Dear brothers and sisters in Christ

Greetings from Budapest, Hungary!

The Gospel is meant to be shared; faith is meant to be lived out. We sense that in Europe there is a new impulse to mission. There are many reasons for this, and we believe it comes from the Holy Spirit. We are inspired with a humble confidence in our faith in Jesus Christ and a sense of urgency to share it, both of which go back to the very roots of Christianity.

The gospel is meant to be shared; faith is meant to be lived out. We have been encouraged by hearing different examples of mission and evangelism, and stories of renewal. What we have learned from one another challenges us to rethink our theologies of mission in the light of new global realities, drawing on our different Christian traditions and the new perspectives coming from inside and outside Europe. In response, we recommit ourselves to working together in mission, seeing the many issues that face us not as threats but as opportunities to see the glory of God displayed.

We are participants attending the Mission Consultation of the Conference of European Churches from the 23rd to the 28th January 2007. This consultation has coincided with the end of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, which is a reminder that mission and the ecumenical commitment of our different Churches are closely associated. We are from many Christian traditions; including Anglican, Orthodox, Protestant, Roman Catholic, Evangelical and Pentecostal, and from twenty-one countries of Europe. Forty percent of us are women. The presence of a number of participants from the churches of the South and the Roma communities in Hungary is important to us. The discussions have also been enriched by contributions from younger scholars and practitioners of mission. Meeting in Central Europe, we have become more aware that Hungary interacts with both east and west. It has a long Christian heritage and a strong ecumenical commitment. We express our sincere thanks to our hosts for their generous hospitality, and for the opportunity to experience something of the riches of their faith, history and culture.

Our theme has two parts: “Come, Holy Spirit, heal and reconcile in Europe”, which recalls the theme of the Conference of World Mission and Evangelism at Athens in 2005, and challenges us to explore the implications of that global gathering for our European context. The second
part, “Illuminate the whole of humankind with the light of Christ” refers us forward to the theme of the Third European Ecumenical Assembly to be held in Sibiu, Romania, in September 2007. On the way from Athens to Sibiu, we have been participating together in a programme of prayerful reading of the Bible (\textit{lectio divina}), plenary presentations, a wide variety of workshops, discussions in plenary and in small groups, and worship according to several traditions. We have also interacted informally during breaks and over shared meals.

We are called to take our European context and the changing landscape of Christianity seriously. Globalisation is bringing changes in demography, increasing urbanisation, tensions in inter-religious relations and great economic realities. In Europe today we are aware of new lifestyles and ways of belief. There are many bitter memories to be healed. There are struggles for identity for nations, ethnic groups, and for Europe herself. In this time of transition, we are struggling to make sense of our faith anew amidst a plurality of worldviews. New forms of mission are emerging. For example, there are different patterns of sending and receiving. The presence of migrant churches among us, their needs and gifts, has come very much to our attention, and it contributes to the new shape of the church in Europe.

In this situation, we invite you to join with us in a renewed commitment to mission and evangelism. During the consultation we have explored the particular importance of ministries of healing and reconciliation in our context; these expressions of mission, which were highlighted at Athens in 2005, are needed within and among our churches as well as outside them. Engaging in healing and reconciliation means adopting a pastoral orientation in mission as well as a messianic one, and fulfilling a mediatory as well as a prophetic role. From one another we have learnt about many other ways of mission and evangelism, and raised questions and controversial issues to refer for further work by churches, other consultations and by the CEC-CCEE assembly at Sibiu later this year; these are recorded in more detail in the consultation report.

We thank God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit - who forgives our sins and invites us to be part of his mission. We look forward to doing mission and evangelism together, sharing the cost and also the joy. Recognising obstacles and opportunities in our present context, we are dependent on the Holy Spirit to guide us and to illuminate the whole of humankind with the light of Christ. Come, Holy Spirit!

The participants of the Mission Consultation of the Conference of European Churches
Budapest, 27 January 2007