Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification

The Lutheran World Federation and the Roman Catholic Church

20th Anniversary Edition

Including statements from the World Methodist Council,
the Anglican Consultative Council
and the World Communion of Reformed Churches

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THE LUTHERAN WORLD FEDERATION

A Communion of Churches

World Communion of Reformed Churches

ANGLICAN COMMUNION

IN OVER 165 COUNTRIES

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Foreword

As leaders of five Christian World Communions, Anglican, Catholic, Lutheran, Methodist and Reformed, we express our joy as we affirm together our faith in God's liberating grace and our consequent hope for this world, as expressed in the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ). Indeed, it is in and through Christ that the gift of salvation reaches humankind. We are thankful that we stand together on this common ground.

The JDDJ was a historic agreement signed by Lutherans and Catholics in 1999, effectively resolving one of the key theological conflicts of the Reformation, the understanding of salvation. Three other Christian World Communions, namely the Methodist, Anglican and Reformed families of churches, have since formally associated themselves with what was initially a Catholic-Lutheran agreement. Through the JDDJ, centuries-old controversies and misunderstandings were overcome.

A consultation of all the five Communions at Notre Dame University in March 2019 became a witness that the bilateral agreement between the member churches of the LWF and the Roman-Catholic Church from 1999 now has effectively become a multilateral agreement between five equal parties. Therefore, with joy we jointly offer this publication to our Communions and the wider ecumenical world. It gathers the JDDJ statement from 1999, the further texts expressing the agreement from the Methodist (2003), Anglican (2016) and Reformed (2017) Communions, and the Notre Dame Consultation Statement (2019) for wider study and discernment.

As leaders of these five Christian World Communions, we jointly affirm our agreement on this core issue of our common Christian faith. Our agreement compels us to witness together, in word and deed, about God's justifying and sanctifying grace, and to share this message in ways which effectively communicate with today's societies. We are committed to the call to

share together this message of salvation, and we want to do this together wherever possible, as agreed in the Notre Dame Consultation Statement:

> "We are convinced of the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ to transform us and the world and we are committed to witness more and effectively together to the salvation given to us in Christ (Romans 1:16)."

Rev. Dr Martin Junge, General Secretary,
The Lutheran World Federation

Kurt Cardinal Koch, President,
Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity

Bishop Ivan M. Abrahams, General Secretary,
World Methodist Council

Most Revd. Dr Josiah Idowu-Fearon,
Secretary General, Anglican Communion

Rev. Dr Chris Ferguson, General Secretary,
World Communion of Reformed Churches

Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification

by the Lutheran World Federation and the Roman Catholic Church

31 October 1999

Preamble

1. The doctrine of justification was of central importance for the Lutheran Reformation of the sixteenth century. It was held to be the "first and chief article"[1] and at the same time the "ruler and judge over all other Christian doctrines."[2] The doctrine of justification was particularly asserted and defended in its Reformation shape and special valuation over against the Roman Catholic Church and theology of that time, which in turn asserted and defended a doctrine of justification of a different character. From the Reformation perspective, justification was the crux of all the disputes. Doctrinal condemnations were put forward both in the Lutheran Confessions[3] and by the Roman Catholic Church's Council of Trent. These condemnations are still valid today and thus have a church-dividing effect.

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[1] The Smalcald Articles, II,1; Book of Concord, 292.

[2] "Rector et judex super omnia genera doctrinarum" – Weimar Edition of *Luther's Works* (WA), 39,I,205.

[3] It should be noted that some Lutheran churches include only the Augsburg Confession and Luther's Small Catechism among their binding confessions. These texts contain no condemnations about justification in relation to the Roman Catholic Church.

2. For the Lutheran tradition, the doctrine of justification has retained its special status. Consequently it has also from the beginning occupied an important place in the official Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue.

3. Special attention should be drawn to the following reports: "The Gospel and the Church" (1972)[4] and "Church and Justification" (1994)[5] by the Lutheran-Roman Catholic Joint Commission, "Justification by Faith" (1983)[6] of the Lutheran–Roman Catholic dialogue in the United States and "The Condemnations of the Reformation Era—Do They Still Divide?" (1986)[7] by the Ecumenical Working Group of Protestant and Catholic theologians in Germany. Some of these dialogue reports have been officially received by the churches. An important example of such reception is the binding response of the United Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Germany to the "Condemnations" study, made in 1994 at the highest possible level of ecclesiastical recognition together with the other churches of the Evangelical Church in Germany.[8]

4. In their discussion of the doctrine of justification, all the dialogue reports as well as the responses show a high degree of agreement in their approaches and conclusions. The time has therefore come to take stock and to summarize the results of the dialogues on justification so that our churches may be informed about the overall results of this dialogue with the necessary accuracy and brevity, and thereby be enabled to make binding decisions.

5. The present *Joint Declaration* has this intention: namely, to show that on the basis of their dialogue the subscribing Lutheran churches and the Roman Catholic Church[9] are now able to articulate a common

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[4] Report of the Joint Lutheran-Roman Catholic Study Commission, published in *Growth in Agreement* (New York and Geneva, 1984), pp. 168-89.

[5] Published by the Lutheran World Federation (Geneva, 1994).

[6] *Lutheran and Catholics in Dialogue*, VII (Minneapolis, 1985).

[7] Minneapolis, 1990.

[8] "Gemeinsame Stellungnahme der Arnoldshainer Konferenz, der Vereinigten Kirche und des Deutschen Nationalkomitees des Lutherischen Weltbundes zum Dokument 'Lehrverurteilungen – kirchentrennend?' " *Ökumenische Rundschau* 44 (1995): 99-102. See also the position papers that underlie this resolution, in *Lehrverurteilungen im Gespräch, Die ersten offiziellen Stellungnahmen aus den evangelischen Kirchen in Deutschland* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993).

[9] The word "church" is used in this *Declaration* to reflect the self-understandings of the participating churches, without intending to resolve all the ecclesiological issues related to this term.

understanding of our justification by God's grace through faith in Christ. It does not cover all that either church teaches about justification; it does encompass a consensus on basic truths of the doctrine of justification and shows that the remaining differences in its explication are no longer the occasion for doctrinal condemnations.

6. Our *Declaration* is not a new, independent presentation alongside the dialogue reports and documents to date, let alone a replacement of them. Rather, as the appendix of Sources shows, it makes repeated reference to them and their arguments.

7. Like the dialogues themselves, this *Joint Declaration* rests on the conviction that in overcoming the earlier controversial questions and doctrinal condemnations, the churches neither take the condemnations lightly nor do they disavow their own past. On the contrary, this *Declaration* is shaped by the conviction that in their respective histories our churches have come to new insights. Developments have taken place that not only make possible but also require the churches to examine the divisive questions and condemnations and see them in a new light.

1. Biblical Message of Justification

8. Our common way of listening to the word of God in Scripture has led to such new insights. Together we hear the gospel that "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life" (Jn 3:16). This good news is set forth in Holy Scripture in various ways. In the Old Testament we listen to God's word about human sinfulness (Ps 51:1-5; Dan 9:5f; Eccl/Qo 8:9f; Ezra 9:6f) and human disobedience (Gen 3:1-19; Neh 9:16f,26) as well as of God's "righteousness" (Isa 46:13; 51:5-8; 56:1 [cf. 53:11]; Jer 9:24) and "judgment" (Eccl/Qo 12:14; Ps 9:5f; 76:7-9).

9. In the New Testament diverse treatments of "righteousness" and "justification" are found in the writings of Matthew (5:10; 6:33; 21:32), John (16:8-11), Hebrews (5:3; 10:37f), and James (2:14-26).[10] In Paul's

[10] Cf. "Malta Report," paras. 26-30; "Justification by Faith," paras. 122-47. At the request of the US dialogue on justification, the non-Pauline New Testament texts were addressed in *Righteousness in the New Testament*, by John Reumann, with responses by Joseph A. Fitzmyer and Jerome D. Quinn (Philadelphia and New York, 1982), pp. 124-80. The results of this study were summarized in the dialogue report "Justification by Faith" in paras. 139-42.

letters also, the gift of salvation is described in various ways, among others: "for freedom Christ has set us free" (Gal 5:1-13; cf. Rom 6:7), "reconciled to God" (2 Cor 5:18-21; cf. Rom 5:11), "peace with God" (Rom 5:1), "new creation" (2 Cor 5:17), "alive to God in Christ Jesus" (Rom 6:11, 23), and "sanctified in Christ Jesus" (cf. 1 Cor 1:2, 30; 2 Cor 1:1). Chief among these is the "justification" of sinful human beings by God's grace through faith (Rom 3:23-25), which came into particular prominence in the Reformation period.

10. Paul sets forth the gospel as the power of God for salvation of the person who has fallen under the power of sin, as the message that proclaims that "the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith" (Rom 1:16f) and that grants "justification" (Rom 3:21-31). He proclaims Christ as "our righteousness" (1 Cor 1:30), applying to the risen Lord what Jeremiah proclaimed about God himself (Jer 23:6). In Christ's death and resurrection all dimensions of his saving work have their roots for he is "our Lord, who was put to death for our trespasses and raised for our justification" (Rom 4:25). All human beings are in need of God's righteousness, "since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23; cf. Rom 1:18-3:20; 11:32; Gal 3:22). In Galatians (3:6) and Romans (4:3-9), Paul understands Abraham's faith (Gen 15:6) as faith in the God who justifies the sinner (Rom 4:5) and calls upon the testimony of the Old Testament to undergird his gospel that this righteousness will be reckoned to all who, like Abraham, trust in God's promise. "For the righteous will live by faith" (Hab 2:4; cf. Gal 3:11; Rom 1:17). In Paul's letters, God's righteousness is also God's power for those who have faith (Rom 1:16f; 2 Cor 5:21). In Christ he makes it our righteousness (2 Cor 5:21). Justification becomes ours through Christ Jesus "whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement by his blood, effective through faith" (Rom 3:25; see 3:21-28). "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God—not the result of works" (Eph 2:8f).

11. Justification is the forgiveness of sins (cf. Rom 3:23-25; Acts 13:39; Lk 18:14), liberation from the dominating power of sin and death (Rom 5:12-21) and from the curse of the law (Gal 3:10-14). It is acceptance into communion with God--already now, but then fully in God's coming kingdom (Rom 5:1f). It unites with Christ and with his death and resurrection (Rom 6:5). It occurs in the reception of the Holy Spirit in baptism and incorporation into the one body (Rom 8:1f, 9f; 1 Cor 12:12f). All this is from God alone, for Christ's sake, by grace, through faith in "the gospel of God's Son" (Rom 1:1-3).

12. The justified live by faith that comes from the Word of Christ (Rom 10:17) and is active through love (Gal 5:6), the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22f). But since the justified are assailed from within and without by powers and desires (Rom 8:35-39; Gal 5:16-21) and fall into sin (1 Jn 1:8, 10), they must constantly hear God's promises anew, confess their sins (1 Jn 1:9), participate in Christ's body and blood, and be exhorted to live righteously in accord with the will of God. That is why the Apostle says to the justified: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure" (Phil 2:12f). But the good news remains: "there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom 8:1), and in whom Christ lives (Gal 2:20). Christ's "act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all" (Rom 5:18).

2. The Doctrine of Justification as Ecumenical Problem

13. Opposing interpretations and applications of the biblical message of justification were a principal cause of the division of the Western church in the sixteenth century and led as well to doctrinal condemnations. A common understanding of justification is therefore fundamental and indispensable to overcoming that division. By appropriating insights of recent biblical studies and drawing on modern investigations of the history of theology and dogma, the post-Vatican II ecumenical dialogue has led to a notable convergence concerning justification, with the result that this *Joint Declaration* is able to formulate a consensus on basic truths concerning the doctrine of justification. In light of this consensus, the corresponding doctrinal condemnations of the sixteenth century do not apply to today's partner.

3. The Common Understanding of Justification

14. The Lutheran churches and the Roman Catholic Church have together listened to the good news proclaimed in Holy Scripture. This common listening, together with the theological conversations of recent years, has led to a shared understanding of justification. This encompasses a consensus in the basic truths; the differing explications in particular statements are compatible with it.

15. In faith we together hold the conviction that justification is the work of the triune God. The Father sent his Son into the world to save sinners.

The foundation and presupposition of justification is the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Christ. Justification thus means that Christ himself is our righteousness, in which we share through the Holy Spirit in accord with the will of the Father. Together we confess: By grace alone, in faith in Christ's saving work and not because of any merit on our part, we are accepted by God and receive the Holy Spirit, who renews our hearts while equipping and calling us to good works.[11]

16. All people are called by God to salvation in Christ. Through Christ alone are we justified, when we receive this salvation in faith. Faith is itself God's gift through the Holy Spirit who works through Word and Sacrament in the community of believers and who, at the same time, leads believers into that renewal of life which God will bring to completion in eternal life.

17. We also share the conviction that the message of justification directs us in a special way towards the heart of the New Testament witness to God's saving action in Christ: it tells us that because we aer sinners our new life is solely due to the forgiving and renewing mercy that God imparts as a gift and we receive in faith, and never can merit in any way.

18. Therefore the doctrine of justification, which takes up this message and explicates it, is more than just one part of Christian doctrine. It stands in an essential relation to all truths of faith, which are to be seen as internally related to each other. It is an indispensable criterion that constantly serves to orient all the teaching and practice of our churches to Christ. When Lutherans emphasize the unique significance of this criterion, they do not deny the interrelation and significance of all truths of faith. When Catholics see themselves as bound by several criteria, they do not deny the special function of the message of justification. Lutherans and Catholics share the goal of confessing Christ in all things, who alone is to be trusted above all things as the one Mediator (1 Tim 2:5f) through whom God in the Holy Spirit gives himself and pours out his renewing gifts. (See Sources for section 3.)

[11] "All Under One Christ," para. 14, in *Growth in Agreement*, 241-47.

4. Explicating the Common Understanding of Justification

4.1. Human Powerlessness and Sin in Relation to Justification

19. We confess together that all persons depend completely on the saving grace of God for their salvation. The freedom they possess in relation to persons and the things of this world is no freedom in relation to salvation, for as sinners they stand under God's judgment and are incapable of turning by themselves to God to seek deliverance, of meriting their justification before God, or of attaining salvation by their own abilities. Justification takes place solely by God's grace. Because Catholics and Lutherans confess this together, it is true that:

20. When Catholics say that persons "cooperate" in preparing for and accepting justification by consenting to God's justifying action, they see such personal consent as itself an effect of grace, not as an action arising from innate human abilities.

21. According to Lutheran teaching, human beings are incapable of cooperating in their salvation because as sinners they actively oppose God and his saving action. Lutherans do not deny that a person can reject the working of grace. When they emphasize that a person can only receive (mere passive) justification, they mean thereby to exclude any possibility of contributing to one's own justification, but do not deny that believers are fully involved personally in their faith, which is effected by God's Word. (See Sources for 4.1.)

4.2. Justification as Forgiveness of Sins and Making Righteous

22. We confess together that God forgives sin by grace and at the same time frees human beings from sin's enslaving power and imparts the gift of new life in Christ. When persons come by faith to share in Christ, God no longer imputes to them their sin and through the Holy Spirit effects in them an active love. These two aspects of God's gracious action are not to be separated, for persons are by faith united with Christ, who in his person is our righteousness (1 Cor 1:30): both the forgiveness of sin and the saving presence of God himself. Because Catholics and Lutherans confess this together, it is true to say that:

23. When Lutherans emphasize that the righteousness of Christ is our righteousness, their intention is above all to insist that the sinner is granted righteousness before God in Christ through the declaration of forgiveness and that only in union with Christ is one's life renewed. When they stress that God's grace is forgiving love ("the favor of God"),[12] they do not thereby deny the renewal of the Christian's life. They intend rather to express that justification remains free from human cooperation and is not dependent on the life-renewing effects of grace in human beings.

24. When Catholics emphasize the renewal of the interior person through the reception of grace imparted as a gift to the believer,[13] they wish to insist that God's forgiving grace always brings with it a gift of new life, which in the Holy Spirit becomes effective in active love. They do not thereby deny that God's gift of grace in justification remains independent of human cooperation. (See Sources for section 4.2.)

4.3. Justification by Faith and through Grace

25. We confess together that sinners are justified by faith in the saving action of God in Christ. By the action of the Holy Spirit in baptism, they are granted the gift of salvation, which lays the basis for the whole Christian life. They place their trust in God's gracious promise by justifying faith, which includes hope in God and love for him. Such a faith is active in love and thus the Christian cannot and should not remain without works. But whatever in the justified precedes or follows the free gift of faith is neither the basis of justification nor merits it.

26. According to Lutheran understanding, God justifies sinners in faith alone (*sola fide*). In faith they place their trust wholly in their Creator and Redeemer and thus live in communion with him. God himself effects faith as he brings forth such trust by his creative word. Because God's act is a new creation, it affects all dimensions of the person and leads to a life in hope and love. In the doctrine of "justification by faith alone," a distinction but not a separation is made between justification itself and the renewal of one's way of life that necessarily follows from justification and without which faith does not exist. Thereby the basis is indicated from which the renewal of life proceeds, for it comes forth

[12] Cf. WA 8:106; American Edition 32:227.

[13] Cf. Denzinger-Schönmetzer, *Enchiridion symbolorum* … (hereafter DS) 1528.

from the love of God imparted to the person in justification. Justification and renewal are joined in Christ, who is present in faith.

27. The Catholic understanding also sees faith as fundamental in justification. For without faith, no justification can take place. Persons are justified through baptism as hearers of the word and believers in it. The justification of sinners is forgiveness of sins and being made righteous by justifying grace, which makes us children of God. In justification the righteous receive from Christ faith, hope, and love and are thereby taken into communion with him.[14] This new personal relation to God is grounded totally on God's graciousness and remains constantly dependent on the salvific and creative working of this gracious God, who remains true to himself, so that one can rely upon him. Thus justifying grace never becomes a human possession to which one could appeal over against God. While Catholic teaching emphasizes the renewal of life by justifying grace, this renewal in faith, hope, and love is always dependent on God's unfathomable grace and contributes nothing to justification about which one could boast before God (Rom 3:27). (See Sources for section 4.3.)

4.4. The Justified as Sinner

28. We confess together that in baptism the Holy Spirit unites one with Christ, justifies, and truly renews the person. But the justified must all through life constantly look to God's unconditional justifying grace. They also are continuously exposed to the power of sin still pressing its attacks (cf. Rom 6:12-14) and are not exempt from a lifelong struggle against the contradiction to God within the selfish desires of the old Adam (see Gal 5:16; Rom 7:7-10). The justified also must ask God daily for forgiveness as in the Lord's Prayer (Mt. 6:12; 1 Jn 1:9), are ever again called to conversion and penance, and are ever again granted forgiveness.

29. Lutherans understand this condition of the Christian as a being "at the same time righteous and sinner." Believers are totally righteous, in that God forgives their sins through Word and Sacrament and grants the righteousness of Christ which they appropriate in faith. In Christ, they are made just before God. Looking at themselves through the law, however, they recognize that they remain also totally sinners. Sin

[14] Cf. DS 1530.

still lives in them (1 Jn 1:8; Rom 7:17, 20), for they repeatedly turn to false gods and do not love God with that undivided love which God requires as their Creator (Deut 6:5; Mt 22:36-40 par.). This contradiction to God is as such truly sin. Nevertheless, the enslaving power of sin is broken on the basis of the merit of Christ. It no longer is a sin that "rules" the Christian for it is itself "ruled" by Christ with whom the justified are bound in faith. In this life, then, Christians can in part lead a just life. Despite sin, the Christian is no longer separated from God because in the daily return to baptism the person who has been born anew by baptism and the Holy Spirit has this sin forgiven. Thus this sin no longer brings damnation and eternal death.[15] Thus, when Lutherans say that justified persons are also sinners and that their opposition to God is truly sin, they do not deny that, despite this sin, they are not separated from God and that this sin is a "ruled" sin. In these affirmations, they are in agreement with Roman Catholics, despite the difference in understanding sin in the justified.

30. Catholics hold that the grace of Jesus Christ imparted in baptism takes away all that is sin "in the proper sense" and that is "worthy of damnation" (Rom 8:1).[16] There does, however, remain in the person an inclination (concupiscence) that comes from sin and presses toward sin. Since, according to Catholic conviction, human sins always involve a personal element and since this element is lacking in this inclination, Catholics do not see this inclination as sin in an authentic sense. They do not thereby deny that this inclination does not correspond to God's original design for humanity and that it is objectively in contradiction to God and remains one's enemy in lifelong struggle. Grateful for deliverance by Christ, they underscore that this inclination in contradiction to God does not merit the punishment of eternal death[17] and does not separate the justified person from God. But when individuals voluntarily separate themselves from God, it is not enough to return to observing the commandments, for they must receive pardon and peace in the Sacrament of Reconciliation through the word of forgiveness imparted to them in virtue of God's reconciling work in Christ. (See Sources for section 4.4.)

[15] Cf. Apology II, 38-45; Book of Concord, 105f.
[16] Cf. DS 1515.
[17] Cf. DS 1515.

4.5. Law and Gospel

31. We confess together that persons are justified by faith in the gospel "apart from works prescribed by the law" (Rom 3:28). Christ has fulfilled the law and by his death and resurrection has overcome it as a way to salvation. We also confess that God's commandments retain their validity for the justified and that Christ has by his teaching and example expressed God's will, which is a standard for the conduct of the justified also.

32. Lutherans state that the distinction and right ordering of law and gospel are essential for the understanding of justification. In its theological use, the law is demand and accusation. Throughout their lives, all persons, Christians also, in that they are sinners, stand under this accusation which uncovers their sin so that, in faith in the gospel, they will turn unreservedly to the mercy of God in Christ, which alone justifies them.

33. Because the law as a way to salvation has been fulfilled and overcome through the gospel, Catholics can say that Christ is not a lawgiver in the manner of Moses. When Catholics emphasize that the righteous are bound to observe God's commandments, they do not thereby deny that through Jesus Christ God has mercifully promised to his children the grace of eternal life.[18] (See Sources for section 4.5.)

4.6. Assurance of Salvation

34. We confess together that the faithful can rely on the mercy and promises of God. In spite of their own weakness and the manifold threats to their faith, on the strength of Christ's death and resurrection they can build on the effective promise of God's grace in Word and Sacrament and so be sure of this grace.

35. This was emphasized in a particular way by the Reformers: in the midst of temptation, believers should not look to themselves but look solely to Christ and trust only him. In trust in God's promise they are assured of their salvation, but are never secure looking at themselves.

36. Catholics can share the concern of the Reformers to ground faith in the objective reality of Christ's promise, to look away from one's own

[18] Cf. DS 1545.

experience, and to trust in Christ's forgiving word alone (cf. Mt 16:19; 18:18). With the Second Vatican Council, Catholics state: to have faith is to entrust oneself totally to God,[19] who liberates us from the darkness of sin and death and awakens us to eternal life.[20] In this sense, one cannot believe in God and at the same time consider the divine promise untrustworthy. No one may doubt God's mercy and Christ's merit. Every person, however, may be concerned about his salvation when he looks upon his own weaknesses and shortcomings. Recognizing his own failures, however, the believer may yet be certain that God intends his salvation. (See Sources for section 4.6.)

4.7. The Good Works of the Justified

37. We confess together that good works—a Christian life lived in faith, hope and love—follow justification and are its fruits. When the justified live in Christ and act in the grace they receive, they bring forth, in biblical terms, good fruit. Since Christians struggle against sin their entire lives, this consequence of justification is also for them an obligation they must fulfill. Thus both Jesus and the apostolic Scriptures admonish Christians to bring forth the works of love.

38. According to Catholic understanding, good works, made possible by grace and the working of the Holy Spirit, contribute to growth in grace, so that the righteousness that comes from God is preserved and communion with Christ is deepened. When Catholics affirm the "meritorious" character of good works, they wish to say that, according to the biblical witness, a reward in heaven is promised to these works. Their intention is to emphasize the responsibility of persons for their actions, not to contest the character of those works as gifts, or far less to deny that justification always remains the unmerited gift of grace.

39. The concept of a preservation of grace and a growth in grace and faith is also held by Lutherans. They do emphasize that righteousness as acceptance by God and sharing in the righteousness of Christ is always complete. At the same time, they state that there can be growth in its effects in Christian living. When they view the good works of Christians as the fruits and signs of justification and not as one's own

[19] Cf. *Dei Verbum* (Vatican II) (hereafter *DV*) 5.
[20] Cf. *DV* 5.

"merits," they nevertheless also understand eternal life in accord with the New Testament as unmerited "reward" in the sense of the fulfillment of God's promise to the believer. (See Sources for section 4.7.)

5. The Significance and Scope of the Consensus Reached

40. The understanding of the doctrine of justification set forth in this *Declaration* shows that a consensus in basic truths of the doctrine of justification exists between Lutherans and Catholics. In light of this consensus the remaining differences of language, theological elaboration, and emphasis in the understanding of justification described in paras. 18 to 39 are acceptable. Therefore the Lutheran and the Catholic explications of justification are in their difference open to one another and do not destroy the consensus regarding the basic truths.

41. Thus the doctrinal condemnations of the sixteenth century, in so far as they relate to the doctrine of justification, appear in a new light: The teaching of the Lutheran churches presented in this *Declaration* does not fall under the condemnations of the Council of Trent. The condemnations in the Lutheran Confessions do not apply to the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church presented in this *Declaration*.

42. Nothing is thereby taken away from the seriousness of the condemnations related to the doctrine of justification. Some were not simply pointless. They remain for us "salutary warnings" to which we must attend in our teaching and practice.[21]

43. Our consensus in basic truths of the doctrine of justification must come to influence the life and teachings of our churches. Here it must prove itself. In this respect, questions of varying importance still need further clarification. These include, among other topics, the relationship between the Word of God and church doctrine, as well as ecclesiology, ecclesial authority, church unity, ministry, the sacraments, and the relation between justification and social ethics. We are convinced that the consensus we have reached offers a solid basis for this clarification. The Lutheran churches and the Roman Catholic Church will continue to strive together to deepen this common understanding of justification and to make it bear fruit in the life and teaching of the churches.

[21] "Condemnations of the Reformation Era," 27.

44. We give thanks to the Lord for this decisive step forward on the way to overcoming the division of the church. We ask the Holy Spirit to lead us further toward that visible unity which is Christ's will.

Sources for the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*

In parts 3 and 4 of the *Joint Declaration* formulations from different Lutheran-Catholic dialogues are referred to. They include the following documents:

- "All under One Christ." Statement on the Augsburg Confession by the Roman Catholic/Lutheran Joint Commission, 1980. In *Growth in Agreement*. Edited by Harding Meyer and Lukas Vischer. New York/ Ramsey, N.J., Geneva, 1984, 241-47.
- Denzinger-Schönmetzer, *Enchiridion symbolorum* ..., 32nd to 36th edition (hereafter DS).
- Denzinger-Hünermann. *Enchiridion symbolorum* ..., since the 37th edition (hereafter DH).
- "Evaluation of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity of the Study 'Lehrverurteilungen—kirchentrennend?' " Vatican, 1992, unpublished document (hereafter PCPCU).
- "Justification by Faith." In *Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue,* VII. Minneapolis, 1985 (hereafter USA).
- "Position Paper of the Joint Committee of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Germany and the LWF German National Committee regarding the document 'The Condemnations of the Reformation Era. Do They Still Divide?' " In *Lehrverurteilungen im Gespräch*. Göttingen, 1993 (hereafter VELKD).
- "The Condemnations of the Reformation Era. Do they Still Divide?" Edited by Karl Lehmann and Wolfhart Pannenberg. Minneapolis, 1990 (hereafter LV:E).

For 3: The Common Understanding of Justification (paras. 17 and 18) (LV:E 68f; VELKD 95)

- "... a faith-centered and forensically conceived picture of justification is of major importance for Paul and, in a sense, for the Bible as a whole, although it is by no means the only biblical or Pauline way of representing God's saving work" (USA, no. 146).
- "Catholics as well as Lutherans can acknowledge the need to test the practices, structures, and theologies of the church by the extent to which they help or hinder 'the proclamation of God's free and merciful

promises in Christ Jesus, which can be rightly received only through faith' (para. 28)" (USA, no. 153).

Regarding the "fundamental affirmation" (USA, no. 157; cf. 4) it is said:

- "This affirmation, like the Reformation doctrine of justification by faith alone, serves as a criterion for judging all church practices, structures, and traditions precisely because its counterpart is 'Christ alone' (*solus Christus*). He alone is to be ultimately trusted as the one Mediator through whom God in the Holy Spirit pours out his saving gifts. All of us in this dialogue affirm that all Christian teachings, practices, and offices should so function as to foster 'the obedience of faith' (Rom. 1:5) in God's saving action in Christ Jesus alone through the Holy Spirit, for the salvation of the faithful and the praise and honor of the heavenly Father" (USA, no. 160).
- "For that reason, the doctrine of justification—and, above all, its biblical foundation—will always retain a special function in the church. That function is continually to remind Christians that we sinners live solely from the forgiving love of God, which we merely allow to be bestowed on us, but which we in no way—in however modified a form—'earn' or are able to tie down to any preconditions or postconditions. The doctrine of justification therefore becomes the touchstone for testing at all times whether a particular interpretation of our relationship to God can claim the name of 'Christian.' At the same time, it becomes the touchstone for the church, for testing at all times whether its proclamation and its praxis correspond to what has been given to it by its Lord" (LV:E 69).
- "An agreement on the fact that the doctrine of justification is significant not only as one doctrinal component within the whole of our church's teaching, but also as the touchstone for testing the whole doctrine and practice of our churches, is—from a Lutheran point of view—fundamental progress in the ecumenical dialogue between our churches. It cannot be welcomed enough" (VELKD 95, 20-26; cf. 157).
- "For Lutherans and Catholics, the doctrine of justification has a different status in the hierarchy of truth; but both sides agree that the doctrine of justification has its specific function in the fact that it is 'the touchstone for testing at all times whether a particular interpretation of our relationship to God can claim the name of "Christian." At the same time it becomes the touchstone for the church, for testing at all times whether its proclamation and its praxis correspond to what has been given to it by its Lord' (LV:E 69). The criteriological significance of the doctrine of justification for sacramentology, ecclesiology and ethical teachings still deserves to be studied further" (PCPCU 96).

For 4.1: Human Powerlessness and Sin in Relation to Justification (paras. 19-21) (LV:E 42ff, 46; VELKD 77-81, 83f)

- "Those in whom sin reigns can do nothing to merit justification, which is the free gift of God's grace. Even the beginnings of justification, for example, repentance, prayer for grace, and desire for forgiveness, must be God's work in us" (USA, no. 156.3).
- "*Both* are concerned to make it clear that … human beings cannot … cast a sideways glance at their own endeavors … . But a response is not a 'work.' The response of faith is itself brought about through the uncoercible word of promise which comes to human beings from outside themselves. There can be '*co*operation' only in the sense that in faith the heart is involved, when the Word touches it and creates faith" (LV:E 46f).
- "Where, however, Lutheran teaching construes the relation of God to his human creatures in justification with such emphasis on the divine 'monergism' or the sole efficacy of Christ in such a way that the person's willing acceptance of God's grace—which is itself a gift of God—has no essential role in justification, then the Tridentine canons 4, 5, 6 and 9 still constitute a notable doctrinal difference on justification" (PCPCU 22).
- "The strict emphasis on the passivity of human beings concerning their justification never meant, on the Lutheran side, to contest the full personal participation in believing; rather it meant to exclude any cooperation in the event of justification itself. Justification is the work of Christ alone, the work of grace alone" (VELKD 84, 3-8).

For 4.2: Justification as Forgiveness of Sins and Making Righteous (paras. 22-24) (USA, nos. 98-101; LV:E 47ff; VELKD 84ff; cf. also the quotations for 4.3)

- "By justification we are both declared and made righteous. Justification, therefore, is not a legal fiction. God, in justifying, effects what he promises; he forgives sin and makes us truly righteous" (USA, no. 156, 5).
- "Protestant theology does not overlook what Catholic doctrine stresses: the creative and renewing character of God's love; nor does it maintain … God's impotence toward a sin which is 'merely' forgiven in justification but which is not truly abolished in its power to divide the sinner from God" (LV:E 49).
- "The Lutheran doctrine has never understood the 'crediting of Christ's justification' as without effect on the life of the faithful, because Christ's word achieves what it promises. Accordingly the Lutheran doctrine understands grace as God's favor, but nevertheless as effective power … 'for where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation' " (VELKD 86,15-23).

- "Catholic doctrine does not overlook what Protestant theology stresses: the personal character of grace, and its link with the Word; nor does it maintain ... grace as an objective 'possession' (even if a conferred possession) on the part of the human being—something over which he can dispose" (LV:E 49).

For 4.3: Justification by Faith and through Grace (paras. 25-27) (USA, nos. 105ff; LV:E 49-53; VELKD 87-90)

- "If we translate from one language to another, then Protestant talk about justification through faith corresponds to Catholic talk about justification through grace; and on the other hand, Protestant doctrine understands substantially under the one word 'faith' what Catholic doctrine (following 1 Cor. 13:13) sums up in the triad of 'faith, hope, and love' " (LV:E 52).
- "We emphasize that faith in the sense of the first commandment always means love to God and hope in him and is expressed in the love to the neighbour" (VELKD 89,8-11).
- "Catholics … teach, as do Lutherans, that nothing prior to the free gift of faith merits justification and that all of God's saving gifts come through Christ alone" (USA, no. 105).
- "The Reformers … understood faith as the forgiveness and fellowship with Christ effected by the word of promise itself. This is the ground for the new being, through which the flesh is dead to sin and the new man or woman in Christ has life (*sola fide per Christum*). But even if this faith necessarily makes the human being new, the Christian builds his confidence, not on his own new life, but solely on God's gracious promise. Acceptance in Christ is sufficient, if 'faith' is understood as 'trust in the promise' (*fides promissionis*)" (LV:E 50).
- Cf. The Council of Trent, Session 6, Chap. 7: "Consequently, in the process of justification, together with the forgiveness of sins a person receives, through Jesus Christ into whom he is grafted, all these infused at the same time: faith, hope and charity" (DH 1530).
- "According to Protestant interpretation, the faith that clings unconditionally to God's promise in Word and Sacrament is sufficient for righteousness before God, so that the renewal of the human being, without which there can be no faith, does not in itself make any contribution to justification" (LV:E 52).
- "As Lutherans we maintain the distinction between justification and sanctification, of faith and works, which however implies no separation" (VELKD 89,6-8).
- "Catholic doctrine knows itself to be at one with the Protestant concern in emphasizing that the renewal of the human being does not 'con-

tribute' to justification, and is certainly not a contribution to which he could make any appeal before God. Nevertheless it feels compelled to stress the renewal of the human being through justifying grace, for the sake of acknowledging God's newly creating power; although this renewal in faith, hope, and love is certainly nothing but a response to God's unfathomable grace" (LV:E 52f).

- "Insofar as the Catholic doctrine stresses that grace is personal and linked with the Word, that renewal ... is certainly nothing but a response effected by God's word itself, and that the renewal of the human being does not contribute to justification, and is certainly not a contribution to which a person could make any appeal before God, our objection … no longer applies" (VELKD 89,12-21).

For 4.4: The Justified as Sinner (paras. 28-30) (USA, nos. 102ff; LV:E 44ff; VELKD 81ff)

- "For however just and holy, they fall from time to time into the sins that are those of daily existence. What is more, the Spirit's action does not exempt believers from the lifelong struggle against sinful tendencies. Concupiscence and other effects of original and personal sin, according to Catholic doctrine, remain in the justified, who therefore must pray daily to God for forgiveness" (USA, no. 102).
- "The doctrines laid down at Trent and by the Reformers are at one in maintaining that original sin, and also the concupiscence that remains, are in contradiction to God … object of the lifelong struggle against sin … . [A]fter baptism, concupiscence in the person justified no longer cuts that person off from God; in Tridentine language, it is 'no longer sin in the real sense'; in Lutheran phraseology, it is *peccatum regnatum*, 'controlled sin' " (LV:E 46).
- "The question is how to speak of sin with regard to the justified without limiting the reality of salvation. While Lutherans express this tension with the term 'controlled sin' (*peccatum regnatum*) which expresses the teaching of the Christian as 'being justified and sinner at the same time' (*simul iustus et peccator*), Roman Catholics think the reality of salvation can only be maintained by denying the sinful character of concupiscence. With regard to this question a considerable rapprochement is reached if LV:E calls the concupiscence that remains in the justified a 'contradiction to God' and thus qualifies it as sin" (VELKD 82,29-39).

For 4.5: Law and Gospel (paras. 31-33)

- According to Pauline teaching this topic concerns the Jewish law as means of salvation. This law was fulfilled and overcome in Christ. This

statement and the consequences from it have to be understood on this basis.

- With reference to Canons 19f of the Council of Trent, the VELKD (89,28-36) says as follows: "The ten commandments of course apply to Christians as stated in many places of the confessions… . If Canon 20 stresses that a person … is bound to keep the commandments of God, this canon does not strike to us; if, however, Canon 20 affirms that faith has salvific power only on condition of keeping the commandments this applies to us. Concerning the reference of the Canon regarding the commandments of the church, there is no difference between us if these commandments are only expressions of the commandments of God; otherwise it would apply to us."
- The last paragraph is related factually to 4.3, but emphasizes the "convicting function" of the law which is important to Lutheran thinking.

For 4.6: Assurance of Salvation (paras. 34-36) (LV:E 53-56; VELKD 90ff)

- "The question is: How can, and how may, human beings live before God in spite of their weakness, and with that weakness?" (LV:E 53).
- "The foundation and the point of departure [of the Reformers is] … the reliability and sufficiency of God's promise, and the power of Christ's death and resurrection; human weakness, and the threat to faith and salvation which that involves" (LV:E 56).
- The Council of Trent also emphasizes that "it is necessary to believe that sins are not forgiven, nor have they ever been forgiven, save freely by the divine mercy on account of Christ"; and that we must not doubt "the mercy of God, the merit of Christ and the power and efficacy of the sacraments; so it is possible for anyone, while he regards himself and his own weakness and lack of dispositions, to be anxious and fearful about his own state of grace" (Council of Trent, Session 6, chapter 9, DH 1534).
- "Luther and his followers go a step farther. They urge that the uncertainty should not merely be endured. We should avert our eyes from it and take seriously, practically, and personally the objective efficacy of the absolution pronounced in the sacrament of penance, which comes 'from outside.' … Since Jesus said, 'Whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven' (Matt. 16:19), the believer … would declare Christ to be a liar … if he did not rely with a rock-like assurance on the forgiveness of God uttered in the absolution … . This reliance can itself be subjectively uncertain—that the assurance of forgiveness is not a security of forgiveness (*securitas*); but this must not be turned into yet another problem, so to speak: the believer should turn his eyes away from it, and should look only to Christ's word of forgiveness" (LV:E 53f).

- "Today Catholics can appreciate the Reformers' efforts to ground faith in the objective reality of Christ's promise, 'whatsoever you loose on earth …' and to focus believers on the specific word of absolution from sins … . Luther's original concern to teach people to look away from their experience, and to rely on Christ alone and his word of forgiveness [is not to be condemned]" (PCPCU 24).
- A mutual condemnation regarding the understanding of the assurance of salvation "can even less provide grounds for mutual objection today—particularly if we start from the foundation of a biblically renewed concept of faith. For a person can certainly lose or renounce faith, and self-commitment to God and his word of promise. But if he believes in this sense, he *cannot at the same time* believe that God is unreliable in his word of promise. In this sense it is true today also that—in Luther's words—faith *is* the assurance of salvation" (LV:E 56).
- With reference to the concept of faith of Vatican II, see Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, no. 5: " 'The obedience of faith' … must be given to God who reveals, an obedience by which man entrusts his whole self freely to God, offering 'the full submission of intellect and will to God who reveals,' and freely assenting to the truth revealed by Him."
- "The Lutheran distinction between the certitude (*certitudo*) of faith, which looks alone to Christ and earthly security (*securitas*), which is based on the human being, has not been dealt with clearly enough in the LV. The question whether a Christian "has believed fully and completely" (LV:E 53) does not arise for the Lutheran understanding, since faith never reflects on itself, but depends completely on God, whose grace is bestowed through word and sacrament, thus from outside (*extra nos*)" (VELKD 92,2-9).

For 4.7: The Good Works of the Justified (paras. 37-39) (LV:E 66ff; VELKD 90ff)

- "But the Council excludes the possibility of earning *grace*—that is, justification—(can. 2: DS 1552) and bases the earning or merit of *eternal life* on the gift of grace itself, through membership in Christ (can. 32: DS 1582). Good works are 'merits' as a *gift*. Although the Reformers attack 'Godless trust' in one's own works, the Council explicitly excludes any notion of a claim or any false security (cap. 16: DS 1548f). It is evident ... that the Council wishes to establish a link with Augustine, who introduced the concept of merit, in order to express the responsibility of human beings, in spite of the 'bestowed' character of good works" (LV:E 66).

- If we understand the language of "cause" in Canon 24 in more personal terms, as it is done in chapter 16 of the Decree on Justification, where the idea of communion with Christ is foundational, then we can describe the Catholic doctrine on merit as it is done in the first sentence of the second paragraph of 4.7: growth in grace, perseverance in righteousness received from God and a deeper communion with Christ.
- "Many antitheses could be overcome if the misleading word 'merit' were simply to be viewed and thought about in connection with the true sense of the biblical term 'wage' or reward" (LV:E 67).
- "The Lutheran confessions stress that the justified person is responsible not to lose the grace received but to live in it … . Thus the confessions can speak of a preservation of grace and a growth in it. If righteousness in Canon 24 is understood in the sense that it affects human beings, then it does not strike us. But if 'righteousness' in Canon 24 refers to the Christian's acceptance by God, it does strikes us; for this righteousness is always perfect; compared with it the works of Christians are only 'fruits' and 'signs' " (VELKD 94,2-14).
- "Concerning Canon 26, we refer to the Apology, where eternal life is described as reward: '… We grant that eternal life is a reward because it is something that is owed—not because of our merits but because of the promise' " (VELKD 94,20-24).

Official Common Statement

by the Lutheran World Federation and the Catholic Church

1. On the basis of the agreements reached in the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JD)*, the Lutheran World Federation and the Catholic Church declare together: "The understanding of the doctrine of justification set forth in this *Declaration* shows that a consensus in basic truths of the doctrine of justification exists between Lutherans and Catholics" (*JD* no. 40). On the basis of this consensus the Lutheran World Federation and the Catholic Church declare together: "The teaching of the Lutheran Churches presented in the *Declaration* does not fall under the condemnations from the Council of Trent. The condemnations in the Lutheran Confessions do not apply to the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church presented in this Declaration" (*JD* no. 41).

2. With reference to the Resolution on the Joint Declaration by the Council of the Lutheran World Federation of 16 June 1998 and the response to the Joint Declaration by the Catholic Church of 25 June 1998 and to the questions raised by both of them, the annexed statement (called "Annex") further substantiates the consensus reached in the *Joint Declaration*; thus it becomes clear that the earlier mutual doctrinal condemnations do not apply to the teaching of the dialogue partners as presented in the *Joint Declaration*.

3. The two partners in dialogue are committed to continued and deepened study of the biblical foundations of the doctrine of justification. They will also seek further common understanding of the doctrine of justification, also beyond what is dealt with in the *Joint Declaration* and the annexed substantiating statement. Based on the consensus reached, continued dialogue is required specifically on the issues mentioned especially in the *Joint Declaration* itself (*JD* no. 43) as requiring further clarification in order to reach full church communion, a unity in diversity, in which remaining differences would be "reconciled" and no longer have a divisive force. Lutherans and Catholics will continue

their efforts ecumenically in their common witness to interpret the message of justification in language relevant for human beings today, and with reference both to individual and social concerns of our times.

By this act of signing
The Catholic Church and The Lutheran World Federation
confirm
the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification
in its entirety

Annex to the Official Common Statement

1. The following elucidations underline the consensus reached in the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JD)* regarding basic truths of justification; thus it becomes clear that the mutual condemnations of former times do not apply to the Catholic and Lutheran doctrines of justification as they are presented in the *Joint Declaration*.

2. "Together we confess: By grace alone, in faith in Christ's saving work and not because of any merit on our part, we are accepted by God and receive the Holy Spirit, who renews our hearts while equipping and calling us to good works" (*JD* no. 15).

   A "We confess together that God forgives sin by grace and at the same time frees human beings from sin's enslaving power …" (*JD* no. 22). Justification is forgiveness of sins and being made righteous, through which God "imparts the gift of new life in Christ" (*JD* no. 22). "Since we are justified by faith we have peace with God" (Rom 5:1). We are "called children of God; and that is what we are" (1 Jn 3:1). We are truly and inwardly renewed by the action of the Holy Spirit, remaining always dependent on his work in us. "So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!" (2 Cor 5:17). The justified do not remain sinners in this sense. Yet we would be wrong were we to say that we are without sin (1 Jn 1:8-10, cf. *JD* no. 28). "(A)ll of us make many mistakes" (Jas 3:2). "Who is aware of his unwitting sins? Cleanse me of many secret faults" (Ps. 19:12). And when we pray, we can only say, like the tax collector, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner" (Lk 18:13). This is expressed in a variety of ways in our liturgies. Together we hear the exhortation "Therefore, do not let sin exercise dominion in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions" (Rom 6:12). This recalls to us the persisting danger that comes from the power of sin and its action in Christians. To this extent, Lutherans and Catholics can together understand the Christian as *simul justus et peccator,* despite their different approaches to this subject as expressed in *JD* nos. 29-30.

B The concept of "concupiscence" is used in different senses on the Catholic and Lutheran sides. In the Lutheran Confessional writings "concupiscence" is understood as the self-seeking desire of the human being, which in light of the law, spiritually understood, is regarded as sin. In the Catholic understanding concupiscence is an inclination, remaining in human beings even after baptism, which comes from sin and presses towards sin. Despite the differences involved here, it can be recognized from a Lutheran perspective that desire can become the opening through which sin attacks. Due to the power of sin the entire human being carries the tendency to oppose God. This tendency, according to both the Lutheran and the Catholic conception, "does not correspond to God's original design for humanity" (*JD* no. 30). Sin has a personal character and, as such, leads to separation from God. It is the selfish desire of the old person and the lack of trust and love toward God. The reality of salvation in baptism and the peril from the power of sin can be expressed in such a way that, on the one hand, the forgiveness of sins and renewal of humanity in Christ by baptism are emphasised and, on the other hand, it can be seen that the justified also "are continuously exposed to the power of sin still pressing its attacks (cf. Rom 6:12-14) and are not exempt from a lifelong struggle against the contradiction to God ..." (*JD* no. 28).

C Justification takes place "by grace alone" (*JD* nos. 15 and 16), by faith alone, the person is justified "apart from works" (Rom 3:28; cf. *JD* no. 25). "Grace creates faith not only when faith begins in a person but as long as faith lasts" (Thomas Aquinas, *STh* II/II 4, 4 ad 3). The working of God's grace does not exclude human action: God effects everything, the willing and the achievement, therefore, we are called to strive (cf. Phil 2:12ff). "As soon as the Holy Spirit has initiated his work of regeneration and renewal in us through the Word and the holy sacraments, it is certain that we can and must cooperate by the power of the Holy Spirit ..." (The Formula of Concord [FC], SD II,64f; BSLK 897,37ff).

D Grace as fellowship of the justified with God in faith, hope, and love is always received from the salvific and creative work of God (cf. *JD* no. 27). But it is nevertheless the responsibility of the justified not to waste this grace but to live in it. The exhortation to do good works is the exhortation to practice the faith (cf. BSLK 197,45*).* The good works of the justified "should be done in order to confirm their call, that is, lest they fall from their call by

sinning again" (Apol. XX,13, BSLK 316,18-24; with reference to 2 Pet. 1:10. Cf. also FC SD IV,33; BSLK 948,9-23). In this sense Lutherans and Catholics can understand together what is said about the "preservation of grace" in *JD* nos. 38 and 39. Certainly, "whatever in the justified precedes or follows the free gift of faith is neither the basis of justification nor merits it" (*JD* no. 25).

E By justification we are unconditionally brought into communion with God. This includes the promise of eternal life; "(I)f we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his" (Rom 6:5; cf. Jn 3:36; Rom 8:17). In the final judgment, the justified will be judged also on their works (cf. Mt 16:27; 25:31-46; Rom 2:16; 14:12; 1 Cor 3:8; 2 Cor 5:10, etc.). We face a judgment in which God's gracious sentence will approve anything in our life and action that corresponds to his will. However, everything in our life that is wrong will be uncovered and will not enter eternal life. The Formula of Concord also states: "It is God's will and express command that believers should do good works which the Holy Spirit works in them, and God is willing to be pleased with them for Christ's sake and he promises to reward them gloriously in this and in the future life" (FC SD IV,38). Any reward is a reward of grace, on which we have no claim.

3. The doctrine of justification is that measure or touchstone for the Christian faith. No teaching may contradict this criterion. In this sense, the doctrine of justification is an "indispensable criterion that constantly serves to orient all the teaching and practice of our churches to Christ" (*JD* no. l8). As such, it has its truth and specific meaning within the overall context of the Church's fundamental Trinitarian confession of faith. We "share the goal of confessing Christ in all things, who alone is to be trusted above all things as the one Mediator (1 Tim 2:5f) through whom God in the Holy Spirit gives himself and pours out his renewing gifts" (*JD* no. 18).

4. The Response of the Catholic Church does not intend to put in question the authority of Lutheran Synods or of the Lutheran World Federation. The Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation began the dialogue and have taken it forward as partners with equal rights (*par cum pari*). Notwithstanding different conceptions of authority in the church, each partner respects the other partner's ordered process of reaching doctrinal decisions.

The World Methodist Council Statement of Association with the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification

23 July 2006

(accompanied by the Official Common Affirmation signed by Representatives of the Catholic Church, the Lutheran World Federation and the World Methodist Council)

Seoul, South Korea, 23 July 2006

1. After official approval of the Lutheran World Federation and of the Roman Catholic Church, the "Official Common Statement by the Lutheran World Federation and the Roman Catholic Church" was signed by the two partners on 31 October 1999, thereby confirming the "Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification". Articulating their common understanding of basic truths of the doctrine of justification by God's grace through faith in Christ, this substantial agreement between Roman Catholics and Lutherans expresses a far reaching consensus in regard to the theological controversy which was a major cause of the split in Western churches in the sixteenth century.

2. We, the Churches joined together in the World Methodist Council, welcome this agreement with great joy. We declare that the common understanding of justification as it is outlined in the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ 15-17) corresponds to Method-

ist doctrine. We are especially grateful for the trinitarian approach by which God's work in salvation is explained in these paragraphs:

2.1 In faith we together hold the conviction that justification is the work of the triune God. The Father sent his Son into the world to save sinners. The foundation and presupposition of justification is the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Christ. Justification thus means that Christ himself is our righteousness, in which we share through the Holy Spirit in accord with the will of the Father. Together we confess: By grace alone, in faith in Christ's saving work and not because of any merit on our part, we are accepted by God and receive the Holy Spirit, who renews our hearts while equipping and calling us to good works.

2.2 All people are called by God to salvation in Christ. Through Christ alone are we justified, when we receive this salvation in faith. Faith is itself God's gift through the Holy Spirit who works through word and sacrament in the community of believers and who, at the same time, leads believers into that renewal of life which God will bring to completion in eternal life.

2.3 We also share the conviction that the message of justification directs us in a special way towards the heart of the New Testament witness to God's saving action in Christ: it tells us that as sinners our new life is solely due to the forgiving and renewing mercy that God imparts as a gift and we receive in faith, and never can merit in any way.

3. We agree also with what Lutherans and Roman Catholics say together about some of the crucial issues in the doctrine of justification which were disputed between them since the time of Reformation (cf. JDDJ 19, 22, 25, 28, 31, 34, 37). Moreover, we accept the explanations which Lutherans and Catholics respectively give in paragraphs 20-21, 23-24, 26-27, 29-30, 32-33, 35-36, and 38-39 concerning their respective positions on these issues, and we do not consider these diverse emphases sufficient cause for division between either party and Methodists.

4. The Methodist Movement has always understood itself as deeply indebted to the biblical teaching on justification as it was understood by Luther and the other reformers and then again by the Wesleys. But it has also always embraced elements of the doctrine of justification which belong to the Catholic tradition of the early church both East and West. This gave its own doctrine of justification its distinctive profile. Set in relation

to "the remaining differences of language, theological elaboration, and emphasis" which are not reckoned to impair the "consensus in basic truths of the doctrine of justification" between Lutherans and Catholics (JDDJ 40), the Methodist teaching may be described thus:

4.1 According to John Wesley the doctrine of original sin is an essential Christian doctrine. The corruption of human nature cannot be cured by ourselves. The destructive effects of the Fall are countered by the universal availability of prevenient grace (Sermon 85, On Working Out Our Own Salvation, III.4). That people are able to respond to God's call is due only to God's prior work. According to Wesley, the grace of God "assists" but does not "force" the human response (Sermon 63, The General Spread of the Gospel, 11). By God's grace believers are commissioned and empowered to tell people that God has reconciled the world to himself and to entreat them on behalf of Jesus Christ to be reconciled to God (2 Corinthians 5:20).

4.2 The deep connection between forgiveness of sins and making righteous, between justification and sanctification, has always been crucial for the Methodist understanding of the biblical doctrine of justification. John Wesley saw in salvation a twofold action of God's grace: "By justification we are saved from the guilt of sin and restored to the favor of God; by sanctification we are saved from the power and root of sin, restored to the image of God" (Sermon 85, II.1). The redemptive acceptance into communion with God and the creative renewal of our lives are entirely the work of God's grace.

4.3 Salvation "depends on faith in order that the promise may rest on grace" (Romans 4:16) – this Pauline phrase could well be the motto of the Methodist movement. It started as a missionary movement after the Wesley brothers and their friends experienced the liberating Gospel of salvation by faith alone. It is only through God's grace that human beings are saved by faith alone. By faith we commit ourselves to the saving, redeeming, healing and renewing work of God's grace and love in our lives. Therefore genuine Christian faith is always "faith working through love" (Galatians 5:6). Neither faith nor love are the achievement of human efforts, but by God's call to faith and by the outpouring of God's love we as human beings are included in the reality of God's salvation.

4.4 In Methodist teaching, preaching, liturgy and hymnody, a theology of grace includes not only the assurance of the forgiveness of our sins but

also the promise that we are liberated from the power of sin. Methodist theology has tried to take seriously Paul's assertion: "Now that you have been freed from sin and enslaved to God, the return you get is sanctification and its end, eternal life" (Romans 6:22). This was the reason why Wesley developed the doctrine of "Christian perfection" or "entire sanctification" (cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:23), which he considered to be at the heart of Methodist teaching. This doctrine found different interpretations during the history of the Methodist movement. However, in Methodist teaching five things always remained clear:

a) "Entire sanctification" or "Christian perfection" is nothing else than "loving God with all your heart and all your soul and with all your mind" and "your neighbour as yourself" (cf. Matthew 22:37-39; 1 John 2:5).

b) "Christian perfection" is not the absolute perfection which belongs to God alone; and it "does not imply an exemption either from ignorance, or mistake, or infirmities, or temptations" (Wesley's Sermon 40, Christian Perfection, I.9).

c) Even if our whole being is filled with the love of God which has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5), this will always remain God's gift and the work of God's grace and never our human merit or achievement.

d) The hope of conquering sin should never lead us to deny or disregard the danger of backsliding and being caught by the power of sin. Thus 1 John 1:6-9 states: "If we say that we have fellowship with God while we are walking in darkness, we lie and do not do what is true; but if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

e) Those who are justified and sanctified by God's grace will struggle with temptation and sin during their whole lives. But in this struggle they are strengthened by the promise of the gospel that in Christ God has broken the power of sin. Even if "the contradiction to God within the selfish desires of the old Adam" (JDDJ 28) remains in the lives of the justified, God's

grace "reigns through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:21).

4.5 For Methodists both the law and the gospel are expressions of God's word and God's will. For guidance in the way of life and good (cf. Deuteronomy 30:15-20), God in his love gave the law, which is summarized in the commandment to love God and our neighbours. As human beings we are not able to follow this way on our own. Because we have all failed to do God's will, the law now serves to accuse and convict us of sin (cf. Romans 3:21). God saves us and gives us life through the love revealed and expressed in the life and the death of Jesus Christ. Although the law no longer has any power to condemn those who believe in Jesus Christ, it remains as summarized in the love commandment an indispensable guide to God's will.

4.6 Assurance of faith and assurance of salvation have always belonged to the core of Methodist preaching. Such assurance is not seen as the certainty of possession but as the reliability of a relationship which is founded in God's love. This relationship is lived by using the "means of grace", especially searching the Scriptures and receiving the Lord's Supper. These are outward signs, ordained by God, through which he conveys his grace to us. To be assured by the witness of the Holy Spirit that we are children of God (Romans 8:16) is the source of peace and joy in the lives of those who come to believe in Jesus Christ. In Wesleyan terminology, both "holiness" and "happiness" are gifts of God's grace.

4.7 "Faith working through love" (Galatians 5:6) is seen as the root of all good which results from the lives of those who believe in Jesus Christ. Works of piety and works of mercy are fruits of the Spirit in the lives of those who follow Jesus. Such works also help the believers to live their lives in communion with God and to be "co-workers with God" (1 Corinthians 3:7) in the field of God's mission and in ministry to the poor and to those who need the love of God most. But all such works are the work of God's grace; or, as John Wesley in his sermon on "Working Out Our Own Salvation" (Philippians 2:12) puts it: "God works, therefore you *can* work. God works, therefore you *must* work" (Sermon 85, III. 2).

5. As Methodists we are grateful that on the basis of such an agreement as this, Lutheran and Methodist Churches in some countries have recognized one another as belonging to the one Church of Jesus

Christ and have declared full communion of pulpit and altar. It is our deep hope that in the near future we shall also be able to enter into closer relationship with Lutherans in other places and with the Roman Catholic Church in accordance with this declaration of our common understanding of the doctrine of justification.

Official Common Affirmation

In this Statement the World Methodist Council and its member churches affirm their fundamental doctrinal agreement with the teaching expressed in the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification signed at Augsburg on 31 October 1999 on behalf of the Lutheran World Federation and the Catholic Church.

The signing partners of the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification join together in welcoming the above Statement of the World Methodist Council and its member churches, which declares and demonstrates Methodist agreement with the consensus in basic truths of the doctrine of justification as expressed in the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification.

Building on their shared affirmation of basic truths of the doctrine of justification, the three parties commit themselves to strive together for the deepening of their common understanding of justification in theological study, teaching and preaching.

The present achievement and commitment are viewed by Catholics, Lutherans and Methodists as part of their pursuit of the full communion and common witness to the world which is the will of Christ for all Christians.

Anglican Consultative Council Resolution 16.17: Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification

April 2016

The Anglican Consultative Council

1. welcomes and affirms the substance of the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ), signed by Lutherans and Roman Catholics in 1999; and

2. recognizes that Anglicans have explored the doctrine of justification with both Lutherans and Roman Catholics; and

3. recognizes that Anglicans and Lutherans share a common understanding of God's justifying grace, as the Helsinki Report stated that we are accounted righteous and are made righteous before God only by grace through faith because of the merits of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and not on account of our works or merits; and

4. recognizes that in 1986 the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC) produced a statement Salvation and the Church, which observed that our two Communions are agreed on the essential aspects of the doctrine of salvation and on the Church's role within it.

Association of the World Communion of Reformed Churches with the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification

5 July 2017

Preamble

1. In recent years a welcome degree of convergence on the doctrine of justification has been achieved. In 1999, after many years of committed dialogue, the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification was signed by the Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation. This agreement, on what had been a central church dividing issue at the time of the Reformation, is a landmark achievement which we celebrate. In 2006, the World Methodist Council and its member churches affirmed their fundamental doctrinal agreement with the teaching expressed in the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification. The World Communion of Reformed Churches, after extended consideration and special attention to connections between justification and justice, now joyfully accepts the invitation to associate with the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ). For the Reformed, justification by grace through faith is an essential teaching of the gospel.

2. We affirm our doctrinal agreement with the common statements on the doctrine of justification (cf. JDDJ 14-18, 19, 22, 25, 28, 31, 34, 37). We rejoice together that the historical doctrinal differences on the doctrine

of justification no longer divide us, and we experience this as a moment of self-examination, conversion and new commitment to one another manifesting new unity and advancing our common witness for peace and justice. In keeping with the Reformed principle, "*ecclesia reformata, semper reformanda secundum verbum dei,*" we embrace the new reality this shared agreement promises. We hope to not only affirm but also enrich and extend the existing degree of consensus. We embrace the model of differentiating consensus and the openness, diversity and richness of theological language it makes possible. We accept those passages where Lutherans and Catholics explain their doctrinal traditions in the light of the consensus (20-21, 23-24, 26-27, 29-30, 32-33, 35-36, 38-39) and we do not consider these diverse emphases sufficient cause for division between either party and the Reformed. We will add our distinctive emphases to those already shared by others. We anticipate areas that invite further dialogue and clarification. We acknowledge the importance, in ecumenical dialogue, of listening to one another and listening to Scripture together.

3. There is a long and interesting history of dialogue on the matter of justification among Reformed, Lutheran and Catholic communions. In fact, a remarkable consensus on basic elements of the doctrine of justification was declared in the Regensburg Agreement of 1541 (Article V *de iustificatione*).[22] Calvin warmly welcomed this agreement (*Letter to Farel* 11.5.1541). However, because of the confessional struggle, the efforts failed and the agreement was nearly forgotten for more than 450 years.

We hear the consensus and agree

4. We agree with the common affirmation that justification is the work of the triune God. The good news of the gospel is that God has

[22] In the Article V de *iustificatione* Catholic, Lutheran and Reformed theologians (Contarini, Eck, Gropper, Melanchthon, Bucer, Calvin) stated: "But this happens to no one unless also at the same time **love is infused** *[infundatur]* which heals the will so that the healed may **begin to fulfil the law,** just as Saint Augustine [De spir. et lit., c. 9,15] said. So **living faith** is that which both appropriates mercy in Christ, believing that the **righteousness which is in Christ is freely imputed** to it, and at the same time **receives the promise of the Holy Spirit and love.** *Therefore the faith that truly* justifies is that **faith which is effectual through love** [Gal. 5:6]. Nevertheless it remains true that it is **by this faith that we are justified** (i.e. accepted and reconciled to God) inasmuch as it appropriates the **mercy and righteousness which is imputed to us on account of Christ** and his merit, **not on account of the worthiness or perfection of the righteousnes**s imparted *[communicatae]* to us in Christ." (Translated by Anthony N. S. Lane, *Justification by Faith in Catholic-Protestant Dialogue. An Evangelical Assessment,* London/New York 2002, 234-235).

reconciled the world to himself through the Son and in the Spirit. Justification presupposes and is grounded in the incarnation, death and resurrection of Christ. Justification means that Christ himself is our "righteousness (δικαιοσύνη – justice) and sanctification and redemption" (1 Cor. 1:30). According to Reformed understanding, justification and sanctification, which cannot be separated, both flow from union with Christ. Entering into union with him through the Holy Spirit, by means of word and sacrament, we receive a share in his saving righteousness. By grace alone, through faith in Christ's saving work—and not because of any merit on our part—we are accepted by God. In Christ the Spirit renews our hearts while equipping us to do the good works that God has prepared for us to walk in. (§15)

5. We also agree that God calls all people to salvation in Christ. When we receive this salvation by grace through faith, we are justified by Christ alone, by faith alone (sola fide). Faith is God's gift through the Holy Spirit. By word and sacrament in the community of faith, the Spirit leads believers into that renewal of life which God will bring to completion in eternal life. (§16)

6. We further agree that the message of justification directs us in a special way to the heart of the biblical witness. Based on God's saving action in Christ, justification tells us "that because we are sinners our new life is solely due to the forgiving and renewing mercy that God imparts as a gift and we receive in faith, and can never merit in any way." (§17)

7. We agree with both Catholics and Lutherans that the doctrine of justification has a central place among the essential doctrines of Christian faith. It is an indispensable criterion for teaching and practice in the life of the church. (§18)

We particularly appreciate some of the distinctive insights in the JDDJ

8. We appreciate the recognition in the JDDJ that we are powerless to save ourselves, incapable of turning to God on our own, and that the freedom we know is not freedom for salvation. Our response to God's grace is itself the effect of God's grace working in us. What Christ has accomplished by his saving obedience (*extra nos*) is made known and applied in us (*in nobis*) by the Spirit especially through God's word and the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper. No one can res- pond to God's call apart from God's prior work of grace. (§19-21)

9. We appreciate the recognition that sin leads to both guilt and enslavement; thus, God's grace brings both forgiveness and liberation. God's forgiveness absolves us of our guilt (justification) and God's liberation frees us from bondage to sin so that our faith might be active in love (sanctification). Union with Christ, according to Reformed teaching, is the source of these two saving benefits. Sanctification does not entail attaining perfection in this life. We recognize the ongoing struggle—our situation of being at the same time justified and a sinner. Nevertheless, we believe that in our union with Christ "day by day, more and more" we are being conformed to his image and grow in grace. According to Reformed understanding, it is through our participation in Christ by faith that we receive a saving share in his righteousness before God (justification) and receive the gift of new life (sanctification) to be instruments of God's love. (§22-24)

10. We appreciate the clear presentation that sinners are justified by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8) and that faith is active in love. Grace is the source and ground of justification while faith is the instrument of its reception. The whole of the Christian life is a life of trust in the promises of God. Such faith cannot truly exist without love and hope in God. Union with Christ by faith entails both justification by grace and sanctification or growing in grace. "Faith is active in love and thus the Christian cannot and should not remain without works." Faith without works is dead (Jas. 2:17). Love for God and the neighbour is therefore indispensable to faith. "But whatever in the justified precedes or follows the free gift of faith is neither the basis of justification nor merits it." The grace we receive brings renewal of life. (§25-27)

11. We appreciate the honest recognition that even though we are justified we nevertheless continue a lifelong struggle against the contradiction to God which we must continually repent and for which we daily ask forgiveness in the Lord's Prayer. This struggle, however, does not separate us from God in Christ. We remain ever dependent on God's grace, through word and sacrament, throughout our lives. Grace never becomes something we merely possess. (§28-30)."

The Reformed have particular emphases and additional insights to bring

12. The Reformed agree with the strong conviction expressed that the law is fulfilled in Christ and is not a "way of salvation" for us. The law

discloses our sin to us and leads us to seek God's mercy in Christ. At the same time, we understand that it is the teaching and example of Christ (who fulfilled the law) that remains the norm for life in Christ. For this reason, the Reformed maintain that the commandments of God remain valid for us in our lives as believers. This is the guiding role of the law, sometimes referred to as "the third use of the law." This is the primary use in Reformed understanding—even more central than the first two: the "civil" use (to curb wrongdoing in the public arena) or the "pedagogical" use in convicting of sin. "Law and gospel" are not sharply contrasted but viewed as connected by their grounding in God's grace. This sense of connection between law and gospel echoes a Reformed emphasis on the continuity (rather than contrast) between the Old Testament and the New Testament as one covenant of grace. For the Reformed *sola scriptura* entails *tota scriptura*. Both law and gospel are God's good gifts to us. The law is God's gracious provision of a guide for living. Reformed sensibilities concerning the law resonate with those expressed in Psalm 19, "The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the decrees of the Lord are sure, making wise the simple; the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is clear enlightening the eyes…." The renewal of life (sanctification) that accompanies justification strengthens us to live (more fully) in gratitude and joyful obedience to God. This is a gift of God's grace at work in our lives. We may have confidence that the good work God has begun in us will be brought to completion. "Through Jesus Christ God has mercifully promised to his children the grace of eternal life." (§31-33)

13. We affirm the testimony given here to the utter reliability of the promises of God. We witness to the irrevocability of the gifts and calling of God (Rom. 11:29). God's covenant of grace given to Israel is unbroken and is extended to us by faith in Christ. The gift of faith provides us assurance of salvation. Faith without assurance would be deficient or confused. Assurance is not based upon anything in ourselves—whether faith, works or evidences of the Holy Spirit—but upon the promises of God. Our God is a faithful God who keeps covenant with the people of God through the ages. God's electing grace at work in the people of Israel is now at work in us also through Christ. For assurance we look to Christ and the promises of God in him. In times of doubt, temptation and anxiety we do not look to ourselves but to Christ. For the Reformed, assurance of salvation is particularly linked to the doctrine of election. Divine election is grounded solely in God's electing grace. In the doctrine of election we recognize God who chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4). We have nothing that we

have not received. Even our capacity to respond to God is God's gift to us. So also, is our perseverance in faith. These insights evoke humility and gratitude in believers and provide assurance of salvation. God's calling and God's promises are sure. In Christ God has promised our salvation, and "the objective reality of God's promise" which cannot be considered untrustworthy grounds our assurance of salvation. (§34-36)

14. We value the careful nuancing of the place of good works among the justified. They are the fruit (and not the root) of justification. Good works reflect the effect of God's grace in us; faith that is active in love. Good works can only be done in dependence upon God's grace. The Reformed would add here a comment on how we have interpreted the place of good works among the justified. In the Second Helvetic Confession (Chapter XVI, paragraph 6) there is an explication which clarifies that good works are not done in order to earn eternal life, or for ostentation, or for gain. Rather they are "for the glory of God, to adorn our calling, to show gratitude to God, and for the profit of the neighbour." In this way, we have further elaborated the place of good works among the justified. (§37-39)

We wish to underscore the integral relation between justification and justice

15. We wish to add a word on the relation we see between justification and justice. In 2001, representatives of the Catholic Church, the Lutheran World Federation, the World Methodist Council and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches met in Columbus, Ohio, to discuss the prospect of widening participation in the JDDJ. The thoughtful and constructive conversation held at the consultation led the Reformed to a deepened reflection on the JDDJ and to a commitment to inquire into one of our key questions: What is the relation between justification and justice? The similarity in terms invites reflection upon the nature of their connection. In the New Testament, the same Greek term (δικαιοσύνη, *dikaiosyne*) is used to convey both. It can be translated either as "righteousness" or as "justice." We began a series of consultations in our regional contexts about the nature of this connection. Our further discussions have been most profitable and we offer, in the paragraphs which follow, a few insights that have emerged.

16. For the Reformed, justice is not simply the ethical outworking of justification as a kind of second step; rather it is already entailed theologically in justification as such. This insight has now been elaborated in the final

report of the fourth phase of the International Reformed–Catholic Dialogue, *Justification and Sacramentality: The Christian Community as an Agent of Justice*, "That both of these meanings are conveyed with the same word reflects the fact that they are profoundly related. The one who is justified by faith is called to act in a righteous way. As a consequence, the doctrine of justification cannot be seen in the abstract, divorced from the reality of injustice, op- pression and violence in today's world" (paragraph 56). Justification is, both a "declaring righteous" and a "setting right." This insight may be at the root of John Calvin's insistence that justification and sanctification are inseparable (*Institutes*, III.2.1); they are to be thought of as a two-fold grace (*duplex gratia*). We acknowledge that the declaration of justification (in JDDJ 4.2) as entailing both "forgiveness of sins" and "renewal of life" points in this direction. We also welcome the invitation offered in paragraph 43 to further clarification of "the relation between justification and social ethics." In what follows, the Reformed intend an initial offering on this relation.

17. In the Reformed emphasis on the sovereignty of God, we have affirmed that God is sovereign over all of life (not just the narrowly religious or spiritual aspects of individual lives). We affirm with the Psalmist that "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and those that dwell therein" (24:1, KJV). God has entered into covenant with all of creation (Gen. 9:8-12), and God's covenant of grace intends a "setting right" that is world-embracing—including even political, economic and ecological realities. All of God's covenantal acts are acts of justification and justice. We acknowledge that justice (like justification) is God's work in and among us. Our understanding of justice has been obscured and our enactment of justice hampered by our sin. It is God who will bring the fulfilment of justice. We understand ourselves to be called even so to join in God's world- transforming work. This has been lately underscored in the Accra Confession (Covenanting for Justice in the Economy and the Earth): "God has brought into being an earth community based on the vision of justice and peace….Jesus shows that this is an inclusive covenant in which the poor and marginalized are preferential partners, and calls us to put justice for the 'least of these' (Mt 25.40) at the centre of the community of life. All creation is blessed and included in this covenant (Hos 2.18ff)" (paragraph 20).

18. This way of thinking has also been welcomed by the present partners. In the most recent dialogue with the Lutheran World Federation (*Communion: On Being the Church, paragraph 56*), Lutherans and Reformed have together affirmed, "There is no area in life, indeed in all creation

which does not belong to Jesus Christ who sends us into all the world to be a sign of God's kingdom to preach and live the gospel of reconciliation in a common concern for justice, freedom, peace and care for the creation." Similarly, in the final report of the fourth phase of the International Reformed-Catholic Dialogue (*Justification and Sacramentality: The Christian Community as an Agent of Justice*), Catholics and Reformed have together affirmed: "the theological doctrine and reality of justification by faith and sanctification impels the Christian community to act on behalf of justice. The imperative for justice flows necessarily from justification and from the call of the whole Church to holiness" (paragraph 79).

19. There is a sense in which justification and sanctification may be thought of as ordered toward justice. In God's saving work things are being "set right" in lives. We are drawn into right relationship with God and into the true worship of God (*soli deo gloria*). The true worship of God finds concrete manifestation in striving for justice and righteousness in society. Thus we are drawn into the work of setting things right in the larger social world. Calvin affirmed that "believers truly worship God by the righteousness they maintain within their society" (*Commentary on Matthew, 12:7*).

20. We maintain that "the doctrine of justification cannot be seen in the abstract, divorced from the reality of injustice, oppression and violence in today's world" (Justification and Sacramentality: The Christian Community as an Agent of Justice (paragraph 56)." In the message and ministry of Jesus justice was central. The Belhar Confession expresses the imperative of resisting injustice even more strongly. In Christ, God is revealed "as the one who wishes to bring about justice and true peace among people… . We reject any ideology which would legitimate forms of injustice and any doctrine which is unwilling to resist such an ideology in the name of the gospel" (paragraph 4).

21. The doctrine of justification is vitally important for the Reformed. Calvin spoke of it as "the main hinge on which religion turns" (*Institutes*, III.2.1). We view it as being in essential connection with other doctrines. Our unity around this central doctrine is to be celebrated. We are grateful that Lutheran and Reformed Churches in some countries have recognized one another as belonging to the one Church of Jesus Christ and have declared full communion of pulpit and table. It is our deep hope that in the near future we shall also be able to enter into closer relationship with Lutherans in other places and with the Catholic Church, as well as with Methodists, in accordance with this declaration of our common understanding of the doctrine of justification.

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In this Statement the World Communion of Reformed Churches affirms fundamental doctrinal agreement with the teaching expressed in the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification signed at Augsburg on 31 October 1999 on behalf of the Lutheran World Federation and the Catholic Church. The World Methodist Council affirmed their fundamental doctrinal agreement on 23 July 2006.

The signing partners of the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification join together in welcoming the above Statement of the World Communion of Reformed Churches which declares and demonstrates Reformed agreement with the consensus on basic truths of the doctrine of justification as expressed in the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification.

Building on their shared affirmation of basic truths of the doctrine of justification, Catholics, Lutherans, Methodists and Reformed commit themselves to strive together for the deepening of their common understanding of justification in theological study, teaching and preaching.

The present achievement and commitment are viewed by the four parties as part of their pursuit of the full communion and common witness to the world which is the will of Christ for all Christians.

Notre Dame Consultation Statement

29 March 2019

Who we are and why we are here

In a broken, divided and contentious world, we as representatives of five world communions, Anglican, Catholic, Lutheran, Methodist and Reformed, have met at the University of Notre Dame, Indiana USA, from 26th to 28th March, drawn by a common urgency to present the message of God's liberating grace and hope for this world. We are convinced of the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ to transform us and the world and we are committed to witness more effectively together to the salvation given to us in Christ (Romans 1:16).

We believe that the Holy Spirit has brought us together following our agreement on the doctrine of justification, expressed in the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ) which states that: "Together we confess: By grace alone, in faith in Christ's saving work and not because of any merit on our part, we are accepted by God and receive the Holy Spirit, who renews our hearts while equipping and calling us to good works" (para.15). This Trinitarian approach is important for us in understanding justification and sanctification fully.

Our communions are witnesses that through JDDJ we are overcoming centuries-old controversies. We are now five world communions that adhere jointly to the JDDJ. And we rejoice in the fresh and new ways in which our five communions can with vigour, trust and confidence work in

realising a deeper communion towards the full visible unity of the Church and to make manifest the growth in communion which we have already experienced.

What we affirm together

Experiencing a deep sense of our commonality in the time we have spent together:

- We re-affirm the basic truths of the doctrine of justification which are expressed in JDDJ, emphasising that the message of God's grace is powerful and urgently needed in our time. We commit ourselves to communicate this message to people of our time in meaningful and relevant ways through our common witness and service.

- We affirm that justification calls for sanctification, a holiness of life which is both personal and social, and advances a common commitment to resisting and overcoming injustices, which should lead to a life of justice in the world, recognising and defending human dignity and the integrity of all that God has created.

- We affirm through our discernment that the Holy Spirit uses one another's ministries, worship and church life, in order to do the Holy Spirit's work to create its fruit, faith, hope and love.

- We affirm that all our activities should be guided by the first imperative of *From Conflict to Communion (Lund 2016)*: We "should always begin from the perspective of unity and not from the point of view of division in order to strengthen what is held in common even though the differences are more easily seen and experienced." We will continue to review how the Lund imperative is being addressed in our church programmes and ecumenical engagement. We rejoice that we are given fresh perspectives of seeing one another and given a new dynamic in our inter-relationships, helping us to find undiscovered fruit in what has already been done before. This will enable us to address further more fully the various questions among us requiring additional clarification as indicated in JDDJ.

We have found that the method of the differentiating consensus has proved to be a fruitful means of overcoming controversies by identifying common substance and distinguishing from its different confessional expressions. Thus this type of consensus encompasses both agreements and differences. It

is a creative way to deal with past, present and future complexities, holding together differing perspectives without reducing them to one perspective. We are convinced that we should apply this method to other controversial questions within and between the churches but also to conflicts in the wider society.

We realise that ecumenism proceeds at different levels that are inter-related with each other. Sometimes local ecumenism is lively and is able to inspire theological reflection. In other cases theological reflection challenges ecclesial practices and calls for changes.

What we want to do together

Our churches face similar challenges in communicating the meaning of justification to today's society in ways in which meet the experiences and needs of the world. We are gripped with the imperative of proclaiming the good news of salvation, through compassion and working for justice.

Yet the message has not reached and engaged with all humankind. There is a challenge for us to witness to God's liberating grace in ways which provoke and convey the hope and grace of the gospel.

To proclaim God's grace in our time requires connecting the distinct horizons of justification in biblical times with contemporary perspectives. Language from our traditions about the human person before God, grace and sin, forgiveness and righteousness, must come alive for people today. This work requires careful ecumenical study at all levels, locally, regionally and globally. Such bridging work results also in fresh proclamation. The world is in need of the message of God's liberating grace. In a time of individualism and commodification, we want to stand together to offer the message that God's salvation, human beings and creation are not for sale.

We will work to strengthen our witness to the common bond of baptism we share. We propose to work on creating appropriate resources for celebrations of baptism and renewal of baptismal vows where they do not exist already. In a similar way liturgies to celebrate justification and our common baptism around 31st October, the eve of All Saints, should be offered more widely. Common themes for spiritual edification and ecumenical reflection for each year should be identified.

In all these ways we wish to make more visible our common witness, in worship and service, on our journey together towards visible unity, walk-

ing together, praying together and working together. In this new reality in our common life, we shall review the application of the Lund Principle of 1952: "that churches should act together in all matters except those in which deep differences of conviction compel them to act separately" which we have all affirmed.

Next Steps

We will establish a Steering Committee to take forward the momentum generated by our meeting through promoting and monitoring the process of developing relationships among the adherents of JDDJ, comprising at least two persons from each world communion, to meet annually at the time of the Conference of Secretaries of Christian World Communions.

We propose a follow up forum, following the affirmations made, to review progress after a further three years.

We propose to develop a range of catechetical tools and resources, in various forms, written and visual, including a dedicated common webpage, to be used in all aspects of church life and theological education.

Conclusion

We thank God for the opportunity to experience the fellowship of our five communions in this new way. We are grateful for the generous hospitality offered to us by the University of Notre Dame which has enabled us to move forward together on our journey, inspired and energised to proclaim anew the good news of God's liberating grace.

May the Holy Spirit bring to completion the work God had begun.

"We re-affirm the basic truths of the doctrine of justification which are expressed in JDDJ, emphasising that the message of God's grace is powerful and urgently needed in our time. We commit ourselves to communicate this message to people of our time in meaningful and relevant ways through our common witness and service."

— *Notre Dame Consultation Statement*

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The Lutheran World Federation
Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity
World Methodist Council
World Communion of Reformed Churches
The Anglican Communion