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the “calling, sending, and accompanying” God, a trust constantly renewed and strengthened by an ever deepened sense of mission spirituality. Prayer, however, is also the medium through which God brings transformation, reconciliation, empowerment, and healing into the world (Matthew 21:22; John 14:12–14, 15:16). A church in mission, indwelt and led by the Holy Spirit, is a praying church.

A messenger community

The church in mission is a messenger community. It has a powerful and empowering message to deliver. The message is centered on God’s reconciliation and salvation in Jesus Christ and thus also points to God’s gracious act of transformation of the whole person and of all people in all places at all times. The church in mission is apostolic, not only because it delivers the message entrusted to it, but also because it is faithful to the integrity of the message. While announcing the in-breaking of God’s reign, the message is also prophetically denouncing oppressive, hierarchical, and patriarchal structures and destructively violent systems, as well as sinful interpersonal relations. Announcing the message prophetically compels the messenger community to analyze and name its context ever anew.



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The messenger community understands that the message of the breaking in of God’s gracious reign in Christ can be conveyed in different ways: in verbal proclamation, by living the call to be a good neighbor, and through diaconal services and advocacy for justice and peace. In the past, many churches had a rather restricted definition of mission as basically evangelism, an encounter between unbelief and faith. While proclamation as evangelism is at the core of mission, it is not the whole of mission. Since the 1970s, churches, especially from the South, have understood mission in a more holistic and comprehensive way. The messenger community bears witness to the Good News in word and deed, making the life promised by the gospel concrete in the experience of people in their own contexts, affording opportunities for the wider community to share in God’s gracious invitation to the “wedding feast” (Matthew 22:1–12).

The messenger community knows of different ways of inviting people to be part of the in-breaking reign of God. Churches thus far have embarked on evangelistic “campaigns” in stadia, tents, street corners, or moving from village to village and from door to

door. Progress has been made in the use of modern technology such as radio, audio and video cassettes, and television. Many churches nowadays are exploring effective use of the Internet or the telephone for sharing God's message. These communication tools, though they may be effective in reaching large secularized audiences, are rather impersonal. "Virtual" congregations are created through the Internet, but people continue to long for a real faith community. The church is therefore challenged to reconsider traditional forms and means of communication.

One approach that is still effective is the personal, one on one, face-to-face, cross-generational and cross-cultural way of sharing the Good News. This approach is open, flexible, and affordable to

all messengers. It can be practiced everywhere – at home, at work or study places, while traveling. Looking at its context as a messenger community, however, the

church realizes that Christians in some affluent and secularized countries are hesitant or even reluctant to share their faith openly with others. The church needs to undertake an in-depth study of its context, theology, and ministry to find the causes of Christians' inability to live fully as messengers.

In some parts of the world, where the "one on one" sharing of holistic mission has been practiced, usually through the "house church movement" and renewal charismatic movements, church membership has grown tremendously. In Africa, for instance, the Lutheran church grows on average by 300,000 members every year. The church is faced with the great need of providing adequate pastoral care, nurturing, and structural capacity. However, the messenger community, through these movements, has found an effective way of being the church in community seven days a week.

A serving community

The church in mission is a serving community engaged in diakonia in the image of its Lord, who said that he came "*not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many*" (Matthew 20:28). Through diakonia, the church as a serving community expresses concretely in people's everyday lives the in-breaking reign of God in Christ. On the one hand, churches have been engaged in diaconal work, such as schools, hospitals, orphanages, and nursing homes. In spite of the benefits that society at large has gained from such services, they have been criticized by some as "evangelistic"; that is, done with the aim of alluring or attracting people for the sole purpose of "winning souls". The church, through its services, bears witness to the reality of God's in-breaking reign in Christ, whether the service is for the community at large or for the church's own nurturing. However, it realizes that such service may become paternalistic and proselytizing, and should be the object of continuous reflection and discernment.

On the other hand, the serving community is also known for its engagement in diakonia with social services aimed primarily at relieving human and

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community needs, effecting transformational processes in structures and in the lives of communities. The primary aim is to share with all people, in concrete ways, the abundant life promised by the gospel, without necessarily “vocalizing” or verbalizing it in any way. Such services are not mere charity. They aim at transforming communities and societies, advocating for justice, and calling for alternative sustainable communities; thus, they must be results oriented and impact conscious. This unconditional and non-discriminatory diaconal service takes shape usually through the church’s development projects: emergency work, humanitarian aid, rehabilitation work after a catastrophe, community development work, and different care activities.

The concept of development is considered by its detractors as incompatible with the mission

of the church, as denoting a Western political economic theory based on a specific understanding of social relations and using modernist views. The understanding of the meaning and aim of development, however, has changed drastically. Development has been refocused to aim at the emancipation of the individual and the transformation and liberation of society, encompassing the social, cultural, and spiritual well-being of people. It is no longer focused solely on economic and material wealth. In this understanding, development work, as part of the



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process of transformation and empowerment, is an integral part of the mission of the church. In many parts of the world, at the grassroots level, the church as a serving community is recognized as an effective agent of in-depth social empowerment and transformation.

A healing community

The church in mission is a healing community. From the very beginning, the church has understood its calling and sending to be a healing community as an integral part of its service in community (Matthew 10:1, 8; Mark 16:15–18), following in the way of its Lord (Acts 4:30). It also understands itself as a community in the process of healing. Healing takes place at personal *and* societal levels. The church in mission has been endowed with various spiritual gifts for the healing of persons. Persons are cared for and receive treatment in church medical institutions for physical, mental, and even relational ailments. Hospitals, clinics, and emergency medical help are means through which the church has shown the mission of love and empowerment. One of the challenging tasks of the church in the present day is to address the complex issue of HIV/AIDS. Facing the challenge of the pandemic together with different churches, Lutheran

churches in the North and South engaged actively in the LWF campaign against HIV/AIDS (cf. *LWF Plan of Action: Conversion, Compassion, and Care*, 2002).

The church also continues the apostolic practice of healing through prayer and laying on of hands. Through this ministry, cure and healing, well-being and wholeness are prayed for, but the emphasis is on wholeness. Thus, the whole person, together with her or his relationships, is addressed, cared for, and transformed.

The church also looks at the problems and illnesses of society. As a nurturing, messenger, and serving community, the church works towards healing the deep wounds and lasting hurts caused by greed for power and materials, prejudice and violence in the world. At the start of the twenty-first century, many countries still bear the scars, shame, and resentment of colonialism, ideological conflict, racism, and genocide. Atrocities have been committed and suffered, humiliation imposed and endured, resources (material and human) plundered and lost. People – including former victims and victimizers – who share in the same healing community, wish to be relieved of such painful memories. Healing of memories, removing internalized guilt and the shame of the

past, and finding paths together between countries, people, and churches should be a major challenge for church mission in this decade.

3.2.2. An *oikumene* community

The church in mission is an *oikumene* community. As it participates in God's mission, the church cares for the world as its *oikos*, house or home. It is also characteristic of the church in mission that though not *of* this world, it is *in* and *with* the world (John 17:15–18). The mission engagement of the church covers three aspects of the *oikos*: ecumenical, economic, and ecological. An expanded understanding and usage of the ecumenical household comes in also as dialogical engagement: fruitful dialogue with all people who call the earth their home.

Ecumenical engagement

Any church engaged in holistic mission in today's globalized contexts soon realizes that mission encompasses the "whole inhabited world" – not only selected areas – and is best carried out ecumenically by the whole household of God, beyond denominational demarcations. The inability of churches to achieve unity in diversity or to engage in joint mission ventures has undermined the credibility of the church in mission. Likewise, the many conflicts and dissensions among churches and between church-related organizations affect negatively the life and witness of the church. Energy, time, and resources are spent in trying to mediate and reconcile dissenting factions, rather than being focused on the well-being of the world.

A missional church as an *oikumene* community puts priority on bringing peace, justice, health, and abundant life to the *oikos*. Inspired by the spirit of reconciliation, it engages prophetically with the increasing political and social instability and violence in different places in the world. Both at the national

and international levels, churches have courageously offered mediation between conflicting and warring parties. On many occasions, they have called even the most belligerent to the negotiation table in order to reach peaceful settlements between factions. Thus, for the healing of the world, it is imperative that understanding, solidarity, patience, and love are established among the churches.

While church unity is one of the aims of mission, ecumenical dialogues between Christian denominations need to have mission at their center.

A dialogical engagement

The church as an *oikumene* community gives great consideration to people of other religions and convictions that also call this world their home. The church's sustained engagement in transformation, reconciliation, and empowerment also finds expression in its different interrelated approaches in interfaith dialogue with people living in multi-religious contexts.

In Malaysia, for instance, Christians and Muslims engage in a "dialogue of life." In the daily life of the community, people accept

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each other as people of faith and live together and interact with each other in peace. In 2002 and 2004, the LWF organized a “Peace Summit” for Africa, bringing together all religious leaders. The Summit established a Plan of Action aimed at jointly working for peace throughout the continent.

In India, there is a move to look for common ground that brings people of different faith traditions together for *dia-praxis*: action together in solidarity that engages in the promotion of justice, a better quality of life, and the alleviation of human suffering.

In other places, like Nigeria, and in multi-cultural cities in the

North, Christians and Muslims engage in dialogue seeking understanding. Understanding of the other side’s religious belief helps build mutual respect and trust, which facilitate cooperation for peace and development in society. Equally important is the “spiritual approach” in interfaith dialogue, practiced in India, emphasizing prayer and meditation. These approaches highlight a way of life that respects the image of God in everyone. Life is the medium of dialogue.

Another approach consists of academic interfaith dialogue. For

the most part, this involves scholars and religious leaders. At this level, partners in dialogue need to be open, in all objectivity and honesty, to the truth claim presented by the other, and with the clear possibility of changing sides if what is presented shakes the foundation of their faith. For the church, this common search for truth is a trustful venture into the unknown, following the Trinitarian model of dialogue (cf. the LWF publication *Dialogue and Beyond*, March 2003).

Moreover, the church is constantly called to dialogue with different non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil societies on important issues contributing to the well-being of people and relations in society. Transformation, reconciliation, and empowerment can and do take place in society through the church’s encounter and dialogue with groups engaged in social, economic, and ecological concerns.

Economic engagement

Christians live out their baptismal vocation in various arenas of daily life, including economic life. Here, people seek to pursue livelihoods, for their own families as well as for the wider community. A problem is that patterns of injustice, especially as they have emerged under economic globalization, make that increasingly difficult for many. Thus, it is important that the church as an *oikumene* community raise its prophetic voice against oppressive and unjust structures and systems, while also encouraging its members who have access to these structures to change policies and practices from within.

Churches locally, regionally, and globally have strategized together to advocate for the establishment of justice and peace and the eradication of poverty and killer diseases. The *oikumene* community is engaged in mission in a

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world which can destroy itself many times over and that seems unable or unwilling to eradicate poverty and hunger for all. Thus, the church prays for God's empowerment and guidance. It also searches for ways to empower the victims of injustice and engages proactively in transforming the adverse effects of neo-liberal economic globalization.

One example of joint action is the call for a "globalization of solidarity." This aims at fostering and promoting common strategies for debt cancellation for impoverished countries, protecting vulnerable economies from powerful transnational corporations, and supporting alternative trade agreements. Key to these and other strategies is the nurturing of a "spirituality of resistance" as an accompaniment to global solidarity. Churches can draw on their spiritual heritage to confront what is occurring under prevailing policies and practices, to equip members through congregational life to resist the operating assumptions, and work to transform the policies operating under economic globalization, in ecumenical, interfaith, and civil society partnerships. The Emmaus road story provides a powerful paradigm for the journey of churches as they engage with these challenges (cf. the LWF publication *A Call to Participate in Transforming Economic Globalization*, 2002, and the book, *Communion, Responsibility, Accountability*, 2004).

Ecological engagement

The *oikumene* community believes strongly in the goodness of God's creation. It is first and foremost God's creation, which is then received with gratitude as an *oikos* (home) for all people. The first step in the church's ecological mission engagement is that of confession and repentance. For centuries, the church's otherworldly outlook and its emphasis on human dominion or domination over creation paved the way for the exploitation and destruction of nature. The *oikos* earth is in agony.



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The church as a healing community, in every place, needs to look at the whole of creation in the light of the gospel and search for ways to restore this planet to health. The world is not primarily a human environment, nor simply the stage for the drama of human salvation. Rather, it is in and of its own an active participant in God's mission. In the apostle Paul's vision, "creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God" (Romans 8:20–21). The church as *oikumene* community, with its worldwide networks,

should further and prioritize its participation in the process of rehabilitating the earth and preventing further ecological destruction caused by the use of fossil fuels, toxic waste pollution, and the extermination of species, for example. Together with civil

societies and voluntary groups concerned about the integrity of the earth, there is an urgent need for the church to raise its prophetic voice in naming and denouncing destructive actions against the *oikos*. Local projects dealing with ecological rehabilitation should be encouraged and supported financially by all partners. Ecological engagement is an urgent mission call for all.

3.3. New challenges and opportunities for mission

The section on the *context of mission* describes in vivid terms the challenges and opportunities that the changing contexts of mission present. As the pace of globalization rapidly increases with the help of high technology, the market mentality and its attendant consumerism has already infected all spheres of life. It is tragic that the very things that promote globalization (e.g., wealth, information technologies, and skill) are precisely those which divide the world by excluding the majority. Moreover, it is ironic that in a world of high technology and abundant information and knowledge, violence has reached an unprecedented intensity and ubiquity. Contexts have changed radically, and as mission should always be contextual, there is a need for the church to scrutinize, inventory, and reshape its mission practices, with the aim of making them relevant and effective in and for today's contexts.

3.3.1. Mission to the “end of the earth”

Jesus promised his disciples that they would be empowered by the Holy Spirit to be his witnesses even “to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8). The gospel has since been preached to all six continents, but there are still some places where the good news of God's grace in Christ has not been heard and received. In North and South, two thirds of the



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world's population do not yet or no longer recognize Christ as Lord and Savior.

With the shifting of Christianity's center of gravity from the North to the South, the majority of people in what were known as Christian countries have become indifferent or even hostile to the church's witness to the gospel. In countries such as these, there are spheres of life where Jesus Christ is no longer known. For the missional church, these "unreached" places or people are always considered the "end of the earth." These may not be far geographically, but may represent new situations, which offer new and challenging opportunities to witness (*martyria*) to the Lord of history.

Since the second half of the twentieth century, with its rapid changes in technology and the growth of entertainment industries, the church has been removed (in the real and metaphorical sense of the term) from the center of big cities. At the fringes of urban life and business, the church has had no significant influence on the life and future of urban communities. In the best of situations, the church has confined its mission to the care of individuals exasperated by urban demands. What new opportunities for mission do vast cosmopolitan cities such as São Paulo, New York, London, New Delhi, and Nairobi offer to the church? How can the church regain a meaningful presence and assert a relevant influence on the life of the city?

The point is not for the church to be in competition with politics, economics, and entertainment businesses for influence on the life of a city or a nation. Among the challenging opportunities for the church is to accompany communities and nations in "end of the earth" areas and situations and to dare to be the church "where no one has gone before." These are not necessarily "places," but may be spheres of life or interest groups or ideologies. For example, one of the common denominators in influencing and changing people's lives today is

high technology. High tech, when rightly used, affords comfort and helps save lives, but in some cases artificial intelligence may rob people of their human dignity. Research into advanced information technology, genetic manipulation, and safe reusable energy sources is already underway. What would it take for the missional church to be at the birthing place of technology in order to make it more humane? Formulating ethical responses to the use of technology is necessary for the church, but it is not sufficient. The mission of the church calls for more proactive accompaniment.

There are opportunities for the church in accompanying people as they face the onslaught of thriving, destructive underground businesses (e.g., the trafficking of drugs, arms, and women and children, and pornography through the Internet) that are pervasive, privatized, and hard to contain. More elusive is the exploitation in professional sports, spiritism, and secret cultic societies (which have a significant influence on international politics). The church in every locality/nation is best placed to identify those "end of the earth" areas and to design appropriate mission accompaniments.

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3.3.2. Mission and the challenge of information technology

The rapid developments in communication and information technologies also influence mission contexts. There is a need for the church to reflect on the challenging opportunities that such changes bring to people's lives and to its mission in particular. Information technology (IT), for example, has revolutionized the way people communicate with each other, and also the way they think and live and, eventually, their way of being. The church in mission needs to find a new way of being church.

Many churches around the world are already using the Internet creatively for mission (e.g., the "virtual" or cyberspace church as a way to reach unchurched people; online worship services for Internet surfers). The challenge facing the church, however, is monumental. The Internet and a whole panoply of electronic gadgets (video games, DVDs, CDs, etc.) are often misused to promote a culture of

violence. They affect deeply the way users live and think because of the dependency they create, especially among youth. Moreover, the church has to take seriously the challenge Internet culture presents to the way theology, theological education, and the nurturing of the baptized for discipleship and mission are done. This constitutes an "end of

the earth" situation. As theology was once challenged in the North to measure up to philosophical presuppositions and norms, it is now challenged to keep pace with science and technology.

The challenge is not only to make theology survive the Internet culture's constant filtering of data in search of new, updated, and marketable information, but also for IT to be a useful tool for sharing the "old" but empowering story of Jesus Christ.

The rapid development of IT has increased the gap between the haves and the have-nots: many people in the South are still waiting for their first telephone call or access to a computer. The church needs to address this situation urgently as part of its mission strategies.

3.3.3. Mission resources

The call to mission is good news to the church, hence the church must plan for it carefully. Stewardship of resources for the mission of the church is an important element in mission planning. At all church levels, starting with the congregation, allocation of resources for mission – human, material, and financial – should have high priority. Since mission is contextual and is carried out by every church in every place, local congregations play a crucial role, especially in developing resources for mission. A strong stewardship program at the congregational level, aiming at mission resources development, is the basis for reversing the dependency syndrome that has paralyzed many churches in debt-ridden countries. The contextual nature of mission calls on every congregation and national church to design mission activities purposefully based on available resources (e.g., human, material), while working for ways to increase access to other

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resources (e.g., technological, financial). A contextualized mission endeavor, with a strong sense of stewardship, avoids imported approaches that incur high overheads.

Moreover, as the church develops its stewardship program for mission resources, it needs to take a hard look at church structures to determine whether or not they facilitate the mission of the church. Church structures should be flexible and appropriate to the contexts and resource realities of each church and not

duplicates of foreign structures. Rigid and top-heavy church structures stifle the life and mission of the church in such a way that mission is reduced to only supporting church structures. Many churches in the South still depend on overseas subsidies, mainly for structural support.

The practice of mission as a communion of churches calls on churches to be dependent on each other in terms of mission resources: spiritual, human, material, and financial. Mission resources are primarily God's gifts, thus all churches are receivers and stewards of these gifts. On the one hand, therefore, interdependency in mission is for mutual empowerment and transformation based on mutual trust and accountability. The aim of this interdependency is not to ensure the well-being of the churches, but

to strengthen their capacity for and competence in carrying out their mission. On the other hand, many churches in the South are faced with overwhelming challenges for mission (economic disaster, war, displaced population, famine, etc.) that stretch beyond local and national means. Churches in wealthier countries and their related agencies and mission departments, as stewards of God's gifts of mission resources, should reflect seriously and prayerfully on the question of "bilateralism" and "multilateralism" upholding interdependency in a multilateral way as an urgent mission challenge. Engaged in a mission of transformation, reconciliation, and empowerment, these churches and their related agencies, when dealing with project applications from poor countries and churches, should challenge and expose the predatory thinking, consumerist language, and dehumanizing ways of the market economy. They should help build a communion in mission that would be an alternative community, a haven of hope, empowering and supporting the victims of the adverse effects of globalization in all its expressions.

3.3.4. Mission pilgrimage

Recently, the practice of pilgrimage and retreat has received much interest among churches

in Europe. Thousands of people, young and old, women and men, have taken time out of their busy schedules to commit themselves to a weekend or a week of spiritual experience of prayer, scriptural reading, singing, and silence (listening). In the past, individuals or small groups of individuals made pilgrimages for their own spiritual needs, and mission was not the primary aim. Nevertheless, churches and people encountered on the way were also spiritually uplifted.

A revival of pilgrimage as a mission practice could be extremely beneficial for today's churches. It could serve as a practical way for pilgrims to learn, experience, and form solidarity. Thus it could be an effective means of nurturing and promoting a "spirituality of resistance" as the church faces the onslaught of materialism, secularism, and consumerism. It could also present a great opportunity for mutual spiritual strengthening and witnessing in word and deed. Mission pilgrimage can be organized at local, national, regional, and global levels, as well as across generational and denominational lines.

The mission pilgrimage concept and practice help highlight a fundamental vision of the church as being in transformation, a nomadic church, a church on the way, on the Emmaus road. The church in mission is a church in pilgrimage. The church moves not only from place to place, but also from the present to the future and from this "age" to God's new aeon. As a nomadic, pilgrim church, it is gifted by the Holy Spirit to discern the signs of the time and to prophesy (point to) the breaking in of God's reign.