

The following was prepared by a meeting of youth -- delegates and stewards -- in Vancouver in connection with the WCC sixth assembly.

We are the young people at the WCC Assembly in Vancouver. We have gathered from many churches all over the world to form new relationships, to work together, to share our experiences, and to witness to our faith in Christ who struggles with us, who compels us to act, who unites us, and who gives us life.

We come from Nicaragua, where we struggle for survival and for freedom from US intervention.

We come from Africa, where the reality of poverty, disease and oppression by outside forces, and human justice and dignity is being denied, particularly in South Africa where the heresy of apartheid is being justified as biblical.

We come from the Middle East where Lebanon's demands for national sovereignty are being ignored by those who wage war on her soil and where the right of the Palestinian people to return to their homeland in the occupied territories is being denied.

We come from the Pacific, where our home is being turned into a dumping ground for nuclear wastes.

We come from Europe, where the deployment of nuclear arms and militarization bring us daily closer to Armageddon.

We come from Asia, where transnational corporations abound and militarization rages on, supported by the superpowers, which results in the unabated violation of human rights and dignity.

We come from the Caribbean, where we are caught in the midst of superpower rivalry and foreign intervention which threatens our daily lives.

We come from North America, where we are burdened by capitalistic ideals of consumerism and militarism.

We come from many broken churches and broken communities in a broken world. Our world appears to be far from the one body of Jesus Christ. Christ's desire is to reconcile us to God in one body through the cross.

We have come together in Vancouver and among the many issues that confront and concern us, one emerges with compelling urgency.

WE WANT PEACE:

- NOT as the doctrine of national security defines it -- repression, covert violence, the absence of war, BUT as God's shalom built on social justice;
- NOT as the escalation of nuclear armaments, BUT as the affirmation of human dignity and the meeting of basic human needs;
- NOT as comfort and complacency, BUT as gospel-rooted conviction and action.

We recognize that we ourselves are caught up in the structures of oppression and alienation, and at the same time we express our gratitude to God for those of us who are participating in the liberating struggles. We come with anguish and desire to be instruments of the manifest power of the gospel.

(more)

We therefore commit ourselves to participate with the poor and oppressed in their struggle for justice in order to live in peace. To this end we commit ourselves to go beyond mere proclamations and to search with determination for the means of concrete action in our own situations, in community with others, keeping alive the international and cross-confessional friendships we have formed at this meeting.

We challenge each member church through its delegates at this Assembly to work for unity and the realization of these goals.

We challenge the WCC Sixth Assembly to reinforce the ecumenical priorities outlined in this statement. The economic crisis should not be permitted to undermine ecumenical programmes for peace and justice. Unjustified criticism should not be permitted to deter concrete and effective action. In this context, the Programme to Combat Racism must be continued. We commend the Study on the Community of Women and Men in the Church, recognizing the dual nature of the oppression of women in society and the barriers to full participation of women in the church.

Furthermore, WCC initiatives in the following areas must remain priorities:

- literacy education and liberation through an ecumenical Christian education;
- disarmament and the opposition to militarism;
- human rights;
- communication networking among world youth.

Together we must move forward in the conviction that the One who wills life, wills it for all. The One who wills life is our life. The One who kindles our passions for justice and mercy is the One of whom the scriptures say:

God will judge between many peoples, and will settle disputes for strong nations far and wide. They will beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore. People will sit under their own vines, and under their own fig trees, and no one will make them afraid, for the Lord Almighty has spoken. All the nations may walk in the name of their gods; we will walk in the name of the Lord our God, for ever and ever. (Micah 4:3-5)