

# WORSHIPING THE TRIUNE GOD: Receiving and Sharing Christian Wisdom Across Continents and Centuries (2010 Edition)



## Introduction

The sharing of wisdom is a common practice in many cultures—Eastern and Western, Southern and Northern—and is particularly suited for learning and sharing across cultures, generations, and centuries, both in oral and written forms. The sharing of wisdom comprises a significant strand of the biblical literature, including Proverbs and proverb-like Psalms, Jesus’ beatitudes and several Pauline exhortations. To share wisdom is to knit together the sinews of Christ’s body, the church. Sharing wisdom is, thus, a central practice for global Christian fellowships, like the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC). When the wisdom that is shared is a faithful echo and appropriation of scriptural wisdom, a faithful testimony to the Word and “Wisdom of God” (1 Cor 1.24), then this sharing of wisdom can be a sign of Pentecost, not Babel—a gift of the Holy Spirit, “the Spirit of wisdom” (Eph 1.17).

The purpose of this collection of proverbs about the practice of Christian worship is to build up the body of Christ for faithful service and ministry. This collection of proverbs is gathered by Reformed Christians. It is at once a catholic collection, reflecting participation in the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church, and a particular collection, reflecting the unique history, theological convictions, and practices of Reformed communities world-wide. This document was drafted in response to mandates by both World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) at its 2004 Assembly in Accra, Ghana, and the Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC) at its 2005 Assembly in Utrecht, the Netherlands, following a period of communication with member churches from both organizations. It was developed by the worship planning team for the 2010 WCRC Uniting General Council in Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA, in consultation with pastors, teachers, and other leaders throughout the world, both within and outside of the Reformed tradition, and was refined by the Worship and Spiritual Renewal Section of the Uniting General Council.

The document is designed to present a vision for worship and spiritual renewal in which we invite each other to deeper and more vital expression. It is not designed to impose a set of practices on member churches or to imply that worship in member churches already embodies the fullness of this wisdom. The document is designed for several uses:

- 1. The document can be used within a given congregation or denomination to shape a conversation about the gifts, challenges, strengths and weaknesses of local practices.** Those leading these conversations could pause after each proverb and ask “how has God gifted us to practice this wisdom?,” “in what ways is God calling us to embody this wisdom more faithfully?,” and “in what other ways would we express the wisdom of our practices related to this theme?” Each proverb is designed to elicit conversations that explore the connections between theological convictions and practices, conversations of testimony and spiritual discernment that are indispensable for fruitful ministry in any context.

**2. The document can shape a conversation between and among congregations, denominations, and believers from quite different cultural contexts.** Those shaping these conversations could pause after each proverb and ask “how is God gifting each of us in our unique cultural contexts to practice this wisdom?” and “in what way might God be calling us to practice this more faithfully, particularly in light of what we learn from each other?”

**3. The document is an invitation to collaborative in-depth study and further refinement.** Each proverb is a summary of a field of research and Christian reflection, drawing upon work in Biblical exegesis, theological reflection, and historical scholarship. Each proverb could be fruitfully refined after continuing reflection in light of the challenges of faithful discipleship. Thus, this collection is not designed to be final or complete. It is designed to be open-ended: any member church or ecumenical partner can easily supplement this collection with its own materials. Future WCRC gatherings could also amend this collection by adding proverbs to respond to unique challenges that arise in the future.

The ultimate goal of all of these uses, however, is not simply to enhance conversations or to result in a better document. The ultimate goal is nothing less than to elicit, by the Spirit’s power, the faithful and grateful worship of the triune God. May God’s Spirit bless these words and all who wrestle with them so that the church of Christ may be strengthened.

***Note:** For this edition of the document, the terms ‘church,’ ‘congregation, and ‘community’ are used interchangeably, reflecting the different uses of our member churches. The terms ‘blessed’ and ‘wise’ alternate throughout the document, with the term ‘blessed’ typically used to refer to blessings God gives when we follow biblical commands, and ‘wise’ for judgments that congregations make in discerning God’s will. We anticipate further refinement of this usage, following responses from member churches.*

# I. A Called and Forgiven People: Assembling in Jesus' Name

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## 1.1 Called by the Triune God

Blessed are the people of God  
who are deeply aware  
that they are both called by and address *the triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who gathers, protects and cares for the church through Word and Spirit*—<sup>1</sup>  
a God of splendour and majesty  
perfectly revealed in Jesus Christ,  
the “image of the invisible God” (Col 1.15).

Blessed is the community  
that gratefully acknowledges  
that the triune God not only receives our worship,  
but also makes our worship possible,  
prompting us through the Holy Spirit,  
and sanctifying our offerings  
through the perfect priesthood of Jesus Christ,  
who during his life on earth offered  
praise “to the Father,” “full of joy in the Holy Spirit” (Luke 10.21), and even now “ever lives to pray for us” (Heb 7.25).

Blessed is the congregation  
that insists that believers gather to worship God  
not first of all in order that God might bless them,  
but because God has already blessed them.

Blessed is the congregation that then discovers  
that God does indeed bless them  
as they worship the triune God  
who nourishes, teaches, convicts, and corrects them,  
and strengthens bonds  
that unite believers with Jesus Christ and with each other  
through the sanctifying actions  
of the proclamation of the word and corporate prayer,  
through baptism and the Lord’s Supper,  
through fellowship, offerings, and testimony.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf Belhar Heidelberg Confession.

## 1.2 Corporate Assembly, the Whole People of God

Wise is the worshiping community  
that “does not neglect meeting together” (Heb 10.25),  
but joyfully gathers in Jesus’ name,  
eager to proclaim the Word of God,  
to offer praise and prayer,  
and to celebrate the sacraments,  
each of which are actions of the whole people of God,  
“the royal priesthood” (1 Pet 2.9).

Blessed is the congregation  
that invites all worshipers—  
including those which our cultures  
may label in different ways as ‘disabled’—  
to full, conscious and active participation in corporate  
worship,  
engaging heart, soul, and mind in devotion to God,  
deeply aware of how their own personal worship  
participates in a much larger chorus of praise to God.

Blessed is the congregation  
that expresses in its worship  
*the communion in the body of Christ,*  
*the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace,*  
*the oneness that is the gift and calling of God,*  
*that unites the young and old,*  
*and believers of every time and place*  
*who share a common calling by the Spirit of God in Jesus Christ.*<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Cf from WCRC materials for the Grand Rapids event.

## 1.3 The Holy Spirit

Wise is the worshiping community  
that recognizes how the Holy Spirit works  
through both reason and emotion,  
through both spiritual disciplines and surprising events,  
through both services that are prayerfully planned  
and through moments of spontaneous discovery.

Wise is the worshipping community that recognizes that the lasting value or spiritual power of worship does not depend upon our own creativity, imagination, intellect, or emotions, but comes from the Holy Spirit, who may choose to use any or all of these things. For truly, worship is a gift to receive, not an accomplishment to achieve.

#### **1.4 Affirming and Resisting Culture**

Wise is the church that seeks to be “in” but not “of” the world, (John 15.19) resisting aspects of the culture that compromise the integrity of the gospel, and eagerly engaging its culture with the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ who comes to each culture, but is not bound by any culture.

Wise, then, is the church that is grateful that the gospel of Jesus is at once transcultural, contextual, cross-cultural, and counter-cultural.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Cf Lutheran World Federation Nairobi Statement on Worship and Culture.

#### **1.5 The Goodness of the Redeemed Creation**

Wise is the congregation that makes clear that its worship participates in the song of praise that is offered by all creation.

Wise is the congregation that celebrates worship as an embodied reality, grateful for the gestures and postures that express our praise and prayer, and the book, water, bread, and wine, that God ordains for our use—the gifts of God for the people of God.

#### **1.6 Leading God’s People**

Wise is the community that calls, trains, affirms, and responds to those gifted for leadership in all genders, ages, races, abilities providing formative training and mentorship for them in the theology and practices of worship.

Wise are leaders in worship who equip all the members of the community for full, conscious, and active participation, (cf Vatican II) taking care to express hospitality to those who are not yet a part of Christ’s body, the church.

#### **1.7 Artistic Expression**

Blessed is the congregation in which the Word is proclaimed and prayers and praise are offered not only through words, but also through artistic expression: through gifts God has given to each local community in music and dance, in speech and silence, in visual art and architecture. Blessed are the artists who offer and discipline their gifts so God’s people may testify to the goodness of God, offer thanks and express repentance.

Wise are artists who are grateful both for the limitations offered by the second commandment, and also for the example of the biblical artists called by God and equipped by God’s people for service according to God’s commands. (Ex 35.30ff)

Wise is the church that gratefully receives the gifts of faithful songs and artworks from other centuries and other cultures, celebrating the catholicity of the church, and cultivating creativity through new songs and works for worship.

## II. Joyfully Proclaiming God's Word

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### 2.1 Word and Spirit

Blessed is the congregation  
in which the Word of God is proclaimed  
with conviction and joy  
surrounded by expectant prayers  
and profound gratitude  
for the Holy Spirit's work  
to illuminate the hearts and minds of God's people.

### 2.2 The Breadth of the Christ-Centered Word

Wise is the congregation  
that nourishes believers  
with readings and sermons that engage the breadth  
and depth of God's Word,  
Old Testament and New Testament,  
always proclaiming the fullness of the gospel of Jesus  
Christ.

### 2.3 Calling Forth Rest and Witness, Justice and Peace

Blessed is the congregation  
in which the proclamation of God's Word  
comforts those who mourn  
and confronts those who oppose God's reign.

Wise is the preacher  
who invites hearers to receive God's lavish grace,  
to repent from sin and evil,  
to turn toward Christ,  
to proclaim peace,  
"to do justice, to love kindness and to walk humbly with  
God" (Mic 6.8).

### 2.4 Resisting Idolatry

Wise is the congregation  
that proclaims the Word of God  
in ways that actively expose and resist  
both the idols that we are tempted to worship instead  
of God  
and also the idols of our distorted understandings of God.

Blessed is the congregation  
that challenges these distortions  
by contemplating the person and work of Jesus Christ,  
"the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation  
of God's being" (Heb 1.3).

### 2.5 Credo: The Response of Faith

Wise is the congregation  
in which the proclamation of the gospel  
is accepted as the word of God,  
which is at work in you who believe (1 Thes 2.13),  
leading to both confession and praise,  
both repentance and a commitment to service,  
both compassion and a passion for justice,  
both personal and communal actions,  
both new obedience and profound gratitude.

Blessed is the congregation  
that invites believers to testify to the goodness of God  
by expressing the faith of the church  
that transcends and forms our individual experiences  
and unites us with believers across cultures and centuries,  
and by testifying to the work of God in the life of the local  
community.

### III. Responding to God in Prayer and Offerings

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#### 3.1 Praise and Gratitude

Blessed is the church that offers praise and thanksgiving (cf Ps 50.14, Heb 13.15), not only extolling the beauty and glory of God, but also contemplating, reciting, and celebrating all that God has done throughout history.

Wise is the congregation that draws upon and learns from the Bible's own narratively-shaped prayers of praise and thanksgiving (e.g Ps 136) as it gives form to its own prayer.

#### 3.2 Praying in Jesus Name, Through the Spirit

Blessed is the church that prays in Jesus' name, acknowledging our union with our ascended and everpresent Lord.

Blessed is the worshiping community that prays in and through the Holy Spirit, desiring the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and acknowledging that as we pray the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness, interceding for us according to the will of God (Rom 8.26-27), and resisting the "cosmic powers of this present darkness" (Eph 6.12).

#### 3.3 Full Range of Human Experience

Wise is the church that, following the example of the Psalms, encourages honest and trusting prayers to God that express the full range of human experience - the 'anatomy of the soul'—spoken, sung or silent, danced, dramatized or visualized—prayers of celebration and lament, trust and desperation, supplication and intercession, thanksgiving and confession, healing and hope.

Blessed is the church that prays not only for its own needs, but also for the needs of the world that God so loves.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> The phrase "Anatomy of the Soul" is from John Calvin's commentary on the Psalms.

#### 3.4 Gifts and Offerings

Wise is the church that gratefully practices the giving of gifts, time and talent, as an act of dedication and worship

Wise is the church which affirms that all of life is lived in service to God and neighbor, and that believers are called to be stewards of every gift of God.

## IV. Baptizing and Feasting

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### 4.1 Jesus' Commands to Baptize and Celebrate the Lord's Supper

Blessed is the church  
that faithfully obeys Jesus' commands  
"to make disciples,  
baptizing them  
in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit  
and teaching them to obey  
everything Jesus has commanded (Matt. 28:20)  
and to "eat and drink in remembrance of me," (Luke 22.19-20)  
receiving these signs  
as occasions in which God  
works to nourish and sustain,  
comfort and challenge,  
teach and transform us.

### 4.2 Baptism

Blessed is the congregation  
that announces that their true identity  
is found in Jesus Christ.

Blessed is the congregation  
that proclaims how the waters of baptism  
are a sign and seal  
of God's promises  
to wash us clean,  
to adopt us into the body of Christ,  
to send the Holy Spirit to renew, empower,  
and resurrect us a to new life in Christ.

Blessed is the congregation  
that proclaims how the waters of baptism  
are also a sign and seal of God's call to renounce sin  
and evil,  
to embrace Christ, and our new identity in him  
and to live a renewed and holy life.

Wise is the community  
who celebrates baptism joyfully  
and remembers that baptism as a means of grace and  
encouragement  
to live out our vows of covenant  
faithfulness.

### 4.3 Lord's Supper

Blessed is the church  
that regularly celebrates the Lord's Supper  
as a feast of thanksgiving, communion, and hope.

Blessed is the congregation  
that not only gratefully remembers God's creating and  
redeeming work in Jesus Christ,  
knowing his presence in the breaking of the bread,  
but also gratefully receives the gift of union with Jesus  
Christ and Christ's body,  
and looks forward to the feast of the coming kingdom.

Blessed is the congregation  
that shares this meal  
by "discerning the body of Christ" in its manifold oneness,  
by expressing hospitality for one another  
with grace and truth (1 Cor 11.29-33),  
and by reflecting God's hospitality for us  
in ministries of hospitality in the world.

## V. A Blessed and Commissioned People Serving in Jesus' Name

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### 5.1 God's Sending

Blessed is the congregation  
in which believers are  
encouraged by God's gracious blessing,  
and challenged by God's gracious call  
to proclaim the good news of Jesus  
and to live as a healing presence in the world  
in the name of Jesus.

### 5.2 Daily Worship

Wise is the community  
that nourishes faith  
by encouraging daily worship for all believers,  
with emphasis on reading and meditating on God's Word,  
seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit,  
offering prayers of praise and petition,  
singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs,  
listening for God in "sheer silence", (1Kings 19.12)  
and living every moment before the face of God.

### 5.3 Hospitality and Evangelization

Blessed are communities  
in which hospitality  
is practiced in both public worship and in personal lives,  
where strangers and guests are welcomed and embraced,  
where the poor and marginalized, diseased and forsaken,  
can find refuge under the shadow of God's wings.

Blessed are communities  
in which all people are invited and challenged  
to become disciples of Jesus,  
receiving baptism and formation in the faith. (cf Mt.28.19)

### 5.4 Formation for Worship

Wise are congregations  
that invite and challenge believers  
of all ages and abilities  
to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and  
Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Pet 3.18).

Blessed are congregations  
that nurture the faithful interplay  
of scripture, doctrines, practices, and the fruit of the Spirit.

Wise are congregations that deepen worship  
through reflection on and teaching about the meaning of  
worship practices.

### 5.5 Worship, Compassion, and Justice

Blessed are congregations  
whose public worship points to Jesus Christ,  
and Jesus' message about the  
kingdom of God.

Blessed are congregations  
whose corporate worship and public witness  
are consistent with each other  
and faithful to God's Word,  
whose worship and witness are  
a testimony to the work of the Holy Spirit.

Blessed are congregations who seek to receive  
the liberating work of the Holy Spirit  
who alone can break through hypocrisy  
and through whom  
justice and peace, worship and witness,  
can truly embrace.

### 5.6 Maranatha: Worship and Christian Hope

Blessed are congregations  
who are not content  
to live only the present moment,  
but whose worship expresses  
the groaning of all creation  
for the fullness of God's reign  
in Jesus Christ.

Blessed are congregations whose  
life together is summed up  
in the certain hope of the prayer "Maranatha"—  
"come, Lord Jesus" (Rev 22.20).

# NAIROBI STATEMENT ON WORSHIP AND CULTURE

*This statement is from the third international consultation of the Lutheran World Federation's Study Team on Worship and Culture, held in Nairobi, Kenya, in January 1996. The members of the Study Team represent five continents of the world and have worked together with enthusiasm for three years thus far. The initial consultation, in October 1993 in Cartigny, Switzerland, focused on the biblical and historical foundations of the relationship between Christian worship and culture, and resulted in the "Cartigny Statement on Worship and Culture: Biblical and Historical Foundations." (This Nairobi Statement builds upon the Cartigny Statement; in no sense does it replace it.) The second consultation, in March 1994 in Hong Kong, explored contemporary issues and questions of the relationships between the world's cultures and Christian liturgy, church music, and church architecture and art. The papers of the first two consultations were published as *Worship and Culture in Dialogue*. (1) The papers and statement from the Nairobi consultation were published as *Christian Worship: Unity in Cultural Diversity*. (2) In 1994-1995, the Study Team conducted regional research, and prepared reports on that research. Phase IV of the Study commenced in Nairobi and will continue with seminars and other means to implement the learnings of the study, as LWF member churches decide is helpful. The Study Team considers this project to be essential to the renewal and mission of the Church around the world.*

## 1. Introduction

**1.1.** Worship is the heart and pulse of the Christian Church. In worship we celebrate together God's gracious gifts of creation and salvation, and are strengthened to live in response to God's grace. Worship always involves actions, not merely words. To consider worship is to consider music, art, and architecture, as well as liturgy and preaching.

**1.2.** The reality that Christian worship is always celebrated in a given local cultural setting draws our attention to the dynamics between worship and the world's many local cultures.

**1.3.** Christian worship relates dynamically to culture in at least four ways. First, it is transcultural, the same substance for everyone everywhere, beyond culture. Second, it is contextual, varying according to the local situation (both nature and culture). Third, it is counter-cultural, challenging what is contrary to the Gospel in a given culture. Fourth, it is cross-cultural, making possible sharing between different local cultures. In all four dynamics, there are helpful principles which can be identified.

## 2. Worship as Transcultural

**2.1.** The resurrected Christ whom we worship, and through whom by the power of the Holy Spirit we know the grace of the Triune God, transcends and indeed is beyond all cultures. In the mystery of his resurrection is the source of the transcultural nature of Christian worship. Baptism and Eucharist, the sacraments of Christ's death and resurrection, were given by God for all the world. There is one Bible, translated into many tongues, and biblical preaching of Christ's death and resurrection has been sent into all the world. The fundamental shape of the principal Sunday act of Christian worship, the Eucharist or Holy Communion, is shared across cultures: the people gather, the Word of God is proclaimed, the people intercede for the needs of the Church and the world, the eucharistic meal is shared, and the people are sent out into the world for mission. The great narratives of Christ's birth, death, resurrection, and sending of the Spirit, and our Baptism into him, provide the central meanings of the transcultural times of the church's year: especially Lent/Easter/Pentecost, and, to a lesser extent, Advent/Christmas/Epiphany. The ways in which the shapes of the Sunday Eucharist and the church year are expressed vary by culture, but their meanings and fundamental structure are shared around the globe. There is one Lord, one faith, one Baptism, one Eucharist.

**2.2.** Several specific elements of Christian liturgy are also transcultural, e.g., readings from the Bible (although of course the translations vary), the ecumenical creeds and the Our Father, and Baptism in water in the Triune Name.

**2.3.** The use of this shared core liturgical structure and these shared liturgical elements in local congregational worship—as well as the shared act of people assembling together, and the shared provision of diverse leadership in that assembly (although the space for the assembly and the manner of the leadership vary)—are expressions of Christian unity across time, space, culture, and confession. The recovery in each congregation of the clear centrality of these transcultural and ecumenical elements renews the sense of this Christian unity and gives all churches a solid basis for authentic contextualization.

### **3. Worship as Contextual**

**3.1.** Jesus whom we worship was born into a specific culture of the world. In the mystery of his incarnation are the model and the mandate for the contextualization of Christian worship. God can be and is encountered in the local cultures of our world. A given culture's values and patterns, insofar as they are consonant with the values of the Gospel, can be used to express the meaning and purpose of Christian worship. Contextualization is a necessary task for the Church's mission in the world, so that the Gospel can be ever more deeply rooted in diverse local cultures.

**3.2.** Among the various methods of contextualization, that of dynamic equivalence is particularly useful. It involves re-expressing components of Christian worship with something from a local culture that has an equal meaning, value, and function. Dynamic equivalence goes far beyond mere translation; it involves understanding the fundamental meanings both of elements of worship and of the local culture, and enabling the meanings and actions of worship to be "encoded" and re-expressed in the language of local culture.

**3.3.** In applying the method of dynamic equivalence, the following procedure may be followed. First, the liturgical ordo (basic shape) should be examined with regard to its theology, history, basic elements, and cultural backgrounds. Second, those elements of the ordo that can be subjected to dynamic equivalence without prejudice to their meaning should be determined. Third, those components of culture that are able to re-express the Gospel and the liturgical ordo in an adequate manner should be studied. Fourth, the spiritual and pastoral benefits our people will derive from the changes should be considered.

**3.4.** Local churches might also consider the method of creative assimilation. This consists of adding pertinent components of local culture to the liturgical ordo in order to enrich its original core. The baptismal ordo of "washing with water and the Word", for example, was gradually elaborated by the assimilation of such cultural practices as the giving of white vestments and lighted candles to the neophytes of ancient mystery religions. Unlike dynamic equivalence, creative assimilation enriches the liturgical ordo—not by culturally re-expressing its elements, but by adding to it new elements from local culture.

**3.5.** In contextualization the fundamental values and meanings of both Christianity and of local cultures must be respected.

**3.6.** An important criterion for dynamic equivalence and creative assimilation is that sound or accepted liturgical traditions are preserved in order to keep unity with the universal Church's tradition of worship, while

progress inspired by pastoral needs is encouraged. On the side of culture, it is understood that not everything can be integrated with Christian worship, but only those elements that are connatural to (that is, of the same nature as) the liturgical ordo. Elements borrowed from local culture should always undergo critique and purification, which can be achieved through the use of biblical typology.

#### **4. Worship as Counter-cultural**

**4.1.** Jesus Christ came to transform all people and all cultures, and calls us not to conform to the world, but to be transformed with it (Romans 12:2). In the mystery of his passage from death to eternal life is the model for transformation, and thus for the counter-cultural nature of Christian worship. Some components of every culture in the world are sinful, dehumanizing, and contradictory to the values of the Gospel. From the perspective of the Gospel, they need critique and transformation. Contextualization of Christian faith and worship necessarily involves challenging of all types of oppression and social injustice wherever they exist in earthly cultures.

**4.2.** It also involves the transformation of cultural patterns which idolize the self or the local group at the expense of a wider humanity, or which give central place to the acquisition of wealth at the expense of the care of the earth and its poor. The tools of the counter-cultural in Christian worship may also include the deliberate maintenance or recovery of patterns of action which differ intentionally from prevailing cultural models. These patterns may arise from a recovered sense of Christian history, or from the wisdom of other cultures.

#### **5. Worship as Cross-cultural**

**5.1.** Jesus came to be the Savior of all people. He welcomes the treasures of earthly cultures into the city of God. By virtue of Baptism, there is one Church; and one means of living in faithful response to Baptism is to manifest ever more deeply the unity of the Church. The sharing of hymns and art and other elements of worship across cultural barriers helps enrich the whole Church and strengthen the sense of the communion of the Church. This sharing can be ecumenical as well as cross-cultural, as a witness to the unity of the Church and the oneness of Baptism. Cross-cultural sharing is possible for every church, but is especially needed in multicultural congregations and member churches.

**5.2.** Care should be taken that the music, art, architecture, gestures and postures, and other elements of different cultures are understood and respected when they are used by churches elsewhere in the world. The criteria for contextualization (above, sections 3.5 and 3.6) should be observed.

#### **6. Challenge to the Churches**

**6.1.** We call on all member churches of the Lutheran World Federation to undertake more efforts related to the transcultural, contextual, counter-cultural, and cross-cultural nature of Christian worship. We call on all member churches to recover the centrality of Baptism, Scripture with preaching, and the every-Sunday celebration of the Lord's Supper—the principal transcultural elements of Christian worship and the signs of Christian unity—as the strong center of all congregational life and mission, and as the authentic basis for contextualization. We call on all churches to give serious attention to exploring the local or contextual elements of liturgy, language, posture and gesture, hymnody and other music and musical instruments, and art and architecture for Christian worship—so that their worship may be more truly rooted in the local

culture. We call those churches now carrying out missionary efforts to encourage such contextual awareness among themselves and also among the partners and recipients of their ministries. We call on all member churches to give serious attention to the transcultural nature of worship and the possibilities for cross-cultural sharing. And we call on all churches to consider the training and ordination of ministers of Word and Sacrament, because each local community has the right to receive weekly the means of grace.

For a link to the text of this statement, go to [http://www.worship.ca/docs/lwf\\_ns.html](http://www.worship.ca/docs/lwf_ns.html)

**John Witvliet:** *The document is helpful because it calls each of us to give attention to each of these four dimensions of the gospel. To those of us who have pursued cultural relevance with just about all our attention and energy, it calls us to dwell with the transcultural dimensions of the faith and determine which parts of our culture we should resist. To those of us inclined to make universal pronouncements, the documents calls us to see the contextual nature of our own formulations and to learn from formulations from other cultural contexts that may challenge, complement, or enrich our understanding. To those of us with few if any contacts with people unlike ourselves, it invites us to the risky and rewarding prospects of forming cross-cultural friendships. The document challenges every leader, every congregation, and every denomination to not only develop their area of strength, but also their area of weakness.*

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