



BUGEMA UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY AND RELIGIOUS STUDIES

RELP 3212: MODERN ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

A self-instructional undergraduate course module

Course Writers: Alexander Mwita, PhD¹

Course Editor: Amos Bright Kahwa²

¹ Dean, School of Theology and Religious Studies, Bugema University

² Director, Ellen G White Study Centre, Bugema University

COURSE INFORMATION

Course Code: RELP 3212:

Course Title: MODERN ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

Credit Unit: 3 (45 Hrs)

Semester: One

Course Duration: 8 weeks (One hour each day for five days a week, 2 hours for presentation of portfolio, and 3 hours for final examination= 45 Hours)

PREFACE

Welcome to the course **MODERN ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT**. The course introduces students to the historical origins, theological foundations, major organizations, achievements, and challenges of the modern ecumenical movement. It critically examines the development of ecumenism from the nineteenth-century missionary conferences through the establishment of the World Council of Churches and subsequent ecumenical initiatives. Particular attention is given to biblical and theological perspectives on Christian unity, the contributions of major Christian traditions, and the response of the Seventh-day Adventist Church to ecumenical developments. Students will also explore contemporary issues such as interchurch dialogue, religious liberty, mission, globalization, and the implications of ecumenism for Christian witness in the twenty-first century.

COURSE DESCRIPTION, RATIONALE, AND COMPETENCIES

Course Description

This course is a study on the attempts to unite the Christian churches into one organic body from the early Christian era to the present. It will focus on the etymological sketch of ecumenism; early trajectories of the ecumenical movement; the history of the modern ecumenical movement; teachings on unity; the modern ecumenical challenge; and adventism and the ecumenical movement. This course guide gives you an overview of the study and practice of the ecumenical movement, as well as everything you will need to do to complete and walk through the course. Some general guidelines are suggested for the amount of time you should devote to each unit to successfully achieve the goals and objectives of the course.

Course Rationale

The study of the Modern Ecumenical Movement is essential for students of theology because it provides a comprehensive understanding of one of the most influential developments in contemporary Christianity. As churches increasingly interact through theological dialogue, cooperative mission, humanitarian initiatives, and responses to global challenges, ministers and Christian leaders require a sound understanding of the historical origins, theological foundations, objectives, and practical expressions of ecumenism.

From the perspective of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the course equips students to examine ecumenical developments through the authority of Scripture and the distinctive beliefs of the Adventist faith. It develops the ability to distinguish between biblical unity and organizational or doctrinal uniformity, to understand the Adventist Church's official relationship with ecumenical organizations, and to participate in respectful dialogue with people of other Christian traditions without compromising biblical convictions.

Course Competence

This program aims to provide students with;

1. Ability to describe the term ecumenism and its historical and theological foundations.
2. Ability to analyze the development of the ecumenical movement from the early Church to modern times
3. Skill to evaluate theological and practical teachings on Christian unity
4. Ability to describe the challenges facing modern ecumenical efforts.
5. Capacity to assess the position and response of the Seventh-day Adventist Church to ecumenism
6. Capacity to demonstrate an informed and balanced attitude toward inter-church relations and dialogue

Course Objectives

The course aim is to provide students with;

1. Understanding of the term ecumenism and its historical and theological foundations.
2. Discussion of the development of the ecumenical movement from the early Church to modern times.
3. Knowledge of theological and practical teachings on Christian unity.
4. Understanding of the challenges facing modern ecumenical efforts.
5. Understanding of the position and response of the Seventh-day Adventist Church to ecumenism.
6. An informed and balanced attitude toward inter-church relations and dialogue

Course Learning Outcomes

At the end of the course, the learner should be able to;

1. Define the term ecumenism and explain its historical and theological foundations.
2. Analyze the development of the ecumenical movement from the early Church to modern times.
3. Evaluate theological and practical teachings on Christian unity.
4. Describe the challenges facing modern ecumenical efforts.
5. Assess the position and response of the Seventh-day Adventist Church to ecumenism.
6. Demonstrate an informed and balanced attitude toward inter-church relations and dialogue

HOW TO USE THIS MODULE

In self-distance learning, the study units replace the university lecturer. This is one of the great advantages of distance learning; you can read and work through specially designed study materials at your own pace and at a time and place that suit you best. Think of it as reading the lecture instead of listening to a lecturer. In the same way that a lecturer might set you some reading to do, the study units tell you when to read your books or other material, and when to embark on assignments. Just as a lecturer might give you an in-class exercise, your study units provide exercises for you to do at appropriate points. Each of the study units follows a common format.

The first item is an introduction to the subject matter of the unit and how a particular unit is integrated with the other units and the course as a whole. Next is a set of learning objectives.

These objectives let you know what you should be able to do by the time you have completed the unit. You should use these objectives to guide your study. When you have finished the unit, you must go back and check whether you have achieved the objectives. If you make a habit of doing this, you will significantly improve your chances of passing the course and getting the best grade. The main body of the unit guides you through the required reading from other sources. This will usually be either from your set books or from a readings section.

The purpose of the practicum **“Religious Dialogue Practicum”** (see **module 4**) is to provide learners with an opportunity to move beyond theoretical discussions and engage directly with individuals from other faith traditions through respectful conversation, observation, and reflection. It also encourages understanding, mutual respect, and constructive relationships while maintaining one’s own religious convictions

Organize a study schedule. Refer to the 'Course overview' for more details. Note the time you are expected to spend on each unit and how the assignments relate to the units. Important information, e.g., details of your lecturer and the date of the first day of the semester. You need to gather together all this information in one place, such as your diary or a wall calendar. Whatever method you choose to use, you should decide on and write in your own dates for the working breach unit.

1. Once you have created your own study schedule, do everything you can to stick to it. The major reason that students fail is that they get behind with their coursework. If you get into difficulties with your schedule, please let your lecturer know before it is too late for help.
2. Turn to Unit 1 and read the introduction and the objectives for the unit.
3. Assemble the study materials. Information about what you need for a unit is given in the 'Overview' at the beginning of each unit. You will also need both the study unit you are working on and one of your set books on your desk at the same time.
4. Work through the unit. The content of the unit itself has been arranged to provide a sequence for you to follow. As you work through the unit, you will be instructed to read sections from your set books or other articles. Use the unit to guide your reading.
5. Work before the relevant due date (about 4 weeks before the due dates), and get the Assignment File for the next required assignment. Keep in mind that you will learn a lot by doing the assignments carefully. They have been designed to help you meet the objectives of the course and, therefore, will help you pass the exam. Submit all assignments no later than the due date.
6. Review the objectives for each study unit to confirm that you have achieved them. If you feel unsure about any of the objectives, review the study material or consult your lecturer.
7. When you are confident that you have achieved a unit's objectives, you can then start on the next unit. Proceed unit by unit through the course and try to pace your study so that you keep yourself on schedule.
8. After completing the last unit, review the course and prepare yourself for the final examination. Check that you have achieved the unit objectives (listed at the beginning of each unit) and the course objectives (listed in this Course Guide), and arrange your portfolio beginning with the deliverables of the first module to the last.

ASSESSMENT

Assessment is designed to test knowledge, ministry judgement, practical skill, ethical responsibility, and reflective integration. All assignments completed during the semester are compiled in a continuous assessment portfolio worth 50% of the course grade. The end-of-semester examination or capstone assignment is worth the remaining 50%.

To complete this course, engage diligently with the study units, reference materials, and community engagement practicum (identify an ethical issue within a community and help the community to make ethical decisions based on Scripture and sound moral principles, and write a report). Each unit contains deliverables designed to test your understanding. Each deliverable assignment from **each module** and the community engagement practicum must be compiled into a portfolio file for formative assessment. The final examination will be done face-to-face on the main Campus. This 8-week course demands dedication and active involvement to harness the knowledge and skills presented fully.

Learning Schedule

The Learning schedule provided outlines the completion of assignments and the practical project. Adhering to this schedule is crucial to ensure that you participate in the learning, do the assignments, and attend to the practicum. Proactive planning and consistent effort will prevent any lag in your progress.

Assessment

The assessment comprises assignments, practical evaluation, and final examination. The assessments require a student to apply the knowledge and skills acquired throughout the course. Your engagement and submissions must align with deadlines stated in the Presentation Schedule. The practical assignment plays a pivotal role in your final assessment, emphasizing the importance of your contribution to community development.

Deliverables Assignments and Final Examination

There are 3 Deliverables Assignments (DA) and one practicum report in this course. You will submit all the assignments. You are encouraged to work on all the questions thoroughly. The DA constitute 30% of the final score, and one practicum report constitutes 20% of the final score of the course. You will be able to complete your assignments from the information and materials contained in your set books, reading and study units. However, you should demonstrate that you have read and researched more widely than the required minimum.

You should use other references to have a broad viewpoint of the subject and also to give you a deeper understanding of the subject. When you have completed each assignment, write a cover page showing the unit addressed and the date completed, then file it in the portfolio. If, for any reason, you cannot complete your work on time, write a note explaining why it was not done on time and how you compensated for the time. The portfolio will be presented face to

face at the main Campus (Bugema University) one week before the final examination. Examination will be granted only after the portfolio is successfully presented.

Assessment Plan

Component	Description	Weight
Continuous Assessment Portfolio	Three Module deliverables, Religious Dialogue Practicum	50%
End-of-Semester Examination / Capstone Assignment	Integrated application of Christian ethics	50%
Total		100%

University Grading System

Score Range	Letter Grade	Performance Description	Quality Points
80-100%	A	Excellent	5.00
75% – 79.99%	B+	Very Good	4.50
70% – 74.99%	B	Good	4.00
65% – 69.99%	C+	Above Average	3.50
60% - 64.99%	C		3.00
55% – 59.99%	D+	Average	2.50
50% - 54.99%	D	Below Average	2.00
0% - 49.99%	F	Failure	1.00

Study Units

There are three (3) modules of fifteen (13) units and one (1) Practicum. The modules should be studied carefully and diligently to acquire a complete understanding of the content of the course.

MODULE ONE: INTRODUCTION TO ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

UNIT 1 Definition: Etymological Sketch

UNIT 2 What Ecumenism Does Not Mean: Some Common Misconception

- UNIT 3 Models of Christian Unity
UNIT 4 Biblical Understanding of Unity

MODULE TWO: MODERN ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

- UNIT 5 History of the Modern Ecumenical Movement
UNIT 6 Modern Ecumenical Understanding of Unity
UNIT 7 Modern Ecumenical Understanding of Belief
UNIT 8 Modern Ecumenical Understanding of Scripture
UNIT 9 Modern Ecumenical Understanding of Mission and Evangelism
UNIT 10 Vatican II Council

MODULE THREE: SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST AND ECUMENISM

- UNIT 11 Inter-Church/Interfaith Relations
UNIT 12 Why Adventists Participate in UN and Ecumenical Meetings
UNIT 13 Ellen White's Counsel on Ecumenism

MODULE FOUR: RELIGIOUS DIALOGUES PRACTICUM

References

- Beach, W.R. *Ecumenism*. Review and Herald Publishing Association, Washington, 1974.
- Fortin, Denis. *One in Christ: Biblical Concepts for a Doctrine of Church Unity*. Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2018.
- Gros, Jeffrey Eamon McManus, and Ann Riggs. *Introduction to Ecumenism*. New York: Paulist Press, 1998.
- Gulley, Norman R. *Systematic Theology: The Church and The Last Things*. Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2016.
- Klingbeil, Gerald A. "United We Stand: A Biblical Perspective on Ecumenical Relations." *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, Vol 25 no. 2 (2014): 104-131.
- Mwita, Alexander. "Ecumenical Challenge in the Third Millennium" *East African Journal of Education and Social Sciences* Vol 5 no. 1 (2024): 11-18.
- Nelson, R. David and Charles Raith II. *Ecumenism: A Guide for the Perplexed*. New York: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2017.

MODULE 1: INTRODUCTION TO ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

UNIT 1: DEFINITION: ETYMOLOGICAL SKETCH

Unit Structure

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Learning Outcomes (LOs)
- 1.3 Main Content
 - 1.3.1 Defining Ecumenism
 - 1.3.2. A Brief Etymological Sketch
- 1.4 Learning Activities
- 1.5 Reference

Estimated study time	3 hours
Core reading	R. David Nelson and Charles Raith II. <i>Ecumenism: A Guide for the Perplexed</i> . New York: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2017.
Key terms	Ecumenism, Ecumenical, Ecumenist, oikoumenē
Biblical anchor	Mt. 21: 13; 24:14; Acts 11:28; 16:31; Heb. 1:6



1.0 Introduction

Welcome to Module One. The first unit in this module is the Definition and etymological sketch of ecumenism. The concept of ecumenism emerges from this longing for Christian unity and cooperation among believers of different traditions. Imagine a choir where many voices sing different parts, yet together they produce one beautiful harmony. In the same way, ecumenism invites Christians to appreciate their diversity while seeking common faith, mutual understanding, and shared mission in proclaiming the gospel to the world. This unit introduces students to the meaning, purpose, and significance of ecumenism within the life and mission of the Christian church.



1.2 Learning Outcomes (LOs)

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

1. Define the concept of ecumenism
2. Explain historical foundations of ecumenism
3. Critically evaluate how early church concept of ecumenism differ from the later concept, during the time of East-West schism of the eleventh century and the Reformations of the sixteenth century



1.3 Main Content

1.3.1. Defining Ecumenism

“Ecumenism” is a slippery word to define for at least two reasons. First, its etymology is quite complex, as the meaning of “ecumenism” and related words has changed considerably over the course of the history of Christianity. One must take this entire development into account to understand what the word group signifies today. Second, even though, as we shall see, its contemporary usage is relatively unambiguous, “ecumenism” is often used incorrectly or even pejoratively by critics of the modern ecumenical movement or of particular ecumenical endeavors.

1.3.2. A Brief Etymological Sketch

The word “ecumenism” and various related terms such as “ecumenical,” “ecumenist,” and “ecumenicism” all derive from the Hellenistic Greek noun *oikoumenē*, which is used in a number of places in the New Testament (e.g., Mt. 24:14; Acts 11:28; Heb. 1:6), and is itself part of the *oikos* (dwelling or house; e.g., Mt. 21:13; Acts 16:31) word group. While the meaning of *oikoumenē* in the New Testament varies depending on the context, it is generally used in reference to the indwelt or inhabited world: “Their voice has gone out into all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world [*oikoumenēs*]” (Rom. 10:18). In its linguistic context in the Bible, then, for something to be “ecumenical” means that, in some way or another, it pertains to the entire inhabited world.

In Christianity the term began to be used early on to describe a phenomenon within the Christian movement that is, in some sense, “universal” or “general,” such as a council or creed. The one true “ecumenical” creed (that is, the only creed still recognized in both the Eastern and Western divisions of Christianity), the Nicene Creed, adopted at Nicaea I and amended at

Constantinople I, is still designated as such because it was ratified by the universal church of its time. Likewise, the church itself, the household of God, was considered by Christians from early on to be “ecumenical” **by virtue of the fact that the “one” church is “universal” in scope**; that is, **it encompasses the entire world** and not just one region of the world.

For roughly the first millennium of the church’s existence, this correspondence of meaning between “ecumenical” and “universal” went unchallenged. However, as a result of the East-West schism of the eleventh century and the Reformations of the sixteenth century, the idea of one church, universal in scope, was no longer obvious. By consequence, “ecumenism” and its cognates fell somewhat out of use, or else came to be employed only with a sigh of longing for what once had been. In the divided church, that is, the idea of ecumenism gradually became associated with a problem, namely, the scandal of Christianity’s divisions. Significantly, it was in the context of Christian missionary work that this problem proved most scandalous.

During the era of Western Christianity’s global expansion, missionaries from the various churches found themselves bumping up against each other, often at odds, in the pursuit of new converts. In time, missionary workers, theologians, and other church leaders realized that Christianity’s public witness suffered when missions and evangelism were seen as competitive enterprises. At the turn of the twentieth century, the “ecumenism” word group received fresh expression within this context. Mobilized by the common mission to reach the unconverted, the churches revived the idea of ecumenism in turning toward each other to address the historical Christian divisions.



1.4 Learning Activities

Self-Assessment Question: Critically evaluate how early church concept of ecumenism differ from the later concept, during the time of East-West schism of the eleventh century and the Reformations of the sixteenth century.



1.5 References

R. David Nelson and Charles Raith II. *Ecumenism: A Guide for the Perplexed*. New York: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2017.

UNIT 2: WHAT ECUMENISM DOES NOT MEAN: SOME COMMON MISCONCEPTION

Unit Structure

- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Learning Outcomes (LOs)
- 2.3 Main Content
- 2.4 Learning Activities
- 2.5 Deliverable Assignment
- 2.6 References

Estimated study time	3 hours
Core reading	R. David Nelson and Charles Raith II. <i>Ecumenism: A Guide for the Perplexed</i> . New York: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2017.
Key terms	Theological Dialogue, Misconception, Religious Identity
Biblical anchor	Mt. 21: 13; 24:14; Acts 11:28; 16:31; Heb. 1:6



2.1 Introduction

Ecumenism is often misunderstood, especially in contexts where religious identity is strongly tied to doctrinal precision and denominational loyalty. Some assume it implies religious dialogue or some sort of discussions. Yet, at its heart, ecumenism is not the dissolution of religious discussion and religious liberty forums. This unit therefore, invites learners to reconsider common misconceptions and to explore ecumenism from its modern concerns and goals.



2.2 Learning Outcomes (LOs)

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

1. Identify and explain common misconceptions associated with ecumenism in contemporary Christian contexts.
2. Distinguish between ecumenism and theological dialogue



2.3 Main Content

Although today the “ecumenism” word group is employed almost exclusively to refer to the pursuit of Christian unity or to the academic study of that pursuit, it is common for these terms to fall into misuse. For instance, occasionally the “ecumenism” word group is employed to describe what is more properly identified as “interreligious” dialogue or activity. However, ecumenical work and interreligious dialogue are different phenomena, and imprecision at this point has led and will continue to lead to misunderstandings of the tasks and goals of ecumenism—and of dialogue between Christianity and other religions, for that matter. Ecumenical dialogue presupposes a particular starting point for reflection on God and religion, namely, the person and work of Jesus Christ, whom Christians confess as God incarnate and Lord. Ecumenical work proceeds on the assumption that the “other” shares this confession. Cardinal Walter Cardinal documented that “Jesus Christ himself is the basis and the goal of all our dialogue. Through our common Baptism we are in Him, and to the degree we are fully united with Him we will be united also among ourselves in a unity according to the exemplar and source of the mystery of unity in the Holy Trinity.”¹ This confession at the foundational level of ecumenical work necessarily gives rise to approaches, tasks, norms, and sources of dialogue that are fundamentally different from those that mark discussions occurring in interreligious contexts. Beyond this, and introducing an important theological perspective, most ecumenists contend that Christian unity is itself rooted in the person and work of Jesus Christ and, as such, is not something that the churches can produce or make manifest sheerly by virtue of their own efforts. The invisible unity that Christians share because of their common confession of Jesus Christ has been visibly distorted, obscured, and weakened because of sin, at least so this theological approach to ecumenism goes. God alone is able to solve the problem

¹Walter Cardinal Kasper, *Harvesting the Fruits: Basic Aspects of Christian Faith in Ecumenical Dialogue* (London: Continuum T&T Clark, 2009), 6.

of sin and thereby cure the deep wounds of Christian disunity; no human activity can truly be said to create or advance unity. Such theological commitments result in a basis for dialogue that is substantively different from what is possible in the context of interreligious activity. To put this another way: ecumenical dialogue presupposes unity and sees division as a scandal that undermines that unity, while, to the contrary, no such unity need be nor can be presupposed in interreligious dialogue. Hence, while interreligious dialogue remains an essential component of Christianity's public witness, it is fundamentally different from Christian ecumenism (though the extent of the difference remains a point of dispute).

An additional clarification involves the nature of the unity at stake in ecumenism. Many critics of ecumenism have argued that ecumenical work amounts to watering down the Christian faith for the sake of a superficial "unity"; or that ecumenists twist and turn the radical gospel of Jesus Christ to create a "nice" or "polite" Christian message that eradicates appropriate lines of demarcation and blurs necessary distinctions; or that ecumenism is more about advocating for social justice and political causes than healing historic divisions over doctrines and practices. To be sure, such aspects have marked the story of the modern ecumenical movement from its very start. It can be demonstrated that, at times, ecumenists have indeed foreshortened the hard work of overcoming doctrinal disagreements for the sake of claiming ecumenical achievements that were later proved hollow.



2.4 Learning Activities

Self-Assessment Question. Using the content provided and other sources, critically explain misconception of ecumenism



2.5 References

R. David Nelson and Charles Raith II. *Ecumenism: A Guide for the Perplexed*. New York: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2017

UNIT 3: MODELS OF CHRISTIAN UNITY

Unit Structure

- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Learning Outcomes (LOs)
- 3.3 Main Content
 - 3.3.1 Federations
 - 3.3.2 Communion
 - 3.3.3 Organic Unions
- 3.4 Learning Activities
- 3.5 References

Estimated study time	3 hours
Core reading	Mwita, Alexander. "Ecumenical Challenge in the Third Millennium" East African Journal of Education and Social Sciences vol 5 no 1 (2024): 11-18. https://doi.org/10.46606/eajess2024v05i01.0344
Key terms	Christian Unity, Models of Unity, Ecclesiology
Biblical anchor	John 17



3.1 Introduction

Throughout the history of Christianity, the longing for visible unity among believers has taken different conceptual and practical forms, often described as “models of Christian unity.” These models reflect varied understandings of how churches might relate to one another while remaining faithful to the teachings of Jesus Christ and the apostolic tradition. These models include federations, communions, and organic unity. Like different maps attempting to represent the same landscape, each model highlights particular dimensions of unity while grappling with the complexity of doctrinal diversity, ecclesial identity, and mission. This unit therefore introduces learners to these models, enabling critical reflection on how Christian unity may be understood, expressed, and pursued in a fragmented ecclesial context.



3.2 Learning Outcomes (LOs)

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

1. Describe the major models of Christian unity and their historical foundations.
2. Compare and contrast different models of unity in terms of ecclesiology, doctrine, and practice.
3. Critically evaluate the strengths and limitations of each model in relation to the biblical vision of the Church and the mission of Jesus Christ.



1.3 Main Content

3.3.1 Federations

Federations of churches emerge when independent churches bind themselves together for the sake of unified public Christian witness. The federal model of unity assumes that cooperation among churches leads to more effective expressions of public action than is possible when member churches publicly act on their own. For instance, global federations of churches are able to mobilize humanitarian efforts and disaster relief projects by drawing on financial and personnel resources that are considerably more substantial than those available to regional member churches. Federations, however, do not simply come into existence whenever a humanitarian crisis or social-justice need or evangelistic opportunity arises. Rather, federations are permanent organizations, usually possessing recognized legal statuses, and marked by whatever polities member churches agreed on. All of this reflects an ecclesiological commitment involving a particular conception of Christian unity, namely, that church unity

finds visible expression when churches join together in service. Federal approaches to unity among Protestant churches predate the modern ecumenical movement. Especially during the era of Christianity's global expansion through missionary work, independent Protestant churches with common heritages established federations for the sake of unified witness. To point to a prominent example, the Baptist World Alliance, a global federation of Baptist churches founded in 1905, formed so that member churches might have a global platform for evangelization, humanitarian work, and the protection of human rights. Member churches, such as the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Lutheran Church in Great Britain, retain their independent statuses and have their own distinct decision-making governments. The LWF, which is governed by a representative bureaucracy led by a president and a general secretary, provides member churches a permanent and organized global apparatus for humanitarian work, evangelization, disaster relief, ecumenical engagement, and interreligious dialogue.

3.3.2 Communions

Churches differing from one another in name, polity, and theology may occasionally find it prudent to create among them structures of unity. Most commonly, such unity emerges within particular geographic regions, as churches close to each other in proximity but different in stripe determine that it is better to worship, work, and witness together than it is to do so apart. The foundation for these structures of unity is the mutual recognition of the churches involved.

The churches seeking unity, that is, must recognize each other as churches, in spite of the fact that differences in name, historical origin, governmental structure, and core theological commitments persist. On the basis of this spirit of mutual recognition, churches are able to build communions among them marked by common, but not necessarily uniform, expressions of faith and practice. The degree of uniformity varies from communion to communion and corresponds to a number of factors. For instance, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and the Episcopal Church in the United States (ECUSA) currently exist in communion with each other, even though they remain distinct in polity, legal status, liturgy, and theology.

3.3.2 Organic Unity

In moving to address this third category of Christian unity, we are not simply leaving behind the independence of denominations and churches. However, “organic” or “corporate” unions do require participating churches to sacrifice more aspects of their own identities than federations or communions. Ecumenists widely acknowledge that the sheerly one Christian church is an eschatological reality, invisible so long as relations between the churches are marked by sin. Organic unions emerge when the one church—the fully and visibly united church of the eschaton—is targeted, and the participating churches give and adjust accordingly. The Edinburgh Faith and Order conference (1937) expresses this model in somewhat idealized fashion, which, nevertheless, is instructive for our purposes here. The idea of “corporate union” must remain for the vast majority of Christians their ideal. In a church so united the ultimate loyalty of every member would be given to the whole body and not to any part of it.

Its members would freely move from one part to another and find every privilege of membership open to them. The sacraments would be the sacraments of the whole body. The ministry would be accepted by all as a ministry of the whole body. Our task is to find in God, to receive from God his gift, a unity which can take up and preserve in one beloved community all the varied spiritual gifts which he has given us in our separations.¹⁴ (Edinburgh (1937), 252–53. Cited in Meyer, *That All May Be One*, 95).



3.3 Learning Activities

Read an article by Alexander Mwita (Types of Unity). Mwita, Alexander. “Ecumenical Challenge in the Third Millennium” *East African Journal of Education and Social Sciences* vol 5 no 1 (2024): 11-18. <https://doi.org/10.46606/eajess2024v05i01.0344>



3.5 References

Mwita, Alexander. “Ecumenical Challenge in the Third Millennium” *East African Journal of Education and Social Sciences* Vol 5 no. 1 (2024): 11-18.

UNIT 4: BIBLICAL UNDERSTANDING OF UNITY

Unit Structure

- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Learning Outcomes (LOs)
- 4.3 Main Content
 - 4.3.1 Old Testament
 - 4.3.2 New Testament
- 4.4 Learning Activities
- 4.5 Deliverable Assignment
- 4.6 References

Estimated study time	3 hours
Core reading	R. David Nelson and Charles Raith II. <i>Ecumenism: A Guide for the Perplexed</i> . New York: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2017.
Key terms	Trinitarian God; Creation Account, Fellowship, Mission
Biblical anchor	20: 8,10; 1Sam 11:7; Ezra 3:1; Neh 8:1; Psalm 133:1; John 17:11, 23; Acts 2:44-47; 4:32; Eph 4:13



4.1 Introduction

Within the biblical narrative, unity is not merely an institutional arrangement but a deeply theological reality grounded in the very nature of God and the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. From the oneness of God affirmed in the Shema (Deuteronomy 6:4) to the communal life of the early church in Acts, Scripture consistently portrays unity as both a divine gift and a moral calling. The New Testament further develops this vision by presenting the Church as one body with many members, held together by the Holy Spirit and bound in love, truth, and shared confession of faith. This unit therefore invites learners to explore how biblical texts shape a theological understanding of unity that transcends human divisions while remaining rooted in faithfulness to Christ and apostolic teaching.



4.2 Learning Outcomes (LOs)

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

1. Explain the biblical foundations of Christian unity from both Old and New Testament perspectives.
2. Interpret key biblical texts that describe the Church as one body in relation to Christ and the Holy Spirit.
3. Evaluate how biblical teachings on unity inform contemporary Christian life, fellowship, and mission.



4.3 Main Content

Unity is a biblical necessity of the church. Both Old and New Testaments teach that God's people should have unity in accomplishing the mission of God (Jug 20: 8,10; 1Sam 11:7; Ezra 3:1; Neh 8:1; Psalm 133:1; John 17:11, 23; Acts 2:44-47; 4:32; Eph 4:13).

4.3.1 Old Testament

Scripture teaches unity from the beginning of the creation account. The Trinitarian God created and brought the formless earth together in harmony and tranquility (Genesis 1:2; 26; 30). God created the first human beings and put them together in a unity that reflects the Trinitarian unity (Gen 2:24). A strange unity between the serpent and humanity interrupted the intended unity during the fall of man. God's first response to this counterfeit unity was to counteract the unity and put enmity between the offspring of the woman and the offspring of the serpent (Gen 3:15). From this beginning, two kinds of unity emerged: the holy and the unholy unities. According to Klingbeil (2014), the tower of Babylon story brings to view an unholy unity in the history of humankind, which appears in Genesis 11. In this attempt, humanity planned to work in a coordinate way against God's divine attributes and prerogatives. The author specifically pointed out that, The sense of making a great name is a divine prerogative, not the result of human design and efforts. The tower

builders not only tried to erect a structure reaching heaven, they also intend to do so on their own steam, and openly defy the divine command to be fruitful and to multiply the earth (p.110). From this attempt, God disordered their communication to stop them from their own man-made effort to unite at the cost of lapsing the mission of God to spread out and fill the earth. Accordingly, God chose Abraham and detached him from his family for the sake of mission. From him, God established a holy nation. This nation was holy unto God to stay away from unity with other nations that did not worship the true God. Therefore, God forbade intermarriages with them (Deut 7:1-10). However, those who gave themselves to the worship of the God of the Israelites were assimilated in the holy nation as in the case of Ruth (Ruth 1:16-17; 4:10-12). Observing the Old Testament trend on unity, Klingbeil (2014) concluded that God allowed unity with the prerequisite of the worship of God of Israel. He categorically said, "Integration or unity is positive only if it does not come at the expense of recognizing JEHOVA as the supreme deity or sacrifice the truth claims of a Thus says the Lord of Israel. God's special mission for Israel as His people was not to be surrendered" (p. 113). Most importantly, Israel as a nation united by the worship of JEHOVA of which each member had to observe two related institutions of temple and law. These two institutions, as recorded in Deuteronomy 12, distinguished Israelites from other nations. The temple centered their worship and the law served as a unifying factor (Bromiley, 1958).

4.3.2 New Testament

In connection to the Old Testament teaching on unity, New Testament reports that Jesus taught that the proclamation of the gospel would bring multitude to His church, and finally there would be one flock and one shepherd (John 10:16). Emphasizing on unity, Jesus in John 17: 20, 21 prayed for the pf in the biblical perspective. Beginning with biblical nature of unity resent and future believers to have unity so that the world might believe. He prayed, My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me (NIV). Contextual analysis of this passage focuses of the unity among Jesus' disciples who accepted the truth and those who would believe the gospel through the message of the disciples in the future. Jesus prayer on unity expressed a concern for the welfare of his followers. The unity between the Father and the Son was a model for the unity of believers with one another. Biblical unity among Christians appears in a saving relationship with the God of truth in whom the love of God and the love of truth unite them. Therefore, Jesus' prayer for unity focused on the truth, which consists of keeping God's word. The Apostolic church followed the Christ's model of unity that is rooted in the truth found in scripture. The prayer of Jesus in John 7: 21 echoed in the early Apostolic Church. The scripture reads; "All the believers were in one heart and mind, no one claimed that any of their possession was their own, but they shared everything they had. With great power, the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all" (Acts 4:32-33). This unity shows that oneness characterized the believers in the truth and with the purpose of proclaiming the gospel to the world. Moreover, Apostle Paul taught that believers need to seek unity, unity that binds their faith in the Trinitarian God (Ephesians 4:3-6). For Paul, all ethnic groups were brought together for Christ's sake and became heirs of the kingdom according to the promise (Galatians 3:29). Therefore, the New Testament unity should reflect the Old Testament model that assets that God's followers unite in truth for accomplishment of the mission of God.



4.3 Learning Activities

Watch the video on biblical unity

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ng2-h_0sGZI



4.5 References

Mwita, Alexander. “Ecumenical Challenge in the Third Millennium” East African Journal of Education and Social Sciences Vol 5 no. 1 (2024): 11-18.

MODULE ONE DELIVERABLES

1. A report on the biblical unity from the video
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FeSFm_uHy5s (File the report in the portfolio.
Put a cover page to distinguish it from other deliverables).
2. Critically evaluate how the early church concept of ecumenism differs from the later concept, during the time of the East-West schism of the eleventh century and the Reformations of the sixteenth century.

MODULE TWO: MODERN ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

Unit 5: History of the Modern Ecumenical Movement

Unit Structure

- 5.1. Introduction
- 5.2. Learning Outcomes (LOs)
- 5.3. Main Content
- 5.4 Learning Activities
- 5.5 References

Estimated study time	3 hours
Core reading	Fortin, Denis. <i>One in Christ: Biblical Concepts for a Doctrine of Church Unity</i> . Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2018.
Key terms	World Council of Churches; Ecumenical Movement, Global Mission
Biblical anchor	N/A (It is a historical account)



5.1 Introduction

The history of the modern ecumenical movement is not merely a story of church organizations, but a historical account of religious traditions seeking reconciliation, cooperation, and common witness in a fragmented world. As we study this unit, we will explore how missionary conferences, global crises, theological dialogues, and international church bodies contributed to shaping the modern quest for Christian unity.



5.2 Learning Outcomes (LOs)

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

1. Explain the historical background and emergence of the modern ecumenical movement.
2. Identify major events, conferences, and organizations that contributed to the development of the ecumenical movement, such as the World Council of Churches and the Edinburgh Missionary Conference.
3. Evaluate the significance of the modern ecumenical movement in promoting Christian unity, cooperation, and global mission.



5.3 Main Content

This unit covers the history of the modern ecumenical movement from its widely acknowledged commencement at the Edinburgh World Missionary Conference up to the first two decades of the present century. To be sure, the desire for fuller expressions of Christian unity did not suddenly materialize in the Scottish capital in mid-June of 1910. Christian disunity—in particular the emergence over the centuries of distinct churches—had long been recognized as scandalous by theologians, clergy, and laity alike. For instance, as the early Protestant movement was threatening to unravel, the Reformers initiated conversations between leaders of the different theologically and regionally organized Christian communities. For some reason, such efforts failed, as illustrated by the somewhat infamous Marburg Colloquy between Lutheran and Swiss Reformers in 1529, a hot debate over the “real presence” of Christ in the Lord’s Supper, which not only fell short of establishing a unity between the two main branches of incipient Protestantism but also arguably made relations considerably worse. Still, the fact that the different Protestant factions were willing to get together at Marburg and on other occasions during the early sixteenth century indicates that the Reformers were inclined to see the burgeoning atmosphere of division as a problem.

The scandal of disunity and the desire for greater unity inspired such early Protestant ecumenical conversations. (R. David Nelson and Charles Raith II, 2017, 23).

The Edinburgh gathering, however, signified a conspicuous change in posture on the part of the churches toward each other and ushered in a new ecumenical age. While “modern” ecumenical

efforts are not without precedent in the history of Christianity prior to 1910, the energy, intentionality, and enthusiasm for ecumenism that mark the modern milieu are unheralded. The chapters in this unit, which, on the whole, unfold historically, demonstrate five key features of the modern ecumenical movement.

First, the catalyst for both the Edinburgh conference and the ecumenical movement it inspired is the Great Commission. Christian missionary work evolved quickly and spread extensively in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as new methods of communication and transportation encouraged the transmission of the gospel into unreached territories and cultures. Christianity's global expansion was viewed as a shared responsibility, and from early on, Christian missionaries and missionary societies felt obliged to build bridges over the fissures dividing the churches. Early ecumenical endeavors initiated by Anabaptist, Moravian, Baptist, and other Protestant missionaries paved the way for more concrete expressions of ecumenism appearing around the turn of the twentieth century. The eight commissions appointed in the period leading up to the Edinburgh gathering focused on various aspects of missionary work, and the discussion of church unity at the conference itself was oriented to global evangelization. In short, ecumenism and mission are knitted together in the story of the modern ecumenical movement. (David Nelson and Charles Raith II, 23–24).

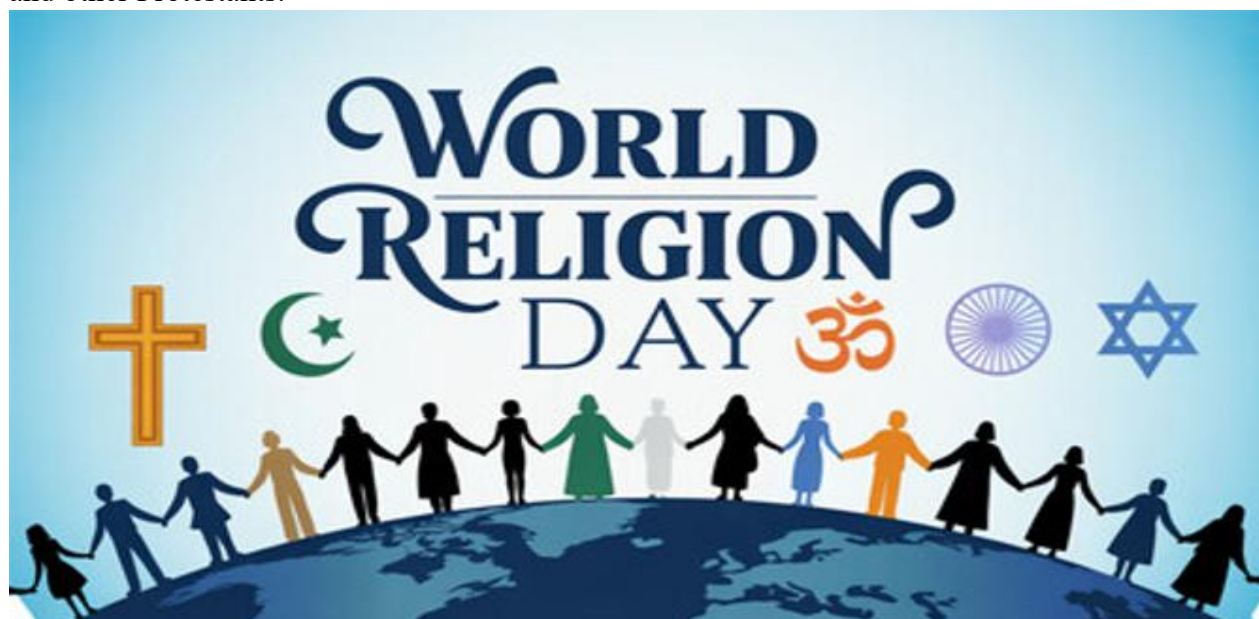
Second, unlike the scattershot occurrences of ecumenical episodes prior to the twentieth century, after Edinburgh the ecumenical movement swiftly unfolded in trajectories marked by organized structures. Early ecumenical missionary societies gave way to larger, international bodies such as the Faith and Order and Life and Work movements, which later merged to form the World Council of Churches. Official dialogues today are still facilitated by commissions appointed by governing bodies of the participating churches. Even so-called grassroots ecumenical networks typically possess leadership structures and solicit official endorsements from churches and denominational communions. Readers will encounter in this unit numerous and varied structures serving the ecumenical movement and its goal of Christian unity.

Third, while the origins of the modern ecumenical movement can be traced to Protestant anxieties over the consequences of church divisions for missionary work (significantly, Catholic and Orthodox missionaries and missionary organizations were not invited to and thus did not participate in the Edinburgh conference), the emergence of Catholic participation in the ecumenical movement, commencing at the Second Vatican Council, has profoundly influenced the history of ecumenism and ecumenical theology. Between the Reformation and the dawn of the new age of ecumenism, relations among divided Protestant churches were, by and large, marked by indifference or stalemate. However, during those centuries Catholic relations with various Protestant churches were haunted by mutual condemnations. It is no small thing, then, that since Vatican II the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, the Catholic Church's official, permanent dicastery for ecumenical relations, has initiated and/or participated in dialogues with all major Protestant church communions, and also with the Orthodox churches. Many of the most significant ecumenical breakthroughs from the past half century are the yield of these labors.

Fourth, since Vatican II, the bilateral dialogues have been the chief vehicle for the advancement of ecumenism. For better or for worse, the historical divisions among the churches have set the tone for ecumenical relations. Official dialogue commissions work together through evolving phases of discussion to address the differences that inhibit Christian unity. Dialogues produce documents—official reports, declarations, and recommendations—that subsequently must be

received by the participating churches in the hope of overcoming the impasses. Through this complex process, real consensuses, leading to new communions and organic unions, can be and have been achieved. While ecumenical endeavors at the grassroots and congregational levels remain indispensable, the success of modern ecumenism depends on the work of the dialogues.

Fifth, relatively recently in the history of the modern ecumenical movement, the cause of ecumenism has received a fresh surge of energy from the participation of evangelical Protestants in several key dialogues and various grassroots enterprises. Evangelicals have offered some of the toughest criticisms of the modern ecumenical movement and ecumenical theology, and for many decades, they excused themselves for the most part from the ecumenical imperative. However, beginning in the 1970s and 1980s, a number of evangelicals, recognizing the essentially ecumenical character of historical evangelicalism, initiated dialogues with Catholics and other Protestants.



5.4 Learning Activities

Self-Assessment Questions

1. Discuss the major historical factors that led to the rise of the modern ecumenical movement in the twentieth century.
2. Explain the contribution of the Edinburgh Missionary Conference to the development of the modern ecumenical movement



5.5 References

Beach, W.R. *Ecumenism*. Review and Herald Publishing Association, Washington, 1974.

Fortin, Denis. *One in Christ: Biblical Concepts for a Doctrine of Church Unity*. Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2018.

Unit 6: Modern Ecumenical Understanding of Unity

Unit Structure

- 6.1 Introduction
- 6.2 Learning Outcomes (LOs)
- 6.3 Main Content
- 6.4 Learning Activities
- 6.5 References

Estimated study time	3 hours
Core reading	Fortin, Denis. <i>One in Christ: Biblical Concepts for a Doctrine of Church Unity</i> . Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2018.
Key terms	Unity, Uniformity, Diversity, Dialogue, Cooperation
Biblical anchor	N/A (It is a historical account)



6.1 Introduction

In today's Christian world, believers worship in different denominations, traditions, and cultures, yet they confess one Lord, one faith, and one baptism. The modern ecumenical understanding of unity seeks to answer an important question: How can Christians remain diverse in worship and practice while still living as one body in Christ? Rather than demanding uniformity, the ecumenical movement emphasizes mutual respect, dialogue, cooperation, and shared mission among churches. This unit invites learners to explore how modern Christianity understands unity as spiritual fellowship, visible cooperation, and collective witness in a divided world, while remaining grounded in biblical teaching and Christian love.



6.2 Learning Outcomes (LOs)

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

1. Explain the modern ecumenical understanding of Christian unity and its biblical foundation.
2. Differentiate between unity, uniformity, and diversity within the Christian church.
3. Analyze the role of dialogue, cooperation, and shared mission among Christian denominations and organizations.



6.3 Main Content

At the beginning of the 20th century, ecumenism stands as an attempt to bring all Christian groups into a unity of one Church of Christ to respond to the mission of God in counteracting secularism. According to Nelson and Raith II (2017), the main agenda in the modern movement, first initiated by the Edinburgh conference in 1910, sought to discuss missionary activities in the world. Later on, the missionary societies became large, and they formulated international bodies known as “Faith and Order” and “Life and Work” movements. Towards the end of the second millennium, ecumenism turned at pushing on Faith and Order and Life and Work, of which the former focused on doctrinal issues and the latter dealt with missions, sacraments and church authority. In the third millennium, ecumenism turned its focus from doctrinal teaching and the church authority issues that seemed to divide the church; instead, it sought the visible unity of the Church towards the renewal of humanity. The World Council for Churches (WCC), held at Geneva in 1990, magnified the need for Christian response to human situations.

A document (WCC, 1990) outlined the situation of the present world dangers, hopes, and anxieties that the Church needed to address. The document insisted that the church holds the issues together in proclaiming God's saving purpose for all humankind. In this case, the call for unity of the church was justified in the context of ushering in the kingdom of God and healing the spiritual bankrupt that faced the world. In connection with the seeking of common concerns of evangelizing the world, Kasper (2009) pointed out that the Augsburg Council (2000)

successfully eliminated the controversy between Lutheran and Roman Catholic churches, and the churches agreed on the substantial content of the common witness to the world. Consequently, the statement of Chavannes-de Bogis Conference outlined that the main agenda of ecumenism focused on fellowship and togetherness in religious activities. In support of this concept, faith and order always insist that struggles towards the unity of the church, common witness, and service in the world should be held together. From the World War I experience, Life and Work concept of the ecumenical movement aimed at advancing justice in the world.

Ecumenism, under this umbrella, focused on ethical issues that needed attention. According to Smit (2003), the movement had to make collective efforts from the churches to face social, political, and economic challenges in the world. This concept appeared during the Life and Work Conference in 1925 in Stockholm. The conference ruled out that the sins and sorrows, the struggles and losses of the Great Wars were too strong for the divided Church. In response, South African Archbishop Tutu (1994) alluded that apartheid was too strong for a divided church. From this observation, the interest of church unity under Life and Works focused more on ethical issues than ecclesiological and doctrinal concerns. On this ground, Life and Work adherents observed a need to address social issues despite doctrinal divisions.

From these trajectories, the ecumenical movement in the third millennium feels indebted to address these issues in a Christian common ground. Therefore, a need for churches to join hands to tackle violence and promote peace in all areas of life, such as social political, economic, and ecological issues. Moreover, the prospect of ecumenical movement in the third millennium focuses on pilgrimage towards Justice and Peace. This perspective encourages people to come together in opposing all divisions of race, gender, age, or culture to promote justice, peace, and to uphold the integrity of creation. Stressing on peace and Justice, the 10th Assembly of the World Council of Churches, which took place between 25th October and 9th November 2013 at Busan, South Korea, aimed to combat social problems by promoting peace and justice. The common quest for combating social problems appears in the three models of the contemporary ecumenical trend. According to Daniel et al. (2012), the three models focus on social issues rather than doctrinal issues.

The first is the Roman Catholic model, established in Vatican II of which the church is unwilling to change its traditional dogmas. The intention of Vatican II was not so much in favor of changing its unique dogmas, such as the infallibility of the pope, Mary's Immaculate Conception, and salvation through the Church, but aimed to explain the Roman Catholic teachings in a contemporary manner. The second model is the Orthodox churches' understanding of ecumenism, which focused on the movement that excludes changes in basic doctrines.

The second model is the Orthodox churches' understanding of ecumenism, which focused on the movement that excludes changes in basic doctrines. The third model is concerned with mutual recognition of ministries and all believers in each place in witnessing and service. These models do not show any possibility of reconciling doctrinal differences, but on the contrary, seeks to find what can bring all Christian onboard. In fulfilling this quest, the ecumenical movement came up with a common project of social endeavors, which focuses on justice, peace, and the integrity of creation. Therefore, regardless of doctrinal differences, the church attempted to embrace the mission of God in serving humanity.



6.4 Learning Activities

Watch the video on the ecumenical unity

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GWhk7-qIW_Y



6.5 References

Beach, W.R. *Ecumenism*. Review and Herald Publishing Association. Washington, 1974.

Fortin, Denis. *One in Christ: Biblical Concepts for a Doctrine of Church Unity*. Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2018.

Unit 7: Modern Ecumenical Understanding of Belief

Unit Structure

7.1 Introduction

7.2 Learning Outcomes (LOs)

7.3 Main Content

7.4 Learning Activities

7.5 References

Estimated study time	3 hours
Core reading	Beach, W.R. <i>Ecumenism</i> . Review and Herald Publishing Association. Washington, 1974.
Key terms	Church Traditions, Christian Denominations, Theological Differences
Biblical anchor	1 Peter 3:15, 16



7.1 Introduction

Modern ecumenical understanding of belief arises from the recognition that Christians across diverse traditions share a common core of faith while expressing it in varied theological formulations and confessional statements. In a pluralistic Christian landscape, questions about doctrine, truth, and interpretation have often led to division; yet the ecumenical movement seeks to explore how shared belief in the Triune God, the saving work of Christ, and the authority of Scripture can form a basis for deeper mutual understanding. This unit invites learners to reflect on how belief is articulated, interpreted, and sometimes contested within the global Church, while also considering how common confession can serve as a foundation for unity without erasing legitimate theological diversity.



7.2 Learning Outcomes (LOs)

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

1. Explain the modern ecumenical understanding of Christian belief within diverse church traditions.
2. Identify the core doctrines commonly affirmed across major Christian denominations that support ecumenical dialogue.
3. Analyze how theological differences and agreements influence efforts toward unity among churches.



7.3 Main Content

In many church circles, broad-mindedness is seen as an ecumenical virtue. The ideal ecumenist, it is suggested, is not dogmatic in belief and is somewhat fluid in doctrinal views. He greatly respects the beliefs of others, but is less than rigid about his own beliefs. He appears humble and not assertive about doctrinal beliefs-except those regarding ecumenical unity. He has a sense of partial knowing. To show religious doctrinal arrogance is, ecumenically, especially sinful.

All this has a laudable side. Humility and meekness are Christian virtues. Indeed, Peter tells us to always be ready to answer and give a reason for our faith, but this must be done with humility, respect, and a good conscience (1 Peter 3:15, 16). However, there is in ecumenical ranks an almost inbuilt danger of softness and relativization of belief. The whole concept of heresy is questioned. Lately, questions are even raised regarding the idea of “paganism.”

Typical of some ecumenical presuppositions is the idea that all denominational formulations of truth are time-conditioned and relative, and therefore partial and inadequate. Some ecumenists would even go so far as to advocate the need of doctrinal synthesis, bringing together various Christian beliefs in a kind of cocktail approach. We are told that each church is imbalanced and it is the task of ecumenism to restore balance and harmony. Within the reconciled diversity of

the ecumenical movement, presumably everyone, in the words of Frederick the Great, "will be saved in his own way."

Adventists believe that without strong convictions, a church has little spiritual power. There is the danger that ecumenical quicksands of doctrinal softness will suck churches into denominational death. Of course, this is precisely what ecumenical enthusiasts hope for. However, Adventists feel that such doctrinal irresolutions must be vigorously resisted; otherwise, spiritual self-disarmament will be the result, and a truly post-Christian age would be upon us.



7.4 Learning Activities

Self-Assessment Questions.

Using different sources, explain core doctrines commonly affirmed by protestants and Catholics, and how Adventists stand starkly in the ecumenical movement.



7.6 References

Beach, W.R. *Ecumenism*. Review and Herald Publishing Association. Washington, 1974.

Fortin, Denis. *One in Christ: Biblical Concepts for a Doctrine of Church Unity*. Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2018.

Unit 8: Ecumenical Understanding of Scripture

Unit Structure

8.1 Introduction

8.2 Learning Outcomes (LOs)

8.3 Main Content

8.4 Learning Activities

8.5 References

Estimated study time	3 hours
Core reading	Beach, W.R. <i>Ecumenism</i> . Review and Herald Publishing Association. Washington, 1974.
Key terms	Hermeneutical Approaches; Interpreting Scripture, Apocalyptic Prophecy
Biblical anchor	2 Peter. 1:20, 21; 2Tim. 3:16,17; Ps. 119:105; Pro.30: 5



8.1 Introduction

Within the modern ecumenical movement, Scripture occupies a central yet carefully interpreted place as the shared foundation of Christian faith and life. Different traditions and denominations embrace diverse hermeneutical approaches. The ecumenical understanding of Scripture therefore seeks not only to uphold its authority, but also to foster common reading, dialogue, and mutual enrichment among diverse interpretive communities. This unit introduces how ecumenical adherents understand Scripture



8.2 Learning Outcomes (LOs)

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

1. Explain the ecumenical understanding of Scripture as a shared foundation for Christian faith and unity.
2. Describe different hermeneutical approaches to interpreting Scripture within various Christian traditions.
3. Evaluate the role of biblical interpretation in fostering dialogue and cooperation among churches in the ecumenical movement.



8.3 Main Content

Adventists see the Bible as the infallible revelation of God's will, the authoritative revealer of doctrinal truth, and the trustworthy record of the mighty acts of God in salvation history (see Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists: "The Holy Scriptures"). Adventists see the Bible as a unity. For many WCC leaders, the Bible is not normative and authoritative in itself. The emphasis is on Biblical diversity, including at times demythologization of the Gospels. For a large number of ecumenists, as is the case for liberal Christianity in general, inspiration lies not in the Biblical text but in the experience of the reader. Propositional revelation is out; experience is in.

Apocalyptic prophecy is given practically no end-of-times role. Proforma references to the Parousia are made, but have no implications for urgency and make little measurable impact on the ecumenical concept of evangelistic mission. There is here the danger of eschatological blindness.

Seventh-day Adventists see the Biblical picture of sin and redemption within the framework of the "great controversy" between good and evil, between Christ and Satan, between God's Word and the lies of the impostor, between the faithful remnant and Babylon, between the "seal of God" and the "mark of the beast."

Adventists are, first and foremost, people of the Word. While believing in the unconditional authority of the Scriptures, Adventists recognize that the Bible was "written by inspired men, but it is not God's mode of thought and expression. It is that of humanity. God, as a writer, it not represented. The writers of the Bible were God's penmen, not His pen. Selected Messages,

book 1, p. 21. Many ecumenists would say that the Biblical text is not the word of God but contains this word as men respond and accept it. In contrast, Adventists would say that the utterances of the Bible writers "are the word of God" (ibid.). God is not on trial; neither is His Word, from criticism notwithstanding. It is man vis-a-vis the Bible who is on trial.



8.4 Learning Activities

Watch the video on biblical interpretation

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fmI81o9pSek&list=PLhkHqhG9glJ-ZDGs8yFjJnvgp-2K-9fbC&index=14>



8.6 References

Beach, W.R. *Ecumenism*. Review and Herald Publishing Association. Washington, 1974.

Fortin, Denis. *One in Christ: Biblical Concepts for a Doctrine of Church Unity*. Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2018.

Unit 9: Modern Ecumenical Understanding of Mission and Evangelism

Unit Structure

- 9.1 Introduction
- 9.2 Learning Outcomes (LOs)
- 9.3 Main Content
- 9.4 Learning Activities
- 9.5 References

Estimated study time	3 hours
Core reading	Gerald A. Klingbeil, "United We Stand: A Biblical Perspective on Ecumenical Relations. Journal of the Adventist Theological Society, 25/2 (2014): 104-131.
Key terms	Mission, Evangelism, Missio Dei,
Biblical anchor	Mat. 28:18-20; Acts. 1:6-8



9.1 Introduction

In the modern ecumenical movement, mission and evangelism are increasingly understood as a shared responsibility of the whole Church rather than the exclusive mandate of individual denominations. Rooted in the *Missio Dei* “the mission of God” this perspective emphasizes that the Church participates in God’s redemptive work in the world through witness, service, dialogue, and proclamation. While historical tensions once separated churches over methods and theological emphases in evangelism, contemporary ecumenical thought seeks to balance faithful proclamation of the Gospel with respect for cultural diversity and cooperative engagement in addressing human need. This unit introduces learners to how mission and evangelism are reinterpreted within ecumenical frameworks as expressions of unity in action and shared witness to Christ in a fragmented world.



9.2 Learning Outcomes (LOs)

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

1. Explain the ecumenical understanding of mission and evangelism in relation to the concept of *Missio Dei*.
2. Describe how different Christian traditions contribute to shared mission and evangelistic efforts within the ecumenical movement.



9.3 Main Content

The traditional understanding of mission highlights evangelism, that is, the verbal proclamation of the gospel. The ecumenical approach sees mission as involving the establishment of shalom, a kind of social peace and harmony. Adventists have problems with any tendency to downplay the primary importance of announcing the good news of redemption from the stranglehold of sin. In fact, the traditional, including Adventist, view of salvation has always been the saving of individuals from sin and for eternity. Ecumenical evangelism sees salvation as primarily saving society from oppressive regimes, from the ravages of hunger, from the curse of racism, and from the exploitation of injustice.

The Adventist understanding of conversion means for a person to experience radical changes through spiritual rebirth. The majority emphasis in WCC circles appears to be on changing-converting-the unjust structures of society.

As we see it, in the area of evangelism and foreign missionary work the fruits (or maybe we should say lack of fruits) of ecumenism have often been less evangelism (as we understand it- from Paul to Billy Graham), less growth and more membership decline, fewer missionaries sent out, proportionally less financial support coming in. In fact, the missionary outreach has shifted away from mainline "ecumenical" churches to conservative evangelicals. It is sad to see such a large evangelistic potential lost to the missionary movement, especially at a time of increasingly active and militant Islamic outreach and the awakening of Eastern and indigenous religions.

The recent and successful Seventh-day Adventist One Thousand Days of Reaping campaign ran counter to the ecumenical low-key "joint mission" approach. The latter may sound good in an ecumenical study paper, but soul-winning results are really not there. The paraphrase of an old saying has some relevance here: "The proof of the ecumenical pudding lies in the evangelistic eating."



9.4 Learning Activities

Read "Unity Between Brothers" (pages 114- 118) in Gerald A. Klingbeil, "United We Stand: A Biblical Perspective on Ecumenical Relations. *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, 25/2 (2014): 104-131



9.6 References

Gerald A. Klingbeil, "United We Stand: A Biblical Perspective on Ecumenical Relations. *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, 25/2 (2014): 104-131

Fortin, Denis. *One in Christ: Biblical Concepts for a Doctrine of Church Unity*. Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2018.

Unit 10: Vatican II Council

Unit Structure

10.1 Introduction

10.2 Learning Outcomes (LOs)

10.3 Main Content

10.4 Learning Activities

10.5 References

Estimated study time	3 hours
Core reading	VATICAN II (1962-1965)” (pages 66-68) in the book: Norman R. Gulley. <i>Systematic Theology: The Church and The Last Things</i> . Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2016.
Key terms	Vatican II, Interdenominational Relationships, Mother Church, Medicine of Mercy
Biblical anchor	N/A (It is a historical account)



10.1 Introduction

The Second Vatican Council marked one of the most transformative moments in modern Christian history. Convened between 1962 and 1965 under Pope John XXIII and Pope Paul VI, the council sought to renew the church's relationship with the modern world, encourage Christian unity, and deepen the participation of believers in the life and mission of the church. As students explore this unit, they will encounter important discussions on worship, ecumenism, Scripture, mission, religious liberty, and the role of the laity.



10.2 Learning Outcomes (LOs)

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

1. Explain the historical background, purpose, and major developments of the Second Vatican Council.
2. Examine the major documents and theological emphases of Vatican II, especially in relation to worship, Scripture, mission, and ecumenism.
3. Assess the impact of Vatican II on contemporary Christianity and interdenominational relationships.



10.3 Main Content

Vatican II was the 21st ecumenical council to be convened in the Church's bimillennial history, and gathered nearly a century after Pope Pius IX convoked Vatican I (1869-70), which defined the dogmas of papal infallibility and the primacy of papal jurisdiction. Pope St. John XXIII announced the convocation on 25 January 1959, only three months after his election to the Petrine ministry in October 1958, as he addressed the cardinals gathered in the Papal Basilica of Saint Paul Outside-the-Walls in Rome. In his unexpected announcement, Pope John explained that his decision was born from the ascertainment of the spiritual impoverishment of modern society resulting from the deep social and political transformations it had been undergoing over the previous decades, which demanded a new response from the Church. He also mentioned the centuries-old divisions in the Christian family.

Pope clarified that the Council was meant primarily to revitalize the Christian faith in an increasingly secularized world, to give new vigour to the Catholic Church's mission, and to adapt Church practices to new circumstances.

Pope John wanted a pastoral Council and one of renovation, so that the Catholic teachings could be better understood and accepted in 20th-century society. As he said at the opening speech of the Council, while preserving the integrity of its doctrine, the Church wanted to offer the modern world the "medicine of mercy", and not severe condemnations.

The Vatican II solemnly opened on 11 October 1962 in St. Peter's Basilica, after over three years of preparations. The Council met in four sessions between 1962 and 1965, each lasting between 8 and 12 weeks, in the autumn of each of the four years, for a total of 169 General Congregations. It was shortly interrupted after Pope John's death on 3 June 1963, and resumed after Pope Paul VI's election, on 11 June that year. It closed on 8 December 1965.

Between 2,000 and 2,500 Catholic cardinals, patriarchs, and bishops from all over the world, assisted by 460 theological experts (periti), attended each session. For the first time, Protestants, Orthodox, and other non-Catholic observers were invited to assist. 42 lay and religious listeners, men and women, also attended.

The opening message of Vatican II expresses the hope of a "spiritual renewal" and "updating (aggiornamento)". This was given by Pope John XXIII (1958-1963), who prayed for a "new Pentecost." This was the stated context for deliberations. There were two documents on the Church. The initial draft brought to the council was rejected because it was too much like pre-Vatican II documents, defensive and judgmental. The second document originated from South American thinking, "The Church as the People of God." The first document is "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church" (Lumen Gentium), which contains the following segments: (1) the Church as mystery; (2) the Church as the people of God; (3) the Church as hierarchical structure; (4) the Church as the laity; (5) the call of the whole Church to holiness; (6) the Church as religious; (7) the eschatological nature of the pilgrim Church, noting her union with the heavenly church; and (8) the mystery of the blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, in the mystery of Christ and the Church.

These eight segments begin and end with mystery. Documents on the church before Vatican II had been tedious, static, and rigid, with apologetic arguments against others and a focus on the hierarchy and infallibility of the pope (the latter since Vatican I in 1870). During the first millennium, the church had been monarchical. The Council of Trent (1545-1563) and Vatican I (1870) were both authoritative. By contrast, Pope John XXIII (1958-1963) wanted a more pastoral approach and for the church to be seen as the "loving mother of all." So in these eight segments, the terms "Mother Church" and "Mother Mary" give a more relational view of the church.



10.4 Learning Activities

Read "VATICAN II (1962-1965)" (pages 66-68) in the book: Norman R. Gulley. *Systematic Theology: The Church and The Last Things*. Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2016.

10.5 Deliverable Assessment

A reading report on the reading (Two Pages)

File the report in the portfolio. Put a cover page to distinguish it from other deliverables.



10.6 References

Norman R. Gulley. *Systematic Theology: The Church and The Last Things*. Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2016.

Fortin, Denis. *One in Christ: Biblical Concepts for a Doctrine of Church Unity*. Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2018.

MODULE TWO DELIVERABLES

1. Reading report on “Unity Between Brothers” (pages 114- 118) in Gerald A. Klingbeil, “United We Stand: A Biblical Perspective on Ecumenical Relations. *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, 25/2 (2014): 104-131.
2. A report on the ecumenical unity from the video
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GWhk7-qIW_Y

MODULE 3: SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST AND ECUMENISM

Unit 11: Inter-Church/Interfaith Relations

Unit Structure

- 11.1 Introduction
- 11.2 Learning Outcomes (LOs)
- 11.3 Main Content
 - 11.3.1 The Truth about Inter-Church/Interfaith Relations
 - 11.3.2 Relations with the Conference of Secretaries of Christian World
Communions
 - 11.3.3 International Religious Liberty Association
- 11.4 Learning Activities
- 11.5 References

Estimated study time	3 hours
Core reading	Fortin, Denis. <i>One in Christ: Biblical Concepts for a Doctrine of Church Unity</i> . Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2018.
Key terms	Interfaith Relations, Tolerance
Biblical anchor	N/A (It is a historical account)



11.1 Introduction

In an increasingly diverse and interconnected world, Christians and people of other faiths encounter one another in schools, workplaces, communities, and national life more than ever before. The study of inter-church and interfaith relations invites learners to reflect on how believers can uphold their convictions while promoting dialogue, mutual respect, peace, and cooperation. This unit explores the theological foundations, opportunities, and challenges of relationships among different Christian traditions and between Christianity and other religions. It also encourages students to consider how unity, tolerance, and constructive engagement can contribute to peaceful coexistence and effective witness in a pluralistic society.



11.2 Learning Outcomes (LOs)

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

1. Explain the meaning and importance of inter-church and interfaith relations within contemporary society.
2. Examine the biblical and theological foundations for dialogue, unity, tolerance, and peaceful coexistence among different faith communities.
3. Evaluate the opportunities and challenges involved in relationships between Christians and adherents of other religions.



11.3 Main Content

11.3.1 The Truth about Inter-Church/Interfaith Relations

Though most Adventists, since the establishment of a department of Public Affairs and Religious liberty in 1901, understand the necessity to mingle with other Christians, the questions are still asked: “Why mingle with other Christians? Is this not a betrayal of Adventist identity, message, and mission?” To these, our unequivocal answer is no, it is not. The mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church cannot be fulfilled without mingling as Jesus did. Fears and objections are part of human experience, but they have to be addressed rationally.

First, a clarification. Inter-church and interfaith relations do not mean ecumenism in the sense of union with other churches, doctrinal alliances, obliteration of differences, or the loss of distinctive emphasis on biblical truths.

A misunderstanding of this basic fact has prompted a few at the fringes of the church to accuse Adventist leaders of betraying the church’s position, which they assume demands there be no interaction with other Christians at all. This radical rejection of mingling with others is, at times, expressed through violent and angry rhetoric.

What, then, is driving these attitudes of hostility toward inter-church and interfaith relations and these unfounded fears that Adventist leaders have engaged in ecumenism, which is understood as a union of churches and loss of Seventh-day Adventist distinctives? To

understand these issues, one has to dig deeper into aspects of the Seventh-day Adventist worldview that could be easily misunderstood and distorted, particularly as they pertain to eschatology and end-time events.

11.3.2 Relations with the Conference of Secretaries of Christian World Communions

For more than 40 years, the Seventh-day church has been part of the Conference of Secretaries of the Christian World Communions. This group meets once a year in an informal meeting to share about their respective identity, work, and impact in this world. This informal organization has no common action, no common project, no doctrine alliance, or syncretism of any kind. It aims to create a platform of interchurch dialogue in order to dispel unnecessary prejudice among Christians without downplaying big and irreconcilable doctrinal differences. Every year, the Conference of General Secretaries meets at a different location giving each communion an opportunity to explain on their own terms who they are and what they are about. Meeting with other leaders does not mean endorsement of any kind of their beliefs or

agendas. But religious freedom is for all. The Conference of Secretaries of the Christian World Communions has had an opportunity to be exposed to the Seventh-day Adventist identity, message, mission and wide portfolio of services. It is important that Seventh-day Adventists mingle with leaders of other communions as salt and light without of course losing one's flavor that is our distinctive identity, message and mission.

11.3.3. International Religious Liberty Association

The International Religious Liberty Association was instituted in 1893 by the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Since then it has been an institution for advocating and promoting religious liberty all over the world. It is a non-governmental organization (NGO) that is recognized by the United Nations Economic and Social Council with the status of United Nations Non-Governmental Organization Category II. The IRLA does not identify with any political party, nor does it endorse any candidates for political office. The IRLA is overseen by a Board of Directors.

The president from 1989 to 2001 was the former general secretary of the Lutheran World Federation. In 2001, Denton Lotz, retired general secretary of the Baptist World Alliance, was elected president of the IRLA. From 2007 to 2016, the president was Ambassador Robert A. Seiple, who served in the United States Department of State as the first Ambassador-at-large for International Religious Freedom. Our current president is Ambassador John Nay, who was elected in 2016. Ambassador Nay formerly served as the United States Ambassador to the Republic of Suriname, and throughout his long career in the United States Foreign Service, he worked to advance human rights and religious liberty.

The IRLA has no paid staff; officers and directors serve voluntarily. Funding for IRLA operations comes from organizations supportive of the association's purpose.

The IRLA is incorporated as a tax-exempt, educational, not-for-profit organization in the District of Columbia. Originally organized by the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the IRLA's purpose is the universal and non-sectarian promotion of religious freedom for all people, everywhere.

Having an active international program with representatives in countries where religious freedom is challenged, the IRLA has hosted a number of officials and ambassadors and welcomed international delegations at its office in Silver Springs, Maryland. After several years of good relations with the United Nations, the IRLA was granted Special Consultative Status by the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) on May 1, 2003. Since then IRLA has had a representative in the United Nations Human Rights Council and assemblies. "It is able to make written and oral statements at such UN sessions as the Commission on Human

Rights....” The IRLA shares an office with the General Conference at the UN Headquarters in New York.



11.4 Learning Activity

Watch the video on interchurch relationships

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6M2LKgXpNL8>



11.5 References

Beach, W.R. *Ecumenism*. Review and Herald Publishing Association. Washington, 1974.

Fortin, Denis. *One in Christ: Biblical Concepts for a Doctrine of Church Unity*. Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2018.

Unit 12: Why Adventists Participate in UN and Ecumenical Meetings

Unit Structure

12.1 Introduction

12.2 Learning Outcomes (LOs)

12.3 Main Content

12.3.1 Defining Unity

12.3.2 Adventist Contributions to Unity

12.3.3 Adventists and Interchurch Relations

12.3.4 Rationale for Rejecting Ecumenism

12.4 Learning Activities

12.5 References

Estimated study time	3 hours
Core reading	Fortin, Denis. <i>One in Christ: Biblical Concepts for a Doctrine of Church Unity</i> . Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2018.
Key terms	Religious Liberty, Advocacy, Humanitarian Service, and Social Justice
Biblical anchor	John. 17; Gal. 3:8; Heb. 12:1



12.1 Introduction

The participation of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in United Nations and ecumenical meetings has often raised important theological and practical questions among believers. Some wonder whether such involvement compromises Adventist identity, while others view it as an opportunity for dialogue, peacebuilding, religious liberty advocacy, and humanitarian cooperation. Historically, the Adventist Church has maintained a cautious but intentional relationship with international and interchurch bodies, seeking to uphold biblical convictions while engaging the wider world in matters of justice, health, education, and human dignity. This unit invites learners to explore the reasons, principles, and boundaries that shape Adventist participation in UN and ecumenical gatherings, as well as the theological debates surrounding such engagement.



12.2 Learning Outcomes (LOs)

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

1. Explain the historical and theological reasons behind the participation of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in United Nations and ecumenical meetings.
2. Identify the key areas in which the Adventist Church engages with international and interchurch organizations, including advocacy for religious liberty, humanitarian service, and social justice.
3. Evaluate the theological concerns and affirmations that shape Adventist involvement in ecumenical and global forums.



12.3 Main Content

12.3.1 Adventist Defining Unity

The concept of unity has a solid biblical and theological foundation. The blessing God intended to spread through Abraham and through his descendants was destined to all the families of the earth. God wants all His people to experience doctrinal unity. This never materialized among His covenant people, Israel. The belief in the resurrection of the dead, for example, was not shared by all Israelites. The New Testament mentions that the Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection of the dead.

Today, unity is understood differently among various Christian churches. For Catholics, for example, unity includes the concept of the communion of saints, meaning both those who are alive and those who are dead. In the Catholic Encyclopedia, the communion of saints is described as “the spiritual solidarity which binds together the faithful on earth, the souls in purgatory, and the saints in heaven in the organic unity of the same mystical body under Christ its head.... The participants in that solidarity are called saints by reason of their destination [heaven] and of their partaking of the fruits of the Redemption.”

With this example in mind, global church unity could only be a reality if all Christians adopted the Catholic worldview or understanding of reality, or if all Catholics gave up their deeply held beliefs. Unity is dear to the heart of God. The whole plan of salvation demonstrates God's determination to unite His divided and dispersed family, which He created in His image. Unity is grounded in the being of God, who is Trinity: a unity in Trinity. Jesus' death was purposed to gather people into one. In John 17, Jesus prayed for unity for the sake of mission so that the world might believe. The Holy Spirit was given to seal the unity in mission.



12.3.2 Adventist Contributions to Unity

Adventists join God in all that God is doing in the world for its salvation. God evangelizes (Galatians 3:8), so do we. God is committed to unite the whole world under the lordship of the Savior Jesus Christ. We join God to fulfill His purposes to lift up God the Son so that the world might be saved.

Adventists are committed to call all peoples to fix their eyes on Jesus (Hebrews 12:1). They remind all Christians of what constitutes a core confession since Apostolic times and is also present in the earliest Christian creed: the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. The principle that informs Adventists' relations to other Christians has two inseparable aspects: truth and religious freedom. Adventist Church cofounder Ellen G. White underscored this in *The Acts of the Apostles*, writing: "The banner of truth and religious liberty held aloft by the founders of the gospel church and by God's witnesses during the centuries that have passed since then, has, in this last conflict, been committed to our hands. The responsibility for this great gift rests with those whom God has blessed with a knowledge of His Word. We are to receive this Word as a supreme authority. We are to recognize human government as an ordinance of divine appointment, and teach obedience to it as a sacred duty, within its legitimate sphere. But when its claims conflict with the claims of God, we must obey God rather than men." (pages 68, 69). More fundamentally, Adventists understand their mission as their name intimates, that of highlighting the truth of the Second Coming as the hope of the world to finally embrace freedom from death and from evil, bringing with it justice and peace. These convictions are the reasons that Adventists emphasize the Second Coming and on a message of healing. Adventists

understand the words of Jesus calling His disciples “salt and light” (Matthew 5) to also apply to them. Every aspect of Adventist engagement with any institution, agency or organization, whether ecclesiastical or political, is predicated primarily upon the reason for the existence of the church: bringing hope to humankind entangled in all kinds of evil. To fulfill this mission, Adventists participate in Jesus’ method: “Christ’s method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Savior mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them to follow Him” (Ministry of Healing, page 143.) Jesus served people, healed them, and fed them with no strings attached. He made them know and feel they were free to choose their future with or without Him. Freedom of conscience matters to Him. Without this freedom, no covenant is genuine. This is because love cannot be forced.

12.3.3 Adventists and Interchurch Relations

Adventists recognize other Christians as genuine members of the body of Christ. But Adventists do not hold formal structural membership in ecumenical organizations primarily for freedom of religion purposes. Membership in an ecumenical body would limit the freedom to share one’s convictions with everyone else and thereby jeopardize a universal end-time mission, as Adventists understand it.

Adventists are not part of the ecumenical organizations that require membership, but they do enjoy guest or observer status at meetings. Partnership with other Christian denominations is in accordance with the Adventist Church’s view of other Christians. White, writing about temperance, said this about leaders in other denominations: “In other churches there are Christians who are standing in defense of the principles of temperance. We should seek to come near to these workers and make a way for them to stand shoulder to shoulder with us. We should call upon great and good men to second our efforts to save that which is lost” (Testimonies, Vol. 6, page 110). In reference to prayer, White said: “Pray for and with ministers of other denominations. Our ministers should seek to come near to the ministers of other denominations. Pray for and with these men, for whom Christ is interceding. A solemn responsibility is theirs. As Christ’s messengers, we should manifest a deep, earnest interest in these shepherds of the flock.” (Testimonies, Vol. 6, p 78). In accordance with the above counsel, the General Conference, the administrative body of the Adventist world church, has inscribed in the General Conference Working Policy that church leaders “recognize every agency that lifts up Christ before men as a part of the divine plan for the evangelization of the world, and ... hold in high esteem the Christian men and women in other communions who are engaged in winning souls to Christ.”

12.3.4 Rationale for Rejecting Ecumenism

Unity, though clearly willed by God, is not the supreme value. Loyalty to God’s truth takes precedence. The Adventist Church and several other denominations that have not joined organized ecumenical bodies object to ecumenism as doctrine or as an objective to fuse Christian churches into one world church, leading to loss of distinctive denominational identity. Also, Adventists and other believers do not adhere to syncretistic alliances that would diminish the importance and weight of truth, especially when beliefs in some churches may not be in harmony with revealed biblical truth. The main concern of Adventists is that they will be restricted from sharing their convictions with every person regardless of religious or philosophical persuasion. This is fundamentally an issue of religious freedom. Christians cannot question the right to freedom of religion or belief while even the secular world has accepted this fundamental human right and value. While considering other Christians as

brothers and sisters in Christ, the principle that prevents the Adventist world church from being a member of an organized union of churches such as the World Council of Churches is that of religious freedom. Religious freedom implies the unrestricted right to share one's religious convictions and the right to invite others to join one's own Christian tradition without being accused or labeled as a proselytizer.

Seventh-day Adventists support Christian unity as they join the Triune God who is determined to gather people He created in His image. The purpose of the whole plan of salvation is the restoration of God's image and the gathering of those He saves. Unity is grounded in God. It was for this purpose that Jesus Christ came to earth to unite all the families of the earth.



12.4 Learning Activities

Self -Assessment Questions

1. Explain the main reasons why the Seventh-day Adventist Church participates in United Nations and ecumenical meetings.
2. Discuss the theological challenges and opportunities that arise from Adventist involvement in ecumenical dialogue and international cooperation.



12.5 References

Beach, W.R. *Ecumenism*. Review and Herald Publishing Association. Washington, 1974.

Fortin, Denis. *One in Christ: Biblical Concepts for a Doctrine of Church Unity*. Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2018.

Unit 13: Ellen White's Counsel on Ecumenism

Unit Structure

13.1 Introduction

13.2 Learning Outcomes (LOs)

13.3 Main Content

13.4 Learning Activities

13.5 References

Estimated study time	3 hours
Core reading	Fortin, Denis. <i>One in Christ: Biblical Concepts for a Doctrine of Church Unity</i> . Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2018.
Key terms	Interchurch Engagement, Doctrinal Faithfulness
Biblical anchor	Spirit of Prophecy Reading



13.1 Introduction

The writings of Ellen G. White continue to shape the understanding of the Seventh-day Adventist Church regarding Christian unity, cooperation, and relations with other churches. While she strongly emphasized faithfulness to biblical truth and warned against compromising doctrinal convictions, she also encouraged kindness, respect, and constructive engagement with people of different faith traditions. Her counsel on ecumenism reflects a balance between preserving distinctive Adventist beliefs and demonstrating Christlike love in a religiously diverse world. This unit invites learners to examine Ellen White's perspectives on unity, apostasy, interchurch relations, and mission, and to consider how her counsel continues to influence Adventist attitudes toward the modern ecumenical movement.



13.2 Learning Outcomes (LOs)

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

1. Explain the counsel of Ellen G. White regarding Christian unity and ecumenical relations.
2. Identify key principles in Ellen White's writings concerning cooperation with other churches while maintaining doctrinal faithfulness.
3. Evaluate the relevance of Ellen White's counsel to contemporary ecumenical discussions and Adventist interchurch engagement.



13.3 Main Content

Seventh-day Adventist Church cofounder Ellen G. White offers practical advice in the art and science of relating to Christians from other denominations. Here are three pieces of advice.

1. "Do not denounce other denominations. When some who lack the Spirit and power of God enter a new field, they commence denouncing other denominations, thinking that they can convince the people of the truth by presenting the inconsistencies of the popular churches. It may seem necessary on some occasions to speak of these things, but in general it only creates prejudice against our work and closes the ears of many who might otherwise have listened to the truth. If these teachers were connected closely with Christ, they would have divine wisdom to know how to approach the people" (Testimonies, Vol. 4, p. 535).
2. "We should not, upon entering a place, build up unnecessary barriers between us and other denominations, especially the Catholics, so that they think we are their avowed enemies. We should not create a prejudice in their minds unnecessarily, by making a raid upon them. There are many among the Catholics who live up to the light they have far better than many who claim to believe present truth, and God will just as surely test and prove them as He has tested and proved us" (Manuscript 14, 1887; Evangelism, p. 144).

3. “We profess to have more truth than other denominations; yet if this does not lead to greater consecration, to purer, holier lives, of what benefit is it to us? It would be better for us never to have seen the light of truth than to profess to accept it and not be sanctified through it” (Testimonies, Vol. 5, p. 620). The responsibility for this great gift rests with those whom God has blessed with a knowledge of His Word. We are to receive this Word as a supreme authority. We are to recognize human government as an ordinance of divine appointment, and teach obedience to it as a sacred duty, within its legitimate sphere. But when its claims conflict with the claims of God, we must obey God rather than men.” (pages 68, 69).

In engaging with other institutions and organizations, White gives the following advice.

1. “Every aspect of Adventist engagement with any institution, agency or organization, whether ecclesiastical or political, is predicated primarily upon the reason for the existence of the church: bringing hope to humankind entangled in all kinds of evil. To fulfill this mission, Adventists participate in Jesus’ method: “Christ’s method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Savior mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them to follow Him” (Ministry of Healing, page 143.)
2. “Partnership with other Christian denominations is in accordance with the Adventist Church’s view of other Christians. White, writing about temperance, said this about leaders in other denominations: “In other churches there are Christians who are standing in defense of the principles of temperance. We should seek to come near to these workers, and make a way for them to stand shoulder to shoulder with us. We should call upon great and good men to second our efforts to save that which is lost” (Testimonies, Vol. 6, page 110).

In reference to prayer, White said: “Pray for and with ministers of other denominations. Our ministers should seek to come near to the ministers of other denominations. Pray for and with these men, for whom Christ is interceding. A solemn responsibility is theirs. As Christ’s messengers, we should manifest a deep, earnest interest in these shepherds of the flock.” (Testimonies, Vol. 6, p 78).



13.4 Learning Activities

Self-Assessment Questions

1. Discuss the main principles found in the writings of Ellen G. White regarding Christian unity and relations with other churches.
2. Explain how the counsel of Ellen White can help the Seventh-day Adventist Church maintain doctrinal faithfulness while engaging in ecumenical dialogue.



13.5 References

Beach, W.R. *Ecumenism*. Review and Herald Publishing Association. Washington, 1974.

Fortin, Denis. *One in Christ: Biblical Concepts for a Doctrine of Church Unity*. Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2018.

MODULE THREE DELIVERABLES

1. Discuss the main principles found in the writings of Ellen G. White regarding Christian unity and relations with other churches.
2. Explain the main reasons why the Seventh-day Adventist Church participates in United Nations and ecumenical meetings.
3. Discuss the theological challenges and opportunities that arise from Adventist involvement in ecumenical dialogue and international cooperation.

MODULE 4: RELIGIOUS DIALOGUES PRACTICUM

Unit Structure

1. Introduction
2. Learning Outcomes (LOs)
3. Main Content
4. Learning Activities
5. References



1. Introduction

A diverse world and people of different religions often raise important questions about faith, identity, tolerance, and peaceful coexistence. A religious dialogue practicum provides learners with an opportunity to move beyond theoretical discussions and engage directly with individuals from other faith traditions through respectful conversation, observation, and reflection. Rather than seeking compromise of personal beliefs, religious dialogue encourages understanding, mutual respect, and constructive relationships while maintaining one's own religious convictions. This unit invites learners to develop practical skills in interreligious engagement, communication, and critical reflection as they encounter the realities and challenges of faith diversity in contemporary society.



2. Learning Outcomes (LOs)

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

1. Demonstrate practical skills for engaging in respectful and constructive religious dialogue with people of different faith traditions.
2. Apply principles of listening, empathy, and critical reflection in interreligious encounters and discussions.
3. Evaluate the challenges and opportunities of religious dialogue in promoting peaceful coexistence in diverse communities.



3. Main Content

This module requires students to identify a religious group within a contemporary community and schedule an official religious dialogue

- i. Unity
- ii. Doctrinal differences
- iii. Evangelization



4 Learning Activities

Practicum Step 1: Issue a Religious group or denomination

Practicum Step 2: Schedule an official dialogue

Practicum Step 3: Field Engagement (Actual dialogue)

Practicum Step 4: Evaluation of the dialogue

In the evaluation, answer the following questions

1. How does religious dialogue differ from ecumenism

2. What are the major unreconcilable doctrinal standpoints?
3. How does ecumenism respond to such irreconcilable doctrinal standpoints

13.5 Deliverable Assessment

A practicum report (10 Pages) File the report in the portfolio. Put a cover page to distinguish it from other deliverables



13.6 References

Fortin, Denis. One in Christ: Biblical Concepts for a Doctrine of Church Unity. Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2018.

Portfolio item	Included	Not yet	N/A	Remarks (Lecturer)
Module One Deliverables	☐	☐	☐	
Module Two Deliverables	☐	☐	☐	
Module Three Deliverables	☐	☐	☐	
Religious Dialogue Practicum Report (10 Pages)	☐	☐	☐	