



**CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN CHURCHES
12TH ASSEMBLY
Trondheim, Norway
25 June – 2 July 2003**

**LETTER TO THE CHURCHES
FROM THE 12TH ASSEMBLY OF CEC**

In the month of June, Trondheim in Norway, where the 12th Assembly of CEC is meeting, is bathed in light around the clock, and we are reminded of Christ as ‘the unshadowed light’. As sunlight heals and illuminates, so Jesus Christ heals and reconciles – the theme for this Assembly.

Trondheim is an ancient place of pilgrimage, and we are on pilgrimage together. It is a meeting place, where waters meet, river and fjord flowing together, reminding us of “the one baptism” (Eph. 4) as we walk to our gatherings. This flowing together is a sign of hope for the future, as we grapple with the legacies of our different histories but do it in fellowship with one another and in Christ.

The Lord Jesus Christ has taught us to see his own image in each brother and sister. Yet it has not always been the case in the history of our Churches which have experienced painful alienation, estrangement and suspicious distrust. There is still much to be done, but there are also signs of hope arising from mutual commitment to a dialogue in the spirit of Truth and Love. We are keenly aware of our common calling to proclaim and witness to the abiding Kingdom of God to the highly secularized world. We, Anglican, Protestant, Old Catholic and Orthodox, have gathered in the Assembly to reaffirm, to reinforce, to renew our will to follow in the steps of Christ who reconciles us when we see his own image in each other.

The Assembly takes place at time when Europe stands at a crossroads. Old wounds are being healed and barriers between people are disappearing. The opening service showed that through the work of Jesus Christ the fellowship of Churches can contribute to this healing process. We had come together from North and South, from East and West, crossing old barriers and frontiers that used to divide our continent.

In the Lutheran Cathedral of Nidaros, in the North of Europe, the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople delivered a strong message of fellowship – but also of the differences that still divide, thus needing ongoing dialogue. The fellowship of Churches gathered in the cathedral was also a powerful reminder that Europe is much wider and richer in diversity than even the enlarged EU. As the Charta Oecumenica reminds us, “Europe – from the Atlantic to the Urals, from the North Cape to the Mediterranean – is today more pluralist in culture than ever before”. The importance of not creating new barriers between people and countries, in Europe and elsewhere in the world was recalled time and again throughout the

Assembly. With a reference to the mention in the preamble of the draft EU constitution of the “cultural, religious and humanist inheritance of Europe”, we as Churches underline that “the spiritual heritage of Christianity constitutes an empowering source of inspiration and enrichment for Europe” (Charta Oecumenica).

Like running waters the key themes flowing through the Assembly have been those of reconciliation and healing. Reconciliation and healing between Churches, people, nations and nature. In the opening address Dr Kenneth Kaunda spoke of the need to be aware of the effect that our actions have upon the rest of creation and our fellow human beings in other parts of the world. A Norwegian *Hustavle* (a basic important text), written by Bishop Finn Wagle, suggests that we need to show care for the earth, that we need to rejoice in the beauty and remember the context. Above all we need to strive for justice and live in reconciliation with all creation. The same themes of justice, human rights, care of creation, migration, trafficking, and an enlarged EU bring awareness of the particular global responsibility, which the Assembly has given as a mandate for CEC’s future work.

The Assembly stressed the need for the Churches of Europe to work towards the healing of memories and to combat the increasing social instability caused by continuing poverty, unemployment and the breakdown of our social services. The Churches must be part of the solution to the problems of growing violence, terror and fear in Europe, rather than being part of the problem.

The young people in their challenging presentation nourished the vision of a renewal of Europe and of CEC. They set a powerful and stimulating example of creativity, open-mindedness and engagement with issues of vital concern. The motto “Unity in diversity” – adopted by the EU – was vividly illustrated through music and images showing a manifold Europe of old and new, men and women, broad and narrow, the one and the many.

The young participants showed a strong witness of a living fellowship in Christ, sharing work, life and prayer across all borders still dividing many of our Churches. In many ways as they launched the opening service by bringing water from the four corners of Europe they have launched CEC into new directions, giving a hopeful future for the Churches in Europe.

This new hope can also be seen in the agreed proposal for a third European Ecumenical Assembly with the Roman Catholic Church in 2007.

The Assembly ended with the Closing Service at which the Orthodox and Armenian Bishops blessed the waters of the River Nidelva and the Archbishop of Canterbury spoke on the Biblical story of the Woman at the Well. Thus, the symbol of new life and living water, healing and reconciliation went through the whole of the Assembly and will follow us all back to our daily life in our countries and our Churches as a source of inspiration and hope.

‘With you is the fountain of life, in your light we see light.’ (Psalm 36)