

Elisabeth KRARUP

How deep are the Common Roots?

Reflections upon WCC's Framework for Common Prayer

Recently the World Council of Churches (WCC) came out with a Framework for Common Prayer. For ten years a commission – founded by an initiative of the WCC – has been working on this. Because the WCC believes it must be possible to “praise God together and offer prayer for Christian unity” in a forum at WCC gatherings, where we respect each others’ traditions and limits. The discussion was started, because neither “judging each other” nor “putting stumbling blocks in front of each other” is the intention of common prayer within WCC, but more likely “it is to pray in a spirit of generosity and care for one another.”

PRAYING TOGETHER

The term “ecumenical worship” has caused confusion about the ecclesiological status of the WCC, why this term will not be used anymore and will be replaced with “common prayer.” This new wording in an ecumenical context can be understood as “a time for confession and reconciliation on the way to a full unity that would be expressed ultimately by sharing the Lord’s supper at a common table.”

The commission’s work has two main goals. One is to clarify that “interconfessional prayer at WCC gatherings is not the worship of an ecclesial body”, and the other is to “make practical recommendations for common prayer at WCC gatherings on how to use language, symbols, imagery and rites in ways which would not cause theological, ecclesiological, or spiritual offence.”

THREE POINTS OF VIEW

In the European Regional Committee (ERC) of the World Student Christian Federation (WSCF), we have discussed this WCC document. We recognise that this question is of crucial importance and it is also very controversial in the ecumenical world. We feel that it is our duty as young Christians address this issue in ecumenical dialogue.

Hereby we bring three denominational points of view on the document that encourage your reflection. We begin with a Protestant and an Orthodox perspective, both of whose churches are members

of the WCC. The third is a Roman Catholic input, a young Christian woman considering the issue “from the outside”, although still inside the situation.

CALL FOR COMMENTS

The discussion within the ERC is just the beginning of a deeper reflection on the meaning of our encounters. It is our wish is that we can include the richness of the whole Federation in this discussion. Therefore we warmly encourage you to read the document, which you can find at <http://www2.wcc-coe.org/ccdocuments.nsf/index/gen-5-en.html#Anchor—SECTIO-15275>.

We bring forth some questions here as a starting-point for discussion or reflection in your movements. As young people we are part of the ecumenical movement, and we want to take a responsibility for shaping its present and future. If you have written comments they may be sent to Elisabeth Krarup (wscfmozaik@yahoo.co.uk).

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

What personal experiences do we have about church traditions other than our own? Common prayer or ecumenical worship: what is the difference? What does ecumenism mean for us? Margot KÄSEMANN (a German Lutheran Bishop with a long involvement in WCC) left the WCC Central Committee after the statement was published. She said that without common worship, WCC makes no sense. In her shoes, would you also leave?

What should WCC do? How can it continue its work? What future is there for ecumenical work? If, as part of ecumenism, we should take on any of the traditions of other churches (for example in our SCMs), what would we accept? What part of our own tradition would we be entirely unwilling to abandon?



Elisabeth KRARUP is a student of Lutheran theology at the University of Copenhagen, Denmark. She is a member of the Danish SCM's International Committee, where she is the WSCF representative. In 2001 she was elected to the European Regional Committee as the coordinator of the Theology Working Group.

