STATEMENT FROM THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
OF THE WORLD METHODIST COUNCIL

UNITY AND SEXUALITY

The Chairperson, His Eminence Sunday Mbang, in his opening address to this Executive, called for a response to the widespread debate 'within the churches on the subject of human sexuality. He asserted 'the unity of the Church is gradually beginning to suffer' as a result of significant tensions. He observed the impact of new and unfamiliar interpretations of the Scriptures to the confusion of many faithful Christians. We also have record of its adverse effect on our Christian mission.

Several churches have worked for many years to find a way to respond to the pastoral needs of their people in the face of changing attitudes to sexual orientation and sexual practice in our societies and cultures, acknowledging that our sexuality is one of the gifts of God in creation. (The issue is sharpened in many cases where a call to ordained ministry is involved.)

It must be observed that there is no ethical consensus in the world at large on these and related matters. For Christians, there is a tension between the desire to respond in love to all God's creatures in the light of the Gospel's universal promises, and the need to discern God's will in rapidly changing circumstances. Additionally, we must be concerned for the health of the nations and the future of the entire human family.

In our review of ecumenical relationships, it is clear that at least one Christian World Communion has been internally disrupted as a result of the actions of certain individuals and conciliar bodies; its survival is at stake. Other with whom we remain in dialogue have firmly reasserted classical Christian teaching on these matters. Some of our own member churches have come to the brink of division or have lost members through precipitate action.

It is acknowledged that this Executive is unlikely to give more satisfactory answers than those which have resulted from long thought and discussion in our churches; it desires only to sound a note of warning. It takes with complete seriousness the issues involved, scriptural and doctrinal, medical and ethical. It urges the churches to apply their energies and best minds to the challenges, as we all seek God's light. It urges the churches to endeavour to preserve the bond of peace and love with all their members. But it equally urges the member churches to hold firmly to the centrality of Scripture, to the long Christian tradition of teaching on the order of creation, on marriage and family life, and to exercise immense care as they face choices which could threaten the unity of congregations and churches.

Adapted by the Executive Committee of the World Methodist Council
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