

Endorsement by Territorial Leadership.

CHARTA OECUMENICA

A new stage for the churches on the way to a common mission in Europe.

At the conclusion of a joint meeting of the Conference of European Churches and the Council of European Bishops' Conferences the CEC President, Metropolitan Jérémie Caligiorgis of Paris and the CCEE President, Cardinal Miloslav Vlk of Prague signed the protocol to the document, commending it as a basic text for all churches and Bishops' Conferences in Europe to receive and to implement in their various contexts.

The eight-page document is subtitled "Guidelines for the Growing Cooperation among the Churches in Europe". Its 12 points contain basic declarations on strengthening the churches' common faith; intensifying their sharing in teaching and pastoral work; promoting greater cooperation in Christian education and theological training; deepening spiritual community among the churches through prayer, and getting to know one another's worship and other forms of spiritual life.

The churches are to make visible their commitment as a community to defend human rights and to work for justice, peace and the integrity of creation; and to share in responsibility for the building of Europe, especially in the area of reconciliation and in developing a community of values such as humane attitudes, social consciousness and solidarity throughout Europe. Other important concerns are the strengthening of relationships with Judaism and cultivating relations with Islam. The document also encourages encounters with other religions and world views in what is increasingly recognised as Europe's pluralistic society.

The Charta Oecumenica seeks to stimulate anew the churches' common witness to their faith throughout Europe. It not only enumerates areas of cooperation, but also calls on the churches to commit themselves to work in these areas, by receiving the concerns described in the document and implementing them at practical levels in their church and national life.

Along with other denominations the Salvation Army in the United Kingdom submitted responses to the first draft and is pleased to see that many of its concerns have been incorporated in the final document.

Some Salvationists may still be concerned about references to 'mutual recognition of baptism and in Eucharistic fellowship' but we view this as an acceptance of each other's varied practices and understandings with a commitment to fellowship.

Commissioner Hughes indicates, "Copies of the Charta Oecumenica have been distributed to Divisional Commanders and the United Kingdom Territory is pleased to endorse the Charta with the desire that the Church will become one in witness and work – and I want to challenge Salvationists to take a lead in cooperating ecumenically, looking beyond the shores of this island to the wider European community of which we are a part"

Alan Dixon
29 January 2002