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The “Ditchingham Report” is a document produced at a 1994 consultation, held at the mother house of an order of sisters within the Church of England, on *Toward Koinonia in Worship*, a consultation sponsored by the Commission on Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches. The consultation dealt with the role of worship in the search for the unity of the church.

Following is the section of this report, “Biblical and Theological Foundations.” It is taken from Thomas F. Best and Dagmar Heller, eds., *So We Believe, So We Pray: Towards Koinonia in Worship*. Faith and Order Paper No. 171 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1995) 5-8. This excerpt is also found as Appendix 1 in Gordon W. Lathrop, *Holy People: A Liturgical Ecclesiology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999) 229-32.

Biblical and theological foundations

1. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Pet. 1:3).

Blessed be God’s great love which has already given to us the holy koinonia for which we pray through the one baptism into Christ Jesus, which continually founds and forms all the churches.¹ Beyond our expectation, God has given us that koinonia as we all, together, being “buried with Christ by baptism into death”, are raised with him day after day “by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life” (Rom. 6:4). That koinonia has been given to us in the common life of the believing community, which is empowered with many gifts by the Holy Spirit, which eats and drinks the “holy communion” of Christ, and which shows forth a foretaste of the communion of the whole creation with God, a foretaste of all peoples reconciled to God and to each other through the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ.² The gift we have received is also our calling and task. The koinonia we seek between and within the churches is a koinonia in and through Jesus Christ. It is a participation in the grace and eternal life of God for the sake of the life and salvation of the world.³ “God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord” (1 Cor. 1:9).

2. This crucified and risen Christ, the ground and source and centre of our koinonia, is alive today in our midst. Koinonia is found in the scriptures opened to speak of him to our burning hearts (Luke 24:13-32) in the broken bread and cup of blessing which are a participation in the body and blood of Christ (1 Cor. 10:16), and in the one Spirit in which “we were all baptized into one body” of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13).⁴ Word and sacraments, signs of the presence of Christ, are set forth in the midst of a participating assembly of people who are gathered by the Spirit, blessed with many different gifts, and sent to bear witness with their lives to the same love and mercy of God for all the world which has been shown forth in their assembly.

3. Through the coming of the Spirit, Christian worship is thus a continual meeting with Christ, so that we might be gathered into the grace and life of God. Many different Christian traditions enrich us as we think of the meaning of this encounter. It is a speaking of the gospel of Christ so that we might come to faith. It is grace flowing from the sacrifice of Christ. It is the beginning

of the transfiguration of all things in the Spirit of Christ. It is a gift and call for personal holiness according to the measure of Christ. It is the visible manifestation of the incarnation of Christ so that we might be formed in incarnational living amid the “sacrament of the world”. It is beholding Christ in the gathering so that we may be able to behold him and love him among the marginalized, outcast and disfigured ones of the world. It is the participation in the Spirit-led meeting as “baptism” and in every shared meal as the “Lord’s supper”. It is praise and thanksgiving to the Father through Christ in the unity of the Spirit. But all these understandings depend upon Christian worship being centered in the encounter in the encounter with God in Jesus Christ through the power of the Spirit enlivening the word and the sacraments. And all these understandings presuppose that this encounter occurs in an assembly which is itself a witness to God’s intention with the world and which forms its participants for a life of witness and service. The liturgy of Christians occurs in assembly: it also occurs in the midst of daily life in the world (see Rom. 12:1-2).

4. The pattern of this gathering and sending has come to all the churches as a common and shared inheritance. That received pattern resides in the basic outlines of what may be called the *ordo* of Christian worship, i.e. the undergirding structure which is to be perceived in the ordering and scheduling of the most primary elements of Christian worship. This *ordo*, which is always marked by pairing and by mutually reinterpretive juxtapositions, roots in word and sacrament held together. It is scripture reading and preaching together, yielding intercessions; and, with these, it is *eucharistia* and eating and drinking together, yielding a collection for the poor and mission in the world. It is formation in faith and baptizing in water together, leading to participation in the life of the community. It is ministers and people, enacting these things, together. It is prayers through the days of the week and the Sunday assembly seen together; it is observances through the year and the annual common celebration of the *Pascha* together. Such is the inheritance of all the churches, founded in the New Testament, locally practiced today, and attested to in the ancient sources of both the Christian East and the Christian West.

5. This pattern of Christian worship, however, is to be spoken of as a gift of God, not as a demand nor as a tool for power over others. Liturgy is deeply malformed, even destroyed, when it occurs by compulsion – either by civil law, by the decisions of governments to impose ritual practice on all people, or by the forceful manipulation of ritual leaders who show little love for the people they are called to serve. At the heart of the worship of Christians stands the crucified Christ, who is one with the little and abused ones of the world. Liturgy done in his name cannot abuse. It must be renewed, rather, by love and invitation and the teaching of its sources and meaning. “And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself,” says Jesus (John 12:32). The liturgy must *draw* with Christ, not compel.

6. Furthermore, this pattern is to be celebrated as a most profound connection between faith and life, between gospel and creation, and between Christ and culture, not as an act of unconnected ritualism nor anxious legalism. Every culture has some form of significant communal assembly, the use of water, speech which is accessible but strongly symbolic, and festive meals. These universal gifts of life, found in every place, have been received as the materials of Christian worship from the beginning. Because of this, we are invited to understand the Christian assembly for worship as a foretaste of the reconciliation of all creation and as a new way to see all the world.

7. But the patterns of word and table, of catechetical formation and baptism, of Sunday and the week, of *Pascha* and the year, and of assembly and ministry around these things – the principal pairs of the Christian liturgy – do give us a basis for a mutually encouraging conversation between the churches. Churches may rightly ask each other about the local inculturation of this *ordo*. They may call each other towards a maturation in the use of this pattern or a renewed clarification of its central characteristics or, even, towards a conversion to its use. Stated in their simplest form, these things are the “rule of prayer” in the churches, and we need each other to learn anew of the richness of these things. Churches may learn from each other as they seek for local renewal. One community has treasured preaching, another singing, another silence in the word, another sacramental formation, another the presence of Christ in the transfigured human person and in the witnesses of the faith who surround the assembly, another worship as solidarity with the poor. As the churches seek to recover the great pairs of the *ordo*, they will be helped by remembering together with other Christians the particular charisms with which each community has unfolded the patterns of Christian worship, and by a mutual encouragement for each church to explore the particular gifts which it brings to enrich our *koinonia* in worship.

8. This pattern or *ordo* of Christian worship belongs most properly to each local church, that is, to “all in each place”.⁵ All the Christians in a given place, gathered in assembly around these great gifts of Christ, are the whole catholic church dwelling in this place. As efforts are made to enable local occasions of ecumenical prayer and as local churches are clarifying the full pattern of Christian worship as the centre of their life, a groundwork is being laid for local unity. “Local churches truly united”⁶ will be one in faith and witness, and, amid continuing diversity of expression, one in the practice of the most basic characteristics of the *ordo*. This same pattern or *ordo* of Christian worship is a major basis for the *koinonia* between local churches, a *koinonia* spanning both space and time, uniting churches of the New Testament times, of the sweep of Christian history and of the present *oikoumene*. Such a *koinonia* can only be enriched by those authentic forms of inculturation which the *ordo* may have taken in each local church, not diminished.

9. The factors described above along with the renewal of many other dimensions of the churches’ worship life have led communities to a deepened sense of *koinonia* and to rediscover the relationship between their worship and the active fulfillment of their baptismal mission. It does not yet appear what our *koinonia* in Christ may be. But we know that as we faithfully gather around word and sacrament, signs of the living Christ and of the power of the Spirit, as we faithfully see their connections to all of life, and as we share the sufferings of a church which longs for unity and a world which longs for justice, we participate in an icon of that future which God’s great love and mercy is bringing towards all the world. We pray for that future and we already begin to receive it and to become part of it. And, bearing witness to the aching and needy world, we sing praise to the One whose mercy is everlasting and whose faithfulness endures to all generations.

¹ See “The Unity of the Church as *Koinonia*: Gift and Calling”, in *On the Way to Fuller Koinonia: Santiago de Compostela 1993*, eds Thomas F. Best & Günther Gassmann, Faith and Order Paper no. 166, Geneva, WCC Publications, 1994, pp. 269-70.

² *Ibid.*, 1.1, p. 269.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ See “Koinonia in Scripture: Survey of Biblical Texts”, by John Reumann, in *On the Way to Fuller Koinonia*, *op. cit.*, pp. 37-69.

⁵ Report of the section on unity, 1, in *The New Delhi Report: The Third Assembly of the World Council of Churches, 1961*, ed. W.A. Visser ‘t Hooft, London, SCM, 1962, p. 116.

⁶ Report of section II on “What Unity Requiresw”, 3, *Breaking Barriers: Nairobi 1975*, ed. David M. Paton, London and Grand Rapids, SPCK and Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1976, p. 60