

**REFORMED STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO USCCB REFUSAL TO APPROVE  
COMMON AGREEMENT ON MUTUAL RECOGNITION OF BAPTISM**

With deep disappointment, the Christian Reformed Church in North America [CRCNA], the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the Reformed Church in America (RCA), and the United Church of Christ (UCC) have received official word from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) that the USCCB will not approve the *Common Agreement on Mutual Recognition of Baptism*.

In a letter dated May 26, 2009, Archbishop Wilton D. Gregory, Chair of the Bishops' Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, reported that "...the competent bodies of the USCCB examined the *Common Agreement on Mutual Recognition of Baptism* and voted not to approve it in the form in which it had been adopted by the Reformed-Roman Catholic dialogue...."

The agreement had been forwarded to the Reformed partners for action in February 2008. The 218th General Assembly (2008) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) subsequently approved the agreement and the presbyteries ratified it. The CRCNA, RCA and UCC were preparing to present the agreement to their General Synods, but postponed further action on the agreement after the USCCB indicated concerns with it in the fall of 2008.

We recognize that at any point in ecumenical dialogue, a communion holds the prerogative to indicate it cannot move forward after having received the document. This is the point the USCCB has reached. In order for the *Common Agreement on Mutual Recognition of Baptism* to be acceptable to the USCCB, additional emendations would be necessary. Some of these emendations were not acceptable to the Reformed partners and were not included in the document that was originally sent to the churches for action and upon which the PC(USA) 218th General Assembly and presbyteries voted.

Because the USCCB has not approved the agreement, it will now become a document archived for study and future dialogue, but will not have authoritative standing in any of the above churches.

The *Common Agreement on Mutual Recognition of Baptism*, along with the study document *These Living Waters* stands as a record of our dialogue and an offering for future study and dialogue. We recognize that Reformed congregations and Roman Catholic parishes have long since recognized the baptisms in one another's churches. We anticipate that this will continue, despite our current inability to formally reach consensus on a national level.

The Seventh Round of Reformed Roman Catholic dialogue will continue to work on its study of the Eucharist and will complete a final report to send to the churches in 2011.

June 16, 2009