



## Final Report of the Task Force on Re-envisioning and Restructuring the NCC

September 16-18, 2012

**Mandate:** The Task Force will meet intensively between March and the September Governing Board meeting with a mandate to develop detailed proposals for the re-envisioning and restructuring of the NCC. It will serve as an advisory body to the Executive Committee and the Interim and Transitional General Secretaries; the Executive Committee will bring final recommendations in its report to the Governing Board. The Task Force was formed by the action of the Executive Committee at the Joint Meetings of the Executive Committee and Task Forces in February 2012.

**Co-Chairs:** Ms. Kathryn M. Lohre & Mr. Jordan Blevins

**Members:** Ms. Peg Birk

Rev. Jose Luis Casal

Ms. Martha Gardner

Bishop Thomas Hoyt

Rev. Dr. Raymon Hunt

Very Rev. Leonid

Kishkovsky Ms. Arpi

Kouzouian

Dr. Peter Makari

Rev. Roy Medley

Rev. Bruce Reyes-Chow

Rev. Karen Georgia Thompson

Dr. Tony Vrame

Rev. Dr. Sharon Watkins

Bishop John White

Bishop Sharon Zimmerman Rader

### Introduction

Over the last six months the Task Force on Re-envisioning and Restructuring the NCC (TFRR) has been on pilgrimage together with you, seeking deeper understanding about our past and present, and discerning the future to which God is calling us. Through weekly conference calls, written assignments, extensive stakeholder outreach (including staff input), and two face-to-face meetings we have come to a place where we can see a bold future for the NCC – one that is responsible to our legacy as a leading ecumenical body, and responsive to our new context for Christian witness.

This final report seeks to articulate a new vision for the NCC through a proposal for a new organizational structure and an implementation strategy that will bring it to fruition. We are grateful to have had you as companions on the journey, offering your input, feedback, and prayers. You have challenged and encouraged us, and we look forward to engaging with you in dialogue about the future of the NCC.

## Proposal

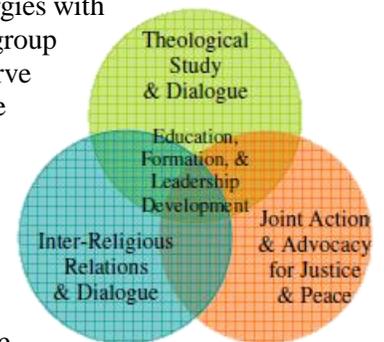
The **vision** that drives this proposal is a shared commitment to a *transformed* and *transforming* NCC through which the churches and other partners **seek visible unity in Christ and work for justice and peace**. We have built on the affirmation first stated in the final report of Task Force 2 that this dual foundation of our existence as NCC is still very relevant and needed today. Yet amidst a rapidly changing ecclesial, ecumenical, and inter-religious world we find ourselves ill-equipped to live into this vision. The institutional structures and presuppositions of our past too often have become an obstacle to our future. Therefore, the primary question this proposal seeks to address is: *How do we transition from a structure that is rigid, silo-ed, and outmoded to one that is agile, integrated, and flexible, all while building a culture based on collaboration, transparency, dignity, and trust?*

**We en-vision a future** in which the NCC focuses on three integrated areas of work:

- Theological study and dialogue
- Inter-religious relations and dialogue
- Joint action and advocacy for justice and peace

Cross-cutting work on education, formation, and leadership development will enhance each of these core areas, and bolster the special role of the NCC within the ecumenical landscape for communicating the faith through education and scripture.

**We en-vision a future** in which the NCC is a convener of the churches so that together we might work toward visible unity in Christ and galvanize prophetic public witness through joint action and advocacy of the churches. Our work will be organized at overlapping tables that integrate our three-pronged focus and draw upon synergies with partners, especially local and regional ecumenism. NCC staff will be a small group of theologically trained community organizers who facilitate the work and serve as hubs and connectors, linking people, ideas, and resources. A rapid response table comprised of advocacy, policy, and communications staff from the churches will give the member churches a stronger voice in today's public square. Creative partnerships with seminaries will be explored for their potential to enhance our theological work while providing ecumenical formation for the next generation of church leaders. Our historic commitment to the work of Faith & Order will be renewed in light of today's church-dividing issues; and our engagement with people of other faiths will be reinforced in light of today's rapidly changing religious landscape. Our witness for racial justice, economic justice, and justice for women in church and society will be revitalized, beginning with how we relate to one another as the NCC.



**We en-vision a future** in which the NCC provides space through a periodic assembly for the churches to deepen relationships; to discern strategic, time-limited priorities; and to define specific goals, outcomes, and timelines for collaborative action and advocacy for justice and peace. This assembly will be comprised of all constituents and partners of the NCC, including heads of communion, ecumenical officers, staff of the member communions, participants in NCC tables, emerging ecumenists, academicians, and local and regional ecumenical leaders.

**We en-vision a future** in which the NCC is financially sustainable. A formula will be developed so that every communion is able and will be expected to financially support the NCC to be considered a member. Our funding streams will be streamlined, with a certain percentage of designated giving going to support the ministry of the whole. A dues structure for the categories of affiliation will be created. A process for seeking grants related to the strategic priorities will be developed. As the royalties return from the Bible translations, we will begin building back the reserves.

**We en-vision a future** in which the NCC's governance is clearly differentiated. The Heads of Communion will constitute a smaller, representative Governing Board, at least for an interim period. Committees of the Board will be comprised of ecumenical officers, church staff, local and regional ecumenical leaders, emerging ecumenists, and partners.

An intergenerational think tank will be formed, serving in an advisory capacity to the Board and staff, with emerging ecumenists comprising at least 60% of membership.

**We en-vision a future** in which the NCC is enriched and emboldened through stronger partnerships. Strategic partnerships and collaborations with others will be a given in all that we do. New categories of affiliation for partner organizations, congregations, interfaith partners, and local and regional ecumenical bodies and leaders will be created.

Crucial conversations with other leading ecumenical bodies in the US will continue.

Beyond existing member communions – legacy members as it were – membership will be open to all churches that are national in their presence, and who profess Jesus Christ as the Son of God and Savior as revealed in the Bible.

**We en-vision a future** in which the NCC is once again thriving at the leading edge of ecumenical life and witness. This will be increasingly defined by how effectively we engage as convener and co-convener. Today the ecumenical vision is alive and well at the local, regional, and national levels, in no small part because of the historic vision and witness of NCC. We see with clear eyes a renewed opportunity to bear witness to our unity in Christ by weaving a national narrative of the movement in all of its expressions and contexts “so that the world may believe.”

### **Implementation Strategy**

We en-vision a transitional period from October 2012-May 2013, during which time our staff, led by Transitional General Secretary Peg Birk, will be focused on driving the implementation of this proposal. While some pieces will be implemented immediately, others will require lengthier processes or procedures. In consultation or collaboration with the leadership groups identified under each category below, staff would be expected to develop a detailed implementation strategy and timeline, the first draft of which would be presented to the Governing Board in November 2012. TGS Peg Birk will provide regular progress reports to the Governing Board.

### **Organizational Structure**

- De-commission the current commission structures.
- Assess and restructure the work at the convening tables.
- Evaluate programs/working groups to determine which are ripe for sunset or spin-off.
- Determine the best way to carry forward the Uniform Series.
- Develop a detailed plan for a periodic assembly of the NCC.

Led by: TGS/Staff & Executive Committee

### **Governance**

- Develop a process and timeline for moving into the new governance structure.
- Develop a process and timeline for creating the intergenerational think tank.
- Refine draft mission statement (appended).
- Draft governance documents that reflect the structure and ethos of this proposal.

Led by: TGS/Staff, Executive Committee & By-Laws Committee

### **Membership and Partners**

- Develop categories for affiliation and an appropriate dues structure.
- Reach out to possible partners with an invitation into the life of the NCC.
- Launch an online networking platform to engage affiliates and partners.

Led by: TGS/Staff, in consultation with the Executive Committee

### **Financial Sustainability**

- Determine the appropriate minimal contribution from member churches and a percentage of designated giving that will go to support the ministry of the whole.
- Streamline funding streams for designated giving.
- Develop a process and parameters for seeking grants.
- Nominate and elect members to the Board Development Committee.

Led by: TGS/Staff & Executive Committee in consultation with the GB and HOCs

### **Location**

- Conduct a feasibility study that would assess where the NCC can best achieve its work, providing the flexibility that reflects the convening table structure in this proposal.

Led by: TGS/Staff & Executive Committee in consultation with the GB

### **Completing the Process**

- Invite current member communions to re-covenant with one another.
- Consider possible launch event and ceremony for the new NCC connected to Ecumenical Advocacy Days in March 2013 or the May 2013 GB meeting.
- Launch the search for a new executive leader.

Led by: TGS, HOCs, Executive Committee, & Governing Board

### **Conclusion**

In the final stages of our work to develop a bold proposal, we have sought to bring clarity to both the micro- and macro-questions, ranging from *What is the precise composition of the Governing Board?* to *Is the NCC a convening council or a programmatic agency?*

Throughout the six months, our methodology has been to listen for synergies in what we were hearing from our stakeholders (new and potential), and to discern the work of the Holy Spirit amongst us.

We have been driven by a vision for transformational change in the life of the Council – not for the sake of the Council’s future, but for the life of the world. As we gathered in NYC for our final face-to-face meeting in August, we set out to establish some criteria for what transformational change would look like in the form of a proposal. We asked ourselves: *How will we know if our final proposal is bold?* We determined together that we would recognize it if it required of all of us some form of loss and a learning curve for the future. Most importantly, we determined that it would compel us to say “Yes, this is it! This is the future to which God is calling us.”

**The Task Force on Re-envisioning & Restructuring recommends** to the Executive Committee the proposal and implementation strategy detailed above.