



VISION STATEMENT OF THE ECUMENICAL PARTNERSHIP

United Church of Christ
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

We believe that God gives the Church its unity and, by the Holy Spirit, leads and empowers the Church to manifest that unity. We confess the sinfulness of our participation in a divided church and a divided world. We yearn to be reconciled to God, and through God to be reconciled to one another both in the church and in all humanity. We rejoice in the gift of unity in Jesus Christ, believing that through our Ecumenical Partnership the Holy Spirit will lead us into full communion with one another. We affirm that our two churches are one in Christ, and, therefore, declare that God calls us to embody the unity of the Church.

FOUNDATIONS

In 1985, the General Synod of the United Church of Christ and the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) declared and celebrated a new Ecumenical Partnership between our churches. The mandate these bodies adopted identified three primary marks of our Ecumenical Partnership:

- (1) Commitment to engage together in the mission God entrusts to the church,
- (2) Theological work to equip our churches to grow toward full communion, and
- (3) Communion worship including frequent sharing in the Lord's Supper/Holy Communion.

From the beginning, the General Synod and General Assembly deliberately set our Ecumenical Partnership within the context of our churches' commitments to the wider ecumenical movement. We see our Partnership as a positive contribution to the Consultation on Church Union and its life, even as we rejoice to receive gifts from the Consultation. Through our participation in the Consultation and in this Ecumenical Partnership, we affirm that our ultimate goal is the oneness of the whole body of Christ.

THE VISION OF ECUMENICAL PARTNERSHIP

The Ecumenical Partnership is a journey in response to the Holy Spirit toward unity between our churches. We base our Partnership on the deliberate commitment we have made to each other which alters the way we see ourselves. While our Partnership is not the full unity to which God calls us, it is already an expression of visible unity which should be celebrated and deepened.

At this time we do not know the full meaning of our Ecumenical Partnership. Already among our churches it takes a diversity of forms in different places, for which we give thanks to God. And still, it invites further creative growth in congregations, regions and conferences, general units and instrumentalities. As we look ahead, our churches believe the Ecumenical Partnership must express itself in faith, sacraments, ministry, and mission.

(over)

- We affirm that we are one in faith. In and through our Partnership we will search out and claim symbols of this common faith and express this oneness in visible and public ways. Our common participation in the ecumenical movement strengthens this affirmation.
- As we affirm our oneness in faith, we are seeking to be one in sacramental life. We intend to move beyond past alienations to recognize and accept each other's understandings and practices in Baptism and the Lord's Supper, a recognition which will preserve our faithful diversity. Additionally, our partnership will lead us to celebrate the sacraments together.
- As we affirm our oneness in faith, we are seeking to be one in ministry. We intend not only to recognize the validity of the lay and ordained ministries of the other, but also to discover the means by which the ministries of one church will be able to function effectively as ministries to and on behalf of both churches.
- As we affirm our oneness in faith, we are seeking to be one in mission. We intend to demonstrate visibly that there is but one mission--the proclamation of God's redemptive love to all humankind, a mission expressed in word and service/deed. When one church engages in acts of mission it does so on behalf of both. Thus, the Ecumenical Partnership is leading us toward that moment when we will undertake all mission in common. Such oneness in mission will require that our churches find ways to share in some forms of common decision-making.

We understand our Partnership is set within the context of our commitments to other denominations through the Consultation on Church Union, councils of churches, and international dialogues. We also believe our partnership must proceed in all its activities and advances in such a way as to invite recognition and participation of all parts of the one holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.

As Partners, we are working toward a time when our churches will be able to claim "full communion" -- a relationship characterized by a mutual recognition of baptism, full eucharistic fellowship, the mutual recognition of members and ordained ministers, a common commitment to confess the gospel of Christ by proclamation and service to the world, and common decision-making. We are working toward that day when our two churches can claim together our oneness in Jesus Christ, a time when we can say without qualification: your baptism is our baptism, your table is our table, your people and pastors are ours, your mission and witness are ours, your decisions we own and respect!

Adopted by the Ecumenical Partnership Committee during the meeting held in St. Louis, Missouri, March 16-18, 1988.