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"WITH A  
DEMONSTRATION  
OF THE  
SPIRIT  
AND OF  
POWER"

Seventh International  
Consultation of United and  
Uniting Churches

**EDITED BY THOMAS F. BEST**

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# Table of Contents

- vii Foreword *Bas Plaisier and Leo J. Koffeman*  
xi Introduction *Thomas F. Best*

## I. Report

- 3 Message from the Consultation  
13 Information Release

## II. Papers

### UNITY

- 19 Unity: A Contribution from the Reformed Tradition  
*Martien E. Brinkman*  
31 The Ghanaian Ministry for London: A Case Study on Unity  
*Francis Amenu*  
39 The Impact of Unity: A Case Study  
*Leo J. Koffeman*

### MISSION

- 46 A Mission of Unity and a Unity of Mission: Perspectives in the  
Mission of United and Uniting Churches  
*Jerry Pillay*  
59 A Case Study in Mission: The United Church in Jamaica and the  
Cayman Islands  
*Norbert D. Stephens*  
69 A Case Study on the Relationship between Mission and Unity:  
The Uniting Church in Australia  
*Terence Corkin*

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IDENTITY

- 76 Earthen Vessels or God's Building? The Identity of United and Uniting Churches  
*David M. Thompson*
- 99 Churches Uniting in Christ: A Case Study in Identity  
*Michael Kinnamon*
- 105 A Case Study on Identity: The Communion of Churches in India  
*D.K. Sahu*

**III. Special Account**

- 115 The Dutch Reformed Church Family in South Africa: Lessons Learned on the Way to Reunification  
*Piet Meiring*

**IV. Bible Studies**

- 135 Unity, Mission, Identity: In Paul's Ephesus – and Now?  
*Jet den Hollander*
- 144 Approaching Identity through Exile – a Welsh Perspective  
*Peter Cruchley-Jones*
- 156 "What Kind of Fools Are We?": God's Wisdom in Our World Today  
*Bertrice Y. Wood*

**V. Sermons**

- 163 The Search for Unity: The Task of the Church  
*John W. Gladstone*
- 168 Homily on John 21:1-14  
*John A. Radano*
- 173 The Imperative of Unity  
*Bas Plaisier*
- 177 **Participants**
- 180 **Contributors**

## Foreword

BAS PLAISIER AND LEO J. KOFFEMAN

It is a happy coincidence that this book is being published in 2004. For us, as the hosting churches of the seventh international consultation of United and Uniting churches held 12-18 September 2002 in Driebergen, Netherlands, the year 2004 has historic significance. As from 1 May 2004, our process of unification into one Protestant Church in the Netherlands will be completed. Together the Netherlands Reformed Church (NRC), the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (RCN) and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Kingdom of the Netherlands (ELC) continue their existence – and, what is more vital, their ministry in this world.

For us this perspective was a major reason for inviting Faith and Order to organize the seventh consultation in the Netherlands. Whereas tensions were increasing in the final stage of our unification process, we hoped to find encouragement from the worldwide family of United and Uniting churches. At the same time, we were aware of some experiences of ours which might serve the continuing ecclesial and theological quest for the unity we seek. In September 2002, both expectations were met – and abundantly so! It was a privilege for us to host so many ecumenical friends.

The request to write a foreword to this publication of the Driebergen consultation offers us a welcome opportunity to present a modest update regarding recent developments in our country. Over the last eighteen months the three synods involved were able to take the required steps according to schedule. Final decisions were taken on 12 December 2003, and we are pleased to include below the Declaration on Unification signed that evening by representatives of the synods. (Church courts in the NRC and RCN still have to deal with formal appeals against these decisions, but we are confident that no further delay will be necessary – even though, after the completion of internal procedures, civil court cases could take a few more years.)

The Driebergen consultation focused on three key words: unity – identity – mission. More than we had expected, the completion of the unification process generated new interest in issues of identity and