

Marks of Churches Uniting in Christ Participation

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After forty years of study and prayer through the Consultation on Church Union (COCU), the member churches agreed to stop "consulting" and start living their unity in Christ more fully. On January 20, 2002, these churches inaugurated a new relationship to be known as Churches Uniting in Christ (CUIC).

Each communion retains its own identity and decision-making structures, but they also have pledged before God to draw closer in sacred things -- including regular sharing of the Lord's Supper and common mission, especially a mission to combat racism together. Each church also committed itself to undertake an intensive dialogue toward the day when ministers are authorized to serve and lead worship, when invited, in each of the communions.

Churches Uniting in Christ is not a new structure. It is an officially recognized invitation to live with one another differently. Christians in the pews know that we belong together because we all belong to the same Lord. Churches Uniting in Christ is a framework for showing to the world what we truly are -- the one Body of Jesus Christ.

"Marks" of Churches Uniting In Christ Participation

Entering into Churches Uniting In Christ means that the participating churches will express their relationship with one another through the following visible marks:

1. Mutual recognition of each other as authentic expressions of the one church of Jesus Christ. Specifically, this means that the participating churches will publicly recognize the following in one another:

- * Faith in one God who through Word and in the Spirit creates, redeems and sanctifies;
- * Commitment to Jesus Christ as Savior and as the incarnate and risen Lord,
- * Faithfulness to the Holy Scripture, which testifies to Tradition and to which Tradition testifies, as containing all things necessary for our salvation as well as being the rule and ultimate standard of faith;
- * Commitment to faithful participation in the two sacraments ordained by Jesus Christ, Baptism and the Lord's Supper;
- * Commitment to the evangelical and prophetic mission of God and to God's reign of justice and peace;
- * Grateful acceptance of the ministry the Holy Spirit has manifestly given to the churches.

2. Mutual recognition of members in one Baptism. This also implies recognition of the ministry all believers share in the common priesthood and from which God calls those members who will be ordained.

3. Mutual recognition that each affirms the apostolic faith of Scripture and Tradition expressed in the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds, and that each seeks to give witness to the apostolic faith in its life and mission.

4. Provision for celebration of the Eucharist together with intentional regularity. This recognizes that the sacrament is at the heart of the church's life. Shared celebration of the Lord's Supper is a sign of unity in Christ. As Christians gather in all their diversity at one Table of the Lord, they give evidence that their communion is with Christ, and that they are in communion with one another in Christ. When Christians are unable or unwilling to partake together of the one Eucharist, they witness against themselves and give a visible demonstration of the brokenness of Christ's body and the human community.

5. Engagement together in Christ's mission on a regular and intentional basis, especially a shared mission to combat racism. The church engages in Christ's mission through worship, proclamation of the gospel, evangelism, education and action that embodies God's justice, peace and love. The commitment made by the members of Churches Uniting in Christ includes all of these, so that hearts and minds may be changed. The participating churches will also recognize, however, a particular and emphatic call to "erase racism" by challenging the system of white privilege that has so distorted life in this society and in the churches themselves. Indeed, this call is a hallmark of the new relationship.

6. Intentional commitment to promote unity with wholeness and to oppose all marginalization and exclusion in church and society based on such things as race, age, gender, forms of disability, sexual orientation and class.

7. Appropriate structures of accountability and appropriate means for consultation and decision-making. While some provision must be made for affecting the marks of the new relationship and for holding the churches mutually accountable to the commitments they have made, the structures developed for these purposes should be flexible and adapted to local circumstances. Apart from ongoing structures, the members of Churches Uniting in Christ may want to assemble from time to time in order to consider pressing issues and to bear witness together on matters of common concern.

8. An ongoing process of theological dialogue. Such dialogue will specifically attempt to:

- * Clarify theological issues identified by the members of Churches Uniting in Christ in order to strengthen their shared witness to the apostolic faith;
- * Deepen the participating churches' understanding of racism in order to make an even more compelling case against it;
- * Provide a foundation for the mutual recognition and reconciliation of ordained ministry by the members of Churches Uniting in Christ by the year 2007.

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