

A Faith That Does Justice

The Journey of the World Council of Churches from Porto Alegre to Busan



World Council
of Churches

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Foreword

Rev. Dr Walter Altmann
Moderator, WCC Central Committee

In my first address to the Central Committee in 2006 after the 9th assembly, I reflected on the words from Peter, “In your hearts sanctify Christ as Lord. Always be ready to make your defence to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you” (1 Peter 3:15, NRSV).

I find these words speak also to us now, as we prepare for the next assembly of the World Council of Churches in Busan in 2013. This report is indeed an accounting of the work we have undertaken in this period, an accounting that makes clear why we have such hope as an ecumenical movement even in the face of grave challenges inside and outside our fellowship.

In this period we have had major crises in the world order – the global financial crisis, political upheavals, armed conflicts between citizens and wars between states. The religious landscape has changed due to evangelism, activism, political changes and even violence. We increasingly face religious pluralism in all corners of the globe.

In the face of these challenges and changes, the role of the WCC as a privileged instrument of the one ecumenical movement is constantly tested. Sometimes these tests come in the form of reduced financial capacity. Sometimes they open new opportunities for stronger relationships with new ecumenical partners, such as through the Global Christian Forum.

The external challenges oblige us continually to rethink our public witness and how as a fellowship of churches we can strengthen our public voice. The statements that have come out from the central committee and executive committee have addressed a great many concerns. Major statements, such as those on *diakonia*, mission and the church, are a result of a long period of reflection with a wide circle of Christian and ecumenical partners that are a great source of hope and energy for the strength of the ecumenical movement in the future. We expect the Assembly in Busan to speak anew on the issue of unity, which is at the core of our identity and our mandate.

The central committee is a very representative body as diverse as the confessions and traditions in the whole of the fellowship. This is extremely enriching but at times also challenging. As a practical expression of the unity we seek, we have experienced a decision making process by consensus which has been significant in shaping a common voice and reaching agreement on very difficult topics in a spirit of mutual confidence. Nevertheless, we must continuously develop our capacity to work with an ethos of consensus rather than simple mechanisms of decision-making.





We must at all times prayerfully seek a common mind. Like all the achievements described in the pages of this report, this demands a continuous effort of learning from each other and of listening to the Spirit, considering all the differences we represent.

I give thanks to God for all those engaged in these efforts for peace, justice and unity, and in particular to the general secretaries Rev. Dr Samuel Kobia and Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit, the WCC staff, all members of the central committee and all member churches and ecumenical organizations.

Geographically, our journey together takes us from one side of the world, in Porto Alegre, to the other, in Busan, from Latin America to Asia, from the Southern Hemisphere to the Northern Hemisphere. Symbolically, this demonstrates the global dimension of the World Council of Churches and our commitment, in spite of the many differences that exist among us, to the hope of unity given by our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. I pray that the God who gives us life, the Christ who calls us in faith, and the Holy Spirit who guides us, will all give us strength and perseverance for the challenges and opportunities ahead.



World Council
of Churches
9th Assembly
Porto

Introduction

Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit General Secretary

At the time of the 2006 assembly in Porto Alegre, I was involved in the World Council of Churches through my position in the Church of Norway. From the perspective of a member church, I remember quite well the challenges laid out by the assembly decisions. Among the recommendations on issues and methods came further calls: to both deepen and widen the ecumenical movement, to combine our interreligious dialogue with advocacy, to involve youth more fully – and to do less and do it better.

Many people have talked about the ecumenical winter and the difficulties for the World Council of Churches. Yet I have witnessed, as both a member church representative and now as general secretary, that in this period between the 2006 assembly in Porto Alegre and the 2013 assembly in Busan, we have worked hard and with clear objectives, and the harvest from our efforts is enormously significant.

During this period, the council celebrated its 60th anniversary. This 60-year-old institution has changed considerably even over the last decade, shifting from being a funder of many initiatives around the world to facilitating partnerships and becoming a smaller organization, carefully stewarding resources following identified priorities.

As difficult as some of these changes have been to those both within the World Council and outside, the council itself has strengthened its certain and undisputed role.

Much of what we do, we can and should do with other ecumenical partners. And the harvest from this period – the achievements described in this report – we share with other ecumenical partners.

But these would not have happened without the World Council of Churches.



General secretary transition

WCC General Secretary Rev. Dr Samuel Kobia expressed gratitude for what he said was the “tremendous privilege” of serving the ecumenical movement for over four decades in his farewell celebration at the Central Committee in August 2009. Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit began serving as the 7th WCC general secretary on 1 January 2010.

Major Humanitarian Alliance Launched

The ACT Alliance, bringing together more than 130 churches and church-related relief and development organizations worldwide, was formally launched on 24 March 2010 with celebrations in Geneva and around the world.

The new ACT Alliance is one of the world's largest humanitarian bodies, working in 140 countries with a combined budget of 1.6 billion U.S. dollars. It provides emergency food aid, shelter, water and sanitation facilities and poverty reduction programmes in the world's poorest countries.

ACT International and its sister organization, ACT Development, merged after being created separately through the leadership of the WCC. At a central celebration event in Geneva, ACT Alliance general secretary John Nduna said the creation of the alliance provides the opportunity to "better link emergency humanitarian assistance and sustainable development."



Through its strategic leading role, the World Council of Churches has involved many ecumenical partners, Christian World Communions, member churches, and other institutions in efforts to widen the ecumenical movement and deepen our partnerships for greater impact. There are many clear examples of this since 2006:

- Our new statement on mission is based on a process that has involved many more partners beyond the World Council in the narrow sense and has been seen as comprehensive and groundbreaking.
- We have further developed our advocacy role in the Middle East, applying different approaches to accompany the churches in their struggles for peace with justice, from the Palestinian-Israeli conflict through the dramatic changes of the Arab Spring.
- The statement on Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World was made with the Pontifical Council and the World Evangelical Alliance. In that sense, it represents almost the whole of Christianity, with the World Council of Churches having the strategic role of bringing these partners together.
- Together with Muslim partners, we have jointly developed our understanding of war and peace, particularly addressing the situation of Nigeria from a Christian – Muslim perspective. This is one model for future efforts.
- The 2013 assembly planning involves a very wide and substantial contribution from other ecumenical partners, following up with what has been done throughout this period.
- Our leading advocacy role was shown in the 2011 peace convocation in Jamaica, where we brought together all the peace actors in the ecumenical family. Our discussion on just peace – which needs to continue – has contributed to a new understanding at a time when the challenges to peace are changing.

There is clearly unfinished work.

We have not succeeded as much as we hoped to mobilize and establish stronger youth participation in our work. We can and should do more.

The important discussions held through the AGAPE process have established the clear links between economic justice and eco-justice. We need to lead in global solidarity where our voice can have an impact on particular issues, bringing our message to the many circles of power in the financial world and accompanying churches in the societies in which they live.

We need to find ways to combine *diakonia*, advocacy, and the justice and integrity of creation as one World Council approach. It should be, it can be, and it can make an impact.

The creation of ACT Development and the merged ACT Alliance came in parallel with the World Council of Churches moving away from a donor role. We are now more settled in a sense, understanding who we are, what we do together and what we do

separately. There is still overlap – as there should be – in advocacy and in capacity building and we need to continue to work together with other ecumenical partners for our strongest possible voice and impact.

We have simplified our programme work, and sought ways to integrate approaches and try new methodologies. We need to continue to explore how other organizations and individuals can work with us, both in short-term and long-term projects, and further recognize that churches are contributing to the fellowship not just through financial support but also through their capacities developed through experience.

In this report, we have identified eight major achievements of the World Council of Churches since the Ninth Assembly in Porto Alegre, all connected to the vision and purpose of the fellowship and in fulfillment of the programme guidelines adopted by the Ninth Assembly. These achievements are described at the start of each chapter. The personal stories, activities, and quotes then reflect some of the ways the World Council – across programme units and in cooperation with partners – fulfilled these achievements. Threading together meetings, exchanges, encounters, worship, action, reflection, support, visits, statements and dialogue, this report attempts to show the interconnections of methods and issues, all marking key junctures in a journey of faith towards justice.

This is a journey in which we have all had our part and I am immensely grateful to you all. I will particularly mention here my predecessor, Samuel Kobia, and other staff who finished their service for the council during this period. In reflecting together on what has been achieved these past seven years, we can and should have a critical and open-minded discussion of what we have learned. Yet the ecumenical movement exists not just to be “successful,” but to always bring us back to the basics of our Christian faith. The ecumenical call is to continue to strive for unity, justice and peace and this means carrying the cross into reality as it exists.

This call is not disappearing, it is only getting stronger.

I hope that we are all open to how God is leading us to live together, even with questions unresolved. This call to unity, which is given to the World Council of Churches to steward, is not something that is granted once, for all time. It is something that we have to pray God to fulfill every time, every year, every day.

May the theme of the Tenth Assembly, “God of life, lead us to justice and peace,” give new inspiration and shape to the work we are doing and strengthen our commitment that whatever we do, we try to do together, knowing that we need all our strength and wisdom to carry the cross in the world in which we live.

WCC marks 60th anniversary

A festive ecumenical celebration presided by the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I took place at Geneva's St. Pierre Cathedral on Sunday, 17 February, 2008, to mark the 60th anniversary of the World Council of Churches (WCC).

“The Council has provided an ideal platform where churches with different outlooks, and belonging to a great variety of theological and ecclesiological traditions, have been able to engage in dialogue and promote Christian unity, while all the time responding to the manifold needs of contemporary society,” the Orthodox leader said.



The WCC also invited young theologians and students of theology to participate in an essay contest on “Making a Difference Together – Prospects for Ecumenism in the 21st Century.” Over 50 essays were submitted, and the winning six were published in the *Ecumenical Review* and on the WCC website.

In the worship service in Geneva, the Ecumenical Patriarch said he envisioned a future that will enable “a new generation of labourers to flourish in the ecumenical vineyard” and that retains a foundation of the “three pillars” of unity, witness, and service on which the WCC was built.



1: Living Out Christian Unity More Fully

In 2010, the World Council of Churches (WCC) called for the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to cancel immediately and fully Haiti's foreign debt, following the catastrophic earthquake that laid waste to the small country in the same year. The debt-cancellation call – an initial step in a plan to support recovery, poverty reduction, and sustainable development – came in June, after a solidarity visit by a WCC delegation.

A month later, the Executive Board of the IMF cancelled Haiti's foreign debt.

While the media hailed this call as an example of how the churches were helping Haiti during the disaster, for its 345 member churches, denominations and church fellowships that span the globe, this was the impact of churches working towards visible unity – the central goal of the ecumenical movement.

"Visible unity" can be understood in different ways, but integral to this vision is the relationship among the churches. The WCC offers a singular space to support and nurture such relationships: to reflect and promote their common witness in work for mission and evangelism; worship and work together; engage in Christian service where there is human need; and break down barriers between people. It is a unique space where together, they can seek justice and peace, foster renewal in unity, and uphold the integrity of creation. It is the broadest and most inclusive among the many organized expressions of the modern ecumenical movement, with Christian unity as its goal.

Foundational to its efforts for unity are the WCC's development of relationships among and beyond the member churches. The visits to member churches by the WCC general secretary enable churches to share their lived reality and faith with the global fellowship, deepen connections between international emphases and local efforts, and often, as in the case of Haiti, provide critical moments for advocacy. Between 2007 and 2012, the WCC general secretary made over 80 visits to WCC member churches in over 50 countries.

Efforts towards visible unity also require reflection on the difficult issues that continue to divide churches. Faith and Order, which marked its 100th anniversary in October 2010, is leading study and dialogue on the nature and mission of the church, mutual recognition of baptism, moral discernment in the churches, and sources of authority. In a culmination of 20 years of collaboration and consultation, Faith and Order in March 2013 published *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*. Centred on the notion of koinonia (sharing or communion), the document captures a convergence of understanding among the full array of member churches on the Church's nature and mission, communion with God and each other, and roles in the world. It now goes to the churches for their formal response.

MAJOR ACHIEVEMENT

Member churches have affirmed together the nature and form of the unity they seek, made concrete steps forward and identified challenges on the way towards visible unity. New ways of living unity and ecumenism in the 21st century have been clarified and practiced by broadening participation and ensuring coherence through collaboration and clearer definition of roles.

Nurturing the Fellowship

Faith and Order

Women in Church and Society

Youth in the Ecumenical Movement

Joint Working Groups

Global Christian Forum

Ecumenism in the 21st Century

Unity as foundation for action

"It is imperative that we act as one while lending a hand to Haitians who are striving to shape their common future. For churches, it is essential to reflect, in times like these, what it means to be one in Christ, locally, regionally and globally. We are called to unity, to serve as churches who speak with a common voice for justice and who care for the life of our neighbour, and who take common action together with partners such as the ACT Alliance and others."

Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit

in an Open Letter to Leaders and Churches in Haiti, June 2010

"The One Church today is the continuation of the apostolic community of the first days. If the denominations are to overcome their present stage of division, communion must be restored among them. They must find the common roots of their faith, the living Tradition, which is experienced in the sacramental life of the One Church. By the power of the Holy Spirit, communion must be realized anew in each place and time. The Church exists within the context of its calling to proclaim God's purpose for the world and to live it out in historical contexts and situations."

Communiqué of the Inter-Orthodox Consultation on "The Nature and Mission of the Church", March 2011



Women in Church and Society continue to be a pivotal agenda for the WCC and its programmes. With a light shone on advocacy by and on behalf of women both within and outside of its structures, the WCC offers a unique space to share the distinct and diverse voices and lived experiences of women in a religiously pluralistic world. Equally important are youth in the ecumenical movement, given their energy and leadership in churches now and in the future. The 9th Assembly called for the formation of a body that would enable young people to develop their vision of the ecumenical movement, as well as strengthen their role in the decision-making mechanisms of the WCC. In May 2007, Echos – Commission of youth in the ecumenical movement – was born, and youth perspectives integrated into many of the ongoing study and dialogue processes in the search for unity and ecumenical witness.

To strive for unity also means engaging in dialogue and building trust and relationships outside of the WCC member churches. Forums such as the Joint Working Group between the World Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic Church (JWG) are long-term processes that explore issues in common as well as issues that divide. Most recently, the JWG has addressed the themes of Ecumenical Reception and the Spiritual Roots of Ecumenism, as well as the issues of migration and youth.



A Joint Consultative Group between the World Council of Churches and Pentecostals has made impressive progress in just 12 years, confirmed by the invitation to Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit to offer greetings to a Pentecostal World Conference, the first WCC general secretary to do so.

And the WCC strives to broaden the ecumenical vision still further, through supporting the Global Christian Forum, which brings together the widest possible range of Christian traditions – Anglican, Charismatic, Evangelical, Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Pentecostal, Protestant, African Instituted, mega churches and contemplative communities. This open platform aims to foster mutual respect, and to explore and address together common challenges. The Forum is now well on its way to fulfilling the WCC's vision of an independent and open ecumenical space.

So what does the future hold for these efforts at unity?

The Continuation Committee on Ecumenism in the 21st Century, which draws together a broad range of representatives, reflects on the effects of the changing world on the ecumenical movement and its vision for the future. Acknowledging that ecumenism is far broader than any one institution, it recognizes that the WCC has a privileged role in revitalizing the ecumenical movement, articulating more clearly a common vision, and ensuring greater ecumenical coherence in response to changing global realities. Part of this changing reality includes the variety of organizations carrying out ecumenical activities at all levels in an era of financial constraints, and the demographic shift in the centre of Christianity from the Northern hemisphere to the global South.

As the Continuation Committee crafts its recommendations, it reminds all of us of the ultimate source of our faith and commitment to unity: "The ecumenical movement has its centre in the Triune God, and not in us nor our own efforts, plans and desires."



"In some of our contexts, and in different ways, the church now seems more to be in the 'guest' than the 'host' position. We are learning now how to be those who are dependent on the hospitality of others. Hospitality is not simply the generous gift of the wealthy and powerful, it is also the skill and grace of the weaker ones."

Rev. Dr Susan Durber,
Faith and Order Commission, 2009

"The World Council of Churches and the Catholic Church have enjoyed a fruitful ecumenical relationship dating back to the time of the Second Vatican Council. The Joint Working Group, which began in 1965, has worked assiduously to strengthen the 'dialogue of life' which my predecessor, Pope John Paul II, called the 'dialogue of charity' (*Ut Unum Sint*, 17). This cooperation has given vivid expression to the communion already existing between Christians and has advanced the cause of ecumenical dialogue and understanding."

Pope Benedict XVI,
25 January 2008

"We experience the open space in the Global Christian Forum as a gift of God. In a fragmented world and church, this unique expression of unity, embracing the breadth of world Christianity, is a source of inspiration and hope. We believe it is a helpful model for building authentic Christian relationships in every place."

Global Christian Forum Message from
Manado, October 2011



2: Mission, Evangelism and Spirituality

One might wonder what a garbage dump has to do with mission and evangelism.

Participants at the March 2012 Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME) Pre-Assembly Event, who spent a half day with a community living at the “Smokey Mountain” dumpsite on the outskirts of Manila, understood the correlation. Smokey Mountain is home to some 30,000 people, all of whom survive through scavenging. The community now fears demolition orders from the Philippine government, which wants to initiate a housing project in the area.

The visit was organized by the National Council of Churches in the Philippines for the participants of the CWME event to witness the mission of the churches in areas like Smokey Mountain, a place where the inhabitants are determined to claim their basic human rights.

“In this kind of situation you see people living in slums striving for dignity. How do you see the gospel working here?” Fr Tito Loyola of Aspiring Citizens for Community Empowerment and Solidarity Inc. asked the participants in a meeting with the slum dwellers. Loyola explained everyday life in Smokey Mountain and the involvement of the churches supporting the struggles of the community.

The WCC sees the mission challenges for the churches as finding a balance between a clear witness to the gospel, respect for people’s dignity and solidarity with those who suffer from poverty, injustice, exclusion, sickness or violence.

The contemporary missionary movement has been one of the major streams fostering ecumenism ever since the world mission conference in Edinburgh in 1910. In June 2010, approximately 300 delegates from 200 churches and Christian organizations, 115 different church backgrounds, 77 nationalities, 65 countries and 62 mother tongues gathered to mark the centenary of this historic conference and reflect on the realities of Christian mission in the 21st century. “This is probably the most comprehensive mission gathering since 1910,” remarked Vinoth Ramachandra, a Sri Lankan leader of the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students.

In preparation for Edinburgh 2010, the WCC was involved in an international, interdenominational and decentralized study on mission held in collaboration with partners beyond the WCC fellowship, including evangelicals, Pentecostals and Roman Catholic mission bodies. The collaboration in the study process and the centenary celebration demonstrate how far we have come together, with the WCC accepted as a partner around a table with those mission traditions that, over the last century, had been strongly opposed to it.

MAJOR ACHIEVEMENT

Member churches, mission bodies and ecumenical partners have reached a common understanding on key ecumenical convictions on the theology and practice of mission and evangelism for today (100 years after Edinburgh 1910).

Mission and Evangelism
Edinburgh 2010

Spirituality and Worship

Ecumenical Prayer Cycle

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

Voices from Edinburgh 2010

“Our world is groaning under the stress of violence and injustice, poverty and hopelessness, HIV and AIDS and ecological degradation. Yet God’s reconciling, healing work has not ceased. And God’s people here, there and everywhere are called together to be part of that mission.”

Ruth Padilla De Borst,
general secretary of the Latin American
Theological Fraternity

“This ecumenical moment reminds us that no part of the One Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church has a monopoly on fulfilling Christ’s mission to the world. In fact, to have any credibility as the Body of Christ, the world has to see Christians from all traditions having a common purpose.”

Rev. Dr John Sentamu,
Archbishop of York

"Mission is not a commandment received once and for all. Mission is an ongoing relationship of friendship and collaboration."

Sister Josue Arregui,
Delegate from the Roman Catholic Church to the Pre-Assembly Event of the WCC Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, Manila, 2012



Planning for Edinburgh 2010 also led the Commissions on World Mission and Evangelism and the Faith and Order Commission of the WCC to meet together in March 2009, highlighting each other's work on mission and unity and making recommendations for future collaboration.

The studies and 2010 conference fed into the process of developing a WCC statement to be presented to the WCC's 10th Assembly in 2013. The draft statement, "Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes" was the major focus of the CWME pre-assembly event held in Manila, the Philippines in March 2012. The last WCC statement on mission and evangelism was in 1982, and while this statement is not "replaced," the new statement as approved by the central committee in September 2012 draws on insights from mission theologies much broader than the WCC membership amidst changing world and ecclesial scenarios.

Worship services during major WCC events become opportunities for common prayer and biblical study, providing spiritual resources that speak to the life of the churches and the search for unity. Resources such as the advent series prepared in connection with the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation, and the collection of resources and songs - *Laudate omnes gentes* – produced in cooperation with the Conference of European Churches, Arbeitsgemeinschaft Christlicher Kirchen in Deutschland and the Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland – have been used widely to express together our faith and witness.

The Ecumenical Prayer Cycle enables the churches to journey in prayer through every region of the world and through every week of the year affirming our solidarity with Christians all over the world, brothers and sisters living in diverse situations, experiencing diverse problems and sharing diverse gifts.

International Review of Mission (IRM)

IRM celebrated 100 years of uninterrupted publication in December 2011. The journal is the missiological quarterly of the WCC. While its focus is ecumenical missiology, it also gives voice to other perspectives, such as those from Pentecostal and Evangelical theologians.

"IRM, over the last 100 years, has influenced thousands of missiologists, mission bodies and churches through its profound discussion of missiological issues," stated Metropolitan Dr Geervarghese Mor Coorilos, Syrian Orthodox Bishop of Nirinam, India and co-moderator of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism at the anniversary celebration in December 2011. "Even at the age of 100, IRM continues to provide us with inspiration and challenge."



Praying for Christian Unity

Under the theme “Pray without ceasing,” the 100th anniversary of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity was observed 18-25 January 2008.

In Rome, WCC general secretary Rev. Dr Samuel Kobia joined Pope Benedict XVI in praying for Christian unity at a vespers service presided over by the Pope – a tangible sign of the spirit of cooperation between the WCC and the Vatican that has marked the 40 years of joint production of the liturgical materials for the Week.

But perhaps the most well-known ecumenical worship is the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, celebrated in congregations and parishes all over the world. Materials for the week are developed by a selected partner in a different region each year in a process guided by the WCC and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity of the Roman Catholic Church.

In lifting hearts and voices to God together in worship, people are touched, and realize that their neighbours’ ways are not so strange. In prayer, our common mission and witness in Jesus Christ are celebrated.





3: Education and Ecumenical Formation

“How do people attain peace through prayer, through their beliefs?” asks Mohammed Azhari of Australia. He put this question during the 2011 Ecumenical Institute of Bossey summer course “Building an interfaith community.” His answer: “In coming to know one another as persons, we will learn to respect each other. In this way we can move beyond mere tolerance to appreciation, to acceptance even of what makes us different. And this is for the best, since it is ignorance that leads to conflict.”

Azhari was one of 23 students from more than a dozen countries who attended the course. At the heart of the course lies the concern that many observers today see religions not as instruments of peace, but as reasons for conflict, “a cause of divisiveness that works against shared values,” explained Rabbi Richard Marker of the International Jewish Committee on Inter-religious Consultations.

2011 was the fifth year of the institute’s summer course on interfaith relations which brings together students of the Jewish, Christian and Muslim traditions for a time of study, shared experience of one another’s sacred spaces and reflection on their own cultures, spiritualities and worldviews.

The Ecumenical Institute at Bossey has been the international centre for encounter, dialogue and formation of the WCC for over six decades. It is related to the University of Geneva through a covenant agreement with the university’s autonomous faculty of Protestant theology. A groundbreaking agreement signed in 2011 enables all students attending the Ecumenical Institute to be eligible to receive an accredited certificate from the university.

Over 25,000 people from virtually all church families and regions of the world have participated in courses at Bossey since its founding in 1946. In the academic years from 2006 to 2012, Bossey hosted 190 students – 127 men and 47 women – in its Graduate School. The students came from 48 different countries and from a full range of Christian traditions including Protestant, Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Evangelical and Pentecostal.

As a laboratory for the ecumenical movement, Bossey creates spaces for the exploration of challenging issues facing the churches through its Graduate School of Ecumenical Studies, masters and doctoral programmes, and programme of continuing ecumenical formation through seminars and courses.

Yet even beyond its formal study programmes, Bossey offers a unique experience of ecumenical formation through its community life and worship: Students participating in the 20-week Graduate School reside and worship together, turning abstract theological debates held in the classroom into lived experiences.

MAJOR ACHIEVEMENT

Member churches and ecumenical partners have been facilitated in the formation of a new generation of ecumenists, and their participation has been enhanced in the ecumenical movement. New and creative models of ecumenical formation and participation have been developed. The Ecumenical Institute in Bossey has maintained its laboratory character in dealing with challenging ecumenical themes.

Ecumenical Institute of Bossey
Continuing Ecumenical Formation
Ecumenical Theological Education
WCC Internship Programme
Stewards Programme
World Youth Programme
Scholarships Programme

“I will not be going back as the same person. I’ve discussed with many people — Orthodox, Catholic and Pentecostal. You cannot know yourself...as the only way.”

Angkok Achuil from Sudan,
 Member of 2008 Class at the Graduate School at the Ecumenical Institute

“Ecumenism is not a concept. It is a way of life.”

Sister Maria Elena Romero Molina, a Missionary Dominican sister from Guatemala, living at Bossey in 2008 with a small residential spiritual community of Sisters from Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant traditions.



Ecumenical formation challenges the whole of the ecumenical movement today and, along with faith nurturing at community and academic levels, is vital for the movement’s renewal.

The WCC both provides ecumenical formation itself and supports churches, ecumenical bodies and institutions, which deliver ecumenical formation and faith nurturing, by helping them to develop the infrastructure and capacity to support a broadened thinking beyond particular cultures and traditions. The project also encourages sharing of practices between individuals and institutions, research in the theological pedagogy of formation and, in general, the development and dissemination of models, methodologies and resources.

Closely related is ecumenical theological education (ETE), considered a seedbed for the renewal of churches, their ministries and their commitment to the unity of the church and of critical importance for Christianity in the 21st century. ETE was also part of the international study process on theological education for the Edinburgh 2010 centennial celebration, publishing the *Handbook on Theological Education in World Christianity* to mark the occasion. In 2011, the WCC, through ETE, helped launch, as a founding member, the Global Digital Library for Theology and Ecumenism (GlobeTheoLib), to harness the “potential of the internet to offer theological research and education new possibilities for international networking, exchange and digital sharing” as stated by Prof. Dr Christoph Stückelberger, founder and Executive Director of GlobeEthics.net. The WCC is assisting and strengthening the formation of regional forums of associations of theological schools in Latin America, Asia and Africa, which will take up greater responsibility for the promotion of ecumenical theological education in cooperation with regional ecumenical organizations and the WCC.

Youth also play an important and pivotal role in the work of the WCC. By involving young leaders in ecumenism, the WCC year-long internship programme for instance, is one way for youth to contribute their ideas and gain experience of the worldwide ecumenical movement. Their active participation in programme areas like the Decade to Overcome Violence, youth, communication and member relations gives them an opportunity to work and learn in an international, multi-confessional setting. “I recommend it for everybody,” says Antsa Rakotoarisoa, from the Anglican Church of Madagascar. “During one year you can learn much about the churches, ecumenism and Jesus Christ.”

Library and Archives

The WCC owns a unique collection of specialized documents pertaining to the ecumenical movement and its history — 130,000 volumes, 2,500 specialized periodicals (some of them over a century old), 500,000 documents on microfilm, 400,000 negatives and slides and 180,000 prints, 500 videos, 3,000 sound tapes and some 12,000 archive boxes. The library is now consolidated at the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey, while the Archives are housed at the Ecumenical Centre in Geneva.



The internships are not token youth participation; the positions bring strong engagement and full contribution to the work of the WCC. The same can be said for the Stewards Programme, which, according to Nazeli Kandakarjian, a member of the Armenian Orthodox Church of Lebanon and Young Adult Steward at the 2008 WCC Central Committee Meeting, was “like being in the centre of the globe.” The Stewards Programme provides opportunities for “on the job” ecumenical formation for young adults to participate in leadership training seminars and to serve at WCC governing body meetings. Stewards may also participate in other events, like those run by ecumenical youth organizations or, as was the case in January 2007, the World Social Forum in Kenya. The World Youth Programme (WYP) is a joint effort between churches and national, regional, and global ecumenical organizations to build the capacity of youth in the churches and ecumenical movement. From 2006 to 2007, over 42 projects were supported or initiated through the WYP in Africa, Asia, Europe, Middle East and Pacific regions. Through these projects, based on the priority themes that include ecumenical learning and leadership formation, overcoming violence and HIV and AIDS, over five thousand young people directly participated in seminars, workshops, conferences, ecumenical prayer services and production of media resources supported by WYP.

Finally, the WCC scholarship programme helps churches and related organizations equip their staff and members to fulfil their roles and mission, as it provides an opportunity for ecumenical learning through exposure to other cultures and faith traditions, in addition to appropriate academic study and practical experience. In 2006, 84 scholarships were awarded for theological and non-theological training — 74 to individuals and 10 to groups.



Comprehensive resource for theological education published

“A new stage has been reached in the important history of ecumenical cooperation and learning in the area of theological education,” wrote Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu in his foreword to the WCC’s Handbook on Theological Education in World Christianity, published in 2010. The handbook brings together more than 90 expert contributions on recent developments, challenges and trends in Christian theological education, as well as regional surveys of ecumenical and denominational trends and models.



4: Building Healing and Reconciling Communities

“We are living without a home, in our own land governed by others,” elders from Galawinku, northern Australia, shared with a WCC Living Letters delegation in September 2010.

“They – the government – have taken away our dignity, our values and our rights and decision-making practices.” Thanking the WCC for coming to hear their voices, the elders said that “we are confident that you are going to stand with us in our struggles. Come to learn about our history of impoverishment and oppression but go back with our traditions of empowerment,” the delegation heard.

The WCC delegation was the first of its kind – a team composed of Indigenous Peoples from around the world, visiting Indigenous Peoples’ communities in the Northern Territories of Australia. The visit resulted in the WCC central committee Statement of Solidarity at its meeting in February 2011.

The WCC, since its inception, has been a committed partner to discriminated and excluded people – racial and ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, Indigenous Peoples, Dalits, and others – in their struggles. For decades, it has facilitated shared reflection and analysis, advocacy and communication among them. It has supported their efforts at local, national and international levels, encouraging churches and societies to be more just, responsive and inclusive.

Most recently, there has been a significant shift in that those who for so long have been the subjects of compassion and advocacy are increasingly empowered to take action on their own behalf, and are together contributing the richness of their traditions and experiences to the wider ecumenical movement. As individual networks and as collective movements, racial and ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, Indigenous Peoples, and Dalits have come together to speak out on unity and mission from the perspective of their lives lived on the margins. A special issue of *The Ecumenical Review* (December 2010) for the first time featured Indigenous Peoples’ theologies, and in December 2012, *The Ecumenical Review* profiled the collective theological reflections and analysis of these movements, which have also informed the new WCC statement on mission.

In 2009, the Conference on Racism and Related Forms of Exclusion in Doorn, The Netherlands, underscored the importance of this critical area of work of the ecumenical movement with a call to initiate a Decade for Overcoming Racism and Creating Just and Inclusive Communities. Overcoming racism and the need to focus attention on the life and dignity of all has been a major WCC concern for several decades. Forty years after the first conference that laid the groundwork for the

MAJOR ACHIEVEMENT

Member churches and ecumenical partners have been enabled to develop new practices in building healing and reconciling communities on the basis of social justice and ecclesial inclusiveness.

Just and Inclusive Communities

Solidarity with Indigenous Peoples

Ecumenical Disability Advocates Network

Dalit International Support Network

Migration and Social Justice

Health and Healing

Ecumenical HIV and AIDS Initiative in Africa

“God is just, Christ who was sent by God is just and the church which is called to follow the way of Christ should be just.”

Message of a consultation on Re-visioning justice from the margins, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, August, 2008

“Our spirituality allows us to live in an interconnected manner because we know that all we do can affect the world’s delicate balance. We do not separate our profound spirituality from our political struggles.”

Joint Declaration of Indigenous Churches, 2009

"We recall the inauguration 40 years ago of the ecumenical campaign to combat racism, and particularly to oppose the system of apartheid in South Africa and its satellites. Thanks largely to an initiative undertaken under the auspices of the World Council of Churches, people from all regions of the globe were enabled to join in the struggle for liberation wherever racism raged. We have come to discern afresh what this commitment to battle against racism implies in today's world. For indeed racism is still alive."

Rev. Dr Sam Kobia,
WCC General Secretary,

in his opening sermon at the Conference
on Racism and Related Forms of Exclusion,
Doorn, The Netherlands, June 2009



WCC Programme to Combat Racism, participants in 2009 looked at the problems faced by migrants and minority groups such as the Roma in Europe, at discrimination based on the colour of one's skin, at the disregard for land rights of Indigenous Peoples, and at Dalits being treated as "untouchables" in India. A further conference held in Cleveland, Ohio, USA in August 2010, reaffirmed the rationale for continued ecumenical engagement in racism in all its forms. "The entire Body of Christ has a prophetic task to denounce by word and deed all forms and expressions of existence which constrain the reality of the abundant life which God offered to us in Jesus Christ. Our failure to do so constitutes disobedience to the God we endeavour to serve through faithful discipleship" the participants stated in their conference summary.

The 9th Assembly of the WCC in 2006 reaffirmed its commitment to accompany the Indigenous Peoples in their struggle for justice and rights, which has been centred largely on facilitating and empowering Indigenous Peoples to speak on their own behalf at three major United Nations forums: the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, the working group on Indigenous Populations (UNWGIP), and the working group on the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. After so many years of advocacy efforts, in September 2007, the UN General Assembly by an overwhelming majority adopted the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Advocacy efforts are now focusing on the implementation of the Declaration at the regional and national levels.

The Ecumenical Disability Advocates Network (EDAN) advocates for the inclusion, participation and active involvement of persons with disabilities in the spiritual, social and development life of church and society. Through regional meetings and information sharing, EDAN networks and supports people with disabilities in the life of the church. Increasingly, EDAN is building the capacity of those in its network to be involved in United Nations human rights frameworks, especially through the 2010 Review of the Millennium Development Goals and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

In its meeting of 14-27 February 2012, the WCC executive committee issued a statement on the doctrine of discovery and its enduring impact on Indigenous Peoples, urging "various governments in the world to dismantle the legal structures and policies based on the Doctrine of Discovery and dominance, so as better to empower and enable Indigenous Peoples to identify their own aspirations and issues of concern."

Facing 3,500 years of entrenched caste-based discrimination, Dalits in India have also been active and empowered by ecumenical solidarity in a number of United Nations bodies, such as the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, and the International Labour Organization. Despite discrimination by caste being banned by the Indian Constitution, the practice of caste discrimination and untouchability remains an ever-present reality. As a follow-up to a global Dalit conference organized by the WCC and the Christian Conference of Asia in Bangkok, in March 2009, the National Council of Churches in India (NCCI) called churches together in India who, for the first time, committed to the goal of churches as “caste-free” zones. Through collaboration with NCCI, the WCC has facilitated a network of Christian Dalit activists, promoted Dalit Liberation Sunday, and organized meetings and conferences related to justice and inclusion. Promoting Dalit theology has also brought to the larger ecumenical community one of the most creative alternative theological discourses today based on the concrete realities and stories of suffering and struggle.



Inclusion and justice are also key in addressing the issue of migration, how it impacts migrant communities, and what churches can do to promote acceptance of diversity in an increasingly globalized world. And while migration has always been a fact of life, it raises new economic, political, cultural and ecclesial concerns in today's globalized world. The WCC project on migration and social justice highlights the urgency to address the complex issues that cause and result from migration, and focuses on how migration has impacted the churches. Migration and ecclesiology have been at the heart of several groundbreaking conferences that provided rich theological reflections and a statement on migration for the next Assembly, while seeking to defuse public hostility in countries and communities affected by the over 250 million people seeking new homes and better lives outside of their own country.

“With Jesus’ love in my heart, I’ll carry and beat the drums for justice and freedom for the Dalits, the Africans and other oppressed peoples, including my own, because, as Christians, we have to carry each other’s burden with courage and without fear.”

Ashraf Tannous,
member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church
of Jordan and the Holy Land, 2009



The WCC's concern for the wholeness of the people of God has also contributed to its leadership in health and healing, with particular emphasis on HIV and AIDS, mental health, and the promotion of reconciliation and the "healing of memories."

The WCC's relationship with the World Health Organization (WHO) and other international organizations such as UNICEF and UNAIDS allows it to facilitate networking and advocacy on behalf of church-related health networks. Archbishop Desmond Tutu noted in 2008: "Together WHO and WCC share a common mission to the world, protecting and restoring body, mind and spirit." Through its pioneering work in public health, the WCC has helped to form 33 Christian health associations throughout the world, and now provides a platform for these associations to share best practice and develop a collective voice in international advocacy. The WCC's delegation to the World Health Organization's annual assembly is the largest among those from civil society, and constitutes an important voice in ensuring the democratization of health care, the inclusion of civil society in WHO reforms, and the contribution of new concepts of Christian health care. Most recently, the WCC has partnered with WHO to equip faith communities to become more engaged in mental health issues.

The concern for wholeness has also led the WCC to work on the "healing of memories" as part of a wider effort to strengthen ecumenical networks in dealing with reconciliation. Built on WCC's innovative work in HIV in creating "safe spaces," people gather to share, listen, find solace, and inspire hope in each other. The project is paving the way for churches and faith communities to become safe spaces where people can seek and grant forgiveness, thus promoting a culture of healing and reconciliation.

"For hundreds of thousands of people there is no reconciliation, no forgiveness, nobody to reconcile with or to forgive. The poison, bitterness and deep hurt remained."

Fr Michael Lapsley,
Founder of the Institute of Healing
Memories, 2009

Since the mid-1980s, the WCC has been a leader in the Christian response to HIV, particularly in addressing stigma and discrimination which are often at the root of people's vulnerability to the virus. As part of its commitment to this field of work, the

Ecumenical HIV/AIDS Initiative in Africa (EHAIA), launched in 2002, enables churches in Africa to access information, training and resources, and make contact with other churches and bodies working in the same field to help them deal with AIDS in their communities. The development of “HIV competent” churches based on the realities of churches, communities and people living with and affected by HIV in Africa is now influencing similar initiatives in Asia and other regions. In many ways, EHAIA has moved beyond Africa to become a global ecumenical initiative. EHAIA now works beyond creating awareness about HIV and AIDS to changing people’s attitudes and theological positions, and addressing deep-rooted gender inequalities and injustices as well as sexual and gender-based violence. Through contextual biblical and ecumenical theological education processes, EHAIA is making profound contributions in the campaign against sexual and gender-based violence (known as the Tamar Campaign) and promoting gender justice in families as well as in the work place, including work on masculinities.

An impact study carried out in 2011 documented the thousands of church leaders who have been trained by EHAIA staff, the ten theological institutions in Central Africa alone that have incorporated HIV into their curricula due to EHAIA-supported initiatives, and the many books with theological perspectives on HIV and gender written by EHAIA staff, now used widely around the world. With innovative approaches and dedicated staff, EHAIA has managed to break the taboos and to talk about sexuality, gender relations and related violence – issues that are often sensitive, even outside the realm of the churches.

Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit, speaking at a summit of High Level Religious Leaders on the response to HIV organized by the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance in March 2010, emphasized that HIV requires mutual accountability – to listen and gain insight and wisdom from “the other” and from that better understand how we act and use our power. His statement based on the response to HIV applies more widely in listening to those on the margins: “It has been our privilege to listen and learn from those among us who are affected by HIV. It is not only a disease, but an issue about quality of relationships and about faith.”

“In the face of this epidemic, the religious institutions must respond. God loves everyone and all are welcomed by God.”

His Holiness Abune Paulos, Patriarch, Ethiopian Orthodox Church,
Summit of High Level Religious Leaders on the Response to HIV, March 2010





5: Advocating Justice, Peace, and Human Rights

As more than a thousand church leaders and ecumenical peace activists from over 100 countries gathered in Kingston, Jamaica for the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation in 2011, one person was not present – a fourteen-year-old girl from India.

Her story, however, touched the lives of many during the week-long convocation that marked the end of the Decade to Overcome Violence, launched in 2001. Coming together – the convocation was an historic moment that represented part of the common witness of the church and recognition that peace and peacemaking are indispensable parts of a common faith. “It constitutes a pattern of life that reflects human participation in God’s love for the world.”

Sanjana Das of the Church of North India (a strong advocate for more effective children-friendly legal systems and partner of organizations such as UN Women) related Gudiya Putul’s (not her real name) story during the convocation – of how she was tortured for not submitting to the advances of an older man.

Gudiya was originally from a village in West Bengal, India. Her life and dreams were shattered when her father died. Her mother remarried an alcoholic, who regularly beat them. Rescued by a “sympathetic aunt” from the neighbourhood, Gudiya was promised a better life in Sonagachi – a city in West Bengal known for its flesh trade.

This young girl is not a statistic. She represents the tens of thousands of unnamed and voiceless women and children across the world forced into the sex trade. Human trafficking, however, is not limited to the sex trade. It is the consequence of poverty and discrimination against the powerless – the strong preying on the weak – and is part of the violence of a global economic system that dehumanizes people while maximizing profit. According to Das, some 80 percent of the trafficking worldwide happens across international borders – people from poor countries submitted to modern forms of slavery in rich countries.

The work of the Church of India in the field of human trafficking echoes the message of the convocation that “we as churches are in a position to teach nonviolence to the powerful, if only we dare.” Gudiya’s story therefore symbolizes not only the breadth and scope of deprivations experienced by people in a violent and unjust world, but exemplifies the engagement of WCC member churches around the world in activities related to Just Peace, addressing power and affirming peace as part of their public witness.

Yet, can there be justice without peace? This is a pivotal question posed by the Ecumenical Call for Just Peace, the foundation document for the convocation. The seven years since

MAJOR ACHIEVEMENT

Member churches and ecumenical partners have demonstrated through actions and advocacy, in particular at the UN, their ecumenical commitment to justice, peace and human rights. The International Ecumenical Peace Convocation and the Declaration on Just Peace enabled member churches to agree on and commit to the theology, spirituality and ethics of peace with justice.

International Ecumenical Peace Convocation

Decade to Overcome Violence Promoting Just Peace

Global Advocacy

Living Letters

Human Rights

“Our home is not what it might and will be. While life in God’s hands is irrepressible, peace does not yet reign. The principalities and powers, though not sovereign, still enjoy their victories, and we will be restless and broken until peace prevails. Thus our peace building will of necessity criticize, denounce, advocate, and resist as well as proclaim, empower, console, reconcile, and heal. Peacemakers will speak against and speak for, tear down and build up, lament and celebrate, grieve and rejoice until our longing joins our belonging in the consummation of all things in God, the work of peace will continue as the flickering of sure grace.”

An Ecumenical Call to Just Peace

Peace convocation inspires

"The convocation has helped me to see how I can contribute to peace in the community."

Wessley Manasa,
Fiji

"It is our obligation to stand up and raise our voice so we can change all the things that limit us, making of our differences not a barrier but strengths, and making our similarities just the base of a world culture of peace."

Eileen M Lewis,
Moravian Church, Nicaragua (IEPC Steward)

"As a Christian, I cannot pretend that overcoming violence is 'someone else's job'."

Alex Patico,
secretary of the Orthodox Peace Fellowship in North America

"The Palestinian Coalition of Christian Organizations, with Palestinian Moslem brothers and internationals, is celebrating this day at the YMCA Shepherds' Field in Beit Sahour with much commitment and dedication to work for peace and human dignity."

Nidal Abuzuluf,
Palestine

"As I am taking in these seminars and plenary sessions and meeting new people I cannot but think that we as Seventh-day Adventists need to become part of the conversation for peace. Our faith tradition and our theological understanding is rich with stories and depth to contribute. I pray that we all take up the challenge to do more in the cause of peace."

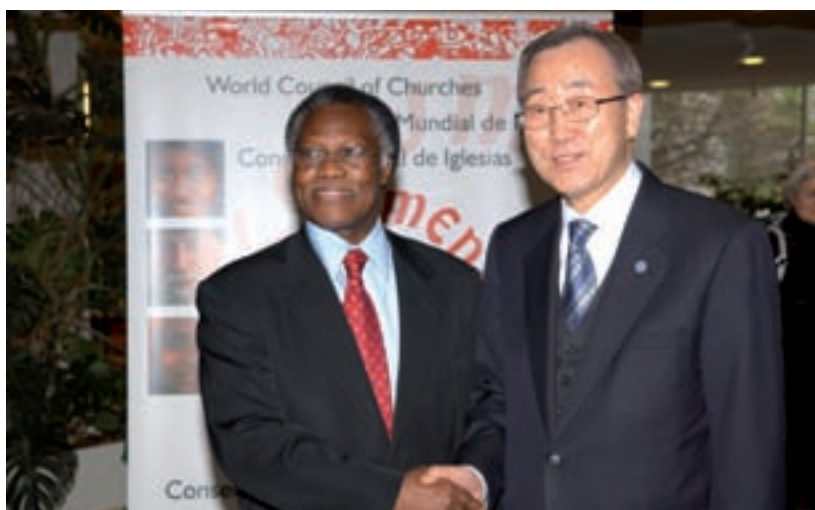
Barry Bussey,
associate director of Public Affairs and Religious Liberty, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

the 9th Assembly of the WCC saw a world where economic injustice, poverty and exclusion and many forms of violence were increasingly rife. As the voice of the churches' concerns at the international level, the WCC challenged, on their behalf, the economic, social, political and cultural powers, offering a prophetic witness for justice, peace and security.

The Decade to Overcome Violence (2001-2010), or DOV as it's known, inspired focused reflection, exchange and action locally and internationally on the complex issues and events that must be addressed in building a culture of peace. The DOV provided the context for new and ongoing efforts by the WCC to address violence in all its forms.

From International Days of Prayers for Peace, marked every year on 21 September, to advocating for disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation, the WCC, along with its members, actively advocate for Just Peace at the highest levels, including the United Nations (UN) through its United Nations Advocacy Week, spoken and written interventions at UN meetings, and events held in parallel to major UN deliberations. In 2008, UN secretary-general Ban Ki-moon visited the WCC to discuss closer cooperation between the two organizations, particularly in the areas of climate change and democratic electoral processes. "We would like to maintain a close partnership with the WCC," Ban Ki-moon stated. "You have a high moral power and what you are doing is based on your Christian beliefs."

Accompanying churches in conflict situations is central to ecumenical solidarity, and the WCC assesses the response needed in each situation – from quiet diplomacy to public statements, from national or regional strategic consultations to ecumenical accompaniment and visits that provide practical presence and raise the global visibility of the conflict and its effects. Solidarity visits made through the Decade to Overcome Violence, known as "Living Letters," underscored the commitment of the WCC fellowship of churches to walk in solidarity with those caught up in violence. Rev. Dr Jayasiri Peiris, general secretary of the National Christian Council of Sri Lanka – one country that received a "Living Letters" visit – said these efforts represent the church striving "to be the living body of Christ." Beginning in 2007, solidarity visits were made to 27 countries in all regions.



The WCC also addresses human rights violations and violence encountered in the home, in communities and even in the church. Violence against women is endemic in both conflict zones and so-called peaceful situations, with at least one recent study showing that more than a quarter of all women have or will experience some form of physical violence against them in their lifetime. Figures such as these continue to spur the work of the WCC and its members to end this form of abuse, with those involved in church-based gender justice movements saying that men must develop a sense of positive masculinity in order to counter increasing levels of violence by men against women. The WCC has emphasized the call for men to be partners with women in the fight against gender inequality and violence and developed initiatives aimed at changing male patterns of behaviour. One such initiative is the Bangalore Appeal, issued in March 2012, by the 32 participants of a WCC Workshop on “Transformative Masculinities.” The participants, representing 23 denominations and 10 countries, noted that often, those affected by such violence do not have a voice or a forum to address their grievances, or that those who choose to speak out find themselves victimized again when they report to the authorities, be it the law enforcement agencies, church hierarchy or other religious institutions.

Recalling that Jesus called peacemakers “blessed” (Matthew 5:9), the Ecumenical Patriarch of the Church of Constantinople, Bartholomew I, said: “We have it in our power either to increase the hurt inflicted on our world, or to contribute toward its healing. Once again, it is a matter of choice.”

“We have seen and heard stories of women and children who not only disproportionately bear the hardships and burden of poverty but sometimes with their bodies and life pay for the egos of violent men. While these stories ring loud and clear in our ears and their pain bleeds in our heart, we still find the myopia or perhaps complete blindness of the churches and communities to recognize and acknowledge this violence.”

Rev. Dr Samuel Kobia,
visiting the Democratic Republic of Congo,
July 2009

Ecumenical Accompaniment in Colombia

Colombia has the third largest internally displaced population after Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo. The country has been mired in conflict for more than four decades caused by deeply rooted social injustice and inequity.

The concept of accompaniment – both spiritual and pastoral – is the main inspiration for the Programme of Ecumenical Accompaniment in Colombia (PEAC), begun in 2011. Modelled on the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel, it is an initiative of the Latin American Council of Churches, with the support of the WCC and other Christian organizations.

Accompaniers will offer an international ecumenical presence that offers protection to churches and NGOs working in the country and supports and encourages civil society efforts towards dialogue aimed at resolving the conflict.

For Sergio Antonio Toscano-Bassa, one of the leaders of Finca Alemania collective farm, the ecumenical accompaniment programme has the potential to challenge the status-quo. “We are always afraid. Therefore, the prospect of the arrival of people from the churches and people from abroad brings a bit of tranquility. It shows that we are not alone and completely isolated.”





6: Working Together for Justice and Peace in the Middle East

At 22 years old, Mohammad Daoud, like many young men at this age, is ready to start his adult life. But, if you are from An Nu'man village on the southern edge of Jerusalem, your prospects for a normal life are slim. After Israel occupied the West Bank in 1967, it unilaterally annexed the village of 200 people to the municipality of Jerusalem, along with a large area of the central West Bank. Even though the village falls within municipal boundaries, Israel refused to give the inhabitants Jerusalem residency cards. Instead, they were defined as West Bankers, and essentially denied the right to live in their own home, and referred to under Israeli law as "present absentees". Although included in Jerusalem, they are, in effect, illegal in their own village. "I know it's hard for others to understand," says Mohammad. "It does not make sense to us either."

Without building and having a house, which is part of Palestinian Arab tradition, Mohammad will not be able to bring a wife to his home. He cannot build a house without permission. Yet permits are impossible to get. His brother, who tried to build a house without the permit, saw his home flattened by Israeli authorities. "When I see the demolished house of my brother, I know I will not attempt to follow my dreams," says Mohammad.

Mohammad's testimony forms part of a massive database of witness and personal accounts gathered over the years through the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI). As a tangible sign of ecumenical solidarity for peace and justice for all the peoples in Israel and Palestine, EAPPI was established in 2002, and has brought over 1000 international volunteers from over 15 countries to the West Bank to accompany Palestinians and Israelis in their non-violent actions and advocacy to end the occupation. Ecumenical Accompaniers (EAs) provide protective presence to vulnerable communities, monitor and report human rights abuses, and support Palestinians and Israelis working together for peace. The EAPPI is based on principles of international humanitarian and human rights law, including resolutions of the UN Security Council, General Assembly and Commission on Human Rights.

The EAPPI expanded in 2011 when accompaniers from Argentina, Brazil, Colombia and the Philippines joined the programme. When accompaniers go back home, they build awareness among the public in their own countries, using what they have witnessed to generate solidarity for long-term justice.

MAJOR ACHIEVEMENT

Member churches and ecumenical partners have been mobilized to work for peace in the Middle East. An international platform for engagement and action has been established for those working together for peace in the Middle East, including member churches and ecumenical partners in the region and globally. Such work has been done in close cooperation with leaders of other religious communities.

Ecumenical Accompaniment in Palestine and Israel

Palestine Israel Ecumenical Forum

Jerusalem Inter-Church Centre

World Week for Peace in Palestine and Israel

**Christian Presence in the Middle East
Solidarity and Witness for Peace**

"Act with us to liberate all peoples of this land from the logic of hatred, mutual rejection and death, so that they see in the other the face and dignity of God."

From The Amman Call (2007)

One of the EAPPI guiding principles is “principled impartiality.” The EAPPI Code of Conduct states: “We do not take sides in this conflict and we do not discriminate against anyone but we are not neutral in terms of principles of human rights and international humanitarian law. We stand faithfully with the poor, the oppressed and the marginalized. We want to serve all parties in this conflict in a fair and unbiased manner in word and action.”



The WCC has developed a clear witness on Israel/Palestine and on the Christian presence and commitment in the region, which has been a foundation for efforts by churches around the world. The WCC believes that the situation in the Middle East calls for collective efforts by ecumenical partners to achieve peace and justice at local, national, regional and international levels. Major problems in the region include the armed occupation of territory, denial of human rights and national aspirations, failures to implement the rule of law at the national and international levels, various forms of extremism and intolerance, and nuclear proliferation in Israel and Iran. Interlinked with these is the question of control of energy resources. Maintaining attention on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and supporting efforts for a peaceful and just settlement of that conflict remain fundamental.

In 2007, the Palestine Israel Ecumenical Forum (PIEF) was established as a platform that rallies churches together by enabling them to coordinate their efforts and initiatives for a just peace in Palestine/Israel. The scope of the PIEF is worldwide because the crisis in the Middle East and its solutions are increasingly global in scope. The PIEF believes that non-violence and rigorous dialogue between people, regardless of religious affiliation, are the pillars around which peace, justice and reconciliation can grow in the region.

Currently the PIEF works on four main issues: Jerusalem, Gaza, settlements and tourism. PIEF is part of a growing movement of people and groups in Palestine, Israel and around the world that share the conviction that pilgrimages to the Holy Land should seek encounters with local Palestinian Christians as a response to the call of the gospel to “come and see.” PIEF has worked to promote pilgrimages of transformation by supporting the establishment of guidelines and a Code of Conduct for Tourism in the Holy Land based on biblical perspectives.

“The churches have a key role in resolving this long and bloody tragedy of suffering and struggle. The conflict is not at its core a religious conflict, but it has a deeply enmeshed religious dimension.

“It is clear that there are differences amongst us in our readings of the biblical texts. This conference will not resolve those differences and doesn’t intend to try. We come together, however, convinced that those differences must not be an obstacle for common action for a just peace.”

Rev. Dr Samuel Kobia,
Welcoming remarks at the International Theological Conference on “The Promised Land”, September 2008

The Forum also provides an international platform for “calls to action” that lead to collective policy development and coordinated ecumenical action in peacemaking.

“The Amman Call” in 2007 was also the Palestine Israel Ecumenical Forum’s founding document adopted by the conference, and acknowledges the fact that in Palestine/Israel “children of God - Christian, Muslim and Jew - are imprisoned in a deepening cycle of violence, humiliation and despair.” But it also affirms that “the role of the churches is to heal and to bring all sides to reconciliation.”

A broadly ecumenical conference on the “Promised Land” held in Bern, Switzerland, in 2008 generated “The Bern Perspective” that addressed biblical and theological issues in Christian discourse about the conflict in Palestine/Israel.

Then in 2009, the PIEF was instrumental in amplifying “The Kairos Document” – a 10-point call by Palestinian Christians to end the occupation of Palestine – a call of faith, hope and love, and one born from the pain of suffering. The Kairos Document has provided an authentic contextual theological document that challenges churches to respond to the situation.

The Jerusalem Inter-Church Centre (JIC), a joint project of the Jerusalem churches, the WCC and the Middle East Council of Churches (MECC), functions as a coordination point for ecumenical action in and for Jerusalem, Palestine and its churches. The JIC shares information and analysis, supports the EAPPI, and facilitates intensive exposure tours and seminars for international, high-level government, church and media visitors.

“We encourage your prayers for us and all your Christian brothers and sisters, the ‘living stones’ of all the Christian traditions, here in the Land of the Holy One. We ask you to pray for us in our struggle for justice, peace and reconciliation, so that when Jesus returns he will not again weep for Jerusalem but share in our joy of unity, respect and love for all people in the Holy Land. Be assured, at the same time, of our prayers for you.”

Easter Message of the Heads of Churches of Jerusalem, 2011



"The WCC's approach to the presence and witness of Christians in the Middle East is radically different. Rather than allowing the situation to deteriorate into one of conflict and antagonism towards other citizens in different countries, the imperative is to find ways and means of bringing to the fore a genuine Christian spirit of solidarity."

WCC Central Committee, February 2011

Beginning in 2007, which marked the 40th anniversary of the Israeli-Palestinian war, the WCC and its partners have observed the World Week for Peace in Palestine and Israel in late May/early June each year. This annual observance of a week of prayer, education and advocacy, calls participants to work for an end to the illegal occupation of Palestine, so that Palestinians and Israelis can finally live in peace. During the 2011 World Week for Peace in Palestine and Israel, held from 29 May to 4 June, churches in at least 21 countries around the world sent a clear signal to policy-makers, community groups, and their own parishes, about the urgent need for a peace settlement that ends the illegal occupation and secures the legitimate rights and future of both peoples.



The life and witness of Christians in the Middle East is an increasingly critical concern. Incidents in which churches and Christians have been directly targeted, such as in Iraq and Egypt in late 2010, are compounded by political tensions and violence which have caused thousands of Christians to leave their homelands and even the region.

Since the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, dozens of churches and mosques have been bombed and more than half of the Christian population has fled the country. A February 2009 meeting in Lebanon, co-organized by the WCC, saw Iraqi church leaders pledge "to work together on establishing an ecumenical forum for all Iraqi church leaders that allows them to speak with a common voice to religious and political authorities inside and outside of Iraq." The pledge also included strengthening "existing relations with Muslims" and establishing new channels

for dialogue and cooperation “in order to promote a constructive and peaceful co-existence based on mutual respect and good citizenship.” In February 2010, representatives of the 14 churches in the country founded the Council of Christian Church Leaders of Iraq, a bold statement of unity and witness at a time when sectarian violence is still a deadly threat.

A 2011 WCC consultation on Christian Presence in the Middle East held together with the Volos Theological Academy (Greece), inspired participants with a renewed sense of the importance of bridging gaps between different ecumenical families, including the need for greater dialogue among the churches in the Middle East and between Christians in the East and the West.

In March 2012, *The Ecumenical Review* published a survey by Christian experts on the current position of churches throughout the Middle East. According to the editors, past years’ historic events in the Arab world “highlighted the aspirations of citizens for their dignity and freedom,” yet these same developments “have also raised new and serious challenges for the many Christian communities there.”

As dramatic events continue to unfold across the region, from Libya to Syria, the WCC continues to condemn violence on all sides, calls for the respect for human rights, and supports action to meet the humanitarian needs of those caught in the conflict. In this context, the decline of the Christian presence in the region is a growing concern not only for its symbolic presence in the region of its birth, but for a witness and contribution to building a culture of peace, which is so desperately needed.

“We believe in God, good and just,” state Palestinian Christians in the Kairos Document. “We believe that God’s goodness will finally triumph over the evil of hate and of death that still persist in our land. We will see here ‘a new land’ and ‘a new human being,’ capable of rising up in the spirit to love each one of his or her brothers and sisters.”





Interreligious Youth Forum
12-14 November, 2009
Sana'a, Yemen

7: Inter-religious Dialogue and Cooperation

“Finding common ground between Muslims and Christians is not simply a matter for polite ecumenical dialogue between selected religious leaders ... If Muslims and Christians are not at peace, the world cannot be at peace ... Thus our common future is at stake. The very survival of the world itself is perhaps at stake.”

These challenging words came from 138 Muslim scholars, clerics and intellectuals from a broad range of Muslim denominations and schools of thought in a 2007 open letter, *A Common Word Between Us and You*.

With over 40 years of experience in inter-religious dialogue and cooperation, the WCC is one of the most respected and experienced partners in international interfaith initiatives. Given its experience and leadership, the WCC initiated a process to respond to the letter, engaging member churches and ecumenical partners. The open letter and resulting consultations have become a space for renewed opportunity for Christians and Muslims to explore together the love of God and the love of neighbour in their respective contexts.

The WCC process generated a commentary on the open letter entitled, “Learning to Explore Love Together” – a document encouraging WCC member churches to be in dialogue with Muslims in their local communities, while recognizing the rights of all to the preservation of life, religion, property and dignity and that neither group should misrepresent the other. The commentary has become a basis for dialogue and reflection. Further intra-Christian dialogue, as well as a Christian-Muslim consultation held in 2008, have been frank in acknowledging a history of “mixed” relationships between adherents of the two religions, but affirm the unity and absoluteness of God and common beliefs that God’s merciful love is infinite, eternal and embraces all things.

Culminating the rich dialogue process and building on relationships developed over decades, the WCC jointly organized with Muslim partners a Christian-Muslim consultation in Geneva in 2010, “Transforming Communities: Christians and Muslims Building a Common Future.” Addressing participants, Prince Ghazi bin Muhammad bin Talal of Jordan, the architect of the “Common Word” initiative and personal envoy and special advisor to King Abdullah II of Jordan, said: “The object of the initiative was not at all to reduce our religions to a common theological core but rather to find a common essence – not denying all our many and irreducible differences – that would allow us to more easily be at peace and harmony with one another, and indeed practise love (*caritas*) towards one another.”

At the heart of much of the conflict not only between Christians and Muslims, but among many other faiths, is the call and practice of evangelization and the sometimes aggressive attempts to win converts.

MAJOR ACHIEVEMENT

Member churches have gained a clearer self-understanding amid many religions, and have been engaged in dialogue and cooperation with people of other faiths. Bilateral and multilateral relationships and dialogues have been further developed. Member churches have been accompanied in situations of conflict that are related to religion.

Common Word Process

Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World

Christian Self-Understanding amid Many Religions

“‘Love of the Neighbour’, is not only a sentiment — however altruistic — it implies and requires certain concrete actions.”

Prince Ghazi bin Muhammad bin Talal of Jordan,
speaking at a Christian-Muslim consultation in Geneva, 2010

"When minorities are considered as outsiders, there is no community. When in a society there is a center and a periphery, there is no community. When there is lack of mutual trust, there is no community. Rejection leads to isolation and isolation breeds hate and violence. Alienation or marginalization leads to radicalization. Community means full participation; it means inter-connectedness and inter-dependence, underpinned by mutual understanding and trust."

His Holiness Catholicos Aram I,
WCC ecumenical consultation with
Christian World Communions,
October 2008



In May 2006, the multifaith hearing on conversion organized by the WCC and the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (PCID) affirmed that "while everyone has a right to invite others to an understanding of their faith, it should not be exercised by violating others' rights and religious sensibilities ... all should heal themselves from the obsession of converting others." The goal became to establish a code of conduct on conversion that would bring Christians from various denominations and theological traditions together to discuss approaches and limitations on the conflictual issue of conversion and changes of affiliation in a religiously plural world.

At the end of the five-year consultation and drafting process, in June 2011, the document "Christian Witness in a Multi-religious World: Recommendations for Conduct," was released. The PCID, the WCC and, at the invitation of the WCC, the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA), produced the document to serve as a set of recommendations for conduct on Christian witness around the world. Not intended as a theological statement on mission, it nevertheless addresses practical issues associated with Christian witness in a multi-religious world. For Rev. Dr Tony Richie from the Church of God, a Pentecostal US-based denomination, the code of conduct is not about "whether" Christians evangelize, but "how" they do it.

The three independent bodies include Orthodox, Catholic, Anglican, Protestant, Evangelical, Pentecostal and independent churches with a combined membership of some two billion people representing nearly 90 percent of the world's Christians.

"We send this document to each of our constituencies," said the Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit, general secretary of the WCC, "with the hope that they will see these recommendations as an inspiration to design their own codes of conduct, relevant to their own particular contexts."

Christian self-understanding is challenged and deepened through encounters with neighbours of other religions, while Christians themselves are renewed by entering into dialogue with them. In the period since the 2006 assembly, the WCC has organized a series of consultations exploring Christian self-understanding in the context of other religions. These have included Islam (2008), Buddhism (2009), Judaism (2010),

Churches have been invited to reflect on the document, "Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World: Guidelines for Conduct" in their own contexts and build interfaith relationships.

In Canada, an event in November 2011 organized by the WCC, the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, the Canadian Council of Churches, and the Canadian Churches Forum for Global Ministries did just that, keeping in mind Canadian churches' own history with First Nation peoples and the country's current religious plurality.

Hinduism (2011) and Indigenous religions (2012). The insights gained at these specific consultations have been fed into a wide-ranging document on “Christian self-understanding in the context of religious plurality” which will be completed in time for the Busan assembly.

The WCC and the Iranian Centre for Inter-Religious Dialogue of the Islamic Culture and Relations Organization held the fifth and sixth in a series of dialogues that date back to 1995. The December 2008 meeting held in Iran is part of an effort to help facilitate understanding between WCC member churches and high-ranking Islamic clergy and scholars. A further meeting between the WCC and the Iranian Centre was held in Geneva in September 2012 to renew relationships and take further steps. A network of Christian and Muslim women is contributing new methodologies for building interfaith understanding at the grassroots level.

Trust built between religious communities through dialogue is also essential in defusing conflict and speaking out for peace together. A recommendation from the 2010 Christian-Muslim consultation was to activate a joint working group “whenever a crisis threatens to arise in which Christians and Muslims find themselves in conflict.”

In May 2012, Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit, general secretary of the World Council of Churches (WCC), and Prince Ghazi bin Muhammad bin Talal of Jordan, in his role as chairman of the Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, led a joint delegation to Northern Nigeria where an increase in violence threatens relations between the two religious communities.

In addition to investigating first-hand the situation and factors adding to present tensions, the delegation expressed the concerns of the international community about the violence to the political and religious leaders in Nigeria.

“The joint involvement of Christian and Muslim leaders in this visit is meant not only to encourage an end to the violence but also to serve as an example of inter-religious cooperation in fostering peace and harmony between people of different religions,” Tveit said.

The WCC continues to advocate for peace and understanding between faiths in this religiously plural world. At an interfaith gathering in Assisi in 2011 called by Pope Benedict XVI, Tveit stated, “The cross is not for crusades but a sign of God’s love embracing everybody.”



"As religious leaders, our role is to study carefully our respective holy scriptures and teachings so as to find grounds for theological rationale in defence of human rights. We need to address situations where harm has been done in the name of religion, promote forgiveness, reconciliation and healing in order to foster mutual respect and understanding among our communities, and stimulate interfaith co-operation with mutual respect."

Rev. Dr Samuel Kobia,
one of ten religious leaders from the
different world religions signing a
statement entitled Faith in Human Rights at
the International Inter-religious Conference,
The Netherlands, December 2008

First published 25 years ago, *Current Dialogue* is regarded as one of the world's oldest and most respected journals related to Christian inter-religious engagement. The magazine's articles have been developed to help people understand that inter-religious dialogue is not solely about Christians engaging with other faiths but also how the presence of other faiths shapes and reshapes our Christian self-understanding.





8: Taking Care of Creation

On Saturday, 12 December 2009, more than 100,000 people marched through the streets of the capital of Denmark. They had all gathered in Copenhagen in the hope of having an impact on the negotiations around climate change. Co-organized by the WCC, the march saw several thousand young people from around the world carrying banners calling for climate justice. Rev. Tofiga Falani, a member of the WCC Central Committee and president of the Congregational Church of Tuvalu, was one of the thousands of people who had made the journey to Copenhagen. Travelling over two days from the South Pacific atolls of Tuvalu, Rev. Falani said his was one small voice from a place you can't even see on the world map. "We want to survive!" he said of the 12,000 people on Tuvalu and others on small islands in the South Pacific which, according to climate scientists, are at the forefront of the climate change issue.

Prior to the talks, the WCC submitted a statement to the high level segment of the Conference of Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP) as a reminder to those in power of the churches' and international church organizations' firm conviction that there is an undeniable historical responsibility on the part of the industrialized countries for the climate change crisis the world is facing. "This is a matter of justice and a call to moral responsibility." But as the excitement of the climate change talks subsided, the WCC said that the outcome of the negotiations unfortunately did not match expectations. "Copenhagen was a missed opportunity by the industrialized countries to lead by example," said Prof. Jesse Mugambi from Kenya and a member of the WCC working group on climate change. For many, the outcome clearly suffered from a lack of transparency, with the agreement reached negotiated without consensus and in secret by the powerful nations of the world. The struggle continues.

Care for creation and justice are at the centre of the WCC's work on climate change. Since the 1970s, the WCC has helped develop the concept of sustainable communities, and has been present at all UN climate change conferences since the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change was adopted in 1992. Over the years, the WCC helped foster a movement for climate justice touching millions of people around the world, including thousands of congregations who rang bells for fair and ambitious climate action in 2009. They are now connected in prayer each year during "Time for Creation," from 1 September to 4 October – all linked with the concern for creation in the Eastern and the Western traditions of Christianity, respectively.

The WCC has a long tradition of addressing the links between justice, peace and the integrity of creation. Its work on eco-justice is implemented through the Ecumenical Water Network (EWN) and work on climate justice and on poverty, wealth and ecology.

MAJOR ACHIEVEMENT

Member churches and ecumenical partners have been engaged in joint reflections and actions on wealth, poverty and ecology. They have been enabled to understand more deeply the inter-relatedness of wealth, poverty and ecology, and have cooperated with other faith communities in developing a common framework for action on poverty eradication and climate change through a renewed understanding of and commitment to diakonia.

Climate Justice

Ecumenical Water Network

Poverty, Wealth and Ecology

"In diaconal work, people are the solution, not things."

Rev. D'Karlo Purba,
Southern Sumatra Christian Church
(GKSBS) at the WCC Global Consultation on
Prophetic Diakonia, December 2010

"The world is a sacred place as well as our only home. Thus, as a world with finite resources, we must temper our attitudes by reducing our demands on the natural order. We must distinguish between our greed and others' need. To achieve moderation and frugality, we require personal sacrifice for the good of the planet. In other words, we need a sense of temperance, which in turn implies recognition of justice. We can either have a human world with justice for all, or a polluted, degraded and angry world without justice."

His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew,
in a message to the United Nations Rio +20

Bossey Summer School raises awareness of the global water crisis

"Water has no colour, no race, no nationality, it is the same all over the world."

Rania Flavie Tourma,
an Orthodox Christian from Syria

"How can Americans hold water as sacred when it is wasted away every day?"

Kelly Forbush,
a theology student from the United Church of Christ in the USA

Holding a small plastic pouch of water sold on the streets of Lagos, Roderick Chukwuemeka Oji said "In my country, we call this pure water." But the content is uncontrolled and far from safe to drink. The elites buy bottled water from abroad.

EWN Summer School on Water, 2008



As an international network of churches and Christian organizations, the EWN strives to promote the preservation, responsible management and equitable distribution of water for all, based on the understanding that water is a gift from God and access to it a fundamental human right. EWN has, since 2008, been providing weekly reflections and other resources on water for the season of Lent. These "Seven Weeks for Water" are a way of raising awareness around World Water Day on 22 March. In 2012, the Seven Weeks for Water focused on the role of water in the emerging, and controversially debated, "Green Economy" concept, aimed at reconciling economic development and environmental and social well-being. It was one of the key topics for debate in the run-up to the United Nations' "Rio +20" Conference on Sustainable Development, which took place in Rio de Janeiro in June 2012.

In March 2005, the WCC published *Alternative Globalization Addressing People and Earth (AGAPE)*, a background document that explores questions of how the churches and the wider ecumenical family can respond to the human tragedies rooted in economic globalization. Responses to the AGAPE call at the 2006 WCC Assembly highlighted the unity of the churches in challenging economic globalization as the source of the growing gap between rich and poor within and among nations. Yet it also raised differences in approach to the complex factors inherent to globalization and emphasized the need to continue to bring diverse people together for reflection and action.

The WCC has since 2006 deepened its efforts for genuinely open and connected dialogue that integrates the complexity of global economic developments with theological reflection and concern for justice. Understanding that poverty, wealth and ecology are all integrally related, the WCC addresses the need for economic transformation in the areas mentioned in the AGAPE Call: poverty eradication, trade, finance, sustainable use of land and national resources, public goods and services, life-giving agriculture, decent jobs and people's livelihoods and the power of empire.

"Jesus warns that 'You cannot serve both God and wealth' (Luke 16:13 NRSV). We, however, witness greed manifested dramatically in the financial and economic systems of our times. The current financial crisis presents an opportunity to re-examine our engagement and action. It is an opportunity for us to discern together how to devise a system that is not only sustainable but that is just and moral. Economics is a matter of faith and has an impact on human existence and all of creation."

From Statement on Just Finance and the Economy of Life, WCC Central Committee, 2009

Central to the ongoing dialogue were regional consultations that examined global developments through national and regional lenses. These were augmented by cross-regional discussions, such as those held between European and Latin American churches, as well as interfaith dialogues that identified common stances in relation to greed.

In 2010, the WCC issued a statement on the occasion of the UN General Assembly Hearing with Civil Society on the Millennium Development Goals, which read in part: “We need to re-examine and dismantle such a perverse system of priorities that places more importance on rescuing big banks and acquiring machines that kill people than on emancipating people from starvation and homelessness.” The WCC reiterated its conviction that eradicating poverty is both “a moral and ethical imperative” and an achievable goal in a world that does not face “a dearth of financial resources to overcome poverty,” but “a dearth of life-affirming values and morals — a dearth of justice, solidarity and care.”

Acknowledging the inter-linkages between economic and environmental concerns, the WCC Central Committee issued a statement on eco-justice and ecological debt in September 2009. Ecological debt refers to damage caused over time to ecosystems, places and peoples, through production and consumption patterns, and the exploitation of ecosystems at the expense of the equitable rights of other countries, communities or individuals. The statement calls on northern and southern governments, churches, institutions and corporations, to rectify the injustices to humanity and to the Earth through “drastic transformation at all levels in life and society.”

Engaging with civil society and people’s movements on issues of poverty, inequality and ecological degradation has been an important part of the poverty, wealth and ecology process. The World Social Forum (WSF) is one of the primary venues where interaction, dialogue and cooperation with movements for justice and peace have taken place. The ecumenical presence at the WSF is geared towards building solidarity with civil society as well as showing the common witness of Christians in the current world debates. From the WSF in 2007 in Nairobi to the WSF in Dakar in 2011, seminars and campaigns have been co-organized with ecumenical and civil society partners on topics such as illegitimate and ecological debt, the food crisis and the financial crisis, to promote discussion and joint actions.

The systematic process of dialogue and action on poverty, wealth and ecology will culminate in a statement for the 10th Assembly developed through the AGAPE Global Forum on Poverty, Wealth and Ecology.

The vision is vast, but our faith calls us to speak and act towards the Kingdom of God. As participants in the Global Forum on Poverty, Wealth and Ecology, Bogor, Indonesia, June 2012 stated: “An economy of life is not only possible, it is in the making, and justice lies at its very foundation.”

“If we affirm ourselves to be a worldwide community that respects and honours the web of life and human dignity, the life-denying relationships and practices which create poverty in the midst of wealth and dehumanize people must be challenged.”

Dar es Salaam Statement on Linking Poverty, Wealth and Ecology in Africa, November 2007

Together with the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace and the Islamic Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization, the WCC collaborated with the International Labour Organization in developing a policy handbook released in 2012 entitled, “Convergences: Decent Work and Social Justice in Religious Traditions.”





9: Changes in Governance

In the years since Porto Alegre, the World Council of Churches has undertaken a review of its governance structures, a process that concluded successfully in 2012 in Crete. The WCC central committee discussed and adopted amendments to the WCC Rules that will equip the Council with a revised governance structure and a new way of working. The impetus behind the changes was both theological and managerial:

The theological basis was founded on the Common Understanding and Vision of the Council as a fellowship of churches. Fellowship is a rich term that implies mutual trust, shared discernment of God's leading, mutual accountability and willingness to take risks for the sake of the other. It assumes that God's voice will not always speak through the powerful. The best management principles liberate time and resources and generate trust and security, they do not constrain. The intention of the governance review process has been, at a time when the Council has felt some unease about its life, to provide a framework for the renewal of trust, and of the capacity to take risks, by giving a firmer foundation to the instruments of governance—and to shape them for effective life in a rapidly changing ecumenical and secular context.

In the revised WCC Constitution and Rules, the four functions of governance, management, implementation and advice are kept conceptually distinct. Governance governs and management manages. Governing bodies set the vision, mission, strategic objectives, limits and guidelines. Management is held accountable for fulfilling these and, at the same time, is left free to organize its work as it does so. Key points incorporated in the change include:

- the desire for a more deliberative central committee of mutual learning, discovery and discernment;
- greater clarity in the respective roles of central and executive committees;
- an understanding of the distinction between governance, management and implementation;
- a change to an eight-year cycle of assemblies, with central committee meeting every two years and the executive twice per year;
- definition of the roles of general secretary, moderators and presidents.

To be able to share our responsibilities, we need to empower all participants by an efficient and transparent structure. To be transparent we need to have clear mandates and regulations for each body and ministry. To be efficient we need to avoid unnecessarily complicated procedures. To be as representative of our churches as possible, we need to have systems of rotation and proper sharing of positions. To be an instrument of strategic leadership for the whole ecumenical movement, we need to have proper ways to include our partners in the work and in the governing processes.

We also come to this conclusion of the work on governance to find the best ways to make us more able to be representative of the wide fellowship of churches that we are, to find the best way of making use of specialized competence in the churches and among the partners, and to make us more open to specific contributions from our partners.

Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit, WCC General Secretary



10: Developing a New Ecumenical Centre

In September 2011, the executive committee addressed the issue of the WCC Retirement Fund, which reported a deficit of CHF 28 million at that time. In determining its strategy in this respect, the executive committee approved a real estate development plan in order to meet three objectives. These objectives are: to fund the cost of transferring pension fund services to an independent collective institution; to “develop a new Ecumenical Centre for the 21st Century;” and to increase the level of rental income currently generated from the estate. Overall, the real estate development aims to enhance and better steward the property and facilities owned by the WCC in Geneva.

Real Estate Development

The Ecumenical Centre is set in an estate of 34,000m² in Grand-Saconnex, Geneva, in the “international zone,” with considerable development potential. The steering committee determined that an offer for tender should be launched to identify a real estate developer or development company to work with the WCC. In December 2011, the WCC selected Implenia, the leading Swiss developer and construction company, quoted on the Swiss stock exchange. The company’s strengths include its experience with large-scale building projects, the emphasis which it places on sustainable development and its ability to ensure the management of a project from development to delivery of properties.

During the period after December 2011, Implenia worked closely with WCC personnel to explore financing, begin consultations with area governmental authorities, and establish a development contract which was signed by WCC and Implenia in May 2012.

While the process has now been defined, the shape of the future development is yet to be discerned. Decisions will depend on the evaluation of the quality of the existing buildings, the ideas proposed in competition by architects, the views of local authorities in the context of development regulations, as well as the economic potential. The percentage of land which might be sold cannot yet be determined; indeed, there is the possibility of retaining land ownership while selling leasehold rights. Financial objectives remain clearly in view, however, and include reimbursement of the loan for the pension fund. Further investment in the project by WCC, in the form of the new or renovated Ecumenical Centre and in buildings for rental, will also be financed either entirely or in part by sales of land, buildings, or leasehold rights.

The development contract identifies seven different phases in the development work, of which the first three concern the whole estate, while the final four may be launched at intervals, and on an iterative basis, each time for a different sector of the plot. These phases include:



We are undertaking a lot of work to identify the best choices for the development of our property so that it can be a visible, functional, effective and attractive building for the work of the WCC and our ecumenical partners in Geneva into the future.

Since beginning this process, I have reflected on the added value of having our secretariat and an ecumenical centre on the road between the Geneva airport and the United Nations institutions of that city. As we learn how valuable this real estate is, we are immensely grateful for the wisdom of those who provided the ground and those who established and built this centre almost 50 years ago.

We are within walking distance of many of the powerful institutions, international organizations and arenas that deal with issues high on our agenda, including justice, peace, human rights, health, labour. We have access immediately to the missions of almost all countries in the world – and their staff have direct access to the WCC as the expression of 350 member churches around the world and to the expertise, commitment and vast networks manifested through the churches, ecumenical bodies and specialized ministries. Through our member churches, we are present in more than 110 countries. We do not need to establish national offices to know what is happening and to have an impact on the national and local contexts.

Geneva represents a legacy and an identity for the ecumenical movement. It is an arena where the churches must be visible and present. Having an ecumenical centre and an ecumenical institute at Bossey gives countless opportunities to encounter many of the church representatives and partners in the same place, through meetings, visits, study, joint action. Our physical presence in Geneva has had enormous significance, and it has even more potential.

Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit, WCC General Secretary

Setting up the project. A technical evaluation was undertaken in 2012 to determine the quality and sustainability of the existing buildings, as a basis for determining to what extent if any they could be integrated in the development project and the related cost of renovation.

Architecture competition and financial estimates to June 2013. An architecture competition will be organized, with the objective of choosing the project which will best meet WCC's objectives and the guidelines defined by the authorities. Five to ten candidate firms will be invited to submit ideas for the whole estate, encompassing the existing buildings or not, in accordance with the recommendations from the prior phase and taking account of specifications to be defined for the new or renovated Ecumenical Centre and other buildings to be owned by WCC. A jury will select the winning project.

Area Development Plan and impact study to September 2014. An Area Development Plan, subject to review by local and WCC authorities, will be prepared in accordance with local regulations, defining the different plots on the estate, the volumes, dimensions, layout and floor surface of buildings, roads, pathways and green spaces.

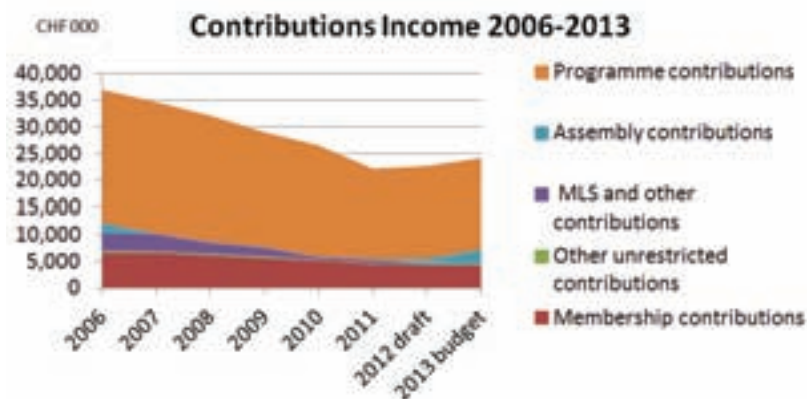
Decisions on completion of the first three phases. After the first three phases, it may be decided to sell certain plots that will have gained value as a result of the process conducted and approvals obtained. However, for other plots Implenia and WCC may open a “development stage,” that is, a cycle of further phases which would encompass: obtaining permits, setting financial objectives, seeking potential investors for each envisioned building, and (from 2016 to 2018) implementing the plan and opening the newly redeveloped site.



11: Financial Profile: Recent History and Current Trends

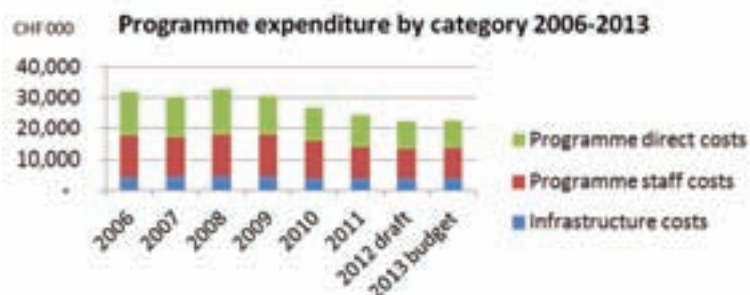
Contributions Income Trends

Total annual contributions income decreased from CHF 37.1 million in 2006 to CHF 22.2 million in 2011 (40% decrease). In 2006, contributions income included CHF 2.7 million for multi-lateral sharing (MLS), an activity which ceased in 2009, as well as CHF 2 million of assembly contributions. Total contributions income is budgeted to increase to CHF 24.1 million in 2013, including CHF 2.8 million in assembly contributions. The most significant year-on-year decline in programme contributions occurred in 2011. Of CHF 4.4 million total decrease in that year, an estimated CHF 1.9 million was attributable to unfavourable foreign exchange rates compared with 2010, and CHF 1.6 million to a severe reduction in back-donor funding to one of WCC's major funding partners. While a degree of stability has been obtained from 2011, with programme contributions at a level of about CHF 17 million from that date, the Council faces a continuing financial challenge due to a long-term trend of decline in contributions income.



Programme Expenditure

Annual programme expenditure (without Assembly, multi-lateral sharing, ACT Development and other special funding) decreased by CHF 9.4 million (29%) from CHF 31.9 million in 2006 to CHF 22.5 million in 2013. On average, programme staff costs represented 42% of programme expenditure.



Significant Financial Developments 2006-2013

2006 The longer-term general reserves target of 50% of staff costs was met, at CHF 9 million. The general reserves exceeded programme funds for the first time.

2007 The Council decided no longer to present its financial statements under International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) as a result of the accounting treatment required in relation to the WCC Retirement Fund (WCC RF) under IFRS. At that date, the WCC RF reported a deficit of CHF 1.7 million.

2008 In a year of financial turbulence, the annual budget was revised downwards during the year, and foreign currency rates fell sharply against the Swiss franc towards the end of the year. An overall deficit of CHF 4.2 million was incurred, compared with CHF 2.5 million budgeted. The WCC RF reported a deficit of CHF 20.5 million, with a coverage level of 79.1%.

2009 The Council completed a fire security renovation project in the Ecumenical Centre, at a cost of CHF 6.6 million over four years, and the renovation of the Visser 't Hooft Hall, at CHF 1.3 million. Approximately CHF 5.6 million was financed from general reserves, and CHF 2.3 million in mortgage loans were drawn. The WCC RF reported a deficit of CHF 13.6 million, reflecting some recovery in the financial markets.

2010 Executive committee approved the development of a conference centre at Bossey, initially with a cost limit of CHF 6.3 million, later revised to CHF 6.6 million, to be financed by mortgage loans and fundraising. A focus on strengthening relations with the member churches resulted in an increase in the number of member churches participating with membership contributions from 177 to 224 (27% increase). The WCC RF reported a deficit of CHF 18.6 million. Governing bodies requested that a report on the longer-term strategy for the WCC RF be developed.

2011 Following consideration of the critical situation of the WCC RF, which reported a deficit of CHF 23.8 million at 31 December, the executive committee determined that the Council should make an extraordinary contribution to the WCC RF, provided that financing be available, and that the contribution be applied to finance the transfer of its assets and obligations to an independent pension fund institution. A tender process was launched to select a property developer as partner, with a view to realising value from the Council's real estate, both to cover the cost of securing the pensions, and to renovate or renew the Ecumenical Centre. An extraordinary charge of CHF 24.7 million was recognised at 31 December, reported as a deficit fund to be covered from the development project. The impact on funds and reserves is presented in the following section.

2012 A steering committee monitored the process as WCC contracted a five-year loan of CHF 24 million, with interest at 1.3% per annum. Proceeds were transferred to the WCC RF, and subsequently to an independent pension scheme. In addition,

CHF 3.5 million was transferred from general reserves to WCC's building project fund to cover loan interest and consultancy costs during a five-year period, the aim being to be able to reimburse the loan through a real estate sale by then. In May, a development contract was signed with Implenia, a leading Swiss construction company. The Council's general reserves closed at CHF 5.5 million.

Overview of Funds and Reserves 2006 to 2013

General reserves averaged CHF 8 million, and programme funds CHF 5.7 million throughout the period. WCC's own funds invested in buildings peaked at CHF 19 million in 2010, reflecting both the Bossey conference centre work-in-progress and completion of work on the Ecumenical Centre fire security renovation. Other funds, averaging CHF 9 million, represent principally the endowments in favour of the Ecumenical Institute, and from 2012, the building project fund, designated from general reserves.

Total funds and reserves decreased from CHF 40 million to CHF 14 million in 2011. At that date, a deficit fund of CHF 24.7 million was recorded, to be covered from proceeds of the development project. In 2011, the WCC's land and buildings were reflected at CHF 45.8 million in net book value, while the insurance value of buildings was reported in the financial statements at CHF 105 million.

Loans

In 2006, mortgage loans totaled CHF 19 million, being CHF 11 million for the staff residential building, CHF 7 million for the Château de Bossey (renovation 2003), and CHF 1 million for the Ecumenical Centre equipment. Loans were increased by CHF 6 million in 2011 for the construction of the conference centre at Bossey, and by CHF 24 million in 2012. No reimbursements are required for the CHF 24 million loan over a period of five years. Contractual annual reimbursements for all other loans total about CHF 0.7 million annually. Loans total CHF 48 million in 2013.



Pre-Assembly Programme Evaluation Report - Summary

The pre-assembly evaluation of the programmes of the World Council of Churches focuses on the effectiveness, relevance and impact of the WCC's programmes from the perspective of its constituency. The evaluation is conducted against the background of the seven basic principles formulated by the 9th Assembly of the WCC (Porto Alegre, 2006).

These seven basic principles are:

- To keep the focus upon what the WCC uniquely might do as a global fellowship of churches in providing leadership to the whole of the ecumenical movement;
- To do less, to do it well, in an integrated, collaborative and interactive approach;
- To lift up its central task of the churches calling one another to visible unity;
- To keep in tension the work of dialogue and advocacy, of building relationships and promoting social witness among churches and with different sectors in society;
- To foster greater ownership and participation by the churches in building as much as possible on initiatives of the churches and partner organizations;
- To bring a prophetic voice and witness to the world in addressing the urgent and turbulent issues of our times in a focused way; and
- To communicate WCC activities to the churches and the world in a timely and imaginative way.*

The aim of the evaluation is to review if the programmatic work of WCC sufficiently and effectively responded to the concerns and challenges the member churches have been facing since 2006 to today.

The evaluation was prepared by the WCC pre-assembly evaluation team, nominated by the executive committee. Methods of the evaluation included a questionnaire to the broad constituency; interviews with some individuals representing diverse backgrounds from within the fellowship; interviews with some members of staff; assessment of the results of the mid-term evaluation, annual evaluations, and key governance reports; and review of the planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting tools. The evaluation questionnaire was sent to 762 contact persons representing member churches, central committee members, Christian world communions, regional ecumenical organizations, international ecumenical organizations, national councils of churches and specialized ministries. There were in total 144 respondents.

**God, in your grace.* Official Report of the Ninth Assembly of the World Council of Churches.

The majority of the WCC constituency has a sense of ownership over the work of WCC (82.5% agree with the statement “Your church as a member feels ownership of the work of the WCC”) and one in four considers their commitment being stronger since the last Assembly.

The majority of the respondents to the questionnaire (over 85%) consider that the fellowship has been strengthened through the programme work, that the relationships which they have with the WCC have been strengthened (75%) and that programme work has promoted ecumenical cooperation (85%).

The members engage mainly through participating in events and through the WCC advisory bodies. Over 40% of the respondents felt their church/organization is not actively involved in the implementation/planning of WCC’s programmatic work. There is a major potential in the member churches and the wider constituency to be more involved in the implementation of the WCC activities as a remarkable 90% consider that they could be increasingly involved. When asked more specifically, “In which ways can your church/organization participate in the WCC work in the future,” issues like participating in planning and implementing activities, strengthening local and global ecumenical movements, offering thematic expertise, participating in governing bodies, committees and commissions and financial and in-kind contributions and membership fees were mentioned as the key approaches for involvement.

The evaluation team recommends that the WCC continues to facilitate where possible that members and partners take increasing responsibility for the common work. A meaningful role is linked to a sense of ownership and commitment. Increasingly, the focus needs to be on the sustainability of work and the willingness of member churches to carry forward the work where the WCC has acted as a catalyst.

There is an overall positive response by the constituency on the relevance, significance and impact of the programmes of WCC. The majority of the respondents (69%) considered that the programmes had an impact in general and on the life of the church, in particular. Among the respondents from member churches, 80% felt that the programmes have had an impact on the life of the church.

Financial realities have influenced the capacity of programmes to produce an impact. Annually, the programme budgets have been revisited and reductions have been made. Also, since Porto Alegre, structural changes have taken place, which have influenced the ability of the organization to generate positive impact. In some cases though, these changes have caused the WCC to work together in a more integrated and collaborative manner with member churches and ecumenical partners. There is an overall difficulty in measuring, assessing and communicating programmatic results and impact, especially in quantitative terms. Therefore it is recommended that goals of the programmes be defined more specifically and increasingly prioritized, and the development of the planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting systems and tools continues to be strengthened.

The programmes that are best known by the respondents are also seen as relevant for future priorities. Programme on Unity, Mission, Evangelism and Spirituality and programme on Justice, Diakonia and Responsibility for Creation as well as the programme on Public Witness: Addressing Power, Affirming Peace are seen as the most important programmes to continue. The other programmes also score well in importance. It is advisable to consider how the main thrust of the three programmes, which are particularly well received by the constituency, can continue in the future.

There is a general positive impression among the respondents of the ability of the WCC to move towards the seven basic guiding principles formulated by the Programme Guidelines Committee in Porto Alegre. Areas of concern are related in particular to the issue of “WCC has fostered greater ownership and participation by the churches in building as much as possible on the initiatives of the churches and partner organizations”. Similarly, an area of concern is the ability of WCC to communicate its activities in a timely and imaginative way.

In addition, around one-third of the respondents disagree with the statement: “WCC is doing less, doing it well and in an integrated collaborative and interactive approach.” In order to do less, choices need to be made. For such prioritization to take place, the evaluation team recommends that the WCC develop a focused Strategic Plan with specific strategic goals. From these goals the appropriate organization, a logical programme framework, methods and staffing should be developed.

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