

Christ's Love Moves the World to Reconciliation and Unity

Report of the WCC 11th Assembly
Karlsruhe, Germany, 2022



World Council
of Churches

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Preface by the Acting General Secretary

I warmly commend this Report of the 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches, which met in Karlsruhe, Germany, from 31 August to 8 September 2022. This report is one element of a wider collection of resources that offers a flavour of what took place at the assembly, which gathered more than 4500 people, including 659 official delegates from the WCC's 352 member churches around the theme "Christ's love moves the world to reconciliation and unity."

Holding the assembly in 2022 was not something that could have been taken for granted, nor to hear people referring to it as "historical and providential." Indeed, the gathering had to be postponed from 2021 because of the unprecedented challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. We are grateful to our hosts for their continued commitment to the assembly and their flexibility and willingness to reschedule the event: the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD), the Council of Christian Churches in Germany (ACK), and the Protestant Church in Baden, as well as those supporting the assembly, especially the neighbouring regional Protestant churches, the Catholic Archdiocese of Freiburg, the Union of Protestant Churches of Alsace and Lorraine, and the Protestant Church in Switzerland.

From my own perspective, I never imagined that I would be leading the preparations for and coordinating the WCC's 11th Assembly. In March 2020, I was appointed interim and then acting general secretary for what was expected to be about three months. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the election of a new general secretary could not take place, and my tenure lasted for almost three years until the end of 2022.

The COVID-19 pandemic has taken countless lives, including many members and leaders of our churches and many ecumenical friends. It reminded us of our shared vulnerability as well as creating a strong sense of solidarity among the churches as a fellowship and with the entire human family.

During the pandemic, we developed new ways of working and of using digital and online technologies for our meetings, and this was reflected in our assembly. Never has a WCC assembly had such online resonance. As well as the 4520 people who gathered in Karlsruhe, the assembly reached a large number of people online, including more than 300 000 through live streaming and videos and more than a million on social media. In addition, around 180 000 people visited the WCC website during the two weeks of the assembly.

This is also reflected in the way we are reporting on the assembly. As well as this printed report, there is also an updated assembly website section containing all the resources from the assembly and a collection of videos from

the assembly. Indeed, as the plenaries had a new format and focus, the main record of the plenaries will be found in the video and other electronic formats, while this report includes a summary of each plenary with links to online resources.

In this printed report, there is an account of the spiritual life of the 11th Assembly; the report to the assembly of the moderator and my report as acting general secretary; the assembly message and unity statement; an overview of the thematic plenaries; a brief introduction to the ecumenical conversations; the committee reports; and the assembly's public statements.

I am very grateful to our outgoing central committee leadership, as well as to Bishop Gregory K. Cameron and the Rev. Dr Dietrich Werner, for contributing their personal reflections and insights on the assembly to this report.

When I took up my position as acting general secretary, the assembly preparations had already started, and I am very grateful for the work that had already been done under the leadership of the Most Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit, former general secretary and at present the Preses of the Church of Norway, and for the support I received from staff and elected members of the governing bodies in preparing for the assembly. I think particularly of the moderator, Dr Agnes Abuom, and the two vice-moderators, Bishop Mary Ann Swenson and H.E. Metropolitan Prof. Dr Gennadios. I think especially of Metropolitan Gennadios' work as moderator of the Assembly Planning Committee until he was sadly taken from us in June 2022.

This report opens with the message of the assembly, which, reflecting on the assembly theme, reminded us that as reconciliation brings us closer to God and each other, it opens the way toward a unity grounded in God's love. This unity, which is a gift from God and which arises from reconciliation, enables us to address the world's urgent problems. When we speak about the love of Christ, as we did in Karlsruhe, we speak about the love of God in Christ for the whole of creation. This is the very essence of our faith and something that we can take with us as a fellowship on our pilgrimage for justice, reconciliation, and unity.

Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca

WCC Acting General Secretary 2020–2022

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**The 11th Assembly of the
World Council of Churches**



An Overview of the 11th Assembly

More than 4500 people, among them 659 official delegates from member churches, gathered in Karlsruhe, Germany, from 31 August to 8 September 2022, for the 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC), around the theme “Christ’s loves moves the world to reconciliation and unity.” It was the first WCC assembly in Europe since the 4th Assembly in Uppsala in 1968 and the founding assembly in Amsterdam in 1948, and the first to gather in Germany. The COVID-19 pandemic, beyond its toll on lives and livelihoods, meant that the assembly was postponed for a year from 2021.

Each assembly has been followed by an assembly report as a record of the assembly with the authoritative documents and decisions of the gathering. This report, therefore, follows those published after the WCC’s founding assembly in Amsterdam in 1948 and the subsequent assemblies in Evanston (US) in 1954, New Delhi (India) in 1961, Uppsala (Sweden) in 1968, Nairobi (Kenya) in 1975, Vancouver (Canada) in 1983, Canberra (Australia) in 1991, Harare (Zimbabwe) in 1998, Porto Alegre (Brazil) in 2006, and Busan (Republic of Korea) in 2013.¹

Christ’s Love Moves the World

The assembly in Karlsruhe gathered amidst perplexities, anxieties, and fundamental questions about the way we inhabit the earth, make sense of our lives, live in society, and accept responsibility for future generations. However, it also met with hope and resolution to act from a unity grounded in Christ’s love, to transform division into reconciliation, to work for the healing of the planet, and to continue together on the path of justice, reconciliation, and unity. Something of the vitality of the assembly in Karlsruhe can be seen in the photo album found in the centre of this report.

To ground its deliberations in the light of present-day realities, each WCC assembly has a theme. The theme chosen for Karlsruhe, “Christ’s loves moves the world to reconciliation and unity,” guided preparations and encouraged reflection on the role of the churches, the WCC, and the ecumenical movement in the world today.

Spiritual life is at the heart of a WCC assembly, and the theme inspired prayer services, Bible studies, and home groups, offering spiritual guidance for the other moments of the journey, as participants engaged in study, discussion,

¹ The reports of the assemblies can be found in the WCC Digital Archive: <https://archive.org/details/assemblydigitaledition>.

and deliberation. A description of the assembly's spiritual life is found in Section 3.

Thematic plenaries explored different aspects of the theme: "The purpose of God's love in Christ for the whole creation—reconciliation and unity" (1 September, Day of Creation), "Affirming the wholeness of life" (5 September), "Affirming justice and human dignity" (6 September), and "Christian unity and the churches' common witness" (7 September), as well as the Europe plenary (2 September), which took as its starting point Christ's compassionate love that transcends boundaries and borders. An account of the plenaries can be found in Section 4.

This flow day-by-day throughout the assembly placed the assembly theme in a movement from the biblical vision of God's love incarnate and made manifest in Christ to considerations of the urgent issues of today's world and the churches' mission as they are called to justice, reconciliation, and unity.

A Day at the Assembly

Each day followed a daily rhythm of praying together, reflecting together, sharing together, and responding together. The assembly programme can be found in Appendix 6.

The day began with morning prayer, after which all participants were invited to the thematic plenary. Following the plenary, delegates and official participants met in home groups of about 30 people to reflect together on what they heard. The same home group met five times during the assembly. Other participants were invited to plenary-style Bible study to reflect on the day's anchor text.

After lunch, delegates and official participants met in committees and business plenaries for discussion about the assembly's message and unity statement, public statements, committee reports, and the election of the WCC presidents and the new central committee.

The business plenaries were followed by ecumenical conversations in which delegates and others discerned how churches could respond to the various challenges facing the ecumenical movement today. There were 23 ecumenical conversations, drawing on the insights of WCC networks, member churches, and partners and addressing emerging ecumenical concerns, and open to participants with official speaking rights. Section 4 consists of an introduction to, and list of, the ecumenical conversations and a link to the report.

While the business plenaries were taking place, other assembly participants were invited to the *Brunnen*, the German word for "well," a meeting place with living water, with workshops and exhibitions, and a space for encountering the diversity of the church and ecumenical partners.

At the end of business each day, the assembly gathered for evening prayer, prepared by different church traditions: Eastern Orthodox, Protestant, Roman Catholic, Anglican and Old Catholic, Oriental Orthodox, and Pentecostal.

This Assembly Report

A WCC assembly has several general functions. *First*, as the most representative gathering of its kind, a WCC assembly is an occasion to celebrate and reaffirm the mutual commitment that member churches and ecumenical partners have made through the WCC. It is a moment for the churches, through their delegates and all those gathered at the assembly, to reaffirm their confession of Jesus Christ, to pray together, and to voice their intention to continue the search for the visible unity of the church.

This mutual commitment is expressed in a message issued by the assembly to the ecumenical fellowship and the wider world and a Unity Statement in which the assembly sets out its understanding of Christian unity in the context in which the gathering is taking place. The message from the assembly in Karlsruhe—“A Call to Act Together”—can be found in this section of the report together with the Unity Statement.

Section 2 offers several personal reflections on the assembly.

Second, a WCC assembly is an opportunity for the churches to receive an account of the work facilitated by the WCC with its member churches and partners over the years since the previous assembly. The outgoing central committee presented a formal account of the work of the WCC since the 10th Assembly in 2013 under the title *Pilgrims on the Path of Peace: The Journey of the WCC from Busan to Karlsruhe*, a summary of and a link to this report is found in Section 4—“Reviewing the Work of the World Council of Churches”—together with the reports to the assembly of the moderator, Dr Agnes Abuom, and of the acting general secretary, Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Saucu.

Third, as the highest decision-making body of the WCC, the assembly sets the council’s policy and programme guidelines for the years to come, as well as electing 150 members of the central committee, who will guide the work of the WCC until the next assembly, and eight presidents of the WCC. Section 6—“Reporting from the Assembly Committees”—includes the reports officially received by the assembly from the Policy Reference Committee, Programme Guidelines Committee, the Finance Committee, and the Nominations Committee. The names of the delegates elected as presidents and to the central committee are available in Appendix 3.

Fourth, a WCC assembly is a place where delegates *speak to the world* on pressing issues facing the international community, and Section 7 includes the public statements prepared by the Public Issues Committee and adopted by the assembly, as well as those that, for reasons of time, were issued after the assembly by the leadership of the central committee and by the newly elected executive committee.

The assembly in Karlsruhe was also a time for sharing together with the hosts from Germany and Europe, ecumenical partners, and friends from other faith communities, as well as listening to voices often marginalized—women,

youth, people with disabilities, Indigenous Peoples—and for receiving the reflections of the Inter-Orthodox pre-assembly consultation and that of the specialized ministries. The messages from the pre-assembly gatherings can be found in Section 8, and greetings to the assembly from hosts and partners in Section 9.

More than any WCC assembly so far, the assembly in Karlsruhe made full use of the possibilities of modern technology to offer livestreaming and video from the assembly, including the spiritual life of the assembly, plenaries, Bible studies, and press conferences. Links to the online resources that complement this formal assembly report are found throughout this publication. These resources are available at <https://www.oikoumene.org/assembly2022>.

The appendices include the lists of assembly delegates and participants, the assembly committee membership, WCC presidents and central committee members elected in Karlsruhe, WCC the member churches, the WCC constitution and rules, and the programme of the assembly.

A Call to Act Together

Delegates at the WCC's founding assembly in Amsterdam in 1948 pledged to "stay together." At the 8th Assembly in Harare in 1998, delegates stated they would continue to "walk together." The 10th Assembly in Busan in 2013 affirmed, "We intend to move together." In its message, the 11th Assembly in Karlsruhe issued "A Call to Act Together." In the final paragraph of this message, the assembly stated:

We commit ourselves to working with all people of good will. As we reflect on the fruits of our work in Karlsruhe, we invite all to become pilgrims together. For in Christ, all things will be made new. His love which is open to all, including the last, the least, and the lost, and is offered to all, can move and empower us in a pilgrimage of justice, reconciliation, and unity.

Message of the 11th Assembly: A Call to Act Together

The love of Christ urges us on.
2 Corinthians 5:14

“Come, Follow Me!”

1. From the time he journeyed on earth, and even in this present moment, Jesus unceasingly addresses these words to every human being. Jesus’ life, words, and actions are a constant invitation to movement—from one physical place to another, from one group of people to another, from one mindset to another. Above all, amid the problems of the world, Jesus calls us to come to him and to abide in his love, a love which is offered for all the world (see Matt. 11:28).

2. The very last book of the Bible, Revelation, speaks of ancient forces of human suffering at work in the world: war, death, disease, and famine. As the assembly of the World Council of Churches gathered in Karlsruhe in 2022, we were conscious of their manifestations in the world today. In their wake come injustice and discrimination, where those who have power often use it to oppress others rather than to build inclusion, justice, and peace.

3. Individuals, peoples, and countries also face catastrophes arising directly from an irresponsible and broken relationship with creation that has led to ecological injustice and climate crisis. As the climate emergency accelerates, so does the suffering experienced by impoverished and marginalized people.

4. Yet, continuing our pilgrimage together as an assembly of the World Council of Churches, our mood has been one of anticipation and hope, and even joy, because through the power of the Holy Spirit, Christ’s invitation remains open to everyone, in fact to the whole of creation.

5. “Christ’s love moves the world to reconciliation and unity.” This love, in answer to the cries of those who are suffering, compels us to come to him in solidarity and to respond and act for justice. We are summoned to be reconciled in God’s love, and to witness to that love revealed in Christ (1 John 4:9–11).

6. Reconciliation is a movement toward God and toward each other. It implies a readiness to listen to God and to one another. It is a conversion of the heart, from selfishness and apathy to inclusion and service, acknowledging our interdependence with creation. We confess that, even as we desire with our

whole hearts to serve God and our neighbour, we have found ourselves failing, disagreeing, and sometimes walking in opposite directions. We confess that we need the transformative power of Christ's love to move to a world truly reconciled and united.

7. Christians, and the structures that we have built, have been complicit in the abuse of others, and we must repent and join in this movement of reconciliation. In the face of war, inequality, and sins against creation today, Christ's love calls us all to repentance, reconciliation, and justice.

Our Journey Together

8. Amid all our diversity, we have relearned in our assembly that there is a pilgrimage of justice, reconciliation, and unity to be undertaken together:

- Meeting together in Germany, we learn the cost of war and the possibility of reconciliation;
- Hearing the word of God together, we recognize our common calling;
- Listening and talking together, we become closer neighbours;
- Lamenting together, we open ourselves to each other's pain and suffering;
- Working together, we consent to common action;
- Celebrating together, we delight in each other's joys and hopes;
- Praying together, we discover the richness of our traditions and the pain of our divisions.

"Go into the Whole World"

9. From the time of his ascension into heaven, and even in this present moment, Christ unceasingly gives this command to all who follow him.

10. As reconciliation brings us closer to God and each other, it opens the way toward a unity founded in God's love. As Christians, we are called to dwell in Christ's love and to be one (John 17). Such unity, which is a gift from God, and which arises from reconciliation and is grounded in his love, enables us to address the world's urgent problems. We will find a strength to act from a unity founded in Christ's love, for it enables us to learn the things that make for peace, to transform division into reconciliation, and to work for the healing of our living planet. Christ's love will sustain all of us in the task of embracing everyone and overcoming exclusion.

11. We have tasted the experience of such love as we gathered from 352 member churches, with our ecumenical partners, friends from other faith communities, and from all regions of the world to seek unity amid our diversity. Together we have listened to voices often marginalized in the world: women, youth, people with disabilities, Indigenous Peoples.

12. We long for a wider movement, the reconciliation and unity of all humanity, and indeed of the entire cosmos. This would be a unity in which God establishes justice, an equal place for all, through which creation may be renewed and strengthened. We rely on Christ's love as we act and advocate for climate justice. We join our voices with the Amsterdam assembly (1948) that "war is contrary to the will of God," and the Nairobi assembly (1975) that "racism is a sin against God." We lament that we have to repeat these statements.

13. In our assembly, we have used many words, but from these we have fashioned a new resolve. Now we ask God's assistance to transform our commitments into action. We commit ourselves to working with all people of good will. As we reflect on the fruits of our work in Karlsruhe, we invite all to become pilgrims together. For in Christ, all things will be made new. His love which is open to all, including the last, the least, and the lost, and is offered to all, can move and empower us in a pilgrimage of justice, reconciliation, and unity.

Unity Statement

Christ's Love Moves the World to Reconciliation and Unity

Preface

1. We—the fellowship of the World Council of Churches (WCC)—live and witness in a world which is at the same time God's beautiful creation and broken by ecological crisis, war, pandemic, systemic poverty, racism, gender-based violence, human rights violations, and many other sufferings. Inspired by the theme of the assembly,¹ this unity statement is written in a pastoral voice. It seeks to offer hope to the churches and the world in their situation. It is founded in confidence in God's indefatigable love and begins there, with the love that never abandons us. It reflects on the significance of that undaunted love, revealed in Christ and kindled by the Holy Spirit, for the ecumenical movement. It challenges the churches to live and pray for unity, inspired and encouraged by such a love as this. It challenges our churches also to commit to witness and work together to the reconciliation of all things in Christ.

United in Christ's Love

2. The Apostle Paul wrote to the Christians in Rome:

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the *love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord* (Rom. 8:38–39, italics added).

Now, as through the ages, the love of God, freely, graciously, and unconditionally given, the communion of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit, is working to defeat all those forces in the world that try to separate us from God, from one another and from creation. The love of God has been made manifest in the incarnation of his Son Jesus Christ: in his compassion for so many, in his washing of his disciples' feet, in his gift of a command to love even our enemies, and by his arms stretched out in love for the world as he gave his life on the cross. We see in Christ a love that never fails, that overcomes separation and brokenness.

¹ "Christ's Love Moves the World to Reconciliation and Unity," see 2 Corinthians 5:11, 21.

The Distinctive Christian Call to Love

3. In the earliest days of the Church, many wondered at the ways in which Christians lived and affirmed their faith. How is it, they asked then, that Christians have no fear, even of death? How do they have such *affection* for each other? And where does their strikingly different way of living come from? In the second century, when Christians were particularly renowned for their willingness to stay with the many sick and dying, the author of “The Epistle to Diognetus” declared that Christian life is “no mere earthly invention . . . or a mere human system of opinion,” but that it comes from the one love of God for humankind. The author says to the reader, “How will you love God who has first so loved you? And if you love God, you will be an imitator of God’s kindness.”²

4. In our times, that early Christian witness to God’s love challenges us to love now. We often fail to live up to this calling, and honest self-criticism and repentance are constantly needed. Church divisions remain. There are wars and conflicts between nations and peoples. Many countries and peoples continue to face colonialism, oppression, and their legacies. The current pandemic has made the world’s inequalities more vivid, and creation faces a climate emergency. But the churches are rooted in a living faith that God makes us and gives us each a true dignity. We always look to the hope for a renewed future that is God’s eternal promise, and we are moved above all by the love of God that is constantly revealed in Jesus Christ. In these days, we hear and proclaim the eternal gospel message that “faith, hope and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love” (1 Cor. 13:13). It is love, above all, that is the inspiration, the foundation, the source of our ecumenical movement. It is in response to the love we have seen in Christ, through the Holy Spirit, that we are moved to search together for justice, reconciliation, and unity based on the truth of our faith.

5. Paul’s call magnifies the message of the earlier chapters of his first letter to the Corinthians that eloquently describe how we are members together of the one body of Christ: by honest self-examination (11:28), by waiting for one another so that we eat at the same table (11:33), by receiving and honouring the variety of gifts of the one Spirit (12:4), and by celebrating the apostolic witness (12:28). And then Paul shows us the way of love. This is why we are affirming, at this 2022 assembly, that Christ’s love moves the world to reconciliation and unity.

2 “The Epistle of Mathetes to Diognetus,” in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1, ed. Philip Schaff, Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe (Buffalo: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1885), chapters 7, 10, (edited), <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0101.htm>.

Today's World

6. The faithful, the people of the churches, with so many others around the world, are deeply affected by the pain of the times. The COVID-19 pandemic has separated families, deepened isolation, and increased death rates. Many families are grieving and longing to be united. Intergenerational traumas strain relationships and societies. Violent conflicts and wars bring death and suffering to every continent. People are being cast out of their homelands by war, climate emergency, religious persecution, and the basic human need for food, security, and safety, and find themselves made often unwelcome refugees. Once again, in some places, Christians are killing each other.

7. We are facing many sins of profound injustice, such as casteism, racism, sexism, ageism, ableism, colonialism, economic exploitation, the unequal distribution of power and resources, and the corruption of our relationships with creation, alongside so many kinds of alienation. These sins push people apart from one another and suppress our God-given longing for recognition, connection, and communion. In a world like this, wounded by divisions, the churches are called to witness to the indestructible power of love to bring together and reconcile. Through the faith they proclaim in the gospel of Jesus Christ, the churches are called to bear a countercultural witness: the hope of unity, justice, and peace. And yet, despite Christ's invitation to unity, the churches continue to remain divided. Amid this division, affecting both the world and the churches, Christ's call to unity rings out even more profoundly.

Unity Statements on the Way

8. Successive assemblies of the World Council of Churches have offered a statement or theme to inspire the churches to reflect on why they have chosen to journey together and the significance of the call to unity. As we recall what our predecessors said, we ask ourselves what we are being called to say in our own time.

9. The 1948 founding assembly in Amsterdam and the second assembly in Evanston in 1954 affirmed our oneness in allegiance to Christ, addressed the sin of persistent church divisions, and expressed hope that the churches might “stay together” in their imperfect fellowship.³ According to the assembly of

3 “The Universal Church in God’s Design,” in *The First Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Held at Amsterdam, August 22nd to September 4th, 1948*, ed. W. A. Visser ’t Hooft (London: SCM Press, 1949), 51–57, WCC Digital Archive: <https://archive.org/details/wcca5/page/51>; “Our Oneness in Christ and Our Disunity as Churches,” in *The Evanston Report: The Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches, 1954*, ed. W. A. Visser ’t Hooft (London: SCM Press, 1955), 82–91, WCC Digital Archive: <https://archive.org/details/wcca7/page/82>.

1961 in New Delhi, the unity that is God's will and gift to the Church is made visible when "all in each place" find reconciliation in the apostolic faith, sacramental life, ministry, and mission, and are united with all in all places and ages.⁴

10. Seven years later, in 1968, the Uppsala assembly approached the vision of unity from the perspective of catholicity, as the quality by which the Church expresses the fullness, integrity, and totality of life in Christ. Catholicity is, therefore, "the opposite of all kinds of egoism and particularism."⁵ The assembly held together the unity of the Church and the unity of humanity, and called the churches to work for the time when "a genuinely universal council may once more speak for all Christians and lead the way into the future."⁶

11. The 1975 assembly in Nairobi took up the perspective of the assembly in Uppsala on conciliarity in its vision of unity. The one Church, it stated, "is to be envisioned as a conciliar fellowship of local churches which are themselves truly united."⁷ From the assembly in Vancouver in 1983 came a reminder that visible unity has three marks: unity in apostolic faith; unity in the mutual recognition of baptism, eucharist, and ministry; and unity in common decision-making and teaching with authority.⁸

12. According to the 1991 assembly in Canberra, the unity of the Church understood as *koinonia* will be realized "when all churches are able to recognize in one another the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church," in such a way that "diversities which are rooted in theological traditions, various cultural ethnic or historical contacts are integral to the nature of communion."⁹ At the WCC's

4 "New Delhi Statement on Unity," in *The New Delhi Report: The Third Assembly of the World Council of Churches*, 1961, ed. W. A. Visser 't Hooft (London: SCM Press, 1962), 116–34, WCC Digital Archive: <https://archive.org/details/wcca11/page/116>.

5 "The Holy Spirit and the Catholicity of the Church," in *The Uppsala Report 1968: Official Report of the Fourth Assembly of the World Council of Churches*, Uppsala, July 4–20, 1968, ed. Norman Goodall (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1968), 13, WCC Digital Archive: <https://archive.org/details/wcca14/page/13>.

6 "The Holy Spirit," 17.

7 "What Unity Requires," in *Breaking Barriers, Nairobi 1975: The Official Report of the Fifth Assembly of the World Council of Churches*, ed. David M. Paton (London: SPCK, 1975), 60, WCC Digital Archive: <https://archive.org/details/wcca17/page/60>.

8 "Taking Steps Towards Unity," in *Gathered for Life: Official Report, VI Assembly World Council of Churches, Vancouver, Canada, 24 July–10 August 1983*, ed. David Gill (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1983), 43–45, WCC Digital Archive: <https://archive.org/details/wcca20/page/43>.

9 "The Unity of the Church as Koinonia: Gift and Calling," in *Signs of the Spirit: Official Report, Seventh Assembly, Canberra, Australia, 7–20 February 1991*, ed. Michael Kinnamon (Geneva: WCC Publications), 172–74, WCC Digital Archive: <https://archive.org/details/wcca23/page/172>.

50th anniversary, the 1998 assembly in Harare urged the churches to call one another to “turn to God and rejoice in hope,” as they also reflected on the decade of churches in solidarity with women.¹⁰

13. All who have been baptized into Christ “are united with Christ in his body,” stated the text on ecclesiology “Called to be the One Church” adopted by the 2006 assembly in Porto Alegre.¹¹ The Church as communion of believers “is created by the Word of God.” As the people of God, body of Christ, and temple of the Holy Spirit, “the Church is called to manifest its oneness in rich diversity.” In our present state of imperfect communion, “each church is called to mutual giving and receiving gifts and to mutual accountability” because “apart from one another we are impoverished.” Finally, the 2013 assembly in Busan emphasized the unity of the Church as a sign and servant of God’s reconciling of all humankind, and indeed of the whole of creation itself, the whole inhabited earth.¹²

An Ecumenism of the Heart

14. In this 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches in 2022, we now turn to celebrate and affirm the ways in which the quest for a true unity is always founded in love: the love of God revealed in Christ and lived in the Holy Spirit, a love that moves us and moves the world to reconciliation and unity. In these times, the vision of unity sometimes seems less clear than we would hope and more difficult to pursue, but the call to unity is still urgent and compelling. The true goal of Jesus Christ, and with him all Christians, is to reach a visible fellowship, one in holy unity. The responses made by the churches to the Faith and Order text *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*¹³ reveal that we now agree more than we disagree on many aspects of the apostolic faith, on much about our understanding of the sacraments and the imperative to serve God’s

10 “Letter from the Decade Festival: Churches in Solidarity with Women,” in *Together on the Way: Official Report of the Eighth Assembly of the World Council of Churches*, ed. Diane Kessler (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1999), 242–48, WCC Digital Archive: <https://archive.org/details/wcca25/page/242>.

11 “Called to be the One Church,” in *God, in Your Grace . . . Official Report of the Ninth Assembly of the World Council of Churches*, ed. Luis N. Rivera-Pagán (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2007), 255–61, WCC Digital Archive: <https://archive.org/details/godinyourgraceof00unsel/page/n263>.

12 “Unity Statement of the 10th Assembly: God’s Gift and Call to Unity—and Our Commitment,” in *Encountering the God of Life: Report of the 10th Assembly of the World Council of Churches*, ed. Erlinda N. Senturias and Theodore A. Gill, Jr (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2014), 37–41; WCC Digital Archive: <https://archive.org/details/encounteringthego00unsel/page/37>.

13 *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*, Faith and Order Paper No. 214 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2013), <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/publications/the-church-towards-a-common-vision>.

people in the world. There is a deep commitment to the goal of visible unity, a renewed focus on ecumenical spirituality and on ecclesiology that begins with baptism. There is a real, increasing convergence about the need to hold together the local and the universal in thinking about the Church, along with an evangelical passion for proclaiming the gospel together and sharing in the mission of God to the world.¹⁴

15. We understand this common commitment, as well as these convergences, to be visible signs of growth toward unity. Churches now ask how this growth might be made visible. There is a move amongst some to emphasize the experience of ecumenism more than formal agreements and a recognition that as we first walk together on our common pilgrimage of reconciliation and unity, we are then also led to reflect together on questions of faith and truth. The churches' responses reveal a longing for an ecumenism in which we bring all of ourselves to the journey and to the table, not separating thought from prayer, prayer from action, or action from thought.¹⁵

16. There are profound challenges to our unity in these times. There remain questions about the limits of diversity in our understanding of unity, a request from many for some common criteria for discernment, particularly about moral questions, and a need to explore together the theological understanding of humankind. Some ecumenical conversations are difficult even to begin. Sometimes, even those in communion with each other are, tragically, at war. Many voices call for an ecumenism that can provide the challenge, inspiration, and courage that will move us to change.

17. Can we open our hearts so that Christ's love may move us in ways that breathe new life into the search for full visible communion? And is this note of love, heard for the first time in this way at an assembly, one that will sound clearly also in the world?

18. The work of unity needs to be inspired anew by the love we have seen in Jesus Christ. It needs to begin with the love of the heart, the love that responds to Christ who said, "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another" (John 13:34). The love of Christ is the spiritual source of the ecumenical movement. It moves us to walk together, compels us to pray together, and urges us to respond to Christ's invitation to be of one spirit and one mind. The quality of

14 *What Are the Churches Saying About the Church? Key Findings and Proposals from the Responses to The Church: Towards a Common Vision*, Faith and Order Paper No. 236 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2021), 6–17, <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/publications/what-are-the-churches-saying-about-the-church>.

15 *What Are the Churches Saying?*, especially 17–19.

the relationships between us and our churches will inspire our journey and our common work towards that full visible communion for which Christ prayed (John 17:20–23).

19. It is when we are kind to one another as churches, warmly welcoming of each other, building profound and evident friendship in sincerity and respect, when we are drawn to one another out of compassion, fascination, and longing for one another—across our differences and divisions—that we will find the grace to search for that common faith, the truth together held that will overcome our separation. Unity in apostolic faith, in sacramental life, in ministry, and in the work of sharing in common action together, all need our heads, hands, and feet, the whole of us, to be fully engaged (1 Cor. 12). But the vital search for agreement in faith, the working together in service to the world, the walking the way of discipleship together; all these are stirred by the love of Christ, who moves our hearts through the Holy Spirit.

20. The search for unity that is inspired by love and rooted in deep and mutual relationship may be termed an “ecumenism of the heart.” It is Christlike love that moves us to walk honestly and wholeheartedly beside one another, to try to see the world through the eyes of others and to have compassion for one another, to build the trust that is such a vital part of our ecumenical journey. It is love that will reject any distorted kind of unity that overcomes, overpowers, or coerces the other, and neither will it settle for a weak type of encounter that is merely formal. This love goes beyond every level of restriction and restraint; it is not abstract, sentimental, soft, or romantic, but is embodied and whole, witnessed in the visible and the practical, in the passionate and the truly challenging, able to address the deepest evil and injustice. We have learned from one another that love which in private is tenderness in public is justice.

21. This truest and deepest love then also enables a genuine and critical accountability. Admonition and challenge, “speaking the truth in love,” as much as gentle kindness, will also be part of growing communion. Love embraces our whole being to unify mind, body, and soul in igniting true affection and in actively resisting evil together for the sake of justice. It includes working together for the transformation of the world. It goes as far as the challenge and the command to love not only our friends but even our enemies. This kind of love, seen in Christ and known among us as *we are in Christ*, receiving him and believing in him as the only Son of God (John 1:12; 3:18), can reshape both our relationships with each other and our witness to the wider world.

Our Witness to the World

22. An ecumenism of the heart springs from an experience of the love of Christ stirring in us the *metanoia* that purifies our hearts, minds, and wills so that we are able truly to embrace one another. This love can also make us witnesses to love in the world. The churches, the nations, the communities of our world today, and the whole of creation, are groaning and crying out in pain, and it is the very love of God working within us that opens our ears and hearts to their cries. We have been walking together on the way towards visible unity, and we have learned, even on our bumpy pilgrimage, that only the love of God can get us moving together to enter faithfully into God's new future. Churches committed to growing in communion with one another, to true love for one another across even profound differences, will live in ways that are deeply countercultural in today's world.

23. Let us pray that we will never seek to divide or conquer, to exploit or humiliate, to overwhelm by violence or enforce unity; nor to collude any more with the inequalities of the world. Let us not be tempted by politics that is shaped by deepened individualism, dangerous nationalism, or increasing militarism; or accept as inevitable the systemic inequalities that divide the world; or suffer without resistance the dominance and dangers of consumerism and of those technologies that alienate us from one another or that damage our God-given humanity. Out of love, we commit ourselves to build a world for the common good, for all humankind. We long for the kind of communion that celebrates and affirms the dignity of all people and honours the whole living earth as the work of God the Creator. Together in Christ, formed in Christ's image, walking the way of love, and in repentance, we celebrate unity as both gift and virtue, knowing that we are called to bear witness to communion in a world that too often creates and exacerbates division. In a world of separation, inequality, and injustice, Christ calls his followers to witness to the unifying power of the love that is a gift of the Spirit. This provokes a strong challenge in the world and sounds a call to an alternative order, one moving towards unity and reconciliation of all humankind and of the whole creation.

Christ's Love on the Pilgrim Way: A Call to Loving Discipleship

24. We have gathered, as a fellowship of churches, as pilgrims on Christ's way, confessing our faith, receiving and sharing hospitality with sisters and brothers, siblings in Christ. We journey together energized by Christ's love, offering glory to God, sharing our stories, our laments, our cries for justice, our dances of joy, nourishing our faith, and giving one another hope. The practice of love that turns a stranger into a neighbour and a neighbour into a sister or brother

calls us to make space for one another, to be patient, kind, humble, generous, and truthful with one another. We will make reconciliation and unity practices of unconditional love and marks of the ecumenical movement. In this journey, we remember before our God and Father the work produced by faith, the labour prompted by love, and the endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thess. 1:3).

25. In faithfulness to the decades of the life of the World Council of Churches, we call one another now not only to stay together and to move together but, most of all, to love one another, as Christ himself commanded his disciples (John 13:34). The fellowship of churches in the WCC is invited to pray together to the God whose love, revealed in Christ, transforms us. We call one another to proclaim together the faith we share that God's love, in Christ, will indeed move our churches towards visible unity. We commit ourselves to strengthen each other in a transforming discipleship.

For the Future

26. We affirm the vision of the WCC for the visible unity of all Christians, and we invite other Christians to share this vision with us. We also invite all people of faith and good will to trust, with us, that a different world, a world respectful of the living earth, a world in which everyone has daily bread and life in abundance, a decolonized world, a more loving, harmonious, just, and peaceful world, is possible. In a world weighed down with so much pain, anguish, and fear, we believe that the love we have seen in Christ brings the liberating possibilities of joy, justice for all, and peace with the earth. Moved by the Holy Spirit, compelled by a vision of unity, we journey on together, resolved to practise Christ's love, following his steps as his disciples, and carrying a torch for love in the world, trusting in the promise that Christ's love moves the world to reconciliation and unity.

A Prayer

Holy God, source and creator of all things, eternal love, we give thanks to you:

Father, who loves us infinitely,

Son, who reveals to us unconditional love,

Holy Spirit, who empowers us with divine love,

gather us together in your love, that we may grow in visible communion and so witness to unity in the world.

Where your people are broken, may love mend.

When hatred shouts in the world, let love bring peace with justice.

As creation groans, may redemption come to all the earth.

Come with your divine love, and enter our hearts. Move your church, and move the world to reconciliation and unity. Amen.

Reflecting on the Assembly



An Affective Appreciation

Bishop Gregory K. Cameron (Church in Wales) is the Bishop of St Asaph, a member of the WCC central committee, and was moderator of the Message Committee at the 11th Assembly.

Valuing the Affective

In theological discourse, as in most academic circles, the intellect is inevitably privileged over the emotions. In life, however, the opposite is often true. It is the emotions that drive much of human behaviour: there is a quotation, commonly attributed to the US poet Maya Angelou, to the effect that while what you say and even what you do may be forgotten, people will never forget how you made them feel.

Emotions are often discounted, and in some circles, even despised as a location of understanding and human will. Yet, it is engagement at the *affective* level that often drives vision, engagement, and zeal for God's mission in the longer term in a way that surpasses the cogency of any intellectual argument.

It was part of the brilliance of the programme for the WCC's 11th Assembly that engagement was sought on many levels and that the affective dimension was far from neglected. Presentations in the plenary sessions often included music, prayer, drama, and dance in a way that was designed to support the impact of the theme for the day.

The life of an assembly is vibrant on many levels, but if we neglect to describe that life at the affective level, we will miss out on a vital element that animated the assembly life of the delegates who gathered in Karlsruhe in September 2022. It is, furthermore, the affective success of the assembly that will drive much of the vision, loyalty, and engagement with the topics raised at the assembly for the period until the 12th Assembly.

It may be argued that the assembly theme itself acknowledges the power of the affective level: "Christ's love moves the world to reconciliation and unity." Of course, in Christian theology, love is predominantly an act of the will rather than emotion, the deliberate kenotic action of God in Christ (as described in Philippians 2:7), which becomes the example of agape, of self-sacrificial love, which is to be at the heart of Christian discipleship. However, the kenotic love of Christ also acts on an affective level, moving and motivating the Christian disciple in an engagement with the action of God's love in the world as we behold the lengths to which our Saviour went to redeem us.

It is significant that the planning team for the assembly chose to articulate that "Christ's love *moves* the world to reconciliation and unity." This must surely involve more than intellectual reflection and imply the engagement

of the whole human being as a psychosomatic union. In English, of course, and perhaps in other languages, the verb has a delightful ambiguity. It implies not only the passive state of being moved emotionally, invoking a change in motivation on both intellectual and affective levels, but also the active and physical sense of being moved to a different place. The example of Christ's love, and the action of his grace in our lives, brings the world to a new location: the place of reconciliation and unity.

This level of engagement was explicitly recognized as the assembly progressed by references to “an ecumenism of the heart,” which could complement and nourish the established routes of the ecumenism of truth in faith and order, spiritual ecumenism in shared prayer, and receptive ecumenism, as we learned from one another, and the missional ecumenism that arose as we lived out the Lund principle.¹

In the Assembly Message, there is a deliberately poetic liturgical section at the centre of the message, which reflects on the affective life of the assembly:

Meeting together in Germany,
we learn the cost of war and the possibility of reconciliation;
Hearing the word of God together, we recognize our common calling;
Listening and talking together, we become closer neighbours;
Lamenting together, we open ourselves to each other's pain and suffering;
Working together, we consent to common action;
Celebrating together, we delight in each other's joys and hopes;
Praying together, we discover the richness of our traditions
and the pain of our divisions.

In composing the message, the Message Committee deliberated for some time on the tense of the verbs that they used in this section of the message. We could have used the past tense, to indicate a process of growth that had taken place during the assembly. In the end, however, the committee chose to use the present tense—to indicate that the learning and growing had only just begun at the assembly, and that there is an ongoing process, not only of reception for an assembly that has taken place, but of the modelling of an ongoing mission and transformation of attitudes that will only be complete when the work of reconciliation and unity is complete. This brief paragraph in the message may, however, provide a framework by which we may analyze the affective dimensions of the life of the assembly.

¹ The Lund principle was derived from discussion at the 1952 Faith and Order Conference of the WCC, held in Lund, Sweden. It affirms that churches should act together except those in which deep differences of conviction compel them to act separately. See O. S. Tomkins, ed., *The Third World Conference on Faith and Order Held at Lund, August 15th to 28th, 1952* (London: SCM Press, 1953), 16; Faith and Order Papers Digital Archive: <https://archive.org/details/wccfops1.121>.

Meeting Together in Germany, We Learn the Cost of War and the Possibility of Reconciliation

One of the most powerful plenary sessions of the assembly came right at the beginning when the president of Germany, Dr Frank-Walter Steinmeier, addressed the assembly and reflected on the particular lessons that could be learned from German history. Dr Steinmeier was unafraid to address explicitly the experience of the Nazi movement in Germany and the appalling impact that Germany's engagement with that political philosophy precipitated throughout the globe in the Second World War.

His address specifically focussed on the role of the churches in Germany and the differentiation between those who failed to speak up for truth and justice and those churches that in witnessing to the love of God challenged the corruption inherent in the Nazi programme. His intention was to draw parallels with the duty of the Church to be a force for reconciliation and peace in a Europe that was once again being drawn into conflict—although some of his comments attracted controversy because of his apparently uncompromising attitude regarding the duty of the WCC to act decisively in condemning the war and censuring the leadership of the Russian Orthodox Church.

Nonetheless, the address put delegates in direct contact with the impact that war had had on German life and the national psyche, together with the scars that remain because the Nazi philosophy had been so insidiously inserted into national life. The welcome given by the city of Karlsruhe was extensive, but to walk around the city was to learn something of the cost of war. All the historic buildings that could be seen—from the palace of the Grand Dukes of Baden to the City Hall—had been reduced, like much of the city, to rubble during the intensive bombing by Allied forces that signalled the closing stages of the Second World War.

It would have been easy for such an inheritance to be manifested in a legacy of bitterness, but, on the contrary, the welcome that the WCC received was generous and open-hearted. The affection displayed and offered to all the delegates by the local population profoundly illustrated the possibilities of reconciliation, as Karlsruhe, so devastated in the war, became a place of hospitality and welcome.

This was especially poignant given that the WCC was holding its first assembly in Europe since 1968, which coincided with a time when Europe was seeing war on its territory on a scale not experienced since the Second World War. Careful thought had to be given to the way in which this was approached by the assembly leadership. It was decided to eschew an attitude of rejection in favour of an approach seeking the possibility of reconciliation on an affective level. The assembly itself was uncompromising in its approach to the war in Ukraine. In an unforgettable plenary session, representatives of Ukrainian churches were invited to give their testimony of the costs of war

that they were experiencing, and the statement adopted by the assembly on the war in Ukraine was unequivocal on the illegal and unjustifiable nature of the invasion by Russia and the call for a ceasefire.

At the same time, the representatives of the Moscow Patriarchate were greeted as brothers and sisters in Christ and were extended the hand of fellowship. There was a sense in which delegates recognized that their fellow Russian delegates were hardly the architects of Russian imperial policy but that the bridges of Christian affection might yet sway their hearts to convince them of the need to do what they could, in ways that did not imperil their own safety, to become advocates of the way of peace commended by our Lord. Some may have preferred grand gestures and confrontational words, but the love of Christ must be allowed affective space to work, to encourage Christians everywhere to become the agents of reconciliation.

Hearing the Word of God Together, We Recognize Our Common Calling

One of the most obvious features of the WCC's assemblies is the breadth of engagement by Christian churches across the globe with the WCC as a privileged instrument of the ecumenical movement. The assemblies embrace all expressions of the Christian church, both ancient and modern—from the developed and developing world, from East and West, and from the global North and global majority. Those churches not members of the WCC itself, such as the (Roman) Catholic Church and some of the new church movements, are invited to send participants and observers to the assemblies, so that altogether there is as broad a spectrum gathering for the assemblies as there are Christian churches themselves. It is possible to say that the whole Christian *oikumene* (the household of faith) is brought together.

A central element of the gathering in Karlsruhe was the priority given to the scriptures, which are proclaimed in every act of worship, and studied both corporately and in small “home groups.” Each day of the assembly had a theme, associated with one of the encounters with Jesus described in the gospels. These had two foci. First, each participant in the assembly was invited to enter by imaginative contemplation into the encounter with Jesus as themselves disciples of the Master. In plenary sessions, creative ways were explored to draw attendees into the dynamic of the meeting to supplement direct affective and intellectual engagement with the text.

However, a special feature of the passages chosen is that they all exhibit not only an encounter with Jesus, but a moment of *krisis*, in its authentic New Testament sense as a point of decision when the auditor is required to respond to the call of the Lord. Participants in the assembly were engaged with scripture precisely because it moves us from where we are toward the place where the Lord wills that we should be. This is a common calling because, although it

may be experienced as individual and differentiated, it is also a call to work together in the building of the kingdom.

Listening and Talking Together, We Become Closer Neighbours

The very term *assembly* implies a coming together in order to communicate. The many channels of conversation established by the programme of the assembly ensured that this happened on many different levels, with varying degrees of formality. Not only was there the possibility of listening to major speakers on the themes of the assembly in the plenary gatherings, but there were also the debates in the formal sessions of the assembly, the group work in the ecumenical conversations, and the more informal channels of communication in the *Brunnen*, events where delegates and visitors could meet on shared topics of interest, and named after the German word for “a well,” as a community place where people gather for encounter and dialogue.

Over all this, however, there was the fact that to bring so many Christians and persons of other faiths together in one place meant that myriad unplanned conversations could take place. These might happen over the meal table, during the coffee breaks, or between the desks of the delegates in the plenary hall. Unexpected meetings could take place with individuals from wildly different contexts, uncovering a deep sense of *koinonia* and fellowship. Contexts which were geographically remote could be brought near, and disciples from Christian traditions unfamiliar to one another would find themselves in dialogue about the realities of discipleship and the experience of the divine. Suddenly, an Orthodox hierarch could be in one-to-one conversation with a Pentecostal student from a very different part of the world and with very different experiences, and yet discover that they drank from the same fountain of grace and truth in the Lord Jesus Christ. This cannot help but engender a new sensitivity and respect.

Christians are taught very early on that our Lord instructed us that we are all neighbours to one another, but the size of the human population, the expanse of the globe, and the isolation of faith communities sometimes make this a truth more theoretical than experienced. The assembly, by providing a sacred space of encounter, made us closer neighbours and realized our Lord's teaching.

Lamenting Together, We Open Ourselves to Each Other's Pain and Suffering

One of the unique features of the 11th Assembly was that it met in the shadow of the COVID-19 pandemic. The date of the assembly had already to be changed to a time when delegates could meet in relative safety, but even so, COVID remained a real risk—testing kits were provided to all participants and the level of the COVID alert had to be raised to higher levels toward the close of the assembly.

Although this sober reality did not affect the warmth of the assembly and its overall sense of joy, it may well have affected the mood of the gathering. Delegates came together aware of the fragility of human existence in a more general way, putting everyone in touch with those delegates who came from locations where human life is always fragile and at risk.

I have already written about the way in which Russia's invasion of Ukraine was at the forefront of people's thoughts since we were gathering in Europe, but this only helped to accentuate that many delegates from around the world also came from other places of intense conflict and human violence and vulnerability. Determined to give representatives of Ukraine a fair hearing, we also found ourselves sensitized to other conflicts in the world, as the three statements and three minutes tackling questions related to war make clear.²

However, there was also a remarkable sense of solidarity with the dispossessed and those discriminated against. Delegates were enormously grateful for the contributions made at three of the pre-assemblies, speaking of the particular challenges faced by Indigenous Peoples, often living still with the impact of centuries of marginalization and persecution; of the struggles of people with disabilities to take their equal place in society, lifted up at the Ecumenical Disability Advocates Network pre-assembly; and of the continuing discrimination and violence faced by women, as raised and discussed in the Just Community of Women and Men pre-assembly. The 11th Assembly was marked by a readiness to face the wounded nature of the world and the scars often created and inflicted by humanity on humanity, but also the redemptive power of the gospel, which moves us to reconciliation and unity.

² "The Things that Make for Peace: Moving the World to Reconciliation and Unity," statement of the WCC 11th Assembly, Karlsruhe, Germany, 8 September 2022, p. 190 in this report; "Seeking Justice and Peace for All in the Middle East," statement of the WCC 11th Assembly, 8 September 2022, p. 202 in this report; and "War in Ukraine, Peace and Justice in the European Region," statement by the WCC 11th Assembly, 8 September, p.167 in this report. See also the three minutes from this assembly that urge acknowledgment of the Syriac-Aramaic genocide in 1915, <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/minute-on-syriac-aramaic-genocide-sayfo>; that condemn the use of chemical weapons and cluster munitions in the Nagorno-Karabakh war, <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/minute-on-consequences-of-the-2020-nagorno-karabakh-war>; and that urge ending war and building peace on the Korean Peninsula, <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/minute-on-ending-the-war-and-building-peace-on-the-korean-peninsula>.

Of particular significance were the Ecumenical Youth Gathering and WCC Youth Pre-Assembly, which demonstrated that the young people of today are a generation significantly attuned to the injustices of the world, and unafraid to challenge the irresponsibility of many decision-makers in the face of the ecological crisis facing the globe. Younger delegates held all of us accountable for the work of the assembly in ensuring that it addressed questions of inequality and discrimination, but especially the climate catastrophe. Where this question was still often marginalized and under-appreciated by older delegates, the younger members of the assembly were determined that the scale of the crisis and the need to address it was fully recognized and articulated at the assembly.³

Although the work of the WCC is rightly configured on seeking that unity for Christians that is the will of God for God's people, this was not an assembly which ignored the pain and vulnerability of the world, but that engaged with it.

It may seem strange that an event designed to celebrate and inspire may have had lament as a central feature, but repentance is a theme central to Christianity and the Church, and the churches, through the WCC, can call upon the world to see, to understand, and to repent. Repentance, which implies a movement toward God, is the ability graced by God to reset, to begin again in hope and, by the mercy of God, with the power to bring about change. This was embodied for us in the commitment to common action.

Working Together, We Consent to Common Action

The assembly was not just about engagement at the affective level, of course, and a great deal of business was transacted at Karlsruhe. There are inspirational accounts of the work achieved between the 10th Assembly in Busan and this assembly in Karlsruhe, as well as the work of the Programme and Public Issues committees, to which reference has already been made.

However, the relationship between the affective response and the commitment to action should never be downplayed. It is the affective that motivates and compels us to action and binds us to mutual commitment. For as we recognize the same call of God within one another, we are empowered to see each other as colleagues who can, and indeed must work together in common action. As we discern the movement of the Spirit in one another, we become confident of being able to trust and consent to common action.

The work of the assembly will be detailed elsewhere in this volume in an accessible and inspirational way, but the resolve with which we will impel that action arises in the affective sphere, and from our common sharing.

³ See "The Living Planet: Seeking a Just and Sustainable Global Community," statement by the WCC 11th Assembly in Karlsruhe, Germany, 8 September 2022, p. 175 in this report.

Celebrating Together, We Delight in Each Other's Joys and Hopes

When the members of the Message Committee were reflecting on the business of the assembly through the affective lens, they wanted the phrases used in the Message of the Assembly to follow a distinct pattern, to have an identical liturgical structure, and to be in the present tense—since the experience of the assembly was a present reality but should remain a present and ongoing reality in the life of the churches. The phrases were therefore ordered in such a way as to move from the receptive and reflective to the commitment to common action, and to the future-oriented life of the churches working together as a world council.

An immediate product at the assembly was the joy of the delegates celebrating together. This happened, not only through worship but also in the plenary sessions, which were enhanced by drama, music, and celebration. We delighted to work together in the formal processes of the assembly; but the informal was also a cause of joy and hope. Old friendships were renewed and strengthened, and new friendships forged. Good news was an integral part of the assembly, as members shared one with another their experiences of the grace of God, and of the transforming and empowering work of the Holy Spirit in the mission of the Church.

Despite all the challenges and causes for lament, and the vast scale of the issues in the world to be confronted and addressed, the overall spirit of the assembly was one of celebration—for we know the goodness of God, and the promise of God's eventual triumph. And there was news of the gospel spreading, of remarkable positive developments in the lives of churches, and of breakthrough moments, even on the matters that gave rise to lament. Special mention must also be made of the welcome provided for us by the churches of Germany, our hosts, and of the city of Karlsruhe. A cultural evening centred on a celebration of the work of the local churches, and the civic involvement of Karlsruhe was exemplary. The assembly was made to feel among friends, and the *koinonia* and fellowship of the event gave rise to a deep sense of joy.

Praying Together, We Discover the Richness of Our Traditions and the Pain of Our Divisions

These reflections began with God and listening to God's word, and they close by returning to God and the prayers offered at the assembly. Here was also one of the chief joys of the assembly, as our hearts and hands were raised in praise of Almighty God.

The distinct nature of the prayer life of the World Council of Churches is its diversity and its commonality. It is the same God who is addressed, and the same Spirit that moves our hearts and minds. Yet the Christian communities

express their worship in myriad forms and ways—not just in the languages used, but in the traditions and styles evoked. As one of my colleagues wrote:

Where on earth could we experience Egyptian Coptic Christians worshipping alongside Chilean Methodists, Tongan Anglicans praying with Palestinian Lutherans, Greek Orthodox witnessing together with Korean Pentecostals? Where could we discover the richness of quite different liturgical traditions forming a beautiful tapestry of praise—from the Kyrie eleison of Kyiv to joyful cries for reconciliation from Brazil, from the haunting indigenous songs of the Arctic Sami people to the vibrant rhythms of South Africa, from the evocative melodies of Japan to the praise of the Caribbean? Where could we join in conversations—both formal and informal—with others having daily routines very different from ours—some living in comfortable, prosperous democracies whilst others face conflict, instability, persecution, famine, and the devastating effects of climate change? Where would we hear sincere expressions of solidarity, heartfelt cries for justice, longing calls for unity, and jubilant affirmations of faith in the face of fear?⁴

In many ways, the prayers of the assembly are an example of one of its most affective components, and, as the Message Committee articulated it, it exposed both the richness of our traditions (as noted above) and the pain of our divisions. We cannot yet celebrate the eucharist as one body, and while the opening and closing times of prayer skilfully wove a tapestry in which as many as possible could share, daily prayers offered a deeper integrity by allowing each of the traditions coming together to offer the praises of God in the languages and modes of one tradition. In our times of prayer, we were strangely both at our closest and most far apart.

This is the joy and pain of the ecumenical journey. We have built the confidence we need to come together, to respect one another, and to work with one another. We have not yet found a way through the doctrinal and historical intricacies that two thousand years of history have generated. We have developed cherished understandings of God's revelation in Christ and of the Sacraments and ministry that he established apart from one another. These are understandings which we dare not betray because in them we see our fidelity to our Lord, and yet they still have the power to hold us back from the complete embrace of one another.

However, it is the ecumenism of the heart that drives us closer together and keeps us in fellowship. As the psalmist said, “Deep calls to deep in the roar of your waterfalls” (Ps. 42:7, NIV), and for the participants in the 11th Assembly,

⁴ Ainsley Griffiths, Adviser to the Church in Wales delegation, in his report to the Bishops of the Church in Wales.

the deep work of the Holy Spirit resonated between us, keeping us together and urging us forward. “Christ’s love moves the world to reconciliation and unity.” In Karlsruhe, we experienced the love of God expressed in many different ways, but it happened through the agency of one another, sisters and brothers in Christ, moving us to be agents of change in the world, to be reconciled and united. The Message of the Assembly speaks of the journey toward one another in reconciliation, in our coming to the assembly, and of our unity in serving God and the world in witnessing to the need for service, repentance, and faith as we go forward in the mission of God. Karlsruhe touched our hearts and the deep parts of our souls, and set our spirits racing. We left repeating the words of our Lord, “Thy Kingdom come,” committed to continuing the work of the Council that embodies both that invitation and the challenge in the coming years.

Moving the World to Reconciliation and Unity

Rev. Prof. Dr Dietrich Werner (Evangelical Lutheran Church in Northern Germany) was senior theological advisor to Bread for the World (Germany) from 2014 to 2022 and WCC programme executive for Ecumenical Theological Education from 2007 to 2014.

The Miracle of Karlsruhe

The mixture of the different elements of a World Council of Churches (WCC) assembly makes for the unique spirit of this event, which is a global festival of faith and companionship and an international celebration of the essentials of Christian faith, while also being the highest decision-making body of the WCC. The assembly in Karlsruhe was all of this at the same time, and it was not always easy for journalists to grasp the specific nature and direction of this event. The rich spiritual and worship life and the daily home groups (in which a smaller number of some 20 to 30 delegates and advisors met throughout the assembly) were the two essential forums that brought people together for mutual bonding, learning, and encounter—not to mention the significance of the short coffee breaks.

The art of combining words, symbols, gestures, and different styles of music in the morning liturgies offered the experience of being gathered together and transformed by God's Spirit. The very theme of the assembly, "Christ's love moves the world to reconciliation and unity," was given the most powerful translation and visible expression by the transforming experiences during the occasions of common prayer and spiritual life in the assembly:

Loving God,

We gather from all over the world, from the eight regions of the World Council of Churches, from diverse contexts, every one of us created in your image.

We share the hope of meeting each other in the warm embrace of Christ's love, that moves us to reconciliation and unity.

....

We share the burden and the pain of this time of the COVID pandemic. We share the burden and the pain of armed conflicts and their consequences in deaths, destruction and forced migration. We

share the burden and the pain of the preexisting plagues of injustice, structural poverty, violence, and a creation that suffers.¹

These words from the opening prayer at the assembly still resonate. These simple but honest words receive deep significance and meaning when on one side of you is a participant from Ukraine; on your other side is a delegate from the Presbyterian Church of Pakistan who has spoken about the disastrous impact of the floods in their country; and behind you is a friend from West Papua. Together we sang the hymn “In Christ There Is No East nor West”:

In Christ shall true hearts everywhere
Their high communion find;
God’s service is the golden cord
Close binding humankind.

In Christ is neither Jew nor Greek,
And neither slave nor free;
For men and women live in God,
And all are kin to me.

In Christ now meet both East and West,
In Christ meet South and North;
One joyous true community
throughout the whole wide earth.²

Certainly, this language transcended concrete realities, as the language of faith is always both anticipatory and related to the sufferings and divisions of the present time. But the assembly also showed—not least when the Europe plenary began on 2 September amid the realities of the situation in Ukraine—just how far Christianity still is away from its vision of being “one joyous true community throughout the whole wide earth.”

Nevertheless, with more than 4500 participants, including 659 delegates from 352 member churches, 6 major committees, 11 working sessions in just 5 days for the committees, 10 thematic and business plenaries, about 60 presentations in the networking zone inside the conference centre, and 250 side events, the assembly in Karlsruhe demonstrated that ecumenism, as a movement inspired by the Holy Spirit to give shape to the transcending and transforming reality of Christ’s love in this world, is as alive and vibrant as

1 World Council of Churches, *Oasis of Peace: Spiritual Life Resources* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2022), 30, <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/publications/oasis-of-peace>.

2 *Oasis of Peace*, 56.

almost never before. The world needs and is full of longing for this counter-movement of hope and reconciliation.

Karlsruhe as a Global Landmark Event and Truly Ecumenical Assembly

The assembly in Karlsruhe was historic, not so much because it was the first *international* church convention of this size and importance to have met in Germany, but because it was a significant *ecumenical* gathering in the midst of a grave global crisis. In it a foretaste of the unity of the body of Christ could be sensed despite all the shortcomings and visible tensions and conflicts between nations, churches, and church traditions in the European continent and beyond. Here I am reminded of the statement of the 1937 Life and Work conference in Oxford, one of the streams that led to the founding of the WCC—that “the term ‘international’ necessarily accepts the division of humankind into separate nations as a natural if not final state of affairs, [but] the term ‘ecumenical’ refers to the expression within history of the given unity of the church. The one starts from the fact of division and the other from the fact of unity in Christ.”³

The assembly was delayed for a year by the COVID-19 pandemic and staff and financial resources were limited. There was negative coverage in some German media prior to the event, accusing the WCC of being antisemitic because of its support for Palestinian rights, and claiming that the WCC was offering support to Vladimir Putin.⁴ Nonetheless, the assembly took place and all delegations, even the Russian Orthodox, stayed until the very end. This was not something that could have been taken for granted. The assembly in Karlsruhe demonstrated that the ecumenical movement is still alive and can offer its enormous potential in a world at the brink of a new East-West divide, facing a significant weakening of multilateral structures of cooperation and even the threat of nuclear war.

Such a situation is not unusual. WCC assemblies have often met amid serious international conflicts and tensions. The first assembly in Amsterdam in 1948 took place during an unprecedented refugee crisis all over Europe. Six years later, the assembly in Evanston in the United States formulated the concept of an international responsible society over against the growing polarization of an East-West divide between communism and capitalism. Martin Luther King, Jr, was assassinated just months before the assembly in Uppsala in 1968, where he was due to be a speaker, and the assembly confronted the devastating impact

3 Julio de Santa Ana, “Research and Ecumenical Formation,” *The Ecumenical Review* 48, no. 4 (October 1996): 498, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1758-6623.1996.tb02963.x>.

4 See, for example, the article by Matthias Hamman, published the day before the assembly, “Kirchentreffen in Karlsruhe: Wenn Christen Israel anfeinden und Putin schonen,” *Die Welt*, 30 August 2022, <https://www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article240766471/Kirchentreffen-in-Karlsruhe-Wenn-Christen-Israel-anfeinden-und-Putin-schonen.html>.

of racism in the US as well as in South Africa. The assembly in Canberra in 1991 took place during the Gulf War, following Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990. In 2013, the assembly in Busan was held in the context of looming nuclear threats on the Korean peninsula and North Korean underground nuclear bomb tests early that year. The idea was that the assembly in Karlsruhe would celebrate the achievements of more than seven decades of a relatively stable European peace order since the end of the Second World War. However, this hope proved illusory with the military invasion of Russia into Ukraine on 24 February 2022—which had been preceded by the annexation of Crimea in 2014.

Some thought the assembly theme too harmless, using too much internal church language, or not provocative or prophetic enough. Yet the theme could not have been more pointed or relevant in the context of the global threats to peace, justice, and security in September 2022. It both recalled the original mandate of the global ecumenical movement to serve reconciliation and unity and was a passionate plea for governments and political leaders not to give in to the forces of militarism, aggressive nationalism, and egoism, which again seem to be determining the fate of millions of people. Certainly, the assembly in Karlsruhe made clear, in the words of the WCC's acting general secretary, Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca, that “one of the most serious challenges facing the ecumenical movement today is to deal with tensions and divisions ‘within’ the same family of churches, instead of ‘between’ families of churches.”⁵ The tragic war between two Christian majority nations, Russia and Ukraine, has underlined what is at stake. Within Christianity, we have to do our homework before and while urging the world's leaders to do their job with regard to addressing the overarching goals of climate justice and greater justice generally—goals that are so easily pushed aside as secondary within this era of revived militarism.

Two movements are currently in conflict with each other globally. One is a movement toward barbarism, polarization, and a brutalization of international relations, which is reviving old evil spirits of rigid nationalism, exclusivism, and East-West enemy images. The other is a counter-movement that presses for continued dialogue and multilateral approaches, for a global culture of shared responsibility for the common good of humankind, for reaffirming and reconstructing legal frameworks of common security and human rights, and for the non-violation of borders. Currently, human “disorder” seems again to be stronger than “God's design,” to use the key phrases of the assembly in

5 Ioan Sauca, interview with WCC News, 14 April 2022, World Council of Churches, <https://www.oikoumene.org/news/fr-ioan-sauca-god-is-on-the-side-of-those-who-are-suffering>.

Amsterdam. That assembly's basic affirmation, "War is contrary to the will of God," seems to be losing credibility and support.⁶

Both the immense potential of the churches for common action for peace, ecological transformation, and human rights, as well as its shortcomings—the ongoing tensions and conflicts within the church, which reflect the dramatically fragmented world torn apart by the forces of war, racism, and grave injustices—were visible during this assembly.

Continuing the Affirmation of the 1948 Assembly in Amsterdam: "War Is Contrary to the Will of God."

The affirmation in the message of the 11th Assembly that that the ecumenical fellowship should move from staying and praying together to "act together" can be regarded as the benchmark according to which the long-term impact of this assembly should be measured and assessed.⁷ In this message, the assembly acknowledged its own shortcomings and weaknesses in terms of moving from common words to common action:

Reconciliation is a movement toward God and toward each other. It implies a readiness to listen to God and to one another. It is a conversion of the heart, from selfishness and apathy to inclusion and service, acknowledging our interdependence with creation. We confess that, even as we desire with our whole hearts to serve God and our neighbour, we have found ourselves failing, disagreeing, and sometimes walking in opposite directions. We confess that we need the transformative power of Christ's love to move to a world truly reconciled and united. . . . In our assembly, we have used many words, but from these we have fashioned a new resolve. Now we ask God's assistance to transform our commitments into action.⁸

The war in Ukraine is a key example of this struggle as well as a demonstration of the powerlessness of the assembly as it faced hardened positions within Orthodox churches, between Orthodox and Protestant churches, and between Eastern and Western delegates. Although some delegates from the global South criticized the amount of attention focused on Europe, the assembly dared to provide a platform for the churches from Ukraine to raise their voices. This was a key moment in the thematic plenary on Europe. Two voices in particular

6 The First Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Held at Amsterdam, August 22nd to September 4th, 1948, vol. 5, *Man's Disorder and God's Design: The Amsterdam Assembly Series* (London: SCM Press, 1948), 31, 89.

7 "A Call to Act Together," Message of the WCC 11th Assembly in Karlsruhe, Germany, 8 September 2022, page 7 in this report.

8 "A Call to Act Together," paras. 6, 13.

called for attention: Ukrainian Archbishop Yevstratiy of Chernihiv and Nizhy, from the Orthodox Church of Ukraine; and Prof. Sergii Bortnyk, from the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. Each reported on the impact and brutality of the Russian invasion.⁹ One of the disappointments was that no official response was heard from the Russian Orthodox delegation during the assembly. At the opening plenary, however, German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier, speaking as a Christian individual as well as a head of state, urged the assembly in quite undiplomatic, courageous, and explicit language to distance itself from any political misuse of the language of faith and to learn from the experience of Germany and the German churches during the period of Nazi terror:

We must never allow religion, which is intended to build up, encourage, and edify people, to become a means to humiliate others, a tool of hatred and violence.

The heads of the Russian Orthodox Church are currently leading their members and their entire church down a dangerous, indeed blasphemous path that goes against all that they believe.

They are justifying a war of aggression against Ukraine—against their own and our own brothers and sisters in the faith. We have to speak out, also here in this room, in this assembly, against this stance: this propaganda targeting the freedom and rights of the citizens of another country, this nationalism, which arbitrarily claims that a dictatorship’s imperial dreams of hegemony are God’s will.¹⁰

While there were some critical voices about these words being less helpful in promoting genuine dialogue, and the Russian delegation unfortunately dismissed them as part of a Western political campaign against Russia,¹¹ I see Steinmeier’s words as a critical reminder to the WCC and the ecumenical movement as a whole that genuine dialogue should be honest, requiring bridge-builders from both sides, and that “dialogue must draw attention to injustice, must identify both victims and perpetrators—and their henchmen.”¹² He was not imposing something on the assembly of churches as a head of state that

⁹“Churches Stress the Need for Reconciliation, Unity and Peacebuilding in Ukraine,” WCC 11th Assembly in Karlsruhe, Germany, 3 September 2022, <https://www.oikoumene.org/news/churches-stress-the-need-for-reconciliation-unity-and-peacebuilding-in-ukraine>. A recording of the plenary can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Yp8ji2xrns>.

¹⁰ Address of German Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier at the WCC 11th Assembly, 31 August 2022, page 292 in this report.

¹¹ See the reaction of Metropolitan Antony of Moscow, leader of the Russian Orthodox delegation in Karlsruhe: “Comments Made by the Head of the Russian Orthodox Church’s Delegation at the 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches,” The Russian Orthodox Church, Department for External Church Relations, 31 August 2022, <https://mospat.ru/en/news/89580/>.

¹² Address of President Steinmeier.

was alien to the task of the church but, as a Christian himself, reminded the assembly of the WCC's mandate.

As the aspiration and hope for genuine and honest dialogue was not met in Karlsruhe, except for a few individual and private talks, and no visible gestures of good will were exchanged between the Russian Orthodox delegation and the representatives of churches from the Ukraine, much needs to be done to set out a clear road map for concrete steps in a process of rapprochement. The involvement of the WCC is urgently needed if this is to be credible and not just a celebration of the ongoing membership of the Russian Orthodox Church in the WCC. The final statement of the assembly on the war in the Ukraine strongly reiterated the rejection of the military invasion as contrary to the word of God. This had been articulated already in the Orthodox pre-assembly.¹³ It was unfortunate that it was not possible to bring into a dialogue in Karlsruhe the deep-seated feelings of cultural and political estrangement, the perceptions of Western dominance, and the perceived military expansion of the NATO alliance to the East. This is what many Russians feel and is rarely reported on by Western media.

The concluding statement of the Public Issues Committee of the 11th Assembly, “The Things that Make for Peace: Moving the World to Reconciliation and Unity,” however, includes crucial commitments and recommendations for post-assembly peace ethics. The document also rather critically assesses reactions to armed conflict that focus primarily on delivery of arms and military escalation, and includes a plea to take up again the need to reform and improve intergovernmental efforts for promoting peace and human security.¹⁴ This recalled the concept of common security that was developed in Europe in the 1990s by the Organization for Security and Co-operation.

Kairos for Creation—We Are Running Out of Time

In an interview before the assembly, Ioan Sauca stated that the WCC and its member churches need to face the urgent threats of a global climate emergency: “We must act now: If we don't change our behaviour, in 50 years our planet will be uninhabitable.” He noted that “the WCC is the only faith-based organization that has a permanent presence in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) process, and it has been present at all the UN climate conferences since the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro.” Even before Rio de Janeiro, the WCC played a prominent role in

13 “War in Ukraine, Peace and Justice in the European Region,” statement adopted by the WCC 11th Assembly in Karlsruhe, Germany, 8 September 2022, page 167 in this report.

14 “The Things that Make for Peace: Moving the World to Reconciliation and Unity,” statement adopted by the WCC 11th Assembly in Karlsruhe, Germany, 8 September 2022, page 190 in this report

highlighting dangers to the environment.¹⁵ Therefore, the assembly statement that was drafted by the Public Issues Committee on the global climate crisis was eagerly awaited in Germany and beyond. The statement repeatedly asserts, “We are running out of time.” The key recommendation urges “all member churches and ecumenical partners around the world to give the climate emergency the priority attention that a crisis of such unprecedented and all-encompassing dimensions deserves.” It will also be crucially important to monitor the implementation of four practical recommendations set down in the statement: for the WCC, in collaboration with partners, to convene a commission on climate change and sustainable development; to declare an Ecumenical Decade of repentance and action for a just and flourishing planet; to reduce its institutional carbon footprint to net-zero by 2030; and to establish strict limitations on travel for WCC purposes.¹⁶

There was little time during the assembly in Karlsruhe to discuss the challenges of implementing such a demanding ecological agenda. However, we need to give more attention to the remarkable new Faith and Order study *Cultivate and Care: An Ecumenical Theology of Justice for and within Creation*,¹⁷ which was published prior to the assembly as the first Faith and Order theological study on a developing a common eco-theological language of all Christian denominations on care for creation, as well as the new volume produced for the assembly, *International Handbook on Creation Care and Eco-Diakonia*.¹⁸

The Global Ecumenical Theological Institute

The WCC’s 10th Assembly in Busan in 2013 inaugurated the Global Ecumenical Theological Institute (GETI) as an event for younger theologians, taking place in parallel with the assembly to strengthen youth ecumenical leadership and intercultural theological competence. Since then, GETI has become a regular feature alongside major ecumenical conferences such as the Conference on World Mission and Evangelism in Arusha in 2018, with a European version organized around the German Protestant Kirchentag in 2017. At Karlsruhe, this

15 “World Council of Churches Leader Looks to Assembly in Germany to Mobilize Action for Climate Justice,” WCC interview with Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca, 12 August 2022, <https://www.oikoumene.org/news/world-council-of-churches-leader-looks-to-assembly-in-germany-to-mobilize-action-for-climate-justice/>.

16 “The Living Planet: Seeking a Just and Sustainable Global Community,” statement adopted by the WCC 11th Assembly in Karlsruhe, Germany, 8 September 2022, page 175 in this report.

17 *Cultivate and Care: An Ecumenical Theology of Justice for and within Creation*, Faith and Order Paper No. 226 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2020), <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/publications/cultivate-and-care/>.

18 Daniel Beros et al., eds, *International Handbook on Creation Care and Eco-Diakonia: Concepts and Theological Perspectives of Churches from the Global South* (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 2022), <https://www.ocms.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Handbook-of-Creation-Care-and-Eco-Diakonia-PDF-for-distribution-A.pdf>.

included some 200 younger theologians from different confessional traditions and geographical contexts, with around 30 senior theological lecturers as their mentors. Issues that were addressed related both to the theme of the assembly and to the GETI theme “Christ’s Love (Re)Moves Borders.” The group was then organized into several theological tracks developed by an International Planning Group under the committed leadership of Dr Kuzipa Nalwamba, then professor of ecumenical social ethics at the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey and WCC programme executive for ecumenical theological education.

A unique group emerged with sharp questions, well-articulated comments on lectures and a remarkable eagerness to learn from each other. There is hope for the forthcoming leadership in the younger generation of ecumenical theologians if we experience something like GETI. The deep engagement, the bright and stimulating theological debates, and the deep friendships forged between participants sends a strong signal: There is a passion and demand for more occasions of intercultural and ecumenical theological learning in the churches. We should not allow churches and institutions of theological education and research to marginalize intercultural theology, ecumenical social ethics, and research on burning inter-confessional as well as missiological and interreligious questions. These are areas where new leadership formation can and will take place.

Ecumenism and Public Communication—Media Attention, Coverage, and Key Symbolic Actions

An enormous effort took place to make the assembly accessible, and to communicate it in all available means and channels of communication. More than 120 people worked in the WCC communication team, and there were 300 accredited journalists, both in person and online. Material was broadcast and shared in English, Spanish, French, and German, with the help of interpreters and translators, who translated close to 150 reports, stories, and publications for the assembly. Events were also simultaneously interpreted in sign language. From 29 August to 11 September 2022, the WCC website was visited by 180,000 users, generating 300,000 page views. Languages used by the visitors to the website were English (43 percent), German (27 percent), French (3 percent), and Spanish (2 percent). There were 21,000 website visitors for the assembly’s opening day on 31 August 2022 and 101,000 for the opening week, from 28 August to 4 September 2022, which broke all known WCC website attendance records.¹⁹

19 “A Look Behind the Scenes at the World Council of Churches 11th Assembly,” WCC News, 23 September 2022, <https://www.oikoumene.org/news/a-look-behind-the-scenes-at-the-world-council-of-churches-11th-assembly>; see also “Media Coverage of WCC 11th Assembly Reflected Global Attention and Interest,” WCC News, 16 January 2023, <https://www.oikoumene.org/news/media-coverage-of-wcc-11th-assembly-reflected-global-attention-and-interest/>.

While such statistical data, along with the 130 assembly-related stories published on the WCC website, reveal a quantitatively positive media coverage impact, more in-depth research is needed to reveal the actual media impact in various national contexts. In more secularized countries and where national audiences are less interested in church affairs, the WCC did not move onto the headlines of major newspapers nor was it mentioned on the daily news programmes of leading television channels. In Germany, church-sceptical journalists waited in vain for a repetition of an antisemitism scandal such as that at the national arts exhibition of Documenta, which had happened several weeks before the assembly. There was neither a huge scandal nor a huge conflict and—apart from President Steinmeier—no really prominent global figure occupied the plenary space. The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, delivered a well-received address, but this was more relevant for church insiders than for the global media public. There were not any meaningful public symbolic gestures that would have encapsulated and embodied a core meaning and made relevant a church gathering such as this for a secular public. Neither the small-scale march focussing on global climate justice with Fridays for Future activists nor any public demonstration against the war in Ukraine received symbolic weight and prominence in terms of media effectiveness and attraction. And when this could have been part of the liturgical programme for the closing day on 8 September, the death of Britain's Queen Elizabeth II the same day took up all the space on the news channels, relegating the WCC into the unseen. Thus, on both the main TV channels and the evening news, the WCC assembly was unmentioned. In Germany, the general impression was that the assembly remained an intra-church event unnoticed by most of the population, despite the broad coverage in church media worldwide. One of the things we need to learn is that apart from the organizational, content-related, and theological dimensions, an assembly needs a dimension of planning in the area of symbolic gestures and media didactics that attract media attention while also communicating something of the core theological message of the assembly.

And Yet It Moves

Back in the 1970s, Ernst Lange, the first German to be an associate general secretary of the WCC, wrote a diagnosis of the ecumenical movement, published in English as *And Yet it Moves: Dream and Reality of the Ecumenical Movement*.²⁰ Lange believed that the churches and their members were not able to keep pace with a globalizing world, and that the ecumenical movement would lose its ability to take action without an ecumenical consciousness and

20 Ernst Lange, *And Yet It Moves: Dream and Reality of the Ecumenical Movement*, trans. Edwin Robertson, abr. Konrad Raiser and Lukas Vischer (Belfast: Christian Journals, 1979). German edition: Ernst Lange, *Die ökumenische Utopie oder was bewegt die ökumenische Bewegung?* (Stuttgart/Berlin: Kreuz-Verlag, 1972).

readiness for change at a global level.²¹ He wrote of the ecumenical movement as being “the most massive domestic Christian protest against the way Christianity, by its alliance with the powers that be, had been transformed into its exact opposite.”²² Ecumenism, he wrote, “has become the test case of faith. Today there is . . . only one way for the church to be one, holy, catholic and apostolic, and that is the ecumenical way.” Lange’s book is the most fascinating, motivating, and influential introductory book about the ecumenical movement that I have read.

No assembly is a perfect image of the ecclesial dream of ecumenism, a comprehensive realization of the prayer of Jesus that all may be one “so that the world may believe” (John 17:21). However, the assembly in Karlsruhe was another important and on the whole, successful, credible, and strong reminder of the living dynamic of the ecumenical dream, which is part of the work of the Holy Spirit and often can be affirmed and discerned only when looking back after a while in a spirit of prayer and spiritual discernment. The message of the assembly pointed to the reality of this dream as being incorporated in the continuation of the ecumenical pilgrimage. This is now called a pilgrimage for justice, reconciliation, and unity, combining to a certain extent the key issues of the conciliar process for justice, peace, and integrity of creation with a concern for unity in and between churches: “We long for a wider movement, the reconciliation and unity of all humanity, and indeed of the entire cosmos. This would be a unity in which God establishes justice, an equal place for all, through which creation may be renewed and strengthened.”²³

As an outcome of the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace, there has been discussion of the need for an “ecumenical theology of companionship,”²⁴ through which churches of different cultural and political contexts can accompany, stimulate, and encourage, but also criticize and challenge each other. The 11th Assembly’s Programme Guidelines Committee envisioned an Ecumenical Pilgrimage for Justice, Reconciliation, and Unity as the inner core of a process of renewal and common within the common fellowship:

21 On Ernst Lange, see Stephen G. Brown, “Globalization and the Unity of the Churches: The Ecumenical Utopia of the German Theologian Ernst Lange,” in Katharina Kunter and Annegreth Schilling, *Globalisierung der Kirchen: Der Ökumenische Rat der Kirchen und die Entdeckung der Dritten Welt in den 1960er und 1970er Jahren* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014), 141–65, and “Ecumenical Utopia: An Impossible Dream?,” *The Ecumenical Review* 69, no. 1 (March 2017): 34–44; <https://doi.org/10.1111/erev.12264>.

22 Lange, *And Yet It Moves*, 5.

23 Message of the 11th Assembly: A Call to Act Together,” page 7 in this report. Also see “An Affective Appreciation” by Bishop Gregory K. Cameron, moderator of the Message Committee, p.23..

24 Fernando Enns, “Toward an Ecumenical Theology of Companionship,” *The Ecumenical Review* 74, no. 2 (April 2022): 268–83.

The beginning of our work has relationship-building at its heart, but we want to go even further and revive a sense that the fellowship is a movement, even a prophetic movement. We do not want to lose the sense that we are “moving” and that we are on a journey of justice and peace, prepared to struggle for them. Deepened relationships should lead to radical change, to conversion, reconciliation, justice, and reparations. We affirm an ecumenism of the heart, but also an ecumenism of the feet in which we walk in the sandals of Jesus Christ.²⁵

What Lange did theologically, in putting the search, vision, and longing for the unity of the church into the context and framework of secular struggles for solidarity and against dividing barriers in this world, was made manifest at the assembly in Karlsruhe. The potential of the churches for common action for peace, for ecological transformation, and for human rights work is and remains enormous. But visible during this assembly were as well the shortcomings: continuing tensions and conflicts within the fellowship of churches, which reflect the dramatically fragmented world torn apart by the forces of war, of racism, and of serious injustice. The WCC needs the prayers and support of those trying to follow the dynamic of Christ’s love, which moves, unites, and transforms this world—as stated in one of the prayers in the assembly worship book:

May deep wisdom guide us as together
we move forward engaging in your loving activity.
We trust in your great faithfulness.
Amen.²⁶

25 “Report of Programme Guidelines Committee,” para. 15, World Council of Churches 11th Assembly Karlsruhe, Germany, 31 August to 8 September 2022, page 147 in this report.

26 *Oasis of Peace*, 286.



Reflecting on the *Assembly*

**Reflections from Members
of the Leadership of the
Central Committee**

Celebrate Christ the Life-Giver

Dr Agnes Abuom (Anglican Church of Kenya), who served as moderator of the WCC central committee from 2013 to 2022, reflects on the WCC 11th Assembly and her hopes for the future of the ecumenical movement.

Dr Abuom moderated the Assembly—the first woman and the first African to do so in the WCC’s history. In her opening remarks, she emphasized an essential element for working together across countries and continents:

“Absolutely fundamental to the WCC and the ecumenical movement are relationships... We encounter one another—in all our uniqueness—and recognize a neighbour in the stranger, unity in the midst of our diversity.”

The WCC celebrates the life of Dr Abuom (†31/05/2023).

Takeaways from the Assembly

For the first time in a long while, the 11th Assembly provided safe spaces for serious engagement, reflections, prayer, challenging one another, and encounters. I saw a commitment to the search for unity, common vision, and understanding—the cornerstones of the WCC.

In the lead-up to the assembly, despite COVID, to a very large extent, we realized that our members and the fellowship were experiencing different challenges but coming together from different angles. This meant that we had to deepen the spiritual life in terms of the structure of the ecumenical movement—deepen our spiritual life of sharing, of prayer. This was manifest at the assembly in Karlsruhe, where we saw the different communions taking part in prayers. In this history of 70-plus years, we finally got to see the Pentecostals lead prayer! That is fantastic!

Stronger Youth Engagement

When I joined the ecumenical movement, I was a steward distributing the assembly newspaper in 1975 in Nairobi. I was a steward many years ago—some people call me “Mama Ecumenical.” Some people call me “Grandma Ecumenical!” Serving as a young person brought me into a totally different world, and I’ve never looked back. I’ve never regretted being part of this movement.

Young people played different roles during the WCC 11th Assembly, very vital roles. I see young people as a beacon of hope in a troubled world and in an ecumenical boat. The assembly theme tried to address this troubled world. Who else would be more in touch with the feelings of love if not young people?

Even in a troubled world, even in a shaky ecumenical boat, young people represent a seed, a plant of hope.

We came with a heart and a spirit of celebration, and young people led the spirit of celebration. If anything, COVID has given the world a terrible trauma. During the COVID-19 pandemic, young men and women became the support companions of our pastors so that they could continue their ministry through technology.

Throughout that time, maintaining hope that the assembly would happen—however small or however big—was critically important. COVID meant that the communions had to find different ways of conducting business, and through intergenerational work, we needed technology—who else would we turn to but the young men and women?

The troubled world represents a situation where young men and women do not seem to know whether they will have a job today or tomorrow. I urge them to be courageous and be strong.

The 11th Assembly carried almost the same feeling as 1948. Today we are in conflict in many regions, and of course, we have the Russia and Ukraine war. As leaders, we see young people as agents at this critical, historical moment—agents of justice, peace, and human dignity. The assembly was a spiritual celebration, a faith journey with intergenerational linkages for us.

I also heard the continuous plea of young people throughout the assembly, and I feel that now there is a concrete plan for addressing the concerns for stronger youth engagement within the WCC. The central committee has been given a clear mandate to follow through on these voices by extending the table to make it more inclusive.

Expanding the Fellowship

During my time as moderator, I was happy to welcome seven new member churches to the WCC. Joining in 2016 was the Dutch Reformed Church from South Africa, the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian Blantyre Synod from Malawi, and the Council of Baptist Churches in Northeast India.

In 2018, the Africa Brotherhood Churches from Kenya and the Community of Baptist Churches in Central Africa from the Democratic Republic of Congo joined the council.

Then in 2022, joining the WCC were the Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa and the First African Church Mission from Nigeria.

Absolutely fundamental to the WCC and the ecumenical movement are relationships. That's what makes experiences like the assembly so precious and formative. We encounter one another—in all our uniqueness—and recognize a neighbour in the stranger, unity in the midst of our diversity.

Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace

The Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace resonated very much with my own work, but more than that it was a challenge to the communions, to the membership, and it became successful in rallying the work from past, present, and focusing into the future. The whole Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace became a tool, such an umbrella, that it became a household communion for men and women of faith. It also helped the programmatic work and program coordination, and this was important.

Thankful for Documents

I thank God for the resource document “Ecumenical Diakonia” because it brings together different theological perspectives. A second document, of course, is related to the whole issue of human sexuality. Human sexuality has been with the council for as long as I can remember, and it has become a very dividing issue in the body. This document brought us through this process of discerning. There is also the unity document, and the Faith and Order document on moral discernment.

Moving Forward

Number one, I think for me as we move forward, the WCC must seriously address the issue of young people. Busan was poor. Karlsruhe was even poorer.

Number two, we need to engage with other religions with a lot of wisdom because, yes, it is a new method of collaboration, but then we need to deepen—as the Bossey Ecumenical Institute is doing—our own faith so that we engage confidently.

Finally, I’d like to say that the issues of violence, of climate change, that we have tried to tackle. We have to repent; we have to act. I thank God that we have so many groups working on this. It’s a matter of coming together with men and women of other faiths, and I’m hoping that the next assembly will bring a better report.

For me, climate justice has become a critical global crisis. It results in economic injustice, which results in conflicts and violence. Because, of course, we have tampered with the planet, we are also getting so many viruses. We cannot ask Christian communions to address this alone.

We must get out of the quagmire. We need a vital, effective, and more focused UN on life and justice. The ecumenical movement and the WCC are very much needed too, a needed organization, a needed group of men and women to resuscitate the values.

Fruitful Future

There is no ecumenical winter. It is summer, and it is summer with green and fruits. I thank men and women who have served in this movement, who have stood so closely with me in prayer. I experienced beautiful team spirit and collegiality in our work.

We harvested our spirituality. It was a spiritual celebration of life. This assembly was characterized by our spirituality, our celebration of spiritual gifts. Let us celebrate Christ and the life-giver.

Every assembly of the World Council of Churches is a unique reflection of its time. Assemblies have been signposts for the churches since its founding 1948 in Amsterdam. To be true to our historic context today, we will have to confront ourselves also with deep-reaching conflicts and disagreements among the churches in the spirit of reconciliation and unity.

Yet, we will continue singing in the coming weeks and months and years the wonderful song of Per Harling on the theme of the assembly: “Christ’s love moves the world to reconciliation and unity. In Christ’s love there is no fear. The Spirit helps us to be bold and free!”

No fear, dear friends, sisters and brothers! No injustice, no violence, no war! In Christ’s love we are free, we can, and we must be prophetic and bold, standing up for justice and peace. That is our call and our mission in this world: to struggle for the dignity of all human beings and the life of all creation.

Let us be moved by Christ’s love. Let us work for healing, reconciliation and unity. These words have deep meaning and very practical consequences in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the climate crisis, or of violence and war in Ukraine and in far too many other places.

As the moderator of the central committee of the World Council of Churches, I want to take this opportunity to thank wholeheartedly all those churches in Germany who have invited us to come to Karlsruhe.

One Body of Christ

Bishop Mary Ann Swenson (United Methodist Church), who served as vice moderator of the WCC central committee from 2013 to 2022, shares the ways in which the assembly deeply touched her, her appreciation for the host city, and what it meant to work so hard for an ecumenism of love.

Remarkable Gathering

It truly was an amazing assembly celebrating how Christ's love moves us to reconciliation and unity. We were presiding over 800 delegates from around the world, and over 3,000 people attending.

As I think about the large crowd that was there and the recent pandemic that was still active, the fact that there were so few COVID cases while we were there was remarkable. That's a great tribute to our health and care people, and the staff, and also the volunteers and the people in Germany, who looked after us and made sure that we did everything to be safe and to be cared for in terms of our health.

The venue in Karlsruhe was excellent. The fact that we were able to be outside as much as we were for the event and that the weather was so good, and the outdoor setup was so good—all that helped us keep healthy, especially when combined with the protections that were in place.

We had time walking around and visiting with one another in the outdoor spaces, and the worship services themselves were outside and in the tent—a true highlight for the whole assembly.

Global Congregation

Outdoor worship every day was so very, very incredible. It was diverse. It was worship from places and people all over the world, and our leaders were in all of the different languages and all of the different music styles of all of the different countries from all over the world.

I brought home the worship book to my own local church, and I want to sit down with our organist, choir director, and music director to share some of the marvellous resources that were a part of that worship experience.

It truly held all of the assembly together, and it also gave us the place to really live into that whole sense of the calling of reconciliation and unity, that we can be God's children in every place and every diversity, and yet still one body of Christ—and we were! We were one body of Christ that whole time.

A Welcome from Karlsruhe

I was so moved by the way the city welcomed us and also the churches in Germany. The city opened its doors and received us so beautifully, and we had marvellous times of sharing with the city leaders and with people there. The churches in Germany were able to be ecumenical and to receive all of us from every place in the world. It was just such a blessing. It was an incredible experience for us, and it truly added to the strength and the power of the assembly.

Bountiful Messages

The thematic plenaries were excellent and moved me day by day. Also, special speakers brought powerful witness, particularly the inter-religious aspects presented by Azza Karam, secretary general of Religions for Peace, whose presentation was such a gift.

On the last day, we had a special moment with the Archbishop of Canterbury, who spoke beautifully—then he went home to his country, and the very next day he had to give pastoral care to the royal family, and he had so much work to do in his country since that time. But how precious it was to share with him!

I also really loved having people from the Taizé community present with us as well. To have them participate just meant so very much to me.

It was fun to walk by the tents and to see the activities that were there, and the possibilities, and the workshops were in different places—so we got even more walking in!

I was happy to be a part of a workshop where even my own local church had been involved and invited to participate!

Inner Workings

At the assembly, we had daily morning meetings with the business committee and used that time to prepare for each day. It was a practical and important part of the work. It was a combination of people who had been together in leadership on the WCC central committee over the last nine years and people who were new. I really loved getting to know some of the new people, beginning to work with some of them, and anticipating what gifts they would bring to the work of the central committee and the executive committee in the weeks, months, and years ahead.

Addressing the Needs of the World

We continue to address the needs of the world in so many ways, through our work and through our ecumenical formation. We do it in our work for justice

and peace. We do it in our work with international affairs. We do it in our work with Faith and Order.

We look at the needs of people in the world, and we look at what's happening with people in the world, and we reach out to be there, and to show God's love, to try to find ways to alleviate suffering, to lift up, and to work together for peace and for justice.

In the assembly, in our public statements and through our public witness, we tried to be fair to all in the ways that we could. I think one example would be in our statement about Ukraine and Russia. We tried to find a way forward and to be one body in the midst of conflict. The same is true when you look at the Holy Land and at Palestinian and Israel, with the painful suffering that's part of the brokenness there. Our public statements are efforts to be a witness to people in the world, and so are our humanitarian efforts—the way in which we go and we are present with people in their places of woundedness.

I think we truly reach out to the world. As we shift from the digital age to the age of artificial intelligence, we're trying to figure out how to live in the world. We have to keep working with that reality.

United Methodist Roots

As a United Methodist bishop, I loved the fact that our United Methodist Church, our United Methodist congregation, was one of the churches closest to the venue. It became a place where young people gathered, and it was fun to see the young people coming from all over to visit there, but also it was a place where I got to go and worship several times. It felt so wonderful! My colleagues, other United Methodist bishops from Germany, and also from different places in the world were present. Training for ecumenical and inter-religious relationships is a very important witness that we do, so I really loved that place.

Peace on the Korean Peninsula

One evening at the assembly, I attended an event that was praying for peace on the Korean Peninsula. I've prayed for peace on the Korean Peninsula for so long. We had the WCC 10th Assembly in Busan, and then for that whole next season, we were in a Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace.

I knew, over the last nine years, we had been working on peace and justice, and praying for peace, and going to places to visit in our Pilgrimage for Justice and Peace, to visit the places, to visit the wounds of people in different places, to celebrate their successes, and to work together for peace and for discipleship into the future. I've been to many places over the last nine years—Japan, Cyprus, the Holy Land, and many others.

At the assembly, we were living with the fact that there was this war with Russia and Ukraine, and we were trying to have peace in that region. The

prayer service for Korea was a symbol of what is so important for the whole world.

Close Colleagues

Serving with Dr Agnes Abuom, with the late Metropolitan Gennadios, with former WCC general secretary Rt. Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit, and with former WCC acting general secretary Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca was an incredible blessing in my life. It was the crown of my ministry and my life as a child of God, and the opportunity to be of service to the church in the world.

Together over all these years, we were walking and learning in a Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace. We were truly part of an ecumenism of love and a way of being a humanist in the world today. We really do celebrate how Christ's love is moving us and moving the world to reconciliation and unity.

A Unique World Spiritual Event

Metropolitan Prof. Dr Nifon

Metropolitan Prof. Dr Nifon of Targoviste (Romanian Orthodox Church), vice-moderator of the central committee of the WCC in the period before and during the assembly, reflects on his experience in Karlsruhe.

I am very grateful to our Good God for the great opportunity I was given to serve the World Council of Churches in the period of preparation and during the 11th Assembly in Karlsruhe as vice moderator of the central committee. I was very happy to experience such wonderful spiritual and ecclesial feelings. I could summarize some of the memorable conclusions of this historical and unique world spiritual event:

1. The path to unity in faith and Eucharistic fellowship as an imperative of the ecumenical movement remains our common goal and vision, but we are still far from this goal. There are still differences and divisions that must be overcome, and new challenges again question the nature of Christian unity today. Yet, even the most critical voices about the WCC now agree that the WCC is vitally needed, especially today as a Christian fellowship and that, despite all the differences, we gather based on our common affirmation that Jesus Christ is God and Saviour according to the scriptures, acknowledging that there is but One God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
2. Based on the great experience, one could really describe the WCC as a spiritual-based organization. The heart of our fellowship is the spirituality we share as the flame that fuels our drive for justice and sparks our work for peace and unity. In our ecumenical endeavours, we should realize how important it is to speak a spiritual language in WCC statements and speeches, a language that people in the churches can identify with but which is also recognized by people in other faith communities. Despite our different faith identities, when we speak a spiritual language and speak to one another as people of faith, we discover that we have something in common that brings us closer.
3. The term ecumenism has become a sensitive and problematic word. In some contexts, it is equated with an ideological movement of the past. Yet, while ecumenism is questioned or even condemned in some cases, very many Christians accept the need for inter-Christian cooperation and dialogue. And more recently, the profile of the WCC is being widely accepted as a unique safe space and open platform for encounters and dialogue towards building bridges

of just peace and reconciliation. We could see the experience we had with the presence of the two Orthodox Churches in Ukraine. Delegations from both churches came to the assembly, but the need to start a dialogue remains a painful necessity, especially once the war ends. Church leaders from both sides acknowledged that WCC could play such a role.

4. In Karlsruhe, we decided to continue the notion of pilgrimage as an ecumenical paradigm for our times, arguing that the image of pilgrimage speaks to our identity. We are a movement and not a static institution. We are people on the way. This very concept has a strong biblical and patristic basis. The first Christians were called “people of the way” (Acts 9:2). We see in the early Christian sources that Christians were called those who walk together (*syn-odoi*), while for St John Chrysostom, the church itself was called a *syn-odos*. The assembly approved having a Pilgrimage of Justice, Reconciliation, and Unity as an overarching concept and paradigm to guide the WCC programmatic work until the next assembly.

5. The unity in faith leading to full communion among Christians remains a great desire and goal. However, that is not a precondition of walking together on the pilgrimage of just peace, reconciliation, and unity of all. Despite differences, by walking and serving together, unity and fellowship—*koinonia*—will be strengthened on the way.

Praying Together



Assembly Spiritual Life

Introduction

The search for unity advances as Christians and churches exchange gifts of their spiritual life, which are graciously bestowed on them by the Spirit despite their persistent divisions.

Interconfessional and intercultural prayer, held during large gatherings of Christians and churches in search for reconciliation, have, for more than a century, been a unique opportunity for participants to be blessed by spiritual gifts shared by praying traditions other than theirs, in which they recognize elements of the true Church of Christ.

Under the supervision of the Assembly Worship Planning Committee, the spiritual life of the Karlsruhe assembly was prepared to serve this purpose of growing in fellowship through the exchange of spiritual gifts.

As in previous WCC assemblies, the pillars of spiritual life were interconfessional prayer services and Bible studies in preparation for and during the assembly. The assembly theme all inspired all prayer services and Bible studies. They provided to each day the spiritual guidance for the other moments of the journey, such as thematic plenaries, home groups, and ecumenical conversations.

Opening prayer

The opening prayer took place on 31 August 2022, gathering assembly participants and people from local churches. The homily by John X, Patriarch of Antioch and all the East, offered a theological reflection on Jesus' encounter with the woman at the well (John 4:1-26). A youth testimony was presented by Ms Ann Jacob, United Methodist Church, USA.

The service can be followed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4nl0fWwZLEk>, and a booklet with the text and worship material is available in a downloadable PDF: <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/publications/oasis-of-peace-opening-prayer>.

Daily Prayer

Each day was marked by moments of prayer: prayer began each day, material was provided for a brief midday prayer, with thematically related prayers and petitions and song suggestions, and evening prayer was prepared and followed different church traditions.

Prayers and songs can be found in Oasis of Peace: Spiritual Life Resources, available as a downloadable PDF at <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/publications/oasis-of-peace>.

Videos of prayers and Bible studies are available at <https://www.oikoumene.org/assembly/assembly-videos#prayer-life>.

Closing prayer

The assembly closed in prayer on the afternoon of Thursday, 8 September 2022. This final gathering sent participants home with renewed hope and joy as they returned to their churches inspired by Christ's invitation to "follow me" (John 21:15-19).

The text and order for the closing prayer can be found at <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/closing-prayer-of-the-wcc-11th-assembly-in-karlsruhe-germany>.

Home Groups

Home groups provided space for delegates and official participants to reflect together on what was heard in the morning prayer and the thematic plenary. The same group met several times during the assembly, led by two co-facilitators. Home groups embodied the relational, spiritual, reflective, and action-oriented dimensions of Christian fellowship.

When home groups met, other assembly participants were invited to a plenary-style Bible study to continue reflecting on the biblical text of the day.

Bible study

Bible studies highlighting events in the church year prepared the fellowship for the assembly and can be accessed at <https://www.oikoumene.org/about-the-wcc/organizational-structure/assembly#resources>.

A series of biblical reflections on the daily "anchor" texts was published for use by assembly participants and congregations around the world. Together with morning prayer and thematic plenaries, these reflections informed the work of home groups and plenary Bible study.

Plenary Bible studies, with the theme "When He Saw the Crowds" were led by the authors of the studies and can be downloaded from <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/publications/when-he-saw-the-crowds-bible-studies>.

Videos of Bible studies are available at <https://www.oikoumene.org/assembly/assembly-videos#prayer-life>.

Opening Prayer

The opening prayer, which took place on 31 August 2022, can be followed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4nl0fWwZLEk>,

A booklet with the text and worship material is available in a downloadable PDF: <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/publications/oasis-of-peace-opening-prayer>.

Homily At the Opening Prayer by John X, Patriarch of Antioch and all the East

Dear brothers and sisters, beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ, peace and love to you from our Lord Jesus Christ.

I come to you carrying greetings and peace from the Phoenician shores that heard the proclamation of the Gospel by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself and afterwards by the Apostles. I come to you from Damascus, the city in which Saint Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles, received illumination and the place of his repentance. I come from the Apostolic City of Antioch, which preached to all nations the Gospel of reconciliation and salvation, and where the disciples were first called Christians (Acts 11:26). Since the Apostolic period, Antioch has persisted in defending the freedom of the children of God to worship Him in spirit and truth and supporting the Church in the Gentile cities against discrimination and exclusion. This led to the fact that the love of God, which He demonstrated to us through the death and resurrection of the Saviour, is now proclaimed in all parts of the world. Thus, there is no doubt that Christ's prophets and teachers in Antioch: Barnabas, Simeon, who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen, who had been brought up with Herod the Tetrarch, and Saul (Acts 13:1), have contributed to make this gathering here today a reality for all of us, coming from all the tribes of the earth; from various countries, nationalities, and races, to praise Christ our God, Who granted us reconciliation with the Father and the ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18).

We are gathered here today to recall and chant with joy: "Christ's love moves the world to reconciliation and unity." God is love, and His love moves us, directs us, and teaches us to imitate His love, as the only New Testament commandment that includes and deeply fulfils all other commandments (Romans 13:9-10; Galatians 5:14) because it addresses the new person by the spirit, not by the letter.

There is a consensus among the apostles, the writers of the New Testament, that the love of God for us was supremely expressed in the death of Christ for our sake. Along the same lines, we can affirm that the entire economy of salvation: the incarnation of God the Word, His life on earth as a human

being, His teachings, and His conversations with people to spread the gospel of the kingdom, all of which demonstrate the love of God and compassion for human beings.

In the Gospel according to John, we find examples of Christ's encounters with different people, including Nathanael the Apostle, the prominent Pharisee teacher Nicodemus, the paralytic man at the pool of Bethesda, a royal official, an adulterous woman, a blind man, and many other examples. Nonetheless, God's love and compassion for humanity, for the sake of salvation, is in common in all these encounters. In these the love of Christ that heals from sin appears, followed by the person's response to this love as befits. The Lord Jesus affirmed to Nicodemus: "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16, NIV). Immediately, after this statement, He went into detail about the severity of the judgment on those who prefer darkness to light, especially after the light has come into the world (John 3:19). Whoever loves the light and comes to it has repented of his sinful deeds and loved the truth (John 3:20-21), lived according to it, and walked in the light as Christ did (see 1 John 2:6).

Among the encounters recorded by John the Evangelist, a meeting with a Samaritan woman is characterized by the Evangelist's elaborate details of this encounter and its redemptive implications. At its onset, the narrative emphasizes that our Lord and God Jesus Christ "had to pass through Samaria" when He was travelling from Judea to Galilee. However, biblical studies inform us that the reason that necessitated this passage in Samaria was neither the geography of the land nor its network of routes. The Jews preferred other routes for their journey from Judea to Galilee. However, the compelling reason here was God's love for the Samaritans as well as His desire to visit their city to meet with the Samaritan woman so that she, along with all the people of Samaria, would believe in "the Saviour of the world" and God's love would again lead to repentance and the salvation of many.

God the Word was tired and thirsty after walking to the city of the Samaritans, for He had chosen to become a human being like us. As a person, He experienced the fatigue of sacrificial love for the sake of others, especially the weak. He then sat at Jacob's Well and addressed a Samaritan woman, thus crossing all social boundaries to enlighten a sinful woman and lead her to repentance.

The first barrier that Jesus overcame was the socio-ethnic barrier of centuries of division and religious hatred between the Jews and the Samaritans. Jesus intended to pass through Samaria, but He also sent His disciples to buy food there. Moreover, He asked the Samaritan woman for water to drink, disregarding one of the famous first-century teachings that compared the food of the Samaritans to the flesh of swine. These are details that the Evangelist John deliberately underlines in order to make the reader understand the behaviour

of the Lord Jesus, which is far from discrimination and exclusion, and which does not place any racial or socio-ethnic barrier in the way of salvation.

The Lord Jesus also crossed another barrier, namely the bad reputation that was accorded to the Samaritan woman; perhaps due to her inappropriate behaviour, as it was proven later that she had married five men and was now living with a sixth man to whom she was not married. Her status prompted her to walk to the well in the midday heat of the sun to avoid encountering other women, for she was not welcome among them. Nonetheless, her social standing did not prevent Christ from paying attention to her because He is the doctor who came to heal the sick, not the healthy, and to call sinners to repentance, not the righteous (Matthew 9:12-13).

The Lord also crossed the gender barrier. If a man were to address a woman alone at a well, it would have seemed like a challenge to many. Therefore, the Evangelist pointed out explicitly the absence of the disciples (verse 4:8) and their amazement when they returned and saw Christ talking to a woman (verse 4:27). The Jewish sages advised men not to engage in unnecessary conversations with women. They included addressing women among the actions that prevented a man from becoming wise and from being trained in studying the Scripture under a wise teacher's instruction.

All these barriers failed to prevent the Lord Jesus from preaching both to the Samaritan woman and the Samaritans about the living water that springs, neither from Jerusalem nor from Sychar, but the water that the Messiah Jesus alone gives to all who believe in Him.

At first, the woman found it absurd that a Jewish man was addressing her, and she mocked Him when she heard Him mentioning the living water that He was offering while not carrying any bucket to draw water. Nonetheless, she soon applauded His words about the water that will never make her thirsty, as this would save her from the trouble of hard work. Our Lord and God did not despise her limited understanding of His heavenly mysteries nor her approach to divine gifts from an egotistic and narrow perspective but as a patient doctor. He continued the conversation and gradually revealed Himself to her. Then she realized the Lord's absolute knowledge of all things. When she heard Him tell her everything she had done, she knew that she was in front of someone who had the power to do what He had promised (see Rom 4:21). Then afterwards, she also realized that He transcends all racial, national, and socio-ethnic divisions and that He neither differentiates between a Jew, a Samaritan, and a Greek; nor between a man and a woman, rich and poor, people of the north and people of the south, nor between people with different skin colours. Jesus Christ wants to proclaim the gospel of reconciliation with God to all so that all entrust him their lives, and thus all may be saved. He came for the people to learn how to worship the Father in spirit and in truth so that they could worship the Father not by outward appearances and animal sacrifices but by spiritual worship and repentance. They will then offer their bodies and selves as a "living sacrifice,

holy and pleasing to God” as a “spiritual worship”, according to the words of the apostle Paul (Romans 12:1). These are the true worshipers who worship the Father by doing all that is true and in the light (see John 3:21).

The conversation of the Samaritan woman with the Lord Jesus is an encounter of spiritual healing that cured her of the love of darkness, passion, and the mind governed by the flesh, which is hostile to God (see Rom 8:7). Through the grace of Christ, she acquired reconciliation with God, her life changed, and her priorities were reset, hence becoming a preacher of Christ for her people.

The conversation with the Samaritan woman reveals the Christ’s intention to heal sinners and to reconcile all in Him into one Body. We learn from the Samaritan woman that sitting in the presence of Christ transforms us and raises us from earthly thoughts and works of the flesh that deprive us of fellowship with God and His kingdom (Galatians 5:19-21), to “the mind of the spirit” and reconciliation by the blood of Christ. The encounter with Christ teaches us love that “is patient . . . and not self-seeking,” “does no harm” to anyone, and fulfils the “law of Christ” (Gal. 6:2). The Samaritan woman also calls us to believe in Christ without hypocrisy, to obtain the living water from which whoever drinks will never thirst. Whoever believes in the Son comes to Him, for He is full of grace and truth, and from His fullness, we receive these good things. He had witnessed and taught what is true so that we could learn from Him to avoid self-love and love our fellow humans even unto death. Christ’s love for us and our love for Christ is shown by keeping His commandments (1 John 5:2-3), becoming the foundation of a new life in reconciliation with God and in unity with all those who love His name.

Today, a divine necessity urges me to ask you to choose to pass through the suffering Middle East, as Christ chose to pass through Samaria. Pass and look at Christ’s beloved ones there, as He looked at the Samaritans, without disregarding those who differ from you, without excluding the people of Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, and the Holy Land, especially because their ancestors served the Gospel of reconciliation and spread it to all nations.

Raise your voice against the exclusion of the people of the Middle East, and against depriving them of food, medicine, heating, and medical treatment, and against sanctions and economic blockades on the pretext of political disagreements. Object to banning Christians and their prayers and hymns, descending from Christ’s eternity, from the land that Christ trod and upon which the apostles worked. Raise your voice and make an appeal for the divulgence of the fate of the Metropolitan of Aleppo, Paul, and Youhanna, whose case has gone unnoticed by the international community for more than nine years. Object to the exploitation of the faithful Christians suffering from the sanctions and blockade, taking advantage of their situation to proselytize them and make them abandon their church and follow another. Stand with deeds, and not just with words, and support your brothers and sisters with

sacrificial love, regardless of their ancient languages different from yours, for they carry the traditions of an authentic Christian apostolic environment imbued with love, humility, and reverence.

Many statements are written to avoid censure and relieve the conscience from overlooking the marginalization of some people, groups, and regions. Whereas, whenever there is genuine sympathy and an interest in a situation, actions become serious in application and persist with urgency and an effective methodology. Are the Christians of Antioch underserving of defence against exclusion, discrimination, starvation, oppression, torment, and death?

God loves us, and with us is God, Emmanuel, forever. He is our peace, joy, life, and resurrection. I pray today with you that our meeting in this WCC 11th General Assembly will be an encounter with Christ, Who quenches our thirst for His love; Who provides us with healing, repentance, and salvation; Who saves all people from the deadly COVID-19 pandemic, as well as every epidemic, famine, and persecution; and Who grants the entire world peace that surpasses all understanding.

May the Holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, protect you and grant you purification, illumination, and glory with His mercy and love for mankind. Amen.

Youth Testimony by Ms Ann Jacob, United Methodist Church, USA

In my present context, I serve a United Methodist Church in Edmonds, Washington on the west coast of the United States. In the community I serve, we have a Refugee Resettlement Ministry through which we accompany more than 30 Afghan and Ukrainian refugees every week. In the autumn of 2021, we received a Muslim family of eight who were part of the evacuations from Afghanistan. They landed in rainy Seattle to a welcome team of members from Edmonds United Methodist Church. The congregation surrounded them in love and care as the five Afghan refugee children navigated a new school system and learned a second language. War brought our Afghan family to Edmonds, and Christ's love through hospitality has given the community a new opportunity to practice reconciliation and peace. In May, our Afghan family hosted a meal in their home for the church youth group. They prepared delicious Afghan food—Kabuli pulao, *mantu*, and mango custard—and the children of Abraham and the children of Ibrahim broke bread together. No matter where we come from, what our immigration status is, how much or how little we have, what we believe or doubt, or whom we love, Christ's love moves through us to transform the world to reconciliation and peace.

I come from a family of nineteen pastors. From the beginning of my life, I have lived in ecumenical spaces. I was baptized in the Church of South India and lived in India until I was nine years old. My grandfather was a pastor in

the Church of South India, serving in the south Indian states of Kerala and Andhra Pradesh. He grew up in a time of revolution when India was gaining independence from the British Raj, and Christian denominations in India were unifying to become one. My grandmother always had an extra place setting at the dinner table. She was ready for an unexpected visitor and prepared to practice Christ's love through breaking bread together.

In October last year, I had the privilege of visiting and travelling in the country of Georgia. While I was there, strangers would welcome me for a meal or offer a ride for free. When I asked why they were offering radical hospitality, they would say, "We believe that guests are from God."

When I think of Christ's love moving the world to reconciliation and peace, I think of our Refugee Resettlement Team at church, my grandparents, and Georgians I have encountered—people of different faith traditions moved to practice radical, inclusive, agape love towards a neighbour. When we break bread together, when we pause to filter our actions through the reality of our neighbour, we transform the world to reconciliation and peace.

May our love be a balm, healing wounds and tending to places of hurt.

May our love be radical, proximate to the margins prioritizing people over profit.

May we offer Christ to one another, overflowing with peace and reconciliation.

May it be so.

Amen

Sending Prayer

The assembly closed in prayer on the afternoon of Thursday, 8 September 2022.

The text and order for the closing prayer can be found at <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/closing-prayer-of-the-wcc-11th-assembly-in-karlsruhe-germany>.

A video of the closing prayer can be viewed at https://www.youtube.com/live/yKOF9fqwn_A.

Sermon by Rev. Joy Evelyn Abdul-Mohan, Moderator of Synod, the Presbyterian Church of Trinidad and Tobago

John 21:15-19

Dear Siblings in Christ, greetings in the name of Jesus Christ, our liberating Saviour. On this Thursday in Black, I feel extremely blessed and humbled to share in worship with all of you through the proclamation of the Word of God in Karlsruhe, Germany, at this 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches.

Introduction

Albeit, the global pandemic interrupted and disrupted our lives and livelihoods, there was a silver lining as the global church and, by extension, the world discovered its ingenuity out of necessity. The new normal became our lived reality to protect and preserve lives.

Thus, the Omnipotent God of unconditional love and grace made it possible for us as an ecumenical family to gather in one place: to worship; to engage in Pre-Assembly events, home groups and Bible studies; to have dialogue and ecumenical conversations; and to make decisions by way of consensus.

In 2019, like other member churches, the Presbyterian Church of Trinidad and Tobago (PCTT) received the invitation to attend this 11th Assembly. There was excitement and pure joy to sensitize the church and community to this global event. So much so that at its adjourned meeting held in October 2019, the Synod of the PCTT adopted (with a slight variation) the assembly's theme as its own for 2020, "Christ's Love Moves the World to Reconciliation and Unity—Mission Beyond Church Walls".

The assembly's theme became more relevant as COVID-19 created havoc in the world and took away from us many close family and friends.

We accepted that things would never be the same. However, even before the pandemic hit, churches in every region were struggling with the question of how to be more contextual. To be the church in and beyond a pandemic, we

need to change the paradigm, the model for what the church should be like. For the church to bloom where it is planted, not merely endure, it needs now more than ever to be vigorous in its ecumenical and missional focus beyond its four walls.

So here we are again, perhaps exhausted after almost ten (10) days of being together—unity in diversity—but ready to return from whence we came, to the East, to the West, to the North and Global South with the eagerness to share and implement what we have received at this assembly.

As we prepare to leave beautiful Karlsruhe and this awe-inspiring and enlightening 11th Assembly of the WCC, notwithstanding some of its challenges, I invite you to reflect with me on the theme: "The Audacity to Love as Christ Loves—an Imperative, not an Option". Please pray with me.

Prayer for understanding:

Eternal Spirit Divine, give us a fresh understanding of your Word today. Challenge us and change our lives as we encounter your wisdom. Help us to see clearly the way to follow you and have the courage to live by your truth revealed in Jesus Christ. Amen.

When I was asked to prepare this sermon based on the given text, John 21:15-19, I wrestled with the text, on which I would have preached many times as an ordained minister for more than 33 years. As I attended the pre-assembly events and various sessions during the first five days of the assembly, I was inspired to hear the stories addressing not only the war in Ukraine but also other global realities, especially those in my region, such as the refugee and migrant crisis in Venezuela as well the Cuban and Haitian crises; I felt burdened with the issues of reparations and repentance which reminded me that systemic racism is as real as life and serious as death. I cannot help but recall the words the secretary-general of Religions of Peace, Professor Azza Karam who urged that war must not be demonstrated as an option. God humbled my heart to appreciate every word and every voice, urging me to sit where others sit.

The conversation between Peter and Jesus—setting the scene for audacious love

This biblical text assigned for today's closing prayer is one of the biblical narratives that challenge the Christian community and ecumenical family to love as Christ loves.

The scene illustrates how the risen Christ restores, reinstates, and commissions Peter for more fruitful service and leadership. The conversation begins with Jesus asking Peter three times the same question: "Do you love me more than these?" And Peter replies in the affirmative, which immediately follows the command of Jesus to serve others. The conversation concludes with the prediction that Peter will face persecution as a result of his mission and

with a simple command to follow Christ with consequences. Oftentimes, this threefold questioning has been juxtaposed with the three times Peter fell asleep in the Garden of Gethsemane and Peter's triple denial of Jesus during his trial.

It is interesting to note that the first two times, when Jesus asked the question, the Greek word *agape* (self-sacrificial love) is used; the third time, Jesus uses the word *phileo* (signifying affection, affinity or relational love) to confirm Peter's loyalty and commitment as both disciple and friend.

It is scripturally evident that the Apostle Peter had declared himself to be more loyal to Jesus than anyone else, yet when the testing came, he fell apart. Peter took a great oath and swore to Jesus, "Though all become deserters because of you, I will never desert you . . . even if I have to die with you, I will not deny you". (Matt 26:33-35).

The truth is that Peter was frail and weak. He had the capacity to make solid, insightful statements without considering the implications of what he said—to take the risk without counting the cost—and the consequences of saying yes to Christ. In other words, like many of us, Peter "put his foot in his mouth."

This is indeed the condition of humanity. We all have good intentions. We all are eager to do the Lord's work. We all want progress. Yet, how often have we failed to follow through with our promises and commitment? Certainly, this narrative reveals the fragility and spiritual myopia of humanity.

The audacious love of Jesus Christ—restorative and reconciliatory

Yet this narrative is also an expression of how God restores the brokenness of humanity. It is clear that Simon Peter had lost his way following his denial. But it is also clear that Jesus wanted to restore and reinstate Peter, to give him a second chance to prove his loyalty and demonstrate his love to Christ over all else.

This demonstrates that God does not give up on people who have fallen. At the Cross, God shows that God is never finished with humankind. God loves, forgives, and restores us, for God's grace is sufficient for all. We have been reconciled to God in Christ. 2nd Corinthians 5:18 reminds us, "For the love of Christ urges us on . . . All this is from God who reconciled us to himself through Christ and has given us the ministry of reconciliation." Here, the Apostle Paul sets forth the heart of the gospel. We owe our salvation solely to the grace of God.

Perhaps we need to be reminded of this because we know what it means to fail at something and to wonder if, it will ever be the same again. That is why Peter's story of restoration is so meaningful to us. Despite the tragedy of his denial, the Lord reached out to him and drew him back into discipleship and eventually into leadership in the early Church.

We, too, as an ecumenical family, are called to be part of that restorative process. We are called to preach the good news that no matter who we are,

regardless of age, race, ethnicity, gender, or disability, we each have our life's purpose to fulfil as daughters and sons of the Kingdom.

Audacious love—a mandate to serve: feed my lambs, tend my sheep and follow me!

Now, having been restored and reinstated by the risen living Lord, Peter was commissioned to the responsibility of tending Jesus' sheepfold, not from the perspective of exclusive authority, but from the perspective of a mutual and collective responsibility.

When Jesus called the disciples to follow him, he wanted them invariably to relinquish their personal agendas for his sake and God's mission, the *missio Dei*. Nonetheless, God's mission should always shape the church's agenda. Jesus envisaged "an audacious love" as the connecting link for the maintenance of this network of relationships and discipleship. "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another." (John 13:34) Jesus, if in our situation, would probably engage us in serious dialogue about the fabric of society—our need to take seriously our mutual and social responsibility—to serve others with dignity and pastoral care.

Sadly, how easy it is for us to sacrifice this audacious love to greed that even our best intentions are subdued by hegemony, glory, possessions, and this constant jockeying for position. What's in it for me?

Have we not failed in our commitment to love Christ and serve him by loving and serving the people for whom he cares about? In our enthusiasm to give our time and resources toward a "noble cause" or whatever, could we have loved these more than Christ? In our excitement and zeal to fulfil our roles and responsibilities in the Church and in our careers, in our homes and communities, have we loved these more than Christ? In setting our agendas at every level of church community life, regionally and internationally, have we loved these more than Christ?

When we have our agenda inclusive of all—for the benefit of all—then the cooperation and the commitment of all will be assured, and Christ's audacious love will become more real to us. All are welcome, and all means all. Consensus, togetherness, searching God's will together with prayer—deliberating with one mind and heart with the audacious love of Christ—we will come closer to fulfilling the will and purpose of God for our lives and the lives of others. No longer will we engage in a Theology of Victimology but a Theology of Hope and Healing.

Let us think for a while and ask ourselves. Is the very same agape love reflective in our present activities and engagements? Are we able to reach out to those on the margins and as a sign of God's presence to bring life into their lives? Are we able to fetch healing to the suffering people around us? What motivates us to do what we are doing? Do we love Jesus more than these?

Conclusion: The audacity to love as Christ loves: an imperative not an option

It seems to me that the audacity to love as Christ loves is an imperative and not an option for the church or its partners. As Christ lives in us and we in him, the constant interchange of his audacious love in the innermost part of our being can make us vehicles to move the world to reconciliation and unity.

The audacity to love as Christ love requires that we be honest with ourselves and accept that we are bound to disagree within our own denominational family while in greater agreement with others. His Grace, Archbishop Jason Gordon of Trinidad and Tobago, coins it this way, “Many people think the biggest challenges to unity of the Church comes from other denominations. There are times when I found more agreement with the people of other denominations than with some Catholics.”

Our task as an ecumenical community is that of building the bridge between others and ourselves through this audacious love of Christ—a love that is life-changing and liberating.

The way human beings relate to and treat each other will say more to the world at large than any programme, project, or activity the church or its related organizations can ever have. Thus, I believe there is an unequivocal basis for this audacious love of Christ in the Golden Rule, as recorded in Luke 6:31, “Do to others as you would have them do to you”. This means that the audacious love of Christ is based on justice and equality—it means equal standards for all. It means an acknowledgement and recognition of not only our own self-worth but also that of others. It means challenging the status quo and any system that stymie the fullness of life for all.

In his very touching presentation, at the EDAN Pre-Assembly, Rolando Mauro said that “persons with disabilities are figures of divine restoration and God restores his chosen. We are all God’s chosen.” He emphasized this point by referring to the then USA President George H.W. Bush who—when signing into law the Americans with Disabilities Act—stated, “Let the shameful walls of exclusion finally come tumbling down.”

Whatever we say or do should inspire and promote the restorative reconciliatory magnanimous love of Christ and the unity of the Body of Christ in all its splendour—not mediocrity, division, envy, selfishness, or pride. The search for love, reconciliation, and unity, therefore, begins with each one of us from where each one sits and serves. We leave this assembly determined to move from hostility to hospitality, to love in action.

So, dear siblings of God, when we pray for love, reconciliation, and unity in a troubled world, what do we think of? Perhaps we think of a time when wars shall end, where justice, righteousness, and freedom will flow like an ever-flowing stream, where poverty, rape, gender-based violence, heinous crimes, human-trafficking, systemic racism, food shortages, the refugee and migrant crisis, xenophobia, stigmatization, oppression and discrimination of every kind

and the raping of the earth will all cease. We think of a time when governments will rule with integrity and the principles of fairness and with a preferential option for the poor, with better healthcare systems in place so that the quality of human life will be at its pinnacle. We think of a day when climate change and the crises associated with it will be acknowledged as real and not a fallacy.

In this nuclear age and turbulent times when the sands of time are rapidly running out, surely the ecumenical family should begin to take more seriously the audacious love of Christ, the mandate to feed the sheep and tend the lambs as an imperative from Christ our Lord and not an option. This is indeed a catalyst for meaningful change.

In the name of God, our Creator, Christ, our Saviour and the Holy Spirit, our Teacher and Counsellor. Amen.

Reflection: Rev. Canon Christopher Douglas-Huriwai

A hallmark of my people, the indigenous Maori of New Zealand, is the centrality of ritual in our culture. From the time my ancestors first set foot on the land that we now know as New Zealand, ritual was present. Perhaps the most important of these rituals are our traditional rituals of encounter. These rituals of encounter have at their core a singular purpose, to ensure the humanity and dignity of all people are not only acknowledged but maintained.

The formal ritual of encounter is a welcome ceremony known as *powhiri*, where calls of welcome are led by the women of the tribe, formal speeches are made, songs are sung, and then, finally, a communal meal is shared by those gathered to bring the process to a close. Through this process, the ancient genealogical lines of both the home people and the visitors are remembered and honoured. The end result of this ritual of encounter is that there is no longer a distinction between home people and visitor; instead, all are considered joined together in a common relationship—all are considered one.

While *Powhiri* is a corporate act vested in the tribe and sub-tribe, there is another sacred ritual of encounter that is more intimate and personal, exchanged whenever Maori greet one another, it is called *Hongi*. This intimate act of shared acknowledgement is both physical and spiritual and consists of the pressing together of two peoples' noses and foreheads while at the same time deeply inhaling a shared breath. This breath is reminiscent of the breath God breathed into the body of his first creation to produce life. It is this intermingling of breath that fundamentally acknowledges the humanity of the other and when coupled with the words *Tena Koe* creates a powerful starting point for a pilgrimage of reconciliation and unity.

Tena Koe is the formal language greeting of my people and literally means "That is You" or when more properly translated "I see you." This greeting gives an insight into the Maori mind and the importance of acknowledgement of the other in Maori society. For Maori, the beginning of any encounter, be it corporate or personal, is an acknowledgement of the humanity and dignity

of the person standing before them. When Maori say “I see you,” we are really saying I see you in all your created glory, your wounds, your scars, your hopes, your aspirations. I see your ancestors, I see your descendants, I see and acknowledge the divine in you.

Tena Koe, then, is not just a simple acknowledgement but a commitment to the other that we are now joined together. Your humanity is now bound up in mine, your sacredness is bound up in mine, and your dignity bound up in mine.

The theme of this, the 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches, has been, in many ways a ritual of encounter for the last eight days. It is not just an encounter between those of us who have participated in the assembly, but it is an encounter between all of us and the love of God in Christ. Perhaps even more than that, it is an encounter between Christians everywhere and with what the love of Christ is demanding of us. Christ’s love moves the world to reconciliation and unity because it brings us into the embrace of a *hongi*, its nose pressed to ours, its forehead pressed to ours, and with a shared sacred breath pronounces with infinite mercy and grace *Tena Koe: I See You.*”

As we return to our homes, empowered, inspired, and perhaps even challenged by the theme of this assembly, it would do us well to be reminded of what unity and reconciliation means to those for whom justice is denied and those who perpetrate injustice. For too long, the burden of reconciliation and unity has fallen on the shoulders of those to whom justice is denied. As an indigenous people in the church, we have experienced multiple occasions where the expectation was on us to exercise grace, to forgive, to forget, and to move on all in the name of unity, while the perpetrators of injustice were free to continue living their lives protected by their privilege.

The love of Christ that motivates us towards reconciliation and unity, however, says to us, “I see the hurt and the wounds of the oppressed. I see the struggle and the brokenness of the oppressors.” Reconciliation and unity are vital to the future of not only the Christian Church but of all humanity. An acknowledgement of the injustices endured by indigenous people, minorities, women, children, the differently abled, the silenced, and the ignored is the first step on the pilgrimage towards reconciliation and unity.

I would like to end this reflection, if I may, by paying tribute to a hero of mine, someone whom I consider to be a holy man and who has graced this assembly not only with his presence but with his wisdom and love: The Most Reverend Winston Halapua, archbishop emeritus. I am thankful that I was a student at the seminary during the time Archbishop Winston spent as the principal of one of the colleges, and so I was lucky enough to regularly encounter him. These moments of contact, however, were fleeting; a gentle smile as we passed each other between classes, an offer to clear away plates at a shared lunch, and small words exchanged as we waited for a church service

to begin. No deep conversation, no back and forth, just meaningless chit-chat. Or so I thought.

As a first-year student at theological college, I was on the extreme opposite end of the spectrum to the archbishop. I was a postulant for holy orders; he was a bishop. I was a student; he was a principal. I was in my early twenties; he was an elder. I was insignificant, and this man was one of the most significant people not only in the college, but our entire church. I meant nothing to him. Or so I thought. And then one day, as the college made its annual pilgrimage to some far-off place, Archbishop Winston and I had occasion to share a much longer time with one another, a three-hour car ride, in fact. During this drive, Archbishop Winston asked how my studies were going; somehow, he knew I was enrolled at Auckland University. He then asked how my wife's work was going; somehow, he knew she had recently begun a new job. And then he asked after my sister; somehow, he knew she had recently been diagnosed with cancer.

Up until this point, I had assumed the smiles between classes, the clearing away of lunch trays, and the words exchanged before prayer were of little significance and perhaps even meaningless. It wasn't until after that car ride that I realized that every moment the archbishop encountered me, he wasn't just noticing me; he was seeing me. He wasn't just hearing me; he was listening. He wasn't just in the same space as me; he was lovingly present.

This encounter with Archbishop Winston has been foundational to my understanding of who and what we are called to be as people who would dare follow the Christ, and, indeed, as people who would allow ourselves to be moved by the love of Christ towards reconciliation and unity.

That is the power of *Tena Koe*; it transforms noticing into seeing, hearing into listening, and love into action.

My sacred siblings of the 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches, the time has come for us to say with renewed vigour *Tena Koe* to one another, to acknowledge each other's humanity and commit to ensuring dignity is maintained. To draw each other into the sacred embrace of the *hongī* and tell one another WE SEE YOU! And then, once we have said this to each other, to go out and live our lives as if it is true.

Now would you please turn to the person sitting next to you and say: *Tena Koe*, I See You!

Deliberating Together



Thematic Plenaries

The assembly theme—Christ’s love moves the world to reconciliation and unity—was woven through the assembly in five thematic plenaries. Each plenary was inspired by a biblical story of Christ’s compassion and was rooted in the experience of the churches, the challenges of the world, and the compassionate love of Christ. They continued the biblical reflection that began each day in morning prayer and stimulating discussion in the home groups on growing together in discipleship.

Thematic Plenary 1: The Purpose of God’s Love in Christ for the Whole Creation—Reconciliation and Unity

To the sounds of nature reverberating through the plenary hall’s speaker system, the assembly’s first thematic plenary opened on 1 September, the first day of the Season of Creation.

After a video message from the Ecumenical Patriarch, Bartholomew I, and a message from Pope Francis, read by Cardinal Kurt Koch, prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity, the moderator of the WCC central committee, Dr Agnes Abuom, delegate of the Anglican Church of Kenya, walked onto the stage to introduce the plenary.

An image of a cedar tree being hugged by children from different parts of the world was displayed on the main screen. Cedar trees are strong and resilient and last for centuries, “reminding us of the bonds of our life over generations,” said Abuom, while lamenting that, contrary to God’s covenant, humans are exploiting and destroying God’s creation.

Two younger delegates, Mr Bjorn Warde (Presbyterian Church of Trinidad and Tobago) and Ms Julia Rensberg (Church of Sweden) were invited onto the stage to reflect on the assembly theme and keynote speakers from their perspectives and context.

H.E. Elder Metropolitan Emmanuel of Chalcedon, leader of the delegation of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, then offered reflections on protecting the environment as an icon of God’s love and of commitment to unity in Christ. Environmental care and climate change speak to the sanctity of life, justice, and the responsibility of human beings to be good stewards of a world in crisis.

“The word ‘crisis’ in Greek means ‘judgment,’” he said. “It is true that these issues point to the consequences of our global systems of consumption, and if we do not act now from a place of humble and sober judgement, we will be brought to account.”

In discussion after Metropolitan Emmanuel's address, Warde noted how Caribbean people feel part of creation, "and because of that, we feel the responsibility of taking care of creation."

Environmental degradation, he continued, is a result of our own recklessness, and as a church we try to counter that by compelling change through uniting and being advocates for all of creation.

Rensberg, a representative of the Sami Council within the Swedish church, said: "In my context, as Indigenous, our existence is relying on the whole creation of Mother Earth. We are not divided from nature, she is not ours, but she is ours to protect. The Day of Creation is a reminder of Mother Earth."

The second speaker, H.E. Archbishop Angaelos, a delegate of the Coptic Orthodox Church, spoke about reconciliation and unity in the Middle East. He compared the roots of a tree to the roots of the church. "Every part of a tree has importance and effectiveness," he said. "The stronger the roots, the more that each and every part of that tree can express its effectiveness, purpose, and function."

At the close of the plenary, the Lord mayor of Karlsruhe, Dr Frank Mentrup, received the cedar tree as a gift from the moderator, Warde, and Rensberg. He was invited to plant it in a suitable place in Karlsruhe as a reminder of God's compassionate love for all humanity and the whole creation.

Watch online: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t8s7PmX4-js>

Thematic Plenary 2: Europe

Opening the plenary, which focused on the challenges facing Europe, the WCC president from Europe, Archbishop Emeritus Anders Wejryd (Church of Sweden), recalled that the gathering in Karlsruhe was the first WCC assembly on the European Continent since 1968. The plenary, he said, was inspired by Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan, where Christ's compassionate love draws us to our neighbour across boundaries and borders.

"Contemporary Europe faces huge challenges with global consequences," he said, and the situation in Ukraine was dramatically affecting peace and security on the continent, leading to a dramatic increase in refugees and global humanitarian crises.

Describing the situation in Ukraine as a decisive challenge to the church's witness, he invited four representatives from Ukraine to speak to the assembly.

Archbishop Yevstratiy of Chernihiv and Nizhyn from the Orthodox Church of Ukraine thanked the leadership of the WCC for its public support, including its appeals to the Russian Patriarch Kirill. "No one has the right to bless aggression, no one has the right to justify war crimes and acts of genocide," he said.

"For more than three centuries, the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union have tried to erase the uniqueness of Ukrainian people," he said, "But we are successfully fighting for our freedom, for our independent future."

Prof. Sergii Bortnyk from the Ukrainian Orthodox Church shared how his church is helping in the situation: “Many faithful have become volunteers. Our church receives and distributes different kinds of humanitarian help—especially from the neighbour countries and from our sister churches.”

After Bortnyk’s contribution, Roman Sigov (Orthodox Church of Ukraine), a former student at the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey, and Ivana Elena, from the UOC and a journalist, were invited to engage in a question and answer session and spoke of the situation of Ukraine and how the world can help.

“War is scary. There is pain, despair, horror,” said Elena. “The life of all Ukrainians has been divided into before and after.”

Sigov said that as he was talking in Karlsruhe, “A Ukrainian Christian is dying for me, for all of us, to protect our freedom, our home, and we need help to defend ourselves.”

Following the words from the representatives from Ukraine, the assembly addressed the humanitarian response to war, refugees, and migration in Europe.

Dr Jørgen Skov Sørensen, general secretary of the Conference of European Churches, spoke of how, with a global food crisis, global inflation, and a global fuel deficit, Ukraine is a concern not only for Europe but for the world.

“As I stand here, watching you as representatives from our worldwide fellowship, I encourage you to see our gathering as a concrete response to the war-inflicted suffering we witness in Europe today, indeed, to the war-inflicted suffering we see all over the world as we speak.”

Rev. Dr Dagmar Pruin, president of Bread for the World (Germany), shared how the war in Ukraine had global consequences. “There are not only victims in Ukraine,” she said. “The international consequences of this war are also plunging millions of millions of people into enormous need.” This included food shortages and rising prices, rising energy costs, runaway inflation, and new geopolitical upheavals, which were affecting those already living in precarious circumstances.

Wejryd then invited three representatives of European churches—the Very Rev. Archimandrite Iakovos Andriopoulos (delegate of the Church of Greece), Mr Simone de Giuseppe (delegate of the Evangelical Baptist Union of Italy), and Ms Annika Matthews (delegate of the Church of England)—to discuss migration in Europe.

While there had been a very generous response to refugees fleeing from Ukraine, said Wejryd, migrants from Asia and Africa are often much less welcome in Europe.

Matthews urged churches needed to continue to put pressure on governments to ensure that racism does not play a part in the decisions made on who can enter a country or not. The mission of the churches, said de Giuseppe, is to be with people on the margins and the Mediterranean Sea is one of these marginal and marginalized places. From a Greek perspective,

said Andriopoulos, churches have a unique opportunity since they are not government institutions and don't need people's tax IDs or passports to serve them.

Watch online: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Yp8ji2xrns>

Thematic Plenary 3: Affirming Wholeness of Life

To the sound of a conch, youth actors entered the stage and formed the image of a tree. Slowly, they dragged their feet along the floor and stomped, imitating the sound of a tree being cut. As the sound got stronger, the tree began to bend towards the side and fell, signalling humanity's failure to care for the environment.

Following the dramatic presentation, two Pacific youths unrolled mats to signify the start of the Talanoa, an exercise of dialogue from Fiji and across the Pacific.

The moderator, the Rev. Tara Tautari (delegate of the Methodist Church of New Zealand), introduced the Talanoa as an opportunity for open discussion, reflecting a process of inclusivity, participation, and cooperation.

Throughout the Talanoa, the Oikoumene Pasifika cultural ensemble offered interludes of music and movement, encouraging people to join the "dance of life."

Iemaima Vaai, an Indigenous Person (Pacific Conference of Churches) described the whole of life as a process of transformation and changing the story, "a story that is ours, not someone else's." In Samoa, she said, "We say '*le'o le fale, a'o le anofale*,' meaning it is not the house itself but the spirituality of the home that makes it a household for all."

Rudelmar Bueno de Faria, general secretary of the ACT Alliance, challenged participants to unmask the structural causes of economic, social, and ecological injustices. "As faith actors we need to stand in solidarity with all those groups that are marginalized and sometimes marginalized by ourselves," he said.

A total conversion of our hearts, heads, and hands must be the foundation of personal, communal, societal, and institutional change, according to Ruth Mathen, a delegate of Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church. "How we live must be in accordance with what we believe and how we pray," she said.

Jocabed Solano (Memoria Indigena), an Indigenous woman from Panama, shared her dream of a land where all can live fully and abundantly. "I dream of a world where the economy is based on a relationship of respect and harmony towards the land," she said. "I dream of a church that plays its role of light in the world and walks in defence of life and harmony." She went on to express her hope for a church that denounces evil and death towards Indigenous Peoples and confesses and repents for its complicity in the tragedy of colonialism that took place yesterday and still takes place today.

Rev. Canon Gideon Byamugisha, an Anglican priest from Uganda and co-founder of the International Network of Religious Leaders Living with or

Personally Affected by HIV and AIDS, addressed the issue of affirming the wholeness of life concerning humanity and creation from a health perspective. He proposed ways that the entire creation could become a vehicle of health and peace, security, and justice, beginning with personal introspection and repentance for greed and self-centeredness, then moving toward creating spiritual environments, moral economies, and political contexts.

As the moderator closed the Talanoa, the mat in the middle of the stage was rolled up, and Oikoumene Pasifika joined the panellists on stage for a final dance in which those on stage moved into the aisles and encouraged assembly participants to sing, dance, and move for a more just and sustainable planet.

Watch online: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GHNvwhzwhz8>

Thematic Plenary 4: Affirming Justice and Human Dignity

The plenary opened with a display on stage of movement and dance. A dancing woman pulled in a man in a wheelchair, and he pulled in the other performers against the background of a fishing village. Something unusual seemed to be happening among the villagers; some people were using their smartphones to capture the action, and others seated on overturned canoes or low stools were talking animatedly.

Posters around the stage reflected both ancient and modern scenes of women and girls talking and working, some in wheelchairs or with crutches. A television correspondent was interviewing participants about what had happened, a portrayal of the Bible story in which Jesus heals the daughter of a Canaanite (Phoenician) woman (Matt. 15:21-28), a reminder that no one can be rendered “disposable” or inferior, to justify depriving them of their rights and dignity.

Moderated by Rev. Dr Henriette Hutabarat-Lebang, a delegate from the Toraja Church (Indonesia), the plenary focussed on the intersection of human dignity and justice through the lens of gender, disability, race, and youth. This plenary focused on how the affirmation of justice and human dignity requires a radical impatience with practices that foster the sin of systematized, structural inequality and abuse.

Adele Halliday, an assembly guest from the United Church of Canada and moderator of the WCC Advisory Group on Overcoming Racism, Discrimination, and Xenophobia, challenged churches to work with communities seeking to heal from post-traumatic slave syndrome and confront how churches had benefited from imperial profits from enslavement. They also needed to wrestle “authentically and faithfully” with the impact of intergenerational trauma from the effects of residential schools when Indigenous children were taken from their communities.

She said many churches have been complicit and complacent, “ignoring or minimizing the voices of Indigenous or racialized peoples,” and needed to work toward human dignity for all.

Maria Mountraki, a delegate from the Orthodox Church of Finland and member of the WCC Commission on Young People in the Ecumenical Movement, spoke of her experience of women and young people not feeling they had space within their churches.

“We, the people, church leaders and fellow humans—can and are able to change the structures,” she said. “It is not for someone else; it is for us to do it.”

Samson Waweru Njoki, an advisor to the assembly from the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria and All Africa in Kenya, urged churches and all Christians to address the structures that neglect and discriminate against people with disabilities.

“We need more practical ways of dealing with the context of disability,” Njoki said, inviting participants “to think about some of the things we can do as a church, as an ecumenical movement, as an assembly, to make the World Council of Churches more inclusive.”

The challenge, according to Rev. Dora Arce Valentin, a delegate from the Reformed-Presbyterian Church in Cuba, “is to continue fighting for justice . . . to bravely burst into those comfort places . . . and demand healing for victims.”

The plenary concluded by asking whether transformation and reconciliation are truly possible. “I believe it is possible,” said Halliday, noting that true reconciliation takes time and demands change. “For there to be true transformation and reconciliation, we as churches cannot just talk about being different; we need to be different.”

Watch online: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5JNGfoBUYgI>

Thematic Plenary 5: Christian Unity and the Churches’ Common Witness

Held on 7 September 2022, this plenary offered an occasion to reflect on what Christian unity means today and on new horizons for the mission of the church. It challenged the churches to examine the quality of their companionship and togetherness on their common journey in Christ. The moderator, Bishop Prof. Dr Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, delegate of the Evangelical Church in Germany, opened the plenary and welcomed the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Most Rev. and Rt. Hon. Justin Welby, to address the assembly.

In his address, Welby described how Christians, in a time of world crisis, more significant today than perhaps ever before, are called to be a community of peace. He said the time of ecumenical winter and the habits of division, of living separately, is past. New life will come with obedience and the choice of Christians taking risks in ecumenism.

A panel discussion on unity and mission followed. H.E. Metropolitan Job of Psidia (delegate of the Ecumenical Patriarchate) spoke of the need for reconciliation between churches, with the whole of humanity, and with those

who are excluded and marginalized. Rev. Canon Dr Rosemary Muthoni Mbogo (delegate of the Anglican Church of Kenya) described ecumenism as an open space to listen, understand, and accept each other. She spoke of the impact of strengthening the WCC fellowship and its cooperation with the Catholic Church and Pentecostal churches in areas such as theological reflection, solidarity in service, national advocacy, and humanitarian intervention.

H. E. Bishop Brian Farrell (Roman Catholic Church), secretary of the Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity, spoke about the need for churches to face their differences, the ones that are compatible and the ones that have still to be overcome because they stand in the way of fuller communion. Rev. Prof. Dr Jaqueline Grey (Pentecostal World Fellowship) recounted Pentecostal involvement in the ecumenical movement and how it requires deliberate engagement to be brought together by Christ's love and to truly love one another, not just to tolerate one another.

The Rev. Prof. Dr Jooseop Keum, general secretary of the Council for World Mission, noting a yearning for transforming discipleship that can bring reconciliation and healing, spoke of the need to be the hope of the world as agents of change, witnessing together to the power of God's love.

Following a video depicting key moments of unity and mission in the fellowship, and the progress in relationships with the Roman Catholic Church, Pentecostals, and other ecumenical partners, the panellists were joined by Lani Mireya Anaya Jiménez (Methodist Church of Mexico) and Bran Friesen (World Student Christian Federation) to reflect on challenges and opportunities for unity and mission in years to come. Anaya Jiménez challenged the assembly to better engage youth in intergenerational ecumenism and unity. Friesen spoke of the ongoing work of Indigenous reconciliation in Canada and around the world and her vision for what a future reconciliation would look like.

The moderator thanked panellists for their reflections and said the ecumenical movement was looking towards the next landmark, the 1700th anniversary of the Nicene Creed and the Council of Nicaea in 2025. Following a dance performance by a youth group from the Pacific, the logo for Nicaea 2025 was presented and projected onto the stage.

Watch online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nLUnu2eN2Xo_

Ecumenical Conversations

Ecumenical conversations have become a feature of World Council of Churches assemblies since the 9th Assembly in Porto Alegre, engaging assembly participants in sustained, in-depth dialogue on critical issues that affect the church's unity, mission, and witness at the time.

The results of these conversations help guide the work of the WCC and future ecumenical cooperation on issues that require a common response by the churches.

There were 23 ecumenical conversations at the 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches held in Karlsruhe, Germany, in 2022. Each conversation focused on a unique topic and was organized around four sessions to allow for a sustained dialogue. Participants were asked to choose one conversation in advance and to commit to being present for all four sessions.

Moderated by an assembly delegate and supported by a leadership team, these conversations followed consensus procedures and used methodologies that informed, engaged, and promoted dialogue.

The success of each conversation depended on genuine and committed encounter among participants. Although challenging at times, the conversations served the process of spiritual discernment and provided a better understanding of how people experience the world and how churches can promote justice, peace, reconciliation, and unity by working together.

All ecumenical conversations were asked to prepare a short narrative report including ecumenical affirmations and challenges to stimulate further conversations, policy discussions, and action by the churches, ecumenical partners, and the WCC. These reports were compiled in a publication, available online, and presented to the WCC central committee at its first full meeting in June 2023.

Download publication: <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/publications/report-on-the-ecumenical-conversations-at-the-wcc-11th-assembly>

List of Conversations

EC 1 Mission Reimagined: Transforming Disciples Challenging Empire

EC 2 Dreaming a New Future: a Call from the Margins

EC 3 Walking Together Hand in Hand: Evangelism and Justice—Exploring Theology and Practice for Mission and Evangelism in an Unjust World

EC 4 The Gift of Being: A Church of All and For All—Inclusion and Full Participation of Persons with Disabilities in Ministry and Mission

EC 5 Prayer in Creation

EC 6 Broadening the Dialogue on the Church

EC 7 Creation Justice Now! Climate Action and Water for Life

EC 8 Who Lives, Who Dies, Who Cares?: The Churches' Role in Health and Healing Today

EC 9 Economy of Life in a Time of Inequality, Persistent Hunger, Climate Change, and the 4th Industrial Revolution

EC 10 WCC and ACT Alliance: Ecumenical Diakonia—Local and Global Faith Actors Building Back Better

EC 11 Conversations on the Pilgrim Way: Invitation to Journey Together on Matters of Human Sexuality.

EC 12 Trends and Emerging Issues in a Rapidly Changing World

EC 13 Towards a Just Peace in the Middle East

EC 14 Ecumenical Call to Just Peace: Holistic Approaches to Peacebuilding

EC 15 Freedom of Religion or Belief: The Church and Others in the Face of Religious Discrimination and Oppression

EC 16 Together toward Racial Justice: Confronting and Dismantling the Enduring Legacy of Slavery and Colonialism in a Time of Increasing Populism and Xenophobia

EC 17 Exile, Exodus, and Hospitality: Human Mobility, Displacement and the Public Role and Witness of the Church

EC 18 Interreligious Dialogue and Solidarity

EC 19 Theological Education—Why Its Ecumenicity Is Essential

EC 20 Minding the Gaps: A Gender Justice Approach to Reconciliation and Unity

EC 21 Christian Ethics and Human Rights

EC 22 Churches and Moral Discernment: Facilitating Dialogue to Build Koinonia

EC 23 Inspired by the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace—Moving Together by the Love of Christ

Reviewing the Work of the World Council of Churches



Pilgrims on the Path of Peace: The Journey of the WCC from Busan to Karlsruhe

For each assembly, the central committee submits an accountability report. It describes WCC activities between assemblies.

Pilgrims on the Path of Peace: The Journey of the WCC from Busan to Karlsruhe is the accountability report of the central committee to the WCC 11th Assembly, describing and offering an assessment of the activities of the WCC, since the 10th Assembly, in Busan, Republic of Korea, in late 2013.

The report is a narrative of a fellowship of churches committed to moving together on a Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace, conveying something of the energy, excitement, ambition, and initiative that have marked the WCC's journey since Busan. It aimed to assist assembly delegates in understanding the council's journey in this period, help them actively participate in the assembly, and share the ecumenical vision reflected in the WCC's activities with member churches, partners, and the wider fellowship.

The Process

Developing this report was a long journey, with preliminary work with programme staff done as early as 2018. A draft framework was presented to the executive committee in May 2019 and adapted after feedback. Various drafts were presented to the executive committee in November 2019, November 2020, and May 2021. The plan was that a revised version would be presented to the central committee in 2020 for approval, but this was not possible due to the COVID-19 epidemic.

Following the meeting of the executive committee in November 2020, the framework of the report was adjusted to reflect the realities of the epidemic and the subsequent delay of the assembly:

- to reflect activities of 2020 and the first half of 2021
- to provide a historical record of the changes COVID-19 imposed on the work of the WCC and the fellowship
- to record the challenges of the pandemic, but also the inspirational and hopeful adaptive responses to these challenges

A further draft was presented to and approved by the central committee in June 2021 and, after minor edits, to the executive committee in November 2021.

It was published as a text document in February 2022; an illustrated version was available in August 2022.

Structure of the Report

Within the framework of the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace, the council's work, initiatives, and achievements have been organized around five strategic objectives formulated after the assembly in Busan. The report follows this framework:

- Strengthening the Fellowship
- Witnessing Together
- Encouraging Spirituality, Reflection and Ecumenical Formation
- Building Trust and Understanding
- Inspiring and Innovative Communication

Download the Report

The two versions of the report are available for download in English, Spanish, French, and German.

Pilgrims on the Path of Peace: The Journey of the WCC from Busan to Karlsruhe (Unillustrated):

<https://www.oikoumene.org/publications/pilgrims-on-the-path-of-peace%20text>.

Pilgrims on the Path of Peace: The Journey of the WCC from Busan to Karlsruhe (Illustrated):

<https://www.oikoumene.org/publications/pilgrims-on-the-path-of-peace>.

Witnessing Together to Christ's Compassionate Love: Report of the Moderator of the Central Committee

Dr Agnes Abuom

A Living Image of One Humanity

1. Dear sisters and brothers, dear friends,
What a great joy to see you all here in Karlsruhe in Germany:
 - Delegates and leaders of our member churches
 - Representatives of churches, ecumenical partners
 - Leaders of other faith communities working together with the World Council of Churches (WCC) for the unity of humanity
 - Assembly participants and guests—the household of God's people, young and old, from all continents of the earth
2. You are a living image of all humankind in all its diversity. You bring with you stories of people struggling for justice and peace and of communities working for reconciliation and unity. I am looking forward to listening to these stories of transformation and hope. I am eager to hear how Christ's compassionate love has motivated you and encouraged you. And together with you I will every day celebrate the signs that Christ's love really moves the world to reconciliation and unity.
3. We know, however, that cheap reconciliation and superficial unity are not enough. We need to confront ourselves with the world as it is, broken and marked by human sin. You bring with you the pain and the trauma of people suffering from violence and war. You carry the burden of communities divided by hate speech, racism, and ethnic tensions. Your villages and cities, forests like the Amazon rainforest, fields and rivers, are deeply affected by the climate emergency and economic exploitation. There is hardly a family that has not been hit by the COVID-19 pandemic.
4. Living together in this world, we are the World Council of Churches (WCC) on the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace: a pilgrimage whose inclusivity has been secured by the World Council of Churches.

5. We have come to Karlsruhe as pilgrims. The assembly is the place where we can share our hopes and anxieties, accompany and support each other, set new directions for our journey, and witness together to the love of the triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Why Are We Gathered Here?

6. Why are we gathered here in Karlsruhe on this station of our pilgrimage? Let me offer you four reasons. First, we are gathered here because we are disciples of Jesus of Nazareth. As disciples of Jesus the Christ, who announced good news to the poor, we firmly believe that his compassion for those who are on the margins must be lived out and proclaimed in a world increasingly marked by individualism and indifference towards those who are vulnerable, be they God's creation or our neighbours. It is the situation of those who are poor and marginalized that shows the quality of relationships in any single community or even entire societies. Their suffering exposes the lack of mutual care and love for the neighbour, and points to the urgent need for justice, peace, reconciliation, and unity. In this sense, in our times, the discipleship of Jesus Christ is countercultural.

7. Second, we are here because we belong to different communions of the disciples of Christ, which are not all in full communion with each other. If we are not in full communion as churches, we do not bear a clear witness to the biblical promise of God's reign: the end of all pain, the advent of peace, and the reconciliation and unity of all things in the one who overcame the powers of destruction and death. We must repent and manifest everywhere in the world, in the power of the Spirit, the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church that we confess in the Creed. The unity statement of this assembly will be an important step forward in that direction.

8. Third, we are gathered here because we believe that human beings, regardless of their gender and the colour of their skin, are created in the image of God and have equal dignity. We are here because we believe that the living Christ whom we follow is not only the head of the church but also the head of the new creation. Because we believe so, we are called to work hand in hand with people of other faiths or of no religious faith who are equally committed to a politics of radical compassion for the end of every single war or conflict, for greater economic justice, for the healing of creation, and for the well-being of future generations.

9. And fourth, we are gathered to conduct the business of the World Council of Churches: namely, to meditate, to reflect, and to evaluate our mandate and work of the period since the WCC's 10th Assembly in Busan. Through prayer,

Bible study, analysis of current issues, reflections, and discussions, the assembly will provide guidance on the future work, witness, and strategic positioning of the World Council of Churches.

10. Do you agree with me? Then let us keep these four reasons always in mind during the coming days as the shared basis of our deliberations. Let us be clear: This, the WCC's 11th Assembly, is more than the highest decision-making body of the WCC and the most representative gathering of Christians in the world. At its best, the assembly is a spiritual celebration of the power of God's love to renew our minds and hearts so that we may become a countercultural force driven by solidarity with the most vulnerable people and God's creation.

11. In other words, the assembly as a global gathering is a moment, a space—to celebrate, pray, meditate, reflect, and work to ensure that the soul, heart, and spirit of the fellowship and of humanity is kept alive, ignited, and renewed, and not lost in the midst of the political or socio-economic injustices of the season. Spiritual celebration and celebration of life, sharing our joys and pains at this assembly, is of utmost importance as we emerge from a period of imposed isolation because of the COVID-19 pandemic for nearly three years. Even more tragic is the demise of our loved ones whose memory we cherish. You agree with me that it is by God's grace that we are here alive to continue the pilgrimage! Our task is to continue the pilgrimage, in God's grace.

12. So many young people are anxiously struggling for life in justice and peace, and for the future of our planet. They go onto the streets here in Germany and in many other parts of world to voice their fears about the limited time left to save the planet, among other things. I beg you to listen carefully to the youth among us, so that we do not disappoint and fail them, but are rather motivated and encouraged by their energy and commitment. They are the generation that is experiencing the first catastrophes of the climate crisis and the last generation that can take action to stop global warming.

13. We are blessed that we could have the Ecumenical Youth Gathering with around 400 young people which included a youth pre-assembly right before the assembly. This was really a great achievement that will show its fruits during and after the assembly with a strengthened ecumenical youth network. There are about 200 students of the Global Ecumenical Theological Institute (GETI) among us, and 150 stewards and 50 young communicators are supporting us. Youth are active participants, and we could not run this assembly without these motivated and highly dedicated young people. Thank you all!

Pilgrims on the Path of Peace

14. In this spirit, I turn now to the accountability report of the central committee, *Pilgrims on the Path of Peace: The Journey of the WCC from Busan to Karlsruhe*. You have all received it. Please read it carefully. I hope that this document conveys something of the excitement and energy of these years, of the churches learning more about regional contexts and local concerns through Pilgrim Team Visits (PTVs), of the strong partnerships forged to collaborate for climate justice, of reflecting on the promising ecumenical convergence captured in the Faith and Order text *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*.

15. Among other concerns, the report highlights also the engagements of the churches in the Colombian peace process and the racial reckoning in the United States; the closer ties with the Roman Catholic Church as well as with the World Evangelical Alliance; the challenging vision of a transforming discipleship; and the innovative ways in which the WCC and its fellowship have stayed together in mission and ministry through the COVID-19 pandemic.

16. This document is a precious resource for our deliberations. I will not summarize it now. I will rather share with you what I have experienced and learned on the pilgrimage from Busan to Karlsruhe. I will speak about the gifts that were shared, the wounds I saw, and the spiritual strength and power for transformative action I have witnessed.

A Timely Theme

17. Let me begin with our assembly theme that guides and inspires our reflections: “Christ’s love moves the world to reconciliation and unity.” Questions were raised at the beginning of our common journey to Karlsruhe if *love* is not a word that is used so much, so widely, and in so many different senses that it ends up saying little because it says too much. However, we soon realized that it does make sense to speak of love and more precisely of *Christ’s love* in today’s world. Why? Basically, for two reasons:

18. First, because an assembly theme is always about Christian mission, witness, and unity in prophetic dialogue with the spirit of a certain time. The first WCC assembly I was privileged to participate in was the 1975 assembly in Nairobi in my country, Kenya. Its theme, “Jesus Christ frees and unites,” spoke to the struggles for liberation and an end to colonialism in the continent of Africa and in other regions of the global South. When today, hate speech is normalized through social media networks; when xenophobia and racism are nurtured by national populisms and politics of fear; when the poor face the consequences of the climate catastrophe and exploitation driven by the

lifestyles of a few who are rich, does it make sense to call all Christians and churches to re-envision prophetically their apostolate, their mission, witness, and unity in relation to Christ's compassionate love? If you need an answer, then please read each morning the Bible study for the day in the book *When He Saw the Crowds*.

19. Second, because meditating on Christ's love will bring "radicality" to the assembly's reflections in prophetic dialogue with the spirit of our time. Stories of Christ's compassion and love for those at the margins of society inspire morning prayers, thematic plenaries, and home group discussions. Jesus' acts of compassion led to his passion on the cross. The disciples' memory of Jesus' compassion also led Saint Paul to write to Christians in Corinth that Christ's love urged them to engage in the ministry of reconciliation, that Christ's love moved them and the world to reconciliation and unity (2 Cor. 5:14–19).

20. This strong commitment to unity and our readiness to search for a common mind in the power of the Holy Spirit marks our deliberations according to consensus procedures. We have seen how well the consensus mode of decision making, buttressed by our spiritual life, works for the WCC, even under difficult conditions, on our way from Busan to Karlsruhe—not least in our last central committee meeting where with Rev. Prof. Dr Jerry Pillay, we were able to elect a new general secretary, and to agree on statements even concerning such difficult issues as the situation in Israel and Palestine and the war in Ukraine.

21. I trust that the assembly theme, together with the consensus procedures and our shared commitment to go forward together in unity, will also help us to address in constructive ways tensions and difficulties that divide humankind today.

The Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace—A Timely Initiative

22. When the WCC's 10th Assembly convened in 2013 in Busan, the churches called each other and all people of good will to embark on a Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace and to engage in transformative action. We are bringing the harvest of this more than eight-year-long journey to Karlsruhe to discuss the next steps we need to take in our common witness of Christ's love.

23. The invitation of the Busan assembly to join a Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace offered a new metaphor under which Christian churches everywhere could see their work for justice and peace—new or existing—as part of a larger quest, uniting churches everywhere in praying, walking, and working toward God's coming reign of justice and peace. The pilgrimage presented not a new

programme or initiative as such, but offered instead a dynamic framework for the churches' life and work, understood as a sacred journey of openness, encounter, learning, and collaboration toward the God of life and for a world of peace and justice. There are three experiences I would like to highlight here:

24. First, the Pilgrimage has shown to us that remaining doctrinal and ethical disagreements, important as they are, should not stand in the way of deepening our collaboration and fellowship given in Christ. We owe to present and future generations and all creation that we address the crises of life we are facing by walking together on the way of justice and peace, witnessing to Christ's compassionate love.

25. Second, the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace offered a new framework to integrate local, national, regional, and global levels of the ecumenical movement with a shared focus on the poorest and most marginalized people in so many places of the world. It has been a very moving experience during our Pilgrim Team Visits to listen to women standing up against violence and male misuse of power in far too many countries of this world. They showed amazing strength, sharing with us stories of their courageous struggle for justice and peace, for instance in Colombia and South Sudan. Turning to the most vulnerable people in our communities, I was struck by their resilience, mutual solidarity, and spiritual strength in celebrating life against all odds. Deeply rooted in their faith in God as the giver of life, in Christ as brother and companion on the way, and in the power of the Holy Spirit who sustains them day by day, they gave me far more than I could have ever expected. They gave me hope that change is possible and courage to trust Christ's unfailing love in the midst of violence, destruction, and death.

26. And third, the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace was conducive to embracing and even accelerating the change that was required by the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic was pushing the WCC to implement new ways of working together, embracing and utilizing new methodologies and technologies. Staff adjusted rather quickly and kept communication and programme delivery at a high level through the intensive use of electronic media. It was just amazing what we could achieve, for instance, through hybrid Pilgrim Team Visits to Indigenous Peoples and to communities of people of African descent in North America. This helped us to understand their struggles against racism, colonial patterns of oppression, and the ongoing misuse of bodies and minds.

27. I am convinced that the ecumenical movement as a whole will benefit from the approach of the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace. I saw how the spirituality of communities was unleashed and energized when the global community of pilgrims encountered their sisters and brothers in the various different local

contexts and vice versa. In all places it was not at all difficult to explore the given context using the three dimensions of the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace: celebrating the gifts, visiting the wounds, and transforming the injustices.

28. We experienced this

- in Israel and Palestine, mourning together in front of the separation wall and supporting farmers and communities in their quest for water justice;
- in Nigeria and other places in Africa, listening to women and leaders engaging in interfaith dialogue facing communal violence;
- in Colombia, visiting communities that carry the scars of decades of civil war and are struggling for peace and access to land;
- in India, encountering Dalits in their struggle for equal rights and human dignity;
- among Koreans yearning for peace and reconciliation in their divided country, and among migrants and refugees in Bangladesh, Myanmar, and Thailand, and among the struggles of Indigenous People in West Papua and the Philippines;
- in Fiji, meeting communities that were forced to resettle because of rising sea levels or were affected by environmentally destructive mining practices;
- encountering Indigenous Peoples reclaiming their lands and identities in North America and joining hands in the struggle for reparations for the consequences of colonialism and slavery with their sisters and brothers of African descent;
- and finally, this year, listening to the Sami people in northern Europe, encountering migrants and refugees in Italy, and visiting Armenia and Ukraine.

Affirming Life and Human Dignity

29. We began the journey of the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace concentrating on four systemic issues affecting people all over the world. These were:

- The climate crisis and care for creation
- Economic injustice and the struggle for an economy of life
- Violence and wars and the work for just peace through peacebuilding and reconciliation
- Racism, ethnic pride, and oppression of women and the affirmation of human dignity

30. We used these four lenses to understand and interpret the struggles of people today, only to learn that they are highly interconnected and affect people's lives as a whole. When people started speaking about their wounds and what needs to be done to change the situation, their stories centred on five recurrent themes:

- Truth and trauma
- Land and displacement
- Gender justice
- Racism
- Health and healing

31. They need to be addressed by the WCC as transversals, cross-cutting issues that open up the search for alternatives to the systemic realities of oppression, exploitation, and destruction of the basis of life.

32. Transformative discipleship then requires the affirmation of life and human dignity. Let us say this with confidence and hope and let us take the necessary decisions moving us in this direction so that the ecumenical movement and the WCC will continue to flourish in the future. Let us do this with courage and energy.

33. We are singing in our prayers the wonderful song of Per Harling: "Christ's love moves the world to reconciliation and unity. In Christ's love, there is no fear. The Spirit empowers us to be bold and free!"

34. No fear, dear friends, esteemed sisters and brothers in Jesus Christ! In Christ's love, we are free! We can and we must be bold and prophetic, standing up for justice and peace. To proclaim Christ's love and to struggle for human dignity and the life of creation is our call and our mission in this world.

35. Let Christ's love move us! In Christ's love lies the key to our unity! Let us continue walking, praying, and working together as pilgrims on the way of justice and peace with the purpose of healing, reconciliation, and unity for all. These words have deep meaning and very practical consequences in the context of our recent experience of the COVID-19 pandemic, the climate catastrophe, and violence and war in Ukraine, Ethiopia, and far too many other places. Our hearts must be wide. Our support and solidarity must be with all people who suffer. This is costly discipleship. When he saw the crowds, Christ had compassion for them because they were harassed and helpless.

36. "Christ's love moves the world to reconciliation and unity. In Christ's love there is no fear. The Spirit empowers us to be bold and free!" May this song

inspire us in the coming days and the days to come when we return home and share our stories about the assembly.

Gratitude for the Achievements of the Central Committee and for Companions on the Pilgrimage

37. Let me conclude now with personal remarks as the moderator of the outgoing central committee of the World Council of Churches. I take this opportunity on your behalf to wholeheartedly thank all those churches and communities in Germany who have invited us to Karlsruhe and are hosting us in very generous ways. In addition, may I, on your behalf, express our deep gratitude to the German government for their gracious facilitation of this assembly. This gesture makes it possible to secure full participation by member churches.

38. The work of the WCC and, for that matter, the assembly, is made possible by the invaluable and incredible contributions of many committed actors. To begin with, I sincerely wish to thank our member churches and, by extension, the members of the central committee for their resilience during the tragic period of the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes institutional compliance with their fiduciary role as well as their fervent prayers for the WCC and the ecumenical movement at large.

39. I am also grateful to our former general secretary, the Rt Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit, currently serving as the presiding bishop of the Church of Norway. As general secretary, he faithfully delivered the mandate given to him, not least the 10th Assembly call to women and men of good will and faith to move together on the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace.

40. Our present acting general secretary, the Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca, has walked and continues to walk in these footsteps while adapting to the new challenges.

41. My appreciation also goes to the members of the Leadership of the Central Committee and the executive committee for the careful navigation of their governance roles. Let me ask you to always remember with gratitude the late Metropolitan Gennadios of Sassima, who was essential in the assembly preparations throughout. He never tired of calling us to witness to the love of Christ and the unity already given us in Christ.

42. As the central committee, we held many meetings made possible by the team spirit and work, and the improved art of listening to each other. Christian world communions, regional ecumenical organizations, ecumenical partners,

and specialized ministries continued to provide essential accompaniment to the WCC and member churches in ways that affirm the compassionate love of Christ.

43. It has been a great honour and privilege to work with the Staff Leadership Group (SLG) and the entire staff team of the WCC, some of whom have blossomed during this period. I thank the SLG for its skilled leadership of the council and its careful preparation of governing body meetings.

Conclusion

44. As the assembly gathers to reflect on the churches' mission, witness, and unity in prophetic dialogue with the spirit of our time, Jesus' compassion for stigmatized minorities, for those for whom little compassion is visible today, will challenge us and our churches to *metanoia*, to conversion, to the renewal of our minds and hearts so that we may become in tomorrow's world a countercultural force driven by solidarity with the most vulnerable towards the survival of God's creation, for which so many young people are anxiously struggling today in Germany and in many parts of the world.

45. In this way, churches will be challenged to seek to overcome their divisions through an "ecumenism of the heart": that is, an ecumenism in which we look at other churches first of all with the eyes of communion in the love of the compassionate Jesus, and with the eyes of a common commitment to God's kingdom; and only within the solid foundation of that unity in Christ do we look at what separates them in matters of faith, ordained ministry, or ethics.

46. Please receive this day and the coming days in a spirit of prayer and personal commitment to witness to Christ's compassionate love. Thank you.

Report of the Acting General Secretary

Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca

Dear moderator, vice-moderators, delegates, representatives, advisors, guests, and participants, Your Eminences, Your Graces, dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

1. “Christ’s love moves the world to reconciliation and unity.” This is the theme of our 11th Assembly. It announces the love of God in Christ for all creation. It speaks to the heart of our faith and is the reason for our fellowship. It inspires our common calling to walk, pray, and work together for justice and peace, for reconciliation and unity, and for renewal and healing. It affirms that God’s plan in Christ was also the reconciliation and healing of the whole creation. I will say more about the climate crisis later.

2. Through God’s grace we gather in Karlsruhe, Germany, even though our assembly has been delayed by one year because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

3. The consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and the challenges of today’s world have shown that the theme is providential. More than ever, we see a world that is in desperate need of reconciliation and unity, and in need of the love of Christ, the first fruits of a new creation.

4. As I start my report, I begin with words of gratitude and thanks: to the leadership of the central committee with Dr Agnes Abuom as moderator and Bishop Mary Ann Swenson and Metropolitan Nifon as vice-moderators. My thoughts go also to the late Metropolitan Gennadios, our vice-moderator, who passed away on 1 June 2022. He contributed to our fellowship in so many ways. I wish also to thank the members of our executive and central committees, our ecumenical partners, and the entire staff for your tremendous commitment and dedication to the World Council of Churches (WCC).

5. My thanks go also to our former general secretary, Bishop Olav Fykse Tveit, for his spiritual encouragement and for his leadership. Bishop Olav, your leadership provided stability and direction amid the many challenges we faced, and for this, we are very grateful.

6. Our assembly in Karlsruhe is the third time that we have met in Europe since our founding assembly in Amsterdam in 1948. The last time was our 4th Assembly in Uppsala, Sweden, in 1968. So, we are particularly grateful to our hosts: the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD), the Council of

Christian Churches in Germany (ACK), and the Protestant Church in Baden, and those supporting the assembly, especially the neighbouring regional Protestant churches, the Catholic Archdiocese of Freiburg, the Union of Protestant Churches of Alsace and Lorraine, and the Protestant Church in Switzerland. The WCC looks back to its long involvement with the German churches, including during the time when the country was divided, and when the WCC was able to maintain the churches from both the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic as full and active members of the ecumenical fellowship.

7. I would also like to thank the German Federal Government and the Federal Foreign Office for the generous support that has made possible this assembly in Germany in so many different ways. The address today of Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier is but one example of the many links between your country and the World Council of Churches.

8. Without all of you, we would not have been able to gather here for the 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches.

1. In the Midst of the Pandemic

9. At the beginning of 2020, when I was asked to take responsibility to lead the WCC as acting general secretary, it was thought it would be only for a short time. It has already been more than two-and-a-half years and will continue until the end of this year.

10. During these years, we all faced the unprecedented challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has taken countless lives, including many members and leaders of our churches and many ecumenical friends. We continue to grieve for this loss of life. This pandemic has reminded us of our shared vulnerability and has created a strong sense of solidarity among the churches as a fellowship and with the entire human family. At the same time, the pandemic has amplified existing inequalities, especially for vulnerable groups.

11. The pandemic disrupted the liturgical and pastoral life of many of our churches. However, while it may have separated us physically, it has brought us closer together spiritually. We have learned new ways of working and of using digital and online technologies to meet together. As we move forward, we continue to be challenged to continue adapting, learning, and caring for one another.

2. The Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace

12. “We intend to move together.” This was the message of our 10th Assembly in Busan. Since then, the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace has become a movement, engaging churches and partners in a common spirit. We learned to celebrate our gifts together; to visit the wounds together, the locations of violence and injustice; and together to seek to transform the injustices we have seen.

13. I am convinced that in looking to the period before us, we must continue our common ecumenical journey as a pilgrimage of reconciliation and unity as an overarching paradigm that guides the WCC’s programmatic work. Moreover, since reconciliation and unity cannot be achieved without justice and peace, this will be a natural continuation of the ecumenical paradigm that was coined at the time of our 10th Assembly in Busan, but now shaped and aligned in response to the needs of a world longing for reconciliation and unity.

14. The image of pilgrimage speaks to our identity. We are a movement and not a static institution. We are “people on the way.” This very concept has a strong biblical and patristic basis. The first Christians were called people “of the way” (Acts 9:2). We see in the early Christian sources that Christians were called those who walk together (*syn-odoi*), while for St John Chrysostom, the church itself was called a *syn-odos*.

3. A Common Journey with People of Other Faiths and of Good Will

15. We have strengthened our relationships and cooperation with people of other faiths as companions on our pilgrimage of justice and peace, on the basis of our common values in responding to the pressing challenges of our times. I would mention the growth in cooperation with the International Jewish Committee on Interreligious Consultations, particularly since 2019, and with the World Jewish Congress on the issue of equal access to vaccination.

16. I also want to mention our cooperation with Al-Azhar and Human Fraternity, with Religions for Peace, and with Shia branches of Islam in Iran. I am glad and grateful that we have representatives of our pilgrim partners present here with us, who will later address our assembly.

17. As we look to the next WCC assembly in 2030, we see a period that coincides with the time that is left to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Many of our governments promised to help achieve these goals and pledged to work with faith communities and civil society. We take them at

their word. The pilgrimage is an opportunity to continue working with all people of good will, to ensure a better future for everyone and for our common home.

4. Ecumenical Relationships Are Essential

Relationships are essential for deepening the fellowship of member churches and broadening the one ecumenical movement.

18. This WCC fellowship of member churches is dynamic. It is growing, deepening, and uniting. I am convinced more than ever that the WCC remains an essential instrument for engaging the churches and amplifying their common witness as a fundamental expression of fellowship and togetherness.

19. This can be achieved only by strengthening collaboration with ecumenical partners, including regional ecumenical organizations and national councils of churches, Christian world communions, and specialized ministries. I particularly want to mention the witness of United and Uniting churches, and that the Protestant Church in Baden, which has offered so much to our gathering here, celebrated its 200th anniversary as a united church in 2021. We are all instruments of the one ecumenical movement, and we serve a common fellowship of churches.

20. The relationships that nurture this one ecumenical movement have extended beyond the fellowship of member churches to include churches that are not members of the WCC, particularly Roman Catholic, Evangelical, and Pentecostal churches.

21. The WCC's 8th Assembly in Harare in 1998 gave the impetus for the creation of the Global Christian Forum as a platform for broadening the experience of Christian unity. I encourage the WCC to continue its support for the forum, in which today the WCC, Roman Catholic Church, Pentecostal World Fellowship, and World Evangelical Alliance serve as its "four pillars."

22. In 2025 we will commemorate the 1700th anniversary of the first Ecumenical Council in Nicaea in 325. The Nicene Creed is an expression of visible unity in one faith and common life in Christ, affirming our faith in the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church. This anniversary will be marked by a Sixth World Conference on Faith and Order and I encourage the whole fellowship of churches to celebrate this anniversary and take part in these activities.

5. The Programmatic Work of the WCC

Everything we do is an important witness to who we are as a fellowship of churches.

23. The accountability report of the central committee, *Pilgrims on the Path of Peace: The Journey of the WCC from Busan to Karlsruhe*, and the Resource Book for this assembly highlight the breadth of activities undertaken in the past nine years. The Programme Guidelines Committee will reflect more deeply on the work of the WCC for the years to come.

24. Here I want to offer a vision for how the work might be structured in this period to come. The WCC has experienced many different programme structures over the years. The WCC's 10th Assembly in Busan defined three programme areas and introduced the idea of transversal, cross-cutting issues.

25. Based on the experience of our work and its outcomes, and the evaluations since Busan, I encourage the assembly to offer guidelines for the WCC's programmatic work to be more focused and integrated and made up of two programme areas instead of three, while maintaining a transversal approach to cross-cutting issues.

26. The first programme area would include the WCC's work on "unity, mission, and ecumenical formation." It would involve the work of the commissions on Faith and Order, on World Mission and Evangelism, and on Education and Ecumenical Formation. It would also include the work of the Indigenous Peoples Network, the Ecumenical Disability Advocates Network, and the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey.

27. The second programme area would include the WCC's work on "public witness and *diakonia*." It would involve the work of the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs and the new Commission on Health and Healing. It would also include the WCC's work on economic and ecological justice, peacebuilding, human dignity, and our engagement with the United Nations.

28. A transversal approach to cross-cutting issues would strengthen church, ecumenical, and interfaith relations, the just community of women and men, the engagement of young people in the ecumenical movement, and our work on overcoming racism.

29. The success of the WCC's work relies, however, on the extent to which it engages the member churches and our ecumenical partners. For this reason, I humbly advise that in the future programmatic structure, the regional desks be revived. Without the direct link with the regions and the work with the

churches there, the body of the WCC remains cut off from its members in the regions.

30. We are also committed to do all we can to promote sustainability in our own activities. As I mentioned earlier, the onset of the pandemic involved a rapid shift to online and electronic platforms to maintain the effectiveness of the WCC as global meetings and local and international staff travel were curtailed.

31. While being aware of the many challenges of digital communication, including the potential for exclusion, and the need to uphold a vision of digital justice, I encourage the fellowship to continue to explore and to utilize the opportunities of digital and online communication, to complement our face-to-face meetings and activities.

32. Another example of our work to promote sustainability is the Green Village, the development of the WCC's estate around its offices in Geneva in partnership with *Implenia*, the leading Swiss real estate services company. In stewarding this resource for the future, the WCC steering committee for the project envisaged a cluster of buildings, "like a village," where people would gather, and which would foster dialogue and exchange. Sustainability is the hallmark of the project, ranging from water management to locally sourced food, locally sourced wood, and the use of geothermal energy and solar panels.

6. Addressing Together the Challenges of Our Time

33. Climate justice. Tomorrow, 1 September, is celebrated by churches worldwide as the Day of Creation and the start of the Season of Creation that lasts until October. For some churches, 1 September is also the beginning of the church year. The issue of creation will be central to the first thematic plenary that takes place tomorrow and is central to our witness as churches. It is a theological issue. God's plan in Christ was also the reconciliation and healing of the whole creation. And let me be very blunt: according to a scientific report presented last October at the meeting in Rome of the religious leaders preparing for the UN climate change conference, COP 26, if we do not change our behaviour, in 50 years our planet will be uninhabitable.

34. In July this year, the German foreign minister Annalena Baerbock described the climate crisis as "now the biggest security problem facing everyone on this earth." This statement touched my very heart. The WCC has played a prominent role in highlighting dangers to the environment, and it is the only faith-based organization that has had a permanent presence in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

process. This is the first WCC assembly to have received official environmental certification, and in Karlsruhe we must raise up the issue of climate justice and underline the need to care for creation. We must make it “the greenest assembly ever.” We have talked enough: now it is time for action.

35. Racial justice. Globally, racism continues in its various forms, perpetuating both racial discrimination and structures that segregate and exploit. While Black Lives Matter is a movement that emerged initially from the experiences of people of African descent in the United States, it has become a national and global movement of solidarity for different racialized groups. It raises the issue of human dignity and self-worth in the face of systems that dehumanize and pervert human dignity.

36. Racism, discrimination, and xenophobia are faced by Indigenous People, racialized peoples, Dalits, Roma people, people of African descent, and by Asians in places where they are a minority, especially following the emergence of COVID-19.

37. The emergence of the Black Lives Matter movement and the experience of the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace led the WCC executive committee to agree in 2016 to lift up a focus on racism, and in 2021, to initiate a new programmatic response to overcoming racism, to reinforce existing work, and to strengthen the ecumenical response to the increasing manifestations we see of racism, racial discrimination, and xenophobia.

38. Human sexuality. The topic of human sexuality is not new in the ecumenical movement and has been repeatedly discussed since the WCC’s 3rd Assembly in New Delhi in 1961. What is new today is that after lengthy debate, we have now a study and resource document, *Conversations on the Pilgrim Way: Invitation to Journey Together on Matters of Human Sexuality*, which was received by the central committee in February 2022 and offered for further study and reflection to churches who are interested in it.

39. Still, this issue continues to divide churches and to create divisions within some confessional families. While some people advance theological arguments that support one position, others, using different theological arguments, deny it and reject it. We have to be clear: the WCC does not have a position or a policy on this issue as it is the churches themselves that have to debate it and arrive at a conclusion for themselves.

40. What we all can agree on, however, is the need to respect the dignity of every human being, to defend and affirm human rights for all, to condemn any violence or verbal or physical aggression, and to affirm that every human being is created in God’s image.

41. For some churches, even discussing this issue remains taboo and whenever a discussion on it is proposed, they get suspicious, fearing that the WCC may support one opinion or another, and may implement it as policy that will then be translated into the programmatic work of the WCC. We heard such fears expressed once again during the Inter-Orthodox Pre-Assembly Consultation in Cyprus this year and I keep hearing the same concerns and worries from other churches, particularly from the global South.

42. Because of this, some churches are keeping their distance from the WCC, and some members threaten to leave it. The report of the Inter-Orthodox Pre-Assembly Consultation reiterated the WCC position and stance on such ethical dividing issues expressed in the 2002 Report of the Special Commission on Orthodox Participation in the WCC: “The Council cannot speak for, nor require the churches to adopt particular positions. It can, however, continue to provide opportunities for all churches to consult one another, and, wherever possible, for them to speak together. By the same token, member churches should understand that not all matters discussed within their fora can be imposed on the WCC agenda. Skill and sensitivity are needed on all sides to perceive which matters should remain within the counsels of particular churches and which can be profitably discussed together.”¹

43. My personal view is that even in this case we should do our best to maintain the WCC as an open and free space for dialogue on any topic with which our world is faced. But the WCC cannot—and should make it clear that it will not—impose or take any stand on an ethical or faith matter that may divide the fellowship. We have to maintain the WCC as a world fellowship of churches.

7. Visiting the Wounds

War in Ukraine

44. This is an open wound in our world today. This war is in Europe, where our assembly is taking place, and since it has worldwide implications due to the nuclear threat and the food crisis that affects people in many parts of the world, I will reflect on it more extensively.

45. From the very beginning, the WCC condemned the war, called for an immediate end to armed hostilities, respect for international law and the sovereignty of Ukraine, and appealed for an immediate end to indiscriminate attacks that were having an increasing impact on civilians. The WCC was in

¹ “Final report of the Special Commission on Orthodox Participation in the WCC,” paras 27–28, <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/final-report-of-the-special-commission-on-orthodox-participation-in-the-wcc>.

the media spotlight since the first day of the war, and as of now, more than 7000 articles have mentioned the WCC in relation to the war.

46. The WCC in its response has been consistent in:

- denouncing violence as a solution to conflict
- calling for the protection of innocent and vulnerable people
- maintaining contact and dialogue with the churches in Russia and Ukraine
- engaging churches from the neighbouring countries in round-table dialogue
- advocating for humanitarian assistance with visible expressions of accompaniment in Ukraine, Hungary, Romania, and Russia

47. At each step, my prayer has been that the WCC can be a space for dialogue, for listening to and caring for one another, and for just peace and reconciliation. We can and must advocate alternatives to geopolitical so-called solutions that would deepen divisions.

48. During this time, we received letters and messages from individuals and three churches asking us to “expel” the Russian Orthodox Church from the fellowship of the WCC.

49. In consultation with the leadership of the central committee, I responded to such requests based on the history of the council when our fellowship was confronted with similar situations. The conclusion was clear in all cases: The WCC was created as an open platform for dialogue and encounter, for discussion and challenging one another on the path to unity. Unless it was because of the theological reasons mentioned in its basis, the WCC did not exclude anybody unless they excluded themselves. This was even the case with the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) in South Africa, which supported and argued for apartheid theologically. This stance led to heated debates and condemnations from other WCC member churches, but, in the end, it was the church that “excluded” itself from the WCC as it felt it no longer belonged. It was not the WCC that suspended or excluded the DRC.

50. During its in-person meeting in June, the central committee debated at length the issue of the exclusion of the Russian Orthodox Church from the WCC. In its strong statement on the war in Ukraine, the central committee condemned the war and any misuse of religious language and authority to justify armed aggression, and reaffirmed the nature of the WCC as “a platform and safe space for encounter and dialogue in order to address the many pressing issues for the world and for the ecumenical movement arising from

this conflict, and the obligation of its members to seek unity and together serve the world, and therefore urges members of the ecumenical fellowship in Russia and Ukraine to make use of this platform.”

51. The central committee unanimously rejected the proposal of exclusion and opted to continue the dialogue. In preparation for this assembly, the central committee asked the acting general secretary to “do all in his power for the forthcoming 11th WCC Assembly in Karlsruhe (31 August-8 September 2022) to contribute meaningfully to the search for peace through dialogue, for justice, human dignity and human rights—including by ensuring representation from Ukraine at the assembly—and for the reconciliation and unity to which we are called by our Lord and Saviour Christ Jesus.”

52. A few weeks ago, I made a five-day visit to Ukraine. We had to go by car for 1700 kilometres because there are no flights to Ukraine. We met people in the parishes, people caring for refugees and for those who are victims of the war, as well as the church leaders. Many said that we were the first high-level religious leaders who had visited them. We heard from the church leaders and state officials words of appreciation for the courageous WCC visit of solidarity and support in conditions of danger and insecurity. I am happy to report that as an outcome of that visit, there are 11 Ukrainians representing the major churches and the National Council of Churches who are with us. In the Europe plenary, they will speak for themselves and share the realities and the challenges of the situation and hopes for the future.

53. As followers of Christ, we were entrusted with the ministry of reconciliation, and the theme of the WCC’s 11th Assembly reminds us all that the love of Christ moves the world to reconciliation and unity. It would be very easy to use the language of the politicians, but we are called to use the language of faith, of our faith. It is easy to exclude, excommunicate, and demonize, but we are called as the WCC to offer a free and safe platform of encounter and dialogue, to meet and listen to one another even if and even when we disagree. This has always been the way of the WCC. I believe in the power of dialogue in the process toward reconciliation. Imposed peace is not peace; a lasting peace has to be a just peace. War cannot be just or holy; killing is killing, which must be avoided through dialogue and negotiations.

Bleeding wounds in the Middle East

Visit to Syria and Lebanon

54. In July, I visited the churches in Lebanon and Syria, together with the general secretaries of the Middle East Council of Churches and ACT Alliance. The visit to Syria was pending as a moral obligation. We went by car from

Lebanon to Damascus and from there on to Aleppo. We were glad to visit and meet with our WCC president, His Beatitude Patriarch John X, primate of the Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch and all the East and with His Holiness Patriarch Ignatius Aphrem II, primate of the Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East. We visited all the churches—Orthodox, Protestant, and Catholic.

55. We saw the pain and suffering of the people, the former towns and villages that are deserted and entirely destroyed. Yet, in the ruins that are left, here and there, we met people: we met children in kindergarten or classrooms, and we visited modest hospitals and places that care for older people. We were moved to see how the churches are managing and taking care of such projects and that the people who are benefiting from these projects are not only Christians, but all those in need.

56. The situation of the people, however, is unbearable. We heard that some people, in despair and fearing for their survival, are selling their organs or their children to buy bread for the other members of the family.

57. The image of a boy about 10 years old still haunts me. In one meeting we had with a congregation after the Sunday service, alongside others who spoke, this boy also asked to speak. With tears in his eyes, he simply asked if we could help to bring medicines for the Syrian people. He did not ask this for his family or for his church but for all Syrian people. Then, he started crying out loud. We discovered that his father was dying of cancer and was now in the terminal phase. He had pains he could not bear, and, because of sanctions, could not find any medicines in the pharmacies.

58. During our visit, the appeals from the people we met could be summarized as these two requests: “Do not forget and abandon us”; and “Tell the churches present at the assembly about our pain and suffering and ask them on our behalf to do whatever they can to help for the lifting up of the sanctions because it is not the politicians or the government who suffer from it but the normal people.”

59. When we returned to Geneva, together with the general secretary of ACT Alliance, I signed a letter addressed to President Biden asking him to lift the sanctions. And we are still waiting with hope to get a response.

60. Our WCC programme on Syria will continue monitoring and addressing these painful and challenging matters.

61. I am aware that some of our initiatives or actions like this one may seem for some people unpopular, unfashionable, or not politically correct. Yet, I

personally think that in all situations we cannot keep silent from witnessing to the values of the gospel which represent in fact the core of our identity. It is our moral duty to see in the face of every human being the face of Christ, and to address any suffering from the perspective of the compassionate love of Christ, who manifested himself as the compassionate Lord for all who suffered, not only for some selected ones.

Visit to Israel and Palestine

62. After Syria, I visited our member churches and fellow Christians in Israel and Palestine and met with all the patriarchs, the heads of churches and local communities, and Christian NGOs representing the grassroots communities in Palestine. Our message and our visit of solidarity was meant to reassure our sisters and brothers in the Holy Land that they are not alone and abandoned: that the WCC continues to remain with them and to accompany them, and to advocate for and defend their dignity and human rights when faced with hardships and tribulations.

63. Our restructured office in Jerusalem, which coordinates the WCC's work and presence in the Holy Land, is working well and we continue to receive many signs of hope. There are still many challenges and hardships, and we have made great efforts to respond to them and increase our advocacy work. At the same time, we have tried to maintain a just approach, to speak fairly, and to denounce any violation of human rights and dignity, whether against or by Palestinians or Israelis.

64. In this regard, our relationship with the International Jewish Committee on Interreligious Consultations has provided a forum for listening to the perspectives of our Jewish brothers and sisters and sharing ours with them. Though we may have different points of view on specific situations or events, we keep a sincere, friendly, and open dialogue, and share the goal of a just peace for the entire region.

65. As we prepared ourselves for the assembly and prior to our visit to the Holy Land, we received news that certain well-known groups, particularly here in Germany, had started to speak against us and portray the WCC once again as an antisemitic organization.

66. To those who accuse the WCC as being antisemitic, I would say boldly that already in 1948, the WCC acknowledged the history of Christian anti-Judaism and denounced antisemitism as a sin. And while we are critical of some policies of the State of Israel, again since 1948, the WCC has recognized the State of Israel and respects the right of Israel to defend itself and take care

of its citizens, from the perspective of international law. We oppose, reject, condemn, and denounce all forms of antisemitism.

67. At the same time, we support equal human rights for Palestinians and oppose, reject, condemn, and denounce situations when these are not respected. Protesting against human rights violations when they occur and asking the Israeli government to protect all its people, whether they be Israeli or Palestinians, has nothing to do with antisemitism; it is a natural and normal exercise in any democratic society. We ask that the dignity and human rights of Palestinians be respected. We ask for the equal treatment of all citizens. We call firmly and consistently for the end of occupation. We have repeatedly affirmed the two-state policy based on international law. We want to see Israelis and Palestinians cohabiting together on the path to peace, to reconciliation, to just peace.

68. At the same time, some groups on the Palestinian side and some groups in the West have challenged us for being soft and not bold enough in denouncing and condemning human rights violations. Furthermore, based on the recent report of Amnesty International, we received letters, requests, and proposals from some in our WCC constituency, in particular from South Africa and a few from the West, to change WCC policy at the assembly in Karlsruhe and denounce Israel as an apartheid state because of its treatment of Palestinians. Support for BDS (Boycott, Disinvestment, and Sanctions) as a way of resistance and pressure on the state of Israel toward the end of occupation and respect of human rights has also been proposed and reaffirmed. All these developments are complex and sensitive, with profound implications.

69. Who could answer best such hard questions and proposals if not our own member churches in the region and our fellow Christians there? Listening to them and seeking advice was one of the main reasons for my visit. The WCC accompaniment programme that is still operating there today was started at the request of our member churches. The views and opinions of our member churches are fundamental as they know best what is needed for their survival and work in their concrete situation. I have met all heads of churches, talked with and listened to people, and promised to bring their views and voices to the assembly.

70. All, with no exception, spoke about the difficult situation of the Palestinians, about cases of violations of human rights, the impunity of settlers for their the aggressive acts, the demolition of houses, violations of properties and expropriations, restrictions of access to religious sites, and attempts to remove the Christian presence from the Old City of Jerusalem. All were grateful for the work of the WCC and our presence in the region, valued the work of the WCC

Jerusalem Liaison Office and the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI), and emphasized how important this work is for the local communities.

71. Yet, when it came to the issues of apartheid and BDS they were all very cautious and nuanced. They asked the WCC to continue advocating for and defending their cause and rights but to be careful about speaking on their behalf and proposing terminology and actions that would close the doors to dialogue and threaten their very existence in the Holy Land. What do you expect will be achieved if the WCC assembly calls Israel an apartheid state, I was asked. How do you want us to support BDS, which means boycotting ourselves, the local businesses of our people, our own existence here? Please, be careful with what you propose on our behalf, I was told; think of our situation here and our future. This was the message I brought back from this visit.

72. On the basis of what I heard there and was asked to convey, I urge our member churches to maintain and keep alive the commitment to advocate with the governments of their countries for the Palestinian cause and for the defence of the Palestinians' human rights and dignity, for the equal treatment of all citizens, and to intervene with the government of Israel when violations of human rights occur, asking that it respects its own laws and international conventions, and ensure they are being implemented in concrete local situations. I also encourage the churches to participate more actively in our EAPPI programme and to offer or sponsor ecumenical accompaniers, whose work and presence is so important there.

73. However, I would advise that we exercise discernment, care, and wisdom with the proposals we come up with during our deliberations in this assembly, the policies we adopt, and the directions we envisage taking, so that we ensure the decisions we take here and now help the Christians and people in the Holy Land rather than endanger their very existence. I advise us to follow their voice and request.

8. Conclusion

74. This period of almost three years of work in the general secretariat of the WCC was an eye-opener for me and an experience of spiritual growth. In times of isolation and death brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, I could see concretely what the WCC means for the churches and how they relate to the WCC, asking for support, solidarity, advice, prayer, and pastoral accompaniment. I heard appreciation from the churches for the spiritual tone and language that the WCC adopted in dealing with the difficult situations during COVID-19, which brought the churches even closer to the WCC. In

times of tribulation and wars, of human rights violations, of the need for a common response to natural disasters or the world food crisis, I could see once again how the WCC was perceived as the international platform where Christians could meet, discuss, express solidarity, advocate, and work together on the basis of the faith values they hold in common in responding to the difficult challenges of our times.

75. Evangelicals and Pentecostals who in former times kept their distance from the WCC, I now see coming closer, engaging with us in common actions and partnership on the basis of the kingdom values and of witness to our faith. Maybe surprisingly, most of the recent applications for membership in the WCC in the last three years came from Evangelical and Pentecostal churches.

76. I saw a similar phenomenon among Orthodox churches who in the recent past were very critical about the WCC, with two even leaving the fellowship. The period of the COVID-19 pandemic brought us closer together. During moments of crisis, it was the WCC that was asked to intervene and to help mediate solutions toward just peace and reconciliation, to offer a safe platform, to establish round tables for encounter and dialogues for debate and challenges, as in the case of the wars in places such as Ukraine, Nagorno-Karabakh, and Ethiopia, or about the desperate situation of Palestinians.

77. Furthermore, following the tradition of the past, the Orthodox took part in a pre-assembly meeting to prepare as a confessional family for the assembly. The meeting indeed took place earlier this year in Cyprus, a European country still longing for a just and peaceful solution to its tragic division, and people refer to the meeting as historic. For the first time Eastern and Oriental Orthodox from all jurisdictions came together (with the exception of the Orthodox Church of America and the Orthodox Church of Japan who could not attend due to the change of date of the meeting).

78. The meeting was historic but the discussions, the debates, listening to the Russian Orthodox delegation about the war in Ukraine, and the fact that the final report and final statement were agreed by everyone also exceeded everyone's expectations. Yet, one has to accept that if it had not been the WCC who convened and presided at such a meeting, it could never have taken place. In times of divisions and conflicts, it is the WCC that offers a safe platform where Christians can meet, engage in dialogue, and search together for ways that lead to healing and reconciliation.

79. The path to unity in faith and eucharistic fellowship as an imperative of the ecumenical movement remains our common goal and vision, but we are still far from this goal. There are still differences and divisions which have to

be overcome, and new challenges which again question the nature of Christian unity today. Yet, even the most critical voices about the WCC now agree that the WCC is vitally needed especially today as a Christian fellowship, and that despite all the differences, we gather together on the basis of our common affirmation that Jesus Christ is God and Saviour according to the scriptures, acknowledging that there is but one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

80. In responding to the hardships of our times, we need one another, we depend on one another, and we can advance only if we walk together, not in separation. Therefore, I would dare to say that if the WCC did not exist, we would have to invent or reinvent it today.

81. As I conclude this report and also my mandate as acting general secretary at the end of this year, I would like to address my thanks to all of you representing our member churches for your trust in me and for your ongoing accompaniment during this difficult time.

82. I also give glory and thanks to God for all the blessings he bestowed upon us during this period and for his constant presence and guidance. We worked hard to plan and move to the future but most of our plans did not happen, and the pandemic meant we kept cancelling and postponing whatever we planned. But each time, and almost in the last minute, the outcomes were great and unexpected. This gave us courage to move on and recognize that the real captain of the ecumenical boat and the head of the Church is none of us but Christ Himself. We are but humble instruments and could be successful if we follow his will.

83. From my side, with humility, I could just conclude with the words of Saint Paul: “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith” (2 Tim. 4:7). May God continue to bless and strengthen the WCC in the years to come!

Reporting from the Assembly Committees



Report of the Finance Committee

1. Financial stewardship from Busan to Karlsruhe

When the assembly met in Busan in 2013, in the wake of the financial crisis of 2008, there was concern over both the decreasing levels of income and the loans taken to refinance the pension fund. However, the launch of the WCC strategic plan by central committee in 2014 marked the start of a new cycle, during which a remarkable level of stability in contributions had been attained. Between 2015 and 2019, an annual average of CHF 17.7 million in contributions assured the basis for the programmatic work, including the services of the general secretariat, governance meetings and communication. The assembly finance committee (AFC) is grateful to the member churches, ecumenical partners, and others, for the continued solidarity expressed in the active engagement in the work and their support offered in so many ways.

Certainly, the impact of the pandemic in 2020 and 2021 has resulted in reduced income, but also an adaptation in ways of working, including an increased number of webinars and other on-line productions. The AFC members appreciated the work which had been conducted by the WCC during these challenging years.

The WCC has adjusted expenditure plans faithfully according to income each year; no programme deficits had been incurred throughout the entire cycle of work. Further, the work guided by the steering committee for the Green Village project has progressed. As a result of the development and land sales, the pension fund loans of CHF 24 million were reduced by half in 2020 and will be reimbursed entirely this year.

In discussing the income perspectives for the forthcoming strategic period of eight years, with its two planning periods of four years, the AFC observed the following:

- The WCC lists over 30 projects and transversals in its current structure.
- The executive committee could apply discretion on the allocation of budgets working with two particular sources of income, being on the one hand, the membership contributions and, on the other, the programme contributions where the partner trusts the WCC to designate the allocation. Comparing the total contributions in these categories in 2021 with 2014, a decrease of CHF 2.4 million was noted, from CHF 11.4 million to CHF 9 million (21%). The continued strengthening of the Swiss franc compared to other

currencies was a factor in the decrease. However, the trend showed the increasing challenge in funding projects which do not benefit from sufficient, or any, earmarked contributions.

- It was appreciated with gratitude to the staff involved that substantial grant agreements had been successfully contracted with new funding partners during the period, in particular with governments and international UN agencies. The projects concerned typically benefited from larger budgets than those funded by traditional partners. While the funding complemented that of the traditional partners, it did not replace such contributions, given the restrictions. Further, it was noted that such grants introduced particular requirements for reporting and compliance with terms; and introduced an additional responsibility for governance in the monitoring of the projects.
- Member churches and specialized ministries representing traditional funding partners in the AFC shared the view that a trend of decrease in funding is to be expected from current major partners over the next eight-year period. This highlights the need for further initiatives in fundraising.

The AFC concurred with:

- the moderator that the climate crisis is the predominant concern affecting all people and all of creation at this time (A01, para 6);
- the view of the acting general secretary that “the WCC remains an essential instrument for engaging the churches and amplifying their common witness . . .” (A02, para 18);
- the findings in the Pre-Assembly Programme Evaluation Report, which highlighted the need to “strengthen the fellowship by nurturing the engagement between and among churches”; and
- the recommendation of the Pre-Assembly Programme Evaluation Report, that the new strategic plan, 2023-2030, be developed “in consultation with a diverse group of stakeholders.”

The AFC took note of the advice of the acting general secretary to revive the regional desks within the new programmatic structure (A02, para 29). The AFC considered that this advice should be further developed in the current financial context and also in consultation with the existing regional ecumenical offices.

The AFC observed that there were about 43 programme executives (full-time equivalents) in Geneva and elsewhere, including those serving in Communication, to cover the range of over 30 projects.

In light of these observations, the AFC considers it urgent that the assembly set guidance for the strategy and plans which will set in motion the adaptations required for the next cycle of work.

The AFC **recommends** that when approving the new strategic plan, the new central committee ensure that:

- i. plans for the new cycle of work focus on the WCC's unique role, addressing those activities which only the WCC is best placed to do; and that the number and range of projects be adjusted to be mindful of the economic realities;
- ii. consideration be given to those projects considered of priority by the programme guidelines committee;
- iii. focus be placed on the roles of the regional ecumenical organizations and national councils of churches and the WCC's commitment to work jointly with them to nurture greater coherence in developing relations with and among the member churches;
- iv. consideration be given in the strategic plan to ways of "amplifying the common witness of the member churches" in the critical work of common concern; and
- v. efforts be made to take into account work conducted by ACT Alliance, as coordinated by its secretariat when planning WCC initiatives in areas of common concern.

2. Four-year financial plan

The AFC supported the general guidelines for the financial strategy for the first four-year planning period, as set out in FIN 02¹ section 4, *Towards a financial strategy 2023-2026*.

It was confirmed that the financial strategy was a useful reference for the executive committee. Progress reported against milestones and indicators had been monitored regularly in the prior period.

The AFC shared the view that the four-year financial target for programmes should be set at a steady level based on the current perspectives for 2023. With the application of the current view on exchange rates for 2023, the total programme income was estimated at CHF 14.8 million.

The AFC shares the following additional general guidance on the four-year financial strategy and **recommends** to the new central committee that:

- i. the over-arching principle be that expenditure plans be adjusted to match the available income in any year;

¹ Assembly finance documents referenced in this report are available under <https://assembly.oikoumene.org/files>.

Within the file structure presented, they are filed under Assembly documentation/Members of assembly committees/Finance

- ii. authority be invested in the general secretary, in consultation with the leadership of the central committee, to adjust, close, or open a project, as may be required, between meetings of the executive committee;
- iii. with reference to the new Rule VI.4.b² and Rule XIX. 11³, a target be set for the four-year period concerning the number of the normally scheduled meetings of the central committee and executive committee to be held electronically in order to reduce costs and the carbon footprint associated with travel;
- iv. the financial strategy includes the requirement to prepare a risk assessment document on the planned removal to the Kyoto building in 2024, and then to the Lima building in 2027, with the aim of quantifying any recommended adjustment to the level of the general reserves;
- v. the objective to deliver and maintain a change management plan in FIN 02, 4.15 include the delegation of responsibility to the appropriate officers by the general secretary;
- vi. the financial strategy includes the plan for revision of the financial policies listed in FIN 09, with the timeline for those requiring revision as a priority in the four-year period; and
- vii. a financial strategy for 2023-2026 be developed under the above guidelines and reviewed by executive committee before approval by central committee in June 2023.

3. Membership contributions

Membership contributions are the principal source of unrestricted income necessary for the funding of the work of the general secretariat, governance, communication and for the support of certain important programme work. Membership contributions totalled CHF 3.6 million in 2021.

The AFC noted with appreciation that 198, or 57%, of member churches had paid a membership contribution in 2021, representing an increase of 42 member churches compared with the previous year, when the impact of the pandemic had caused a decrease in the number contributing. However, it was noted with some concern that it was considered as a positive indicator that 73% of the member churches represented on the central committee had paid a membership contribution for 2021.

² “In lieu of or in addition to its ordinary meetings, the central committee may decide to convene electronically.”

³ “Electronic means, such as teleconference, video-conference and other technologies, may be used in lieu of in-person meetings, for consultation and decision-making, when a quorum is present and the following conditions have been met . . .”

The AFC heard a report on the development of the new membership contribution plan. The plan proposed the continuation of the current scheme, in which the base level is set in the local currency at the level of giving in the prior year, with the request for an annual increase of 2% to 5%. The AFC noted that a very few member churches contributed 80% of the total membership contributions.

It was recognized that not all churches could contribute financially to the same degree. There were reasons why particular churches made such significant contributions, motivated by the Christian spirit of giving, and the church's own commitment to fund the work of the WCC. Other member churches, making smaller contributions financially, were making costly gifts with regard to their available funds. Others contributed by engagement in programmatic work or through contributions in kind.

The AFC discussed whether a membership fee, rather than a contribution, should be introduced, with reference to the principles of Christian stewardship, fairness, transparency, and objectivity. A member church would remain free to make a contribution over and above a possible "membership fee" and to qualify such a contribution as a membership contribution. The AFC discussed what it might mean to be gathered at the table with shared Christian values and to determine how each might contribute in different ways, with their different talents, to ensure the sustainability of the WCC.

The AFC urges the member churches who could contribute more to take up the responsibility for funding the WCC at this time when traditional partners indicate the likelihood of reductions in the future.

Improved financial participation from other sources should follow if the WCC coordinates its way of working within the membership.

The AFC *recommends* that:

- i. the plan for membership contributions be further developed to ensure incorporation of the values of Christian stewardship, fairness, transparency and objectivity;
- ii. a strategy be developed on how to actively involve those churches which do not contribute or are identified as possibly paying less than they could; and
- iii. the new membership contributions plan be launched by central committee in June 2023.

4. Income development strategy

The AFC reviewed the draft *Income Development Strategy 2023-2026* (FIN 06), which, in line with the previous strategy, included sections addressing financial stewardship by member churches, collaboration with specialized ministries, the development of income from new funding partners and fund-raising for the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey.

The AFC supports the draft income development strategy, confirming that the approach proposed can result in improved financial stability for the council.

In the discussion of the document, the AFC raised the following observations:

- Regular, documented contact with member churches, monitored by the responsible officer, presenting the work of the WCC, and expressing interest in the activities of the church, will help build the number of members contributing.
- Training should be provided for project executives and other staff involved in fund-raising in order to identify opportunities and to present compelling applications.
- WCC, as well as its member churches, may, on occasion, miss opportunities to fund-raise for specific projects at the grass-roots level. As an example, congregations in Korea, further to the involvement of the local church leaders, are likely to be interested in the WCC's collaborative work with the churches on reconciliation between North and South Korea. Congregation members might be willing to contribute to the WCC's project work through, for example, an online giving initiative or other similar mechanism.

The AFC *recommends* that:

- i. the income development strategy includes milestones for both programme contributions' development and as measures for the engagement and effectiveness of leadership and programme executives in fund-raising activities; and
- ii. the income development strategy be presented for approval at central committee in June 2023.

5. Assembly Fund

The AFC deeply appreciates the opportunities for development of the fellowship that the 11th Assembly has offered, and the renewed experience of identifying together the hopes and challenges for the WCC for the new cycle of work. The committee noted that the assembly costs to the WCC from 2018 to the first quarter 2023 are forecast to close at CHF 14.2 million, quite apart from the direct costs of the host churches and other churches.

The AFC offers sincere gratitude to the host churches for their engagement in international and local planning, for the coverage of related administrative costs, for the weekend programme, and for other contributions to the 11th Assembly in so many ways. The AFC also expresses gratitude to the German people for the substantial grants from the German Federal Foreign Office for the 11th Assembly.

The AFC noted with appreciation the commitment to sustainability principles at the assembly, and the possibilities offered to eat together as a fellowship during the event.

The AFC **recommends** that the new central committee:

- i. ensure that the financial strategy includes plans for the establishment of the 12th Assembly fund in the four-year planning period 2023-2026, including consideration for an annual allocation of unrestricted contributions to the fund;
- ii. take into account, most seriously, when planning the 12th Assembly, a reduction in the number of days, and a consideration as to the number of seats, as well as subsidies granted, noting that a similar recommendation was made by the AFC of the 10th Assembly.

6. Capital expenditure and real estate strategy

The AFC noted that in accordance with the guidelines of the financial strategies from 2014 to 2021, the investment in capital expenditure had remained low and at an average of CHF 0.5 million per year over the last four years.

The AFC highlights that in the years 2023-2026, as described below in point 11, Green Village, substantial capital expenditure is envisaged for construction. In addition, as noted in FIN 02, an overall strategy for WCC's real estate, including the residential building in Grand-Saconnex and the Château de Bossey in the Canton de Vaud, should be developed in consultation with an expert.

The AFC **recommends** that the new central committee consider the level of priority to be granted for investment and renovation at the Château de Bossey if it may be demonstrated that such investment would offer the opportunity to realise further financial potential.

7. IT strategy

The AFC heard a report on progress with the IT strategy, as set for the prior period and as outlined for the future in FIN 02. In developing the IT strategy for the next cycle of work, the AFC concurred with the following proposed directions:

- Plan, implement and complete phase 2 of the Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system to address HR systems and contact management.

Development for the ERP contact management module should include the feasibility to organize all correspondence and contacts with member churches, ecumenical partners, and other project network relations. In this way, and also with due respect to data confidentiality and data protection policies, tracking of the

involvement of member churches in the work of the WCC could be realized and could be monitored. The project for the development of such a contact database, integrated within the ERP, will require to be led by an executive to be identified by the general secretary.

- Monitor the capacities and qualities of the current platform for digital learning, together with the responsible executives, and bring recommendations to staff leadership.
- Development of tools for application in both in-person and electronic meetings, which could be applied for the implementation of the consensus process.
- Study the application of technology for interpretation, with the aim of including additional languages, in the awareness that certain member churches might be willing to sponsor such an initiative.

In addition, the AFC shared the following observation:

- In the report of the AFC of the 10th Assembly in Busan, it had been proposed that the IT strategy include a study for an IT platform for participative project work and exchange between member churches. The definition of a project which requires such a platform is yet to be formulated. The AFC supports the proposal that a project with such a participative profile be identified, with a study and possible IT implementation to be aligned to support the work, when requirements are defined.

The AFC *recommends* that the new central committee ensure that the IT Strategy is developed and monitored within the context of the WCC financial strategy 2023-2026.

8. Report of the audit committee

The AFC received the report of the audit committee (FIN 03) covering the period 2013 to 2021 and highlighting the work conducted with the auditors, and with staff, in the review of financial risks and in the assessment of financial controls.

It was noted that the number of grant audits required by funding partners had increased from four in 2013 to eleven required in 2022.

The AFC *recommends* that the assembly:

- i. take note that the audit committee reported that “there have been no matters of contention concerning the annual statements under review, nor material issues raised concerning financial controls”.
- ii. recognize with appreciation the voluntary commitment of the independent professionals who have served on the audit committee

alongside executive committee members during the period under review.

9. Report of the pension fund committee

The AFC reviewed a brief report summarizing the responsibilities of the pension fund committee, its work in monitoring the financial situation of the collective service provider *Profond*, and the efforts conducted by the pension fund committee to engage in dialogue with *Profond* on its sustainability strategy and to move towards the implementation of a sustainability investment policy.

When the last AFC met in Busan, 2013, the transfer of assets and liabilities from the former WCC Retirement Fund to the collective service provider, *Profond*, had already been made. The process of liquidation of the WCC Retirement Fund was in progress at that time. The report of the pension fund committee confirms that the liquidation of the former WCC Retirement Fund was completed, and the Fund was struck from the Geneva register in 2016.

Following the transfer to *Profond* in 2012, financial responsibility for the WCC as employer is limited to the annual contributions due under the pension plan.

The AFC **recommends** that the new central committee require that the mandate of the pension fund committee be revised to develop further the responsibilities for engagement with *Profond* with regard to its sustainability investment policy and the principles of climate-responsible finance.

10. Policies

As noted in point 2 above, *Four-year financial plan*, the document FIN 09, being a list of WCC's financial policies, with dates of last review, was received by the AFC.

In addition to the recommendation at point 2 (vi), the AFC **recommends** that the new central committee ensure that:

- i. The draft *Code of conduct for governing bodies, commissions, consultative and advisory bodies* reviewed by the central committee in 2018 be finalized and approved, ensuring in particular that the protocol for addressing possible conflicts of interest for members of governing bodies be formalized;
- ii. The investment policy be revised as a priority, recognizing, in particular, the new category of short-term investments held, being seed capital for the Green Village project;
- iii. A policy be introduced governing compliance with the principles of climate-responsible finance, as described in the WCC statement on the imperative for effective response to the climate emergency (June 2022). The compliance policy should define staff responsibilities and ensure monitoring by the finance sub-committee of the

- executive committee of actions taken by staff to engage with the financial institutions through which WCC banks, invests, and seeks insurance coverage;
- iv. Follow-up is made, in the form of the definition of policy, concerning the decision of the central committee in June 2021, which required that the executive committee “monitor the approach to foster inclusiveness in participation [in WCC programme meetings] when digital means are adopted; and
 - v. the new finance policy committee of the central committee take note that its mandate, as defined in Rule X.5 was extended in June 2022 to include the responsibility to recommend policies related to “significant issues concerning . . . income-generating projects, based upon reports from the finance sub-committee of the executive committee.”

11. Green Village

The AFC heard a report on the perspectives in the Green Village project, the innovative and sustainable real estate development of the WCC in Geneva, being built for operation under One Planet Living principles.

The first objective of the Green Village project is the reimbursement of CHF 24 million of loans contracted to refinance the pension fund in 2012. As a result of the successful sale of the Montreal land shares in 2020, followed by the sale of the Kyoto plot, with the transfer of title in July 2022, the first objective of the Green Village project will be completed this year, with all loans reimbursed. Seed capital has also been established towards WCC’s own construction in this first phase.

The second objective is to renovate the Ecumenical Centre, while the third objective is to own property which will generate a target of CHF 3 million in rental income annually towards the WCC’s operational costs.

In order to meet the second objective, an approach will be made to Geneva foundations this year to seek financing and to the Canton’s agencies, which may offer an interest-free loan.

To meet the third objective, studies are underway for the Lima office building, with a strategy to be approved by the new steering committee this year. Financing for the Lima construction is dependent on the success of the land sale for the Stockholm project. The timeline established together with the developer, Implenia, foresees Stockholm sales contracted in 2024. If these steps are completed according to plan, then the Lima building may be delivered in 2027. Rental income might be generated from 2028, provided that new tenants are found. Given the unstable market conditions, there could be a risk of delay.

The AFC notes that there is a transition period during 2023-2026. During this four-year planning period, WCC will clear the office wings of the Ecumenical Centre and move to the Kyoto building together with sister organizations. In addition, WCC will be engaged in ensuring land sales and funding for a capital expenditure plan to be submitted for approval by the executive committee in 2024.

The AFC *recommends* that:

- i. The assembly recognize with appreciation the role of the steering committee, and, in particular, its leadership, assured over the past nine years firstly by Bishop Olav Fykse Tveit, the former general secretary; and then by Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca, the acting general secretary, in guiding the Green Village project to success in this first phase;
- ii. The assembly recognize that the ecological standards and qualities of the development, with its sustainability action plan, are signs of hope for the future of the work in Geneva, for WCC and the sister organizations, and that, further, the project itself stands as witness in Geneva to the values of the WCC and the sister organizations;
- iii. The assembly recognize with appreciation that the work conducted has resulted in the completion of the first objective of the project, with CHF 18 million of the loans now reimbursed and the final loan of CHF 6 million to be reimbursed on 30 September 2022;
- iv. the assembly decide that the outgoing steering committee retain its responsibilities until the new central committee appoint a new steering committee, in the awareness that guidance may be needed already in October with regard to strategy and to ensure that the interests of the WCC are protected; and
- v. the new central committee require that the new steering committee review the guidelines and indicators for the project in the financial strategy 2023-2026, as proposed in FIN02, before approval of the financial strategy by the central committee in 2023.

12. Actions taken on the report of the finance committee of the 10th Assembly

The AFC received a report on actions taken by the central committee with regard to the recommendations of the AFC of the 10th Assembly in Busan, 2013. The AFC appreciated the extent of work accomplished by the outgoing central committee and executive committee with regard to the recommendations.

The AFC *recommends* that an accountability report on actions taken with regard to recommendations in this report be monitored by the finance policy

committee of the central committee and be shared with the finance committee at the 12th Assembly.

13. Meeting between the moderators and rapporteurs of the programme guidelines committee and the finance committee

A meeting was held to discuss mutual concerns, and to ensure alignment or complementarity in recommendations to the assembly. The finance committee and the programme guidelines committee welcomed this opportunity for its leadership to consult on matters in the process of the work.

14. Appreciation

The AFC expresses its sincere gratitude for the dedicated support of the finance staff, and especially Ms Elaine Dykes, in the preparation of this meeting and their professionalism in presenting the material.

Recommendations approved by consensus

Second Report of the Nominations Committee

I. Presidents

In accordance with Rules IV.4 (Nominations Committee of the Assembly) and V (Presidents) the nominations committee, by consensus, nominates eight persons to serve as WCC presidents: six WCC presidents from six regions traditionally described by the WCC for presidents—Africa, Asia, Caribbean/Latin America, Europe, North America and Pacific—plus two WCC presidents from the Orthodox Church families—Eastern and Oriental (Doc. No. NC 03.1).

On behalf of the assembly, the nominations committee expresses its appreciation to the churches that agreed among themselves to support one candidate whom they considered most appropriate to serve as WCC president from that region or church family. In all cases, the nominations committee agreed that the ecumenical profile of the candidate warranted nomination.

From some regions, more than one candidate was proposed, sometimes by a member church and sometimes by a group of churches or a regional ecumenical organization. In each such case, the committee considered the ecumenical profile of the candidates in relation to Rule V, the particular backgrounds and experience of the candidates in relation to the programmatic priorities of the WCC, and the composition of the group of nominees taken as a whole.

One of the proposed presidents represents a church family that has never served in the leadership of the WCC, namely an African Instituted Church.

II. Central Committee

In accordance with the constitution, Article 5, and Rule IV.4, the nomination committee, by consensus, nominates 150 members for the central committee from the regions traditionally described by the WCC—Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Europe, Latin America, the Middle East, North America, and Pacific—and from the Orthodox Church families—Eastern and Oriental (Doc. No. NC 03.2). Of these, 145 are from among the delegates the member churches have elected to the assembly, and 5 are from among those elected to the assembly by churches that do not fulfil the criteria of size and have not been granted membership for exceptional reasons.

The nominations committee received 209 nominations for the central committee from the member churches by the final deadline. From each region and almost every nominating church, far more candidates were named than could be included among the numbers established for the central committee.

In accordance with the WCC Constitution and Rules, including specific reference to Rule IV.4.c-f, and Rule VI.9.a, the nominations committee sought to nominate a central committee with regard to the following principles:

1. The personal qualification of the individual for the task for which he or she is to be nominated
2. Fair and adequate confessional representation, recognizing the significance to the fellowship in having a wide representation of confessions
3. Fair and adequate geographical and cultural representation
4. Fair and adequate representation of the major interests of the council
5. General acceptability of the nominations to the churches to which the nominees belong
6. Adequate representation of lay persons, Indigenous Peoples, persons with disabilities, and adequate balance of men, women, and young people, in so far as the composition of the assembly made this possible

The committee made every effort to reflect the target balances adopted by the central committee for the 11th Assembly, limited by the pool of delegates present at the assembly as delegated by the member churches.

The committee was resourced with the historical demographics of central committees, particularly since the 7th Assembly (Canberra, 1991), in order to consider the historic distribution of seats. As well, the committee reviewed and applied the list of churches described in the constitution Article V.2.b.ii and Rule VI.4.b.iii as “churches which do not fulfil the criteria of size and have not been granted membership for exceptional reasons.”

It is not possible to elect to the central committee all persons nominated. Some persons, churches, regions, and constituencies may be disappointed. The priority of criteria listed in Rules IV.4.c-f and VI.9.a—revisited and affirmed by the past central committee—guided the nominations committee in the difficult process of discerning the best possible nominees for the central committee for the next period. The nominations committee notes that there simply was not room in the 150-member governing body for many dedicated, well-qualified, bright, and promising theologians and ecumenists nominated by member churches. Given this, the committee also notes the final section of Rule VI.9.c:

In addition to the foregoing, with respect to the election of members of committees, commissions and consultative bodies, the central committee shall consider the representative character of the combined membership of all such committees in relation to the member churches, giving due regard to the broadest feasible representation of member churches.

1. The nominations committee **recommends** that the names of qualified persons, particularly younger people, nominated to the central committee by their member churches who could not be included among the nominees to this central committee be given priority in the formation of commissions and consultative or reference groups for which they are qualified, in the application of that principle.
2. The nominations committee **recommends** that member churches not represented on the central committee be given priority in the formation of commissions and consultative or reference groups for which they are qualified in the application of that principle (Rule VI.9.c).
3. The nominations committee **recommends** that the number of members of the central committee itself be increased. From 1948 to 1983, the number of seats for the central committee increased at every assembly; since 1983 the number has remained at 150, while the number of member churches has increased, and the ecclesial and ecumenical landscape worldwide has changed. As well, during that period, the frequency of meetings of the central committee has decreased, and the mandate has changed. The current structure does not afford the possibility of fully realizing representation as indicated by the WCC rules (Rule IV.4.c-f, and Rule VI.9.a).
4. Furthermore, the nominations committee **recommends** that seats resulting from such an increase be designated to ensure “fair and adequate” representation of WCC constituencies.
5. The nominations committee **recommends** that the next central committee searches for different measures to ensure a higher number of youth members in the following central committee, as it was not possible to reach a central committee with 25% youth members.
7. The nominations committee **recommends** that the next central committee consider increasing the number of presidents from 8 to 9 *to* reflect the distinctiveness between the Caribbean and Latin America regions.

The next central committee nominated for election by the assembly (Doc. No. NC 03.2) is composed as follows:

Women	62
Youth	19
Lay	44
Indigenous	19
Persons with disabilities	5

	Central Committee Elected in Busan	11th Assembly Delegate Profile	Proposed Central Committee
Women	39 %	37 %	41 %
Youth	13 %	13 %	13 %
Lay	32 %	30 %	23 %
Indigenous	5 %	18 %	13 %
Persons with disabilities	2 %	2 %	3 %

Recommendations were approved by consensus

Report of the Policy Reference Committee

1. “The World Council of Churches is a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the scriptures, and therefore seek to fulfil together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.”¹

Mandate

2. The Policy Reference Committee (PRC) presents policy recommendations for assembly action related to the reports of the moderator of the central committee and the general secretary, particularly as they relate to this mandate; recommendations related to membership matters, ecumenical relations, and proposals for amendments to the Constitution and Rules of the World Council of Churches (WCC). Additionally, the PRC presents for action an assembly statement on the unity we seek. The 11th Assembly referred to the PRC documents A 01 (the Report of the Moderator of the Central Committee), A 02 (Report of the Acting General Secretary), A 05 (Draft Unity Statement), A 06 (Amendments to Rules I and VI) and A 07 (Membership Matters). The PRC also reviewed the Tenth Report 2014–2022: Walking, Praying, and Working Together, compiled by the Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches, and the Report of the Joint Consultative Group between the World Council of Churches and Pentecostals. In undertaking its work, the PRC has worked in three subgroups; one considered the statement on unity; the second focused on membership matters and amendments to the WCC rules; the third discussed ecumenical relations. The three subcommittees then reported back to the full PRC.

Report of the Moderator of the Central Committee (A 01)

3. The PRC received with appreciation the report of the moderator, Dr Agnes Abuom (A 01). Giving thanks for Dr Abuom’s leadership as moderator of the central committee during the period between the 10th Assembly in Busan in 2013 and the 11th Assembly in Karlsruhe, the PRC welcomed and noted her reaffirmation of the ecumenical vision of the WCC, her highlighting

¹ Constitution and Rules of the World Council of Churches (as amended by the central committee of the WCC in Geneva, Switzerland, June 2022, and with Rules 1 and VI as confirmed by the 11th WCC Assembly in Karlsruhe, Germany, September 2022), art. I.(page 420 in this report)

of local issues in the context of the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace, and her call to a countercultural ecumenism of the heart inspired by the compassion of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Resolution

The 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches

1. **expresses** its appreciation and gratitude for the leadership during the period from Busan to Karlsruhe of Moderator Dr Agnes Abuom and Vice Moderators Metropolitan Gennadios of Sassima († June 2022), Bishop Mary Ann Swenson, and Metropolitan Nifon of Targoviste (from June 2022).

Report of the Acting General Secretary (A 02)

4. The PRC received with appreciation the substantial report of the acting general secretary, the Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca who took up his post in April 2020, early in the COVID pandemic, continuing the work and vision of the previous general secretary, the Most Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit. The acting general secretary's report refers to three significant challenges of our time—climate justice, racial justice, and human sexuality—and to the challenges these present to the churches. It offers his personal reflections on his recent pastoral visits to the Middle East and to Ukraine (although PRC notes that it is WCC policy to boycott products from the illegal settlements in Palestine). It makes proposals concerning both the future of the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace and the ongoing organization of the WCC programmatic work, including the recommendation that regional desks be revived. It underlines the WCC's growing cooperation with Jewish and Muslim organizations.

The PRC recognizes that the report of the acting general secretary needs to be read in conjunction with the report *Pilgrims on the Path of Peace: The Journey of the WCC from Busan to Karlsruhe*, approved by the central committee in February 2022. This report describes and assesses the activities of the WCC between Busan and Karlsruhe, providing both an accountability report and a flowing narrative of a fellowship of churches committed to moving together on a Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace, and conveying something of the energy, excitement, ambition, and initiative that have marked the WCC's journey since Busan under the leadership of General Secretary Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit until March 2020 and Acting General Secretary Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca since April 2020. Highlights of this work have included the implementation of the assembly in Busan's call to a Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace, the initial preparations for the assembly in Karlsruhe and the definition of its theme, as well as the consolidation of the WCC pension scheme and the launching of the Green Village Project.

Resolution

The 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches

- 2. expresses** its appreciation and gratitude for the leadership during the period from Busan to Karlsruhe of General Secretary Rt Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit until March 2020, and of Acting General Secretary Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca since April 2020, and particularly **commends** the acting general secretary for his courageous acceptance of the call to lead the WCC Secretariat under the very challenging circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Unity Statement (A 05 rev1)

5. According to the WCC constitution, “the primary purpose of the fellowship of churches in the World Council of Churches is to call one another to visible unity in one faith and in one Eucharistic fellowship, expressed in worship and common life in Christ, through witness and service to the world, and to advance towards that unity in order that the world may believe.”² To this end, WCC assemblies adopt statements on the unity that is God’s gift in Christ and our task as Christians and churches in the power of the Holy Spirit. For this 11th Assembly, the drafters had produced a powerful Unity Statement which was received by the assembly and commended to the PRC. In revising the text, the PRC has sought to ensure that the Unity Statement engages with and reflects concerns raised in the pre-assemblies, in different sessions of this assembly, and by members of the committee. Some minor improvements of style and wording were also undertaken.

Resolutions

The 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches

- 3. expresses** its gratitude to the drafters of the Unity Statement for their careful and inspirational work on the text;
- 4. receives, adopts, and approves** the text of the Unity Statement;
- 5. commends** the Unity Statement to the member churches of the WCC for study and implementation.

Amendments to WCC Rules I and VI (A 06 rev1)

6. The PRC reviewed all the proposed amendments to rules I and VI. The Working Group on Constitution and Rules worked for four years on these amendments, and originally more than 100 changes were proposed. The subcommittee discussed and approved those presented and approved by the central committee. Many of the changes are of a grammatical or stylistic

² Constitution of the WCC, art. III.

character, such as vocabulary changes to ensure consistency with other rules. Some paragraphs were added due to the need to work using digital platforms, which became essential during the time of the COVID-19 pandemic. Some changes were proposed to widen participation or to improve the clarity of the rules.

Resolution

The 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches

- 6. approves** the document Amendments to WCC Rules I and VI (A 06), being the amendments approved by the central committee.

Membership Matters (A 07)

7. Since 2013, the central committee recognized three church unions and two new independent provinces of member churches; two churches completed the process of resignation and suspension of their membership; and the WCC received into the fellowship seven new member churches. The majority of the new member churches come from the region of Africa. Over the last three years, the WCC has received over thirty expressions of interest in joining the fellowship. The applications of eight churches are currently in process. Six organizations that have a working relationship with the WCC have been officially recognized as ecumenical partners, and two further ecumenical partners have expressed interest in cooperating with the WCC.

8. The PRC reviewed and discussed the report on membership matters, approved it, and commends it to the assembly.

9. Since some of the developments in the life of the fellowship of member churches pertain to United and Uniting churches, the PRC would like to use the opportunity to highlight the contribution of these churches to the ecumenical movement as well as recognize that the assembly is taking place within the territory of a United church. In 1821, the Protestant Church of Baden was formed, uniting Lutherans and Reformed. The United and Uniting churches are well represented at this assembly. In their daily life they put into practice a vision of unity within the ecumenical movement. They do not seek to form a separate Christian world communion, believing that this would create additional separation and contradict the vision of unity. At the same time, not having a worldwide confessional body means that United and Uniting churches sometimes struggle in the search for their identity. In the past, the WCC has organized spaces and connecting and networking events for the United and Uniting churches. The committee encourages the WCC to continue these efforts and to provide a structured space and specific support, including financial support, for United and Uniting churches.

10. The PRC was briefly reminded of the process of how a church becomes a WCC member church. This process includes a visit from the WCC to the church. The PRC affirmed the importance of including in the visiting group members from various Christian denominations. The PRC also noted that more and more classical Pentecostal churches are seeking to become part of the global ecumenical fellowship of the WCC.

11. In this context, the subcommittee touched upon the issue of proselytism. Giving space in the dialogues and formation programs offered and sponsored by the WCC is an effective strategy to understand each other better and deal with the problem of proselytism.

Resolutions

The 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches

7. **recommends** that the central committee should continue monitoring ecclesial changes in the life of the WCC's member churches, and particularly of unions between Protestant churches that result in the formation of a United or Uniting church;
8. **recommends** that if a member church expresses the intention to resign, the church should be closely accompanied, seeking to maintain the unity of the fellowship;
9. Recognizing the changing landscape of global Christianity and the growing interest of churches that are not members of the WCC in joining the fellowship, **recommends** that churches whose applications meet the criteria for membership should be proactively engaged;
10. **recommends** that the delegation from the central committee that visits applicant churches should include members from various Christian denominations;
11. **recommends** that new ecumenical partnerships continue to be developed, particularly with international ecumenical organizations and organizations supporting specialized ministries which express an interest in cooperating with the WCC and in strengthening the WCC's life and work;
12. **recommends** that a forum be provided that would give United and Uniting churches a structured space and specific support;
13. **affirms** the importance of contact with Pentecostal churches that are not associated with the WCC.

The Joint Consultative Group between the WCC and Pentecostals

12. The PRC received with appreciation the Report of the Joint Consultative Group (JCG) between the World Council of Churches and Pentecostals, which focused on the Holy Spirit, discipleship, and baptism. The PRC commends the clarity of the common mandate and the best practices that the JCG has developed.

Resolutions

The 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches

14. **affirms** the work already undertaken;
15. **endorses** the continuation of the dialogue between the WCC and the Pentecostal World Fellowship's Christian Unity Commission as the parent bodies of the JCG;
16. **calls** for the further development and deepening of this relationship rooted in spiritual commonalities;
17. **suggests** harvesting the fruits of bilateral dialogue between Pentecostals and non-Pentecostals on topics such as the Holy Spirit, discipleship, and Spirit baptism;
18. **commends** and reinforces the concerted efforts for intergenerational participation and conversations.

The Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the WCC

13. The PRC noted the many spaces of involvement and collaboration between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches, such as the Joint Working Group (JWG) itself, the Faith and Order Commission, the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey, the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, and joint study documents. The PRC valued the high level of involvement of the Roman Catholic Church at the 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches.

14. The PRC received with appreciation the Tenth Report of the JWG between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches (2014–2022), entitled *Walking, Praying, and Working Together: An Ecumenical Pilgrimage*. The PRC affirms the JWG's contribution to revitalizing the ecumenical movement through continuing theological engagement and emphasis on practical applications related to contemporary issues.

Resolutions

The 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches

- 19. encourages** the strengthening of partnerships with the Roman Catholic Church in more diverse and collaborative forms, while keeping the search for unity as a primary goal in a spirit of respect, trust, and accountability, not overlooking or minimizing evident dividing issues;
- 20. values** the JWG as a platform for expressing spiritual unity, trust, and shared initiatives, and encourages its continuation as an avenue that explores novel expressions and articulations of ecumenical engagement;
- 21. welcomes** the initiative of the JWG to offer its unique contribution, in partnership with the Faith and Order Commission, on the journey to 2025, the celebration of 1700 years from the First Ecumenical Council in Nicaea (325 CE);
- 22. appreciates** and **encourages** the intensive study and application of the 10th Report Study Documents, “Peace is a Treasure for All: An Ecumenical Reflection on Peacebuilding in Situations of Conflict and Violence” and “Migrants and Refugees: Ecumenical Challenges and Opportunities,” which are strong, cohesive documents offering both theological reflections and practical actions for churches and ecumenical partners at all levels;
- 23. affirms** the JWG’s proposed topics for future work, encouraging spiritual discernment regarding their prioritization for the future of ecumenism, with the active participation of the younger generations.

Youth Representation in WCC Committees and Assemblies

15. The PRC received, affirmed, and endorsed the Youth Statement signed by 38 youth members of the assembly, including twelve delegates and nine advisers (see Appendix), and refers it to the central committee for action, noting the need for full youth involvement in all commissions, committees, advisory groups, and reference groups of the WCC, but also the apparent reluctance of some member churches to nominate young people to the central committee and other committees.

Resolution

The 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches

24. **refers** the Youth Statement to the central committee for action;
25. **recommends** that the WCC ensure that information about nomination processes is sent out to young people involved in WCC work at the same time that this is sent to member churches.

Recommendations approved by consensus

Appendix

Youth Statement

Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity.

1 Timothy 4:12 (NIV)

Introduction

We, the youth, have read and reflected on your reports, and we want to lift one point as an introduction of what we believe resonates with our statement: “Future work, encouraging spiritual discernment regarding their prioritization for the future of ecumenism, with the active participation of the younger generations.” Firstly, we would like to see this prioritizing also being reflected in the current and future assemblies. This is not the Ecumenical Youth Gathering (EYG) message to the assembly; this is the statement of some of the youth present at the assembly in Karlsruhe, commenting on the reports of the Nominations Committee and Policy Reference Committee.

1. The report of the acting general secretary voiced three main challenges presented to us: climate justice, racial justice, and human sexuality. All of these are challenges that youth are especially vulnerable to but also need to be listened to in tackling these injustices as a church family. We have the experiences and are often at the front of the fights against these challenges. We, the youth, had come here to Karlsruhe to give our perspectives on these issues. Yet, we are forced to put our time into the matter of youth representation since we are still underrepresented within many bodies of the assembly, as well as the central committee.

2. We acknowledge that this assembly, like every assembly, is the only chance for many delegates to become a part of the central committee, and we know about the issue of smaller churches and whom they send when they only have one to three delegation seats. We know that every church wants its voice to be heard at the central committee, and it is not our ambition to take away voices from the central committee but to add to them.

3. We acknowledge that the WCC values the voices, contributions, and actions of young people. For many of us, this is the only space where we can interact with the leadership or the hierarchs of our churches and be meaningfully engaged in the global ecumenical movement because the WCC encourages our participation.
4. Still, youth are feeling alienated from the leadership structures of churches, while in fact, we are the ones who have proposed and are still proposing creative solutions to combat issues related to climate injustice, human injustice, and human sexuality.
5. Right now, we want to address the marginalized voice of the youth while also showing solidarity with our other marginalized siblings.
6. One solution to that is to take the youth into account and make them feel valued and heard in the decision-making by giving them space in decision-making bodies. When young people are acknowledged, appreciated, and empowered by their leaders, they most likely will continue contributing to the life and work of the church. The voice and presence of the youth are crucial in the formation of the present and the future of the church.
7. That is why we support the recommendation of the Nominations Committee to add more seats to the central committee. Those seats are meant to represent the diversity of the World Council of Churches and its member churches and should be used to actually achieve the targets for fair and adequate representation, including 25 percent young people. We don't want to have member churches face the decision to either send their traditional representatives or their younger members but to take the pressure off of this decision by giving every member church the chance of nominating their ordained members as well as youth.
8. As stated in the EYG statement, "By giving an active and meaningful space for equal representation of young people in all processes of the World Council of Churches."
9. That's why we want to lift up the concern of adding more seats to the central committee to fit the needs of representation of all of our Christian siblings, but especially the needs of the underrepresented people like young people.

There is one body, but it has many parts. But all its many parts make up one body. It is the same with Christ.

1 Corinthians 12:12 (NIRV)

What we ask for:

1. We want additional seats in the central committee. Those seats are meant to represent the diversity of the World Council of Churches and should be used to actually achieve the targets for fair and adequate representation.
2. 25 percent quota of youth in the central committee, if applicable.
3. We want commitment from the member churches.
4. We want to bring back the positions of youth presidents—and suggest eight (or nine, if the Nominating Committee’s wishes are met to have a separate Latin American and Caribbean president) youth presidents from different regions/confessional bodies.

So the body is not made up of just one part. It has many parts.
Corinthians 12:14 (NIRV)

Thank you.

The following names stand behind this statement:

Hannes Tegerstrand, Youth Delegate, Church of Sweden
Megan Louis Schuster, Youth Delegate, Evangelische Kirche Deutschland
Sandrine Nourry, Advisor, Roman Catholic Church
Sarah Eulitz, Advisor, Evangelical Church in Germany
Barbara Matt, Advisor, Evangelical Church of Germany
Luciana Andreatta Toljander, Steward, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland.
Conchobhair (Conor) Russell, Steward, United Church of Canada
Yu En Wang, PCT, Youth Delegate
Umav Ispalakan, PCT, Indigenous Delegate
Larissa Garcia, Advisor, Methodist Church in Brazil
Mariana Jorge Medeiros Batista da Silva, Advisor, Episcopal Anglican Church in Brazil
Isabella Reimann Gnas, Delegate, Igreja Evangelica de Confissão Luterana no Brasil
Faith Justice Sanchez-Angeles, United Church of Christ in the Philippines
Rachel Friedland, Steward, Episcopal Church, USA
Oleksandra Kovalenko, Delegate Observer, Orthodox Church of Ukraine
Ma. Norme Serdeña, Delegate, Iglesia Filipina Independiente

Giovana Ferreira Koch Buttelli, Steward, Igreja Evangélica de Confissão Luterana no Brasil
Anne Heikkinen, Advisor, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland
Alena Höfer, Advisor, Evangelical Church of Germany
Alina Köder, Steward, Protestant Churches in Germany
Ditrich Rumboirusi, Steward, Evangelical Christian Church in the Land of Papua
Annika Juurikka, Steward, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland
Saara Alamäki, Steward, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland
Annika Mathews, Delegate, Church of England
Jakob Schwarz, Delegate, Church of Sweden
Niels Nicolajsen Geil, Steward, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Denmark
Dörte Mohme, Steward, Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland
Tobias Adam, Steward, Protestant Church in Switzerland, Stadtkloster Zürich
Jussi Luoma, Steward, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland
Martha Wood, Lay Delegate, United Church of Canada
Emma Gunnarsson, Youth Delegate, Uniting Church in Sweden
Emma van Dorp, Youth Delegate, Protestant Church in Switzerland
Juliette Marchet, Steward, Union des Églises Protestantes d'Alsace et de Lorraine
Dorina Diesing, Advisor to the Assembly, Brot für die Welt Jugend
Paula Lottman, Advisor to the Assembly, Brot für die Welt Jugend
Lani Mireya Anaya Jimenez, Youth Advisor and member of the Public Issues Committee, Methodist Church of Mexico
Sarah Bach, Delegate, United Methodist Church in Switzerland
Agustina Lusiana Womsiwor, Steward, Evangelical Christian Church in the Land of Papua

Report of the Programme Guidelines Committee

Introduction

1. The mandate of the Programme Guidelines Committee (PGC) is to propose programme guidelines for all further programmatic work of the World Council of Churches (WCC) in the areas of unity and mission, public witness and diakonia, and education and ecumenical formation including the six transversals: Relations with Member Churches, National Council of Churches and Regional Ecumenical Offices; Youth Engagement in the Ecumenical Movement; Just Community of Women and Men; Interreligious Dialogue and Cooperation; Spiritual Life; and Overcoming Racism, Racial Injustice, and Xenophobia. The PGC is therefore charged with proposing relationship strategies in the areas of church and ecumenical development; with reviewing the programmatic work of the WCC, and with providing an integrated approach to the future direction and priorities in the three areas and strengthening relations with and between member churches and more generally in the ecumenical movement.

2. The PGC received the following reports for its work:

- *Pilgrims on the Path of Peace: The Journey of the WCC from Busan to Karlsruhe* (WCC, 2022)
- “Pre-assembly Programme Evaluation Report” (WCC 11th Assembly Resource Book)
- *Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace* series (WCC, 2021–2022)

Subcommittees also considered these reports:

- *Come and See: A Theological Invitation to the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace* (WCC Faith and Order Paper No. 224, 2019)
- “The Arusha Call to Discipleship” (WCC Conference on World Mission and Evangelism, March 2018)
- “The Gift of Being: Called to Be a Church of All and for All” (WCC Central Committee, June 2016)
- “Serving a Wounded World in Interreligious Solidarity: A Christian Call to Reflection and Action during COVID-19 and Beyond” (WCC and the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, 2020)

- *Who Do We Say That We Are? Christian Identity in a Multi-Religious World* (Interreligious Dialogue and WCC, 2016)
- *What Are the Churches Saying about the Church?* (WCC Faith and Order Paper No. 236)
- *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* (WCC Faith and Order Paper No. 214)
- *Cultivate and Care: An Ecumenical Theology of Justice for and within Creation* (WCC Faith and Order Paper No. 226)
- *Conversations on the Pilgrim Way: Invitation to Journey Together on Matters of Human Sexuality* (WCC, 2022)
- “Joint Report of the Ecumenical Indigenous Peoples Network Reference Group and the Working Group on Climate Change” (WCC, 2022)
- *Called to Transformation: Ecumenical Diakonia* (WCC and ACT Alliance, 2022)
- *Kairos for Creation: Confessing Hope for the Earth* (Wuppertal Call, 2019)
- “Strengthening Christian Commitment to Human Dignity and Human Rights” (in *Strengthening Christian Perspectives on Human Dignity and Human Rights*, 2022)
- “Xenophobia, Racism and Populist Nationalism” (Conference message, 2018)
- “Report of the Advisory Group on Overcoming Racism;”
- *Gender Justice Principles with Code of Conduct* (Gender Advisory Group, 2022) and “Final Report of the Gender Advisory Group” (2022)
- *Churches’ Commitments to Children: Churches Uniting for Children in the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace* (WCC and UNICEF, 2017)
- *Principles and Tools for Child-friendly Churches: Churches Uniting for Children in the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace* (WCC and UNICEF, 2016)
- *Ecumenical Global Health Strategy 2018-2021 and Health and Healing Commission*
- *Economy of Life for All Now: An Ecumenical Action Plan for a New International Financial and Economic Architecture* (Ecumenical Panel on a New International Financial and Economic Architecture, 2014) *NIFEA-Economic and Ecological Justice*
- “Commission on Education and Ecumenical Formation (EEF) report highlights”

3. In addition, members of the PGC attended Ecumenical Conversations and Home Groups listening for emerging themes and priorities and brought inputs from plenaries and hearing sessions as well as contributions on specific issues that were received from constituencies including the Global Ecumenical Theological Institute (GETI), young participants, Indigenous Peoples, and participants from particular countries.

4. The affirmations and challenges in the reports of the Ecumenical Conversations are attached as an appendix to this report and will be used, along with all other contributions, as a resource in the next stage of discussions regarding programmatic priorities.

5. The PGC also reflected on the outcomes of the pre-assemblies of Just Community of Women and Men, Ecumenical Youth Gathering, Ecumenical Disabilities Advocacy Network (EDAN), and Indigenous Peoples, as well as the pre-assembly of specialized ministries, which was held online in March 2022. The PGC is grateful for the important work of these pre-assemblies, as well as their outcomes and ongoing work, which will be important for future programmatic work.

Recommendations

1. The assembly **receives** with appreciation the report *Pilgrims on the Path of Peace: The Journey of the WCC from Busan to Karlsruhe* and the “Pre-assembly Program Evaluation Report.”
2. The assembly **receives** the affirmations and challenges of the Ecumenical Conversations and the messages of the pre-assemblies and **forwards** them to the central committee for further consideration and action.
3. The assembly **affirms** the recommendation from Indigenous Peoples calling upon the WCC and its member churches to encourage the establishment of Truth and Reconciliation processes that are based on restoring justice and healing relationships wherever genocides have occurred.
4. The assembly **affirms** the six transversals: Relations with Member Churches, National Council of Churches and Regional Ecumenical Offices, Youth Engagement in the Ecumenical Movement, Just Community of Women and Men, Interreligious Dialogue and Cooperation, Spiritual Life, and Overcoming Racism, Racial Injustice, and Xenophobia—which are identified for integrating the programmatic work—and asks the central committee to consider adding Disabilities Ministries and Climate Change as the seventh and eighth transversals for the work.

5. The assembly **recommends** that the central committee examine the terminologies of the transversals.

A Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace

6. The “Pre-assembly Programme Evaluation Report” and *Pilgrims on the Path of Peace: The Journey of the WCC from Busan to Karlsruhe* both affirm the significance of the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace as a crucial strategic direction for the future work of the WCC. It is a powerful expression of companionship, and our common journey in and for God’s justice and peace. The report of the 2022 pre-assemblies of Youth, Indigenous People, Just Community of Women and Men, as well as that of the Ecumenical Disability Advocacy Network (EDAN), additionally named the importance of seeking justice that can facilitate the attainment of healing, reconciliation, and peace.

This Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace includes the concerns for integrity of creation and the promotion of the economy of life. The PGC noted that companionship is an expression of visible unity characterized by “sharing bread with each other on the way” towards reconciliation. Through the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace, the WCC as a fellowship (re)discovered the importance of witnessing together, accompanying one another, and reflecting theologically on our experiences. The PGC affirms the spirit of pilgrimage as inspiration for the work of member churches and for strengthening the fellowship. Relationship building must be at the heart of the fellowship, with “fewer texts and more encounters.”

7. The “Pre-assembly Evaluation Report” identifies the five strategic objectives of the WCC Strategic Plan 2014–2017, which provide cohesion for the work of the WCC staff and partners. These have advised the work of the fellowship and guide the work in a way that invites collaboration from member churches and partners. The PGC proposes to combine objectives 1 and 4 with the addition of text and amend objective 2.

Recommendations

6. The assembly **affirms** the model of the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace as a continuing strategic, integrative direction and guideline for all programmes of the WCC, and **asks** the central committee to consider how this model will continue as a part of the direction for the work of the fellowship.
7. The assembly **recommends** to the central committee the following strategic objectives: strengthening the fellowship and deepening solidarity and communion; witnessing together as transforming disciples; encouraging spirituality, reflection, and formation; and innovative and inspiring communication.

Sharing the Journey

9. The Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace provided a viable option for nurturing the relationship between the WCC and member churches. Yet, there is still a need to strengthen ways to connect the WCC to the churches in the regions. The importance of connection with the regions was discussed by the PGC, with consideration given to having regional connection in each of the 8 WCC regions. The move to identify staff to provide regional connections is different than the model of regional desks which were a past model used by the fellowship. Regional connection would invite more collaboration with member churches by establishing a staff liaison for each region.

10. The PGC noted that there is a tendency for movements to become institutionalized, looking more inward and becoming stuck. Being an institution brings opportunities, and we need to reflect on when more flexibility and more decentralization within the WCC might be better for connecting the work of the WCC with the regions and for strengthening the fellowship, which is a priority. Subsidiarity is an appropriate principle—do whatever you can as close to the ground as possible.

Recommendation

8. The assembly **asks** the central committee to maintain and nurture strong relationships with the eight regions with a focus on communication with member churches, national councils of churches, and regional ecumenical organizations, and with the additional intention of strengthening communication with ecumenical officers, ecumenical officers of the world communions, and ecumenical representatives.

Integration of the Programmatic Work

11. An integrated approach to the work of the WCC is an ongoing priority. This call for integration and collaboration must include all levels of the fellowship. The importance of collaboration and partnership with ecumenical regional offices, national councils of churches, local churches, and ecumenical partners was expressed throughout the assembly and in the reports presented. Strengthening the relational nature of the programmatic work of the WCC is a part of the strategic plan.

12. The PGC received the report of the acting general secretary and contemplated the areas of the report related to the work of education and ecumenical formation (EEF). The acting general secretary recommended the programmatic work go from three to two areas, a plan which would place the work of EEF under unity and mission. The PGC wants to affirm the need

for the EEF Commission and the work of ecumenical formation within the fellowship regardless of where that work is placed programmatically.

13. Commissions when appointed should have at least one joint meeting to develop programmatic priorities together, along with joint working groups. This joint effort should include opportunities for sharing information between the commissions so that all are aware of what resources are being produced and shared with member churches, national councils of churches, regional ecumenical organizations, and other partners. Intentional programmatic integration should also include ways for the staff to employ models of working together collaboratively.

14. The voices of youth have been very strongly expressed and heard during the assembly, and we have heard in multiple conversation spaces the need for strengthening the youth voices and participation in leadership in the WCC and in defining the programmatic work of the WCC.

Recommendations

9. The assembly **requests** that the next central committee decide on the way in which the programme areas are divided.
10. The assembly **recommends** that the next central committee establish a Pilgrimage Reference Group that includes members of all commissions for the purpose of integrating and building on the theological reflections presented in *Towards an Ecumenical Theology of Companionship: A Study Document for the Ecumenical Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace* (2022).
11. The assembly **requests** the central committee to provide clear mandates and resources for all WCC commissions.
12. The assembly **affirms** the need to strengthen the Young People in the Ecumenical Movement Commission and ensure continued funding for this.

A Pilgrimage of Justice, Reconciliation, and Unity

15. The beginning of our work has relationship-building at its heart, but we want to go even further and revive a sense that the fellowship is a movement, even a prophetic movement. We do not want to lose the sense that we are “moving” and that we are on a journey of justice and peace, prepared to struggle for them. Deepened relationships should lead to radical change, to conversion, reconciliation, justice, and reparations. We affirm an ecumenism of the heart but also an ecumenism of the feet in which we walk in the sandals of Jesus Christ.

16. The conceptual framework, theological framework, and practical outworking of the “pilgrimage” should be reviewed and re-examined to further develop the model of the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace. Further, study of the impact of the Pilgrimage on member churches would strengthen the commitment to the model and its place in the life of the fellowship.

17. The Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace was an integral part of the work of the WCC and offered opportunities for staff, member churches, national councils of churches, and regional ecumenical organizations to journey together, learning and addressing the challenges and opportunities present in the regions as we together visited the wounds. The intention to “move together” is still present in the fellowship as reflected in the theme of this 11th Assembly: “Christ’s love moves the world to reconciliation and unity.” We continue on this common journey together, celebrating the work of the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace in common witness on the ecumenical journey with the invitation of this assembly for movement toward reconciliation and unity.

Recommendations

13. The assembly **invites** member churches and ecumenical partners to commit to working together as a fellowship in a Pilgrimage of Justice, Reconciliation, and Unity.
14. The assembly **affirms** the above understanding of our future methodology in which programmatic work has a strong relational nature, and relational work strengthens the programmatic work.

Overview of Programmatic Work

Unity and mission

18. The PGC was deeply concerned that the World Mission Conference held in Arusha was not highlighted in the document from *Pilgrims on the Path of Peace: The Journey of the WCC from Busan to Karlsruhe* as a major WCC event. We want to applaud the work of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME), the success of the Arusha conference, and the significance of the *Arusha Call to Discipleship*. This work is at the centre of all we do.

19. We heard the voices asking for more work on visible unity, and that there is fear (or critique) of some uses of the word *unity*. The WCC needs to respond to our core purpose of calling one another to visible unity in ways that are in continuity with the work of the Faith and Order Commission in relation to *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*, the responses to it, and the work of broadening the table of conversation on the church. The Commission on

World Mission and Evangelism will continue its collaborative work with the Faith and Order Commission.

20. Many voices have been raised in our gathering naming the continuing legacies and impacts of the transatlantic slave trade and colonization, which drive the interrelated ecological, economic, racial, and gender injustices of today. Institutions and communities are caught in oppressive systems rooted in colonization. African and African-descendent people, Indigenous People, Dalits, other marginalized and racialized people, and the earth herself bear the trauma most, and live always with its heaviest burden. These are systems that many of our churches and mission societies developed and perpetuated and have not yet repaired, repented, or addressed reparations. To fully seek the unity and mission of the church, colonization and systemic injustices must be addressed and our models of mission and unity framed to bring reparation and reconciliation.

21. We celebrate plans already in place for Nicaea 2025, a series of events to mark the 1700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea, including a world conference on faith and order. We look forward to strong collaboration between the Commission on Faith and Order and the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, both in relation to this event and on plans for a world mission conference.

Recommendations

15. The assembly **affirms** the World Mission Conference held in Arusha in 2018, and the report, *Arusha Call to Discipleship*, and encourages holding a World Mission Conference in the years leading to the 12th Assembly, enabling the ecumenical movement to discern its missionary call.
16. The assembly **asks** the central committee to identify programmes that unmask and resist marginalizing forces—such as neocolonialism, war and greed economies, xenophobia, and religious and cultural justifications of injustice—with a view to reiterate WCC’s solidarity and accompaniment with those who are marginalized and excluded by the powers of our time.
17. The assembly **asks** that all WCC commissions be invited to provide models and methods for mission and unity that move the WCC to repair the damage, tend the wounds, and begin to realize healing from the legacies of colonization.

Public witness and diakonia

22. From this assembly we heard stories that confirmed that the call of the churches to witness together as the WCC is connected to acting together in

diakonia and advocacy. We affirm the role of the WCC to speak on the burning issues in society and recognize the importance of the Commission of Churches in International Affairs (CCIA). The WCC must continue to collaborate with other churches, ecumenical partners, people of other faiths, and people of good will in its response to human rights violations. In a situation when member churches cannot speak for themselves, the fellowship has a moral obligation to use its prophetic voice to advocate for justice and peace in the international arena, holding governments accountable. The identification of priority countries is the role of the general secretary as events change over time.

23. We heard the strong appeal of youth and others to save our planet from the disastrous effects of climate change for future generations and of Indigenous People suffering from the loss of biodiversity on their ancestral lands. We heard about the triple planetary crisis of climate, nature, and pollution, which threatens the continuation of life on earth. In this regard, we appreciate the feasibility of the work of the Ecumenical Water Network and the food campaign, especially in the context of pandemic and geopolitical conflict.

24. Churches are called to address the critical issue of racism, various forms of xenophobia, casteism, and all forms of discrimination based on colour and social structure in the light of the deep hope to decolonize the ecumenical movement and its churches. The presence of forms of discrimination and the rise of nationalism and populism continue to deny the human rights, dignity, and freedom of marginalized communities. As churches bearing witness to the good news of the gospel, we are called to bear witness to our own transformation and healing as we seek the healing and transformation of all of creation.

25. In the face of persecution and in the light of Christ's love for all, we strengthen our commitment to promoting freedom of religion or belief for people of all faiths and none as an integral part of the journey towards reconciliation.

26. We affirm the churches' ministry on health as an expression of Jesus' healing ministry. Learning from the COVID-19 pandemic, the churches realize the importance of strengthening the churches' response to the growing global health crisis. The WCC presence at the United Nations should relate to and nurture partnership with the World Health Organization, together with ACT Alliance. With new trends and technology framing emerging issues in a rapidly changing world, churches need to be engaged in the ethical implications of enhancement and modifications of life and the environment. The field of bioethics continues to grow and raises both challenges and opportunities for all of creation. The churches must strengthen their ability to respond to HIV

and AIDS, COVID-19, and all future pandemics, even as they strengthen their response and awareness of bioethics and theology.

27. The violation of human dignity is clearly visible in cases of forced migration, refugees, and the displacement of people for various reasons. The rights of the people to their land should be protected as a manifestation of human rights and dignity, along with the rights of stateless people.

28. From the reports of youth and the Just Community of Women and Men, and within ecumenical conversations, we continue to hear the violations of human rights and violence inflicted on sexual minorities, women, and children. We affirm the role of the WCC in creating safe and brave spaces to reflect on controversial issues within and among the member churches. These spaces are needed as the fellowship continues to face challenges together as the one body of Christ.

Recommendations

18. The assembly **requests** the central committee to form a Commission on Climate Change and Sustainable Development.
19. The assembly **requests** the central committee to form a Reference Group on overcoming racism, various forms of xenophobia, casteism, and all forms of discrimination.
20. The assembly **affirms** the formation of the Commission of the Churches on Health and Healing by the central committee in February and for approving the commission's by-laws in June 2022.
21. The assembly **reaffirms** the importance of the presence of the WCC, together with ACT Alliance and the member churches, in responding to the needs and the protection of refugees, migrants, stateless people, and internally-displaced people, and **asks** the central committee to form a Reference Group on Ecumenical *Diakonia*.
22. The assembly **requests** the central committee to continue the work of the Reference Group on Human Sexuality, especially to facilitate the conversations regarding *Conversations on the Pilgrim Way: Invitation to Journey Together on Matters of Human Sexuality* with member churches and ecumenical partners who are open to dialogue on this matter.
23. The assembly **requests** the central committee to form a Reference Group on Gender Justice with member churches and ecumenical partners who are open to dialogue on this matter.

Education and ecumenical formation

29. The PGC affirmed ecumenical education and formation, including lay formation, as vital for the whole people of God. Important methodologies for learning include the creation of safe spaces for active learning with opportunities for collaborative work with ecumenical partners who are also involved in education and ecumenical formation. The reports reviewed by the PGC identified ways in which education and ecumenical formation would be necessary for implementing goals and recommendations through theological education of clergy and scholars, or through supporting the ecumenical formation of member churches and local congregations with contextually relevant resources.

30. The PGC noted that no references to ecumenical theological education (ETE) were made in the acting general secretary's report. The work of ETE is an important contribution to the fellowship and the work of EEF. The group discussed the need to clearly define a mandate for EEF, its programmes, and the Bossey Ecumenical Institute, with secured resources for the EEF Commission commensurate with other commissions of the WCC.

31. The relationship of ecumenical education and formation to all of the WCC transversals was noted. Every programmatic initiative should consider how ecumenical education can prepare its participants to contribute to the wider efficacy of the global ecumenical movement. EEF should continue including the transversals in all areas of its work as they are key elements of the body of work with the integrated work of the EEF commission, providing opportunities for youth to interact globally in the context of major ecumenical events, such as those sponsored by GETI and Ecumenical Youth Gathering (EYG). Continued support and development of the Regional Ecumenical Theological Institutes (RETIs), based on the GETI model, will provide wider access to theological education and allow for contextually-rooted and ecumenically-oriented theological development. This will add additional WCC presence in the region, working with local and regional theologians.

32. Important theologies such as disability theology and Indigenous theologies can be supported by ensuring that the Bossey Ecumenical Institute has adequate resources to supplement its programmes and faculty with scholars from around the world. The group felt strongly that resourcing EEF, ETE, and the Bossey Ecumenical Institute are critical steps to ensure the strong foundation of ecumenical formation.

33. The pandemic has shown us that we can and must continue to adapt to digital technologies. Ensuring that the WCC has an infrastructure to help deliver ecumenical education and support gatherings of all kinds is essential.

Hybrid programme offerings are no longer simply a way to endure COVID, they have become the way of the future. Younger generations are digitally native and will feel more at home with these technologies. The use of technology as appropriate can also enable us to minimize the carbon footprint related to in-person gatherings.

34. Use of technology and the rise of digital communication has been accompanied by challenges as well. Access is not equal for all and, at times, persons with disabilities and the poor are denied opportunities for full participation when digital platforms are inadequately vetted for use. While the WCC continues to explore the use of digital technology in its programmes and meetings, this must be done with full awareness of digital justice and inclusion of all persons. Globethic.net is currently being used as a virtual platform and collaborator on content, practice, and blended learning.

35. The WCC can continue to work with and leverage relationships with global partners to share in the work of ecumenical education. Across the member churches, the WCC should also encourage cooperation among theological institutions through the Network of Institutions of Higher Ecumenical Theological Education (NIHETE), which was conceived by the outgoing EEF Commission. The need for nurturing and mentoring women and other marginalized communities through networks like the Pan African Women's Ecumenical Education Network (PAWEEN) and similar initiatives (such as those among Indigenous women) was also affirmed.

Recommendations

24. The assembly **affirms** the Network of Institutions of Higher Ecumenical Theological Education (NIHETE) and the networking and collaboration it encourages among theological institutions.
25. The assembly **affirms** that the WCC continues to explore digital adaptation and resourcing for the necessary infrastructure to support educational programmes for theological and congregational education on hybrid platforms.
26. The assembly **recommends** that the WCC serve as a hub for resources like curricula and methodologies for the churches and theological institutions. This will require adequate resourcing.

Conclusion

36. The WCC has a vital role to play in resourcing and connecting the member churches. The commitment to the fellowship and to creating spaces for strengthening the fellowship, even amidst challenging issues, roots us in love and unity. The fellowship is itself a major resource as each member church has

a variety of contextually-created resources that could be shared with others in the fellowship. There is much that we can learn from each other as we continue this pilgrimage together, guided by Christ's love, which moves the world to reconciliation and unity.

37. A meeting between the moderators and rapporteurs of the assembly programme guidelines committee and the assembly finance committee was held to discuss mutual concerns and to ensure alignment or complementarity in recommendations to the assembly. The assembly finance committee and the assembly programme guidelines committee welcomed this opportunity for its leadership to consult on matters in the process of the work.

Recommendations were approved by consensus

Speaking to the World



Public Issues at the 11th Assembly

Public statements of the World Council of Churches are responses to emerging issues of concern in the world that call for the attention and action of the churches and the ecumenical movement. Often these issues are in areas and concerns with which the WCC has direct involvement and long-standing commitment, as well as issues that are concerns of WCC member churches in national and international affairs.

The Public Issues Committee of the assembly prepares draft statements and minutes on selected issues of international concern and presents them for adoption by the assembly. The basic provisions for making such statements are set out in WCC Rule XII (1,2):

In the performance of its functions, the World Council of Churches through its assembly or through its central committee may issue statements on any situation or concern with which the Council or its constituent churches may be confronted. While such statements may have great significance and influence as the expression of the judgment or concern of so widely representative a Christian body, yet their authority will consist only in the weight which they carry by their own truth and wisdom, and the publishing of such statements shall not be held to imply that the Council as such has, or can have, any constitutional authority over the constituent churches or right to speak for them.

The 11th Assembly adopted the following statements by consensus:

- War in Ukraine, Peace and Justice in the European Region
- The Living Planet: Seeking a Just and Sustainable Global Community
- The Things That Make For Peace: Moving the World to Reconciliation and Unity
- Seeking Justice and Peace for All in the Middle East

In addition the assembly adopted by consensus the following minutes for action:

- Minute on Ending the War and Building Peace on the Korean Peninsula
- Minute on Consequences of the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War

- Minute on the Situation in West Papua
- Minute on Syriac-Aramaic Genocide “SAYFO”

Two draft statements prepared by the Public Issues Committee were referred for reasons of time to the newly elected central committee for action and were issued by the Leadership of the Central Committee:

- Statement on Confronting Racism and Xenophobia, Overcoming Discrimination, Ensuring Belonging
- Statement on Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples

Three draft statements that had been prepared for the assembly were referred to the WCC executive committee for discussion and action and were subsequently adopted by the executive committee in November 2022:

- Christian Witness and Action for Human Dignity and Human Rights
- Global Health and Wellbeing
- New and Emerging Technologies, Ethical Challenges

The background features several overlapping, semi-transparent grey shapes. On the left, there is a large, stylized cross-like shape. To its right, there are several thick, curved lines and loops that resemble calligraphic strokes or abstract forms. The overall composition is minimalist and modern.

Speaking to the World

**Statements and Minutes
Adopted by the Assembly**

War in Ukraine, Peace and Justice in the European Region

Statement prepared by the Public Issues Committee at the 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Karlsruhe, Germany, and adopted by consensus by the assembly.

For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. . . So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near, for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father.
Ephesians 2:14, 17–18

The 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC) is meeting in Karlsruhe, Germany, under the theme “Christ’s love moves the world to reconciliation and unity.” The theme guides delegates and participants to take seriously the call for unity in Christ and to live as people of Christ’s reconciliation, with God and with one another.

The War in Ukraine

As we meet in Karlsruhe, tragically, we are witnessing a war afflicting Europe. The thoughts and prayers of all participants in the 11th Assembly of the WCC are focused on the people and country of Ukraine and the tragic consequences they have and are suffering since the Russian invasion on 24 February 2022, in addition to the thousands of casualties, including many civilians in the east of the country and hundreds of thousands of refugees and displaced people since 2014.

During this six-month period, there have been over 13 000 Ukrainian civilian casualties, and cities such as Mariupol have been laid in ruins. At this moment, close to 14 million people—almost one-third of the entire population of Ukraine—have been forced to flee their homes (according to UNHCR). Moreover, there are many reports of atrocities that may constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity, including sexual and gender-based violence, as well as greatly heightened vulnerability to human trafficking. In addition, we are very concerned about the risks of catastrophic consequences resulting from damage caused to the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant by military activities in its vicinity—as well as containment security at the site of the Chornobyl disaster of 1986.

At its meeting in June 2022, the WCC central committee deplored the war as “illegal and unjustifiable,” lamenting the awful and continuing toll of deaths, destruction, and displacement, of destroyed relationships and ever more deeply entrenched antagonism between the people of the region, of escalating confrontation globally, of increased famine risk in food insecure regions of the world, of economic hardship and heightened social and political instability in many countries.¹

This Assembly **strongly affirms** the position expressed by the central committee and **denounces** this illegal and unjustifiable war. As Christians from different parts of the world, we **renew the call** for an immediate ceasefire to halt the death and destruction, and for dialogue and negotiations to secure a sustainable peace. We **appeal** to all sides in the conflict to respect the principles of international humanitarian law, including especially with regard to the protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure, and for the humane treatment of prisoners of war.

We also **strongly affirm** the central committee’s declaration that war is incompatible with God’s very nature and will for humanity and against our fundamental Christian and ecumenical principles, and accordingly **reject** any misuse of religious language and authority to justify armed aggression and hatred.

We **urge** all parties to withdraw and refrain from military action in the vicinity of the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant and other such locations that may risk unimaginable threats to current and future generations.

We **join in praying** for all the victims of this tragic conflict, in Ukraine, in the region and throughout the world, that their suffering may cease and that they may be consoled and restored to lives of safety and dignity, and we **assure** them of the love and accompaniment of the WCC global fellowship of churches.

We **commend** the local churches, specialized ministries, and all humanitarian organizations that are supporting the suffering people in all parts of Ukraine and beyond, and who are receiving and caring for refugees fleeing from the war, in full respect for their God-given human dignity.

As the central committee meeting in June observed, the WCC has a critical role to play in accompanying its member churches in the region and as a platform and safe space for encounter and dialogue in order to address the many pressing issues for the world and for the ecumenical movement arising from this conflict. We **underline** this calling and the obligation of WCC members to seek unity and together serve the world.

The presence of church representatives from Ukraine and the delegation of the Russian Orthodox Church, together with delegates and participants from

¹ “WCC Central Committee Statement on the War in Ukraine,” Statement on the War in Ukraine by the WCC central committee at its meeting, 15–18 June 2022, <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/wcc-central-committee-statement-on-the-war-in-ukraine>.

WCC member churches and ecumenical partners from elsewhere in Europe and from all regions of the world, has served as a practical opportunity for that encounter. We **commit** ourselves to an intensified dialogue on the issues that divide us—a core purpose of the WCC. For the issues raised by this conflict are indeed deep and fundamental, both for the ecumenical movement and for the wider world and warrant intensive and sustained dialogue to address.

In the meantime, we **reiterate** the central committee's appeal to our Christian brothers and sisters and to the leadership of the churches in Russia as well as in Ukraine, to raise their voices to oppose the continuing deaths, destruction, displacement and dispossession of the people of Ukraine. We **call** on WCC to provide a platform for all voices for peace to be heard and amplified and **we pray** that this war will come to an end very soon.

The task of post-war recovery will be arduous and lengthy, with huge humanitarian, financial, and ecological costs. Churches **are called** to play a key role in the healing of memories, reconciliation, and diaconal care. We **recognize** that in war, there are no winners and that no one should ever resort to war.

In response to increased militarization, confrontation, and weapons proliferation, we **call** for a much greater investment by the governments of Europe and the entire international community in searching for and promoting peace and in strengthening nonviolent conflict resolution, civil conflict transformation, and reconciliation processes, rather than in escalating confrontation and division. We **call** upon the WCC, together with its member churches, to continue its approach of clarity and dialogue, and we encourage round tables and other formats which can contribute to finding solutions to the conflict and its repercussions. We **commit ourselves** to holding one another accountable for maintaining the bond of unity in Christ.

Migration, Xenophobia, and Racism

Christ's reconciling love calls us to recognize and welcome our neighbours. Drawing upon the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37), in response to the question, "Who is my neighbour?", we have heard and received Jesus' call to show compassion and mercy to all who are hurt or suffering, without exception or discrimination. We use our resources, our voices, and our sense of empathy to respond to the cries of all who call for healing and wholeness. We are strengthened for this ministry and witness by Jesus' teachings and example, recognizing that he himself experienced the necessity to flee from those who sought to kill him, beginning at his birth. By Christ's command, we show compassion for all who seek refuge and asylum.

Migration is an inherent feature of the human condition. It belongs to the whole history of humanity and the entire biblical narrative. However, in the period since the WCC's 10th Assembly in Busan, new and persistent conflicts, oppression and persecution, accelerating climate change, development-induced

displacement, and spiralling inequality have driven unprecedented numbers of people to leave their homes and to undertake journeys of desperate risk and danger to seek safety and better life elsewhere. Many of them have lost their lives. We **affirm** that we will remember them.

We stand firmly in the conviction that the international protection of refugees and migrants should be based on need and respect for the equal dignity of every human being—independent of origin, religion, ethnicity, or orientation of the persons concerned—as is laid down in international and EU legislation. That conviction requires the promotion of equal treatment and elimination of disparity and discrimination based on racism and “othering,” and ensuring respect for the equal human dignity of people from all regions.

We **affirm** the legal obligations and moral principles that require a compassionate and welcoming response to people in need. We acknowledge and respect the prerogative of sovereign states to define arrangements for the control of their own borders and the conditions of entry and stay. At the same time, we **expect** all states—in Europe and around the world—to honour the letter and spirit of their obligations under international law, including human rights and refugee law, and especially the right of asylum, or risk jeopardizing the very principles and protections established to respond to such crises and to which all should be entitled. We affirm the statement from the Vatican-WCC conference in September 2018 that “to raise national boundaries and the nation state to an order of value above the recognition of the image of God in every refugee and migrant is a kind of idolatry.”

We consider it legally and ethically inadmissible for states to abdicate their responsibilities for saving lives and providing protection, or to seek to “outsource” them to other states and territories. We consider it unacceptable if people in vulnerable positions and who leave their countries aiming for a safer future, are instrumentalized by governments or others for political reasons or their own selfish goals. We also question the logic of a “closed-door,” “fortress” mentality before addressing the challenges posed by high and increasing levels of movement of people. We **urge** all states to provide for safe, regular, and accessible pathways and opportunities for human mobility in compliance with international humanitarian and human rights obligations, and to take proper measures against the abuse of the vulnerability of migrants and refugees. It is in the absence of wider channels for legal and secure migration that people-smuggling flourishes. We **call** on churches and states to strengthen and extend projects for safe passage like the “humanitarian corridor” initiatives and search-and-rescue services in the Mediterranean.

We **call** for better coordination, cooperation, solidarity, and respect for human rights in Europe’s response to refugees and migrants, including fairer sharing of responsibility within the EU. Solidarity with those seeking protection, with those hosting them, and between churches should be the guiding principle. And we **appeal** for increased regional and international

cooperation in addressing the root causes driving the forced displacement crisis, including especially violent conflicts, the accelerating climate emergency, extreme poverty and lack of development, and the oppression and persecution that force people to flee from their homes.

We **lift up and affirm** the example given to their societies and their governments by the many churches and related organizations that actively engage in welcoming the “stranger,” the refugees and the migrants, especially in contexts in which refugees and migrants are increasingly stigmatized, discriminated against, criminalized, marginalized, and excluded.

We **affirm** the God-given human dignity of all refugees and migrants. Based on that understanding, we **urge** WCC member churches and ecumenical partners, together with all people of good will, to promote a more open and welcoming approach to the “stranger” and to the neighbour in need and distress. This approach promotes a culture of hospitality, challenges us to reflect theologically on hospitality and fellowship with “strangers,” and leads us to help receive and care for refugees and migrants.

The Assembly **encourages** the WCC to continue exercising a convening role and creating spaces for encounter and dialogue on migration with member churches and partners for the sharing of information, solidarity, advocacy, and accompaniment. The revitalization of the WCC global ecumenical network on migration should be considered in this context. We further encourage closer coordination and cooperation with the Churches’ Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME) and ACT Alliance in advocacy and action, particularly in relation to follow up to the UN global compacts on migration and refugees and upholding the 1951 Refugee Convention.² Consideration should also be given to how the WCC might support member churches and their specialized ministries in addressing human trafficking, especially of refugee and migrant women and children, including by facilitating networking between churches and partners in countries of origin and those in countries of arrival.

As Jesus has challenged and blessed us with an expansive understanding of neighbour, we commit to these calls for action as our response to his charge, “Go and do likewise” (Luke 10:37).

Background Information

1) *The war in Ukraine*

One of the many tragic consequences of the war in Ukraine is the greatly intensified militarization, confrontation, and division on the continent of Europe, with an enormous and largely uncontrolled proliferation of weapons in the region, and a renewed and escalating threat of nuclear conflict, which would cause a catastrophe of appalling and likely global magnitude. A new dividing line is being drawn across the continent, bristling with arms on either

² “Refugees and Migrants,” United Nations web site, <https://refugeesmigrants.un.org>.

side. The history of the Cold War period gives us a clear picture of what may follow, and the risks it will entail.

There is a danger that the invasion of Ukraine could lead to other cases of larger countries seeking to conquer smaller neighbours on the pretext of national interests. Given the inevitable human cost, war must be avoided, and churches have a key role in advocating for this. Despite past failures, multilateral diplomacy—especially through the United Nations at the global level—retains a vitally important role in preserving peace.

Meanwhile, increased government spending on defence inevitably means that there is less money available to spend on poverty alleviation, social protection, health, education, climate action, and sustainable development. Inevitably, the poorest will be most affected. Whilst warfare is directly destructive, the social and economic consequences of militarization cannot be overlooked. So many people are suffering in other places in this world from the effects of this war. The skyrocketing cost of food and the energy crisis in the wake of the war are plunging people into hunger and misery.

The global humanitarian impacts of the war in Ukraine were underlined by the WCC executive committee at its meeting on 30 May–2 June 2022.³

2) Migration, xenophobia, and racism

In Europe, migration has become the focus of political polarization and humanitarian crisis, through the conflicting currents of hyper-connected globalization and populist nationalism. The responses by European countries to migrants and refugees have raised serious concerns regarding human rights and challenged the mission and prophetic role of the churches. All too often the response by governments and societies of European countries in which suffering people have sought safe haven has been one of fear, rejection, and exclusion. All too often, political actors have sought to galvanize public concern and to increase fear for political advantage. Long-standing and fundamental principles of international humanitarian law have been questioned and undermined, including the right of asylum—the principle that all people fleeing from conflict and persecution are entitled to seek international protection regardless of nationality, ethnicity, religion, health status, or any criterion other than need. Churches have, in many cases, opened doors and hearts and worked toward a culture of hospitality and welcome. However, we confess that some churches have failed to follow the Christian calling to welcome the stranger.

The WCC had contributed to the development of the UNHCR document “Welcoming the Stranger: Affirmations for Faith Leaders” (2013).⁴ Throughout

³ WCC Executive Committee, “Statement on global humanitarian impacts of the war in Ukraine,” WCC website, , <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/statement-on-global-humanitarian-impacts-of-the-war-in-ukraine>.

⁴ “Welcoming the Stranger: Affirmations for Faith Leaders,” UNHCR website, 2 June 2022, <https://www.unhcr.org/media/welcoming-stranger-affirmations-faith-leaders>.

the period since the Busan assembly, the WCC and its governing bodies have given serious and sustained attention to this matter, through solidarity visits to refugees and host communities, through consultations among church leaders and governmental and UN partners, through cooperation with ACT Alliance and with the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME), through major conferences (such as the WCC-UN conference on "Europe's Response to the Refugee Crisis, From Origin to Transit, Reception and Refuge," in Geneva on 18–19 January 2016;⁵ the Vatican-WCC "World Conference on Xenophobia, Racism, and Populist Nationalism in the Context of Global Migration," in Rome on 18–20 September 2018;⁶ and the "Global Forum for Faith Action for Children on the Move," organized jointly with World Vision International and other leading faith-based organizations in Rome on 16–19 October 2018⁷), through public policy statements by WCC governing bodies, and through advocacy.

There are currently an estimated 281 million migrants globally, and the number of those who have been forcibly displaced has risen to 84 million. Since 2011, more than 6.5 million people—from Syria, Afghanistan, Venezuela, and Eritrea, as well as other countries—have sought asylum in Europe. Many people in need of protection arriving at EU and other European borders have faced pushbacks, detention, long delays in asylum procedures, and increasingly discriminatory and unfair laws governing their right to apply for asylum.

Since the invasion of Ukraine, more than 7 million people fleeing the fighting have crossed EU borders. Many of them have been generously welcomed by volunteers, civil society, churches, and governments across Europe and beyond. However, this work of solidarity is put into question in some European countries, where refugees fleeing Ukraine of African, Asian, Middle Eastern, and Roma origin have experienced discrimination. International protection should be based on need—-independent of origin, religion, ethnicity, or orientation of the persons concerned—as is laid down in international and EU legislation. The welcome received by European refugees from Ukraine is reflective of Europe's broader approach to migration. The double standards are striking.

5 "Europe's Response to the Refugee Crisis, From Origin to Transit, Reception and Refuge," CCME website, 26 January 2016, https://ccme.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/2016-01-21__A_Call_to_Shared_Responsibility_and_Coordinated_Action_20_January_2016_10am.FINAL_.pdf.

6 "Message from the conference 'Xenophobia, Racism and Populist Nationalism in the Context of Global Migration.'" World Council of Churches website, 19 September 2018, <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/message-from-the-conference-xenophobia-racism-and-populist-nationalism-in-the-context-of-global-migration>.

7 "Faith Action for Children on the Move, Global Partners Forum Report," World Vision website, 1 February 2019, <https://www.wvi.org/publications/report/faith-and-development/faith-action-children-move-global-partners-forum-report>.

Russia has also received large numbers of refugees from Ukraine. We are aware of reports of Ukrainian refugees in Russia who have experienced dehumanizing and degrading treatment of interrogation, torture, and loyalty tests at the filtration camps. This warrants further examination by the ecumenical movement. We appreciate the work that churches, religious organizations, and volunteers in Russia are doing in support of the refugees from Ukraine.

We consider it unacceptable if people in vulnerable positions who leave their countries aiming for safety and a future are instrumentalized for political or other purposes. We observe this worrying development, especially in Europe. For many years, European governments have been trying to externalize their responsibility to protect countries outside of Europe while sealing off the EU's external borders ever more tightly. In doing so, member states and European agencies such as Frontex are not only undermining core principles of international and European law, but often blatantly violating the law. This policy follows the calculation of deterrence: the greater the suffering, the fewer new refugees arrive. This assumption is not only wrong but has severe, often deadly, consequences for those seeking protection.

Thousands of people die in the Mediterranean every year because European governments have stopped providing search-and-rescue services and use every means at their disposal to obstruct civilian rescue at sea. At the external land borders of the EU—like at the Bosnian-Croatian border or in the Spanish enclaves Ceuta and Melilla—systematic police violence is used against those seeking protection. People who have managed to cross the Turkish-Greek border or the Aegean Sea are deliberately exposed to destitution, unlawfully detained in camps, or pushed back to Turkey. Several people died in the winter of 2021 when the Belarusian authorities brought thousands of asylum seekers to Europe, where they ended up trapped in the forests at the EU border. And more and more people drown in the attempt to reach the United Kingdom by crossing the Channel due to non-assistance. We are deeply worried about this erosion of refugee law and the ongoing political efforts to criminalize those who provide assistance to refugees and show the solidarity that is so much needed.

The Living Planet: Seeking a Just and Sustainable Global Community

Statement prepared by the Public Issues Committee at the 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Karlsruhe, Germany, and adopted by consensus by the assembly.

The earth is the Lord's, and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it;

for he has founded it on the seas, and established it on the rivers.

Psalm 24: 1–2

Cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow.

Isaiah 1:16b–17

And he said to them, “Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation.”

Mark 16:15

Together We Believe . . .

The Earth is the Lord's, and everything in it. Human beings, created in God's own image, are called to serve as faithful and responsible caretakers of God's precious unique creation, of which we are, at the same time, an inherent part and inextricably dependent on the health of the whole natural world. A narrow anthropocentric understanding of our relationship with Creation must be revised to a “whole of life” understanding to achieve a sustainable global ecosystem. We are all interdependent in God's whole Creation. As Christ's love moves the world to reconciliation and unity, we are called to *metanoia* and a renewed and just relationship with creation that expresses itself in our practical life.

We are running out of time for this *metanoia* to take place. The central committee of the World Council of Churches (WCC), meeting in June this year, noted the Pacific island of Kiribati, facing rising sea levels, had declared a state of natural disaster due to a prolonged drought. As we gather for the 11th Assembly of the WCC, our sisters and brothers in Pakistan face the heaviest rainfall in living memory and flooding that has killed 1162 people, injured 3554, and displaced 33 million. Four years of failed rains in the Horn of Africa have put 22 million people at risk of starvation. In Europe, a drought unprecedented in 500 years has affected large swathes of the continent. Such

extreme weather and accompanying humanitarian crises are the alarm bells of a climate emergency. Moreover, instability and increased competition for resources resulting from climate change greatly exacerbate conflict risks. In addition, climate change is a public health emergency, having been recognized as a leading cause of human mortality and morbidity. Climate-induced displacement, relocation, or migration is no longer a matter of if or when, but is occurring now.

These lived realities bear testimony to the numerous reports by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).¹ The climate emergency is an ethical, moral, and spiritual crisis, manifested in a fixation on profit. The extractive and ultimately unsustainable systems of production and consumption, by those complicit in this crisis, continue to ignore increasing scientific and moral warnings.

We are running out of time. We must repent from our continuing human selfishness, greed, denial of facts, and apathy, which threaten the life of all creation.

We are running out of time. This assembly is the last chance we have to act together to prevent the planet from becoming uninhabitable. In particular, no further delay is possible if we are to have any chance of staying within the safer limit of a 1.5°C increase in global warming and of avoiding vastly more catastrophic climate change.

Christ's love calls us to deep solidarity and a quest for justice for those who have contributed the least to this emergency, yet suffer the most—physically, existentially, and ecologically—through a transformation of systems and lifestyles. Our theology must respond to an emergency of such dimensions.

Indigenous Peoples are among the first to face the direct consequences of climate change, due to their dependence upon and close relationship with the environment and its resources. However, Indigenous Peoples and the role they play in combating climate change through the restoration of the wholeness of creation are rarely considered. This must change through a reimagining and deconstructing of the prevailing worldview.

Action that does not recognize historic responsibilities for the drivers of the climate emergency and environmental degradation—and the injustice perpetrated against poor and vulnerable communities who are suffering the worst impacts while having the smallest carbon footprints—cannot qualify as faithful stewardship.

Together we call the world to urgently respond to the following demands for climate and environmental justice, and for governments to join in practical actions, and not only commitments, to meet the pressing need to avert ecological disaster:

¹ See the “Background information” section; see also the IPCC Sixth Assessment Report, *Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability*, 2022, <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg2/>.

- A just transition to renewable energy sources must be expedited. Use of existing fossil fuel sources must be phased out without further delay. No new fossil fuel or nuclear energy projects can be developed. Subsidies to fossil fuel industries that artificially reduce the price of fossil fuel production must be ended. Large-scale nature-based solutions and sequestration technologies and capacities to offset residual emissions must be implemented.
- Wealthier populations and countries that are responsible for the bulk of emissions must take the lead in reducing their own emissions and in financing emission reductions in poorer nations. They must also respond constructively to claims for reparations for the loss and damage already suffered and provide financial support for the mitigation and adaptation measures that all must take, but not all have the means to achieve. The voices, experiences, and perspectives of those most affected, such as children, youth, people with disabilities, women, Indigenous Peoples, smallholder farmers, and poor and marginalized communities must be lifted up and amplified in all negotiations on climate change and environmental sustainability.
- So-called Green and Blue solutions must not be at the expense of poor and vulnerable communities and the already fragile ecosystem.² The sourcing of rare earth elements from the land and sea, under the guise of providing alternative pathways, has led to environmental degradation and the suffering of Indigenous Communities who experience this as “Green and Blue colonization.”³ The application of alternative indicators of prosperity and well-being that account for the wholeness of economic, social, and ecological conditions is an important tool that needs support.
- All governments and authorities must respect, protect, and fulfil the human right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment, as described in the Escazú Agreement.⁴ The consideration of such proposals as the creation of a new UN Economic, Social and

² To reduce carbon dioxide emissions, two routes have been proposed: the first is to capture and sequester the CO₂ after its generation and this leads to “blue” solutions; the second is to avoid the CO₂ generation by the use of renewable energy and feedstocks and this is the path to “green” solutions. See “Green and Blue Technologies,” Casale Switzerland, 2022, <https://www.casale.ch/green-and-blue-solutions>.

³ Message from the Indigenous Peoples Pre-Assembly Meeting, 11th Assembly of the WCC, 28–30 August 2022, Karlsruhe, Germany in this publication on page 255. See also “*Drawing the Pacific Blue Line*,” The Pacific Blue Line, 2021, <https://www.pacificblueline.org/>.

⁴ “Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean,” adopted at Escazú, Costa Rica, https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/43583/1/S1800428_en.pdf.

Ecological Security Council, a Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty, the rights of nature, ecocide laws,⁵ a climate crimes tribunal,⁶ and an advisory opinion on human rights and climate change from the International Court of Justice,⁷ are new and strengthened forms of accountability that need support.

- A New International Financial and Economic Architecture (NIFEA) that promotes an “Economy of Life,” contributes to the reconciliation of economic, social, and ecological objectives, and expresses Christ’s compassion for all life through systemic repair and restoration.
- WCC’s Zacchaeus Tax Campaign⁸ proposes wealth and carbon taxes at global and national levels to curb ever-growing socio-economic divides and raise the necessary resources to respond to poverty and climate change. The development of new international mechanisms to address and pre-empt chronic sovereign indebtedness, including the cancellation of unjust foreign debts incurred by developing countries, is essential to free up resources for decarbonization and increasing climate resilience projects.
- An end to wars and military drills, and divestment from fossil fuel, arms, and other life-destroying sectors, coupled with a radical mobilization and redirection of resources towards the health and resilience of our communities and the protection and renewal of ecosystems that form the basis of all our economies and societies.

The assembly joins the WCC central committee in urging all member churches and ecumenical partners around the world to give the climate emergency the priority attention that a crisis of such unprecedented and all-encompassing dimensions deserves, both in word and deed, and to amplify their efforts to demand the necessary action by their respective governments within the necessary timeframe to limit global warming to 1.5°C and to meet historic responsibilities to poorer, more vulnerable nations and communities.

5 For more information, visit the website Faith for Ecocide Law, n.d., <https://www.faithforecodelaw.earth>.

6 “Climate Destruction Is Child Abuse,” *Generations Together*, n.d., <https://climatechangeischi.wixsite.com/generations-together>.

7 “Climate Destruction.”

8 Calls of the Zacchaeus Tax Campaign, World Council of Churches, 16 September 2020, <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/calls-of-the-zacchaeus-tax-campaign>.

Together We as Churches Commit . . .

- To “walk the talk” and to take all such actions as we are able in our own contexts to help drive a just transition to a sustainable future, drawing inspiration from the “Roadmap for Congregations, Communities, and Churches for an Economy of Life and Ecological Justice,”⁹ and the many other resources made available by the WCC and others.
- To encourage institutions of theological learning and teaching (such as the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey) to provide programmes of study or scholarships in the field of eco-theology.
- To create and strengthen spaces of encounter for churches to support each other in mainstreaming climate justice to all aspects of the life and work of the church.
- To engage with decision-makers and law enforcement authorities to ensure accountability and the rights of members of future generations to a safe and healthy environment and a life with dignity.
- To support the claims of poor and vulnerable countries and communities for just recognition and response to their claims regarding loss and damage and for financial support for climate change mitigation, adaptation, and relocation.
- To challenge government subsidies to the fossil fuel sector,¹⁰ and any support for nuclear energy or unsustainable industrial agricultural practices. We must work at all levels to promote ethical consumption, ensure divestment and instead promote investment in those initiatives that benefit ecological health and community well-being.
- To support land use and agricultural practices which conserve carbon in soil and water resources whilst phasing out unsustainable cattle-raising activities, which not only degrade the land but emit methane, one of the most harmful greenhouse gases. We commit also to ensure that our food consumption is based on climate-smart food production and sustainable production practices.

9 “Roadmap for Congregations, Communities, and Churches for an Economy of Life and Ecological Justice,” World Council of Churches, 25 April 2019, <https://www.oikoumene.org/news/wcc-roadmap-resource-for-eco-justice-available-in-multilingual-versions>.

10 Jennifer Rankin and Arthur Nesler, “Young People Go to European Court to Stop Treaty that Aids Fossil Fuel Investors,” *The Guardian*, 21 June 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/jun/21/young-people-go-to-european-court-to-stop-treaty-that-aidsfossil-fuel-investors>.

- To engage with our respective financial service providers accordingly, in line with the initiative “Climate-Responsible Finance: A Moral Imperative towards Children.”¹¹
- To empower and embrace young people seeking to take action against climate change and environmental degradation in order to protect their futures which the current generation has so terribly imperilled.¹²
- To advocate for the regulation and monitoring of ecologically-harmful chemical products.
- To support small-scale food producers and buy locally-sourced foods. We will seek to avoid food loss and waste in our own practices.
- To ensure that church-owned land is managed sustainably.
- To support the role of WCC member churches and leaders at UNFCCC COPs, the UN High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, and other relevant forums in bringing the voices of our Christian faith and the perspective of the most vulnerable in advocating for a just transition, and to increase our collaborative efforts with other faith traditions in local to global advocacy for climate justice and in action for a just transition.
- To seek reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples and uphold their rights, including the right to free, prior, and informed consent to new Green and Blue infrastructure and other projects.
- In our respective contexts and according to our respective abilities, to work to safeguard our forests, woodlands, wetlands, and wilderness areas, and to protect oceans, rivers, and other water bodies.
- To seek to ensure that our churches become “green and life-promoting churches,” and witnesses for a New International Financial and Economic Architecture and an ‘Economy of Life.’

Together We Decide . . .

On the need for an emergency response by the WCC, across all areas of its work, to confront the moral and existential crises of climate change and of ecological and economic injustice. Together we commit to providing the necessary resources for such a response.

11 “Climate-Responsible Finance—A Moral Imperative towards Children,” World Council of Churches, 9 May 2022, <https://www.oikoumene.org/climate-responsible-finance>.

12 See the toolkit *Climate Justice with and for Children and Youth in Churches*, research and coordination by Frederique Seidel (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2020), <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/publications/climate-justice-with-children-and-youth>.

This calls for the following exceptional measures:

- Urgently establishing a **Commission on Climate Change and Sustainable Development**, convened by the WCC in collaboration with ecumenical partners, in order to monitor progress and to advise on measures to accelerate our efforts for the protection of God’s creation, and for the promotion of just and sustainable communities.
- Declaring an **Ecumenical Decade of repentance and action for a just and flourishing planet**.¹³
- To set an example by committing **WCC to reduce its institutional carbon footprint** to net-zero by 2030.
- Establishing **strict limitations on travel for WCC purposes**, preferring virtual means of consultation and encounter. These online engagements and the use of electronic devices by the WCC should also be mindful of ongoing environmental costs and the impact on children forced into extractive industries for rare earth minerals.

Background Information

The Minute on Climate Justice adopted by the WCC 10th Assembly in 2013 in Busan acknowledged climate change as “one of the most challenging global threats affecting especially the most vulnerable.”¹⁴ The Busan assembly observed that despite the growing scientific consensus on anthropogenic climate change and the gravity of its consequences, negotiations at the international level had failed to produce effective responses to meet the challenge. Accordingly, the assembly called on churches and ecumenical organizations to insist that their respective governments “look beyond national interests in order to be responsible towards God’s creation and our common future, and urge them to safeguard and promote the basic human rights of those who are threatened by the effects of climate change.”¹⁵

13 This was first articulated in “Kairos for Creation: Confessing Hope for the Earth—The Wuppertal Call,” statement issued by the conference “Together towards Eco-theologies, Ethics of Sustainability and Eco-friendly Churches,” Wuppertal, Germany, 16–19 June 2019, <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/kairos-for-creation-confessing-hope-for-the-earth-the-wuppertal-call>.

14 World Council of Churches. Minute on Climate Justice. Adopted by the WCC 10th Assembly as part of the Report of the Public Issues Committee, <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/minute-on-climate-justice>.

15 See “Minute on Climate Justice,” in *Encountering the God of life: Report of the 10th Assembly of the World Council of Churches*, ed. Erlinda N. Senturias and Theodore A. Gill, Jr. (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2014), 301–302; WCC Digital Archive: <https://archive.org/details/encounteringthego00unse/page/300/mode/2up>.

In the intervening nine years, the scientific evidence of the seriousness of the threat posed by climate change has become ever more dramatic; extreme weather events and fires have become more frequent and more destructive in almost all parts of the world, and the impacts especially on poorer and more vulnerable communities have become ever more disastrous. Concurrently, the threat to Earth's biodiversity due to the negligence of human stewardship of nature has escalated. Despite some moments of opportunity and raised hopes—in particular, the Paris Agreement of 2015—the collective human failure to respond effectively to these unprecedented existential challenges and to ensure justice for those most vulnerable and least responsible for the global ecological crisis has persisted, while the time remaining for the required action has rapidly dwindled.

Greenhouse gases (GHG) in Earth's atmosphere are now at their highest level in human history. Though emissions fell dramatically in 2020 due to pandemic-related confinement, by 2021 they had equalled or surpassed the records set two years earlier: in 2019 they were already 12% higher than in 2010, and 54% higher than in 1990. However, in a sign of the growing recognition of the threat of climate change, the average rate of increase in emissions over the past decade (2010–19) was lower than in the previous decade. Further, the cost of many low-carbon technologies has been steadily decreasing. Nevertheless, emissions continue to increase rather than decrease, and with global warming having already risen by 1.09°C in 2021, temperatures are projected to rise by as much as 3.5°C by the end of the century if emissions continue at their current rate.

Well over three billion people are now living in situations of high vulnerability to climate change, and the already observable effects on people and ecosystems of the ecological crisis include:

- increased frequency, intensity, geographical distribution, and duration of extreme weather events (storms, floods, droughts) and fire disasters.
- reduced availability of water and food resources (in Africa, Asia, and small islands in particular).
- negative impacts on health in all regions of the world, through increased heat stress, spread of diseases to new regions, the emergence of new zoonotic diseases and increased risk of pandemics, and deterioration of air quality, as well as the health consequences of hunger, malnutrition, and water scarcity related to changing climatic conditions.
- rising sea levels, the inundation of low-lying islands and coastal areas, and the beginnings of large-scale climate-induced displacement.
- accelerating loss of animal and plant species.

Globally, by the mid-21st century, 1.3 billion people are expected to be exposed to amplified climate-related humanitarian threats. Among other things, it is predicted that a warmer climate will intensify very wet and very dry weather and climate events and seasons, with implications for flooding or drought; consequently, the number of people deprived of access to clean water will increase. Water scarcity already affects 40 percent of the global population, but for every 1°C rise, 500 million more people will face a 20 percent drop in available water resources.

Concurrently, biodiversity loss—partly related to climate change, as well as other environmental factors—is also presenting a major threat. Of the estimated 8 million animal, fungi, and plant species on the planet—only a fraction of which have been scientifically documented—scientists project that without global action the world may lose nearly 1 million species by 2030, with an average extinction rate of one species every 10 minutes. The implications for entire ecosystems, including for human beings, are immense. The WCC executive committee highlighted this challenge in a May 2019 Statement on the Global Biodiversity Crisis and the Urgent Need for Structural Change.¹⁶ In December 2022, the second phase of the 15th UN Biodiversity Conference convened in Montreal, Canada, and agreed on a new international framework for the protection of biodiversity.

Chemical pollutants continue to pose major environmental challenges, and new concerns surrounding the ubiquitous environmental presence and health impacts of microplastics and PFAS (a group of chemicals that are widely used for their water- and oil-repellent properties) require intensified study and action.

Climate change impacts and environmental threats interact in complex relationship with other factors, resulting in cascading risks across sectors and regions. For example, climate change—and the increasingly frequent and severe natural disasters it provokes—is one of the main drivers of global hunger but has combined with conflicts and with the ongoing economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic to produce an amplified global food crisis. It is estimated that about 828 million people currently face hunger, and the prevalence of undernourishment, having been stable for the past five years, has increased by 1.5 percent to 9.9 percent. Moreover, if average global temperature should rise by 2°C from pre-industrial levels, an additional 189 million people are expected to be pushed into hunger. In a 4°C warmer world, this figure could increase to a staggering 1.8 billion.

At the same time, together with forestry and other land use, agriculture causes almost one quarter of human GHG emissions. Particularly due to

¹⁶ WCC Executive Committee, “Statement on the Global Biodiversity Crisis and the Urgent Need for Structural Change,” World Council of Churches website, 27 May 2019, <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/the-wcc-executive-committee-statement-the-global-biodiversity-crisis-and-the-urgent-need-for-structural-change>.

current agricultural practices, a third of global soils are degraded, releasing 78 gigatonnes of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, and costing over 10 percent of GDP. Furthermore, 14 percent of all food produced, worth USD 400 billion, is lost post-harvest before it reaches retailers. Food waste and losses cause 8 percent of GHG emissions globally.

Cattle-raising activities, which not only degrade the land but emit methane, one of the most harmful greenhouse gases, is also a main driver of deforestation by forest burning in Brazil and in many countries of the global South. Forest areas when burned release carbon immediately to the atmosphere, displace Indigenous Peoples, and degrade or eliminate the rich biodiversity on their ancestral lands with their associated cultural and spiritual practices, many times irreversibly. Tropical deforestation and forest degradation account for 11 percent of GHG emissions. Moreover, the unsustainable rate of deforestation, especially affecting the major remaining rainforests—the “lungs of the planet”—is seriously depleting Earth’s capacity to absorb carbon dioxide. Recent reports have illustrated the accelerating fire and climate feedback loop. Hotter and drier conditions due to climate change are making forests more susceptible to more frequent and larger fires, which release even more carbon, thereby adding to emissions and fuelling further global warming, forest degradation, and biodiversity loss.

The oceans absorb up to 50 times more CO₂ than the atmosphere, and 20 times more than plants and soil combined. But as oceans warm and acidify, their waters become less efficient at taking in emissions, and can even rapidly release it back into the atmosphere.

Climate change models suggest that if the world is to avoid extreme climate impacts, *emissions must begin to fall by 2025 and must be halved by 2030*. The vast majority of carbon emissions come from the use of fossil fuels. Accordingly, *immediate action is required to curb fossil fuel use*, followed by major ongoing reductions over the next decades.

At the same time, we acknowledge that many of the natural resources needed for the “green transition”¹⁷ are primarily mined in the global South, often associated with displacement and armed conflict, and that the green transition also carries with it the risk of the appropriation of these resources by the North, disastrous effects on the natural environment and Indigenous

17 These include minerals and rare-earth elements such as coltan, lithium, nickel, cobalt, copper, neodymium, magnesium, platinum, titanium, and vanadium.

populations, and the exploitation of children.¹⁸ There is also an increasing focus on the ocean as the source for these resources.¹⁹ We need to reconsider the current Blue Economy framing with a critical lens on the geopolitical and ideological agendas behind it. These should be closely examined in order to identify who and what they truly represent.

Climate change exacerbates the difficulties already faced by Indigenous Communities, including political and economic marginalization, loss of land and resources, human rights violations, discrimination, and unemployment. And yet, as the Joint Report of the Ecumenical Indigenous Peoples Network Reference Group and the Working Group on Climate Change of the World Council of Churches emphasizes, the long experience of Indigenous Peoples living sustainably with nature holds essential wisdom for responding to the global environmental crisis.²⁰

Ten percent of the world's population owns 75 percent of all wealth, receives 50 percent of all income, and is responsible for nearly half of all carbon emissions.²¹ These figures represent a monumental injustice. Those who are most culpable continue to resist the just claims of the victims for support for climate change mitigation and adaptation, and for recompense for the loss and damage already suffered by poorer and more vulnerable nations and communities.

The 11th assembly convenes at the mid-point of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development (2016–30), and it is becoming increasingly clear that many of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are seriously off-track, due to the converging and interrelated crises of climate, COVID-19, conflict, food, energy, finance, and inequality.

18 See Frederique Seidel, *Facts and Findings: Climate Solutions as a Vital Child Protection Measure: Documentation on Violence against Children Fuelled by the Climate Emergency*, 11 November 2022, <https://docs.google.com/document/d/14PGIgdffO3nQdYnri6as1gkdiB3JK82AitTFolxvIQE/edit>. See also Annie Kelly, "Apple and Google Named in US Lawsuit over Congolese Child Cobalt Mining Deaths," *The Guardian*, 16 December 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2019/dec/16/apple-and-google-named-in-us-lawsuit-over-congolese-child-cobalt-mining-deaths>; "CBS News Finds Children Mining Cobalt for Batteries in the Congo," CBS News, 5 March 2018, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/cobalt-children-mining-democratic-republic-congo-cbs-news-investigation/>; Amindeh Blaise Atabong, "Scheme to Stop 'Conflict Minerals' Fails to End Child Labor in DRC, Report Says," Mongabay, 10 May 2022, <https://news.mongabay.com/2022/05/scheme-to-stop-conflict-minerals-fails-to-end-child-labor-in-drc-report-says/>.

19 See "Drawing the Pacific Blue Line."

20 "Joint Report of the Ecumenical Indigenous Peoples Network Reference Group and the Working Group on Climate Change of the World Council of Churches," World Council of Churches website, 9 August 2022, <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/joint-report-of-the-ecumenical-indigenous-peoples-network-reference-group-and-the-working-group-on-climate-change-of-the-world-council-of-churches>.

21 *World Inequality Report 2022*, World Inequality Lab, 7 December 2021, <https://wir2022.wid.world>.

Even now, 425 massive fossil fuel projects—so-called carbon bombs—with the potential to emit over a gigatonne of carbon are either planned or already operating.²² This is twice the world’s total remaining carbon budget needed to have any chance of meeting the Paris Agreement commitments. These weapons of mass environmental destruction must be defused.

The COVID-19 pandemic, particularly in 2020 and 2021, caused major economic impacts globally, with many countries incurring significant debts due to the costs of the pandemic response and lower tax revenues from reduced economic activity. Many debt-stricken countries are also locked into costly build-rebuild cycles due to recurring climate disasters, further increasing their debt burdens. Such debts are swiftly becoming unsustainable for some countries as interest rates rise.

The consequences of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, together with the ongoing economic disruption resulting from the pandemic, are compounding the global food security crisis driven by changing climate conditions, causing food prices to spike. Further, controversy and uncertainty over the supply of oil and gas from Russia has contributed to major increases in fuel prices internationally, with a consequent impact on economic and political stability in a number of countries. And although the danger of irreversible environmental damage from climate change becomes ever more urgent, the global addiction to fossil fuels shows little sign of ending.

There is a danger that the pandemic and the conflict in Ukraine may be used as excuses for failure to achieve the SDGs. Churches must remain agents of hope and voices for justice and accountability: the goals of sustainable development must not be abandoned or allowed to fail. Churches can play a significant role in advocating and working for the realization of Agenda 2030.

The accelerating environmental crisis: the WCC response

With each new piece of evidence of the human-induced threat to future generations and to the living world, and with each new experience of the severity of the consequences, the WCC has raised an increasingly urgent voice of concern and demand for action.

In particular, following the IPCC reports *Global Warming of 1.5°C* (October 2018), *Climate Change and Land* (August 2019), and *The Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate* (September 2019)²³—as well as a series of extreme weather events and other natural disasters around the world that caused many deaths and widespread devastation—the WCC executive

22 “Carbon Bombs,” LINGO, n.d., <https://www.leave-it-in-the-ground.org/projects/carbon-bombs/>.

23 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, “Special Report: Global Warming of 1.5°C,” <https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/>; “Special report: Climate Change and Land,” <https://www.ipcc.ch/srcccl/>; “Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate,” <https://www.ipcc.ch/srocc/>.

committee in November 2019 declared a climate emergency, demanding “an urgent and unprecedented response by everyone everywhere—locally, nationally and internationally.” The executive committee expressed “bitter disappointment at the inadequate and even regressive actions by governments that should be leaders in the response to this emergency,” and called on “member churches, ecumenical partners, other faith communities and all people of good will and moral conscience to find the means whereby we can make a meaningful contribution in our own contexts to averting the most catastrophic consequences of further inaction and negative actions by governments” and to “join in confronting this global crisis through concerted advocacy for climate change mitigation and adaptation, zero fossil fuel use and a ‘just transition.’”²⁴

Following the IPCC Working Group reports (contributing to the IPCC Sixth Synthesis Report) on The Physical Science Basis (August 2021), Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability (February 2022), and Mitigation of Climate Change (April 2022)²⁵—as well as further climate-related disasters around the world—in June 2022 the WCC central committee issued a Statement on the Imperative for Effective Response to the Climate Emergency. In this statement, the central committee observed that “decades of scientific research have validated the reality of the accelerating climate emergency that now confronts us as an actual imminent catastrophe.” The central committee underlined that “the global *metanoia* required to confront this challenge must, first and foremost, entail an urgent phase-out of fossil fuel extraction and use, and a just transition to renewable energy sources that protects the rights of Indigenous Peoples and other marginalized communities and takes gender justice into account. However, in stark contrast to this need, the world is currently on track to produce more than twice as much coal, oil, and gas by 2030 as would be consistent with limiting the rise in global temperature to 1.5°C.” Against this alarming background, the central committee declared that “continuing wilfully on our current destructive path is a crime—against the poor and vulnerable, against those least responsible for the crisis but bearing its heaviest impacts, against our children and future generations, and against the living world.”²⁶

24 WCC Executive Committee, “Statement on the Climate Change Emergency,” World Council of Churches website, 25 November 2019, <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/statement-on-the-climate-change-emergency>.

25 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, “Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis,” <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/sixth-assessment-report-working-group-i>; “Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability,” <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/sixth-assessment-report-working-group-ii>; “Climate Change 2022: Mitigation of Climate Change,” <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/sixth-assessment-report-working-group-3>.

26 WCC Central Committee, “Statement on the Imperative for Effective Response to the Climate Emergency,” World Council of Churches website, 18 June 2022, <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/wcc-central-committee-statement-on-the-imperative-for-effective-response-to-the-climate-emergency>.

The central committee therefore called on the 11th Assembly of the WCC—“the last such global ecumenical assembly within the remaining window of opportunity for action to avoid the worst impacts of climate change”—to serve as a platform “for promoting the ecological *metanoia* we need in the ecumenical movement and in the wider world, through the encounter of churches from rich nations and poor, from the privileged and the imperilled,” encouraged all WCC member churches and ecumenical partners “to come to the Assembly prepared to listen and learn from the stories of struggle and resilience from affected communities, to share their commitments and initiatives, and to match their words with deeds, to help ensure a sustainable future for the living world that God created in such abundance and complexity,” and invited consideration of the establishment of a new Commission on Climate Change and Sustainable Development “in order to bring the appropriate focus to this issue in this pivotal period.”

Decades of advocacy by the WCC have articulated the need for action to reduce emissions to sustainable levels, for a just transition to a sustainable future, and for climate justice for the most vulnerable poorer communities and Indigenous Peoples, reflecting the historic responsibility of the most developed industrialized nations. Throughout the period since the assembly in Busan, the WCC has continued to engage in advocacy—often with interfaith partners—in the UN climate change conferences (Conference of Parties to the UNFCCC) and other intergovernmental forums. Adding to and complementing this advocacy, the WCC has during this period worked to present to its members and partners practical means by which they might take meaningful action in their own contexts, including through the *Roadmap for Congregations, Communities and Churches for an Economy of Life and Ecological Justice*,²⁷ *Walk the Talk*,²⁸ and the recent Climate-Responsible Finance initiative.²⁹

Elements of the WCC’s response have also been carried forward through its leadership of the Ecumenical Water Network, and the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance Food for Life Campaign, as well as through partnerships such as the International Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development (PaRD) and the Interfaith Rainforest Initiative (IRI). And recognizing that the root causes of the climate and environmental crisis lie in the unjust and unsustainably exploitative economic models that currently prevail, the

²⁷ *Roadmap for Congregations, Communities, and Churches for an Economy of Life and Ecological Justice* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 2019), <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/roadmap-for-congregations-communities-and-churches-for-an-economy-of-life-and-ecological-justice>.

²⁸ Athena Peralta, ed., *Walk the Talk: A Toolkit to Accompany the “Roadmap for Congregations, Communities and Churches for an Economy of Life and Ecological Justice”* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2021), <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/publications/walk-the-talk>.

²⁹ “Climate-Responsible Finance—a Moral Imperative towards Children,” World Council of Churches website, <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/climate-responsible-finance-a-moral-imperative-towards-children>.

WCC has continued to promote an “Economy of Life” through the New International Financial and Economic Architecture (NIFEA) programme—reflected also in the November 2018 WCC executive committee Statement on the Urgent Challenge of Economic Transformation: 10 Years after the Global Financial Crisis.³⁰ Responding to the interconnected global health, economic, and ecological crises, the WCC, together with sister ecumenical bodies, has pointed to the urgency of system change and of rooting our systems in the New Creation where the justice and the care of the Creator is “reflected not in a Creation exploited endlessly but blessed deeply.”³¹

The WCC Faith and Order Commission has also produced *Cultivate and Care: An Ecumenical Theology of Justice for and within Creation*,³² and the WCC partnered with United Evangelical Mission (UEM), Brot für die Welt (Bread for the World), the Protestant Church in Germany (EKD), and the Protestant Association of Churches and Mission (EMW) to publish *Kairos for Creation: Confessing Hope for the Earth*.³³

30 WCC Executive Committee, “Statement on the Urgent Challenge of Economic Transformation,” World Council of Churches website, 7 November 2018, <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/statement-on-the-urgent-challenge-of-economic-transformation>.

31 “Calling for an Economy of Life in a Time of Pandemic—A Joint Message from the WCC, WCRC, LWF, and CWM,” World Council of Churches, 15 May 2020, <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/calling-for-an-economy-of-life-in-a-time-of-pandemic-a-joint-message-from-the-wcc-wcrc-lwf-and-cwm>.

32 *Cultivate and Care: An Ecumenical Theology of Justice for and within Creation*, Faith and Order Paper No. 226 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2020), <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/publications/cultivate-and-care>.

33 Louk Andrianos et al., eds, *Kairos for Creation—Confessing Hope for the Earth* (Solingen: Foedus, 2020), <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/kairos-for-creation-confessing-hope-for-the-earth>.

The Things that Make for Peace— Moving the World to Reconciliation and Unity

Statement prepared by the Public Issues Committee at the 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Karlsruhe, Germany, and adopted by consensus by the assembly.

If you, even you, had only recognized on this day the things that make for peace!

But now they are hidden from your eyes.

Luke 19:42

As we meet in the 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC) in Karlsruhe, Germany, almost three years since the emergence of the COVID-19 global pandemic, we must acknowledge with deep pain and dismay that violence and conflict continue to impact vulnerable communities, especially the elderly, women, children, and youth.

The life and work of the WCC since the 10th Assembly in Busan has been framed as a Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace, drawing especially on *An Ecumenical Call to Just Peace* and the 10th Assembly “Statement on the Way of Just Peace.”¹ “The Statement on the Way of Just Peace” describes just peace as “a journey into God’s purpose for humanity and all creation” and expresses its vision in four dimensions: just peace in the community, just peace with the earth, just peace in the marketplace, and just peace among the nations.

We meet in a time of renewed and escalating global polarization, reconfiguration of governance and geopolitical alignments, division, confrontation, and militarization—as well as continuing military occupations in situations such as the Occupied Palestinian Territories and Cyprus—with all the appalling risks that attend this context. In the community, grave concerns are being raised in the ecumenical fellowship about the instrumentalization of religious language, authority, and leadership to justify, support, or “bless” armed aggression or any kind of violence and oppression, in sharp contrast to the Christian calling to be peacemakers and in contradiction to core ecumenical principles.

¹*An Ecumenical Call to Just Peace* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2011), <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/ecumenical-call-to-just-peace>; “Statement on the Way of Just Peace,” in *Encountering the God of life: Report of the 10th Assembly of the World Council of Churches*, ed. Erlinda N. Senturias and Theodore A. Gill, Jr. (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2014), 282–88; WCC Digital Archive: <https://archive.org/details/encounteringthego00unse/page/282>.

We understand that making peace involves addressing racism, xenophobia, antisemitism, hate speech, and other forms of hatred of the other (all of which have increased and intensified during these years, in large part encouraged by populist nationalist movements); crisis and competition for essential resources for life; economic injustice and inequality in the marketplace; interstate conflicts and re-emergence of war; and the raising of the spectre of nuclear war.

These threats to peace fundamentally violate the core tenets of the Christian faith. The calling to dialogue, encounter, and the pursuit of mutual understanding is the very essence of ecumenism and is central to peacemaking. It is the role of churches to embody “Christ’s love [that] moves the world to reconciliation and unity.”

The 11th Assembly of the WCC, therefore,

Affirms the demand for prophetic truth-telling, **recognizes** the urgent need for a deep renewed dialogue within the ecumenical movement on the implications of our Christian faith for our witness for peace in the world and for our ecumenical commitment to the “Way of Just Peace,” and **urges** the WCC to exercise leadership, in cooperation with others, to convene such dialogue.

Strongly affirms the commitment of the WCC and its member churches to peacemaking through interreligious dialogue and cooperation at all levels, as a key contribution to countering the forces of division, confrontation, polarization, and injustice, and **urges** the WCC and the entire ecumenical fellowship to continue and deepen this engagement.

Rejects the polarization and division of the human community and **declares** our commitment to stay together as an ecumenical fellowship and to grapple with the threats and challenges to peace, justice, human security, and environmental sustainability through dialogue, encounter, the pursuit of mutual understanding, and cooperation, rather than through exclusion and confrontation.

Appeals for much greater financial and practical support by the international community for peacebuilding and peacemaking rather than for division and military confrontation and **underlines** the important role of women and youth as peacemakers and of nonviolent conflict transformation.

Reasserts the ecumenical movement’s rejection and denunciation of war as contrary to the will of God.

Calls for a global ceasefire, as an urgent moral imperative, in all armed conflicts around the world, and for parties to such conflicts to engage and persist in dialogue and negotiations until just and sustainable peace can be achieved and to abstain from war.

Urges WCC member churches and partners to actively support and accompany the Korean churches in their advocacy by carrying forward the

heritage of the 10th Assembly affirmed by the “Statement on Peace and Reunification of the Korean Peninsula.”²

Recognizes Article 9 of the Constitution of Japan³ as an important heritage from the ashes of the Second World War and a unique resource for peace globally. We encourage Christians and all people around the world to stand with the churches and civil society of Japan in their efforts to protect this heritage and commend this principle to other nations.

Calls for renewed commitment by the WCC and the ecumenical movement to revive *diakonia* and respond to the emergencies and humanitarian needs brought about by violence and instability in places such as Ethiopia, Nigeria, Cameroon, South Sudan, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mozambique, Sudan, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, the Philippines, and West Papua, and to stand in Christian solidarity with the churches and people of all affected countries and regions.

Recognizes WCC accompaniment during the peace and reconciliation process in Colombia through DiPaz (Interchurch Dialogue for Peace in Colombia). As the new government brings new hope for the continuation of the peace process,⁴ the assembly urges the WCC and the international community to reaffirm commitment and solidarity with the Colombian government, churches, and people, and to collaborate in the design, implementation, advocacy, and funding for the construction of peace in the country.

Urges support for the churches and peoples of Syria, Cuba, Venezuela, and Zimbabwe in the midst of oppression due to international sanctions that affect these populations’ human rights and dignity. Churches have been crucial agents working for better relationships despite the limitations and barriers caused by sanctions. We **call for** the removal of Cuba from the list of countries that sponsor terrorism and to accompany the churches as prophetic voices of peace, hope, cooperation, and mutual respect.

Invites reflection and discussion within and among the member churches of the WCC fellowship on Christian principles and perspectives with regard to the doctrine of nuclear deterrence.

2 “Statement on Peace and Reunification of the Korean Peninsula,” in Senturias and Gill, eds, *Encountering the God of Life*, 277–82; WCC Digital Archive: <https://archive.org/details/encounteringthego0unse/page/277>.

3 “Renunciation of War,” Chapter II, Article 9, *The Constitution of Japan*, 3 November 1946, https://japan.kantei.go.jp/constitution_and_government_of_japan/constitution_e.html.

4 Gustavo Petro Urrego (President of the Republic of Colombia) to Rev. Dr Ioan Sauca (Acting General Secretary of the World Council of Churches), 22 August 2022, <https://drive.google.com/file/d/10iAPWW6jhXf56g0s6Gijgv5e2Gy5E684/view>.

Urges all states that have not already done so to sign and ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons,⁵ especially nuclear umbrella states and nuclear-armed states that are the source of this global threat.

Calls for full implementation of commitments made under other disarmament conventions, especially the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT),⁶ the Landmine Ban Treaty,⁷ and the Convention on Cluster Munitions,⁸ as well as the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW)⁹ and article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT),¹⁰ which commits its 191 member states—including the five main nuclear weapons states—to pursuing negotiations in good faith on effective measures for complete nuclear disarmament.

Expresses strong support for a global pre-emptive ban on autonomous weapons systems (Killer Robots and drones) and **urges** states to desist from obstructing progress to this ban and to engage in good faith negotiations for this purpose.

Denounces the military-industrial complex, which profits from the economics of war and violence and the proliferation and export of weapons, and **calls** for a moratorium and, ultimately, an end to the export of the weapons and armaments that fuel conflicts around the world.

Demands full legal accountability for all perpetrators of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and other serious violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, including attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure; sexual and gender-based violence in conflict; the use of food and access to food,

5 UN General Assembly, Resolution 71/258, Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (adopted 7 July 2017; entered into force 22 January 2021), https://treaties.un.org/doc/Treaties/2017/07/20170707%2003-42%20PM/Ch_XXVI_9.pdf.

6 Arms Trade Treaty, ATT website, <https://thearmstradetreaty.org/treaty-text.html?templateId=209884>; UN General Assembly, Resolution 61/89, Arms Trade Treaty (adopted 2 April 2013; entered into force 24 December 2014), <https://www.un.org/disarmament/convarms/arms-trade-treaty-2/>.

7 See the International Campaign to Ban Landmines website, <http://www.icbl.org/en-gb/the-treaty.aspx>; UN General Assembly, Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, 1997; UN General Assembly, Resolution 74/61, Implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, adopted 1997; entered into force 1 March 1999), <http://www.icbl.org/en-gb/the-treaty.aspx>.

8 Convention on Cluster Munitions website <https://www.clusterconvention.org>; UN General Assembly, Convention on Cluster Munitions (adopted 30 May 2008; entered into force 1 August 2010), <https://www.clusterconvention.org/>.

9 UN General Assembly, Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (adopted 10 October 1980; entered into force 2 December 1983), <https://www.un.org/disarmament/the-convention-on-certain-conventional-weapons/>.

10 UN General Assembly, Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (entered into force 5 March 1970; extended indefinitely 11 May 1995), <https://www.un.org/disarmament/wmd/nuclear/npt/text/>.

water, and medical care as weapons of war; and any use of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction.

Denounces every instance of the violation of freedom of religion or belief and **affirms** the freedom of religion or belief for all people of faith and people of no faith everywhere, and the right of conscientious objection for a peaceful world.

Calls for greatly increased investment by governments and other actors in the foundations of true human security and global stability, including for urgent action to achieve climate justice and to avert the threat of catastrophic climate change, and for a just transition to renewable energy, for the elimination of extreme poverty, for sustainable development, and for measures to control rampant inequality, including through tax justice and reparations—all of which if not addressed will fuel conflict.

Supports renewed efforts to reform and improve the effectiveness of UN and other intergovernmental instruments for promoting peace and human security and **encourages** the WCC to explore ways in which churches and the ecumenical movement may make a meaningful contribution in this regard.

Calls for the lifting of sanctions and/or addressing the negative impacts of such sanctions on ordinary people in countries such as Syria, Cuba, Venezuela, and Zimbabwe, and **encourages** further study of the effectiveness of international sanctions against perpetrators of violence and oppression, and the negative impacts of insufficiently targeted sanctions on ordinary people, and on humanitarian response, social service, and peacebuilding—especially by churches and related organizations—in affected countries.

Urges the WCC to engage with ACT Alliance and other international actors to support efforts towards a new international harm reduction policy to replace the “war against drugs” military paradigm.

Suggests that the WCC cooperate with ACT Alliance and other ecumenical partners, as well as UN and civil society partners, to strengthen the capacity of churches around the world for psychosocial counselling and support, especially in conflict-affected settings.

Prays that the love of Christ will move this suffering and divided world to reconciliation and unity and that all perpetrators of violence and division will repent of their sins and act to restore justice and peace.

Background information

Interstate conflicts and re-emergence of war

Among the nations, conflict and armed violence has continued to be a tragically prominent reality. The European region and historical moment in which the 11th Assembly convenes is particularly marked by the re-emergence of interstate conflict on the continent of Europe due to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. Entailing terrible suffering for the Ukrainian people as well as for

many more around the world, the war in Ukraine is massively compounding a global food and energy crisis, contributing to economic, social, and political instability in many places far beyond the borders of Europe, and provoking a renewed military confrontation between Russia and the West, raising again the spectre of nuclear war.

After a brief window of opportunity for peace was squandered, the Korean Peninsula—where the 10th Assembly met—has again slipped into renewed confrontation and escalating conflict risk.

Though the war in Syria has abated, peace, justice, and stability remain distant prospects for the Syrian people. The so-called Islamic State—an empire of terrorist brutality—has risen and fallen, but with lingering consequences for human security and social cohesion in Syria, Iraq, the Middle East region, and the wider world. In Israel and Palestine, periodic outbursts of bloody violence—especially affecting the people of Gaza, as well as many others in the region—have occurred throughout this period, during which the military occupation of the Palestinian territories has continued and the long-standing demands for justice and equal human rights have remained unfulfilled.

In South Sudan and Colombia, solemn commitments to peace have languished for lack of implementation.

The people of other priority countries for the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace, such as Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, have continued to be afflicted by persistent conflict, violence, and instability.

Moreover, new conflicts have emerged or escalated, in the anglophone region of Cameroon, in Yemen, and in Ethiopia, where fierce fighting has recently resumed between Ethiopian federal forces and the Tigray People's Liberation Front after a five-month humanitarian truce. And in Myanmar, the democratically-elected government was displaced by a military coup in February 2021, following which the people of the country have been subjected to increasing oppression, violence, and displacement.

The situation in Kosovo and Metohija warrants closer attention by the WCC and the international community and increased comprehensive protection of the Serbian Orthodox Church community in Kosovo and Metohija.

The spectre of nuclear war

Since the WCC's 1st Assembly in 1948 in Amsterdam—where the WCC described nuclear weapons as a “sin against God” and “a crime against humanity”—the WCC has consistently and continuously called for a world free from nuclear weapons. The victims of the terrible effects of the first and, so far, the only use of nuclear weapons in conflict—in Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945—demand their elimination. Any use of nuclear weapons today would result in catastrophic humanitarian consequences to which no country would have adequate capacity to respond. The consequences could not be constrained by national borders and would linger for thousands of years. Even if never

again used in war, the effects of historic nuclear testing programmes on the health and environments of thousands, possibly millions of people and their descendants in the Pacific region, Australia, the US, Algeria, Kazakhstan, and elsewhere are grave and ongoing.

Supported by the efforts of the WCC and its ecumenical, interfaith, and civil society partners in the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN),¹¹ the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) was adopted by the UN in 2017, and entered into force in January 2021. States ratifying the TPNW accept that they are prohibited from developing, testing, producing, manufacturing, transferring, possessing, stockpiling, using, or threatening to use nuclear weapons or allowing nuclear weapons to be stationed on their territory. The TPNW has already created a new normative standard in international law that is on the way to delegitimizing the very existence of nuclear weapons, as well as introducing positive obligations for victim assistance and environmental remediation.

However, nuclear-armed states continue to maintain, develop, and increase their nuclear arsenals; other states still aspire to such weapons as the ultimate form of leverage in international relations, and nuclear umbrella states continue to look to nuclear-armed allies as a key pillar of their security. But a security guarantee that threatens global devastation is illusory, illegitimate, and morally indefensible. Far from preserving peace and security, the mere possession of nuclear weapons serves to coerce and intimidate, to inflame tensions, and to facilitate aggression. The very existence of the most indiscriminately destructive weapons that human beings have ever created violates the fundamental tenets of the Christian faith. Such weapons are not safe in any human hands, and they must be eliminated.

Proliferation of weapons

In addition to nuclear weapons, the proliferation of other weapons in the context of conflict and escalating confrontation—including the uncontrolled spread of small arms and light weapons in communities—presents grave challenges for peace and human security.

Meanwhile, the development of new types of weapons and new theatres of conflict—such as autonomous weapons systems (Killer Robots),¹² drones, and cyber-warfare—threaten a new and perilous global arms race.

Increased military spending inevitably comes at the cost of essential investment in peacebuilding, the elimination of extreme poverty, climate action, a just transition to renewable energy, and other investments in sustainable development and economic justice that are necessary for true human security and global stability. The direction of even more financial resources away from

11 International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), n.d., <https://www.icanw.org/>.

12 Stop Killer Robots, 2021, <https://www.stopkillerrobots.org/>.

these purposes and towards the means of making war is self-defeating and unacceptable.

Polarization and division

Polarization, division, and exclusion is the antithesis of the purpose of the ecumenical movement. Accordingly, the worldwide ecumenical fellowship must actively and assertively resist all such forces of division and proclaim instead the reconciliation and unity to which the love of Christ calls us. In this historical moment and context, it is an urgent imperative of our Christian faith and witness in the world.

In 1948, the assembly in Amsterdam held that “war is contrary to the will of God.”¹³ In 1975, the assembly in Nairobi called on churches to “emphasize their readiness to live without the protection of armaments and take a significant initiative in pressing for effective disarmament.”¹⁴ In 1983, the assembly in Vancouver considered that the time had come when “the churches must declare that the production and deployment as well as the use of nuclear weapons are a crime against humanity.”¹⁵ In 2006, the assembly in Port Alegre affirmed the responsibility to protect, with the prevention of assaults on individuals and communities its primary focus and recognizing that any resort to armed force represents a failure of that responsibility.¹⁶ In 2013, the assembly in Busan charted the “way of just peace” and asserted that “we must join other communities of faith and people of good will to . . . delegitimize the institution of war.”¹⁷ The direction of our collective ecumenical journey is abundantly clear, and it stands in stark and opposition to the direction of the world today.

Grave concerns are being raised in the ecumenical fellowship about the instrumentalization of religious language, authority, and leadership to justify, support, or “bless” armed aggression or any kind of violence and oppression, in sharp contrast to the Christian calling to be peacemakers and in contradiction to core ecumenical principles. Consequently, a fresh and critical analysis—and

13 *The First Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Held at Amsterdam August 22nd to September 4th, 1948*, ed. W. A. Visser 't Hooft (London: SCM Press, 1949), 89.

14 *Breaking Barriers: Nairobi 1975. The Official Report of the Fifth Assembly of the World Council of Churches*, ed. David M. Paton (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1975), 182.

15 *Gathered for Life: Official Report, 6th Assembly, World Council of Churches, Vancouver, Canada, 24 July–10 August 1983*, ed. David Gill (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1983), 75.

16 “Vulnerable Populations at Risk: Statement on the Responsibility to Protect,” in *God, in your grace . . . Official Report of the Ninth Assembly of the World Council of Churches* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2014), 303–11.

17 “Statement on the Way of Just Peace,” in *Encountering the God of Life: Report of the 10th Assembly of the World Council of Churches*, ed. Erlinda N. Senturias and Theodore A. Gill, Jr (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2014), 282.

deep and sustained dialogue—on these issues and on the Christian faith in its relation to politics, the nation, and nationalism is urgently called for.

Reform of international governance for peace and security

The current constellation of conflicts and converging threats to peace and human security also demands serious re-examination of intergovernmental structures, policy, and practice for the promotion of peace and prevention of war—including long-overdue reform of the UN Security Council.

The impotence of the post-World War II international security architecture, when one of the five permanent members (P5) of the UN Security Council is the perpetrator of armed aggression, has once again been thrown into sharp relief by the Ukraine conflict and inspired fresh calls for reform. Many previous attempts to reform the UN Security Council for greater inclusion and better effectiveness—and to prevent misuse of the veto power—have been signally unsuccessful. However, the recent initiative led by Liechtenstein requiring a UN General Assembly debate whenever a veto is cast in the Security Council represents a small sign of hope and applies a certain measure of accountability to veto-holding P5 members of the Security Council. While this initiative still falls short of the needed reform, it is a step in the right direction toward a greater measure of justice in the UN's pre-eminent forum at a time when effective international governance for peace and security is most sorely needed and most seriously threatened.

Respect for and accountability to international humanitarian and human rights law is an essential foundation for international peace and justice. And yet states increasingly flout and undermine it or invoke it only in pursuit of their own perceived interests. States must recommit to the universal and impartial application of these obligations, and the mechanisms of legal accountability to these principles must be strengthened.

Violations of international humanitarian and human rights law

In addition to the tragically frequent attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure (including hospitals and schools) in conflicts during these years—affecting especially vulnerable populations—food or access to food is increasingly being used as a weapon of war. Moreover, anti-personnel landmines, which have continued to be deployed despite the Landmine Ban Treaty of 1997, not only kill and maim indiscriminately and often long after conflict has ended, but also render productive agricultural land unusable and impede access to water sources in many affected rural locations. Cluster munitions—another indiscriminate weapons system banned by most countries—have also repeatedly been used in recent conflicts, with innocent children often the victims.

Violence against children

The elimination of violence against children, among the most vulnerable members of society and the hope for the future of our communities, has become an important priority for the WCC following the mandate given by the assembly in Busan. In addition to violence suffered by children in the context of conflict, children face the threat of violence in their communities and even in their homes, with lockdowns during the COVID-19 pandemic having increased the salience of this threat and the incidence of such violence at home. The *Churches' Commitments to Children* have provided an important framework for ecumenical engagement in the elimination of violence against children, including through the role of churches in ensuring child-safe church environments as well as in addressing violence against children in their societies and homes.¹⁸

The role of women and youth in peacemaking

Together with children, women are often the victims of armed conflicts instigated and perpetrated by men. Whether as victims of indiscriminate attacks, or targeted for sexual violence, or killed or maimed by the lingering detritus of conflict, women carry the burden of men's wars. Gender injustice continues to be widely prevalent, undermining the prospects of women and girls throughout the world. Despite important progress in some areas, women's human rights have been rolled back in others. Moreover, lockdowns in many countries during the COVID-19 pandemic exposed women and girls to heightened risks of domestic violence, and sexual and gender-based violence has continued to be an abhorrent reality in many societies and many contexts, including through the recurrent use of rape as a weapon of war.

However, as Pilgrim Team Visits undertaken in the context of the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace have demonstrated, women have a powerful but under-recognized and under-supported agency as peacemakers. Likewise, young people, who otherwise must fight and suffer the most direct impacts of the wars launched by their elders, should be given a much more significant space in the fields of peacemaking and peacebuilding.

Governmental and intergovernmental actors, as well as churches and related organizations, must do more to support the role of women and young people as agents of peace. The international system has provided mechanisms by which to support this goal, including UN Resolution 1325 and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.¹⁹

18 *Churches' Commitments to Children: Churches Uniting for Children in the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace*, 22 February 2017, World Council of Churches and UNICEF, <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/churches-commitments-to-children>.

19 UN Security Council, Resolution 1325, Women and Peace and Security, adopted 31 October 2000; UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (adopted 20 November 1989; came into force 2 September 1990).

Sanctions

In the experience of the WCC, sanctions and other coercive economic measures rarely achieve their stated purposes and invariably do significant harm to the civilian population, especially to women, children, and other vulnerable groups. Syria is an important case in point. International and unilateral sanctions are contributing to worsening the humanitarian situation, harming a civilian population already made vulnerable by war. Moreover, sanctions are damaging the historical multicultural and multireligious fabric of the Syrian society, forcing Christians and other Indigenous groups to flee the country.

Together with Caritas Internationalis and World Evangelical Alliance, and in cooperation with ACT Alliance, the WCC has commissioned a research project on the negative impacts of sanctions on humanitarian response, social service, and peacebuilding in a number of affected countries. The results of this research project are awaited.

Trauma healing

The experience of victims of war and violence is often carried into the future through psychological trauma that may persist long after any physical wounds have healed. That trauma, especially if widespread in a conflict-affected society, may reduce resilience and predispose toward repeated cycles of violence. Intergenerational effects of trauma perpetuate the effects of war and violence. This vicious cycle must be broken by the healing of memories through psychosocial counselling and support, which churches have a powerful potential to facilitate.

Climate crisis and competition for essential resources for life

In humanity's relations with the earth, a crisis has become a global emergency, due to this generation's failure to recognize—let alone effectively address—the unprecedented threat of climate change, and to take the actions at governmental and societal level that are needed to avert it. The consequence of armed conflict, especially in the case of the current war in Ukraine, is driving the world even more rapidly towards the precipice of climate catastrophe, while undermining prospects for effective intergovernmental cooperation at the global level to change this suicidal course.

Concurrently, increasing levels of deforestation are weakening Earth's own resilience and accelerating the disastrous rate of biodiversity loss, while environmental contamination by microplastics and chemical pollutants raises further concerns for human and environmental well-being. Incidentally, a deteriorating environment and the diminution of Earth's capacity to sustain human communities increase the risks of armed conflict due to increasing competition for water, food, land, and other essential resources for life.

Economic injustice and inequality in the marketplace

Economic injustice, inequality, and the gulf between the richest few and the overwhelming majority of others has become vastly greater, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic and, more recently, the war in Ukraine that has caused so much suffering for so many but during which the privileged few have earned exceptional windfall gains.

The World Inequality Report 2022 demonstrates that the richest 10 percent of the global population currently takes 52 percent of global income, whereas the poorest half of the population earns 8.5 percent of it; and whilst the poorest half of the global population barely owns any wealth at all—possessing just 2 percent of the total—the richest 10 percent of the global population owns 76 percent of all wealth. Income and wealth inequalities have been on the rise nearly everywhere since the 1980s, have escalated significantly in more recent years, and currently stand close to early 20th-century levels, at the peak of Western imperialism.²⁰

Such inequality is not inevitable but is rather a political and (im)moral choice with grave consequences for social stability, peace, and justice. Although agreement was reached in 2021 on a global minimum corporate tax rate of 15 percent, corporations and the wealthiest individuals routinely continue to avoid the redistributive mechanism of taxation through the widespread use of tax havens and other techniques. The appeal for tax justice goes largely unheard and unmet.

²⁰ *World Inequality Report 2022*, coord. Lucas Chancel, Thomas Piketty, Emmanuel Saez, and Gabriel Zucman (World Inequality Lab, 2021), <https://wir2022.wid.world/>.

Seeking Justice and Peace for All in the Middle East

Statement prepared by the Public Issues Committee at the 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Karlsruhe, Germany, and adopted by consensus by the assembly.

“Peace, peace,” they say, when there is no peace.
Jeremiah 6:14; 8:11(NIV)

Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid.
Matthew 14:27 (NRSV)

The World Council of Churches (WCC) looks to the Middle East region as the place of the historical origins of our faith, where Jesus Christ was born, crucified, and resurrected. The worldwide ecumenical fellowship has always sought to be in active solidarity with the Christians of the Middle East, who are living in continuation of an unbroken line of faithful Christian witness in the multireligious contexts of their countries, making vital contributions to the vibrant diversity and development of their societies.

Upheavals, violent extremism using religion as justification, ongoing military occupations, discrimination and systematic violations of human rights, economic crises and corruption, absence of the rule of law, and other factors have contributed to an existential crisis for all in the region. This is particularly affecting vulnerable communities, including Christians, who are facing displacement and mass migration.

In this 11th Assembly of the WCC in Karlsruhe, Germany, we **recognize** the threat to the future of the Indigenous Christians and of all the people of the Middle East. We **affirm** that the best means of averting this threat is equal rights, inclusive citizenship, and justice and dignity for all, without religious or racial discrimination. We **commit** to the guiding principles of “God’s justice and love for all of creation, the fundamental rights of all people, respect for human dignity, solidarity with the needy and dialogue with people of other faith” that remain the foundation of our ecumenical response to the region¹

Sadly, the reality on the ground in different countries of the Middle East challenges this vision.

¹ See “Minute on the Presence and Witness of Christians in the Middle East,” in *Minutes of the Fifty-Ninth Meeting of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, 13-20 February 2011, Geneva, Switzerland* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2011), 32; WCC Digital Archive: <https://archive.org/details/fiftyninthmeetin00unse/page/32>.

In Palestine/Israel, there is another wave of forced displacement of Palestinian people from their homes—sometimes on multiple occasions since 1948—as in Sheikh Jarrah, Silwan, the South Hebron Hills, as well as in the rest of Area C. The expanding Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories, especially those encircling East Jerusalem, are illegal under international law and threaten fundamental demographic and political changes to the region. Moreover, they have so undermined any practical prospect of a two-state solution that this path toward a just peace now seems increasingly unviable.

The expansion of the settlements and the increased military presence that accompanies them have brought more suffering for Palestinian communities, with more encroachment on and seizure of Palestinian lands and properties, and increased systematic harassment and attacks by settlers (especially in the absence of the protective presence of international visitors during the COVID-19 pandemic).

In Gaza, we have recently again seen an escalation of the vicious cycle of violence. The WCC categorically condemns all such deadly and destructive violence, whether perpetrated by Israeli forces or by Palestinian armed groups. The situation in Israel/Palestine cannot be resolved by violence but only by peaceful means in accordance with international law.

We affirm the rightful place of the State of Israel in the community of nations and recognize its legitimate security needs. At the same time we affirm the right of the Palestinians for self-determination and that the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories since 1967, as well as settlement construction and expansion in the occupied territories, is illegal under international law and must be ended. We believe that it is only through an end to the occupation, and a just, comprehensive, and lasting peace settlement, that the security of both Palestinians and Israelis can be assured.

In June 2022, the WCC central committee observed that “the discrimination against Palestinians is overt and systemic, and the ongoing half-century-long occupation continues to contradict the equal human dignity and human rights of Palestinians living under this system of control, while the response of the international community continues to reflect egregious double standards.”² The recent suppression of several Palestinian human rights organizations by the Israeli authorities without any effective opposition by the international community is an emblematic example of this system of control and these double standards. For Palestinian people, the situation is sadly compounded by the grave failings of the Palestinian authorities, including reprisals against opposition leaders and the lack of legal and democratic accountability.

² WCC Central Committee, “Statement on Threats to a Just Peace in Israel and Palestine, and to the Christian Presence in the Holy Land,” World Council of Churches website, 18 June 2022, <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/wcc-central-committee-statement-on-threats-to-a-just-peace-in-israel-and-palestine-and-to-the-christian-presence-in-the-holy-land>.

Recently, numerous international, Israeli, and Palestinian human rights organizations and legal bodies have published studies and reports describing the policies and actions of Israel as amounting to “apartheid” under international law. Within this assembly, some churches and delegates strongly support the utilization of this term as accurately describing the reality of the people in Palestine/Israel and the position under international law, while others find it inappropriate, unhelpful, and painful. We are not of one mind on this matter. We must continue to struggle with this issue while we continue working together on this journey of justice and peace. We pray that the WCC continues to provide a safe space for its member churches for conversation and collaboration in pursuing truth and working for a just peace among all people of the region.

With regard to the particular situation of Christians in Israel/Palestine, we are hearing the pleas of the heads of churches in the Holy Land more than ever before in relation to mounting intimidation, violations, limitation of access to places of worship, and attacks by Israeli radicals and authorities on the Christian presence and identity in Jerusalem, threatening the Status Quo and the multireligious and multicultural identity of the city.

Elsewhere in the Middle East, such as Syria after the so-called “Arab Spring” of 2011 and Iraq after the 2003 invasion, the people have been victims of conflict, wars and proxy wars, geopolitical pressures, sanctions and international interventions, violent religious extremism, gross violations of human rights and of international humanitarian law, and economic crisis. This has led to straining the already weakened social fabric, social capital, and trust, paving the way for hate and demonizing and dehumanizing narratives of the other based on exclusionary constructions of the collective national identities.

Moreover, several United Nations reports have identified drought (resulting from climate change) as one of the driving factors to the onset of the conflict in Syria. After a decade of war that has already had a destructive impact on agricultural infrastructure and resulted in displacement of farming and herder communities, this extreme drought is turning Syria into a new climate hotspot. Furthermore, Iraq has been ranked the fifth-most vulnerable country to climate breakdown, affected by soaring temperatures, intensified droughts and water scarcity, frequent sand and dust storms, and flooding. Climate change challenges are seriously affecting the region and need to be addressed properly.

A prosperous life in dignity, safety, and security can only be achieved under the rule of law, territorial unity, and through sovereignty of the political, judicial, cultural, and economic institutions in both countries. Sustainable peace is assured if based on values of justice, equal citizenship, and equal human rights for all.

We have greatly appreciated the opportunities presented by this assembly for fellowship and Christian solidarity with sisters and brothers from the

Middle East, and for intensive ecumenical conversations and consultations on the path forward toward a just peace in the region.

The 11th Assembly of the WCC **expresses** the firm commitment of the worldwide ecumenical fellowship to strengthening our support for and cooperation with the churches of the Middle East, the Middle East Council of Churches (MECC), and faith-based and civil society partners in order to seek a just and sustainable peace in the region.

The 11th Assembly particularly calls on:

- the members of the worldwide ecumenical fellowship to listen to the voices and repeated pleas of the churches and Christian communities of the region, and to accompany them in prayer and action.
- all member churches concerned for lasting peace and security for all in the Middle East to engage actively in efforts of dialogue with all sides, in order to find a solution that respects and upholds the human rights and inclusive citizenship for everyone living in the region.
- the worldwide ecumenical fellowship of churches to consult and reflect on an alternative policy, perspective, and comprehensive solution for Palestine/Israel where all people have equal rights before the law, as opposed to the current systems of control, exclusion, and discrimination.
- the WCC to examine, discuss, and discern the implications of the recent reports by B'Tselem, Human Rights Watch, and Amnesty International, and for its governing bodies to respond appropriately.
- the WCC, its member churches, and partners to support and maintain the vital and precious work of WCC programmes in the region, such as the Jerusalem Liaison Office (JLO), the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI), and the Palestine Israel Ecumenical Forum (PIEF), engaging a wider WCC constituency together with the local churches, Christian communities, and other faith partners.
- the WCC to strengthen its newly-created transversal programme on racism so as to include the Middle East region.
- the WCC to increase its efforts in its present programmatic work in collaboration with its member churches in the Middle East to articulate principles for living together peacefully in post-conflict societies with equal citizenship, human rights, and dignity.
- the WCC to facilitate encounter and dialogue in the diverse multireligious and multicultural societies of the region, especially

of Syria and Iraq, to help protect these countries' religious, ethnic, and cultural diversity, and to promote social cohesion.

- the international community to call for lifting the unilateral sanctions on Syria that are harming the population rather than achieving their stated goals.
- the government of Israel to lift the blockade on Gaza.
- all Christian sisters and brothers to join in prayer for the release and safe return of the Syriac Orthodox Archbishop Yohanna Ibrahim and the Greek Orthodox Archbishop Paul Yazigi, who were kidnapped more than nine years ago. “These beloved bishops have become iconic figures of all those innocent, unjustly detained, tortured, and forcibly disappeared persons.”³
- the worldwide ecumenical fellowship of churches to join in prayer for the people of the Middle East, including Lebanon, whose people are suffering from very difficult conditions of life.

³ “WCC encourages prayer for release of archbishops of Aleppo and others missing, detained and disappeared,” World Council of Churches news release, 19 April 2022, <https://www.oikoumene.org/news/wcc-encourages-prayer-for-release-of-archbishops-of-aleppo-and-others-missing-detained-and-disappeared>.

Minute on Ending the War and Building Peace on the Korean Peninsula

Minute prepared by the Public Issues Committee at the 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Karlsruhe, Germany, and adopted by consensus by the assembly.

The 10th Assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC) in 2013 in Busan, South Korea, drew the attention of the worldwide ecumenical movement to the ongoing search for peace, reconciliation, and reunification of the divided Korean people, and adopted a “Statement on Peace and Reunification of the Korean Peninsula.”¹ The WCC has intensified its engagement and undertaken many relevant initiatives and actions during the intervening period.

It is 77 years since the division of the peninsula and its people under the global Cold War system. And despite the signing of an armistice agreement on 27 July 1953, the Korean War still has not been formally ended. Over the past 40 years, the WCC has, together with the National Council of Churches in [South] Korea (NCCK) and the Korean Christian Federation (KCF) in North Korea, engaged in and supported dialogue and cooperation for peace, and promoted global ecumenical solidarity for peace on the Korean Peninsula and reunification of its people.

Following the assembly in Busan, a period of escalating tensions was followed by a moment of high hope for peace in the region. However, renewed tensions and increased risk of potentially catastrophic conflict once again prevail.

Carrying forward the heritage of the 10th Assembly in this time of renewed threats to peace in the region, and appreciating the important contributions made by the WCC to the search for peace, reconciliation, and reunification on the Korean Peninsula during this inter-assembly period, the 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches meeting in Karlsruhe, Germany, therefore,

Urges WCC member churches and partners to renew their solidarity and to actively support and accompany the Korean churches in their advocacy through the Sunday of Prayer for the Peaceful Reunification on the Korean Peninsula,² the Ecumenical Forum for Peace, Reunification and Cooperation

1 “Statement on Peace and Reunification of the Korean Peninsula,” in *Encountering the God of life: Report of the 10th Assembly of the World Council of Churches*, ed. Erlinda N. Senturias and Theodore A. Gill, Jr. (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2014), 277–82; WCC Digital Archive: <https://archive.org/details/encounteringthego00unse/page/277>.

2 “Sunday of Prayer for the Peaceful Reunification of the Korean Peninsula,” World Council of Churches website, 11 August 2019, <https://www.oikoumene.org/events/sunday-of-prayer-for-the-peaceful-reunification-of-the-korean-peninsula>.

on the Korean Peninsula (EFK),³ and the Korea Peace Appeal campaign⁴—a campaign for ending the war and replacing the 1953 Armistice Agreement with a peace treaty—which aims to collect signatures from 100 million people around the world by the 70th anniversary of the armistice agreement in 2023;

Prays for our Christian sisters and brothers in the Korean Peninsula, that the political reasons for their division from each other will be resolved, and that peaceful reunification will be achieved.

3 “Ecumenical Forum for Korea,” website of the Ecumenical Forum for Peace, Reunification and Cooperation on the Korean Peninsula, <http://ecuforumkorea.org>.

4 “Korea Peace Appeal,” <https://en.endthekoreanwar.net>.

Minute on Consequences of the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War

Minute prepared by the Public Issues Committee at the 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Karlsruhe, Germany, and adopted by consensus by the assembly.

Following six weeks of intense fighting for Nagorno-Karabakh/Artsakh, in late 2020, the WCC executive committee adopted a statement praying for wisdom, unity, and calm and grieving “with all those who have suffered terrible losses not only in the renewed fighting since 27 September, but throughout the long history of the struggle for self-determination in the region, entrenching antagonism more deeply with each precious life lost.”¹ The WCC condemned the use of chemical weapons and cluster munitions, the targeting of civilians, hospitals, and public infrastructure, and all other war crimes, beheadings, torture, and other atrocities witnessed during the conflict. The WCC also appealed for respect for the holy sites and cultural heritage of Nagorno-Karabakh/Artsakh, in light of numerous reports of the desecration of such sites.

Almost two years after the end of the armed conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh, hundreds of ethnic Armenians are still illegally held by Azerbaijan in violation of the Geneva Convention relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War. While the world’s attention is fixed on the conflict in Ukraine, Azerbaijani forces are reported to have launched new assaults on Indigenous Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh, as well as on the sovereign borders of the Republic of Armenia, with further loss of innocent lives and more prisoners taken.

Moreover, accountability for war crimes and other violations of international humanitarian and human rights law—repeatedly reported by Human Rights Watch, BBC, the *Guardian*, and many other international media outlets—has not been achieved or pursued.

The 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC), meeting in Karlsruhe, Germany,

Appeals to the United Nations, the European Union, and the authorities of Azerbaijan for the immediate release of all Armenian civilian hostages and POWs in accordance with international law.

Reiterates concern for holy sites and Armenian cultural heritage in the region and **urges** UNESCO and all members of the international

¹ WCC Executive Committee Statement on the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict. 13 November 2020. <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/statement-on-the-nagorno-karabakh-conflict>.

community to take all possible and appropriate measures to protect these sites.

Calls for the start of meaningful dialogue for a just and peaceful settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in the framework of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group.

Requests the WCC and all member churches to remain engaged in Christian solidarity with the churches and people of Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh in their search for a just and sustainable peace.

Minute on the Situation in West Papua

Minute prepared by the Public Issues Committee at the 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Karlsruhe, Germany, and adopted by consensus by the assembly.

The 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC), meeting in Karlsruhe, Germany, once again expresses the grave concern of the international ecumenical fellowship regarding the situation in Tanah Papua—the Papuan provinces of Indonesia. The Indigenous Papuan people—the vast majority of whom are Christians—continue to suffer serious and systemic violations of their physical security and human rights, including arbitrary arrests, torture, and extrajudicial killings, as well as sexual and gender-based violence, while independent journalists, international humanitarian organizations, and human rights monitors are allowed restricted or no access to the territory.

In addition, the consequences of deforestation and environmental degradation are threatening Papuan traditional livelihoods and culture. Meanwhile, both Indonesian and international corporate interests exploit the resources of the territory—including gold, copper, nickel, uranium, gas, oil, and coal, as well as forest, marine, and cultural resources—without any adequate economic redress to the Papuan people.

Recently, the violence and violation of rights have been compounded by new political arrangements in the territory that have been imposed on the people of Papua against their will. The systemic marginalization of and discrimination against the Papuan people in their own land is accelerating and intensifying. Moreover, the increasing deforestation of the rainforests of Papua is contributing to the destruction of the “lungs of the planet” and accelerating the global trajectory towards climate catastrophe. Protection of the rainforest and the marine ecosystems of Papua—with the vast biodiversity they host—is an urgent necessity.

The 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches meeting in Karlsruhe, Germany,

Commends the initiatives and actions taken by the WCC to respond to this situation since the assembly in Busan, including especially the international ecumenical delegation visit to West Papua in February 2019.

Encourages continued and intensified engagement by the WCC (including advocacy in UN human rights forums and consideration of the establishment of an ecumenical working group on West Papua).

Urges all WCC member churches and partners to increase their awareness, accompaniment, and support for the people and churches of Tanah Papua in the midst of this longstanding and worsening crisis.

Minute on Syriac-Aramaic Genocide (SAYFO)

Minute prepared by the Public Issues Committee at the 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Karlsruhe, Germany, and adopted by consensus by the assembly.

The 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC), meeting in Karlsruhe, Germany, recalls again both the historical reality and the persistent and present threat of genocide for some peoples.

In this context, we have been reminded of the Syriac genocide, or SAYFO, in which, in 1915, over half a million Syriac-Aramaic Christians are estimated to have lost their lives. Though taking place in the same historical and political context, these events are understood as distinct and separate from the Armenian genocide (on which the assembly in Busan issued a minute).¹ Alongside the Armenian genocide, the upheavals of that historical period were marked by genocidal acts against several, mostly Christian, communities of Aramean, Chaldean, Syrian, Assyrian, and Greek descent, which blighted history at the beginning of the 20th century. We acknowledge that these tragic events occurred and that they must be named by their right name.

All too often, the victims of genocide and their descendants face silence and the denial of historical facts and must struggle for recognition of what their people have experienced, compounding their anguish and despair.

This assembly, therefore, **requests** the general secretary to provide information to WCC member churches on this matter and to continue to pursue it in appropriate contexts.

¹ “Minute on 100th Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide,” adopted by the 10th Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Busan, Republic of Korea, 8 November 2013, <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/minute-on-100th-anniversary-of-the-armenian-genocide>.

The background features a series of overlapping, thick, grey lines and shapes. On the left, there is a vertical line intersected by a horizontal line, forming a cross-like structure. To the right, there are several large, curved, overlapping loops and arcs, some resembling stylized calligraphic characters or abstract forms. The overall composition is minimalist and modern.

Speaking to the World

**Statements Issued by
the Leadership of the
Central Committee**

Statement on Confronting Racism and Xenophobia, Overcoming Discrimination, Ensuring Belonging

Statement prepared by the Public Issues Committee at the 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Karlsruhe, Germany, and issued by the newly elected leadership of the central committee.

Then God said, “Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness.”

Genesis 1:26

The World Council of Churches (WCC), at its 11th Assembly, in Karlsruhe, Germany, abhors the perpetuation of all forms of racism, xenophobia, and related discriminations against humanity and the pervasive suffering it causes.

The 4th Assembly of the World Council of Churches, in 1968, in Uppsala, Sweden, condemned racism as a blatant denial of the Christian faith and urged a robust response to combat racism. The WCC central committee meeting of 1969 responded by launching the Programme to Combat Racism, which became one of the most effective, albeit controversial WCC programmes. It played an important role in dismantling official apartheid in South Africa and contributed to the liberation of Zimbabwe. The programme became the practical expression of the belief of the oneness of humanity enshrined in the fellowship’s ethos.

However, despite the end of the apartheid system in southern Africa and the dismantling during the second half of the 20th century of colonial empires, and almost two centuries after the abolition of slavery, both racism and colonial mindsets remain existential evils that the people of God continue to struggle against.

Indeed, racism, xenophobia, and other forms of discrimination and hatred have become even more salient in recent years, due to the negative use of social media and anti-foreigner populist nationalist movements in several countries. Racism and xenophobia intersect with discrimination based on ethnicity, national origin, religion, economic status, gender, disability, and other factors that intensify systems of exclusion, such as statelessness, that deny people their dignity as human beings created in the *imago Dei*.

Over the centuries, people of African descent, those on the African continent and in the diaspora, have suffered racism, xenophobia, and discrimination at the hands of several other groups within the human family. Racist-based enslavement of Africans, especially during the transatlantic slave

trade of the 15th–19th centuries, saw whole communities of African peoples destroyed by slave traders. Many African lives were lost due to the inhumane conditions they suffered as they were forcibly uprooted and trafficked across the Atlantic.

Those who survived the journey were exposed to further inhumane treatment as they were made into “beasts of burden” or chattels, forced to strengthen the economies of colonial systems that did not recognize them as human but as property. Africans who escaped the slave trade were subjected to colonial enslavement. Africans were reduced to a non-human or subhuman species as colonial settlers plundered their resources and lives. Today, Afro-descendants continue to be stigmatized and discriminated against everywhere.

As a result of racist colonialism and slavery, mostly by white Europeans, shadeism and colourism within Afro-descendent, Asian, and Indigenous Communities is prevalent. This attributes superiority to people with fairer and lighter-skin complexion over those who have darker skin. In many countries, skin-whitening products predominantly targeting Black and Brown women is a multibillion-dollar business.

Asians and people of Asian descent have always suffered racism and discrimination. The advent of the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the situation through association with the origins of the coronavirus, and anti-Asian violence, harassment, and discrimination have now reached alarming levels.

Likewise, racism experienced by people of Middle Eastern origin was greatly exacerbated as a result of false associations between all Middle Easterners and religious extremism and terrorism, especially following the 9-11 attacks in the United States of America, and which still persist. Among many other manifestations, the continued disregard of the rights of Palestinian people and the need for a just peace in Israel and Palestine carries with it overtones of racism as well as of religious intolerance and discrimination, undermining respect for the equal human rights of all people in the region.

Among the many tragic dimensions of the war in Ukraine, has been vividly exposed the persistence of racism in Europe. In many cases, people of African, Asian, and Middle Eastern descent, and Roma people were deliberately targeted for denial of safe evacuation in a shocking demonstration of this reality. The warm welcome that white Ukrainians received across the continent stood in stark contrast to the manner in which Europe has responded to refugees from other regions, including non-white Ukrainian refugees.

Many people, especially from Africa and the Middle East, who sought safety and a better life in the United Kingdom are now being transported to Rwanda under a highly controversial agreement between the two countries.

In one positive example, the German government demonstrated leadership in accepting refugees from Syria at a time when many states were turning them

away, and we encourage other states to follow this lead when dealing with vulnerable people fleeing persecution and war and seeking refuge.

Across the globe, we have witnessed in recent years a proliferation of populist nationalist rhetoric and governments promoting xenophobia and using hate speech against national, ethnic, religious, or linguistic minorities. Such methods constitute a well-established strategy for mobilizing political supporters, delegitimizing and dehumanizing political opponents, and deepening political polarization. Refugees and migrants have frequently been the targets of such political movements, often resulting in grave and deadly violations of human rights.

Meeting in the country where, during the Second World War, the Holocaust of the Jews was conceived and from which it was perpetrated, we acknowledge the legitimate fears of Jewish people around the world concerning the shortness of the trajectory from anti-Semitic attitudes and hate speech to genocide. Populist nationalist forces have in many places unleashed and encouraged latent anti-Semitism, with the consequence of increased violent attacks as well as discrimination against Jewish people and communities. The churches have a continuing responsibility to confront the scourge of anti-Semitism, given the historic role of churches in promoting and disseminating it. Though ancient in its origins, anti-Semitism remains an ever-present threat, returning in new forms and through new voices in every generation. Here in Karlsruhe, we reaffirm the categorical denunciation by the WCC's founding assembly in Amsterdam of anti-Semitism as sin against God and humanity.

Racism has also been perpetrated against and continues to be experienced by Indigenous Peoples in the Americas, Caribbean, the Pacific, Asia, and Africa, as well as in Europe. Indigenous People were killed and displaced, with no equitable reparation being made to them for centuries of land theft and dehumanization. Even today, when Indigenous Peoples strive to protect their traditional areas from large-scale exploitation, they are confronted with racism, threats, and violence. Additionally, the rape of Indigenous and African women during the colonization period reflects the weaponization of sexual violence as a means of denying the dignity of subjugated peoples, and continues even today. Those who resisted were beaten, threatened, or murdered, resulting ultimately in genocides that have still not been fully documented or recognized.

The particular type of discrimination faced by Dalits, also known as *untouchables*, is based on a combination of descent and traditional occupation. It remains prevalent throughout South Asia and the South Asian diaspora, as well as in traditional societies in a number of other cultures and regions, including West Africa. Dalits and similarly discriminated-against communities are marginalized and excluded within their own societies, and contact with them is even considered physically or spiritually polluting.

Intersections between race, gender, and disability greatly amplify the marginalization experienced by women and people with disabilities who are

also of African, Asian, Indigenous, or Dalit descent in a world of systemic racism.

Discrimination is the driving force behind statelessness and has been the cause of the exclusion of entire communities from citizenship: It can take the form of racialized nationality, religious nationalism, or gender discrimination in nationality laws, or sometimes a combination of these. Millions of stateless people live in legal limbo as perpetual foreigners, disenfranchised, and rendered “invisible” in their own societies. They live on the margins of society, with no practical access to their human rights and little protection. Stateless people are among the most vulnerable and overlooked groups in the world. They are exposed to and at risk of arbitrary detention, forced displacement, deportation, exploitation, and human trafficking, especially women and children. Statelessness and the deprivation of human rights can be both a cause and a consequence of forced displacement, which is at unprecedented levels globally.

Racism, xenophobia, caste-based discrimination, anti-Semitism, all faith-based persecution, and all forms of related discrimination are fundamentally contrary to the will of God. The principle of non-discrimination is deeply rooted in our Christian faith. As Christians, we believe that all people are created in the image of God (Gen. 1:27); everyone is endowed with inherent dignity by virtue of bearing the divine image. God has allowed our bodies to respond to our surrounding environment, producing diversities in the human family, which do not entail change in the equality of human dignity. We all remain created in the image of God. There is no justification in either faith or science for the racism, xenophobia, and discrimination that we are witnessing in the world. Divisions and marginalization on the basis of ethnicity, “race,” caste, national origin, and all other forms of discrimination create barriers to the Christian witness to unity.

Our hearts cry out, as we stand in solidarity with those suffering from racism, xenophobia, and discrimination, and with those who have been marginalized, excluded, exploited, or rendered stateless by others, who have been treated as less than human instead of being embraced as siblings and people of equal dignity and worth.

The 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches, meeting in Karlsruhe, Germany, therefore,

Affirms categorically that racism is a sin against God and humanity, a Christian theological heresy, and ***recognizes*** that *race* is a social construct that emerged out of colonial ideology that has no basis in faith or science.

Acknowledges that racism and xenophobia still impact many communities and individuals in all regions, and intersect toxically with other forms of discrimination, and therefore ***commends*** the WCC for establishing a new transversal programme on racism, xenophobia, and related discriminations.

Encourages this ecumenical body to revisit the complicity of some religious bodies in the painful past of enslavement, colonialism, and its current expressions, in order to journey towards repentance, confession, reparations, reconciliation, and healing.

Acknowledges and strongly affirms the positive steps being taken by churches, ecumenical partners, and some states to acknowledge historical complicity in systemic racism, to dismantle systemic racism, and to improve inclusiveness and equity.

Encourages the WCC to continue to honour the mandate it received from the 10th Assembly in Busan, South Korea, and continue its prophetic witness for the dignity and rights of stateless people as one of its programmatic priorities, exploring the links between statelessness and various issues, such as migration, gender, racism and xenophobia, religious nationalism, and development.

Welcomes the recently approved *interfaith affirmations on belongingness* and **affirms** that what we can do together with other faith and religious groups to alleviate the suffering of stateless people and to help eliminate statelessness, we should not do separately.

Encourages member churches, ecumenical partners, and all people of good will to raise awareness of the trauma of racism, xenophobia, and related discriminations, and to advocate for the equality and dignity of all people.

Challenges our communions to become more aware of how this abomination shows up in our preaching, teaching, Bible reading and study, liturgy, worship, and discipleship, and **calls** on member churches, ecumenical partners, and faith leaders to actively become cognizant of how their attitudes and actions exclude people from the beloved community (John 17:20–21).

Urges member churches, ecumenical partners, faith leaders, and all people of good will to confront racism, xenophobia, and related forms of discrimination in church, society, and around the world, and engage in dialogue with policymakers and leaders in their national and local contexts to dismantle structures of systemic racism, xenophobia, and all forms of discrimination.

Calls on our ecumenical leaders, members, and partners, and people of good will not to perpetuate the institutionalization of racism by the normalization of stereotypes as they are inserted in literature, language, art, music, film, folklore, and social and public media.

Invites member churches and ecumenical partners to commit to dialogue with their governments to adopt inclusive policies that confer nationality and rights for all without discrimination, and to deconstruct systems of racism, discrimination, and xenophobia in governance, education, commerce, and religion.

Strongly encourages the ecumenical movement to raise its voices against those who benefit and profit from all forms of racism, discrimination, and xenophobia, those who acquiesce to it by their silence or inaction, and those

who cannot see the need to expose and dismantle its violent impact on fellow human beings.

Exhorts member churches in the ecumenical family to become passionate advocates to help ensure that the inherent dignity and equality of all human beings are not compromised by human or religious institutions.

Now may the World Council of Churches and all Christians be transformed by the renewing of our minds with the truth of the gospel of justice and peace so that we will not repeat the sins of the past or be guilty of the very thing we denounce, and by Christ's love the world moves toward reconciliation and unity.

Statement on Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples

Statement prepared by the Public Issues Committee at the 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Karlsruhe, Germany, issued by the newly elected leadership of the central committee.

Behold I create new heavens in which life, justice, and peace are possible for all
—see Isaiah 65:17-25

Indigenous Peoples are created with God-given identities that are beautiful. God was present in their lands and among their peoples before colonizers arrived. When Christians brought the Bible, Indigenous Peoples recognized the voice of their Creator in Jesus' teachings. They did not hear a call to reject their identities.

The majority of Indigenous Peoples are the most marginalized communities in many parts of the world—exposed to poverty, disease, malnutrition, dispossession, exploitation, trafficking, and forced migration, and denied possibilities of migration or asylum. Ever since their first contact with colonizers, Indigenous Peoples have experienced a series of harms. They have been moved off their traditional lands, killed, exploited, and dehumanized. In many cases, their dispossession began with the Doctrine of Discovery, that permitted European colonizers to claim ownership of lands not inhabited by Christians.

Christ's love calls us to reconciliation and unity. Reconciliation involves the courage to dismantle oppressive structures, policies, ideologies, and theologies that restrict access to the abundant life that Jesus promised for all (John 10:10). The dominant discourse on reconciliation and unity has been largely responsible for the domination and suppression of Indigenous Communities and other marginalized communities. Christian unity, in an Indigenous context, has often meant little more than conformity to the colonial way of life and the dissolution of Indigenous, land-centred identity.

In line with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Indigenous Christians claim their own power, agency, and authority to self-determination in spiritual matters. Indigenous theologians, Indigenous clergy, and the people of Indigenous churches have the capacity to formulate Christian theologies that have relevance, authenticity, and integrity. For Indigenous Christians, there is a fluidity and a porosity of the Spirit of Indigenous and Christian worldviews: one complements the other. Accusations of syncretism are not only unhelpful but also abusive.

Healing from historical trauma is intergenerational. The mental and physical well-being of the children, grandchildren, and generations to come are at stake. This healing is directly tied to the healing and well-being of the lands, waters, and air in the places they inhabit and, indeed, in the whole world.

It also involves supporting Indigenous Peoples in dealing with historical and ongoing trauma and racism within the church, which still leads to suffering (such as suicide, substance abuse, and violence) and the loss of Indigenous lives.

Finally, the church must commit to supporting Indigenous self-determination within ecclesial institutions in keeping with article 12.1 of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Throughout history, Indigenous Peoples have been categorically dehumanized and denied the right to self-determination by not being considered as “peoples.”

Love, as taught by Jesus of Nazareth, is radical. It heals and restores, and confronts and transforms. It calls us to love our enemies, restore justice, and make community with those pushed to the margins by the dominant systems and traditions. It indicts systems and cultures that discriminate and dehumanize. It empowers the disempowered and re-members the dismembered. As such, Christ’s love is subversive and offensive to the systems and cultures that dominate, discriminate, and dehumanize. Such love alone can make reconciliation lasting and unity real.

The 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC) meeting in Karlsruhe, Germany, on 31 August–8 September 2022, therefore,

- 1. *Stands*** in solidarity with all Indigenous Peoples across the world, and ***supports*** the rights of Indigenous Peoples to preserve their traditional lands and territories, to maintain and enrich their cultures, and to ensure that their traditions are strengthened and passed on for generations to come;
- 2. *Commends*** the WCC for repudiating the Doctrine of Discovery and terra nullius and ***encourages*** its member churches who have not already done so also to repudiate these concepts.
- 3. *Calls*** upon the WCC to ensure that the Indigenous Peoples programme has its own fully-financed desk with adequate resources, and that the WCC climate justice work with the Indigenous Peoples programme be strengthened.
- 4. *Urges*** the WCC and its member churches to initiate processes to address Indigenous Peoples’ need for healing from historical and intergenerational trauma by the establishment of truth and reconciliation processes that are based on restoring justice and healing relationships wherever crimes against humanity and genocides have occurred.

5. ***Calls*** upon the WCC to commit to advocate for the aspirations of Indigenous Communities who struggle for self-determination (as per the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples) and continue to be threatened by Green and Blue colonization.
6. ***Expresses*** our solidarity with the Indigenous Peoples of West Papua, Maohi Nui, Kanaky, and other places, who continue to face grave violations of their human rights and obstacles to the realization of their equal human dignity.
7. ***Encourages*** the WCC to continue its advocacy—in international fora such as the UN—with Indigenous Peoples and on their behalf in defence of their human rights, to protect the use of human rights language, to promote Indigenous Peoples’ right to self-determination, and their right to participate in decision-making processes within churches and in society in general, as per the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.
8. ***Requests*** the WCC to promote education about Indigenous Peoples’ theologies and worldviews, including as part of their efforts to address the climate crisis.
9. ***Urges*** the WCC and member churches to take responsibility for their complicity in the destruction of Indigenous Peoples and failures to support their journey to healing, wholeness, and fullness of life. The complicity of the church in these genocides against Indigenous Peoples as well as the spiritual violence perpetrated by churches since first contacts prompts us to decolonize our faith traditions in order to rediscover the life-nurturing and rehumanizing potential of the gospel.

Background Information

The following information has informed the actions in this statement. The Public Issues Committee wishes to acknowledge with great appreciation the Indigenous Peoples pre-assembly meeting and its message. It has greatly contributed to the creation of this statement.

When Christians brought the Bible, Indigenous People heard “God loves us. God loves our cultures and our languages and our spiritualities. God knows us and God loves us as spiritual beings in relationship with each other and with all of creation. Our cultures are libraries of ancestral memory. Our languages, which uphold our sacred relationship with our lands, are storehouses of ecological well-being.”¹

¹ Message from the Indigenous Peoples Pre-Assembly Meeting, 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Karlsruhe, Germany, 2022, page 255 in this report.

However, across the globe, most Indigenous Communities share a tragic common experience of marginalization, poverty, disease, malnutrition, dispossession, exploitation, trafficking, forced migration, genocide, and, in some instances, eugenics.

The Sami people of Northern Europe have a history of being oppressed by the state, which the churches of the region were part of. Sami were subjected to eugenics and Sami remains have been collected and placed in museums and institutions to this day. The church was part of the colonization that led to the loss of Sami land down the line and also led to extensive exploitation. The ideology of Green colonialism manifested in projects such as windmills or railways undermines Sami traditional and spiritual life.

In North America, the tragic experiences of Indigenous children in residential schools have shown how racism enabled even churches and people who thought they were doing good to seek to erase traditional identities and to remake Indigenous children in the image of their dispossessors.

Indigenous populations in Asia share a similar historical experience of killings, dispossession from their land, epidemic diseases, displacement, and marginalization as a result of the intrusion of settlers from elsewhere. This was followed in many cases by violent encounters between Asian First Peoples and settler societies. Today, most of these Indigenous Communities live in highlands and other regions remote from the fertile agricultural plains that once formed the centre of the continent's great civilizations.

In Australia and Aotearoa-New Zealand, Indigenous Peoples were also displaced by European settlers, and they continue to struggle for recognition, land rights, and self-determination. In the neighbouring Pacific, the historic marginalization and exploitation of Indigenous People is being compounded by the loss of their island homes to rising sea levels, while the world continues to debate the issue of climate change. This is exacerbated by extractive and Blue colonization industries which undermine the very fabric of Pasifika cultures, spiritualities, and identities.

In Latin America, which is home to many Indigenous groups and cosmologies, there are historical experiences of killings, dispossession from land, epidemic diseases, displacement, and marginalization as part of colonization. These communities continue to experience mistreatment with direct, political, and structural violence. They face discrimination and human rights violations as well as limitations in access to land, to water, and to justice. The region has witnessed recurrent killings of human rights and environmental activists, and the people are facing Indigenous genocide by big farmers and mining companies. This is a shared experience with communities of West Papua, Maohi Nui, and Kanaky, who continue to struggle for self-determination.

In Africa, Indigenous Communities experience a lot of obstacles, which include marginalization, poverty, illiteracy, HIV/AIDS, but also non-recognition by governments and other ethnic groups. Those who engage

in activism to fight for their recognition, land, language, and culture often experience intimidation, arrests, and even death.

Indigenous Peoples “are particularly concerned about the increasing nexus among neo-liberal economics, right-wing politics, and authoritarian regimes and their new mechanisms to silence and suppress dissent and aspirations for justice and rights of the marginalized communities in many parts of the world. As such, our affirmations of love, reconciliation, and unity must involve critical engagement with these global and local dispensers of injustices, even if such actions threaten the positions of power and privilege of some of us.”²

Indigenous Peoples’ common understanding of the interdependent and interconnected reality and dynamics of life “compels us to assert that reconciliation that does not include the whole of God’s creation is incomplete and superficial. A holistic consciousness of life kindles and nurtures mutual respect and responsibility and enables one to be humble, just, and compassionate. Seeking reconciliation is a spiritual and moral choice. It involves restoring justice, truth-telling, repentance, and forgiveness. It is an ongoing journey that unveils God’s presence and purposes in all of God’s creation. It is not an easy journey, but one that calls for costly discipleship (Matt. 19:21; Mark 8:34–35; Luke 9:23).”³

“Reconciliation is not only about restoring broken human relationships but also humanity’s broken relationship with the creation. God’s love is not limited to the human world and life has no future without seeking reconciliation with the earth. We are the people of the earth and we call all to find our common earth identity.”⁴

However, hierarchies and power-based relationships, whether in the church or the wider society, obstruct such goals. “We remind the church of unity as it is illustrated on the day of Pentecost, not by all of God’s children speaking the same language, but by each person being understood and honoured in their own mother-tongue.”⁵

There can be no reconciliation without understanding the truth of the spiritual violence Indigenous Peoples have experienced and without considerable work at healing. Indigenous Peoples are on their own healing journeys to recover their God-given identities. Everywhere in the world, this[?] is difficult, and in some parts of the world it is nearly impossible.

We gratefully acknowledge the places where reconciliation processes have begun and where churches have apologized to Indigenous Peoples for the harm the churches have done. The learnings of these processes should be shared with

2 Indigenous Peoples Pre-Assembly Meeting.

3 Indigenous Peoples Pre-Assembly Meeting.

4 Indigenous Peoples Pre-Assembly Meeting.

5 Indigenous Peoples Pre-Assembly Meeting.

the member churches of the World Council of Churches, to encourage further reconciliation processes.

As underlined in the 2022 Indigenous Peoples Pre-Assembly Statement, the churches must pursue reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples around the world. It must confront and address the spiritual violence it has committed in the name of Christ's love, and in the pursuit of a unity that denies the God-given diverse identities of Indigenous Peoples, including their spiritual identities. The church in its many global contexts needs to establish processes to hear the truth of the harm it has done, to repent of its sins, to atone, and to change its behaviour. This extends to deep examination of its understanding of what it means to witness to Christ's love. Indigenous Peoples have much to teach the church in this regard.

WCC History with Indigenous Peoples Issues

Walking Together Towards Tomorrow, World Council of Churches, 1 January 2003, <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/walking-together-towards-tomorrow>.

Statement on the Doctrine of Discovery and Its Enduring Impact on Indigenous Peoples, WCC Executive Committee, Bossey, Switzerland, 17 February 2012, <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/statement-on-the-doctrine-of-discovery-and-its-enduring-impact-on-indigenous-peoples>.

Minute on Indigenous Peoples, adopted by the WCC 10th Assembly as part of the Report of the Public Issues Committee, Busan, Republic of Korea, 8 November 2013, <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/minute-on-indigenous-peoples>.

Resolution on Outcome of the Indigenous Peoples' Conference on Reconciliation Processes and Indigenous Peoples, WCC Central Committee, Trondheim, Norway, 25 June 2016, <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/resolution-on-outcome-of-the-indigenous-peoples-conference-on-reconciliation-processes-and-indigenous-peoples>.

The background features several overlapping, semi-transparent grey shapes. On the left, there is a large, stylized cross-like shape. To its right, a large, thick, curved line forms a partial circle. Below these, there are more complex, overlapping curves and lines, some resembling a stylized 'S' or a calligraphic flourish. The overall aesthetic is modern and minimalist.

Speaking to the World

**Statements Adopted by
the Executive Committee**

Statement on Christian Witness and Action for Human Dignity and Human Rights

Statement prepared for the Public Issues Committee at the 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Karlsruhe, Germany, and finalized and adopted by the executive committee of the World Council of Churches for decision.

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.
Luke 4:18–19

The current global context is marked by escalating conflicts, divisions, inequalities, resurgent racism, xenophobic attacks on migrants, anti-Semitism, violations of the rights of women and other forms of discrimination, threats against human rights defenders, as well as authoritarianism, populist nationalism, and religious and other forms of extremism that threaten grave peril for the physical security and human dignity and rights of diverse communities and individuals around the world.

This context sadly recalls the time of the WCC's foundation in the aftermath of the Second World War, when impelled by revulsion at the appalling violations of God-given human dignity perpetrated during that conflict, the international ecumenical movement committed to and engaged actively with other members of the international community in the development of international legal frameworks for the promotion and protection of human rights, including freedom of religion or belief. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR),¹ adopted in 1948, is the foundational product of that engagement.

Unlike 1948, however, the current global challenges are aggravated by intentional misinformation, “fake news,” and hate speech in social media and other channels. Moreover, in several countries, currently there are unprecedented assaults on human dignity and democratic principles, attacks on the validity of international law, and impunity for grave human rights violations.

¹ United Nations General Assembly. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). New York: United Nations General Assembly, 1948. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>.

In recent years, the universality of human rights has been increasingly called into question, not least because of obvious double standards in the application of international human rights law. Many states instrumentalize these principles for political purposes, and powerful states resist human rights accountability for their own actions. Such misuse of principles that should be of universal application has damaged their credibility in the eyes of many and weakened them for the essential purposes for which they were intended.

Differences of opinion about the nature and quality of the relationship between Christian faith principles and the principles reflected in international human rights law have also become increasingly evident during these years, despite the history of close engagement by the WCC in the development and promotion of international human rights law as a framework for accountability for violations of human rights and for the protection of God-given human dignity.

In 2018, in marking the 70th anniversary of both the WCC and the UDHR, the WCC central committee mandated “a new process of ecumenical reflection and consultation on the relationship between international human rights law and scripture, theology, and Christian ethics,” leading up to the 11th Assembly.²

In its first meeting following the 11th Assembly, the WCC executive committee welcomes and appreciates the process of reflection and consultation on these matters that the WCC undertook in partnership with the United Evangelical Mission (UEM) and the Protestant Church in Germany (EKD) during the intervening years, culminating in a consultation held in Wuppertal and online on 9–12 April 2022. We appreciate the outputs of this process, which provided the basis for an ecumenical conversation on Christian ethics and human rights at the assembly, and which warrant further study, reflection, and development.

Together with the participants in the Wuppertal consultation, we affirm the enduring relevance of the Bible as a dynamic resource for churches in the ecumenical movement in their ongoing advocacy for respect for human rights and the upholding of human dignity, while at the same time acknowledging the potential misuse of some biblical texts to justify exclusion, marginalization, and violence in contradiction to the life-giving spirit of the Bible. We also join them in recognizing the strong affinity between the active affirmation of human rights and human dignity, and the biblical proclamations of liberty, love, compassion, justice, and peace, and the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ, who preached and embodied God’s inclusive gospel of love for the disenfranchised and disadvantaged (Luke 4:18–19; John 15:13).

² World Council of Churches, 70th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights Statement of the WCC Central Committee, 15-21 June 2018, Geneva, Switzerland. <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/70th-anniversary-of-the-universal-declaration-of-human-rights>.

We acknowledge, as did the Message of the WCC 10th Assembly in Busan,³ the prophets' call to God's covenanted people to work for justice and peace, to care for the poor, the outcast, and the marginalized, and to be a light to the nations (Micah 6:8; Isaiah 49:6). We recognize the calling to a lived faith that embodies Christ's example, affirming the dignity and worth of all, regardless of race, gender, class, religion, or any other characteristic.

We confess our unfulfilled responsibilities to protect and lift up those whose God-given dignity and worth is not respected, including women, who still struggle in many contexts for their rightful equality with men, and the children and young people who have been silenced or disregarded, the Indigenous Peoples whose very identity has been denied them, and all those who suffer victimization, oppression, and discrimination.

Even as we recognize the different perspectives within our fellowship on the principles of international human rights law, we affirm and underline the necessity of such a universal framework of legal accountability for the violation of human dignity and rights, especially given the historically ambiguous role played by churches and religious communities in this regard.

Consequently, the first reference point for our engagement in this matter must be a compassionate response to the voices, cries, and lived experiences of the women, children, and men who experience the violation of their human dignity and rights, rather than the differences in our theological approaches.

Just as the 10th Assembly stated, we are called to be a community upholding justice in its own life, living together in peace, never settling for the easy peace that silences protest and pain, but struggling for the true peace that comes with justice.

Following the reflections undertaken during the 11th Assembly, the WCC executive committee *calls* on all members of the ecumenical fellowship to:

- **Listen** to the victims of human rights violations and stand in solidarity with them, upholding them in prayer, lamentation, and advocacy;
- **Study and reflect** on the outcomes of the Wuppertal consultation,⁴ and undertake further discussion of the issues raised in their own contexts;

3 Message of the 10th Assembly of the World Council of Churches: Join the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace, <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/message-of-the-wcc-10th-assembly>.

4 See documents from the Wuppertal consultation: "Strengthening Christian Commitment to Human Dignity and Human Rights" (the message of the consultation, 13 April 2022); and *Strengthening Christian Perspectives on Human Dignity and Human Rights: Perspectives from an International Consultative Process*, ed. Peter Prove, Jochen Motte, Sabine Dressler, and Andar Parlindungan (Geneva: WCC Publications and Globethics.net, 2022), <https://www.globethics.net/strengthening-christian-perspectives-on-human-dignity-and-human-rights>.

- **Rediscover** the rich biblical narratives that affirm human dignity, justice, and the rule of law, for further theological reflection and discernment for responsible action.

We **acknowledge** that human dignity is to be understood not in isolation from the integrity of the entire creation, a foundational relationality of all creatures. We **affirm** that advocating for universal human dignity and rights is part of striving for justice, peace, and integrity of creation, a means of reconciliation, and a witness for unity.

We **commit** to continuing to engage with the differences in perspective and approach within the ecumenical movement in order to work towards common conclusions and recommendations for churches to recognize and affirm the biblical roots of human dignity as the basis of the modern codification of human rights, and to advocate for human rights and for the rule of law, as an integral part of churches' life and witness.

We **request** that the WCC continue to convene and lead such discussions.

Statement on Global Health and Well-Being

Statement prepared for the Public Issues Committee at the 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Karlsruhe, Germany, and finalized and adopted by the executive committee of the World Council of Churches for decision.

I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.
John 10:10

When approaching the issue of health and well-being, we as Christians and churches affirm that the giver and sustainer of life is our Lord Jesus Christ, the healer of our bodies and souls, the one who heals our diseases, who redeems our life from the pit, and crowns us with love and compassion (Ps. 103:3–4).

The 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC) met in Karlsruhe 31 August–8 September 2022,) following almost three years of the ongoing global COVID-19 pandemic, which may be responsible—directly and indirectly—for a death toll of 15 million or more (based on excess mortality data), as well as widespread social, economic, and political disruption and destabilization. This terrible experience awakens us all to the real and continuing threat of pandemics in our hyper-connected and over-exploited world.

Other long-standing challenges to health and well-being have been masked—or in some cases exacerbated—by the pandemic. In 2019, the 10 leading causes of death globally were ischaemic heart disease, stroke, chronic obstructive lung disease, lower respiratory infections, neonatal diseases, cancers of lungs and airways, Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias, diarrhoeal diseases, diabetes mellitus, and kidney diseases.¹

While communicable diseases have declined, noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) have increased over the years in almost all countries. NCDs cause 41 million deaths each year, equivalent to 71 percent of all deaths globally, and 77 percent of all NCD deaths are in low- and middle-income countries.

Almost one in three child deaths globally is caused by pneumonia and diarrhoea—diseases which are preventable and treatable. And other diseases, such as polio, long thought to have been close to elimination, are once again on the rise.

Moreover, concomitant with the COVID-19 pandemic, this period has also seen a pandemic of mental health issues, especially for children and young people, whose lives and development have been especially severely disrupted.

¹ “The Top 10 Causes of Death,” World Health Organization, 9 December 2020, <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/the-top-10-causes-of-death>.

This has been compounded by physical abuse and sexual and gender-based violence, in addition to the disruption in access to education resulting from lockdowns and enforced isolation at home.

The pandemic also resulted in exceptional pressures on the physical and mental health of overburdened and under-supported front-line medical and health workers, many of whom suffered burnout and other health consequences while seeking to care for so many others.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted several obstacles that have been hampering the full realization of the vision of health and well-being for all (Sustainable Development Goal 3). These obstacles include issues specific to the medical field, but also issues pertaining to how the health sector relates to economic, cultural, religious, and other sectors. Given some churches' initial response to the introduction of vaccines and the subsequent shift when dialogue was initiated by healthcare professionals on the front line, it is clear that there is need for greater interaction between the sectors.

The pandemic has, on the other hand, underlined the importance and, indeed, the necessity of health remaining high on the agenda of the churches. Many churches contributed actively in providing correct health education, undertaking local and international advocacy for the equitable supply of COVID-19 vaccines and other health goods and services, by opening up church premises to be used for COVID-19 services, and by offering diaconal services to mitigate the socio-economic impact of COVID-19. Almost all the major causes of mortality and morbidity can be reduced significantly by church-based health promotion programmes.

Since the WHO's 1978 declaration of the "Health for All by the Year 2000" agenda, human longevity has increased, while infant and child mortality has decreased significantly. For example, child mortality has decreased from 124 per 1000 children in 1978 to 43 per 1000. These gains are, however, modest in comparison to the targets set. Further, there are increased inequalities where scarce health resources can be purchased by a wealthy minority, while the majority of poor people are denied access to even basic health care services.

In addition, since 1978, the global population has almost doubled and is still growing, making it more difficult for health, food, and social services (like education, water, sanitation, and hygiene) to be assured, leading to worsening poverty, environmental degradation, and other socio-economic determinants of health. Population growth is outstripping socio-economic development in most countries. Increasing expenditure on the military and armaments by many countries continues to dramatically reduce public investment in health and other related social sectors.

Neglected tropical diseases are sometimes called diseases of the poor and still serve as an example of persisting lack of equity and justice in health.

The area of sexual and reproductive health and related rights is often seen as contentious for many churches, for cultural reasons or based on concerns

regarding “hidden agendas” contrary to biblical teachings. However, avoiding addressing these issues results in women and girls facing grave consequences such as obstetric fistula, female circumcision, unplanned pregnancies resulting from rape and incest, botched abortions (in places where abortion is illegal), foeticide and infanticide. Moreover, girls and women in many poorer countries and rural areas continue to lack access to education on puberty and to sanitary supplies for menstruation, affecting their dignity and development.

In many countries, medical services and primary healthcare facilities are directly affiliated with religious groups. Addressing issues related to reproductive health is of special concern to practitioners in places of displacement and conflict. Moreover, addressing the long-term trauma and discrimination suffered by both the victims of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) as well as the children born to them in such circumstances is a paramount concern for churches.

Jointly with other partners, the WCC has recently taken up the issue of obstetric fistula as a human rights concern. The WHO estimates that each year between 50,000 and 100,000 women worldwide are affected by this condition, which is an injury often resulting from giving birth without adequate health care, from sexual violence, or in connection with female genital mutilation (FGM). An estimated two to three million women live with untreated obstetric fistula, mainly in Asia and Africa. Obstetric fistula is entirely preventable and treatable and has been eliminated in developed countries. But in some parts of the world, it is one of the major causes of maternal mortality and morbidity. Women who experience obstetric fistula suffer constant incontinence and other health problems. Due to the shame and social segregation that result from this condition, it is largely a hidden concern. Churches have a critical role to play in supporting women in their communities who are suffering in this way, in raising awareness about the concern and confronting the discrimination and stigma attached to the issue and advocating for the prevention of the condition through adequate health care, for access to repair surgery for affected women, and for all affected by this condition to be treated with dignity and respect.

With regard to the ongoing struggle against HIV and AIDS, a human rights approach has helped to improve prevention, treatment, and support services. However, the recent report “In Danger: UNAIDS Global AIDS Update 2022” details how social and economic inequalities within and between countries are stalling progress in the HIV response and how HIV is making those inequalities acute.² In 2021, an adolescent girl or young woman was newly infected with HIV every two minutes. The COVID-19 pandemic caused HIV treatment disruptions in many countries as governments focused on the response to the pandemic. Moreover, the marked increase in child and teenage pregnancies, cases of female circumcision, and cyberporn of minors documented in several

2 UNAIDS, *In Danger: UNAIDS Global AIDS Update 2022*, <https://www.unaids.org/en/resources/documents/2022/in-danger-global-aids-update>.

countries during the first few months of the pandemic lockdown attest to the negative side effects of the lockdown measures prior to the introduction of COVID-19 vaccines.

In 2021, one person with HIV died every minute, accounting for 650,000 AIDS-related deaths, despite the availability of effective HIV treatment and tools to prevent, detect, and treat opportunistic infections. Currently, 10 million people living with HIV do not have access to treatment. Only half (52 percent) of children living with HIV have access to life-saving medicine, and the inequality in HIV treatment coverage between children and adults is increasing.

The world is not moving fast enough to end the inequalities that drive pandemics. Neither is the church, and that is a lost opportunity since the church has such extensive networks among people who live in the midst of those inequalities.

Although more remains to be done to finally defeat HIV as a public health threat, the gains so far should serve as an encouragement to scale up comprehensive approaches to fighting diseases, leaving no one behind. Ecumenical efforts on HIV and AIDS must be more sustainable, integral, holistic, and comprehensive.

Mental health is a vital aspect of well-being throughout a person's life—it is the ability to be self-aware, to manage one's emotions, and to cope with problems. Childhood and adolescence have been found to be the most crucial stages for developing mental health resilience. Presently, it is estimated that around 10–20 percent of adolescents worldwide suffer from mental health conditions that are untreated and undiagnosed (WHO, 2019).

Mental health issues are increasing among adolescents, and mental disorders are the leading cause of disability among the youth.³ According to the WHO, common problems found among adolescents are emotional disorders, childhood behavioural disorders, eating disorders, psychosis, suicide and self-harm, and risk-taking behaviours.⁴ The American Psychology Association and the WHO strongly suggest mental health promotion and intervention, as well as addressing mental health problems early in order to prevent serious complications in the future.

In the context of the accelerating climate crisis, more and more children and youth experience eco-anxiety, which the American Psychological Association describes as “a chronic fear of environmental doom.”⁵ Close to 60

3 Caroline Cassels, “Mental Disorders Leading Cause of Disability in Youth,” 2011, published in *Medscape* at: <https://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/744116>.

4 See World Health Organization, “Adolescent Mental Health,” October 2019, at: <https://www.who.int/news-room/factsheets/detail/adolescent-mental-health>.

5 Kirsten Weir, “Climate Change Is Threatening Mental Health,” *American Psychological Association* 47/7 (July/August 2016): 28. See at: <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2016/07-08/climate-change>.

percent of the young people who responded to a recent global online survey of 10,000 teenagers and young adults in 10 countries said that they felt “very” or “extremely” worried about climate change, while 75 percent said that “the future is frightening,” 56 percent believe that “humanity is doomed,” and 39 percent were hesitant to have children. Fifty-eight percent of respondents felt that governments were betraying them and future generations.

Indeed, the climate crisis and other environmental factors are key drivers of almost all major causes of mortality and morbidity, and many global health experts consider climate change to be the greatest threat to human health. Furthermore, social isolation and loneliness is an important determinant of negative outcomes with regard to many aspects of mental and physical health.

All these health challenges are compounded by economic disparities and inequitable access to health care. Far too many communities, especially in poorer countries and regions, still lack access to basic health education and health care, although health is recognized as a fundamental human right. Among other things, vaccine inequity remains a major obstacle to effective public health measures in many poorer countries and communities.

In February 2022, in light of these many challenges as well as the historic and current role of churches as health care providers, the WCC central committee re-established an ecumenical commission on health, the Commission of the Churches on Health and Healing (CCHH). This will be the ecumenical movement’s main vehicle for galvanizing the churches’ collective efforts to promote ministries of health and healing and to help ensure that churches fulfil their calling to be leading actors for health and well-being for all.

In this effort, we keep stressing the healing power of our faith and the hope that connects us to life itself in Christ and makes us partake of eternity.

Following the exchange of experiences and lessons learned that took place at the 11th Assembly, the WCC executive committee meeting on 7–12 November 2022 in Bossey, Switzerland,

Welcomes the establishment of a WCC ecumenical commission on health and healing;

Invites WCC member churches to:

- **Commit** to becoming health-promoting churches by running evidence-based health-promotion ministries;
- **Evaluate** their national health systems and identify critical areas where they can intervene in order to ensure comprehensive and inclusive health services;
- **Assess** their current portfolios of health-related programmes against community needs and gaps in available health services, and redesign their health ministries accordingly, especially to meet the needs of women and girls, people living with HIV, people with disabilities,

those facing mental health challenges, and other underserved groups and socially-isolated people;

- **Engage** with their governments with regard to vaccine inequity and to promote resources for local production of vaccines and other needed health products;
- **Take measures** to address the trauma, stigma, and discrimination faced particularly by women and girls due to SGBV, and ensure their meaningful participation and inclusion in programmes that provide redress and rehabilitation;
- **Establish** health-promotion ministries in all congregations as a means of revitalizing the ecumenical commitment to primary health care for all;
- **Encourages** all theological education institutions to integrate public health issues in their educational and training curricula.

Statement on New and Emerging Technologies, Ethical Challenges

Statement prepared for the Public Issues Committee at the 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Karlsruhe, Germany, and finalized and adopted by the executive committee of the World Council of Churches.

He loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of the steadfast love of the Lord.

Psalm 33:5

New technologies are transforming our world and the multiple spaces in which we live, work, and witness. These technologies offer us new ways to create, to heal, to communicate, and to navigate the world. However, many such technologies, while undoubtedly offering actual or potential advances in human well-being, have also raised concerns regarding their social and environmental impacts and ethical implications, especially in light of the rapidity of their development and application.

The technologies that have collectively become known as the Fourth Industrial Revolution combine hardware, software, and biology—such as advanced robotics, artificial intelligence, nanotechnology, and advanced biotechnology—intermediated by advances in communication and connectivity (especially 5G wireless technologies and the almost universal dissemination of mobile devices).

At the same time, digital communication platforms have become an even more prevalent and pervasive feature of our daily lives in many parts of the world. And while such communication technologies can be powerful tools for living in relation with others—for inclusion, education, encounter, imagination, creativity, and understanding, and especially in the context of the isolation and social disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic—they also pose challenges through their conception, design, and especially through the uses to which they are put.

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the digital transformation as organizations and individuals moved online to maintain livelihoods, education, worship, and connections when physical interaction was necessarily limited. At the same time, we lamented the loss of physical connections that deepen our relationships.

It is also concerning that the laws of many countries are failing to be updated at a speed sufficient to take account of technological change and development. Poorly drafted or inadequate legislation may result in further miscarriages of justice, as courts are not able to provide adequate legal remedies

for victims. This is a major and urgent challenge to legislators throughout the world.

At the 11th WCC Assembly in Karlsruhe, an ecumenical conversation addressed “Trends and Emerging Issues in a Rapidly Changing World,”¹ which discussed and reflected on technological developments that will affect the life and work of churches now and into the future.

While acknowledging the many positive aspects of these technological advances, participants in the 11th Assembly looked back on the period since the previous assembly, sought to read the signs of our current times, and observed a number of grave ethical challenges that emerge from the accelerating development of these technologies, the corporate commercial logic that drives them, and the massive concentration of power in the hands of a very few individuals with disproportionate impact on the lives of all.

Advanced robotics and increased automation, together with the industrial application of artificial intelligence, are provoking a new wave of technologically-driven unemployment while further concentrating power and wealth in the hands of a technological elite, and rapidly widening and deepening the gulf of income inequality. Assurances of new jobs to replace those that have been eliminated in this revolution generally lack sufficient substance to give them any degree of credibility.

Artificial intelligence and location detection technologies have also massively enhanced the surveillance capabilities of authoritarian governments and other bad actors, as well as increased the impact of propaganda and misinformation (including “deep fake” images). Weaponized applications of artificial intelligence, such as cyber warfare, and the development of autonomous weapons systems (so-called Killer Robots) risk destabilizing the global security environment and provoking a new arms race in these technologies. They raise pressing new disarmament and ethical challenges. In particular, Killer Robots have become a new area of concern for the WCC since Busan. In November 2019, the WCC executive committee adopted a minute on this subject,² which expressed grave concern about this new militaristic threat to human life, dignity, and rights and the ethical implications of efforts by a number of countries to develop automated weapons systems that would operate without meaningful human control. In recent months, efforts in the Group of Governmental Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems established

1 World Council Of Churches, “Trends and Emerging Issues in a Rapidly Changing World,” in Report on the Ecumenical Conversations at the WCC 11th Assembly, (Geneva: WCC, 2023). <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/publications/report-on-the-ecumenical-conversations-at-the-wcc-11th-assembly>.

2 World Council of Churches, Minute on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems – “Killer Robots,” <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/minute-on-lethal-autonomous-weapons-systems-killer-robots>.

by the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons to make progress for the regulation of such weapons have been repeatedly blocked.

Algorithmic bias, whether deliberately or inadvertently introduced in artificial intelligence systems, raises another set of ethical concerns with wide-ranging implications for the rights and even the lives of human beings. Racist assumptions, for example, may be acquired by machine learning from unregulated sources of flawed internet data and/or by prejudicial correlations based on existing experience. In the case of Killer Robots, such algorithmic bias risks deadly consequences. Racial profiling and bias might be built unintentionally or even deliberately into such weapons, leading to situations where people with certain features common to those of particular ethnicities, such as skin colour, would be more at risk of being targeted.

Nanotechnology, or the use of matter on an atomic, molecular, and supramolecular scale for industrial or other purposes, has been the subject of calls for tighter regulation in light of emerging evidence regarding the health and environmental risks associated with nanotech materials.

Likewise, developments in advanced biotechnology and bioengineering have outpaced the capacities of regulatory oversight, let alone ethical reflection. In particular, CRISPR in vivo gene editing techniques, while offering the means to address important and long-standing challenges in the fields of medicine and agriculture, also raise the spectre of human germline editing for unethical eugenic or cosmetic purposes. Faced with practical examples of uncontrolled use of these techniques, many responsible scientists have called for a global moratorium on genetically editing human embryos.

Social media and other digital communications platforms—as well as becoming ever more pervasive means of communication and human interaction—have also become increasingly recognized as a source of social harm. These digital communication technologies, with all their positive advantages, have been used to spread disinformation, promote hatred of the other, encourage distrust and social fragmentation, undermine democracy, increase surveillance, exploit individuals and communities, and contribute to growing gaps in access, power, and wealth—including between private companies and national governments. Social media platforms have undermined the right to privacy and monetized the personal information of their users. For young people especially, social media and violent computer and online games have been a key vector of worsening mental health and social dislocation.

In February 2022, the WCC central committee received the “New Communications Paper for the 21st Century: A Vision of Digital Justice.”³ This paper warned that the digital transformation of society raises profound issues that the ecumenical fellowship has wrestled with for many decades: power,

3 World Council of Churches, “A New Communications Paper for the 21st Century: A vision of digital justice,” <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/a-new-communications-paper-for-the-21st-century-a-vision-of-digital-justice>.

justice, equity, participation, sustainable communities, care for creation, how voices from the margins are heard, human dignity, and what it means to be human, made in the image of God.

The “Vision of Digital Justice” paper draws attention to some of the issues with which communities of faith, and political, cultural, and civil society actors are all struggling to respond, including “digital divides” (which often reflect entrenched forms of discrimination), accessibility (including for people with disabilities), inequity, education, freedom and safety of the public space, privacy and security, and gender justice.

It underlines that we are called to participate in God’s mission to ensure that all may have life and have it abundantly (John 10:10) also in the digital sphere. We are called to a journey of justice and peace and to ensure the integrity of creation. Digital technology itself is a product of human creativity and should be celebrated when it is used to enhance human dignity. At the same time, the biblical preferential option for the poor and vulnerable (Matt. 5) directs our attention to information poverty and the digital divides in the global face of digitalization.

The executive committee of the WCC, meeting in Bossey, Switzerland, on 7–12 November 2022, affirms that while technologies developed through the God-given intelligence of human beings can bring great benefits to humanity, they can also be the source of great harm, especially when they become the tools for acquiring excessive wealth and power over others or over life and creation. In pursuit of technological progress, human beings cannot claim the position of God.

It is clear that technologies developed during the period since the WCC 10th Assembly in Busan are driving deep and fundamental shifts and are already shaping the future of human society and the environment. We are called, in this context as in all others, to answer God’s call to love our neighbour as ourselves and to emulate the love that Christ has shown us. Love is at the centre of our faith, love should be at the heart of all decision-making for those who have put their faith in God, and as such we must resist all attempts to give responsibility for these decisions over to a technological elite or to a machine.

The executive committee, therefore,

Affirms that each person is created with their own dignity and in God’s image. To be created in God’s image means to be creative. We have a creative healing mandate, and technology can contribute to healing and to our calling to do good for the whole creation.

Calls upon all WCC member churches and ecumenical partners to equip themselves with knowledge concerning these technologies that are shaping our common future, so as to be able to inform our communities and to engage in the public discourse on these critical issues.

Urges the application of the “precautionary principle” by all relevant authorities with regard to innovations with potential for causing

significant harm when sufficient scientific knowledge and experience on the impact of such innovations is lacking, acknowledging that there is a social and governmental responsibility to protect the public from such harm whenever there is a plausible risk, and until scientific evidence has clearly established that significant harm will not result.

Calls upon national governments and all responsible authorities to guarantee minimum social protection floors for all those whose livelihoods are negatively affected by accelerating automation and industrial applications of artificial intelligence, and to consider the introduction of a universal basic income where circumstances permit, while at the same time supporting and promoting the right of all to dignified work and equitable participation in society.

Appeals for the urgent adoption of an international pre-emptive ban on the development of fully autonomous weapons systems.

Strongly supports calls for a worldwide moratorium on applying CRISPR gene editing technology to the human genome.

Urges WCC member churches and ecumenical partners to respond actively to counter the misuse of social media and other digital communications platforms for spreading misinformation, promoting hatred, and encouraging distrust and social fragmentation, and to promote an informed, grassroots, faith-inspired resistance to the forces challenging human dignity and flourishing in digital spaces.

Encourages all member churches to include in their educational and other programmes focusing on children and youth components addressing the negative impact of social media and violent computer/online games on the development and psychological well-being of children and young people.

Asks theological institutions to strengthen ethical reflection on new ethical challenges in their theological education curricula and actively engage in interdisciplinary research and dialogue with scholars in relevant fields, and to encourage theological and ethical critiques of digital transformation, including the powers that operate unregulated, commercially-driven digital spaces.

Affirms the “New Communications Paper for the 21st Century: A Vision of Digital Justice” and urges member churches and ecumenical partners in their local contexts and as a global ecumenical fellowship to address the challenges posed by digital justice in their work and advocacy on gender equality, environmental sustainability, human rights, democratic participation, and economic justice.

Underlines the need for spaces and channels that are inclusive, accessible, interactive, and participatory, that promote racial justice, gender justice, and digital justice, and expand public spaces while also creating visions for the future.

Urges churches to be open for engagement with the state and society and for dialogue with regard to scientific knowledge, technological developments, and the power of Big Data.

Exhorts member churches to be examples of listening to those on the margins, of joining with young people, and of including all generations in decision-making processes to ensure that the decisions and actions of political and economic decision-makers do not harm future generations.

Calls on member churches and ecumenical partners to support a transformative movement, with the broad support and joint commitment of civil society, including churches and faith communities, political actors, science, and business, to guarantee and protect civil rights in the digital age and make the digital space usable for the common good, where technologies are placed at the service of people rather than governments or corporations.

At the Assembly





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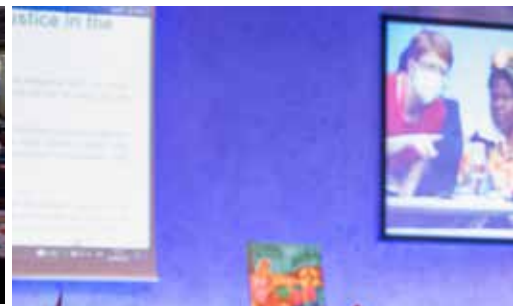


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Hearing from the Pre-Assemblies



Message from Ecumenical Disability Advocates Network Pre-Assembly Meeting

Introduction

The Ecumenical Disability Advocates Network (EDAN) came into being in 1998 at the 8th Assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC) in Harare, Zimbabwe, when a small number of persons with disabilities were invited to the assembly. There were 12 persons with disabilities invited, but they were not given any authority to speak at the assembly and could not give feedback during any of the meetings. There was an initial feeling of tokenism and the 12 people decided that this was not acceptable. Out of that feeling EDAN was formed. We are glad that the WCC has continued to support this work through its programmatic structures, and we have witnessed great strides since then, albeit slowly.

We would like our churches to be the ideal examples of accessible communities, a point of entry into God's love radiating through the lives of its members. However, to be able to access such an inclusive space is a difficult matter for persons with disabilities. Often, persons with disabilities are either excluded altogether from participation or included in a paternalistic way, thus denying them the opportunity to make real contributions to their community.

Exclusion, or the perception of exclusion, may cause certain groups to opt out of markets, services, and spaces, with costs to both individuals and the economy. Inclusion is a priority and this crisis gives us an opportunity to focus on the rebuilding of more inclusive systems that allow society as a whole to be more resilient to future shocks, whether health, climate, natural disasters, or social unrest.

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) is a benchmark document that works to ensure the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms by persons with disabilities. Together with other international human rights and development instruments, a comprehensive international framework is established to guide national policymaking and legislation, including international cooperation, for building an inclusive society, and fostering disability-inclusive development. At the international level, these instruments promote and support disability-inclusive policies and practices. At the national level, they require harmonization of national legislation, policies, and programmes in line with these international norms and standards in the formulation and enforcement of their legislation, strategies,

policies, and programmes that promote equality, inclusion, and empowerment of persons with disabilities in society.

Toward this, we share the following pressing issues:

- **For the WCC to have a wider representation of people with disabilities within EDAN in attending assemblies and other activities, such as:**
 - Non-speaking people: people who communicate through alternative and augmentative devices
 - People who are neurodivergent; have learning disabilities or invisible disabilities
- **Recognizing the God-given gifting of people with disabilities and releasing those gifts for the body of Christ (the Church) to function fully,**
 - Continue to develop and encourage more people with disabilities to be involved in church leadership (laity and ordained) at the local church and denominational levels.
 - We call on the WCC to urge their member churches to increase the number of people with disabilities who are in training to be in all forms of leadership within the church.
 - We urge that more people with disabilities are delegates at the assembly, particularly from the southern hemisphere.
 - Recommend that governing bodies and those at the local church level have a mandate to ensure proportional representation of people with disabilities:
 - * EDAN
 - * WCC
 - * Member churches
- **Development of disability theology**
 - Urge churches and theological institutions to facilitate and to pursue the development of disability theology, both in historical centres of theological development and in their own theological centres of the global South.
 - Provide scholarships to enable this.
 - Include theology of disability and disability training in the WCC's Ecumenical theological Education (ETE) programme and the programme's curriculum and/or provide intensive courses at the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey in cooperation with EDAN.

- Organize an annual disability training for WCC staff, WCC staff leadership, and central committee, facilitated by EDAN.
- To continue to develop an improved level of accessibility (more than just physical access) at all events (including international, regional, national, and local levels) to enable all to fully participate.
- EDAN to promote the coordination of the different network groups of persons with disabilities.
- **To ensure that all training is provided not only by people with disabilities but people with lived experience of disability** (such as a person having a family member with a disability).
- **Disability and poverty**
EDAN calls on the WCC to recognize the ramifications of disability, and that persons with disability are disproportionately found among the poorest of the poor. We urge the WCC member churches and parachurch development agencies to urgently develop programmes and projects to prioritize economic development of people with disabilities, especially in the most economically-disadvantaged states, such as Haiti.
- **Global militarization and conflict**
The WCC denounces militarization. EDAN calls for actions to decrease risk and impact of crises on persons with disabilities (for example, to intensify lobbying efforts to cease arms and increase accessibility of any emergency migration/evacuation), including influencing reduction and recovery from injury in the population.
- **Environmental crisis**
With heightened global understanding of the world's climate emergency, the WCC urges member churches to prioritize disability issues and responses to people with disabilities in environmental risk amelioration and management. We also recognize that the large agrochemical companies are damaging the land and these chemicals impact the lives of people with disabilities. We call on the WCC to urge churches in the North to support churches in the South.
- **The Convention for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)**
EDAN would want to urge the WCC to affirm the Convention for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the change that it has brought to the life of disabled people. However, we recognize that whilst many countries may have signed the CRPD, they need the Church to ensure that rights for people with disabilities are upheld and implemented.

- **Young people**

Finally, EDAN, along with the WCC, would want to affirm the need to encourage and release young people into their rightful ministry within the Church. However, we urge the young people's group and the WCC to seek out the voice of young people with disabilities and empower them to play their part in the group.

Message from the Ecumenical Youth Gathering

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ . . . Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot would say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body.

1 Corinthians 12:12, 14–15

Within the body of Christ there is diversity, through the gifts given to each member of the body. To allow the Church to function to the fullest of its potential, we uphold these gifts. As one body, we recognize not only how we are diverse, but also how the gifts we cultivate bring us together. However, at times, there are evil forces, struggles, and people that wound its members, leaving trauma and scars. We do not all have the same wounds, but recognize the wounds of the body as a whole and lift up these wounds through joined prayer. Jesus Christ is able to transform these wounds into a tapestry of unique encounters, stories, and resilience. We lift up in prayer and invite all Christians to act for and with our siblings, humankind and all creation, who are suffering:

We may not be aware of every wound in the world today, still we strive for tomorrow, carrying these wounds in our prayers. The examples of our laments below are the injustices that were voiced during the Ecumenical Youth Gathering.

- We lament that we cannot name all the countries lifted up during the Ecumenical Youth Gathering, in which we understand there is suffering and sorrow, because of the concern for the security and protection of participants.
- We lament the killings, the violence and brutality against human beings, and crimes against humanity, especially against women, children, and girls, in times of war, from foreign oppressors in countries such as Ukraine and Palestine.
- We lament the forced silence and unjust imprisonments of people fighting for self-determination in their countries, such as West Papua Kanaky (New Caledonia), Maohi Nui (French Polynesia), Belarus, and the ongoing red-tagging and extra-judicial killings in the Philippines.
- We lament the forced displacements of people and nations due to climate crisis, wars, and violent conflicts and oppression such as in

the Middle East, many Pacific Islands, most African countries, and Latin America.

- We lament the hegemonic system imposed on many countries, and unilateral and unjust blockades that some countries have placed on others, such as Cuba, Venezuela, and Zimbabwe.
- We lament the degradation and destruction of mother nature, including the oceans, for profit and human consumption, and the persecution of environmental activists who speak up.
- We lament the influence of greenwashing in our Christian communities that instrumentalizes the issues of climate crisis for profit.
- We lament the use of green colonialism to land-grab ancestral domains of Indigenous Peoples, such as the Sámi peoples and the Maasai peoples for new “green technologies.”
- We lament the forced removal and displacement of Indigenous Peoples from their lands, and the loss of traditions and identity that can teach us all how to better live on our earth through respect and knowing when enough is enough.
- We lament the religious intolerance and the persecution of people of faith around the world such as in Nigeria, Iraq, Sudan, and Syria.
- We lament the dehumanization of humankind through human trafficking, forced migration, child labour, sexual exploitation, the death penalty, impunity, and the destruction of cultures and languages through ethnic cleansing and genocide.
- We lament the institutionalization and perpetuation of systemic racism through the impact of neocolonialism, imperialism, modern slavery, socio-economic inequalities, and the claiming of Indigenous lands.
- We lament the discriminatory treatment, exclusion, silencing, and stigmatization of the LGBTQIA+ community in our church communities and the society.
- We lament the gender-based violence perpetuated by the patriarchal society and the millions of young women and girls whose human rights are denied and violated due to discriminatory gender norms.
- We lament our churches that do not recognize women’s voices and participation in God’s testimony, such as in biblical stories and today.
- We lament how people with disabilities are made invisible and inaudible in our churches and communities due to discriminatory attitudes, policy, and negligence in providing facilities for

disabilities and in recognizing the human right for liberty of people with disabilities.

- We lament the isolation and labelling of people in our communities because of poor mental health and mental illness.
- We lament forced unjust systems of poverty, with limited opportunities for education, economic opportunities, and access to basic healthcare, and the denial of other basic human needs and rights.
- We lament the wounds inflicted by the church on its young members throughout history and the silence and complacency of the church in responding today.

We recognize, confess, and pray for justice, forgiveness, and reconciliation because of the wounds the Church as a body has inflicted and continues to inflict in the world. We believe and affirm that the healing of wounds is a process, a journey, and a path. This requires a community grounded in the love of Christ with the knowledge of his passion, crucifixion and resurrection as the greatest gift to raise up all human beings from their deepest wounds and transform them into divine strength, making the body whole.

Today, we as young people ask the Church to take the path of healing wounds. This path starts at this assembly and requires participation in authentic encounters, together with openness for diversity and acceptance of differences.

We, as young people, are gifts to the church and society as part of the body of Christ. Today, we advocate for the use of these gifts in our churches. We invite all young people and the WCC assembly as a whole to walk the talk—act now. We urge each other to use our prophetic voices to call out injustices, for all the wounds in the world, especially those in which churches have participated. Together, let us walk on the path of using our gifts, healing wounds, and transforming injustices:

- By giving an active and meaningful space for equal representation of young people in all processes of the World Council of Churches;
- By establishing a permanent youth desk focused on advocacy and reconciliation toward unity;
- By demanding active listening to the cries of the young people, especially those in oppressed communities and those fighting for the pressing matter of climate justice; to stand with them, to work toward restoration and love, with a deep knowledge of the pains of the past.

As young people, we need to point out that we are a present for the present days. We are here, as stewards, theological students, advisors, delegates, participants, and observers. We are around 400 young people, full of gifts and overflowing

with God's spirit. We are grateful for the opportunity and the space we have at the Ecumenical Youth Gathering to grow together and be inspired by one another. However, this is not reflected at the 11th Assembly. In fact, only 93 out of 750 voting delegates with decision-making rights are young people. That is only about 12 percent.

Therefore, we urge the assembly to recognize our presence and acknowledge our voices today and not only tomorrow. We urge the member churches to respect and intentionally reflect their commitment to young people at the decision-making spaces through fair and equal representation of young people in their delegation to the assembly. Additionally, we urge this 11th Assembly to elect a fair and adequate representation of young people to the central committee.

To lead us into this path, we start with a prayer:

May God help us use our unique gifts to be unified in our diversity.
May Christ's love transform our discipleship to fight injustices that are creating these wounds.
May the Holy Spirit guide us to be agents of reconciliation and peace.
Amen.

Message from the Indigenous Peoples Pre-Assembly Meeting

We were welcomed to this land in song, scripture, and ceremony by the Sami people and members of the Ecumenical Indigenous Peoples Network. We acknowledge the Sami of Norway, Sweden, Finland, and parts of Russia and the Inuit of Greenland as Indigenous Peoples of Europe. As people from the world's four directions, representing 40 different Indigenous communities, we celebrated our time together in prayer, conversation, and reflection on our theme: *Restoring wholeness in creation for reconciliation and unity*.

As people belonging to rich traditions of prudence, and as people pushed to the margins, we seek to make visible what is hidden by and from the view of those who occupy the centres of the world.

Reconciliation

Our common understanding of the interdependent and interconnected reality and dynamics of life compels us to assert that reconciliation that does not include the whole of God's creation is incomplete and superficial. A holistic consciousness of life kindles and nurtures mutual respect and responsibility and enables one to be humble, just, and compassionate. Seeking reconciliation is a spiritual and moral choice. It involves restoring justice, truth-telling, repentance, and forgiveness. It is an ongoing journey that unveils God's presence and purposes in all of God's creation. It is not an easy journey, but one that calls for costly discipleship (Matt. 19:21; Mark 8:34–35; Luke 9:23).

Hierarchies and power-based relationships, whether in the church or the wider society, obstruct such goals. Reconciliation involves courage to dismantle oppressive structures, policies, and theologies that restrict access to the abundant life that Jesus promised for all (John 10:10).

Unity

We reiterate that the dominant discourse on reconciliation and unity has largely been responsible for the domination and suppression of Indigenous communities, and other marginalized communities. Christian unity, in an Indigenous context, has often meant little more than conformity to the colonial way of life, and the dissolution of Indigenous, land-centred identity. We remind the Church of unity as it is illustrated on the day of Pentecost, not by all of God's children speaking the same language, but by each person being understood and honoured in their own mother tongue.

Christ's Love

Love, as taught by Jesus of Nazareth, is radical. It heals and restores, and confronts and transforms. It calls us to love our enemies, restore justice, and make community with those pushed to the margins by the dominant systems and traditions. It indicts systems and cultures that discriminate and dehumanize. It empowers the disempowered and re-members the dismembered. As such, Christ's love is subversive and offensive to the systems and cultures that dominate, discriminate, and dehumanize. Such love alone can make reconciliation lasting and unity real.

Indigenous Spirituality

In contrast to some dominant religious traditions and belief systems that continue to legitimize injustice and the abuse of human beings and the earth with their truncated views of life, anthropocentric theologies, and hierarchical institutions and relationships, we hold forth Indigenous spiritual traditions as life-nurturing practices. These are shaped by an awareness of life in all its diversity, vastness, and interconnectedness. These call us to re-anchor our understanding of and our relationship with God in the affirmation of God as the Creator of life. Vast, diverse, and beautiful, the creation, in all its intricate interconnectedness and interdependence, is God's self-expression and God's wisdom and generosity.

Indigenous Peoples have God-given identities that are beautiful. God was present in our lands and among our peoples before the colonizers arrived. When Christians brought the Bible to us, we recognized the voice of our Creator in Jesus' teachings. But we did not hear a call to reject our identities. We heard God loves us. God loves our cultures and our languages and our spiritualities. God knows us and God loves us as spiritual beings in relationship with each other and with all of creation. Our cultures are libraries of ancestral memory. Our languages, which uphold our sacred relationship with our lands, are storehouses of ecological well-being.

And yet the colonizers and their churches told us, "It's not a coincidence but God's will that they will die out," as said by a non-Sami priest. We have been subjected to genocides around the world; some have been spoken about, while others have been suppressed. In many contexts, the church has been complicit in these genocides. We have been victims of spiritual violence perpetrated by Christian churches since first contact. This prompts us to decolonize our faith traditions in order to rediscover the life-nurturing and rehumanizing potential of the gospel.

As Indigenous Christians, we claim our power, agency, and authority to self-determine in spiritual matters. This is consistent with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Indigenous theologians,

Indigenous clergy, and the people of Indigenous churches have the capacity to formulate Christian theologies that have relevance, authenticity, and integrity.

Our openness enables us to hold together our worldviews and Christian faith traditions in harmony. For Indigenous Christians, there is a fluidity, a porosity of the spirit of Indigenous and Christian worldviews; one cannot work without the other. Accusations of syncretism are not only unhelpful, but also abusive.

There can be no reconciliation without understanding the truth of the spiritual violence we have experienced and without considerable work at healing. We are on our own healing journeys to recover our God-given identities. Everywhere in the world it is difficult and in some parts of the world it is nearly impossible. Healing from historical trauma is intergenerational. Our mental and physical well-being, that of our children, grandchildren, and generations to come are at stake. And this healing is directly tied to the healing and well-being of our lands, our waters, and the air we breathe.

Political Engagement

We are particularly concerned about the increasing nexus among neo-liberal economics, right-wing politics, and authoritarian regimes and their new mechanisms to silence and suppress dissent and aspirations for justice and rights of the marginalized communities in many parts of the world. As such, our affirmations of love, reconciliation, and unity must involve critical engagement with these global and local dispensers of injustices, even if such actions threaten the positions of power and privilege of some of us.

Indigenous Land Rights and Climate Change

Reconciliation is not only about restoring broken human relationships but also about humanity's broken relationship with the creation. God's love is not limited to the human world and life has no future without seeking reconciliation with the earth. We are the people of the earth and we call all to find our common earth identity.

As we have said, land is sacred to Indigenous Peoples. It gives us identity and livelihood. Yet our way of being has been under attack for generations. Even new Green and Blue solutions,¹ intended to provide alternative pathways, have led to suffering in our communities. The restoration of the wholeness of creation, therefore, will require a reimagining and deconstructing of the dominant worldview and theology. We recognize that the majority of Indigenous Peoples are the most marginalized communities in many parts of the world, exposed to

¹ To reduce carbon dioxide emissions, two routes have been proposed: the first is to capture and sequester the CO₂ after its generation, and this leads to "blue" solutions; the second is to avoid the CO₂ generation by the use of renewable energy and feed stocks, and this is the path to "green" solutions. See <https://www.casale.ch/green-and-blue-solutions>.

poverty, disease, malnutrition, dispossession, exploitation, trafficking, forced migration, or denied possibilities of migration or asylum. It is imperative for the church not only to accompany them but also to advocate for justice on their behalf.

As we join the larger efforts to address climate change with our distinct experiences of suffering, we call on the churches in the North to impress upon their governments the need to halt or restrain extractive and exploitative projects for economic growth and prosperity on the land.

Our conversation on the restoration of creation as necessary for reconciliation and unity opens possibilities to offer new content to churches' advocacy for climate justice.

In conclusion, we want to assert that our commitment to the restoration of the creation is inclusive of the restoration of all those yearning for justice, dignity, and freedom and struggling against exclusionary ideologies, systems, and cultures. To that extent, we see ourselves as proclaimers of new paradigms for the celebration of life and as partners with God in the mission of transformation that ensures space and dignity for all of God's creation. We affirm our faith in God who announces, "Behold, I create new heavens in which life, justice and peace are possible for all" (Isaiah 65:17–35).

Recommendations

1. We call upon the World Council of Churches to ensure that the Indigenous Peoples programme has its own fully financed desk with adequate resources.
2. We call upon the World Council of Churches to pursue its climate justice initiatives through the Indigenous Peoples desk.
3. We call upon the World Council of Churches and its member churches to initiate mechanisms to address Indigenous Peoples need for healing from historical and intergenerational trauma.
4. We call upon the World Council of Churches and its member churches to encourage the establishment of truth and reconciliation processes that are based on restoring justice and healing relationships wherever genocides have occurred.
5. We call upon the World Council of Churches to commit to advocate for the aspirations of Indigenous communities, such as those in West Papua, Maohi Nui, Kanaky, and other places that struggle for self-determination, and continue to be threatened by projects such as Green and Blue colonization.
6. We call upon the World Council of Churches to promote education about Indigenous Peoples' theologies and worldviews, including as part of the WCC's efforts to address climate change.

7. We commend the World Council of Churches for repudiating the Doctrine of Discovery and the principle of *terra nullius* (nobody's land) and encourage its member churches, who have not already done so, also to repudiate these concepts.

Message from the Just Community of Women and Men Pre-Assembly Meeting

From the time of its 1st Assembly in Amsterdam in 1948, the World Council of Churches (WCC) has worked in multiple ways to foster a just community of women and men in church and society. This process continued as Christians gathered 29–30 August 2022 for the Just Community of Women and Men (JCWM) pre-assembly to the WCC's 11th Assembly in Karlsruhe, Germany. Through Bible study, liturgy, workshops, and presentations, participants explored the assembly's theme through the lens of gender justice, identifying avenues for reconciliation and collaboration.

Biblical-theological reflection during the pre-assembly focused on Acts 8:26–39, the encounter between Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch. This story challenged us to reflect on our understanding of inclusion and transformation and how injustice occurs on the basis of identity and particularity, including sexual and gender identity, class, ethnic and racial identity, and religious identity. We asked, What prevents us from experiencing the fullness of life in God? What maintains exclusion and prevents radical welcome?

Our study and discussion also drew on key documents reflecting JCWM work since the 10th Assembly in Busan, and documents coming to the 11th Assembly in Karlsruhe. These included Gender Justice Principles, the Code of Conduct, strategies developed during the consultation for the 20th Anniversary of the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women (DCSW), Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace (PJP) women's team visits, and the PJP Orthodox Women's Meeting. In all of these, we reflected the pilgrimage movement of celebrating gifts, visiting wounds, and transforming injustice. While we recognize and celebrate this history of work for transformation toward inclusive participation and gender justice, we are still advocating for essential changes to be made. From our discussions in the pre-assembly, we lift up four areas calling for continued urgent attention.

1. Violence and Abuse

Reports from every region and programme focus revealed that multiple forms of sexual and gender-based violence and abuse are represented in all regions and have devastating impacts on those on the margins, most vulnerable to megatrends such as the COVID pandemic, the climate crisis, conflict and war, racism, migration, and the role of media in shaping experience including violence. We recognize with concern the emerging forms of violence against

women and children in online spaces, exacerbated by the impunity accorded social media.

We noted the intersectionality among these issues and in relation to gender injustice. A vivid example is the particular experience of widows, single mothers, and others made vulnerable to poverty and abuse by isolation in the community. These highlight the economic and ecological crises and their effects on women, with threats to employment, food security, and health care exacerbated by the pandemic.

Sadly, almost a quarter century since the WCC's assembly in Harare declared [in 1998] that violence against women is a sin, we continue to hear the stories of sexual and gender-based violence in our churches as well as in society. We trace its effects throughout our communities: against women and children, often as a weapon of war; against the LGBTQIAA+ community; against refugee, migrant, and trafficked women; against Indigenous and minority women and girls; often overlapping with racism, xenophobia, and selective inclusion. We are reminded of the harmful theological doctrines and biblical interpretations that help to perpetuate structural and systemic violence. We acknowledge the continuing culture of silence around the presence of violence within our churches, and abuse by clergy in particular.

These stories of sexual and gender-based violence in all its forms were powerfully portrayed in the Waterfall Tapestry of patches from around the world, and in the witness of Thursdays in Black ambassadors and trailblazers, but so too were stories of courage, resilience, and resistance as we celebrated networks engaged in solidarity, advocacy, and action.

2. Praxis (Policy and Practice)

Our discussions named barriers to equity and equality related to tradition, culture, and politics that plague our theologies and praxis of faith. Harmful cultural norms and Christian fundamentalism often join to threaten women's rights, at times with violence, pushing women and men into regressive and oppositional gender roles. Socio-cultural realities that impose themselves on our religious lives distort God's vision of life in fullness, abundance, and love. Patriarchy hurts and exploits women, men, and people of all genders. The operation of patriarchy or the power imbalances between women and men results in an inclusion that comes with conditions set by those in power. As Christians, we are called to employ the "power of love" and not the "love of power."

At times in our Christian communities, oppressive theology is used to justify discrimination on the basis of gender or sex. Even when theological education and entry into ministry have been accepted, barriers exist that prevent women from serving to their fullest potential. We lament limited

mentoring, training, and resources to cultivate a new generation of women leaders and peacemakers in our communities.

It is imperative that men confront their own positions on gender justice. We must urgently and intentionally work with men and boys for transformative and positive masculinities, to name and resist the sin of patriarchy, and emphasize what it means to be truly an equal and just community of women and men.

There is immense potential to bridge these gaps and ensure that our devotional life, social action, theological work, and theoretical research reflect equity and equality not only in words but in funding, action, and impact. While we shared anger and despair at the places in our churches where women's rights and participation seem to be regressing, we also learned of work within the WCC and member churches that is contributing to agency and empowerment.

3. Rights and Responsibilities

Gender justice must be mainstreamed in all policies, language, programmes, structures, and institutions of our churches and communities, with attention to implementation and accountability. It is vital to allocate appropriate resources for women's empowerment, which must include gender-responsive budgeting. We ask again for our churches and the wider ecumenical fellowship to be proactive and prophetic in discerning the signs of the times in relation to gender justice.

While acknowledging that there is not a consensus, a significant number identified and challenged the current gender binary framing of the JCWM. Change could begin with the transformation of language to respect persons of the non-binary and non-gender-conforming community. The need for safe spaces in faith communities was identified in several dimensions: for women in all churches, for vulnerable men, for creating dialogue and affirmation around gender diversity, and for solidarity and accompaniment with victims of violence.

4. Affirmation with Respect

The vocation of the church is to be a foretaste of new creation; a prophetic sign to the whole world of the life God intends for all; and good news of justice, peace, and love. We celebrate and learn from positive examples and best practices of theology, action, and advocacy towards transforming injustice.

We cannot see visible unity and reconciliation as long as women are still suffering. The community of God is not served by a so-called unity that dilutes, dismisses, or negates the lived experience of women. The prioritization of unity must not prevent us from delving deeper and exploring the real issues that hurt women and men. We seek a fellowship through the WCC that reflects Jesus' advocacy for women and his model of a community where all are included and honoured with dignity and respect.

In the life of the WCC, we denounce a neocolonial approach that disrespects and exploits local and Indigenous contexts. We continue to encourage churches to make use of the rich resources that the WCC has published over many years, and that reflect the call of the fellowship of churches to progress to gender justice.

Calls to Action: Our Vision for Our Ecumenical Future

Being “disturbed” and moved by the Holy Spirit, we call on the WCC, its member churches, and ecumenical partners to:

1. **implement** the commitments already demonstrated by our churches through targeted and concrete actions;
2. **create space** for feminist and womanist dialogue among church leaders, pastors, and male clergy, and for men to critically engage with their own positionalities, power, and privilege;
3. **nurture and mentor** intergenerational women’s networks, encouraging women’s potentials and leadership, especially those of young women;
4. **allocate funding** for gender justice and employ gender-responsive budgeting in the structures and institutions of our churches and communities;
5. **appoint and recognize** male allies and champions for gender equality;
6. **sustain and amplify** the **Thursdays in Black** campaign, Gender Justice Principles, Code of Conduct, DCSW strategies, and other WCC and member church initiatives;
7. **transform language** to respect persons of the non-binary and non-gender conforming community;
8. **advocate** for nonviolent conflict prevention, resolution, and transformation, as well as the healing of personal and collective trauma;
9. **integrate** global, regional, and local programmes and networks, such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Framework, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and other UN instruments, for more effective communication and collaboration;
10. **address the intersectional dimensions of gender justice**, including racial justice and reparations; economic exploitation and oppression; militarization and political violence; and the vulnerability and exclusion of marginalized groups in our societies;

Without joint and just participation within church life, we cannot speak about humanity, *imago Dei*, and the experience of the fullness of life bestowed upon us by Jesus Christ. The church is the body of Christ, and Christ is fully human. Gender justice is an issue of our authentic identity as Christian churches.

Report of the Inter-Orthodox Pre-Assembly Consultation for the 11th Assembly in Karlsruhe, Germany, 2022 “Christ’s Love Moves the World to Reconciliation and Unity”

*Organized by the World Council of Churches & hosted by the
Orthodox Church of Cyprus, Paralimni, Cyprus, May 10-15, 2022*

<i>Christ is Risen!</i>	<i>Krishti u Ngjall!</i>	<i>Ἐρῆυννου θωρητωρ</i>
<i>ክርስቶስ ተንሥላ እሙታን!</i>	<i>Xpucmoc βωκπερε!</i>	<i>Hristos a ἰνvia!</i>
<i>Christ est ressuscité!</i>	<i>Χριστός Ἀνέστη!</i>	<i>ክርስቶስ ክብ ሙታን ተንሥላ!</i>
<i>“Christos Anesti” - Chrystus Zmartwychwsta!</i>		
<i>ക്രിസ്തു ഉയർത്തെഴുന്നേറ്റു</i>	<i>Xpucmoc βωκπερε!</i>	<i>المسيح قام!</i>
<i>Kristus nousi kuolleista!</i>	<i>ክርስቶስ ከሙታን ተለይቶ ተነሣ!</i>	<i>Vstal z mrtvých Kristus!</i>

Preamble

1. We, Orthodox delegates to the 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC) to be held in Karlsruhe, Germany, give thanks to the Triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—whose self-giving love is the source of the Church’s unity and the power that strengthens it to address all divisions.
2. The WCC, in the articles of its Constitution, is “a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Savior according to the scriptures, and therefore seek to fulfill their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.” The primary purpose of this fellowship to which Orthodox churches have belonged since its founding in 1948, is “to call one another to visible unity in one faith and in one eucharistic fellowship expressed in worship and in common life in Christ, through witness and service to the world, and to advance toward that unity in order that the world may believe.” The Acting General Secretary of the WCC, Rev. Prof. Dr. Ioan Sauca, has called the Council a “blessed instrument” for promoting dialogue, witness, and service in the name of Christ.
3. Fifty participants, including delegates from twenty Eastern and Oriental Orthodox churches along with observers and consultants, have gathered in Cyprus from May 10-15, 2022 for an Inter-Orthodox Pre-Assembly

Consultation. We rejoice in the active presence of the Eritrean Orthodox Tewahedo Church in such a Pre-Assembly meeting for the first time. This is the sixth time, starting in 1983, that representatives of Orthodox churches have met in advance of a WCC assembly in order to reflect on the assembly theme, to identify how Orthodox Christians can contribute to the assembly's agenda, and to prepare for informed discussions on issues of the day. This meeting, organized by the WCC, is additionally intended to enhance Orthodox participation in the life of the Council. We express our gratitude to H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios of Sassima for pursuing the vision of the late Rev. Ion Bria of Pre-Assembly meetings which include both Orthodox church families.

4. The theme of the WCC's 11th Assembly (August 31–September 8, 2022) is “Christ’s love moves the world to reconciliation and unity,” a theme drawn from St. Paul’s second letter to the Corinthians (5:14). Consideration of the theme is, at heart, a matter of spiritual discernment, and, thus, we have set our days of study and discussion in a context of prayer. A summary of our discussions is set forth in the body of this report, but we note at the outset that this theme is surely timely. We gather at a moment when around the world, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, violence, conflicts, wars, occupation, racism, poverty, and ecological devastation imperil human existence, contrary to Christ’s love that moves the world to reconciliation and unity!

5. The World Council of Churches is a significant forum for dialogue among Christian communities and churches that, while sharing a common confession of the Triune God, may have theological differences and genuine disagreements about issues of the day. In this context, we cannot imagine the expulsion of any member. We are thankful that the WCC has provided a setting for this consultation of Orthodox churches, Oriental and Eastern, and look forward to the Council’s 11th Assembly where we will join with the wider ecumenical fellowship in prayer, study of scripture, and dialogue. With them, we are called to witness that Christ’s love moves the world to reconciliation and unity! Being together as Orthodox families and with others in the fellowship of the WCC is itself a sign of God’s life-giving grace.

6. We express our appreciation for the extraordinary hospitality of H.E. Metropolitan Vasiliios of Constantia and Ammochostos, of the Orthodox Church of Cyprus, as well as the local municipal authorities of Paralimni, Sotira, Agia Napa, and Protaras. We were graciously welcomed by Cypriot presidential commissioner, Photis Photiou, who commended the Orthodox churches for coming together and the WCC for providing an “open platform” for dialogue. We were warmly greeted by H.B. Archbishop Chrysostomos II in Nicosia. During this meeting, which took place on May 12, the Feast of St. Epiphanius, His Beatitude underlined the importance of Orthodox preparing

together for the 11th Assembly. The same day also marked the 15th anniversary of the enthronement of H.E. Vasilios and the restoration of the Diocese of Constantia and Ammochostos.

7. The island of Cyprus is an apostolic land of the apostles Paul, Barnabas, and Mark, and was the first European country to receive the Gospel. It is also today a vivid indication of the need for reconciliation and unity. In addition to British colonial presence, one-third of the island is occupied by the Turkish army, including two-thirds of the diocese in which we have met. Nearly two hundred thousand Christians have been forced to flee their homes, and churches, Christian monuments, and other Christian cultural heritage have been, and continue to be, destroyed in the occupied territory. As H.E. Metropolitan Vasilios has said, the intention of Orthodox Christians is not to further inflame relationships with Muslims or the people of Turkey, but to call on all churches to pray and work for the reunification of Cyprus, for an end to destruction and injustice on this island, and for the restoration of its churches.

8. One hopeful sign for us has been the combined presence of Eastern and Oriental Orthodox delegates at this pre-assembly consultation. During our sessions, we have been encouraged and informed by speakers from both traditions, Eastern and Oriental, and we look forward to further growth, led by the Holy Spirit, in this relationship.

9. Those gathered for this meeting are only part of the Orthodox delegates that will take part in the upcoming assembly. In Karlsruhe, there will be nearly two hundred delegates from Orthodox churches that are members of the WCC, one-quarter of all the delegates to the 11th Assembly. There should be no doubt that the Orthodox voice is strong and valued in the life of the Council, demonstrating Christ's love in our relations with one another and with our sisters and brothers in other churches. The papers and discussions at this consultation have reminded us that Orthodox participation in the movement to restore unity with other followers of Christ in the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church is not foreign to the nature and history of the Orthodox Church. It is with that conviction that we commend this report to our Orthodox churches and the other member churches of the WCC fellowship.

Theological Contribution to the Assembly Theme

10. This is the first time that 'love' has been part of an Assembly theme. While that has commended the theme to many Christians, others have raised questions: Does the focus on Christ's 'love' ignore the fullness of the Trinity? Does it undercut the importance of interfaith relations? Should the theme

have explicitly included ‘justice’ and/or ‘creation’? What is the meaning of ‘unity’? The presentations at our Consultation have shown that an Orthodox understanding of the theme can effectively address such questions, and thus, contribute to the whole Assembly.

11. God is love (1 John 4:16). The whole creation has come into being due to the superabundance of divine goodness and is being saved by the same superabundant divine love. The ontological abyss between God’s divine nature and our human nature is overcome by the Word of God taking on flesh. It is Jesus Christ, through His giving of the self, who brings to us the all-abundant love of the Creator. The passion of Christ was not the price to be paid for human sins, nor the ransom to be given to Satan, but was the ultimate expression of God’s love for all people.

12. The Holy Trinity, the *koinonia* of love, calls humans to be participants in the love that does not discriminate but unites, that embraces not only the beautiful but also the disfigured, not only the perfect but also the imperfect, not only the world of angels blessed by heavenly bliss but also the world of pain and the realm of death. This love is universal. God entreats us to abide in this love by keeping his commandments (John 15:10). These commandments are “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind . . . and love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:37-39).

13. The love referred to in these commandments does not signify a demand of a superior to his inferior but is a corroboration of the divine will, according to the commandment given to Adam in paradise. The commandments constitute a *modus vivendi*, which connotes the living of the faithful according to the truth and reflects divine goodness. They are ‘light . . . and life’ (Symeon the New Theologian), leading human beings to the light and the real life that is Christ Himself.

14. The transformation in Christ leads to the second great commandment: loving one’s neighbor, whether they are agreeable or disagreeable to us, whether they are friends or enemies (Matthew 5:44). The love of this kind has nothing in common with all the causes of love known in our human experience. Its nature is not sentimental, due to an enthusiasm or a type of interest; it is not a creature of imagination, it is not a simple desire of the other, but, as the perfection of love, goes beyond all these, having a catholic character. It is addressed to all human beings no matter who or where they are.

15. Love, in Orthodox Christian perspective, is not merely tolerance, but is rooted in the very nature of God and is manifest in compassion, in taking

on and identifying with the sufferings of the world through ‘transforming discipleship.’¹ Love-as-sacrifice supersedes love-as-tolerance. Through the sacrificial love of God in Jesus Christ, we are taught (1 Thessalonians 4:9), and called to emulate, a deeper experience of self-emptying love that knows no bounds. This emptying of the self in love for the other is a clear virtue and Christian preoccupation. The impetus of this love is reconciliation.

16. Genuine Christian reconciliation requires a *metanoia*, a real transformation of unjust relationships by acknowledging and recognizing our faults and mistakes, and changing our minds and ways of life. Reconciliation is both the foundation of life as well as a ministry we are called to serve. Having then received Christ’s reconciling love, we are sent as ambassadors of reconciliation. The Church is called to be a peacemaker (Matthew 5:9). The unity of the church as witness to reconciliation, is always to be identical with and connected to its service in and for the transformation of the world. This is preceded by acknowledging one’s mistakes for lasting reconciliation. This transformation is not restricted to an exterior change of the human, but according to Orthodox Christian perspective, to the inner radical change that is offered through *metanoia*.

17. The achievement of the perfection of love presupposes the knowledge of God in as much as He reveals Himself to us. The internalization of this revealed knowledge is faith. Of course, faith is not merely an intellectual acceptance of the existence of God or even of the basic articles of faith but the absolute trust and self-giving of the faithful to God, as shown by Abraham and other saints, and most perfectly by the Theotokos, that permits the faithful to be known by God (1 Corinthians 8:1-3). It is “the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1). In this perspective, faith is a foundational virtue and the spiritual prerogative, as without it there cannot be any spiritual building.

18. The building up of faith denotes the confession of faith in one spirit, because one is the Lord. After His resurrection from the dead and before his ascension to heaven, Jesus Christ instructed His disciples: “go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.” (Matthew 28:19) Jesus Christ, being the unifying principle for Christian faith, is the cornerstone on whom the spiritual construction is fit together, to whom we are assembled, becoming the temple of God in spirit. Thus, “we come to Him, the living stone... and like living stones we learn ourselves to be built into a spiritual house.” (1 Peter 2:4)

¹ Theme of the WCC World Mission Conference in Arusha (2018).

19. In this organic unity, founded on the one common faith and experience activated by love, Christ is the cornerstone. He is the Head of his Body, the Church, and the One who blesses, through the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, those who believe in Him. In this way, He makes all partakers of the one bread members of the same body with Himself and with each other. According to St. Epiphanius of Salamis², to us, “this is the faith and this is the pride, and this is our mother; the Church that saves through faith, that is strengthened through hope and that is perfected through Christ’s love, in the one confession, in the sacraments . . . this is the faith, this is the reality of our life, this is the truth, and again, this is the life and the hope and the assurance of immortality.”

20. The ontological unity of humankind broken by sin is restored through the incarnation, passion, and sacrifice of Jesus, His suffering, death, and resurrection, for those who are born from Him of water and spirit (John 3:5). The arms of the Savior stretched out on the Cross embrace all ends of the world, uniting all people who rely on Him into “one man” whom the Savior places “in the bosom of one deity,” that is, reuniting them with God and deifying them (St. Gregory the Theologian). Faith, hope, and love are interconnected. Each one of them depends on the other. Loving God results in loving the other. Love is often considered as the climax of spiritual progress which cannot exist unless it is founded in faith. (Galatians 5:6)

21. The deepest mystery of human dignity is not reached only by human intellect but is mainly grasped through God’s revelation, achieving its fulfilment in Christ’s incarnation. In it is clarified that every human person has a great, unique and equal worth and that the origin of this should be sought exclusively in the fact that humans have been created “according to the image and likeness of God,” and this creation is the root of the inherent worth or dignity of each and every human person. As “an image of God,” humans must act, live and create in a godlike manner; to become God’s partner in creation. This type of conduct cannot be enjoyed apart from relationship with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, meaning, apart from God. Therefore, human freedom, a major characteristic of this godlike image, reflects not only an autonomous chooser but also a responsible person with a sense of moral duty. This sense of moral duty, according to the Orthodox vision, should always be seen and fulfilled in the light of its eschatological dynamic.

22. The ascetic ethos of the Orthodox Church entails a manner of modesty in life and self-restraint towards all the offered goods of the creation and the respect to all resources, being to our disposal for the benefit of our life. It reminds us that we are responsible for the creation as its guardians but not its creators.

2 Epiphanius of Salamis, Panarion, *De fide*, 18-19.

The Cry of the World

23. As Christians, we are greatly affected by the tragedies that have been unfolding before our eyes. Cries for help of millions of our brothers and sisters in various parts of the world must not remain the voice heard “wailing and in loud lamentation” like Rachel “weeping for her children, refusing to be consoled as they are no more” (Matthew 2:18) As Orthodox churches—which identify both their history and their present with the mystery of the Cross, the suffering and resurrection of the Lord—we are deeply concerned with the conflicts, human rights violations, the worsening refugee crisis, the systematic destruction of Christian cultural heritage, terrorist actions, and persecutions and uprooting of Christians taking place in different parts of the world. We are particularly concerned about, and lift up in prayer, the situation in Ukraine, Armenia, Cyprus, Syria, Palestine, Iraq, and the Middle East and Africa, and other places in the world. We also sorrowfully remember the yet unresolved situation of the kidnapped Archbishop Paul Yazigi of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch, Syriac Orthodox Archbishop Yohanna Ibrahim, and other abducted clergy and lay people. “Never again”: “we do not forget” the consequences of degradation and dehumanization which has resulted in untold pain, suffering, and sorrow for generations.

24. During our deliberations, there was an expression of grave concern over the armed conflict in Ukraine that has already claimed many people’s lives. The participants in the meeting have been unanimous in condemning the wars and call upon all the parties involved in the conflicts to do everything within their power for the urgent establishment of peace and for ensuring safety in Ukraine, Russia, Europe, and the whole world. We also condemn systematic campaigns of disinformation that promote divisions and hatred. In this time of great hardships, we are called to lift up fervent prayers to Christ the Savior so that hatred may not take hold of human souls and hearts, but, instead, love and fraternal communion may return to the brotherly peoples in anguish.

25. We should not allow our hearts and minds to be governed by all passions and old imperfections and expressions of our fallen human nature, which drives us to sin and distance from God and our neighbor. We believe that conflicts must be solved only through peaceful means and dialogue, and not through military action. We call and pray for the immediate cessation of violence in these areas, as in all places where conflict is occurring, and for the universal observance of self-determination and good governance. Christ’s love moves us to work and pray for reconciliation and unity, to express God’s will for peace.

26. At this meeting, we also discussed such documents as: ‘Conversations on the Pilgrim Way—Invitation to Journey Together on Matters of Human

Sexuality’ (received by the Central Committee in February 2022), informing our participation in the WCC. We recall what has been stated in the 2002 Report of the Special Commission on Orthodox Participation in the WCC in order to strengthen the ecumenical memory on special social and ethical issues: “The Council cannot speak for, nor require the churches to adopt particular positions. It can, however, continue to provide opportunities for all churches to consult one another, and, wherever possible, for them to speak together. By the same token, member churches should understand that not all matters discussed within their fora can be imposed on the WCC agenda. Skill and sensitivity are needed on all sides to perceive which matters should remain within the counsels of particular churches and which can be profitably discussed together.”

27. We are called to bear witness to the Tradition of the Church of the first centuries, which is faithfully preserved and lived in the Orthodox churches. The state of ethics and morality in the present-day society urges us to raise our voice in defense of the traditional values of family and marriage and in defense of human life, from the moment of conception until natural death. We must not be apathetic towards moral relativism and degradation. It is only the clear example of faithfulness to the commandments of God and a firm word that can produce results in order to “by all means save some” (1 Corinthians 9:22).

28. The COVID-19 pandemic, which continues to rage on in many parts of the world at the time of this meeting, has wrought misery and death. The pandemic has reminded us of our inherent fragility. It has exposed great inequalities within and between nations: the unequal distribution of COVID-related health care and aid has prolonged the pandemic in the Global South, leading to health and economic crises that have pushed millions of people into further vulnerability and poverty. The pandemic must be understood as a consequence of humankind’s exploitative relationship with the rest of creation, an entitlement that is arrogant and neglects the ethos of *metanoia*.

29. Christ’s love reaches not only to the human realm but to all creation, calling Christ’s followers to responsible care for the creation. This is why the devastating impacts of climate change and potentially irreversible destruction of life on land and under water is an urgent priority for the Orthodox people. Paul’s words “We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time” (Romans 8:22)—take on new meaning for us in this era. Our Christian vocation means we should seek to rectify our wrongs against creation and aid in its full restoration.

30. We also received with appreciation the Report³ of the Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox Women's Consultation which was held from October 3-7, 2019 by the invitation of the WCC and with the gracious hospitality of H.B. Anastasios of Tirana, Durres, and all Albania. 18 women, of which 6 are now present here, convened to reflect on the theme 'Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace: The Journey of Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox Women Today', and endeavored together to strengthen fellowship, witness together, and encourage spirituality. The meeting served as a platform to celebrate and learn from the innovative work and diaconal ministries of women in their unequivocal love for the stranger, the compassion and care of the refugee, the counseling and healing of the traumatized—all for the glory of God.

Epilogue

31. In our meeting we, delegates of both Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Churches, gave thanks to God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, for bringing us together in a spirit of love, reconciliation, and unity. We prayed to have our Lord Jesus Christ, "the way and the truth and the life" (John 14:6) always in our midst, trusting in His promise: "I will not leave you as orphans. I will come to you" (John 14:18). With this promise in our hearts, we renew our commitment and common obedience to our Triune God, that we follow His commandment to Love Him, to love one another, and to protect His creation, which is our home.

³ The full Report of the meeting of Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox Women's Consultation held in Albania in 2019 on the theme 'Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace: The Journey of Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox Women Today' can be found in the publication *Orthodox Reflections on the Way to Karlsruhe: Christ's Love Moves the World to Reconciliation and Unity*, Ioan Sauca, Vasile-Octavian Mihoc (eds), (WCC: Geneva, 2022) <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/publications/orthodox-reflections-on-the-way-to-karlsruhe>.

Specialized Ministries Pre-Assembly Message to the WCC 11th Assembly

Context

1.1 The representatives of Specialized Ministries, organizations connected to member churches of the World Council of Churches (WCC) serving the one ecumenical movement in the areas of mission, diakonia, relief and advocacy, gathered for an online Pre-Assembly 9 and 10 March 2022 in preparation for the WCC 11th Assembly, taking place in Karlsruhe, Germany, in September 2022.

1.2 We gathered to reflect on the signs of our times, to affirm the role of Specialized Ministries in the one ecumenical movement and to offer a message of encouragement and commitment to the WCC member churches and ecumenical partners that will gather at the 11th Assembly.

1.3 The Pre-Assembly was planned in the context of COVID-19. At the time of the gathering, the context included the ongoing pandemic alongside worsening ecological, economic, and spiritual challenges and the devastating impact of war in Ukraine. Pandemic and war shaped our thoughts, weighed heavy on our hearts, and increased our urgency to engage and respond in unity. In this fragmented and fractured world, the assembly theme “Christ’s love moves the world to reconciliation and unity” is an affirmation that Christ’s love transforms the world through the life-giving power of the Holy Spirit.

1.4 We prayed for all who have been forced to leave Ukraine and shared grief at the destruction wrought; the aspirations for peace and stability shattered. We gave gratitude to God for the responses by local churches and civil society and welcomed the concerted action to the humanitarian crisis by ACT Alliance members and others.

1.5 We were deeply mindful that globally, the COVID-19 pandemic and the fallout from measures to control it have exacerbated structural determinants of poverty and vulnerability. Vaccine inequity continues at intolerable levels. New inequalities created by the digital gap and inequitable vaccine distribution have surfaced, with lockdown-related restriction of fundamental freedoms. In all regions, those most marginalized and vulnerable have suffered most.

An opportunity for transformational change

2.1 The Pre-Assembly recognized this moment as an opportunity for transformational change. It addressed three critical issues confronting humanity and creation: overcoming racism, discrimination, and xenophobia; the rise of populism; and the climate emergency. All three are framed by complex crises that manifest locally and globally. We went beyond naming critical issues to defining how and why they are urgent. We articulated common action for the ecumenical fellowship in response. In this message, we communicate this response as we journey together to the 11th Assembly and beyond toward unity, justice, and reconciliation.

2.2 Racism, xenophobia and discrimination have structured society to benefit some and denigrate others. The realities these structures create are incompatible with the God-given dignity of every person—and with our Christian faith. We name a renewed ecumenical commitment to promoting an anti-racist Christian faith by highlighting the cross-section of racism and xenophobia with politics, economics, ethnicity, gender, environmentalism, health, and religion.

This historic moment uniquely invites a global engagement to renew our faith commitment to dismantling the systems, policies, and relationships that promote and further codify racism. Such leads us to critical engagement with global, regional, and national efforts by civil society and the private and government sectors. We encourage the WCC to continue learning from the Programme to Combat Racism around the practical support for communities suffering from racial and xenophobic discrimination. Together with WCC member churches, we commit to work towards overcoming racism, discrimination, and xenophobia in all regions of the world.

2.3 Truth is twisted, trust is manipulated, and those with privilege and power dominate. We witness the rise of nationalist populism across the globe. As trust declines in social institutions of many kinds, with spiralling misinformation fuelled by social media, there are unprecedented threats to human dignity, justice, and inclusion—life itself.

We are called to be bold witnesses to the truth. Where the voices and experiences of those at the margins are ignored or suppressed, our engagement in Christian diakonia must centre on its prophetic calling. Together with the WCC member churches, we commit to live our responsibility to ensure that all voices are heard, knowing we must find ways to amplify those voices in civil society who seek to pursue the common good.

2.4 The climate and ecological emergency threatens all of creation including the whole human family. Responding to this crisis is impeded by how unequally its impacts are felt among different locations, how inequitably the resources

fuelling the crisis are shared, and how divisive the issue of climate change has become in some national political discourses.

As the climate emergency accelerates faster than anticipated, so too does the suffering experienced by impoverished and marginalized peoples, especially those experiencing displacement. The moment is upon humanity to address the crisis, to act and advocate for climate justice, and engage for change.

We rely on Christ's love for the courage to act. The ecumenical response to the climate emergency must reflect our calling to care for creation, to join with peoples of other faiths and society in actions that include prayer, advocacy, and witness. Together with the WCC member churches, we commit to providing leadership and action that conveys hope in the face of the existential threat facing creation and humanity.

2.5 Our commitment to transformation begins within, as we address inequities, discrimination, and structural racism in our own organizations and the ecumenical movement, and in the creation and nurture of just and inclusive structures and systems that enable full participation.

We commit to listen deeply to the voices of those marginalized, particularly indigenous peoples.

We commit to mending differences that weaken ecumenical unity, fostering dialogue to hear one another, to work at building bridges with other faiths and all who work with a vision for the common good of the human family and the Earth.

Together with WCC member churches, we commit to be part of this effort.

We intend to act together

3.1 As stated in *Called to Transformation: Ecumenical Diakonia*,¹ "The ecumenical movement is carried by the conviction that unity and sharing are intimately interrelated as God's gracious gift and vocation. At the same time, this commitment to unity and sharing cannot be limited to the life of the churches and their wellbeing. It is a calling to serve in the world, participating in God's mission of healing and reconciliation, and of lifting up signs of hope, announcing by word and deed God's reign, God's justice and peace."

Following the devastation of World War II, the WCC 1st Assembly, held in Amsterdam in 1948, proclaimed, "We intend to stay together."

The WCC 10th Assembly, held in Busan in 2013, affirmed, "We intend to move together."

Together with WCC member churches and all at the WCC 11th Assembly, we intend to act together toward a vision of justice, peace and reconciliation for humanity and creation.

1 *Called to Transformation: Ecumenical Diakonia*. (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2022).

Greetings to the Assembly



Greetings to the *Assembly*
Opening Greetings



His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew

Distinguished organizers and delegates,
Beloved participants and stewards of the 11th Assembly of the World Council
of Churches,
Dear friends, brothers, and sisters,

One of the core beliefs and central teachings of Christianity through the centuries is the conviction that the light of Christ shines more brightly than any darkness in our hearts and in our world. We Christians affirm and declare that the joy of the resurrection radiates through and prevails over the suffering of the cross. This is what we maintain; this is what we preach; and this is what we proclaim to the whole world. Indeed, “if Christ had not been raised from the dead, then our message is meaningless and our faith is in vain” (1 Cor. 15.14). This is surely the underlying premise and focus of the theme of this assembly, which professes that “Christ’s love moves the world to reconciliation and unity.”

Yet, even as we look around, we are obliged to confess that we have not practised—and continue to fall short of—what we have preached over twenty centuries. How can we reconcile our magnificent faith with our manifest failure?

The answer lies in the scriptural passage for this morning’s plenary, which takes place on 1 September, the day that Orthodox Christians since 1989 have dedicated to praying for the protection of God’s gift of creation and when Christians of all confessions and communions commit to advancing the ministry of creation care. In the Letter to the Colossians (1:19-20), we read that: “In Christ all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether in heaven or on earth, making peace by the blood of the cross.”

This passage assumes a fundamental difference between the secular and a spiritual worldview. The person with a secular mentality feels that he or she is the centre of the universe. By contrast, the person with a sacred mentality considers the centre of the universe to be elsewhere and in others.

A spiritual worldview suggests an enlarged—a broader or ecumenical—worldview, one that is centred and balanced in Christ as the heart of the universe. This is what provides the source of reconciliation and assurance of transformation. By perceiving the world through this lens of cosmic transfiguration and transformation, we are capable of embarking—as

individuals and as society—on restoring the shattered image of creation, a process that begins with and involves acknowledging responsibility for the sin of ignoring the divine presence in all things and in all people. The entire universe—all of creation—constitutes a cosmic liturgy. When we are initiated into the mystery of the Resurrection and transformed by the light of the Transfiguration, then we are able to discern and detect the purpose for which God has created everyone and everything.

There is a need for cosmic repentance and cosmic resurrection. What is required is nothing less than a radical reversal of our perspectives and practices. “The blood of the cross” in the above apostolic reference reveals and indicates a way out of our impasses by proposing self-criticism and self-sacrifice as solutions to self-centeredness. “The blood of the cross” provides a way of assuming responsibility for our actions and our world. We should all adopt a spirit of humility and appreciate the world as larger than ourselves. We should never reduce our religious life to ourselves and our own interests. We should always recall our vocation to transform all of God’s creation.

Still, the greatest threat to our planet is not the novel coronavirus but climate change. The growing but neglected toll from rising global temperatures will actually eclipse the current number of deaths from all the infectious diseases combined if climate change is not constrained. In the wake of the pandemic, even the World Economic Forum called for “a great reset” of capitalism, arguing that sustainability will only be achieved through drastic lifestyle changes. This is what we have described as the need for repentance (or *metanoia*) from indiscriminate habits and destructive practices toward other people and in relation to nature’s resources.

Dear brothers and sisters,

If we are to make any change in our priorities and lifestyles, we must do so together—as churches and communities, as societies and nations. We must “bear one another’s burdens if we wish to fulfil the law of Christ” (Gal. 6.2). And here, let us call to mind the current war and unjust suffering of our brothers and sisters in Ukraine. Above all, then, we must pledge our repentance and the conversion of our hearts and lives. Today is “the right opportunity” (Is. 49.8), “the acceptable time and the day of salvation.” “The time to act for the Lord is now” (Ps. 119.126).

This is our fervent prayer for all of you in the 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches on this consecrated day of prayer and protection for God’s sacred creation.

Source: Submitted to WCC

His Holiness Pope Francis

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.” (2 Cor 13:13).

I would like to cordially greet the representatives of the Christian communions gathered in Karlsruhe, on the occasion of the 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches. I assure you of my pastoral interest in the work of the assembly. I wish you a meaningful and fruitful meeting that deepens and strengthens the bonds of communion between the Churches and the ecumenical organizations present. The Catholic Church has been sending “delegated observers” to the assemblies since the 3rd Assembly took place in New Delhi, in 1961: I am glad that a delegation is also present this year, a sign of the strong relationship between the Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches that has consolidated over time.

This assembly convenes under the theme “Christ’s love moves the world to reconciliation and unity.” Our world remains plagued by discord, conflict, and division. Wars, discrimination, different forms of injustice and division persist, even among Christians themselves. The globalized world in which we live demands of us a common witness to the Gospel, in response to the pressing needs of our time. The theme of the assembly is a timely invitation to the world communion of Christians to work together for greater closeness and unity among Churches, religions, cultures, peoples, nations, and the entire human family, and to foster reconciliation across the world.

As we commit to a greater effort to care for those who need it most, to work for justice and peace, and to promote human development, let us do so moved by the Gospel. The search for reconciliation and unity has, above all, a vertical dimension, as it is directed towards He who, as Redeemer of the world and Lord of history, is Himself our reconciliation. In fact, “God has reconciled us to himself through Christ” (cf. 2 Cor 5:18).

Our mission as Christians is to bring the fulfilment of this reconciliation to the world, with the Church being the instrument and visible sign of the unity to which God calls all people. Only Christians fully committed to the service of the human family and zealous to make disciples of all nations—baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to observe all that the Lord has commanded them (cf. Mt 28:19)—can attract people. Faced with the perennial temptation to accommodate the evangelical message to worldly ways of thinking, we must

constantly remember that we are only convincing when we are faithful to the Lord, who said of himself: “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (Jn 14:6). The Christian community does not grow by proselytism, but only by attraction.

But how can we credibly proclaim the Gospel of reconciliation without also being committed, as Christians, to promoting reconciliation among ourselves? I ask God that this assembly strengthen everyone’s commitment towards a more intense cooperation in the search of a fuller and more visible communion. Reconciliation among Christians is the fundamental prerequisite for the credible mission of the Church. Ecumenism and Mission belong together and interrelate.

This assembly is already emblematic for its reconciled diversity. May it strengthen and deepen communion among all, so that Christian unity may be an ever more radiant sign of hope and comfort for humanity. Conscious that the soul of ecumenism remains authentic conversion, holiness and prayer (cf. *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 8), I pray that the assembly may bring the world closer to reconciliation and unity, with the power and light of the Holy Spirit.

Source: Submitted to WCC

Greetings to the *Assembly*
Local Hosts



Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD)

Präses Annette Kurschus, chair of the EKD Council

“They will come from the east and the west, from the north and the south, and sit down in the kingdom of God,” says Jesus. When I look into this hall today and see your faces—people from all parts of the world, from different cultures, different churches and denominations—I get the feeling that we are literally experiencing a reflection of this heavenly promise. Right here on earth, here and now. There you all are, after coming from the east and the west, from the north and the south. And before—in reconciled unity—we enjoy the great banquet at God’s table, we first have some hard work to do at the ordinary, sometimes uncomfortable, negotiating tables at which you will struggle for reconciliation and also argue.

The tables that have received you here are in Karlsruhe and not in the kingdom of God. But this city is, at least for us in Germany, a tiny outpost of the kingdom of God: because it is here that every endeavour is made to hold high and defend human dignity. In Karlsruhe, the Federal Constitutional Court is the guardian of Article 1 of our constitution, which states, “Human dignity is inviolable.” That means the dignity of every person, regardless of their origin, faith, gender, class, or sexual orientation. The mothers and fathers of democratic Germany placed this clause right in the forefront—before, beneath and above all other laws—when Nazi Germany had been overpowered and had collapsed, and the murdering in the gas chambers and on the battlefields had come to an end. It was not “Germany above all.” Not “nation, people, money above all.” It was “human dignity above all.” I dare to claim that Jesus would say: With this confession you are not far from the kingdom of God. After all, it is a confession, an article of faith, a declaration of defiance in face of the millionfold violations of human dignity that almost drive us to despair.

This is the secular form of what we believe, my dear brothers and sisters—that in the human brothers and sisters who are violated, dispossessed, and suffering violence, Christ meets us and calls us to love.

“Christ’s love moves the world to reconciliation and unity” is your theme for the coming days. Christ’s love is not sentimentality; it is prophetic practice: vigorous, bold, courageous, resilient. This love, Paul writes, bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things.

No, not everything! Christ’s love does not tolerate a war of aggression. It is contrary to that. If there is to be reconciliation and unity, then not without this truth. For the sake of Christ’s love, I want to believe, and I hope that your assembly will bear strong witness to this love.

Christ's love moves the world to reconciliation and unity. May Christ's love inspire and teach you good moves. Moves on the way to the peace for which we so fervently pray.

To all of you who have worked so hard for this assembly—day-in, day-out, through the nights, some of you for years—go my heartfelt thanks. And to all of you who have come here from far and near—a very warm welcome.

Source: https://www.ekd.de/ekd_de/ds_doc/220831%20Welcoming%20Address_Annette%20Kurschus_At%20the%20opening%20of%20the%20WCC%20Assembly.pdf.

Council of Christian Churches in Germany (ACK)

Archpriest Radu Constantin Miron, chair
(Translated)

Dear ecumenical guests from around the world,

On behalf of the ACK, the Council of Christian Churches in Germany with its 25 member and guest churches, I also welcome you to Karlsruhe. I would like firstly to ask you a question: Did you know that you have come to a city whose name is connected with “sleeping”? According to legend, the founder of Karlsruhe, Margrave Karl Wilhelm von Baden-Durlach, fell asleep against a tree near here more than three hundred years ago. The idea of founding a city came to him in a dream. That is why the new city was named Karlsruhe (in other words, “Charles’ repose,” “le repos de Charles,” “Reposo de Carlos”). As with so many legends, there is no evidence that this story is true. However, there is no doubt that the name “Karlsruhe” does exist, a name that from today will go down in the history of the ecumenical movement.

The churches of Germany want the 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches to be stored in the collective memory of Christendom not as a place where somebody slept, but as a place where a wake-up call was sent to the world, to the churches, to all of us. Our Lord is here asking us: “Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? Enough! The hour has come!” (Mark 14:41)

So it is up to us, dear brothers and sisters, whether the name of Karlsruhe, at least as far as our churches are concerned, will be associated after our assembly with the ecumenical sleep of indifference, routine, and self-sufficiency, with “business as usual,” or instead with waking up and awakening, with new beginnings and mutual encouragement, or as the New Testament puts it: it is not about resting (ΑΝΑΠΑΥΣΙΣ / ANAPAUSIS) but about rising, indeed it is about resurrection (ΑΝΑΣΤΑΣΙΣ / ANASTASIS). In this sense: ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ ΑΝΕΣΤΗ / CHRISTOS ANESTI! Christ is risen.)

Source: <https://www.oekumene-ack.de/aktuell/nachrichtenarchiv/artikel/artikeldetails/grusswort-bei-der-eroeffnung-der-11-vollversammlung-des-oerk-am-31-august-2022-in-karlsruhe/>.

Conference of European Churches

Rev. Christian Krieger, president

Esteemed church leaders, excellencies, eminencies, religious leaders, and political leaders: dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

It is my great privilege and honour to welcome the 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC) on behalf of the Conference of European Churches. Together with our 114 member churches across the European continent, here in Karlsruhe, we welcome the global ecumenical community in Europe—with the hope that this assembly will empower churches to strengthen their vision of reconciliation and unity in our fractured world today.

As a regional ecumenical organization, founded in 1959 following the Second World War, the Conference of European Churches focused on overcoming political, ethnic, cultural, and theological divisions and bringing healing and peace. At that time, churches in Europe, united in baptism, joined forces to face geopolitical tensions between the East and West. Since then, they have been proclaiming the gospel together, receiving the gifts of one another, praying and serving the world together, and raising Christian voices to the power holders as they move towards the goal of eucharistic fellowship.

The assembly theme, “Christ’s love moves the world to reconciliation and unity,” is at the heart of our mission as we continue to lift up the voices of churches in increasingly plural and secular European societies, and especially with regard to the European political institutions, moved by the love of Christ that embraces the whole of creation.

Reconciliation and unity acquire new meaning in light of the current global realities such as the global health crisis, the ongoing migration, the persisting racism, the rise of populist polarization and the shrinking of democracy, the continued destruction of the natural environment, and the resurgence of armed conflict, including the recent Russian invasion of Ukraine. These global realities, and the challenges and experiences of exclusion and fragmentation that accompany them, bring to the fore the crucial role and responsibility of the churches of God in maintaining the world that God created. Their aspiration for peace, reconciliation, and justice is stronger than ever. The report of the European Regional Pre-Assembly organized by the Conference of European Churches last February reflects the sentiment of churches in Europe concerning the war in Ukraine, and highlights voices from Ukrainian churches. Participants in the Pre-Assembly reflected on what it means to be a church in Europe today and for a WCC assembly to be hosted in Europe. Coming from diverse geographical and ecclesial contexts in the continent, they engaged with the assembly theme and stressed that “the theme of the 11th

WCC Assembly is Christocentric and missional, but not exclusivist. Christ's love, radical compassion and solidarity with those who suffer, is at the center of the churches' reflections and preparations for the Assembly."

Pre-Assembly participants noted that "the war against Ukraine has been a new shock to Europe that churches and Christians are grappling with. However, the city of Karlsruhe which is hosting the Assembly, is a witness to a long history of French-German reconciliation after World War Two, and is an example of cross-border dialogue and reconciliation in Europe."

Participants in the Pre-Assembly also expressed the hope that the 11th Assembly of the WCC is a truly intergenerational, interconnected, and prophetic assembly, engaging the diverse Christian experiences of young people, persons with disabilities, women, Indigenous people, refugees and migrants, and the variety of local communities as they reflect on the biblical stories of Jesus' compassion. They hope that this assembly will be an ecumenical boost for Europe that will strengthen the role of ecumenism and religion's role in our societies.

With these aspirations, I pray that this assembly is a life-transforming event for the global fellowship of churches that will strengthen their common journey towards unity and reconciliation in the power of the Holy Spirit.

I thank you for your attention.

Source: Conference of European Churches

Federal Republic of Germany

Frank-Walter Steinmeier, federal president

For the first time in more than 50 years, the assembly of the World Council of Churches is convening in Europe again. It is, therefore, both an honour and a delight for me as Federal President to extend a warm welcome, also on behalf of our country, to all of you who have travelled from all corners of the globe to come to Germany.

This is the first time that the World Council of Churches is meeting in Germany. We are most grateful that you have accepted the invitation to come here and hope that we will be good hosts. This event is intended to be a celebration of faith, of interaction, of exchange. It is rare for us to host guests who are so different but who are nonetheless connected by a deep sense of unity. A very warm welcome to you all!

Here in Germany, we remember with thankfulness that the German churches were actually permitted to attend the very first assembly in Amsterdam in 1948 and were welcomed as members on an equal footing. After the horror that the German Reich unleashed on the world, after the war, after the systematic persecution and murder of Europe's Jews—after all these unspeakable crimes, that was not something that could be taken for granted.

The fact that the World Council of Churches accepted the German churches as members shortly after the Second World War, even before the establishment of the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic, does not mean that it turned a blind eye to this guilt. But its acceptance helped pave the way for a new start. To this day, we are grateful for this!

The logo of this 11th Assembly consists of four symbols: the circle, the way, the cross, and the dove.

The circle traditionally represents the whole world, the earth. And it is impressive that participants have travelled here to Karlsruhe from more than 120 countries; they represent 352 churches from all corners of the world, “from every nation under heaven,” as Acts describes the occasion of Pentecost.

Presbyterians from the Hudson River in New York and Presbyterians from the Amazon in Brazil; Maori Anglicans from the “Land of the Long White Cloud” and High-Church Anglicans from the green hills of England; Orthodox Christians from the Ethiopian Highlands and Zwinglians from the foot of the Swiss mountains; members of the Reformed Church, Lutherans, and Anglicans, all from the same city of Johannesburg; Protestant Christians not affiliated with any specific denomination from small church communities in China; Lutherans from the Usambara Mountains and Reformed Church members from the Bergisches Land region; Methodists, Quakers, and Mennonites

from all points of the compass; men and women from the entire spectrum of Orthodox Christianity. It is almost like it was in Jerusalem that first Pentecost, when people from all parts of the known world heard the Christian message and were filled with the Spirit.

This vibrant diversity was one of Christianity's defining characteristics from the outset. From the beginning it was not uniform; regional and also national distinctions still frequently emerge, alongside the denominational differences. And the churches then go different ways, and these differences are constantly withstood, and indeed have to be withstood, through theological reflection but also through practical brotherly and sisterly love.

The second symbol of the assembly logo is therefore the way. We each have our own individual path to pursue, but our communities, our churches, are also always on the move. We are never finished, we can never say we have finally arrived. Over the course of the centuries, our churches have gone down very different routes. To some extent, that is dictated by the external circumstances, by the historical, political, and economic conditions. But it also depends on the specific way in which a particular community understands, interprets, and practically applies the Christian message.

During this process, some have on occasions followed the wrong path, often going in destructive and dangerous directions. At the start of my speech, I talked about the experiences of our church in Germany.

Let me remind you of the murderous antisemitism incited among and by Christians over centuries—in Germany, but not only here. One of the greatest current responsibilities of the Christian churches all over the world is to take a stand against antisemitism. We need to be aware that antisemitism can assume many forms. Yet it always remains an ideology of hatred with a history of annihilation.

The security of the Jewish community—in Germany, in Israel, in the nations of the world—must be one of the tenets of all religions. We must never allow religion, which is intended to build up, encourage, and edify people, to become a means to humiliate others, a tool of hatred and violence.

The leaders of the Russian Orthodox Church are currently leading their members and their entire church down a dangerous, indeed, blasphemous path that goes against all that they believe.

They are justifying a war of aggression against Ukraine—against their own and our own brothers and sisters in the faith. We have to speak out, also here in this room, in this assembly, against this stance: this propaganda targeting the freedom and rights of the citizens of another country; this nationalism, which arbitrarily claims that a dictatorship's imperial dreams of hegemony are God's will. How many women, men, and children, too, in Ukraine have become victims of this hatemongering, this hatred and this criminal violence! Hundreds, thousands, tens of thousands, far too many!

Carpet bombings and targeted attacks on civilian buildings, on apartment blocks, on hospitals, on shopping centres, on stations and public spaces; war crimes taking place in full view of the world: here, today, we cannot remain silent on this issue. We must call it by its name; indeed, we must denounce it, and last, but not least, as a Christian fellowship, we must express our commitment to the dignity and the freedom and the security of the people of Ukraine. I would like to take this opportunity to convey a specific and heartfelt welcome to the delegations from the churches in Ukraine—and I hope that from this gathering they will be able to take strength and support to their suffering churches and congregations back home.

There are also representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church here today. The fact that they are here is not something we should take for granted in these times. I expect this assembly not to spare them the truth about this brutal war and the criticism of the role of their church leaders. Yes, time and again Christians are called to be bridge-builders. That is and remains one of our most important tasks. But building bridges requires willingness on both sides of the river; a bridge cannot be constructed if one side tears down the pillars that support it. In the run-up to the assembly, the opinion was expressed that dialogue at least should be made possible. Yes, but dialogue is not an end in itself. Dialogue must bring to light what is happening. Dialogue must draw attention to injustice, must identify both victims and perpetrators and their henchmen. Yet dialogue that does not move beyond pious wishes and vague generalizations can, in the worst case, become a platform for vindication and propaganda. What sort of dialogue will we engage in here? That is the choice this assembly has to make, and Germany's stance—I am speaking also on behalf of the Federal Government—is clear.

Today, I also want to remind you that hundreds of Russian Orthodox priests have engaged in public resistance and taken a stand against the war, despite the threats by Putin's regime. I now also want to address these brave individuals, whose example reminds us of the responsibility of religions for peace: even though you cannot attend this assembly and speak to us today, we hear you! May your voice also find an echo in this assembly.

The leadership of the Russian Orthodox Church has aligned itself with the crimes of the war against Ukraine. This totalitarian ideology, disguised as theology, has led to the complete or partial destruction of so many religious sites on Ukrainian territory—churches, mosques, synagogues, educational and administrative buildings belonging to religious communities. No Christian who is still in possession of their faith, their mind, and their senses will be able to see God's will in this. It all fundamentally contradicts the third symbol of the assembly logo, the cross.

The cross is the symbol of commitment to the innocent Man of Sorrows, the wrongly condemned one who died on it, which unites all Christians. It can

never be a secular sign of domination, though it has often been exploited as such over the course of history.

The cross remains the crucial sign of Christian identity across the entire Christian community. It stands for compassion and mercy, for prioritizing the poor, those who suffer, all those in need. Yet compassion should not only take the form of charity, it can and must also have political consequences; it can and must also prove its worth in the fight for justice, in the commitment to giving a voice also to the marginalized, whether individuals or entire groups.

Whoever prays for themselves, “Give us this day our daily bread,” in the Lord’s prayer, also has an obligation and the right to work or fight to ensure that everyone has enough to eat and a humane way of making their living. Our Catholic sisters and brothers here in Germany once said that the kingdom of God is not indifferent to global trade prices.

I am aware that when so many different churches are gathered here, they will have very diverse priorities with regard to social and ecological issues.

Here there are poor churches and rich churches, there are churches that are persecuted by the state, churches that are politically tolerated, and churches that are free to go about their work in public. Here there are minority churches and churches that strongly shape the politics and culture of their country. There are churches from regions affected by conflict and civil war.

Some are already directly experiencing the consequences of climate change; for others, the glaring disparity between poor and rich is the chief concern.

Elsewhere, sexual abuse is a huge problem within society and the church, which for far too long was trivialized, concealed, and covered up.

In still other places, land seizure and mafia-like structures are threatening basic livelihoods. The consequences are often child trafficking, forced prostitution, and slavery; and it is always the poor who are most severely affected by all this.

Some churches are grappling with very difficult ethical issues, such as questions concerning the beginning and end of life—birth control and euthanasia. Others are chiefly concerned with central medical issues, such as how to protect people from HIV and AIDS or from other diseases, or how to ensure that everyone has access to a fair healthcare system.

I know that churches everywhere are doing outstanding work to overcome the various challenges. Often, they are the only source of support and point of contact in places where state structures are either non-existent or inadequate.

This gathering of Christians from all over the world is a unique opportunity for everyone. I hope that you will all be able to benefit from your interaction here, to listen to the needs of others, to ask for help yourselves, to learn from one another, to experience and to show support and solidarity.

We know that protracted injustice is itself a form of violence—and it constantly and repeatedly engenders new violence, terrorism, and war. Only justice—ecological, economic, and political justice—can lead to peace. “The

work of righteousness will be peace”: this old message from the prophet Isaiah still applies and it must guide our actions.

Finally, the fourth symbol of this 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches is the dove. It is firstly a symbol of peace, which so many people lack and for which we so fervently yearn. In many traditions it is also a symbol of the Holy Spirit. But above all it is the messenger in the Old Testament that Noah sent out to see whether the flood waters had receded, whether the universal catastrophe was coming to an end.

For us today, this dove should be both a warning and a symbol of hope.

A warning to do everything in our power to ensure that the human-induced disaster of unchecked climate change does not come to pass. Many people are already suffering from the impact of the unmistakable harbingers of climate change—and representatives of these people are here in Karlsruhe today and can provide first-hand accounts of what is happening. In this context, we Christians have a special responsibility, for creation has been placed into our hands, into our care, for us to protect. Our freedom to use the earth, its treasures, and gifts, cannot and must not be unbounded. The rich and the industrialized countries and their churches, of course, have a particular responsibility in this area.

Yet the dove can and should also be a symbol of hope. If we do what we can—indeed, what we have to do!—then land will re-emerge: our common land, the inhabitable earth on which we can all rightfully live.

Brothers and sisters—I can say that this afternoon here in Karlsruhe, as a Christian among Christians—I wish you all a fruitful and successful 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches, one that will be characterized by exchange but also by prayer, by dialogue but also by clarity and resolve, by shrewd analysis but also by a willingness to act, by insight into what has to be done but also by hope.

I wish you all the very best. Welcome once again, and God bless you!

Source: <https://www.bundespraesident.de/SharedDocs/Reden/EN/Frank-Walter-Steinmeier/Reden/2022/220831-VV-OeKR.html>.

Minister-President Baden Württemberg

Winfried Kretschmann, Mdl

(Translated)

I warmly welcome you to Baden-Württemberg. This is your first assembly in Germany. I am therefore very proud that our beautiful Baden-Württemberg and the city of Karlsruhe were chosen for this event.

An excellent decision. Karlsruhe is the seat of the Federal Constitutional Court that watches over our Basic Law. In turn, the Basic Law in its Article 4 has given prominence to religious freedom. In other words, freedom of faith and creed, and the undisturbed practice of religion. Karlsruhe was therefore a wise choice for your assembly.

In fact, in this world, freedom to practise religion is interpreted in many different ways. In many countries, believers are persecuted and oppressed. This also applies to millions of Christians throughout the world. In other countries, there are state religions where religious leaders determine the fate of the country, or at least get involved in this process and ally themselves with those in power, and misuse religion for their own political ends.

Unfortunately, even some Christian churches are not immune from this, as we have had to witness in the case of the Russian Orthodox Patriarch Kirill I, who allows himself to be harnessed to Putin's cart. I find it inconceivable how he, as head of a church, is drumming up support on religious grounds for the brutal armed invasion of Ukraine and seeks to justify it. It is a good thing that the World Council of Churches made it clear when it was founded that the responsibility of Christians before God is higher and greater than their attachment to any earthly community.

Fortunately, here in Germany, we have the cooperative separation of state and religion. However, the churches in this country have worries of their own. They are struggling with dwindling faith and a loss of trust, demographic changes, and people leaving the church. Since this spring, for the first time in centuries, Christians no longer account for the majority of the German population.

Christianity has a great and positive influence in our country in the fields of culture, education, social welfare, and offering a sense of values. However, this influence is diminishing.

If the churches want to continue exerting a positive influence on social coexistence, this can only be achieved, in my opinion, through ecumenical cooperation. Because a single church is too small. And because each church has something to contribute that can enrich the other churches: the Catholics their universal unity, the Protestants the freedom of the Christian person, the

Orthodox churches their deep spirituality, and the free churches their strong communities. Out of this grows a togetherness that is more than just the sum of the individual churches.

That is why a strong ecumenical signal is going forth from this assembly, and is finding in Baden-Württemberg an ecumenism that has deep roots. However, ecumenism, Christian togetherness, is not enough by itself. Interreligious understanding is also needed. This is not just a matter of theological dialogue. “No peace among the nations without peace among the religions. No peace among the religions without dialogue between the religions.” This was the dictum of the renowned theologian Hans Küng, who died last year and who lived and taught here in Baden-Württemberg, in his Global Ethic Project.

This means that a heavy responsibility is placed on religions to ensure the salvation of people, the wellbeing of nations, peace and reconciliation, social cohesion and understanding, as well as the preservation of creation and the future of our children. Indeed, this will also be one of the main issues for your deliberations.

This is why your assembly is so important, especially in these times of crisis with wars and energy crises, climate change, and migration. And you yourselves have taken up this task to lead the world toward reconciliation and unity in the spirit of Jesus Christ. I am therefore very pleased that the Ukrainian churches are also represented at this assembly and the Ukrainian people can count on our full, unreserved solidarity. Reconciliation and unity of the world—this is a high aspiration and it will be a long way to reach this. This is why I sincerely wish you fruitful deliberations, a stimulating exchange of experiences, and uplifting worship. And *his* rich blessings on everything you do.

Many thanks.

Source: epd-Dokumentation 4/2023

Greetings to the *Assembly*

**Churches and
Ecumenical Partners**



Anglican Communion

Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury

Come Holy Spirit. Come, Holy Spirit, and set our hearts on fire with the flame of your love. Amen.

We are in a time of world crisis. We are in a time of world crisis, and in this time of world crisis, we found ourselves meeting at the end of July and early August at the Lambeth Conference of Anglican Bishops, which was called ‘God’s Church for God’s World,’ and, strangely, the themes of that meeting almost exactly overlapped with the themes of this meeting. During it, we had the benefit of remarkable speeches from ecumenical guests.

Two I will pick out especially. One was from Dr Anne Burghardt, who, with great generosity, broke into her summer holiday to speak to almost 700 Anglican bishops and 500 spouses. She spoke, above all, of visible and organic unity, with deep theological and emotional impact. The second one was Cardinal Tagle, who spoke on the subject of the next 10 years; he is the Cardinal who leads under the Pope’s leadership on evangelization. He emphasized the urgency of the dangers that face us and the greatness of the task of evangelization at every level, for only in the conversion of human beings is found the hope of God’s new community, globally.

So, we met, a lot of us, not all; we sadly missed some who felt they could not be there, and the themes we concentrated on were conversion of life, clarity of vision, and honesty about the differences that we have between us. The conference had had three main aims; to renew our love for Christ, to define our solidarity with one another, to refresh our commitment to serving the *missio Dei*, the mission of God, in God’s world. There was a lot more than that, of course.

The Anglican Communion reaches from the hills and mountains of Papua New Guinea to the canyons of Wall Street, the vast majority are global south, in conditions of poverty, persecution, or war, and that means that hindrances to unity are no less in the Anglican Communion than they are in the Global Church or in this wonderful gathering which I feel so privileged to be invited to address. Of course, the public comment in the secular media tended to focus only on human sexuality—what else is there to talk about when the world is in such crisis?—but we spent one hour only in plenary over 11 days on that subject, and the rest of the subjects were those that are in this world of crisis.

In that time of talking about human sexuality and the work behind the scenes, we had huge differences; cultural and theological, scriptural, scientific. We found our way forward through, not by solving the issues but by living

in the light of Christ, by saying we do not agree, by being honest without excluding one another.

Our experience amidst our differences could have been summed up in the opening remarks of this WCC by the moderator, Dr Agnes Abuom—that very remarkable opening speech—she said, “Absolutely fundamental to the WCC and the ecumenical movement are relationships, that’s what make experiences like the assembly so precious and formative, we encounter one another—in all our uniqueness—and recognize a neighbour in the stranger, unity in the midst of our diversity.”

And in this time of world crisis, we found a way forward: not in panicking about what is happening around us but in studying the scriptures, in prayer, and even—by the end of the conference—by sharing Communion far more than we were the eucharist at the beginning. At the beginning, many felt they could not participate in the eucharist, by the end, almost all did.

The theme of the conference was the first letter of Peter. And to take 1 Peter 1:22, we began in that conference by the grace of God, to love one another fervently from the heart. Being together as part of God’s people and reflecting on God’s world, renewed our sense of what God has done in that God has created a new nation, a holy people—that is the theme of Peter’s letter—a people whose nature is holy, a royal priesthood, God’s own people who have received mercy (1 Peter 2:9-10).

And the challenge to us as Christians is in daily conversion of life—to use one of Benedict’s expressions—we are to declare God’s wonderful works, to give expressions to the reasons for our hope, to be beware of the danger of slipping into old ways and of the dangers that come all around us.

We found afresh in this time of crisis, the grace of God and the grace of each other, and that grace is needed ever more intensely now because we are in a world of crisis. Whether it is Ukraine, or ISIS, or Syria, or the threat to Middle East Christianity, whether it is debt, inflation, hunger, and climate change, all these are crises that have come since our last meeting as the WCC in Busan and it means that we live amidst wars and rumours of wars. The next decades look no better economically, militarily, spiritually, socially, scientifically, technologically, and especially for the poorest and the weakest.

In this time of world crisis, Christians are to be a community of peace, the creation of God, not us, in Christ through the Spirit. We are to be a people of generosity and harmony across differences that testifies to the world, that says to the world; We have met, some believed in the Lord, and are blessed with a blessing we share. (John 20 and 1 Peter 2:9-10).

I believe that times of great world crisis—and they are greater today than perhaps ever before in human history—say to all of us the time of ecumenical winter and the habits of division, of living separately, is past. New life will come with obedience to God and the choice of us taking risks in ecumenism, that step forward expecting to be blessed when we obey Christ.

We live amidst the ecumenism of suffering, where Christians are killed all round the world for being Christian, never asked which church they belong too. Are you an Anglican? No, are you a Christian?

We are well practised in the ecumenism of service. Theological understanding has advanced greatly. But none of us are yet imbued with the spirit of the love of Christ. Christ's prayer for visible unity to convert and draw us close enough to each other, although not united, we share as one people in the paschal mystery. But we do not show that day to day.

What is visible, organic unity? Like those at the empty tomb we do not yet know our individual or collective future with Christ. Unlike them we do know the world's future without Christ. The luxurious expense of well-practised Christian division is no longer affordable.

And in this time of world crisis I find hope that even Anglicans can come together because God is even bigger than the mistakes of the ABC.

My simple challenge to all of us today, is to re-find the spiritual passion of the past for ecumenism; theologically, in solidarity with the suffering, in love that covers a multitude of sins. To do that we must face our fears of each other and of the world together, we must love one another, we must give common witness and work towards a more visible unity that we reimagine in the grace of God.

For it is in the attributes of God that we see unity. Katherine Sonderegger's recent Systematic Theology in her first chapter of volume one sets this out beautifully.

The world crisis must not be allowed to continue while the world church remains divided. At Pentecost God created a single new people. At the last day, Christ Pantokrator will come to judge us. We will have no answer to his judgement if we permit such a failure in this age of our divisions, such a failure in this age of climate change which threatens literally billions of our fellow human beings, of war and possible nuclear war.

We will have no answer to God, no answer except, we were used to being divided. We are called to offer our obedience to the prayer that there may be one in humility. And so, in that spirit of honesty I must say that after 9.5 years in this role I feel a deep sense of failure and shame on my efforts in the ecumenical area and before you I want to commit myself now and with you I pray and hope to seek afresh the future unity to which we are all called, not a unity of identity but a unity of diversity in the richness of God's creation and in that and towards that and with that, may God give us courage, joy, love and peace. Amen

Source: <https://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/speaking-writing/speeches/archbishop-addresses-11th-assembly-world-council-churches>.

Roman Catholic Church, Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity

Cardinal Kurt Koch, prefect

Dear participants of this 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC), held under the theme “Christ’s love moves the world to reconciliation and unity,”

Let me greet you all warmly on behalf of the official Catholic delegation composed of almost 20 members and sponsored by the Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity, as well as many other Catholics attending this meeting in different capacities. I am particularly pleased to bring greetings from Pope Francis, who sends his wishes for a fruitful meeting, together with a letter that I will read in Spanish.

The WCC assemblies, which gather together representatives of the member churches and many other participants from almost all Christian communions, are privileged moments in the life of the ecumenical movement. The Holy See has sent delegated observers since the 3rd Assembly in New Delhi in 1961 without interruption as a sign of our developing relationship.

Although the Catholic Church is not a member of the WCC, since the time of the Second Vatican Council a multiform collaboration has developed between the two entities. Catholics officially appointed by the Holy See are active members of various WCC commissions, including the Faith and Order Commission, the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, and the Commission on Education and Ecumenical Formation. Different dicasteries of the Roman Curia and other Catholic organizations collaborate with their corresponding programmatic areas of the WCC. There is joint preparation of the texts for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, collaboration on joint projects promoting justice and peace, and concern for migrants and refugees, the youth, and the care of creation. Particularly important is the work of the Joint Working Group (JWG), which since 1965 has been a catalyst of fruitful cooperation. The JWG has recently completed its tenth mandate with the publication of two important studies with recommendations to churches, the first on peacebuilding in situations of conflict and the second on migrants and refugees.

Special moments in the history of the relations between the Catholic Church and the WCC were three papal visits to the Ecumenical Centre in Geneva. To open the road was Pope Paul VI in 1969. This was a gesture of high symbolic significance at a time when the relationship between the Catholic Church and the WCC was still in its beginnings. Fifteen years later, John Paul II visited the

WCC in 1984. In his speech during an ecumenical worship service, he insisted that the involvement of the Catholic Church in the ecumenical movement was irreversible. On 21 June 2018, Pope Francis visited the WCC to commemorate the 70th anniversary of its foundation. This “ecumenical pilgrimage,” as it was called, was placed under the motto of “Walking, Praying, Working Together,” which reflected well the kind of relationship that the Catholic Church has been developing with the WCC for over half a century.

The various aspects of our walking together on the path of Christian unity are sound achievements in the time-tested relationship between the Catholic Church and the WCC. May this assembly move all Christian Communion represented here, and the world itself, towards reconciliation and unity in the power and light of the Holy Spirit.

Source: Submitted to WCC.

World Evangelical Alliance

***Bishop Prof. Dr Thomas Schirrmacher, general secretary and
CEO***
(Transcript)

Thank you very much for the invitation to bring greetings and blessings to the assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC) and its many member churches from around the globe on behalf of the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA). Representing about an equal number of Christians worldwide as the WCC, we are aware that we have considerable overlap in membership anyway.

What binds us together is simply our faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who himself created the gospel, the good news, by laying down his life for us.

The good relations between WCC and WEA begin with strong personal relationships between the two secretaries-general, which dates back to my two immediate predecessors and their counterpart. I thank Prof. Ioan Sauca for his friendship and cooperation since our installation. Having known each other for a long time, we have been able to cooperate closely even though we both began our terms under the restrictions of COVID-19. Prof. Sauca has been a gift of God to the body of Christ for such a time as this.

Nowadays, WCC and WEA work together in most areas of ministry. We exchange members on all important commissions. My own involvement in Faith and Order has given me enormous insight into the different theological topics that still divide churches and the urgent need for more intense listening to each other.

Besides this, we see each other at the annual meeting of the secretaries of Christian World Communions and within the Global Christian Forum, which is prominently represented at this Assembly.

Although, of course, many topics need to be addressed at this assembly, I am happy to see that much of the program consists of worshipping and praising God, praying together, and reading the Bible together. WCC and WEA would be just two large NGOs like all the others if it would not be for God's continuing involvement in our world, shedding light in places of darkness, and the Holy Spirit using Holy Scripture to bind us together. We could offer no self-criticism, no repentance, no forgiveness, no reconciliation, no love, and no hope. Only the fact that our faith lies not in ourselves but in the Creator and Redeemer of all things justifies our bold words on many issues.

Let me briefly address two topics that deeply concern all of us.

WCC and WEA agree in condemning the war of aggression against Ukraine. We agree that war always is against God's shalom, even if violence

may be justified in self-defence. And we both want to see not just an end to this war but a world in which fewer weapons are needed, especially one that bans nuclear weapons altogether. WCC and WEA have a long joint history of calling for a world free of nuclear weapons, as well as for working for various global treaties against small weapons or landmines.

Having met with Metropolitan Epiphanius of Kyiv and All Ukraine as well as with the new chairman of the Department of the External Church Relations of the ROC, in Moscow, both present here, I am deeply convinced that churches need to stay in dialogue always, even more in times of crisis and when one church feels the need to voice deep concerns to another. Concerning the Russian Orthodox Church, we should first listen carefully, double-check translations made by media sources, and distinguish between what individual leaders say and what the Holy Synod of the ROC stands for.

Although we oppose the war in Ukraine, we also maintain that racist attitudes toward any people group are wrong, including against Russians and Russian-speaking people. Criticize Russia's political leaders for their war but do not hold innocent people responsible. Even most of the young Russian soldiers dying in this war are just victims, as they did not choose to go to war. Our deep solidarity with the suffering Ukrainian people and the many refugees does not justify a new form of racism.

The second topic, which I believe WCC and WEA need to discuss more, is antisemitism. WEA—as well as I myself as a German—thank WCC for speaking clearly against antisemitism for decades and here at the assembly.

The Holocaust is unique even among genocides in history not only for the sheer number of victims but because of the goal was not to discriminate or exploit the Jews or enslave them in a colonial fashion, but the complete exterminating of the Jews. And beyond other genocides, this goal was based on the—groundless—claim of a global Jewish conspiracy endangering all others—a claim that still today distinguishes antisemitism from most other forms of racism.

WEA sees a continuation of such forms of antisemitism when people express conspiracy theories concerning Israel's "real" plans and explain what Israel does based on its being "Jewish." Israel's actions, including any human rights violations, should be judged like those of any other state, but not as a means to make Israel responsible for all problems in the Middle East or even the world and thereby question its right to exist. Our protest on behalf of human rights should be unbiased and should cover everything we would also condemn elsewhere, including the sentencing of five people in Gaza to death two days ago, some of them for "collaboration with Israel."

As the president of Israel, Isaac Herzog, yesterday arrived here in Germany to visit our President Franz Walter Steinmeier, WEA would like to point out that any solution for the Holy Land needs to include a direct dialogue with the government of Israel. In April 2022, a global delegation from the International

Jewish Council for Interreligious Consultations, whose leadership is present here, and a delegation from WEA together visited President Herzog, and I found him to be a well-informed and open-minded conversation partner who wants peace and justice for all and listens to critical voices.

We pray for God's blessing on all the ongoing work of the WCC and this Assembly. May God the Father give us all strength to work on behalf of his creation. May Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who saved us from sin and death, be our example in his willingness to give his life for the good of others. And may the Holy Spirit keep us all from evil ways and unjust thoughts and lead us into the growing truth promised to his church on earth.

Thank you very much!

Source: <https://www.youtube.com/live/GHNwvhzwhz8?feature=share&t=1006>.

World Methodist Council

Bishop Ivan M. Abrahams, general secretary

Greetings and best wishes to the 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches

It gives me great pleasure to greet you in the name of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, as you gather for the WCC's 11th Assembly under the timely and appropriate theme, "Christ's love moves the world to reconciliation and unity," inspired by Paul's letter to the Corinthians (5:19).

I bring greetings and best wishes on behalf of the World Methodist Council (WMC), which brings together the worldwide association of 82 Methodist, Wesleyan, and related United and Uniting churches of more than 82 million people in 132 countries.

The Methodist, Wesleyan, and United Church family celebrate with you and share in your joy that we can finally gather in Karlsruhe after two years of the COVID-19 pandemic, which led to travel bans, a global lockdown, and exposed the fault lines of global inequality. We owe the acting general secretary, Dr Ioan Sauca, a huge debt of gratitude for stepping into the breach for the past two years. Furthermore, we wish to assure the new general secretary, Dr Jerry Pillay, of our love and support.

We give thanks and praise to God for your faithful witness, the stewardship of gifts and commitment to share the gospel as you face the challenges of the 21st century. We celebrate the fact that ecumenists like John Mott, Philip Potter, Emilio Castro, Samuel Kobia, and many others within the Methodist tradition were able to give leadership in the work and witness of the WCC. The WMC is fully committed to sharing our gifts and resources with those within and beyond the ecumenical family.

We trust that the 11th WCC Assembly will be an occasion not just to celebrate the past but more importantly an opportunity to incubate dreams and cast fresh vision for the future. It is our fervent prayer that you will be inspired by the gentle breeze of the Spirit as you seek reconciliation, justice, and peace in our world.

God has brought you to this place and moment in history to pray, reflect, and celebrate. As you march toward tomorrow's world, we pray that you will move forward with unmatched boldness and commitment, drawing new energy from the same transcendent God who cared for and guided your forebears.

Source: Submitted to WCC.

Pentecostal World Fellowship

Rev. Dr William Wilson, chair

(Transcript)

Thank you, Rev. Sauca. And it's a delight to be with you today, Dr Pillay and all of the leadership of the World Council of Churches (WCC).

We're honoured to be here; we have a number of Pentecostals participating in this assembly. We also have with us our vice-chair today, David Wells, who is sitting in the front row. David, would you stand up? He has been very engaged in a lot of the activities here. Would you welcome David today?

The mission of the Pentecostal World Fellowship is to unite and mobilize the global spirit-filled family in completing the Great Commission of Jesus Christ on behalf of our fellowship and the over 650 million believers in the global spirit-filled family.

I bring greetings to this 11th Assembly of the WCC. The Pentecostal World Fellowship is officially an observer at this meeting, though we have individuals and member groups participating at various levels throughout the assembly. We are thankful for the opportunities afforded us to participate, and we're also glad to officially be part of the Global Christian Forum. Along with many of you, we are praying for this assembly that, as a result of your meeting here in Germany, the world would be moved in a greater way toward reconciliation and unity by the power of Christ's love.

In 2022, our world is filled with chaos, emptiness, and darkness. We are in great need of direction, purpose, and hope. Genesis 1:2-3 says how the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the spirit of God was hovering over the waters. In the beginning, the Holy Spirit brought light out of darkness and order out of chaos. In the physical dimension, we still need the Spirit's help in the chaos we face in our world, and we also pray that the Holy Spirit will move in the 21st century to bring Christ's light and purpose to our spiritually chaotic world.

As we emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic, may God give us peace instead of war, hope instead of despair, and righteousness instead of injustice, and, most importantly, may he help us join with the Holy Spirit in making Christ known to the millions who do not know him and have yet to believe (John 17:20-23).

"My prayer is not for them alone," Jesus said. "I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they

be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me” (NIV).

In response to Christ’s priestly prayer, Christian unity must first be relational, founded in God’s love for us, and his love in us for one another. And second, unity must also become missional, grounded in God’s love for a broken world. Ultimately our love for God and one another should lead the world to believe that the Father sent Jesus. No earthly priority should overshadow the heavenly priority the Father revealed in sending his Son to die for our sins that we might be saved.

In the 21st century, we are being challenged to translate God’s love for the world into understandable terms for each individual and personalize the Great Commission. Every single person on earth is of inestimable value and worth and every person on earth deserves an opportunity to know who Jesus is and believe in him. Our movements and, indeed, all of us are called to live as in Christ, ambassadors imploring the world to be reconciled to God first and then to one another.

Eleven years from now, 2033, Christianity will celebrate the 2000-year anniversary of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. Between now and 2033, what could we do together to make Christ known? Could we possibly bring Christ’s love to the darkest, most chaotic corners of the globe until every person has an opportunity to know him? Could we participate together in seeing the knowledge of the glory of the Lord cover the earth as the waters cover the sea in our generation? Will we align our earthly priorities with the Father’s heavenly priority of bringing eternal hope to the world? Will our unity lead the world to believe, or will we allow petty differences to divide us? Will we become side-tracked by good things, all the while missing the great and godly things before us? Could we possibly seize this moment and make the next decade the greatest decade of united effort for vertical reconciliation to God in the history of mankind? Or will we languish in small thinking and petty arguments, struggling ourselves to be reconciled while the world remains in chaos and darkness?

Pentecostals stand ready to reach across chasms of division and mountains of misunderstanding in order to witness the relational and missional fulfilment of Christ’s prayer in John 17 so that the world, our post-pandemic polarized, broken, hurting, chaotic world, might believe and find salvation in the name that is above every name, the name of Jesus Christ.

Finally, I want to say thank you to the entire WCC leadership team and all of your staff for your hospitality and great hard work this week and for the mutual love we share together in Christ. We pray that our relating together will change the world for good and that all of us will unite with the Holy Spirit as he moves in the chaos to bring forth light and make Christ known.

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GHNwvhzwhz8&t=484s>.

World Student Christian Federation

Marcelo Leites, general secretary

Dear moderator, Dr Agnes Aboum, Acting General Secretary, Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca, elected General Secretary, Rev. Prof Dr Jerry Pillay, and members of the 11th Assembly of the WCC,

On behalf of the World Student Christian Federation (WSCF), I would like to extend our greetings and congratulations to the World Council of Churches (WCC) as you gather for your 11th Assembly. We are very honoured to be with you as you continue to discern and reaffirm that Christ's love moves the world to reconciliation and unity.

Since its inception in 1895, the WSCF, the world's oldest ecumenical youth and student movement, has formed and nurtured generations of young, critically minded ecumenical leaders in faithful service and witness to the mission of Jesus Christ in different parts of the world, encouraging young people from Protestant, Orthodox, Pentecostal, Roman Catholic, and Anglican traditions to dialogue and cooperate for justice. As a forerunner of the WCC, the WSCF, from the outset, has been crucial in forming leaders for the churches.

Today on the occasion of the WCC's 11th Assembly, we in the WSCF reaffirm our commitment to supporting the churches' mission work, helping revitalize and providing leadership formation in the call to service of the entire *oikoumene*. The council's leadership in the search for Christian unity has historically been a witness for all humanity. Its work in the mission field has shown people of faith and those who are not that the reign of God and his justice seeks together with everyone without distinction of any kind.

This shows us the importance of continually developing the role of youth and students in the ecumenical movement. Their presence in church and society has envisioned the past and present of ecumenism: providing ecumenists, church leaders, world leaders, and theologians. Many of them have served the WCC.

Sisters and brothers, in this assembly, we celebrate and rejoice in the historical witness and the ecumenical path of the WCC, the witness that can help us to envision ecumenism in the 21st century. May our presence be a reminder of the essential role of young people as promoters of change, recalling that our federation was built by young student leaders when the world needed the voice of the gospel incarnated in the practice of justice and love.

We are proud to continue working with you, and we intend to strengthen our relations and our journey together under the remarkable heritage that

our collective identity has left us, which led us to continue working together against crises of planetary dimensions:

The climate crisis that dares the whole creation to survival, the struggle against all expressions of hatred wherever those expressions come and manifest, and the struggle to eradicate all forms of discrimination that have served as an imperial weapon to oppress the marginalized.

We must continue promoting peaceful societies combating all forms of fundamentalisms, especially those coming from Christian societies, working for gender justice and justice for all people created in God's image, and engaging in conversation and action against inequalities and the exclusion of billions due to an unjust economic system and development paradigm that preys on nature and people.

Today, gathered here, our responsibility for providing hope to the world is enormous, and many are listening and expecting from us. It is a hope that is not empty but full of transformative promise.

The world's struggles are also the struggles of the churches. We can only do our mission if we do it with the youth, with the voices and actions of people on the margins, the women's movements, the Indigenous peoples, the forced migrants and those displaced, and all those whose lives and bodies have been historically undermined and who are most affected by the existing crises—all those whom Christ loves to reach. Are we listening to the voices of people whose lives, in all their fullness and dignity, have been denied?

That is why we celebrate the challenge that the assembly's theme highlights; the love of Christ comes with sacrifices, reconciliation with a prophetic voice and unity with justice.

Finally, a call to the youth, to the young people of the WCC, and to all those who resist oppression: Be bold in your actions and keep speaking loudly!

We will humbly accompany the decisions and actions of the council's leadership and the churches that lead us toward transformation. Our prayers and well wishes are with you.

Ut Omnes Unum Sint!

Source: <https://www.wscf.ch/wscf-in-action/programmes/global-collaborations/message-to-the-11th-ga-of-the-wcc-from-the-wscf>.

Bishops Conference of the Church of Norway

*The Most Rev. Olav Fykse Tveit, Preses,
WCC general secretary 2010-2020*

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ, moderator, delegates, and all who participate in this World Council of Churches (WCC) assembly, and I want to particularly acknowledge the presence of all of you who do not carry a title among those listed in the greetings like these: Dear sisters and brothers!

The next assembly will be in 2030. *Our* sustainability goals should be reached by then. And we should not be those who are cynical and say we won't make it. Are we not people of faith?

It is a miracle that we all are able to gather here. Knowing how much work is behind such an event, I will particularly commend all staff members and all involved in the preparations—in so many ways—so that we are here. I also honour the leadership, the acting general secretary, and the governing bodies of the WCC for the enormous efforts to make the council able to handle and even develop the work under all the challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic—in addition to the last part of these preparations. We duly remember the work of the late Metropolitan Gennadios of Sassima, the vice moderator of the central committee, one of the pillars in the ecumenical movement.

Christ's love moves the world to reconciliation and unity. We meet in a time of history where it is absolutely necessary that the churches together say exactly so. Even more important is that we show that we believe it and show what it means and could mean in times like these.

The world is already deeply into challenges that humanity has not seen before, through climate change and all its effects on the whole world. As always, the first and most affected are those who are already the most vulnerable. The issues of justice and peace are rising every day before us.

Reconciliation and unity are needed now more than ever: what we see is a world more and more divided by the many forces of politics, the economy, climate change, pandemics, wars, and other causes of injustice and conflict.

This is not the time to declare the word “unity” as obsolete but to take ownership of it and show what it means—in the love of Christ to all—and, really, all. Who are we to exclude somebody from that, as a gift, as a right to protection, a right to peace and justice—and as an ability to love?

My first speech to a WCC body was in the big hall in the Ecumenical Centre in Geneva, addressing the central committee. I pointed to the huge

tapestry there and its text: *“hina pantes hein åsin”* (“That they all may be one”). The quest for being one in the fellowship of churches is the origin and the goal of our work. Many efforts have been made, and many fruits harvested. We see them as we are here together if we open our eyes to see.

We, the churches, need a global ecumenical fellowship of churches leading us in confessing and repenting from our sins, leading us in transformation from the destructions, obstacles, and ignorance of the full meaning of being one. We are called to be one as churches, as followers of Christ.

Therefore, not in addition, to be one as church must be also a sign and expression of God’s one humanity in God’s one creation. Deeper reflection of what it means is needed, particularly in taking seriously that all, really all, are embraced and can express the love of God. We do so also in this assembly.

However, often, maybe most often, it is clear enough for us what it means. We can know if we are mutually accountable in our encounter if we are honest and put clear names on the realities we have to share and address together. Then we do not ignore the call from God to be our brother’s and sister’s keeper, to love our neighbour as ourselves, to be peacemakers, to show real compassion, to end occupation, violence, and wars, and to pray and work for the impact of Christ’s love in this world.

This assembly should help the churches in the world to be courageous and clear about how we can contribute together—together—being one creation and one humanity in the next eight years. If we cannot show what it means that Christ’s love moves the world to reconciliation and unity, God must call others.

It is our privileged position in this assembly to acknowledge, receive, celebrate, but more importantly, to make use of the fruits of the work of the whole WCC in the years since the 10th assembly in 2013. These are costly gifts, given as fruits of hard and difficult discussions and new initiatives, and they can now be used as a platform on which the next years of work can stand and move on. All could be mentioned. I mention only the whole new approach and methodology developed in the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace.

I congratulate the elected general secretary, Jerry Pillay, and I assure him and those who will be elected to carry on these responsibilities in the coming period of the prayers and support of my church and myself.

I am particularly encouraged by the participation, but even more by the input and impact of the wisdom of young people in this assembly, such as we had in the plenary this morning. This is very promising for the WCC. More important, it is necessary for the work and contribution we shall make together. You are not only the future of the church and the ecumenical movement, but you are also the present, as much as anybody else, and even have special insights and clarity about what is at stake in the times ahead of us.

May Christ’s love move us all!

Source: <https://qrco.de/be1ek6>

Korean Christian Federation

Central Committee

We offer warm congratulations on the 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC).

We sincerely hope that this assembly will take place successfully, true to the common desire and demand of the ecumenical community to make active contributions to accomplishing the cause for world justice and peace.

We are convinced that WCC will, just as before, continue to extend wholehearted support and firm solidarity to the righteous struggle of the Korean people to bring earlier the independent and peaceful reunification of Korea.

Availing ourselves of this opportunity, we sincerely pray that all the fellow believers of the WCC would be in good health amid the world health crisis under the grace of the Lord.

Source: Submitted to WCC.

Mar Thoma Syrian Church of Malabar

***H. G. The Most Rev. Dr Theodosius,
Mar Thoma metropolitan and primate***
(Transcript)

Good morning distinguished ecumenical colleagues and friends from across the world.

It is with great joy and privilege that I participate in the 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC). First, my deep appreciation and thanks to the WCC acting general secretary Rev. Dr Ioan Sauca, for the special invitation. I bring you greetings from the members of the Malankara Mar Thoma Syrian Church in India and its diaspora members spread across different continents and regions, such as in Asia, Africa, Europe, the Middle East, North America, and the Pacific. It gives me immense pleasure to have the unique opportunity to participate in this assembly as a specially invited guest. It is indeed a privilege for me to reflect on the assembly theme together with all of you representatives of the churches across the world. The theme of the 11th Assembly, “Christ’s love moves the world to reconciliation and unity,” which is, of course, the most pertinent concern warranting our Christian commitment.

The Malankara Mar Thoma Syrian Church, which is also known and listed in WCC records as the Mar Thoma Syrian Church in Malabar, is one of the founding members of the WCC since its inception in 1948. Ever since 1948, the Mar Thoma Church has taken active participation in the WCC. I do recollect the active involvement of our church leaders, my predecessors, in the WCC and the roles they played at different times in the global ecumenical movement. I don’t want to narrate all that historical data, but I would especially mention the contributions of the late lamented Dr Juhanon Mar Thoma Metropolitan, who was a member of the WCC central committee and the president of the WCC from Evanston in 1954 to New Delhi in the 1961 assembly. Dr Juhanon Mar Thoma was mainly instrumental in inviting the 3rd WCC Assembly to India when he was a president of the WCC. The contributions of our lay members, like Dr M. M. Thomas in his capacity as moderator of the central committee from Uppsala to Nairobi, also have been widely recognized by the ecumenical movement.

We have been humbled by the numerous opportunities through which God has been enabling us to be pilgrims in the global ecumenical movement all these years. In fact, our church’s participation in the WCC over the years also motivated us to ensure our participation in regional and national ecumenical organizations and in ecumenical movements beyond our native

land of India. The diaspora Mar Thoma members are very much an integral part of ecumenical fellowships and communities in their respective areas. The Mar Thomas Church has been active in the Faith and Order Commission as well as in the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism of the WCC at different times. We are fortunate that almost all general secretaries and several of the former moderators of the WCC accepted our invitations to be part of the various events of our church over the years.

On this occasion, I gratefully acknowledge the participation of three former general secretaries of the WCC who are present in our midst—Dr Konrad Raiser, Dr Samuel Kobia, and Dr Olav Fykse Tveit—as well as Dr Agnes Abuom, the present moderator. All of them have participated in different events of our church in the past, and in recent years, we very much value their accompaniment with us. We are greatly privileged and blessed by their leadership.

During the past two days, we have heard voices from many parts of the world about the ever-increasing levels of multi-faceted social, economic, political, and security challenges and fragmentations causing threats to peace and denial of justice: armed conflicts and violence, increasing poverty, inadequate health care, economic exploitation, environmental degradation and exploitation of natural resources, ethnic and religious conflicts, communal violence, political unrest, and the like. The negative impacts of these diverse problems are not only affecting the churches and Christians but also society as a whole. Modern technology and its advancement often add more fragmentation in an age of digitalization. The COVID-19 pandemic and associated crises also have had tremendous impacts on human lives, forcing us to realize human vulnerability and weakness.

The vulnerable situation we experience in our social and communal lives reminds us of the need for our churches to be mindful in addressing the wider social issues as part of our Christian witness in today's fragmented and vulnerable societies. While we are here to reaffirm our faith and trust in God, who is leading us to reconciliation, and to affirm God's love to heal our vulnerability and lead our fragmented communities to unity, we are again reminded of the value of ecumenical accompaniment in our common ecumenical journey. Our participation in the 11th Assembly is a reminder to envision, all of us, our commitment to mission and witness.

May God Almighty continue to bless the WCC, a privileged instrument given to us by God Almighty. May the vision and mission of the WCC be blessings for many as we continue to participate in God's mission of witnessing God's love and transforming actions for reconciliation and peace with justice in the world.

When we speak about Christ's love, let us remember the vicarious suffering that he revealed to the whole world through his life and work. We need to look at the cross of Jesus Christ, the cross where he was obedient to God Almighty

even to the point of death. His obedience is a mark of his love. Breaking his body and shedding his blood are again marks of his love. Dying on the cross is certainly a unique point where we need to focus our attention. He died, and he rose again. Whenever we gather together, it is our practice to celebrate the holy eucharist, and that reminds us of his death on the cross. We gather together to celebrate his resurrection, and we also come together to look with hope for the time of his second coming. It is this love about which Saint Paul said, in his epistle to the Galatians, that “I carry the mark of the cross on my body.” He also said to the public in Corinth that he wanted to remain among them as one who wanted to focus his attention on the crucified Christ and nothing else.

Let us remember that unique love which Christ revealed to us, which leads the whole world and moves the whole world to reconciliation and unity. We are here with diverse talents, diverse opinions, and diverse ways of looking at things. But this diversity is to be celebrated, at the same time moving us to celebrate the unity to which God has called each one of us, and that enables us to move to reconciliation: always understanding that there is a point of repentance, always realizing that when we truly repent, God’s love revealed in Jesus Christ forgives and unites us with him. And that enables us to celebrate the unity that we have with the Godhead and with the whole creation.

I pray for God’s richest blessings upon all those who are working very hard to make this 11th Assembly of the WCC a great success.

Thank you, and God bless each one of us.

Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Yp8ji2xrns&t=463s>.

Taizé Community

Brother Alois, prior

Dear friends, sisters, and brothers in Christ,

With great joy and gratitude, I received the invitation to greet you at the beginning of this plenary. The longing for Christian unity set the ecumenical movement in motion more than a hundred years ago, and a more visible communion of all those who love Christ remains its goal today.

The Faith and Order document “The Church: Towards a Common Vision” marks an important stage on the ecumenical pilgrimage towards unity. With my brothers in Taizé, I was deeply moved to read in it that Brother Roger, the founder of our Taizé community, “inspired countless Christian believers, especially the young, to join together in common worship of the Triune God.”

So I want to focus this morning on the role of common prayer in our search for unity, sharing with you our experience in Taizé. I live in this tiny village in France with my brothers from about 30 different countries and various church backgrounds. Following the monastic tradition, we gather for common prayer three times a day together with our guests. Many things have changed in Taizé since Brother Roger settled there in 1940. Common prayer, however, never ceased—not even that evening in 2005 when he was killed tragically at the beginning of the evening prayer.

The diversity among the mainly young adults coming to Taizé is huge. They belong to different churches. They have different opinions and convictions. Many are seekers rather than believers. And yet, in the simple common prayer three times a day, which consists of singing, listening to the word of God, waiting in silence and interceding for those in trouble, there is not much difference among us. We are all Christ’s guests, welcomed in God’s house, whomever we are and wherever we are at.

In our “common worship of the Triune God,” as the Faith and Order document rightly points out, we experience a common belonging to Christ which comes before exhaustive dogmatic formulations. There is an ancient saying: *lex orandi, lex credendi*, the rule of prayer is the rule of faith. Common prayer has the capacity to reveal and express our common faith.

More than 50 years ago, the well-known theologian Karl Rahner, born not far from Karlsruhe, observed, as he said, a “new pluralism.” Today, the synods of our churches and our ecumenical conversations often bring to light positions which seem—and sometimes are—incompatible, at least on a conceptual level. Rahner reflected on “a unity that can never be provided by concepts alone” and proposed what he called a “practice of unity!”

Our ecumenical conversations try to move from a unified profession of faith toward unity. Rahner wondered if taking things the other way around could not be a real theological possibility: that the people of God gathered in common prayer move toward a unified confession of faith.

I was told that I might use my time as I wish. So I would like us to dedicate the two minutes remaining to two things. Let us pray one minute in silence, repeating in our hearts the prayer of Jesus: “May they all be one!” And then let us sing together our common belonging to Christ. (Singing *Laudate omnes gentes*)

Source: Submitted to WCC.

Greetings to the *Assembly*
Interfaith Messages



Central Council of Jews in Germany

Professor Barbara Traub, member of the Presidium

(Translated Transcript)

Dear Federal President Steinmeier, Minister-President Kretschmann, General Secretary Professor Dr Ioan Sauca, and Dr Abuom, my greetings to Imam Erol Pûrlû

Dear delegates and guests of the assembly of the World Council of Churches.

On behalf of the Central Council of Jews in Germany and the Jewish community in Germany, I also extend a warm welcome to you to our country, which is characterized by its wide diversity, where people of different religions can live together in a spirit of mutual trust.

Shalom.

I extend a particularly warm welcome to the representatives of the churches from Ukraine and assure you of our solidarity: to you, I offer a particularly heartfelt shalom, peace.

I speak to you today as a Jewish voice.

It is with great concern that we have witnessed over the years a resurgence of antisemitism and its murderous consequences. History teaches us that where Jews feel threatened, other people are always also at risk. Jewish communities were and continue to be reliable seismographs of social processes.

We recognize the assembly of the World Council of Churches all the more as an important platform of interaction for Christians from all over the world, which aims to serve the goal of peaceful coexistence in every part of the planet. Your objectives are to reconcile and unite. As a Jewish community, we are all the more concerned that voices have been raised from within your ranks seeking to repudiate Israel as an alleged apartheid state.

We are filled with dismay and concern that for years an unacceptable Kairos Palestine paper has been in circulation in the name of more than half a billion Christians, like the BDS movement promoted by some within your ranks.

Israel is the only democracy and the only constitutional state in the Middle East. Israel is the only state in that region of the world that fully guarantees democratic standards, regardless of religion, background, or race. For us Jews, Israel is both the central religious and cultural point of reference, with many of us having close family ties with Israel.

I therefore make this urgent appeal to you: do not fall back into old anti-Jewish ways of thinking. Where questions of anti-Judaism are concerned, you must take a stance, and your clear “no” must also be followed by actions.

I have read in the assembly papers that reconciliation is a specifically Christian issue. I need to challenge this viewpoint. Reconciliation is not a specifically Christian issue.

God's covenant with the Jewish people is as strong as ever, and all of us as churches and religious communities in this country, as well as those in the rest of the world, have the task of contributing to reconciliation and peace. Reconciliation is central to Judaism and represents a divine mandate. Our year will soon begin with the Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur, whose message is the reconciliation of people with one another and with God.

Via the criticism of Israel, I as a Jew increasingly experience a sense of exclusion instead of reconciliation. I therefore expect the Christian churches present at this assembly and who represent more than half a billion Christians, to send out a message of peace and reconciliation from this meeting instead of inciting misgivings about Israel and the Jewish people.

For centuries, Christian anti-Judaism determined the relationship with us Jews by means of exclusion and recriminations. This must not be allowed to continue or be repeated in any form whatsoever.

My urgent and anxious appeal here today is: take on the responsibility of ensuring that this assembly does not become a platform for exclusion and one-sided blaming of Jews.

I am sure that you are all familiar with the image, the Jewish image, of the shepherd leading his flock, where the concept of the shepherd embodies his unique wisdom and prudence. The flock does not follow a lord of the manor but rather a wise shepherd who leads it prudently, never forgetting the overall aim of his mission.

I understand your invitation, Professor Sauca, to contribute as a Jewish person to the opening of the 11th Assembly as a conscious call from you to the shepherds gathered here from 120 countries of the world always to remember German-Jewish history in their deliberations, both the immeasurable suffering as well as the trust that, despite this history, could be built up again through reconciliation in less than the span of a human life. I wish you a rewarding and successful meeting. May you take with you from Karlsruhe many ideas for promoting reconciliation for your work in your congregations and may all your decisions be based on prudence and wisdom, qualities that should characterize a good shepherd in our common biblical tradition.

Shalom.

Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y0KAeUUVBog>.

Coordination Council of Muslims in Germany

Imam Erol Pürlü

(Translated)

Dear Federal President Steinmeier, Minister-President Kretschmann, Moderator Dr Abuom, General Secretary Sauca, Professor Traub,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am delighted to be here today and want to thank you for inviting me to today's assembly of the World Council of Churches.

I offer you cordial greetings and best wishes from the Islamic religious communities in the Coordination Council of Muslims. This is an association of the six major Islamic umbrella organizations in Germany, representing the majority of organized Muslims in this country. Its members comprise Muslims of different Islamic schools of jurisprudence and different ethnic origins.

You, the representatives of churches throughout the world, have come here today, among other reasons, to promote, unity, justice, peace, and reconciliation throughout the world and to stand together for these aims. May God support you in your worthy endeavours.

The pandemic, the armed conflicts in the world, climate change, and the catastrophes resulting from this, as well as social and economic challenges, demand a great deal from us human beings. War, which seemed so far away from us, has today flared up again on our continent and right on our own doorstep.

Existential fears are spreading. The hard-earned social prosperity in this country is suddenly appears to be faltering. In the current crisis, global economic dependencies are leading to higher prices, which in turn are causing more poverty and loss of livelihoods.

The state is trying to cushion, with all the means at its disposal, the effects of these new burdens on its citizens.

As religious communities, we know never to abandon hope in difficult situations. As Muslims, we draw support here from this guiding principle in the Koran: "Never lose hope in the mercy of Allah," and the prophetic statement: "If even only one person should enter Paradise, then hope that it is you."

Nevertheless, even people of faith are prone to fears and worries.

In difficult times, we need to come closer together. We need unity more than ever. By this I do not just mean unity within our own religious community, but unity across religions, unity across the whole of society, and unity in diversity. Standing together in solidarity in crises is immensely important for the cohesion of our societies. For example, Islamic religious communities too

are helping to meet the new challenges here in Germany, recently by taking in Ukrainian refugees into their institutions.

This unity in diversity may be compared to the pomegranate, whose fruit kernels come together to form a whole. For religions, this earthly and paradisiacal fruit epitomizes unity. It not only adorns depictions of the Virgin Mary and mosques, but it also symbolizes the unity of faith and the community of believers in all its diversity.

This unity, applied to the whole of society, will be able to equip us even more fully to meet the great challenges of our time.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In a civilized world, I believe there must be no more war. Justice, peace, and reconciliation should be the order of the day throughout the world. That is what we all wish for. I hope that it will not remain just a dream.

Religious communities are important ambassadors of justice and peace. Therefore, as the Koran sets out, compete with each other in worthy endeavours. Justice knows no bounds: “Be just,” the Koran says, even towards those you dislike (Sura 5:8).

Religious communities are dependent on many cooperation partners, whether state institutions or other social actors. A great deal can be achieved by acting together. “The hand of God rests on the community,” as the Prophet Muhammad—Peace be upon him—was accustomed to saying.

Acting together, let us all become bridge builders for a peaceful, reconciled, and united world. I would like to support the initiatives for peace that are to come out of this meeting with a short prayer.

“The Lord is peace,” as Jews and Christians say.

“Ya Salaam (O you peace)” is how Muslims call upon him.

I would like to ask him for peace, for peace in Ukraine, in Syria, and all the other places in this world where people experience suffering, injustice and unfairness.

Bismillahirrahmanirrahim
O God, You are peace.
Peace emanates from you
Peace returns to you
Fill us and our earth with peace.
Amen.
Thank you very much.

Source: <https://www.youtube.com/live/1fH6tFLh3DQ?feature=share&t=8319>.

International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations

Rabbi David Fox Sandmel, chair

Shalom!

It is my privilege to offer greetings on behalf of the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations, or IJCIC, to this plenary of the 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches. IJCIC is a consortium of 11 major international Jewish organizations constituted to engage with other international religious bodies, including the World Council of Churches, the Vatican, the World Evangelical Alliance, the Ecumenical Patriarchate, and non-Christian organizations as well.

The Hebrew month of Elul began last weekend. Elul is a special time of spiritual and moral preparation for the Ten Days of Repentance beginning with the Jewish New Year and concluding with the Day of Atonement.

The theme of this assembly is reconciliation that leads to unity. Essential to the Jewish understanding of repentance is the imperative of reconciliation. During Elul, we are urged to examine ourselves, confront our moral failings, confess them before God, and ask for forgiveness. We are explicitly instructed to seek out whomever we have wronged, to make amends, and to seek their forgiveness. Indeed, our tradition teaches that reconciliation between people is a prerequisite for forgiveness from God. When we are reconciled with God and with our neighbour, we reunite on both the human and the divine level.

One of the most profound examples of the power of communal reconciliation can be seen in what has taken place between Jews and Christians since the end of the Shoah, the Holocaust. The repudiation of antisemitism and the rejection of the classical Christian “teaching of contempt” for Jews and Judaism by many Christian theologians and institutions is unprecedented in human history.

Indeed, at its founding in 1948, the World Council of Churches called antisemitism “sin against man [sic] and God” and has repeatedly spoken out against anti-Jewish rhetoric and violence. This revolution in Jewish-Christian relations is something to be celebrated and should serve as an inspiration and a model for overcoming prejudice and hatred. Many in the Jewish community are sadly unaware of the great progress in Jewish-Christian relations.

Unfortunately, Jews around the world continue to be the targets of hatred, including lethal hatred. In this regard, people of goodwill can have strong disagreements about Israel. Some criticism of Israel, however, is motivated not

by facts but by antisemitism or is expressed using antisemitic rhetoric. We all need to find vocabulary to discuss this most sensitive issue that promotes rather than obstructs dialogue.

Reconciliation, of course, is an ongoing process. Despite the progress in Jewish-Christian relations, anti-Jewish tropes still find expression in some Christian teaching and preaching—in many cases, the result of ignorance rather than malice. Correcting deeply embedded biases, and becoming sensitized to what hurts and offends, takes time and effort—and the courage to be honest with oneself and others. It also takes time to build trust. It is, therefore, encouraging that in recent years, IJCIC and the leadership of the WCC have engaged in serious, substantial, respectful, and productive conversations about very sensitive issues, including our deep and abiding attachment to the people and land of Israel and how together we can further the cause of peace in the region.

We hope that this relationship and our understanding of one another will grow and deepen in the years ahead.

According to some rabbinic traditions, the Jewish New Year is the anniversary of the creation of the world, or to be more precise, the creation of humanity. Another tradition teaches that the Eternal created humanity beginning with one couple—Adam and Eve—so that no person could claim to have a better lineage than anybody else. According to Genesis, all humanity is one family with a common ancestor. While we differ from one another in many ways, we share the imprint of the divine in our very being.

The late Rabbi Jonathan Sacks wrote about “the dignity of diversity.” He said, “The religious challenge is to find God’s image in someone who is not in our image, in someone whose colour is different, whose culture is different, who speaks a different language, tells a different story, and worships God in a different way.”

I note that the Season of Creation, first established by Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios in 1989, and later joined by the WCC and the Vatican as a time of prayer and action for our common home, begins just before the Jewish commemoration of creation. In the book of Genesis, God says that each of the elements of creation by itself is good, but only when all the work of creation is complete, including humanity, is it very good.

The human family is one, but strife and injustice abound. Our planet is one, but we fight over it and pollute it. None of us alone can address the challenges our human family faces. The only answer is to work together in unity for peace and understanding and justice, for reconciliation with one another, with our common home, and with the Divine, so that, in the words of the prophet, all may sit under their vine and under their fig tree, with none to make them afraid. Amen.

Source: Submitted to WCC.

Religions for Peace

Prof. Dr Azza Karam, secretary general

Greetings of peace, *as-salaam-alaikum*, shalom, every single word of peace be upon you and upon everyone here, and those who are not with us, but in our minds and hearts.

Your eminences, your excellencies, friends, family, brothers and sisters in faith, Prof. Ioan Sauca,

Thank you very much for this distinguished and great honour and privilege to be able to be here today, to say a few words of greetings to this august assembly.

I worked in the United Nations for almost 20 years. Every year, the political leaders of the world would come together during the United Nations General Assembly. And it's a very awe-inspiring moment to look around the room and see a room full of prime ministers and presidents and all other very important political figures.

Yet, to be very honest with you, this assembly, and this room, is far more inspiring and far more meaningful.

I understand the power of politics. I understand the responsibility of politicians, particularly when and where they are elected by their people. And it is a burden, a big burden, as it is a very serious responsibility, to deliver on the mission of a government to protect its citizens and the people living within its territories.

We still wonder how well governments look after the people living within their territories, but we presumably do not wonder as much about citizens in a democratically elected context.

The challenge, however, is factually far greater for faith leaders, because it is a spiritual, a moral, a political, an emotional, a mental, and a very big set of practical and interconnected challenges.

That is why I firmly believe that the power of faith leaders far, far exceeds the power of political leaders.

But that power also carries enormous responsibilities. I am not saying anything new to you, but I do wish to make a plea. And if I had not been so short, I would have gone to my knees as I make this plea. But if I get on my knees now, some of you will not see me. So, please pretend I am on my knees as I try to make this plea.

And the plea is this: Was Christ's love meant only for people of the Christian faith? And if Christ's love is meant for all of humanity, what would that mean, practically, for each of us in this room?

Because I believe, very firmly, as a Muslim, that Christ's love was meant for me too.

And if you believe that it was meant for me too, and those like me, and many others who do not believe in anything at all, but believe in something (all of us believe in something, by the way), if you believe that Christ's love was meant to be inclusive of people like me and any others, then I would ask you, in fact I would beg you, to consider that the question is not only how you could overcome the differences within the Christian community (which are significant enough), but that you consider how it would be when we work together from different faith traditions. When we work together from different faith institutions—each of which is deeply protective of itself, of its mandate, of its territory, of its citizens (its adherents)—consider how much more of Christ's love can be spread when we work, multi-religiously, to serve everyone! Not just one nation, not just one community, not just one religion, but everyone.

I believe very firmly that the resurrection of Christ is meant to symbolize that moment when we all come together to serve each other, regardless of our genders, regardless of our nationalities, regardless of our religions, regardless of our nations.

But in order to do so, we have a moral and political obligation not to be used by the politicians and the political establishments. We have a moral obligation to be the conscience of the political establishments.

To be the conscience of the political establishments requires us to look within first, to make sure that when we point a finger at one another, or at the political establishment, we are also looking inwards to see where we ourselves may be replicating the same distancing, exclusion, superiority, that sometimes we claim the political establishments do.

When and where do we not listen to one another?

Where do we fail to be together?

Where do we fail to honour the integrity of the humanness of one another?

Our political establishment today, everywhere in the world, has proven it cannot serve the needs of everyone. It has been proven over and over and over again.

Furthermore, our political establishments today, regardless of north, south, east, west, democratic or not, have also proven that war is an easier option. And that is where your role as faith leaders comes in, to uphold the consciousness that war is *not* an option.

Because you can demonstrate, not only through the words—though heaven knows the word is powerful because that is how we see God; we know God's presence through the word—but through the actions of standing together in solidarity, regardless of the faith traditions, regardless of the distinctions, you can demonstrate that war is not an option.

If every single Christian today, anywhere in the world, whether they happen to be Catholic or of the various and myriad forms of Protestant and Orthodox,

were to come together in very firm solidarity and unity . . . When that day happens, God willing, whether it is under the aegis of the World Council of Churches, or any other aegis, please believe me, it will be a wonderful moment, but it will not be enough.

Because our world, our world consists of so many more who deserve Christ's love, but who might not come under that church aegis. But they come under the church that is the mother of us all, that is the faith that brings us all together.

We can be believers. Let's act as believers.

Thank you.

Source: Submitted to WCC.

Songdhammakalyani Monastery

Ven Dhammananda, abbess

My warm greetings to WCC members.

This is a wonderful opportunity for us to be here in Karlsruhe, Germany. It is even more auspicious that this conference brought us together after eight years. We meet this time to focus on “Christ’s love moves the world to reconciliation and unity.” We are here to open our hearts so that we can allow Christ’s love to flow among us.

My ordained name is Dhammananda. I am the first fully ordained nun in Buddhism in Thailand. My country has 67 million in population; among them, we have 300,000 monks and 300 nuns like me.

I am the second generation at Songdhammakalyani Monastery, the first monastery for nuns. Our temple is situated right on Petkasam Highway, which can lead us straight down south to Malaysia. We are 52 kilometres west of Bangkok, the capital.

From our video, you can see two main buildings; the one on the left is our main shrine. Our temple is the centre of learning both for international Buddhists and interfaith dialogue. Being the first temple for women, it provides a natural space for women to come and experience a monastic lifestyle.

We conduct classes both for Thai’s and international audiences. We offer guided meditation to train the mind. Right mental formation is important for our monastic life.

Also, we are concerned about Mother Earth, so we provide space to collect and recycle trash. You can make merit with your trash! We weave rags into rugs. We turn the caps of plastic bottles into tabletops!

We hope to share this concern with other temples. There are some 26,000 temples in our country.

We also have Medicine Buddha or healing Buddha to bless us with good health. More important, he heals us spiritually.

It was here in this space in front of the Medicine Buddha that I welcomed my Catholic friends coming from the northeastern part of Thailand. First, they felt uneasy sitting in front of the Medicine Buddha, so I asked them if they believe that God is omnipresent. Indeed, God is omnipresent, so they immediately felt relaxed. We had a good sharing, good learning, both for Buddhists and Christians.

We met with that flow of Christ’s love between us.

Allow me to share with you my first encounter with the World Council of Churches (WCC)WCC. This took me back to 1991, when I organized the very

first international conference of Buddhist women. The WCC was farsighted, and they gave us support. That was our first step to come forward with many more conferences. Every two years, we moved around, covering larger ground and allowing the Buddhist women to connect and touch on their potentiality. The WCC also sponsored women from different faiths to discuss their position from the perspective of their own religions. There was much learning in these interfaith dialogues, which still continue.

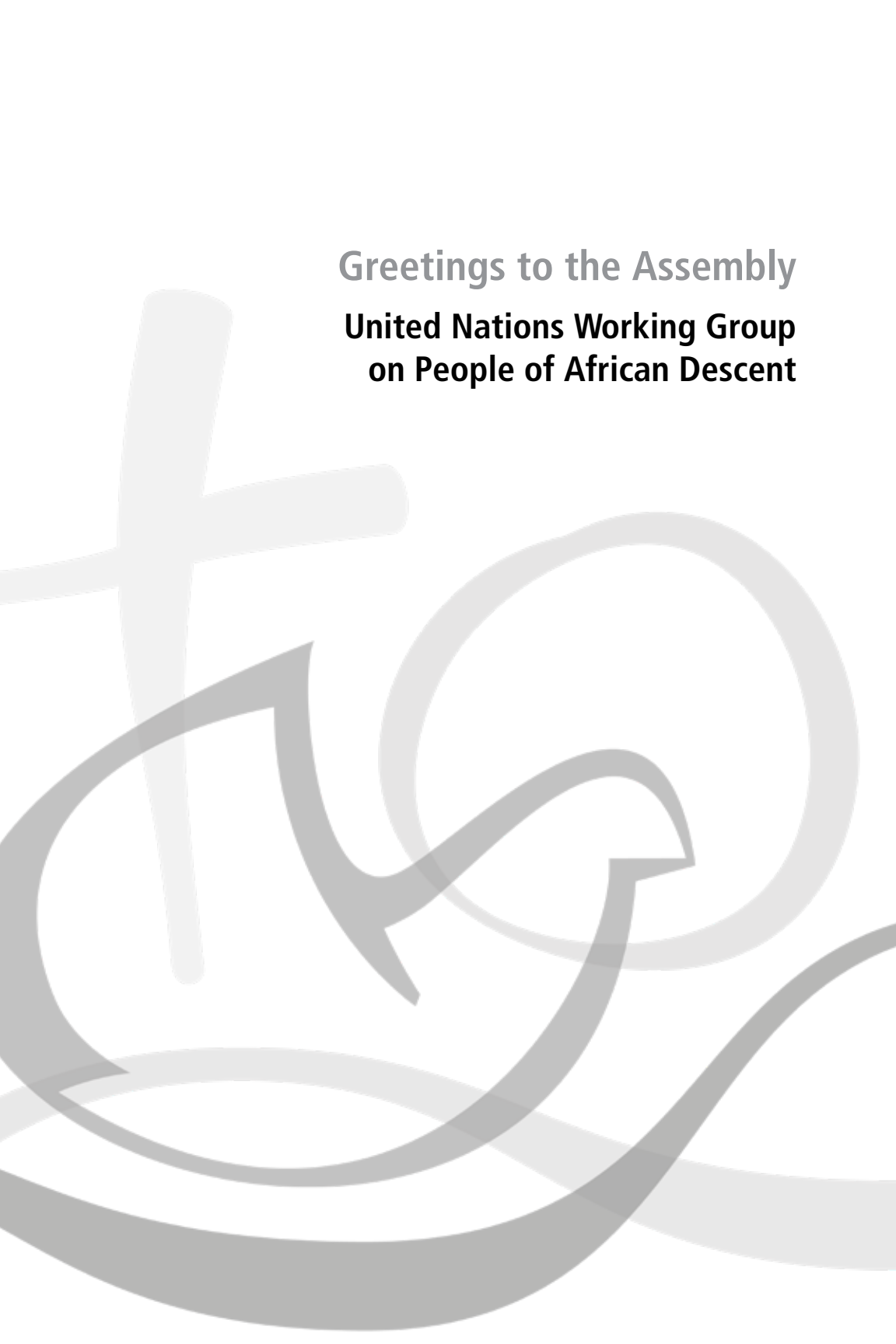
And now in Germany, we meet to allow Christ's love to move within us and to guide us on the right path to save and to heal our fragile humanity.

I rejoice for this opportunity and I have deep conviction that once again you will come up with a positive message to share with the world at the time when it is much needed.

Allow Christ's love to flow within us; the world needs your guidance.

Thank you.

Source: Submitted to WCC.



Greetings to the *Assembly*
United Nations Working Group
on People of African Descent

United Nations Working Group on People of African Descent

Catherine Namakula, chairperson

(Transcript of video greeting)

Eminences and graces, distinguished assembly delegates and participants, sisters and brothers, madame moderator Dr Agnes Abuom,

It is a great pleasure and honour for the Working Group of Experts and People of African Descent, a special procedure of the Human Rights Council, to be accorded an opportunity to participate in the 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC).

The WCC and the United Nations work closely together on combating racism and racial discrimination and on minorities, as well as on the human rights concerns of people of African descent. We are very grateful for the many years of fruitful cooperation between the working group and the WCC.

The church was established to be, and it is indeed a transformative agent, but in many respects, it has battled (to bar) itself from the strong dynamics of the society in which it operates.

The history of the church of profiting from the enslavement of Africans, colonialism, and racial segregation is documented. These legacies of the past, which also found justification in church doctrine, are the root causes of racism and other intolerances that are afflicting people of African descent today.

The Bible followed the gun.

An attempt to dehumanize Black people went as far as disputing whether Black people had souls or even had the propensity to believe. Irrespective of that, people of African descent continually seek solace from the church and religion as they negotiate the difficulties that global realities have imposed on them.

The Lord has equally called them to build his kingdom here on earth. As a result, the church is growing extensively among persons of African descent, making them rightfully an integral constituency in the body of Christ.

Inside the walls of the church have, however, been many controversies. White and other congregants are fleeing churches because of being joined by black members or black ministers. Congregants of African descent have to adopt a particular established mode of conformist behaviour in order to be accepted in churches. The mode of worship, the prayers, are predetermined, and in many respects, they are colonial.

Racial dynamics are impacting the choice of church leadership intensely.

The image of a white Jesus and white angels, in contrast to a black devil and black demons, is contributing to the further perpetuation of demonization and criminalization of the racial identity of Black people.

Disproportionate Black poverty and white affluence is a strong undercurrent in church politics, and the images of starving African children are still being utilized in appeals for funding and church projects.

The church has a choice to decisively confront its past and set its foot on a new path of effective redress.

It can neutralize the colour of models of spiritual beings, and I have to say at this point, that Jesus has appeared to me in a neutral colour before.

The church can also integrate teachings against racism and racial discrimination in Sunday schools for children; it can affirm the distinctiveness and sacredness of Black lives, and address racism and racial discrimination in families through premarital counselling.

It can also decolonize liturgies and allow for diversity to thrive.

I urge the church to strengthen its witness against racism and racial discrimination and stand with people of African descent in their quest for reparations and effective and meaningful representation in all sectors of society.

The voice of the church needs to be uncompromised on matters of Haitian migrants, African migrant workers in the Middle East, persons of African descent fleeing the war in Ukraine, police brutality and racial profiling of people of African descent, and xenophobia, among other cutting-edge issues.

The church is accountable for and to all persons, irrespective of their racial identity.

I thank you for your kind attention and wish you a fruitful assembly.

Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5JNGfoBUYgI&t=1003s&ab_channel=WorldCouncilofChurches.

Appendices



Appendix 1: Assembly Delegates and Participants

The list of delegates and participants represents those present at the assembly. The titles used are those requested by the participants. The abbreviations following the name of each participant indicate y=youth (30 years of age or younger); m=male; f=female; o=ordained; and l=layperson.

Delegates from Member Churches

Abdul-Mohan, Rt Rev. Joy Evelyn, fo, Presbyterian Church of Trinidad and Tobago

Abiog, Bishop Noel M., mo, Evangelical Methodist Church in the Philippines

About Siriani, Mr Razek, ml, (USA), Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East

Abraham, H.G. Bishop, mo, (USA), Coptic Orthodox Church [Egypt]

Abuom, Dr Agnes, fl, Anglican Church of Kenya

Adams, Rev. Charles Christian, mo, Progressive National Baptist Convention, Inc. [USA]

Adebayo, Deacon Anthony, ml, The Church of the Lord (Prayer Fellowship) Worldwide [Nigeria]

Adekunle, Dr Olubimpe Olasunmbo Modupeola, fl, Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion)

Ade-Williams, Mrs Selina, fl, Methodist Church Sierra Leone

Adhikari, Mr Christopher, ml, Bangladesh Baptist Church Sangha

Agbeko, Rt Rev. Dr Lt. Col. Bliss Divine Kofi, mo, Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Ghana

Ajah, Most Rev. Dr Miracle, mo, Presbyterian Church of Nigeria

Akamisoko, Bishop Duke, mo, Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion)

Akanji, Rev. Dr Israel Adelani, mo, Nigerian Baptist Convention

Akhmatkhanov, Hierodeacon Pyotr, ymo, Russian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate)

Akinwale, Bishop Michael Olusegan, mo, Methodist Church Nigeria

Akotia, Rev. Dr Mawusi, mo, Eglise évangélique presbytérienne du Togo

Alam, Rev. Sharaz Sharif, mo, Presbyterian Church of Pakistan

Albecker, Mr Christian, ml, Union des Églises Protestantes d'Alsace et de Lorraine [France]

Aleksiejuk, Very Rev. Dr Artur, mo, Polish Autocephalous Orthodox Church

Alemán, Rev. Eddy, mo, Reformed Church in America

Alemezian, H.E. Archbishop Dr Nareg, mo, Armenian Apostolic Church (Holy See of Cilicia) [Lebanon]

Alexander, Bishop James Lagos, mo, (South Sudan), Africa Inland Church of South Sudan and Sudan

Allo Linggi, Rev. Suleman, mo, Gereja Toraja [Indonesia]

Alves, Rev. Sérgio, mo, Lusitanian Church of Portugal

Amanatidis, Very Rev. Deacon Cæcumenius, ymo, Ecumenical Patriarchate [Türkiye]

Andemun, Rev. Rimamnde Musa, mo, Reformed Church of Christ for Nations [Nigeria]

Andiwa, Mr Derrick Dixon, yml, Anglican Church of Kenya

Andraous, Dr Khaleel, ml, Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem [Palestine]

Andriamampianina, Rev. Zaka Hary Masy, mo, Eglise de Jésus-Christ à Madagascar

Andriopoulos, Archimandrite Iakovos, ymo, Church of Greece

Aneye, Mrs Jeannette Akissi, fl, Eglise méthodiste unie de la Côte d'Ivoire

Angaelos, H.E. Archbishop, mo, (United Kingdom), Coptic Orthodox Church [Egypt]

Angeles, Ms Faith Justice, yfl, United Church of Christ in the Philippines

Annamalai Peter, Rev. Joshua Peter, mo, United Evangelical Lutheran Church in India

Anstead, Rev. Janet, fo, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Canada

Antony of Volokolamsk, H.E. Metropolitan, mo, Russian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate)

Araevna, Mrs Erika, yfl, (Russian Federation), Armenian Apostolic Church (Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin)

Arce Valentin, Rev. Dora Ester, fo, Iglesia Presbiteriana-Reformada en Cuba

Arends, Rev. Dietmar, mo, Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland

Armah, Ms Agnes Afi, yfl, Presbyterian Church of Ghana

Asbittey, Rev. Nii Armah, mo, Presbyterian Church of Ghana

Asmerom, Deacon Girmay, mo, Eritrean Orthodox Tewahdo Church

Aspinall, Archbishop Phillip, mo, Anglican Church of Australia

Aydin, H.E. Metropolitan Dr Mor Polycarpus Augin, mo, (Netherlands), Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East

Aykazian, H.E. Archbishop Dr Vicken, mo, (USA), Armenian Apostolic Church (Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin)

Azar, Bishop Sani Ibrahim, mo, (Israel), Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan & the Holy Land [Palestine]

Bach, Ms Sarah, yfo, (Switzerland), United Methodist Church [USA]

Bachus, Rev. Reginald, mo, National Baptist Convention USA, Inc.

Badejo, Rev. Olubunmi Adedoyin, fo, The Church of the Lord (Prayer Fellowship) Worldwide [Nigeria]

Balog, Bishop Zoltán, mo, Reformed Church in Hungary

Bambedi Mukishi, Mr Augustin, ml, Église du Christ au Congo - Communauté mennonite au Congo [DRC]

Bammel, Pröpstin Dr Christina-Maria, fo, Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland

Banda, Rev. Ackson, mo, Reformed Church in Zambia

Bangun, Rev. Yunus, mo, Karo Batak Protestant Church (GBKP) [Indonesia]

Bani Altawil, Mr Yousif Rafea Jalil, mo, (Iraq), Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East

Barakat, H.E. Metropolitan Isaac, mo, (Germany), Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East [Syrian Arab Republic]

Barbee, Rev. Amantha, fo, Presbyterian Church (USA)

Bargheer, Ms Anneke, fl, Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland

Barreto, Dr Raimundo, fo, American Baptist Churches USA

Barsoum, Ms Rima, fl, (Switzerland), Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East

Bartosh, Ms Alena, fl, (Belarus), Russian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate)

Barus, Rev. Krismas Imanta, mo, Gereja Batak Karo Protestan (GBKP) [Indonesia]

Basil, H.G. Bishop, mo, (USA), Coptic Orthodox Church [Egypt]

Bataringaya, Rev. Dr Pascal, mo, Eglise presbytérienne du Rwanda

Bayrakdarian, Prof. Dr Nora, fl, Armenian Apostolic Church (Holy See of Cilicia) [Lebanon]

Bayton, Mrs Mandy, fl, Church in Wales

Bedford-Strohm, Bishop Heinrich, mo, Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland

Benyamin, Rev. Sargez, mo, (Germany), Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Iran

Benyamin Mavaneh, Bishop Marnarsai, mo, (Iran, Islamic Republic of), Holy Apostolic Catholic Assyrian Church of the East [USA]

Berbati, Ms Germana, yfl, Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania

Berhane, H.G. Bishop Abune Pietros Asfaha, mo, Eritrean Orthodox Tewahedo Church

Besau, Mr Christian, ml, Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland

Beszédes, Rev. Mária, fo, Reformierte Christliche Kirche in Serbien

Bidgood Enders, Rev. Liz, fo, Church of the Brethren [USA]

Billi, Rev. Joel Stephen, mo, Church of the Brethren in Nigeria

Binejal, Rev. Jledrik, mo, United Church of Christ - Congregational in the Marshall Islands

Binejal, Mrs Kaki, fl, United Church of Christ in the Marshall Islands

Birch, Bishop Peter, mo, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark

Blackfox, Mr Vance, ml, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Boafo, Bishop Paul Kwabena, mo, Methodist Church Ghana

Boba, Rev. Dr Welman, mo, Christian Evangelical Church of Sangihe Talaud (GMIST) [Indonesia]

Bonanga, Rev. Eliko, mo, Église du Christ au Congo - Communauté des disciples du Christ [DRC]

Bonner, Mr Byrd, ml, United Methodist Church [USA]

Borisov, Rev. Antony, mo, Russian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate)

Bosonkui, Miss Sylvia Elorm, yfl, Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Ghana

Boss, Rev. Dr Marc, mo, Eglise protestante unie de France

Bosse-Huber, Bishop Petra, fo, Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland

Boukis, Rev. Dr Sotiris, mo, Evangelical Church of Greece

Bozikis, Mr Dionysios, yml, (Australia), Ecumenical Patriarchate [Türkiye]

Brace, Bishop Daniel De Graft, mo, Methodist Church Ghana

Brasil, Ms Raissa, yfl, Igreja Presbiteriana Unida do Brasil

Brasoveanul, H.G. Bishop Sofian, mo, (Germany), Romanian Orthodox Church

Brekken, Rev. Marianne, fo, Church of Norway

Brigden, Ms Ruth, fl, Anglican Church of Australia

Briggs, Mr Michael, ml, Methodist Church in Ireland

Brooks, Rev. Jazmine, yfo, African Methodist Episcopal Church [USA]

Brown, Ms Desiree Edwina, fl, Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa [South Africa]

Bruch, Bishop Izani, fo, Iglesia Evangélica Luterana en Chile

Bulekov, Archimandrite Philaret, mo, Russian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate)

Butarbutar, Rev. Dr Robinson, mo, Huria Kristen Batak Protestan (HKBP) [Indonesia]

Cakic, Ms Marina, yfl, (Germany), Serbian Orthodox Church

Cameron, Rt Rev. Gregory, mo, Church in Wales

Campbell, Ms Karen, fl, United Reformed Church [United Kingdom]

Caravaca Dominguez, Rev. Daniel, mo, Iglesia Española Reformada Episcopal

Cavalcante, Rev. José, mo, Igreja Presbiteriana Unida do Brasil

Cecha, Very Rev. Pawel, mo, (Belgium), Polish Autocephalous Orthodox Church

Cele, Rev. Sikhalo, mo, (Zimbabwe), United Congregational Church of Southern Africa [South Africa]

Chalupka, Bischof Mag. Michael, mo, Evangelische Kirche A. und H.B. in Österreich

Champion, Mr Philipp, ml, Russian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate)

Chang, Rev. Dr Yoon-Jae, mo, Presbyterian Church of Korea

Charbonnier, Rev. Michel, mo, Waldensian Church [Italy]

Chiu, Rev. Dr Shu-Pin, fo, Presbyterian Church in Taiwan

Cho, Rev. Dr Hyuk, mo, United Church of Canada

Cho, Ms Eleni, fl, (Korea, Republic of), Ecumenical Patriarchate [Türkiye]

Cho, Ms Euna, yfl, Presbyterian Church of Korea
Choul, Rt Rev. James, mo, Presbyterian Church of South Sudan
Christensen, Dr Maria Munkholt, fl, (Germany), Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark
Chukwu, Mrs Nkechi, fo, Presbyterian Church of Nigeria
Cîrstea, Mr Cosmin Iulian, yml, Romanian Orthodox Church
Claassen, Rev. Dr Gustav, mo, Dutch Reformed Church [South Africa]
Coman, Ms Maria-Laura, yfl, Romanian Orthodox Church
Comănoiu, Mr Mihail, ml, (Switzerland), Romanian Orthodox Church
Cordova, Rev. Rosa, fo, Iglesia Metodista del Perú
Coro Mogro, Rev. Bladimir, mo, Iglesia Evangélica Discipulos de Cristo en Argentina
Cowans, Rev. Dr Gordon, mo, United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands
Currie, Rev. Amanda, fo, Presbyterian Church in Canada
Dajur, Ven. Dr Gershinen Paul, mo, Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion)
Daley, Rev. Barrington Earle, mo, Moravian Church in Jamaica & the Cayman Islands
Dang, Most Rev. Johan, mo, United Evangelical Lutheran Churches in India
Daniel, Rev. Alberto, mo, Igreja Evangélica Reformada de Angola
Daniel, Rev. Prof. Dr Joseph, mo, Mar Thoma Syrian Church of Malabar [India]
Daniels, Rev. Xavier, ymo, African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church [USA]
Dascalu, Rev. Prof. Dr Daniel, mo, Romanian Orthodox Church
De Giuseppe, Mr Simone, ymo, Evangelical Baptist Union of Italy
De Souza, Rev. Dr Mauro Batista, mo, Igreja Evangélica de Confissão Luterana no Brasil
Deyerl, Mr Kilian, yml, Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland
Dibisa, Rev. Dr Yonas Yigezu, mo, Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus
Dis, Rev. Fr Abdallah, ml, (Germany), Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East [Syrian Arab Republic]
Docherty, Mrs Lucy, fl, Church of England
Dogbe, Bishop Hilliard K. Dela, mo, (Ghana), African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church [USA]
Domingos, Bishop Gaspar, mo, (Angola), United Methodist Church [USA]
Dondokambey, Mr Rio Alexander, ml, Christian Evangelical Church in Minahasa (GMIM) [Indonesia]
Dorhauer, Rev. John, mo, United Church of Christ [USA]
Dormor, Rev. Duncan, mo, Church of England
Dörr, Rev. Dr Elfriede, fo, Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Romania

Douglas-Huriwai, Rev. Canon Christopher, mo, Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia

Dudiak, Prof. Jeffrey, ml, Canadian Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)

Duensing Pearce, Rev. Stacey, fo, Reformed Church in America

Dyck, Bishop Sally, fo, United Methodist Church [USA]

Eaton, Rev. Elizabeth A., fo, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Eiwuley, Rev. Canon Anthony Morkehchie, mo, Church of the Province of West Africa [Ghana]

Elmacari, Fr Kyrillos, mo, (United Kingdom), Coptic Orthodox Church [Egypt]

El-Sanady, Dr Magdy, ml, Coptic Orthodox Church [Egypt]

Elya, Bishop Mar Benyamin, mo, (Australia), Holy Apostolic Catholic Assyrian Church of the East [USA]

Enns, Rev. Prof. Dr Fernando, mo, Arbeitsgemeinschaft Mennonitischer Gemeinden in Deutschland

Epse Iritie, Ms Attin Emma Lydie, fl, Église harriste [Ivory Coast]

Ershov, Fr Alexander, ymo, Russian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate)

Evans, Rev. Anna, fo, Presbyterian Church of Wales

Evis, Mrs Ninive, yfl, (Germany), Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East

Faalevao, Rev. Elder Dr Leatulagi, mo, Congregational Christian Church in American Samoa

Falk, Ms Celina, fl, Church of Sweden

Fassinou, Mrs Ayitchekpakluno Dorcas, fo, Eglise protestante méthodiste du Bénin

Fathy, Rev. Refat, mo, Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Egypt, Synod of the Nile

Feleke, Rev. Fr Daniel Seife Michael, mo, Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church

Fellmann, Rev. Lydia Mirjam, fo, Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland

Fernandes, Mr Roland, ml, United Methodist Church [USA]

Fernandis, Fr Aswin, mo, Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church [India]

Flores Olmos, Rev. Dr Israel, mo, Iglesia Evangélica Española

Forba, Rt Rev. Fonki Samuel, mo, Presbyterian Church in Cameroon

Fornerod, Rev. Serge, mo, Protestant Church in Switzerland

Frederika, Ms Kezia Gianina, yfl, Gereja Protestan di Indonesia (GPI)

Fremont Jr., Rev. Rock, mo, International Council of Community Churches [USA]

Fretheim, Prof. Kjetil, ml, Church of Norway

Fuite, Rev. Steven H., mo, Eglise Protestante Unie de Belgique

Gabriel of Nea Ionia and Philadelphia, H.E. Metropolitan, mo, Church of Greece

Gaeses, Rev. Moedertjie Lena, fo, Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia

Galbraith, Bishop Everal, mo, Methodist Church in the Caribbean and the Americas [Antigua and Barbuda]

Galloway, Rt Rev. Hamish, mo, Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand

Gama, Rev. Dr Billy, mo, Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) Blantyre Synod [Malawi]

Gaspar, Rev. Károly, mo, Reformed Church in Romania

Gaula, Bishop Dr Given, mo, Anglican Church of Tanzania

Gebremedhn, H.G. Bishop Habtewelde Habtemaryam, mo, Eritrean Orthodox Tewahedo Church

Gennady of Kaskelen, H.G. Bishop, mo, (Kazakhstan), Russian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate)

George, Dr Irini, fl, Coptic Orthodox Church [Egypt]

George, Ms Aimee Sarah, fl, (Singapore), Mar Thoma Syrian Church of Malabar [India]

George Chunakara, Dr Mathews, ml, (Thailand), Mar Thoma Syrian Church of Malabar [India]

Gerius Fares, Ms Maha, fl, Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East [Syrian Arab Republic]

Geyer, Ms Colleen, fl, Uniting Church in Australia

Gill, Rev. Shahzad, mo, Church of Pakistan

Gilmore, Rev. John, mo, Churches of Christ in Australia

Glynn-Mackoul, Mrs Anne, fl, (USA), Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and all the East [Syrian Arab Republic]

Gomez, Mr Paul, yml, United Methodist Church [USA]

Gonzalez Hernandez, Rev. Yoimel, mo, The Episcopal Church [USA]

Goundiaev, Archpriest Mikhail, mo, (Switzerland), Russian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate)

Green, Rev. Lynn, fo, Baptist Union of Great Britain

Green, Rev. Canon Dr Daphne, fo, (Switzerland), Church of England

Gu, Ms Jingqin, fl, China Christian Council

Guib, Bishop Reinhart, mo, Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Romania

Guldanova, Rev. Eva, fo, Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Slovakia

Gulo, Rev. Oklisman, mo, Banua Niha Keriso Protestan Kantor Sinode (BNKP) [Indonesia]

Gunnarsson, Ms Emma, yfl, Uniting Church in Sweden

Guy, Ms Bethany, fl, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States

Haas, Ms Palesa Pearl, fl, Methodist Church of Southern Africa [South Africa]
Habila Pyikison, Mrs Dorcas, fl, Reformed Church of Christ for Nations [Nigeria]
Haddad, Rev. Imad, mo, (Jordan), Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan & the Holy Land [Palestine]
Hadiwitanto, Rev. Dr Handi, mo, Gereja Kristen Indonesia (GKI)
Haines Turner, Rev. Cynthia, fo, Anglican Church of Canada
Hallonsten, Rev. Dr Gunilla, fo, Church of Sweden
Hambardzumyan, Fr Garegin, mo, Armenian Apostolic Church (Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin)
Hambira, Rev. Rupert, mo, (Botswana), United Congregational Church of Southern Africa [South Africa]
Hanna, Mr Ramy, ml, (Germany), Coptic Orthodox Church [Egypt]
Hans, Rev. Dr Bukelwa, fo, Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa [South Africa]
Hans Abia, Rev. Miki, mo, Presbyterian Church in Cameroon
Hansen, Ms Anne Magdalena, yfl, Arbeitsgemeinschaft Mennonitischer Gemeinden in Deutschland
Harasta, Dr Eva, fo, Evangelische Kirche A. und H.B. in Österreich
Harris, Ms Julia, fl, The Episcopal Church [USA]
Harris, Mr Conrad, ml, Jamaica Baptist Union
Heil, Rev. Andrew, mo, Moravian Church in America
Hernandez Retureta, Rev. Liudmila, fo, Iglesia Presbiteriana-Reformada en Cuba
Hintz, Bishop Marcin, mo, Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Poland
Hira, Rev. Probhudan, mo, Church of Bangladesh
Hoarste, H.G. Bishop Andrei, mo, Orthodox Church in America
Hollis, Rev. Sharon, fo, Uniting Church in Australia
Horsburgh, Rev. Alexander, mo, Church of Scotland
Hounsa, Rev. Kponjesu Amos, mo, Eglise protestante méthodiste du Bénin
Huanca-Corimayta, Obispo Antonio, mo, Iglesia Evangélica Metodista en Bolivia
Hutabarat-Lebang, Rev. Dr Henriette, fo, Gereja Toraja [Indonesia]
Hyde Riley, Rev. Merlyn, fo, Jamaica Baptist Union
Ibyishaka, Rev. Rose Marie, fo, Eglise presbytérienne du Rwanda
Ice, Rev. Demianus, mo, Gereja Masehi Injili di Halmahera (GMIH) [Indonesia]
Igumnov, Hieromonk Stefan, mo, Russian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate)
Ikponmwosa, Ms Gunilla, fl, Uniting Church in Sweden
Ime, Mr Bassey, ml, Presbyterian Church of Nigeria

Indangasi, Rev. Eunice, fo, Methodist Church in Kenya
Inioluwa, Ms Ayo Oladapo Praise, yfl, Nigerian Baptist Convention
Innes, Rt Rev. Dr Robert, mo, (Belgium), Church of England
Ioannou, Archimandrite Benedict (Konstantinos), mo, Church of Cyprus
Ionite, Mr Sorin Constantin, ml, Romanian Orthodox Church
Iosif of Buenos Aires, H.E. Metropolitan Dr, mo, (Argentina), Ecumenical Patriarchate [Türkiye]
Isakhanyan, H.G. Bishop Serovpé, mo, (Germany), Armenian Apostolic Church (Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin)
Isara, Rev. Melepone, mo, Congregational Christian Church Samoa
Ise, Rev. Nozomi, fo, United Church of Christ in Japan
Islam, Ms Khadijah, yfl, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Ispalakan, Ms Umav, yfl, Presbyterian Church in Taiwan
Issa, Dr Theodora, fl, (Australia), Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East
Jackelen, Archbishop Dr Antje, fo, Church of Sweden
Jackson, Rev. Dr Deborah, fo, The Episcopal Church [USA]
Jacob, Dr Ron, ml, (USA), Mar Thoma Syrian Church of Malabar [India]
Jacob, Ms Ann, yfl, United Methodist Church [USA]
Jallah, Rev. Dr Tolbert Thomas, mo, Lutheran Church in Liberia
Janse Van Rensburg, Rev. Cornelis, mo, Dutch Reformed Church [South Africa]
Jara Reyes, Bishop Américo, mo, Iglesia Evangélica Metodista Argentina
Jeremiah, Rev. Canon Dr Anderson, mo, Church of England
Job of Pisidia, H.E. Metropolitan, mo, Ecumenical Patriarchate [Türkiye]
Johannessen, Ms Anne Hjul, yfl, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark
John X, H.B. Patriarch, mo, Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East [Syrian Arab Republic]
Johnson, Bishop Susan, fo, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada
Joseph, Rev. Ebenezer W. P., mo, Methodist Church, Sri Lanka
Kabue Mbala, Rev. Simon, mo, Église du Christ au Congo - Communauté presbytérienne [DRC]
Kabuika, Deaconess Rachel, fo, Eglise du Christ - Lumière du Saint Esprit [DRC]
Kabwe Mulongo, Bishop Elie, mo, (Sweden), Église du Christ au Congo - Communauté épiscopale baptiste en Afrique [DRC]
Kacian, Mgr Adrian, mo, Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Slovakia
Kakkoura, Dr Christina, fl, Church of Cyprus
Kalaitzidis, Dr Pantelis, ml, Church of Greece
Kalonji Mukendi, Rev. Isaac, mo, Église du Christ au Congo - Communauté presbytérienne de Kinshasa [DRC]
Kan, Rev. Baoping, mo, China Christian Council

Kanarian, Ms Tamar E., fl, (USA), Armenian Apostolic Church (Holy See of Cilicia) [Lebanon]

Kandouw, Elder Steven Octavianus, ml, Christian Evangelical Church in Minahasa (GMIM) [Indonesia]

Kantipudi, Rev. Priscilla Parimala Reuben, fo, Church of South India

Karinga, Rev. Lilian W., fo, Anglican Church of Kenya

Kasaato, Mrs Josephine, fl, Church of Uganda

Kassab, Rev. Joseph Majd, mo, National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon

Katoneene, Bishop Emeritus Yona Mwesigwa, mo, Church of Uganda

Kaulule, Dr Sarah Silomba, fl, United Church of Zambia

Kawak, H.E. Archbishop Mor Dionysius Jean, mo, (USA), Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East

Kayuwa Mikenyi Mike, Patriarche Jean Baudouin, mo, Eglise du Christ - Lumiere du Saint Esprit [DRC]

Kazarian, Protopresbyter Dr Nicolas, mo, (USA), Ecumenical Patriarchate [Türkiye]

Keba Ndumba, Rev. Charlotte, fo, Église du Christ au Congo - Communauté presbytérienne [DRC]

Keib, Bishop Sageus, mo, Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia

Kelling, Mr Joel, ml, (Jordan), Episcopal Church in Jerusalem and the Middle East [Palestine]

Keshishian, Ms Mania, fl, (Canada), Armenian Apostolic Church (Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin)

Khajerian, H.E. Archbishop Kegham, mo, (Greece), Armenian Apostolic Church (Holy See of Cilicia) [Lebanon]

Khalil, Very Rev. Archimandrite Prof. Jack, mo, (Lebanon), Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East [Syrian Arab Republic]

Khaw, Rev. Dr Si, mo, Mara Evangelical Church [Myanmar]

Khulap, Archpriest Vladimir, mo, Russian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate)

Kidane, Rev. Bereket, mo, Eritrean Orthodox Tewahedo Church

Kifle, Mr Melaku, ml, (Switzerland), Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church

Kiguru, Rt Rev. Jeremiah Ngumo, mo, African Christian Church and Schools [Kenya]

Kikkert, Rev. Jacob, mo, United Protestant Church of Curaçao

Kim, Rev. Sungtae, mo, Korean Christian Church in Japan

Kim, Rev. Dr Chang Ju, mo, Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea

Kim, Rev. Hanho, mo, Presbyterian Church of Korea

Kim, Rev. Seoyoung, fo, (United Kingdom), Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea (PROK)

Kimani, Rev. Elizabeth Wamere, fo, Presbyterian Church of East Africa [Kenya]

Kinuthia, Rev. Julius Kimani, mo, African Christian Church and Schools [Kenya]

Kipshidze, Mr V.V., ml, Russian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate)

Kitsinian, Ms Vanna, fl, (USA), Armenian Apostolic Church (Holy See of Cilicia) [Lebanon]

Kitundu, Eng. Robert Martin, ml, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania

Kolimon, Rev. Dr Mery, fo, Gereja Masehi Injili di Timor (GMIT) [Indonesia]

Kolovopoulou, Prof. Marina, fl, Church of Greece

Konan, Rev. N’Goran Daniel, mo, Eglise méthodiste unie de la Côte d’Ivoire

Kondor, Bishop Péter, mo, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hungary

Kongi, Bishop Angbada John, mo, (Uganda), Africa Inland Church of South Sudan and Sudan

Kongoh, Archbishop Emmanuel Tamba, mo, (Sierra Leone), The Church of the Lord (Prayer Fellowship) Worldwide [Nigeria]

Kopecka, Rev. Martina, fo, Czechoslovak Hussite Church

Koranyi, Prof. Dr Andras, mo, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hungary

Kosykh, Fr Ilya, mo, Russian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate)

Kotni, Mr George, ml, Bengal-Orissa-Bihar Baptist Convention [India]

Kotobesoa, Rev. mo, Malagasy Lutheran Church [Madagascar]

Kounthapanya, Rev. Phonesavanh, mo, Lao Evangelical Church

Kouzouian, Ms Arpi, yfl, (USA), Armenian Apostolic Church (Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin)

Kramer, Landesbischof Friedrich, mo, Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland

Kraulins, Rev. Andris, mo, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia

Krieger, Rev. Christian, mo, Union des Églises Protestantes d’Alsace et de Lorraine [France]

Kristi, Rev., fo, Gereja Kristen Jawa (GKJ) [Indonesia]

Krochak, Very Rev. Grand Syncellus Iakovos, mo, Ecumenical Patriarchate [Türkiye]

Kühnbaum-Schmidt, Bishop Kristina, fo, Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland

Külen, Mr Gabriel, mo, (Sweden), Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East

Kuriakose, H.E. Metropolitan Dr Mor Theophilose, mo, (India), Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East

Kuriakose, Bishop Mar Awgin, mo, Holy Apostolic Catholic Assyrian Church of the East [India]

Kykotis, H.E. Metropolitan Serafim, mo, (Zimbabwe), Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria and All Africa [Egypt]

Labba, Dr Kristina, fl, Church of Norway

Labetubun, Rev. Oktovina, fo, Gereja Protestan Maluku (GPM) [Indonesia]

Labuntog, Bishop Melzar D., mo, United Church of Christ in the Philippines
Lawson Kpavuvu, Rev. Godson Teyi Dogbeda, mo, Eglise Methodiste du Togo
Leal Da Silva, Rev. Clayton, mo, Igreja Presbiteriana Independente do Brasil
Leath, Rev. Dr Jennifer S., fo, (Canada), African Methodist Episcopal Church [USA]
Leath, Bishop Jeffrey, mo, African Methodist Episcopal Church [USA]
Lee, Ms Saeleum, fl, Korean Methodist Church
Legesse, Dr Nigussu, ml, Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church
Legita, Ms Feraz, fl, Convention of Philippine Baptist Churches
Lemma, Rev. Fr Alula, mo, Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church
Len, Ms Don Lam, yfl, Myanmar Baptist Convention
Leonid of Klyn, H.E. Metropolitan, mo, Russian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate)
Lewis, Rev. Algernon, mo, Moravian Church, Eastern West Indies Province [Antigua and Barbuda]
Lian, Rev. Dr Thang Cin, mo, Myanmar Baptist Convention
Lin, Rev. Dr Manhong, fo, China Christian Council
Llanco, Obispo César, mo, Iglesia Metodista del Perú
Lo, Rev. Dr Kong-Hi, mo, Presbyterian Church in Taiwan
Lohre, Ms Kathryn, fl, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Lopez Ballalta, Rev. Marta, fo, Iglesia Evangélica Española
Lowe, Rev. Jessica, fo, United Methodist Church [USA]
Lubat, Ms Maria, yfl, (Israel), Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem [Palestine]
Luft, Dr Rebecca, fl, Orthodox Church in America
Lukusa Mbuyi, Bishop Alexis, mo, Eglise du Christ - Lumière du Saint Esprit [DRC]
Lumbantobing, Mr Humala, mo, Christian Protestant Church in Indonesia (GKPI)
Lundegaard, Rev. Ole, mo, Baptist Union of Denmark
Luoma, Archbishop Tapio, mo, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland
Maclean, Rev. Dr Catherine, fo, United Church of Canada
Magnée-De Berg, Rev. E. Kim, fo, Remonstrant Church [Netherlands]
Mabling, Dr Lubina, fl, Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland
Makoto, Rev. Dakarai, mo, United Church of Christ in Zimbabwe
Mankhin, Most Rev. Samuel Sunil, mo, Church of Bangladesh
Mantasavili, Ms Kristina, fl, (Greece), Ecumenical Patriarchate [Türkiye]
Mante, Rt Rev. Prof. Joseph Obiri Yeboah, mo, Presbyterian Church of Ghana
Manukyan, H.G. Bishop Hovakim Vardges, mo, (United Kingdom), Armenian Apostolic Church (Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin)

Mar Paulos, Bishop Dr Abraham, mo, Mar Thoma Syrian Church of Malabar [India]

Margossian Hadesian, Ms Seta, fl, Armenian Apostolic Church (Holy See of Cilicia) [Lebanon]

Maric, Mr Stefan, ymo, (Germany), Serbian Orthodox Church

Marshall, Most Rev. Dr Azad, mo, Church of Pakistan

Marsiglia, Rev. Fr Pedro, mo, (Brazil), Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East [Syrian Arab Republic]

Martzelos, Prof. Gheorgios, ml, Church of Greece

Masegman, Rev. Ritchie, mo, Episcopal Church in the Philippines

Maskal, Mrs Sofiya, yfl, (Canada), Ecumenical Patriarchate [Türkiye]

Masserlian, Rev. Raffi, mo, Union of the Armenian Evangelical Churches in the Near East [Lebanon]

Mathen, Ms Ruth, yfl, (Thailand), Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church [India]

Mathews, Ms Annika, yfl, Church of England

Matiri, Mrs Everlyn Karwitha, fl, Methodist Church in Kenya

Mawire, Rev. George T., mo, Methodist Church in Zimbabwe

Mbanda, Archbishop Laurent, mo, Province de l’Eglise anglicane du Rwanda

Mbanda, Mrs Chantal, fl, Province de l’Eglise anglicane du Rwanda

Mbesse, Dr Bessala, mo, Église presbytérienne camerounaise

Mbingasani-Maluavanga, Deaconess Marceline, fo, Église du Christ au Congo - Communauté baptiste du Congo [DRC]

Mbogo, Rev. Canon Dr Rosemary Muthoni, fo, Anglican Church of Kenya

Mcarthur, Rev. Dr Jane, fo, United Free Church of Scotland

Mella, Rev. Dr Connie Semy, fo, (Philippines), United Methodist Church [USA]

Memiafo Sopjio Epse Kemogne, Rev. Abestine, fo, Eglise évangélique du Cameroun

Mendoza, Rev. Milquella, fo, (Dominican Republic), The Episcopal Church [USA]

Mengistie, Rev. Dr Mersha, mo, (Germany), Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church

Mengistu, H.E. Archbishop Diyonasiyos Tedla, mo, (Germany), Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church

Messelu, Commissioner Yilikal Shiferaw, ml, Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church

Methuen, Rev. Prof. Charlotte, fo, Scottish Episcopal Church

Mfom, Mr Jules Perigord Martin Mamia, mo, Eglise protestante africaine [Cameroon]

Mgombele, Rev. David Anania, mo, Moravian Church in Tanzania

Mh, Rev. Kinurung, mo, Gereja Kalimantan Evangelis (GKE) [Indonesia]

Midttømme, Bishop Ingeborg Synove, fo, Church of Norway

Milki Wehbe, Mrs Maha, fl, (Lebanon), Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East [Syrian Arab Republic]

Miller, Ms Samantha, yfl, United Church of Canada

Mills, Very Rev. Anne, fo, Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia

Mimboe Abanda, Mrs Marie-Hélène, yfl, Eglise Presbytérienne Camerounaise

Mingashanga, Mr Pascal, ml, Église du Christ au Congo - Communauté presbytérienne [DRC]

Mlula, Rev. Canon Bethuel Joel, mo, Anglican Church of Tanzania

Mngadi, Mr Herbert, ml, (South Africa), African Methodist Episcopal Church [USA]

Modise, Rev. Prof. Dr Leepo Johannes, mo, Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa [South Africa]

Mofu, Rev. Andrikus, mo, Gereja Kristen Injili Di Tanah Papua (GKITP) [Indonesia]

Moilanen, Ms Annamari, fl, Orthodox Church of Finland

Molen, Ms Eneresi, yfl, (Zimbabwe), Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria and All Africa [Egypt]

Molisiwa, Rev. Senamo Shemaiah, mo, Council of African Instituted Churches of Southern Africa [South Africa]

Moore, Rev. Sarah, fo, United Reformed Church [United Kingdom]

Mor Coorilos, H.E. Metropolitan Dr, mo, (India), Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East

Morales, Mrs Maria Teofilina, fl, Iglesia Filipina Independiente

Morris, Rev. Canon Dr Jeremy, mo, Church of England

Mountraki, Ms Maria, yfl, Orthodox Church of Finland

Mpetshehi, Rev. Dr Lungile, mo, Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa [South Africa]

Muchombo, Ms Mayamiko, yfo, Church of the Province of Central Africa [Zambia]

Muhambi, Most Rev. John Akhura, mo, African Church of the Holy Spirit [Kenya]

Munirji, Mr Jamil, ml, (Sweden), Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East

Munthe, Rev. Dr Paul Ulrich, mo, Gereja Kristen Protestan Simalungun (GKPS) [Indonesia]

Musleh, Mr Yohanna, yml, Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem [Palestine]

Mutavdžić, Mr Nikola, yml, Serbian Orthodox Church

Muyunga, Mr Brian, yml, Church of Uganda

Mwangi, Rev. Paul Kariuki, mo, Presbyterian Church of East Africa [Kenya]

Mwaniki, Ms Sophia G., fl, Anglican Church of Kenya

Mwaura, Ms Zipporah, fl, (Kenya), Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria and All Africa [Egypt]

Mwololo, Rev. Luke Nzioki, mo, Kenya Evangelical Lutheran Church

Naett Vidovic, Dr Julija, fl, (France), Serbian Orthodox Church

Nainggolan, Ms Ernisa Maranatha, yfl, Huria Kristen Batak Protestan (HKBP) [Indonesia]

Nakmofa, Rev. Yusuf, mo, Gereja Masehi Injili di Timor (GMIT) [Indonesia]

Nalbandian, H.G. Bishop Armash, mo, (Syrian Arab Republic), Armenian Apostolic Church (Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin)

Narciso, Rev. Dr Jerson, mo, Convention of Philippine Baptist Churches

Nare, Ms Boiketlo Princess, yfo, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe

Navaya, Rev. Edina P., fo, Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) Blantyre Synod [Malawi]

Nayis, H.E. Archbishop Mor Philoxenus Mattias, mo, (Germany), Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East

Ncholo, Ms Masechaba Palesa Moletsane, fl, Anglican Church of Southern Africa [South Africa]

Ndagijimana, Bishop Emmanuel, mo, Association des Eglises baptistes au Rwanda

Ndambuki, Archbishop Timothy, mo, Africa Brotherhood Church (ABC) [Kenya]

Ndintore, Rev. Félibien, mo, Eglise Anglicane du Burundi

Ndukuba, Archbishop Henry, mo, Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion)

Neilson, Dr Brendon, ml, Anglican Church of Canada

Nelyubova, Ms Margarita, fl, Russian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate)

Netsere, Rev. Abune Lukas Gebrehiwet, mo, Eritrean Orthodox Tewahedo Church

Ngobeh, Presiding Bishop Mark K., mo, Methodist Church Sierra Leone

Nicholovos, H.E. Metropolitan Zachariah Mar, mo, (USA), Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church [India]

Niemi, Rev. Vilma, yfo, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland

Nifon of Targoviste, H.E. Metropolitan Prof. Dr, mo, Romanian Orthodox Church

Nikkola of Apolonia and Fier, H.E. Metropolitan, mo, Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania

Ninan, Mr Ajith, ml, (Emirates, United Arab), Mar Thoma Syrian Church of Malabar [India]

Nishinosono, Rev. Michiko, fo, United Church of Christ in Japan

Nkaku, Mrs Josphine Gaceri, fl, Methodist Church in Kenya

Ntongo Bitti, Rev. Jean-Marie, mo, Église presbytérienne camerounaise

Numfor, Rev. Dr Numfor Perpetua Be Epse, fo, Presbyterian Church in Cameroon

Oancea, Rev. Prof. Dr Constantin Horia, mo, Romanian Orthodox Church

Odonkor, Rev. Dr Godwin Nii Noi, mo, Presbyterian Church of Ghana

O'Dowd-Smyth, Rev. Dr Christine, fo, Church of Ireland

Emmanuel of Chalcedon, H.E. Elder Metropolitan, mo, Ecumenical Patriarchate [Türkiye]

Athenagoras of Nazianzos, H.G. Bishop Dr, mo, (USA), Ecumenical Patriarchate [Türkiye]

Ogouma, Rev. Fritzel, ymo, Eglise protestante méthodiste du Bénin

Ogunsola, Ms Oluremi Olujimi, fo, (USA), The Church of the Lord (Prayer Fellowship) Worldwide [Nigeria]

Ohanian, H.E. Archbishop Gomidas, mo, (Venezuela), Armenian Apostolic Church (Holy See of Cilicia) [Lebanon]

Olateru-Olagbegi, Mrs Adebisi, fl, Nigerian Baptist Convention

Olayiwola, Mrs Florence Afolake, fo, Nigerian Baptist Convention

Olotu, Dr Anjela Thomas, fo, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania

Ositelu, Most Rev. Dr Rufus Okikiola, mo, The Church of the Lord (Prayer Fellowship) Worldwide [Nigeria]

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Owens, Rev. Teresa Hord, fo, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States

Owino Siang'A, Rev. Joanes, mo, Presbyterian Church of East Africa [Kenya]

Padilla Curbelo, Rev. Amilcar, mo, Iglesia Morava en Nicaragua

Pakpahan, Rev. Dr Binsar J., mo, Huria Kristen Batak Protestan (HKBP) [Indonesia]

Panayotopoulos, Dr Marie, fl, (Greece), Ecumenical Patriarchate [Türkiye]

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Papamikroulis, Very Rev. Protopresbyter Emmanouil, mo, Church of Greece

Papantoniou, Fr Nicholas, mo, Church of Cyprus

Papantoniou, Deacon Epifanios, mo, Church of Cyprus

Park, Rev. Dr Do Woong, mo, Korean Methodist Church

Parker, Dr Evelyn L., fl, Christian Methodist Episcopal Church [USA]

Parrish Lucas, Rev. Kelli, fo, United Church of Christ [USA]

Pavlou, Dr Maria, fl, Church of Cyprus

Pelushi, Fr Robert, mo, Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania

Pereyra, Pastora Vicepresidenta Mariela Alejandra, fo, Iglesia Evangélica Luterana Unida [Argentina]

Pérez, Rev. Isay, mo, Iglesia Presbiteriana de Colombia

Petersen, Pastor Barend, mo, The Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa

Piedimonte, Ms Laura Edith, fl, Iglesia Evangélica Metodista Argentina

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Pihaatae, Rev. François Opura, mo, Église protestante Maohi [French Polynesia]
Pikulski, Rev. Krzysztof, mo, Polish Catholic Church in Poland
Pirri-Simonian, Ms Teny, fl, (Switzerland), Armenian Apostolic Church (Holy See of Cilicia) [Lebanon]
Pirttimaa, Rev. Kati, fo, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland
Pitakaji, Rev. Armstrong, mo, United Church in the Solomon Islands
Pitts, Rev. Dr Tyrone S., mo, Progressive National Baptist Convention, Inc. [USA]
Pokorný, Rev. Pavel, mo, Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren
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Purnama, Rev. Danny, mo, Gereja Kristen Indonesia (GKI)
Quawas, Dr Audeh, ml, (Jordan), Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem [Palestine]
Rajan, Ms Lisa Rachel, yfl, (USA), Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church [India]
Rakotomandimby, Mr Benjamin Alexis, ml, Eglise de Jésus-Christ à Madagascar
Rakotozafy, Rev. Dr Denis, mo, Malagasy Lutheran Church [Madagascar]
Ranarivelo, Rt Rev. S. Jaona, mo, (Madagascar), Church of the Province of the Indian Ocean [Mauritius]
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Rathina Raja, Mr Fernandas, ml, Church of South India
Rees, Rev. Dyfrig, mo, Undeb yr Annibynwyr Cymraeg [United Kingdom]
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Reis Oliveira, Rev. Sandra Cristina, fo, Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Portugal
Remala, Rev. Makarious, mo, Coptic Orthodox Church [Egypt]
Rennie-Philip, Mrs Steffy, yfl, (United Kingdom), Mar Thoma Syrian Church of Malabar [India]
Rensberg, Ms Julia, yfl, Church of Sweden
Rense, Rev. Jetrosan, mo, Christian Church of Central Sulawesi (GKST) [Indonesia]
Rentel, Archpriest Alexander, mo, Orthodox Church in America
Reyes, Jr, Bishop Rex, mo, Episcopal Church in the Philippines
Riggs, Dr Ann, fl, Religious Society of Friends: Friends United Meeting [USA]

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Roboh, Ms Anie Getruida Pili, yfl, Gereja Masehi Injili di Timor (GMIT) [Indonesia]
Rodriguez Lara, Rev. Santiago de Jesus, mo, Iglesia Luterana Salvadoreña
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Rudershausen, Ms Christine, fl, Katholisches Bistum der Alt-Katholiken in Deutschland
Sæmundsdóttir, Rev. Ása Laufey, fo, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Iceland
Saleh Ibrahim, Mr Girgis, ml, Coptic Orthodox Church [Egypt]
Salusu, Rev. Musa, mo, Gereja Toraja [Indonesia]
Sambira, Rev. Marthen, mo, Gereja Protestan di Sulawesi Tenggara (GEPSULTRA) [Indonesia]
Sandmael, Very Rev. Kristine, fo, Church of Norway
Sapit, Most Rev. Dr Jackson Ole, mo, Anglican Church of Kenya
Sarkar, Mrs Rupkatha, fl, Church of North India
Sarkissian, H.E. Archbishop Dikran Sebouh, mo, (Iran, Islamic Republic of), Armenian Apostolic Church (Holy See of Cilicia) [Lebanon]
Saroyan, H.G. Bishop Gevorg, mo, Armenian Apostolic Church (Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin)
Schild, Rev. Suzanne, fl, Protestant Church in Switzerland
Schindler, Rev. Leonardo, mo, Iglesia Evangélica del Río de la Plata [Argentina]
Schmidt, Ms Käthe, yfl, Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland
Schuler, Pfarrer Christoph, mo, Christkatholische Kirche der Schweiz
Schuster, Ms Megan Louis, yfl, Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland
Schwarz, Mr Jakob, yml, Church of Sweden
Seenathsingh, Deaconess Marlene, fo, Presbyterian Church of Trinidad and Tobago
Serapion, H.E. Metropolitan Bishop, mo, (USA), Coptic Orthodox Church [Egypt]
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Sergiy of Singapore and Southeast Asia, H.E. Metropolitan, mo, (Singapore), Russian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate)
Servand, Bishop Anilkumar, mo, Methodist Church in India
Setyoputri, Rev. Helen, fo, Gereja Kristen Indonesia (GKI) [Indonesia]
Seyboldt, Rev. Emmanuelle, fo, Eglise protestante unie de France
Shattahi, Archimandrite Meletius, mo, Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East [Syrian Arab Republic]
Shaw, Rt Rev. Riscylla, fo, Anglican Church of Canada
Shen, Rev. Xuebin, mo, China Christian Council
Sherrill, Dr Elisabeth Ivete, fl, Igreja Episcopal Anglicana do Brasil

Shi, Ms Meiyong, fl, China Christian Council
Shoo, Bishop Dr Frederick Onaeli, mo, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania
Sibanda, Bishop Kenneth, mo, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe
Sibarani, Mrs Apriani Magdalena, fo, Gereja Methodist Indonesia (GMI)
Siebh, Mr Spencer Siebah, yml, Presbyterian Church of Liberia
Sigurdardottir, Bishop Agnes, yfo, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Iceland
Sikombe, Rt Rev. Conrad Nguvumali, mo, Moravian Church in Tanzania
Silishebo, Rev. Silishebo, mo, United Church of Zambia
Simatupang, Bishop Togar Satrya, mo, Christian Protestant Angkola Church (GKPA) [Indonesia]
Simbolon, Mrs Dinar Imelda Kartika, fl, Huria Kristen Batak Protestan (HKBP) [Indonesia]
Simoës, Rev. Daniel Edgardo, mo, Iglesia Cristiana Bíblica [Argentina]
Sinaga, Rev. Dr Deonal, mo, Huria Kristen Batak Protestan (HKBP) [Indonesia]
Singh, Most Rev. Dr Prem Chand, mo, Church of North India
Singitthiphon, Mrs Phasouk, yfl, Lao Evangelical Church
Skvarnik, Ms Nadezhda, fl, (Czech Republic), Orthodox Church in the Czech Lands and Slovakia
Smith, Most Rev. Geoffrey, mo, Anglican Church of Australia
Smith, Rev. Canon Dr Jennifer H., fo, Methodist Church [United Kingdom]
Sohlberg, Mr Jussi, ml, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland
Soliman, Ms Barbara, fl, Coptic Orthodox Church [Egypt]
Soliola Iosia, Rev. Elder Tunumoso, mo, Congregational Christian Church in Samoa
Sonea, Rev. Prof. Dr Cristian-Sebastian, mo, Romanian Orthodox Church
Sossou, Rev. Abran Anne, fo, Eglise protestante méthodiste du Bénin
Souisa, Rev. Dr Nancy Novitra, fo, Gereja Protestan Maluku (GPM) [Indonesia]
Speckmann, Dr Iris, fo, Mennonite Church in the Netherlands
Spyrou, Mr Michael, ml, Church of Cyprus
Stanojević, H.G. Bishop Jovan, mo, (Germany), Serbian Orthodox Church
Stathokosta, Prof. Vasiliki, yfl, Church of Greece
Still, Rev. Canon Murray, mo, Anglican Church of Canada
Svensson, Rev. Lasse, mo, Uniting Church in Sweden
Swanson, Mr Joshua, mo, United Methodist Church [USA]
Swenson, Bishop Mary Ann, fo, United Methodist Church [USA]
Szólláth, Dr Bernadett, fl, Reformed Church in Hungary
Tabarira, Mrs Mercy, fl, Reformed Church in Zimbabwe
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Tahanian, Very Rev. Fr Hrant, mo, Armenian Apostolic Church (Holy See of Cilicia) [Lebanon]

Talava, Rev. Alee, mo, (New Zealand), Ekalesia Kelisiano Tuvalu
Talwa, Rev. Gilbert Nkasa Ilunga, ml, Eglise Evangélique Luthérienne au Congo [DRC]
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Tautari, Rev. Tara, fo, Methodist Church of New Zealand
Teder, Rev. Tauno, mo, Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church
Tegerstrand, Mr Hannes, yml, Church of Sweden
Temparaja, Rev. Juliana, fo, Protestant Church in Timor Lorosa'e
Terefe, Mrs Rahel, fl, Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus
Thomas, H.G. Bishop, mo, Coptic Orthodox Church [Egypt]
Thompson, Rev. Dr Susan, fo, Methodist Church of New Zealand
Thompson, Rev. Dr Karen Georgia, fo, United Church of Christ [USA]
Thompson, Bishop Brian, mo, African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church [USA]
Thompson, Rev. Felica, fo, African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church [USA]
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Toma, Archimandrite Dr Stefan, mo, (Germany), Ecumenical Patriarchate [Türkiye]
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Torto, Rt. Rev. Daniel S.M., mo, Church of the Province of West Africa [Ghana]
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Tshidinda Mamba, Rev. Jean, mo, Église du Christ au Congo - Communauté presbytérienne [DRC]
Tsomanidis, Prof. Stylianos, ml, Church of Greece
Tuioti, Rev. Dr Eteuati Sili Leuo, mo, Methodist Church of Samoa
Tuioti, Mrs Maselina, fo, Methodist Church of Samoa
Turagavou, Rev. Dr Semisi Mamau, mo, Methodist Church in Fiji and Rotuma
Tuwanakotta, Rev. Fransisca Carolina, fo, Gereja Protestan di Indonesia (GPI)

Tyrlík, Bishop Tomáš, mo, Silesian Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession [Czech Republic]

Udessa, Mr Wondmagegn, ml, Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus

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Vaccaro, Rev. Jorge Julio, mo, Asociación Iglesia de Dios [Argentina]

Van De Beek, Ms Rianne, fl, Old-Catholic Church in the Netherlands

Van Den Broeke, Rev. Karin, fo, Protestant Church in the Netherlands

Van Den Toren, Dr Benno, mo, Protestant Church in the Netherlands

Van Dorp, Ms Emma, yfl, Protestant Church in Switzerland

Vasechko, Archpriest Valentin, mo, Russian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate)

Vasethe, Rev. Veronica, fo, Church of Melanesia [Solomon Islands]

Vasilache, Mr George, ml, Romanian Orthodox Church

Vasilevich, Ms Natallia, fl, (Belarus), Ecumenical Patriarchate [Türkiye]

Vasilios of Constantia and Ammochostos, H.E. Metropolitan Dr, mo, Church of Cyprus

Viilma, Archbishop Urmas, mo, Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church

Vlantis, Mr Georgios, ml, (Germany), Ecumenical Patriarchate [Türkiye]

Voaden, Mrs Kimberly, fl, (Cayman Islands), United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands

Vorster, Rev. Michael, mo, Methodist Church of Southern Africa [South Africa]

Voulgari, Ms Aikaterini, fl, Church of Greece

Vukasovic, Mr Jovica, ml, (Montenegro), Serbian Orthodox Church

Wagey, Rev. Roberto, mo, Gereja Protestan di Indonesia Bagian Barat (GPIB)

Waithera Thiong’O, Ms Sharon, yfl, Presbyterian Church of East Africa [Kenya]

Walker, Ms Rachel, yfl, Scottish Episcopal Church

Walker-Smith, Rev. Dr Angeliq, fo, National Baptist Convention USA, Inc.

Wang, Mr Yu-En, yml, Presbyterian Church in Taiwan

Warde, Mr Bjorn, yml, Presbyterian Church of Trinidad and Tobago

Wasuka, Isaac Muke, mo, Communauté union des églises baptistes au congo [DRC]

Waszuk, Mr Pablo, ml, Iglesia Metodista en el Uruguay

Waweru, Rev. Lucy, fo, Presbyterian Church of East Africa [Kenya]

Wea, Rev. Daniel, mo, (France), Église Protestante de Kanaky Nouvelle-Calédonie

Weibye, Ms Miriam, fl, Church of Scotland

Weideman, Dr Henri Jacobus, mo, The Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa

Welschen, Rev. Johannes, mo, (Netherlands), Evangelische Brüder-Unität [Germany]

Wen, Rev. Dr Ge, mo, China Christian Council

Wetschka, Rev. Thomas, mo, Altkatholische Kirche Österreichs
Williams, Rev. Dr Uzoaku, fo, Presbyterian Church of Nigeria
Wolfe, Dr James, mo, American Baptist Churches USA
Wong, Rev. Ka Fai, mo, Hong Kong Council of the Church of Christ in China
Wong, Most Rev. Dr James, mo, (United Kingdom), Church of the Province of the Indian Ocean [Mauritius]
Wong, Rev. Dr Gordon, mo, The Methodist Church in Singapore
Wood, Ms Martha, yfl, United Church of Canada
Wright, Bishop Philip, mo, (Belize), Church in the Province of the West Indies [Bahamas]
Wu, Rev. Wei, mo, China Christian Council
Yakimchuk, Archpriest Igor, mo, Russian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate)
Yanez Ogaza, Rev. Vilma Isabel, fo, Iglesia Presbiteriana de Colombia
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Yaqoob, Ms Maria, yfl, (Iraq), Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East [Syrian Arab Republic]
Yaziji, Ms Maria, yfl, Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East [Syrian Arab Republic]
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Yoteni, Dr Fransina, fl, Gereja Kristen Injili Di Tanah Papua (GKITP) [Indonesia]
Youkhanis, Bishop Mar Awraham, mo, (United Kingdom), Holy Apostolic Catholic Assyrian Church of the East [USA]
Young, Rev. Austin, ymo, African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church [USA]
Youngson, Rev. Michaela, fo, Methodist Church [United Kingdom]
Zareef, Rev. Nadi Labib, mo, Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Egypt, Synod of the Nile
Zavalny, Fr Vyacheslav, mo, Russian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate)
Zeljko, Mr Stefan, yml, (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Serbian Orthodox Church
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Zoumvouta, Rev. Ziloua, mo, Union des Eglises Baptistes du Cameroun
Zulu, Rev. Dr William, mo, Reformed Church in Zambia

Advisors to the Delegations

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Agøy, Ms Berit Hagen, fl, Church of Norway
Agola, Rev. Elias Otieno, mo, Presbyterian Church of East Africa [Kenya]

Albert, Most Rev. Dharmaraj Rasalam, mo, Church of South India
Aphayamath, Rev. Dethsacda, mo, Lao Evangelical Church
Asamoah-Gyadu, Rev. Prof. Johnson, mo, Methodist Church Ghana
Blair, Rev. Michael, mo, United Church of Canada
Brooks, Rev. Philip, mo, United Reformed Church [United Kingdom]
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Fäh, Rev. Heinz, mo, Protestant Church in Switzerland
Franklin-Ross, Rev. Tony, mo, Methodist Church of New Zealand
Gehrs, Rev. Paul, mo, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada
Gejrot, Rev. Victoria, fo, Uniting Church in Sweden
Granberg-Michaelson, Rev. Wesley, mo, Reformed Church in America
Griffiths, Rev. Dr Ainsley, mo, Church in Wales
Hagerius, Rev. Joakim, mo, Uniting Church in Sweden
Hansrod, Rev. Michel, mo, Methodist Church of Southern Africa [South Africa]
Hawxhurst, Rev. Dr Jean, fo, United Methodist Church [USA]
Hernando, Rev. Francisco J., mo, United Church of Christ in the Philippines
Hodgson Rios, Mr Ashley Wesley, ml, Iglesia Morava en Nicaragua
Hosler, Rev. Dr Nathan, mo, Church of the Brethren [USA]
Hsu, Mr Wan-Chi (Victor), ml, (USA), Presbyterian Church in Taiwan
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Kiambi, Rev. Japhet Ngugi, mo, Methodist Church in Kenya
Kickett, Rev. Mark, mo, Uniting Church in Australia
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Mosuka, Mr Ngole Mbuayo Ndivi, ml, Presbyterian Church in Cameroon

Muchenda, Bishop Japheth Omucheyi, mo, African Church of the Holy Spirit [Kenya]

Mumba Chilolo, Rev. Eneless, fo, Reformed Church in Zambia

Musa, Brother Andesati Adamu, ml, Reformed Church of Christ for Nations [Nigeria]

Ncozana, Very Rev. Prof Silas, mo, Church of Central Africa Presbyterian Blantyre Synod [Malawi]

Ndamsai, Rev. Anthony Addua, mo, Church of the Brethren in Nigeria

Niap, Rev. Jacob, mo, Gereja Masehi Injili di Timor (GMIT) [Indonesia]

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Nygaard, Mr Birger, ml, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark

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Ogunmuyiwa, Most Rev. Dr Peter Oluakemi, mo, The African Church [Nigeria]

Oh, Rev. Ilyoung Oh Il Young, mo, Korean Methodist Church

Oleng, Rev. Clementie E., fo, Christian Evangelical Church of Sangihe Talaud (GMIST) [Indonesia]

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Pataki, Rev. Mautji, mo, Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa [South Africa]

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Pettis, Rev. Mark, mo, United Church of Christ [USA]

Puehn, Rev. Martin, mo, Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland

Randrianaivoarisoa Ep Ravelosoa Andriamamonjy, Mrs Josiane, fl, Eglise de Jésus-Christ à Madagascar

Rose, Rev. Margaret, fo, The Episcopal Church [USA]

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Shokoya, Rt Rev. Ezekiel Olukayode, mo, The First African Church Mission [Nigeria]

Sixt-Gateuille, Rev. Claire, fo, Eglise protestante unie de France

Sotiriadis, Very Rev. Archimandrite Ignatios, mo, Church of Greece

Strobel, Rév. Enno, mo, Union des Églises Protestantes d'Alsace et de Lorraine [France]

Sverrisdottir, Deacon Magnea, fo, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Iceland

Tannous, Rev. Ashraf, mo, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan & the Holy Land [Palestine]

Tche, Rev. Paul, mo, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States

Toivonen, Rev. Teemu, mo, Orthodox Church of Finland

Tolu, Rev. Ikani Tali'ai, mo, Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga (Methodist Church in Tonga)

Toma, Very Rev. Co-Bishop George, mo, (USA), Holy Apostolic Catholic Assyrian Church of the East [Iraq]

Tonzarova, Rev. Dr Hana, fo, Czechoslovak Hussite Church

Treavis, Mrs Hilary, fl, Baptist Union of Great Britain

Uche, H.E. Dr Samuel Chukukwuemeka Kanu, mo, Methodist Church Nigeria

Ugu, Rev. Abram, mo, Gereja Masehi Injili di Halmahera (GMIH) [Indonesia]

Ukpubo, Rt Rev. Ini, mo, Presbyterian Church of Nigeria

Valdes Fleites, Rev. Edelberto Juan, mo, Iglesia Presbiteriana-Reformada en Cuba

Van Andel, Rev. R.C.G. Rachele, fo, Remonstrant Church [Netherlands]

Van Duin, Mrs Marijke, fl, Mennonite Church in the Netherlands

Wachira, Bishop Zachariah Kahuthu, mo, Kenya Evangelical Lutheran Church

Wate, Rev. Dr Ben, mo, Church of Melanesia [Solomon Islands]

Wong, Prof. Wai-Yin Christina, fl, Hong Kong Council of the Church of Christ in China

Woods, Rev. Dr C Jeff, mo, American Baptist Churches USA

Wright, Dr Yvonne Dianna, fl, Presbyterian Church (USA)

Yin, Rev. Dr Maung Maung, mo, (Japan), Myanmar Baptist Convention

Presidents Of The WCC

(present at the assembly and not attending as delegates)

Wejryd, Archbishop Emeritus Dr Anders, mo, Church of Sweden

Members of the Outgoing Central Committee

(present at the assembly and not attending as delegates)

Adhikari, Mr Joyanta, ml, Bangladesh Baptist Church Sangha

Asana, Very Rev. Dr Festus Ambe, mo, Presbyterian Church in Cameroon

Ayokunle, Rev. Dr Samson Olasupo Adeniyi, mo, Nigerian Baptist Convention

Azariah, Bishop Samuel Robert, mo, Church of Pakistan

Bae, Rev. Dr Hyunju, fo, Presbyterian Church of Korea

Brunne, Bishop Eva, fo, Church of Sweden

Canagasabey, Rt Rev. Dhiloraj Ranjit, mo, Church of Ceylon [Sri Lanka]

Carter, Rev. Dr Jeffrey, mo, Church of the Brethren [USA]

Cheng, Rev. Dr Prof. Yang-en, mo, Presbyterian Church in Taiwan

Evans, Ms Emily Jane, fl, Uniting Church in Australia

Heitmann, Rev. Anne, fo, Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland

Johnson, Rev. Karl, mo, Jamaica Baptist Union

Königsdörfer, Dr Judith, fl, Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland

Koukoura, Em. Prof. Dr Dimitra, fl, (Greece), Ecumenical Patriarchate [Türkiye]

Krause-Vilmar, Rev. Dr Elisabeth, fo, Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland

Matamoros, Rev. Cora, fo, Iglesia Morava en Nicaragua

Nathaniel, Ven. Canon Dr Leslie, mo, (Germany), Church of England

Pena, Mr Charles “Carlos”, ml, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Philoxenos, Bishop Dr Isaac Mar, mo, Mar Thoma Syrian Church of Malabar [India]

Pillay, Rev. Prof. Dr Jerry, mo, Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa [South Africa]

Rutoro, Rev. Dr Rangarirai, mo, Reformed Church in Zimbabwe

Spies, Rev. Miriam, fo, United Church of Canada

Temple, Bishop Arnold, mo, Methodist Church Sierra Leone

Velilla De Medio, Mrs Ana María, fl, Iglesia Evangélica de los Discipulos de Cristo [Argentina]

Delegated Representatives of WCC Associate Councils and Other Organizations

Abrahams, Bishop Ivan Manuel, mo, World Methodist Council

Abs, Dr Michel, ml, Middle East Council of Churches

Achtelstetter, Rev. Dr Karin W., fo, Canadian Lutheran World Relief

Aldous, Rev. Dr Benjamin, mo, Churches Together in England

Baird, Rev. Joshua, mo, United Church of Christ - Wider Church Ministries

Bhagwan, Rev. James, mo, Pacific Conference of Churches

Bizimana, Rev. Sylvestre, mo, Conseil national des églises du Burundi

Boytler, Rev. Dr Jørgen, mo, Moravian Church Worldwide Unity Board

Brady, Dr Nicola, fl, Churches Together in Britain and Ireland

Brown, Bishop Kortu, mo, Liberia Council of Churches

Bueno De Faria, Mr Rudelmar, ml, Action by Churches Together - ACT Alliance

Burghardt, Rev. Anne, fo, Lutheran World Federation
Camnerin, Rev. Dr Sofia, fo, Christian Council of Sweden
Carino, Dr Theresa, fl, Amity Foundation
Christoffersen, Rev. Mads, mo, National Council of Churches in Denmark
Crouwel, Rev. Christine, fo, Council of Churches in the Netherlands
Dally, Mr Volker Martin, mo, United Evangelical Mission
Danet, Rev. Anne-Laure, fo, Fédération Protestante de France
Diop, Rev. Dr Ganoune, mo, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists
Dölker, Mrs Marina, fl, Hilfswerk der Evangelischen Kirche Schweiz
Dopico, Rev. Joel, mo, Cuba Council of Churches
Durrer, Mrs Anne, fl, Arbeitsgemeinschaft Christlicher Kirchen in der Schweiz
Edwards, Mr Steven, yml, Ecumenical Youth Council in Europe
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Phyu Thwel Aung, Ms Phyu Thwel Aung, yfl, Myanmar Baptist Convention

Quartey, Rev. Joseph Charles Kwaatei, mo, Presbyterian Church of Ghana

Ramachandra, Dr Vinoth, ml, (Sri Lanka), International Fellowship of Evangelical Students [Switzerland]

Rimmer, Rev. Dr Chad Michael, mo, Lutheran World Federation [Switzerland]

Robinson, Rev. Dr Matthew Ryan, mo, (Germany), University of Bonn/ Presbyterian Church (USA)

Salvan, Mr Dorin-Ioan, yml, (Germany), Romanian Orthodox Church

Samosir, Ms Agustina, fl, Gereja Methodist Indonesia

Santiago, Ms Niza Joy, fo, Missionsakademie an der Universität Hamburg [Indonesia]

Sattler, Dr Dorothea, fl, Universität Münster, Ökumenisches Institut [Germany]

Shengelia, Rev. Fr Irineos (Tariel), ymo, Church of Greece

Sijo, Mr George, yml, Malankara Mar Thoma Syrian Church [India]

Slunitschek, Ms Agnes, fl, University of Würzburg [Germany]

Smith, Rev. David Brandon, ymo, (Germany), Presbyterian Church (USA)

Srisranoi, Ms Nattawadee, yfl, Church of Christ Thailand

Sriulina, Ms Indah, fo, Gereja Batak Karo Protestan (GBKP) [Indonesia]

Steensgaard, Ms Benedikte Emilie Thorup, yfl, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Denmark

Steilmann Franco, Rev. Karla Maria, fo, Bread for the World [Germany]

Steininger, Ms Courtney, yfl, Presbyterian Church (USA)

Süss, Mr Felix, yml, Evangelisch-Methodistische Kirche Deutschland

Tapaleao, Mr Tafatolu, yml, Congregational Christian Church of Samoa

Taruk, Mrs Elim Wilsen, fo, Gereja Toraja [Indonesia]

Thakor, Rev. Ankur, yo, Methodist Church in India

Thankaraj, Mr Jebin, mo, Church of South India

Thein, Mr Saw Min, ml, Pwo Karen Theological Seminary [Myanmar]

Tian, Rev. Feng, fo, China Christian Council

Tinsley, Mr Tavis Donta, yml, United Methodist Church [USA]

Umesi, Rev. Mrs Peculiar Onyemaechi, fo, Presbyterian Church of Nigeria

Ursulean, Mr Andrei Dumitru, yml, Romanian Orthodox Church

Vaai, Rev. Prof. Upolu Luma, mo, Pacific Theological College [Fiji]
Vasantha Rao, Prof. Rev. Dr Chilkuri, mo, United Theological College [India]
Veatch, Mr Jack, ymo, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States
Venny, Ms Shella Gracia, yfl, Gereja Kristen Pasundan [Indonesia]
Vethakani, Dr Vedhanayagam, fl, Church of South India
Wangui, Rev. Fr Kallinikos David, mo, (Kenya), Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria And All Africa [Egypt]
Wasmuth, Rev. Prof. Dr Jennifer, fo, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hannover [Germany]
Weber, Ms Rahel Eliane, yfo, Protestant Church In Switzerland
Weber, Mr Max, ml, Evangelical Church In Württemberg [Germany]
Wilson, Prof. Dr Rev. H.S., mo, (USA), Foundation for Theological Education in Southeast Asia [USA]
Wilson, Mr Stefan, yml, Presbyterian Church of Trinidad and Tobago
Wisch, Ms Josephine Mathilde, yfl, Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland
Yaacoub, Ms Rita, fl, Our Lady of Hadat, Maronite Archdiocese of Beirut [Lebanon]
Yaqub, Missionary Kashif, mo, All Nations Church (Presbyterian) [Korea, Republic of]
Yasini, Ms Mary, yfl, Church of England
Ylikangas, Ms Hanna Sylvia Aleksandra, yl, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland
Youngouda, Mr Pierre, mo, Union des Églises Baptistes au Cameroun
Yu, Ms Esther, yfl, Ewha Womans University Church [Korea, Republic of]
Zipf, Ms Almuth Christiana, fo, Evangelisch-Methodistische Kirche Deutschland

Appendix 2: Assembly Committee Membership

Business Committee

- ABUOM*, Dr Agnes, Anglican Church of Kenya, fl, Moderator
NIFON OF TARGOVISTE, H.E. Metropolitan Prof. Dr, Romanian Orthodox Church, mo, Vice-Moderator
SWENSON, Bishop Mary Ann, United Methodist Church, fo, Vice-Moderator
SAUCA, Fr Prof. Dr Ioan, World Council of Churches, mo, Acting General Secretary
ABDUL-MOHAN, Rt Rev. Joy Evelyn, Presbyterian Church of Trinidad and Tobago, fo, Member
ABOUD SIRIANI, Mr Razek, Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East, ml, Member
ANGAELOS, H.E. Archbishop, Coptic Orthodox Church, mo, Member
BATARINGAYA, Rev. Dr Pascal, Eglise presbytérienne du Rwanda, mo, Member
BEDFORD-STROHM, Bishop Heinrich, Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland, mo, Member
CAMERON, Rt Rev. Gregory, Church in Wales, mo, Member
COWANS, Rev. Dr Gordon, United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands, mo, Member
DE SOUZA, Rev. Dr Mauro Batista, Igreja Evangélica de Confissão Luterana no Brasil, mo, Member
GABRIEL OF NEA IONIA AND PHILADELPHIA, H.E. Metropolitan, Church of Greece, Maleo, Member
GAMA, Rev. Dr Billy, Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) Blantyre Synod, mo, Member
GLYNN-MACKOUL, Mrs Anne, Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and all the East, fl, Member
GU, Ms Jingqin, China Christian Council, fLay, Member
HEITMANN, Rev. Anne, Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland, fo, Member
HUTABARAT-LEBANG, Rev. Dr Henriette, Gereja Toraja, fo, Member
JOSEPH, Rev. Ebenezer W. P., Methodist Church, Sri Lanka, mo, Member
LAWSON KPAVUVU, Rev. Godson Teyi Dogbeda, Eglise Methodiste du Togo, mo, Member
NICHOLOVOS, H.E. Metropolitan Zachariah Mar, Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church, Maleo, Member
PEURA, Bishop Simo, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, mo, Member

TAUTARI, Rev. Tara, Methodist Church of New Zealand, Femaleo, Member
VAN DEN BROEKE, Rev. Karin, Protestant Church in the Netherlands, fo,
Member
VASETHE, Rev. Veronica, Church of Melanesia, fo, Member
WEJRYD, Archbishop Dr Anders, Church of Sweden, mo, Member

Finance Committee

NICHOLOVOS, H.E. Metropolitan Zachariah Mar, Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church, mo, Moderator
HYDE RILEY, Rev. Merlyn, Jamaica Baptist Union, foy, Rapporteur
AYKAZIAN, H.E. Archbishop Dr Vicken, Armenian Apostolic Church (Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin), mo, Member
CHANG, Rev. Dr Yoon-Jae, Presbyterian Church of Korea, mo, Member
FERNANDES, Mr Roland, United Methodist Church, mo, Member
INNES, Rt Rev. Dr Robert, Church of England, mo, Member
ISARA, Rev. Melepone, Congregational Christian Church Samoa, mo, Member
KÜHNBAUM-SCHMIDT, Bishop Kristina, Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland, mo, Member
LABUNTOG, Bishop Melzar D., United Church of Christ in the Philippines, mo, Member
MANTE, Rt Rev. Prof. Joseph Obiri Yeboah, Presbyterian Church of Ghana, mo, Member
MARGOSSIAN HADESHIAN, Ms Seta, Armenian Apostolic Church (Holy See of Cilicia), mo, Member
NELYUBOVA, Ms Margarita, Russian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate), mo, Member
PRESA, Rev. Dr Prof. Neal, Presbyterian Church (USA), mo, Member
WRIGHT, Bishop Philip, Church in the Province of the West Indies, mo, Member
ZULU, Rev. Dr William, Reformed Church in Zambia, mo, Member
JOHNSON, Rev. Karl, Jamaica Baptist Union, fly, Advisor
KAARIAINEN, Rev. Dr Kimmo, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, fl, Advisor
LARSEN, Ms Anne-Grete, Norwegian Church Aid, ml, Advisor
LINDVALL, Very Rev. Peter, Church of Sweden, fl, Advisor
MUSHI, Mr Bernard Gilbert, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania, fl, Advisor
RÖDER, Mr Johannes Leon, World Young Men's Christian Association (World YMCA), fl, Advisor
TALBOT, Ms Patricia, United Church of Canada - Partners in Mission, ml, Advisor

Message Committee

CAMERON, Rt Rev. Gregory, Church in Wales, mo, Moderator
WAWERU, Rev. Lucy, Presbyterian Church of East Africa, mo, Rapporteur
AZAR, Bishop Sani Ibrahim, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan & the Holy Land, mo, Member
BESAU, Mr Christian, Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland, mo, Member
CLAASSEN, Rev. Dr Gustav, Dutch Reformed Church, mo, Member
DE SOUZA, Rev. Dr Mauro Batista, Igreja Evangélica de Confissão Luterana no Brasil, mo, Member
JOB OF PISIDIA, H.E. Metropolitan, Ecumenical Patriarchate, mo, Member
LEE, Ms Saeleum, Korean Methodist Church, mo, Member
LEGESSE, Dr Nigussu, Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, mo, Member
MIDTTOMME, Bishop Ingeborg Synove, Church of Norway, mo, Member
MOUNTRAKI, Ms Maria, Orthodox Church of Finland, mo, Member
RENTEL, Archpriest Alexander, Orthodox Church in America, mo, Member
TAHANIAN, Very Rev. Fr Hrant, Armenian Apostolic Church (Holy See of Cilicia), mo, Member
WEIBYE, Ms Miriam, Church of Scotland, mo, Member
BARO, Mrs Olivia, Pacific Conference of Churches, fl, Advisor
CHOROMANSKI, Rev. Andrzej, Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity, ml, Advisor
NOURRY, Sister Sandrine, Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity, fl, Advisor
SØRENSEN, Dr Jørgen Skov, Conference of European Churches, ml, Advisor

Nominations Committee

GLYNN-MACKOUL, Mrs Anne, Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and all the East, mo, Moderator
REYES, JR, Bishop REX, Episcopal Church in the Philippines, mo, Rapporteur
ALEMEZIAN, H.E. Archbishop Dr Nareg, Armenian Apostolic Church (Holy See of Cilicia), mo, Member
BARSOUM, Ms Rima, Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East, mo, Member
BREKKEN, Rev. Marianne, Church of Norway, mo, Member
CAKIC, Ms Marina, Serbian Orthodox Church, mo, Member
COWANS, Rev. Dr Gordon, United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands, mo, Member
GEORGE CHUNAKARA, Dr Mathews, Mar Thoma Syrian Church of Malabar, mo, Member

KANARIAN, Ms Tamar E., Armenian Apostolic Church (Holy See of Cilicia), mo, Member

KIFLE, Mr Melaku, Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, fo, Member

KIM, Rev. Dr Chang Ju, Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea, mo, Member

KINDA, Rev. Tegwende Leonard, Association des églises évangéliques réformées du Burkina Faso, fo, Member

MANUKYAN, H.G. Bishop Hovakim Vardges, Armenian Apostolic Church (Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin), mo, Member

MWAURA, Ms Zipporah, Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria and All Africa, mo, Member

PAKPAHAN, Rev. Dr Binsar J., Huria Kristen Batak Protestan (HKBP), mo, Member

PIERCE, Rev. Garland, African Methodist Episcopal Church, mo, Member

REIMANN GNAS, Ms Isabella, Igreja Evangélica de Confissão Luterana no Brasil, mo, Member

SAPIT, Most Rev. Dr Jackson Ole, Anglican Church of Kenya, fo, Member

SCHILD, Rev. Suzanne, Protestant Church in Switzerland, mo, Member

SONEA, Rev. Prof. Dr Cristian-Sebastian, Romanian Orthodox Church, mo, Member

TAUTARI, Rev. Tara, Methodist Church of New Zealand, mo, Member

TUIOTI, Rev. Dr Eteuati Sili Leuo, Methodist Church of Samoa, mo, Member

VLANTIS, Mr Georgios, Ecumenical Patriarchate, mo, Member

DHAS, Mr Jenil, Church of South India, fl, Advisor

DIESING, Ms Dorina, Bread for the World, fl, Advisor

Policy Reference Committee

GABRIEL OF NEA IONIA AND PHILADELPHIA, H.E. Metropolitan, Church of Greece, mo, Moderator

CHIU, Rev. Dr Shu-Pin, Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, mo, Rapporteur

DANIEL, Rev. Prof. Dr Joseph, Mar Thoma Syrian Church of Malabar, fo, Member

DYCK, Bishop Sally, United Methodist Church, fo, Member

FAALEVAO, Rev. Elder Dr Leatulagi, Congregational Christian Church in American Samoa, fo, Member

GULDANOVA, Rev. Eva, Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Slovakia, fo, Member

HUANCA-CORIMAYTA, Obispo Antonio, Iglesia Evangélica Metodista en Bolivia, fo, Member

KALAITZIDIS, Dr Pantelis, Church of Greece, fo, Member

LEAL DA SILVA, Rev. Clayton, Igreja Presbiteriana Independente do Brasil, fo, Member

MATHEN, Ms Ruth, Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church, fo, Member
METHUEN, Rev. Prof. Charlotte, Scottish Episcopal Church, fo, Member
MILLER, Ms Samantha, United Church of Canada, fo, Member
MODISE, Rev. Prof. Dr Leepo Johannes, Uniting Reformed Church in
 Southern Africa, fo, Member
MORALES, Mrs Maria Teofilina, Iglesia Filipina Independiente, fo, Member
OLAYWOLA, Mrs Florence Afolake, Nigerian Baptist Convention, fo,
 Member
PITTS, Rev. Dr Tyrone S., Progressive National Baptist Convention, Inc., fo,
 Member
QUAWAS, Dr Audeh, Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem, fo, Member
SEENATHSINGH, Deaconess Marlene, Presbyterian Church of Trinidad and
 Tobago, fo, Member
SHOO, Bishop Dr Frederick Onaeli, Evangelical Lutheran Church in
 Tanzania, fo, Member
VAN DORP, Ms Emma, Protestant Church in Switzerland, fo, Member
WEA, Rev. Daniel, Église Protestante de Kanaky Nouvelle-Calédonie, fo,
 Member
YAQOOB, Ms Maria, Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the
 East, fo, Member
ZIACA, Prof. Dr Angeliki, Ecumenical Patriarchate, fo, Member
HANNA, Mr Ramy, Coptic Orthodox Church, fl, Advisor
HEIKKINEN, Rev. Anne Kristiina, Ecumenical Youth Council in Europe/
 Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, fl, Advisor
HENN, Rev. Prof. William, Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity, ml,
 Advisor
HÖFER, Ms Alena, Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland, fl, Advisor
THÖNISSEN, Prof. Dr Wolfgang, Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity,
 ml, Advisor
WELLS, Rev. Dr David, Pentecostal World Fellowship, ml, Advisor

Programme Guidelines Committee

VAN DEN BROEKE, Rev. Karin, Protestant Church in the Netherlands, mo,
 Moderator
THOMPSON, Rev. Dr Karen Georgia, United Church of Christ, mo,
 Rapporteur
ABDUL-MOHAN, Rt Rev. Joy Evelyn, Presbyterian Church of Trinidad and
 Tobago, fly, Member
ABOUD SIRIANI, Mr Razek, Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and
 All the East, mly, Member
ANDIWA, Mr Derrick Dixon, Anglican Church of Kenya, fly, Member
ANNAMALAI PETER, Rev. Joshua Peter, United Evangelical Lutheran
 Church in India, fly, Member

BERBATI, Ms Germana, Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania, fly, Member

BOSSE-HUBER, Bishop Petra, Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland, fly, Member

CURRIE, Rev. Amanda, Presbyterian Church in Canada, fo, Member

ENNS, Rev. Prof. Dr Fernando, Arbeitsgemeinschaft Mennonitischer Gemeinden in Deutschland, fly, Member

GAMA, Rev. Dr Billy, Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) Blantyre Synod, fly, Member

HAVEA, Rev. Dr Tevita, Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga (Methodist Church in Tonga), fo, Member

HUTABARAT-LEBANG, Rev. Dr Henriette, Gereja Toraja, fly, Member

KAWAK, H.E. Archbishop Mor Dionysius Jean, Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East, mly, Member

KAZARIAN, Protopresbyter Dr Nicolas, Ecumenical Patriarchate, fly, Member

LAWSON KPAVUVU, Rev. Godson Teyi Dogbeda, Eglise Methodiste du Togo, fly, Member

LUBAT, Ms Maria, Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem, mly, Member

LUFT, Dr Rebecca, Orthodox Church in America, fo, Member

MBOGO, Rev. Canon Dr Rosemary Muthoni, Anglican Church of Kenya, fly, Member

OWENS, Rev. Teresa Hord, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States, fo, Member

PARK, Rev. Dr Do Woong, Korean Methodist Church, fly, Member

PIRRI-SIMONIAN, Ms Teny, Armenian Apostolic Church (Holy See of Cilicia), ndly, Member

SHERRILL, Dr Elisabeth Ivete, Igreja Episcopal Anglicana do Brasil, mly, Member

SILISHEBO, Rev. Silishebo, United Church of Zambia, fly, Member

STATHOKOSTA, Prof. Vasiliki, Church of Greece, fly, Member

WILLIAMS, Rev. Dr Uzoaku, Presbyterian Church of Nigeria, fly, Member

CARINO, Dr. Theresa, Amity Foundation, ml, Advisor

CRUCHLEY, Rev. Dr Peter, Council for World Mission, fl, Advisor

DIOP, Rev. Dr. Ganoune, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, ml, Advisor

DURBER, Rev. Dr Susan, United Reformed Church, fl, Advisor

EULITZ, Ms Sarah, World Student Christian Federation - WSCF, fl, Advisor

GARCIA, Ms Larissa, Methodist Church of Brazil, fl, Advisor

KOPECKA, Rev. Martina, Czechoslovak Hussite Church, fl, Advisor

LYSÉN, Mr Erik, Church of Sweden, ml, Advisor

MOMBO, Dr Esther Moraa, St Paul's University, fl, Advisor

MOR COORIOS, H.E. Metropolitan Dr, Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East, ml, Advisor
MTATA, Rev. Dr Kenneth, Zimbabwe Council of Churches, ml, Advisor
VAAI, Ms Iemaima, Pacific Conference of Churches, fl, Advisor
VON SINNER, Rev. Prof. Dr. Rudolf, Igreja Evangélica de Confissão Luterana no Brasil (IECLB), fl, Advisor

Public Issues Committee

ANGAELOS, H.E. Archbishop, Coptic Orthodox Church, mo, Moderator
BAYRAKDARIAN, Prof. Dr Nora, Armenian Apostolic Church (Holy See of Cilicia), moy, Rapporteur
ARCE VALENTIN, Rev. Dora Ester, Iglesia Presbiteriana-Reformada en Cuba, mo, Member
ASPINALL, Archbishop Phillip, Anglican Church of Australia, mo, Member
BEDFORD-STROHM, Bishop Heinrich, Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland, mo, Member
BRUCH, Bishop Izani, Iglesia Evangélica Luterana en Chile, mo, Member
BUTARBUTAR, Rev. Dr Robinson, Huria Kristen Batak Protestan (HKBP), mo, Member
DIBISA, Rev. Dr Yonas Yigezu, Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus, mo, Member
FATHY, Rev. Refat, Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Egypt, Synod of the Nile, mo, Member
FORBA, Rt Rev. Fonki Samuel, Presbyterian Church in Cameroon, mo, Member
IGUMNOV, Hieromonk Stefan, Russian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate), mo, Member
JOHNSON, Bishop Susan, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, mo, Member
KYKOTIS, H.E. Metropolitan Serafim, Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria and All Africa, mo, Member
MASEGMAN, Rev. Ritchie, Episcopal Church in the Philippines, mo, Member
MBANDA, Archbishop Laurent, Province de l'Eglise anglicane du Rwanda, mo, Member
MCKENZIE, Bishop Vashti Murphy, National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA, mo, Member
NIFON OF TARGOVISTE, H.E. Metropolitan Prof. Dr, Romanian Orthodox Church, mo, Member
OSITELU, Most Rev. Dr Rufus Okikiola, The Church of the Lord (Prayer Fellowship) Worldwide, mo, Member
SCHWARZ, Mr Jakob, Church of Sweden, mo, Member
VASILEVICH, Ms Natallia, Ecumenical Patriarchate, mo, Member

YOTENI, Dr Fransina, Gereja Kristen Injili Di Tanah Papua (GKITP), mo,
Member
ABS, Dr Michel, Middle East Council of Churches, ml, Advisor
ANAYA JIMÉNEZ, Ms Lani Mireya, Methodist Church of Mexico, fl,
Advisor
BHAGWAN, Rev. James, Pacific Conference of Churches, fly, Advisor
BUENO DE FARIA, Mr Rudelmar, Action by Churches Together - ACT
Alliance, ml, Advisor
CHIKANE, Rev. Frank, Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa, fl, Advisor
JORGE MADEIROS BATISTA DA SILVA, Ms Mariana, Igreja Episcopal
Anglicana do Brasil, fl, Advisor
LEE, Rev. Dr Hong Jung, National Council of Churches in Korea, ml,
Advisor
RISHMAWI, Ms Yasmine K. A., World Student Christian Federation –
WSCF Middle East, fl, Advisor

Appendix 3: WCC Central Committee Members Elected at the Assembly

The following is a list of WCC presidents and central committee members elected in Karlsruhe. Members of the executive committee are denoted by asterisks.

Presidents

ARAM I, H.H. Catholicos, Armenian Apostolic Church (Holy See of Cilicia), mo
DURBER, Rev. Dr Susan, United Reformed Church, fo
HUTABARAT-LEBANG, Rev. Dr Henriette, Gereja Toraja, fo
OSITELU, The Most Rev. Dr Rufus Okikiola, The Church of the Lord (Prayer Fellowship) Worldwide, mo
PIHAATAE, Rev. François, Église protestante Maohi, mo
VASILIOS OF CONSTANTIA AND AMMOCHOSTOS, H.E. Metropolitan Dr, Church of Cyprus, mo
WALKER-SMITH, Rev. Dr Angélique, National Baptist Convention USA, Inc., fo
WRIGHT, Rt Rev. Philip, Church in the Province of the West Indies, mo

Leadership of the Central Committee

**BEDFORD-STROHM*, Bishop Heinrich, Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland, mo
**AYKAZIAN*, H.E. Archbishop Dr Vicken, Armenian Apostolic Church (Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin), mo
**HYDE RILEY*, Rev. Merlyn, Jamaica Baptist Union, fo
**PILLAY*, Rev. Prof. Dr Jerry, Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa, mo

Central Committee

**ABRAHAM*, H.G. Bishop, Coptic Orthodox Church, mo
ADHIKARI, Mr Christopher, Bangladesh Baptist Church Sangha, ml
AKANJI, Rev. Dr Israel Adelani, Nigerian Baptist Convention, mo
ALEKSIEJUK, Very Rev. Dr Artur, Polish Autocephalous Orthodox Church, mo
ALEMEZIAN, H.E. Archbishop Dr Nareg, Armenian Apostolic Church (Holy See of Cilicia), mo
ANNAMALAI PETER, Rev. Joshua Peter, United Evangelical Lutheran Church in India, mo

ANTONY OF VOLOKOLAMSK, H.E. Metropolitan Antony, Russian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate), mo

AZAR, Bishop Sani Ibrahim, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan & the Holy Land, mo

BAMBEDI MUKISHI, Mr Augustin, Église du Christ au Congo - Communauté mennonite au Congo, ml

BARAKAT, H.E. Metropolitan Isaac, Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East, mo

BARRETO, Dr Raimundo, American Baptist Churches USA, fo

BINEJAL, Mrs Kaki, United Church of Christ in the Marshall Islands, fl

BOSS, Rev. Dr Marc, Eglise protestante unie de France, mo

BOSSE-HUBER, Bishop Petra, Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland, fo

**BULEKOV*, Archimandrite Philaret, Russian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate), mo

BUTARBUTAR, Rev. Dr Robinson, Huria Kristen Batak Protestan (HKBP), mo

CAMERON, Rt Rev. Gregory, Church in Wales, mo

CHARBONNIER, Rev. Michel, Waldensian Church, mo

CHIU, Rev. Dr Shu-Pin, Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, fo

CHO, Rev. Dr. Hyuk, United Church of Canada, mo

CLAASSEN, Rev. Dr Gustav, Dutch Reformed Church, mo

DE SOUZA, Rev. Dr Mauro Batista, Igreja Evangélica de Confissão Luterana no Brasil, mo

DIBISA, Rev. Dr Yonas Yigezu, Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus, mo

DOCHERTY, Mrs Lucy, Church of England, fl

DONDOKAMBEY, Mr Rio Alexander, Christian Evangelical Church in Minahasa (GMIM), ml

DUENSING PEARCE, Rev. Stacey, Reformed Church in America, fo

**DYCK*, Bishop Sally, United Methodist Church, fo

**ENNS*, Rev. Prof. Dr Fernando, Arbeitsgemeinschaft Mennonitischer Gemeinden in Deutschland, mo

FALK, Ms Celina, Church of Sweden, fl

FATHY, Rev. Refat, Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Egypt, Synod of the Nile, mo

FELEKE, Rev. Fr Daniel Seife Michael, Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, mo

FELLMANN, Rev. Lydia Mirjam, Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland, fo

FORNEROD, Rev. Serge, Protestant Church in Switzerland, mo

FRETHEIM, Prof. Kjetil, Church of Norway, ml

GABRIEL OF NEA IONIA AND PHILADELPHIA, H.E. Metropolitan, Church of Greece, mo

GAESSES, Rev. Moedertjie Lena, Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia, fo
GALBRAITH, Bishop Everald, Methodist Church in the Caribbean and the Americas, mo
GAMA, Rev. Dr Billy, Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) Blantyre Synod, mo
GONZALEZ HERNANDEZ, Rev. Yoimel, The Episcopal Church, mo
GOUNDIAEV, Archpriest Mikhail, Russian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate), mo
GU, Ms Jingqin, China Christian Council, fl
GUNNARSSON, Ms Emma, Uniting Church in Sweden, fly
HAMBIRA, Rev. Rupert, United Congregational Church of Southern Africa, mo
HERNANDEZ RETURETA, Rev. Liudmila, Iglesia Presbiteriana-Reformada en Cuba, fo
HOLLIS, Rev. Sharon, Uniting Church in Australia, fo
**IBYISHAKA*, Rev. Rose Marie, Eglise presbytérienne du Rwanda, fo
IGUMNOV, Hieromonk Stefan, Russian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate), mo
INDANGASI, Rev. Eunice, Methodist Church in Kenya, fo
INNES, Rt Rev. Dr Robert, Church of England, mo
IOANNOU, Archimandrite Benedict (Konstantinos), Church of Cyprus, mo
ISLAM, Ms Khadijah, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, fly
ISSA, Dr Theodora, Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East, fl
JACOB, Ms Ann, United Methodist Church, fly
JOHANNESSEN, Ms Anne Hjul, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark, fly
**JOHNSON*, Bishop Susan, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, fo
JOSEPH, Rev. Ebenezer W. P., Methodist Church, Sri Lanka, mo
KARINGA, Rev. Lilian W., Anglican Church of Kenya, fo
KAYUWA MIKENYI MIKE, Patriarche Jean Baudouin, Eglise du Christ - Lumiere du Saint Esprit, mo
KAZARIAN, Protopresbyter Dr Nicolas, Ecumenical Patriarchate, mo
KIDANE, Rev. Bereket, Eritrean Orthodox Tewahedo Church, mo
KIGURU, Rt Rev. Jeremiah Ngumo, African Christian Church and Schools, mo
KIM, Rev. Seoyoung, Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea (PROK), fo
KOLIMON, Rev. Dr Mery, Gereja Masehi Injili di Timor (GMIT), fo
**KOLOVOPOULOU*, Prof. Marina, Church of Greece, fl
KOPECKA, Rev. Martina, Czechoslovak Hussite Church, fo
KORANYI, Prof. Dr. Andras, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hungary, mo

KROCHAK, Very Rev. Grand Syncellus Iakovos, Ecumenical Patriarchate, mo
KYKOTIS, H.E. Metropolitan Serafim, Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of
 Alexandria and All Africa, mo
LEATH, Rev. Dr Jennifer S., African Methodist Episcopal Church, fo
LEGESSE, Dr Nigussu, Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, ml
 **LEN*, Ms Don Lam (Gloria), Myanmar Baptist Convention, fly
 **LIN*, Rev. Dr Manhong, China Christian Council, fo
LUBAT, Ms Maria, Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem, fly
LUOMA, Archbishop Tapio, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, mo
MAHLING, Dr Lubina, Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland, fl
MANTE, Rt Rev. Prof. Joseph Obiri Yeboah, Presbyterian Church of Ghana,
 mo
 **MAR PAULOS*, Bishop Dr Abraham, Mar Thoma Syrian Church of
 Malabar, mo
MASEGMAN, Rev. Ritchie, Episcopal Church in the Philippines, mo
 **MIDTTOMME*, Bishop Ingeborg Synove, Church of Norway, fo
MOORE, Rev. Sarah, United Reformed Church, fo
MOUNTRAKI, Ms Maria, Orthodox Church of Finland, fly
MUCHOMBO, Ms Mayamiko, Church of the Province of Central Africa,
 foy
 **MUYUNGA*, Mr Brian, Church of Uganda, mly
NAETT VIDOVIC, Dr Julija, Serbian Orthodox Church, fl
NDUKUBA, Archbishop Henry, Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion),
 mo
NELYUBOVA, Ms Margarita, Russian Orthodox Church (Moscow
 Patriarchate), fl
NICHOLOVOS, H.E. Metropolitan Zachariah Mar, Malankara Orthodox
 Syrian Church, mo
 **NIFON OF TARGOVISTE*, H.E. Metropolitan Prof. Dr, Romanian
 Orthodox Church, mo
NIKKOLA OF APOLONIA AND FIER, H.E. Metropolitan, Orthodox
 Autocephalous Church of Albania, mo
NISHINOSONO, Rev. Michiko, United Church of Christ in Japan, fo
 **EMMANUEL OF CHALCEDON*, H.E. Elder Metropolitan, Ecumenical
 Patriarchate, mo
OWENS, Rev. Teresa Hord, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the
 United States, fo
 **OWINO SIANG'A*, Rev. Joanes, Presbyterian Church of East Africa, mo
PADILLA CURBELO, Rev. Amilcar, Iglesia Morava en Nicaragua, mo
PANZO, Mr Baptista Garcia, Igreja Evangélica Reformada de Angola, ml
PARK, Rev. Dr Do Woong, Korean Methodist Church, mo
PARKER, Dr Evelyn L., Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, fl

**PEREYRA*, Pastora Vicepresidenta Mariela Alejandra, Iglesia Evangélica Luterana Unida, fo
PIEDIMONTE, Ms Laura Edith, Iglesia Evangélica Metodista Argentina, fl
**PITAKAJI*, Rev. Armstrong, United Church in the Solomon Islands, mo
**PRESA*, Rev. Dr Prof. Neal, Presbyterian Church (USA), mo
**PUIMERA*, Ms Karen Erina, Gereja Protestan di Indonesia Bagian Barat (GPIB), fly
**QUAWAS*, Dr Audeh, Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem, ml
RANARIVELLO, Rt Rev. S. Jaona, Church of the Province of the Indian Ocean, mo
RATHINA RAJA, Mr Fernandas, Church of South India, ml
RENSBERG, Ms Julia, Church of Sweden, fly
RENTEL, Archpriest Alexander, Orthodox Church in America, mo
ROBINSON, Pastor Romella, Presbyterian Church of Pakistan, fo
SCHULER, Pfarrer Christoph, Christkatholische Kirche der Schweiz, mo
SCHUSTER, Ms Megan Louis, Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland, fly
SERVAND, Bishop Anilkumar, Methodist Church in India, mo
SHAW, Rt Rev. Riscylla, Anglican Church of Canada, fo
SHOO, Bishop Dr Frederick Onaeli, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania, mo
SIDDIQUI, Mr Imran, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, ml
SIEH, Mr Spencer Siebah, Presbyterian Church of Liberia, mly
SINGH, Most Revd Dr Prem Chand, Church of North India, mo
SINGITTHIPHON, Mrs Phasouk, Lao Evangelical Church, fly
SKVARNIK, Ms Nadezhda, Orthodox Church in the Czech Lands and Slovakia, fl
SOLIOLA IOSIA, Rev. Elder Tunumoso, Congregational Christian Church in Samoa, mo
TABARIRA, Mrs Mercy, Reformed Church in Zimbabwe, fl
TAHANIAN, Very Rev. Fr Hrant, Armenian Apostolic Church (Holy See of Cilicia), mo
TAMER, Prof. Dr Georges, Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East, ml
TARI, Most Rev. Samuel Enosa Peni, Province of the Episcopal Church of South Sudan, mo
TEDER, Rev. Tauno, Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church, mo
TEMPARAJA, Rev. Juliana, Protestant Church in Timor Lorosa'e, fo
THOMAS, H.G. Bishop Bishop, Coptic Orthodox Church, mo
THOMPSON, Rev. Dr Susan, Methodist Church of New Zealand, fo
**THOMPSON*, Rev. Dr Karen Georgia, United Church of Christ, fo
THOMPSON, Bishop Brian, African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, mo
TITA, Rev. Dr Michael, Romanian Orthodox Church, mo

TOPALOVIC, Protopresbyter-Stavrophoros Vladislav, Serbian Orthodox Church, mo

TSAGHIKYAN, Dr Diana, Armenian Apostolic Church (Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin), fl

TUIOTI, Rev. Dr Eteuati Sili Leuo, Methodist Church of Samoa, mo

TURAGAVOU, Rev. Dr Semisi Mamau, Methodist Church in Fiji and Rotuma, mo

**VAN DEN BROEKE*, Rev. Karin, Protestant Church in the Netherlands, fo

VOADEN, Mrs Kimberly, United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands, fl

WARDE, Mr Bjorn, Presbyterian Church of Trinidad and Tobago, mly

WEIBYE, Ms Miriam, Church of Scotland, fl

WEIDEMAN, Dr Henri Jacobus, The Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa, mo

WONG, Rev. Ka Fai, Hong Kong Council of the Church of Christ in China, mo

YANEZ OGAZA, Rev. Vilma Isabel, Iglesia Presbiteriana de Colombia, fo

YAZIJI, Ms Maria, Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East, fly

YOTENI, Dr Fransina, Gereja Kristen Injili Di Tanah Papua (GKITP), fl

YOUKHANIS, Bishop Mar Awraham, Holy Apostolic Catholic Assyrian Church of the East, mo

ZIACA, Prof. Dr Angeliki, Ecumenical Patriarchate, fl

ZOUMVOUTA, Rev. Ziloua, Union des Eglises Baptistes du Cameroun, mo

ZULU, Rev. Dr William, Reformed Church in Zambia, mo

Appendix 4: Member Churches

(As of the date of the assembly)

Africa

Africa Brotherhood Church [Kenya]
Africa Inland Church of South Sudan and Sudan [South Sudan]
African Christian Church and [Kenya]
African Church of the Holy Spirit [Kenya]
African Israel Nineveh Church [Kenya]
Anglican Church of Kenya
Anglican Church of Southern Africa [South Africa]
Anglican Church of Tanzania
Association des Eglises baptistes au Rwanda
Association des églises évangéliques réformées du Burkina Faso
Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) Blantyre Synod [Malawi]
Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion)
Church of the Brethren in Nigeria
Church of the Province of Central Africa [Zambia]
Church of the Province of the Indian Ocean [Mauritius]
Church of the Province of West Africa [Ghana]
Church of Uganda
Communauté baptiste au Centre de l'Afrique [Rwanda]
Council of African Instituted Churches of Southern Africa [South Africa]
Dutch Reformed Church [South Africa]
Eglise Anglicane du Burundi
Eglise baptiste camerounaise [Cameroon]
Eglise de Jésus-Christ à Madagascar
Eglise du Christ - Lumière du Saint Esprit [DRC]
Église du Christ au Congo - Communauté baptiste du Congo [DRC]
Église du Christ au Congo - Communauté des disciples du Christ [DRC]
Église du Christ au Congo - Communauté épiscopale baptiste en Afrique [DRC]
Église du Christ au Congo - Communauté évangélique [DRC]
Église du Christ au Congo - Communauté mennonite au Congo [DRC]
Église du Christ au Congo - Communauté presbytérienne [DRC]
Église du Christ au Congo - Communauté presbytérienne de Kinshasa [DRC]
Eglise évangélique du Cameroun
Eglise évangélique du Congo [DRC]
Eglise évangélique du Gabon

Eglise Evangélique Luthérienne au Congo [DRC]
Eglise évangélique presbytérienne du Togo
Église harriste [Ivory Coast]
Eglise méthodiste du Togo
Eglise méthodiste unie de la Côte d'Ivoire
Église presbytérienne camerounaise [Cameroon]
Eglise presbytérienne du Rwanda
Eglise protestante africaine [Cameroon]
Eglise protestante d'Algérie [Algeria]
Eglise protestante méthodiste du Bénin
Eritrean Orthodox Tewahedo Church
Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus
Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa [South Africa]
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania
Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe
Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ghana
Evangelical Presbyterian Church in South Africa
Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Ghana
Iglesia Reformada Presbiteriana de Guinea Ecuatorial
Igreja Evangélica Baptista em Angola
Igreja Evangélica Congregacional em Angola
Igreja Evangélica Reformada de Angola
Igreja Presbiteriana de Moçambique
Kenya Evangelical Lutheran Church
Lesotho Evangelical Church in Southern Africa
Lutheran Church in Liberia
Malagasy Lutheran Church [Madagascar]
Methodist Church Ghana
Methodist Church in Kenya
Methodist Church in Zimbabwe
Methodist Church Nigeria
Methodist Church of Southern Africa [South Africa]
Methodist Church Sierra Leone
Missão Evangélica Pentecostal de Angola
Moravian Church in South Africa
Moravian Church in Tanzania
Nigerian Baptist Convention
Presbyterian Church in Cameroon
Presbyterian Church of Africa [South Africa]
Presbyterian Church of East Africa [Kenya]

Presbyterian Church of Ghana
 Presbyterian Church of Liberia
 Presbyterian Church of Nigeria
 Presbyterian Church of South Sudan
 Province de L'Eglise Anglicane du Congo [DRC]
 Province de l'Eglise anglicane du Rwanda
 Province of the Episcopal Church of South Sudan
 Province of the Episcopal Church of Sudan
 Reformed Church in Zambia
 Reformed Church in Zimbabwe
 Reformed Church of Christ For Nations [Nigeria]
 The African Church [Nigeria]
 The Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa
 The Church of the Lord (Prayer Fellowship) Worldwide [Nigeria]
 The First African Church Mission [Nigeria]
 Union des Eglises baptistes du Cameroun
 United Church of Christ in Zimbabwe
 United Church of Zambia
 United Congregational Church of Southern Africa [South Africa]
 Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa [South Africa]
 Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa [South Africa]
 Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia [New Zealand]

Asia

Anglican Church in Japan
 Anglican Church of Australia
 Anglican Church of Korea
 Bangladesh Baptist Church Sangha
 Banua Niha Keriso Protestan Kantor Sinode (BNKP) [Indonesia]
 Baptist Churches of New Zealand
 Batak Christian Community Church (GPKB) [Indonesia]
 Bengal-Orissa-Bihar Baptist Convention [India]
 China Christian Council
 Christian Church of Central Sulawesi (GKST) [Indonesia]
 Christian Church of Sumba (GKS) [Indonesia]
 Christian Churches New Zealand
 Christian Evangelical Church in Minahasa (GMIM) [Indonesia]
 Christian Evangelical Church of Sangihe Talaud (GMIST) [Indonesia]
 Christian Protestant Angkola Church (GKPA) [Indonesia]
 Christian Protestant Church in Indonesia (GKPI)
 Church of Bangladesh
 Church of Ceylon [Sri Lanka]
 Church of Christ in Thailand

Church of North India
Church of Pakistan
Church of South India
Church of the Province of Myanmar
Churches of Christ in Australia
Convention of Philippine Baptist Churches
Council of Baptist Churches in North East India
Episcopal Church in the Philippines
Evangelical Methodist Church in the Philippines
Gereja Batak Karo Protestan (GBKP) [Indonesia]
Gereja Kalimantan Evangelis (GKE) [Indonesia]
Gereja Kristen Indonesia (GKI)
Gereja Kristen Injili Di Tanah Papua (GKITP) [Indonesia]
Gereja Kristen Jawi Wetan (GKJW) [Indonesia]
Gereja Kristen Pasundan (GKP) [Indonesia]
Gereja Kristen Protestan di Bali (GKPB) [Indonesia]
Gereja Kristen Protestan Simalungun (GKPS) [Indonesia]
Gereja Masehi Injili di Halmahera (GMIH) [Indonesia]
Gereja Masehi Injili di Timor (GMIT) [Indonesia]
Gereja Methodist Indonesia (GMI)
Gereja Protestan di Indonesia (GPI)
Gereja Protestan di Indonesia Bagian Barat (GPIB)
Gereja Protestan di Sulawesi Tenggara (GEPSULTRA) [Indonesia]
Gereja Protestan Maluku (GPM) [Indonesia]
Gereja Toraja [Indonesia]
Gereja-Gereja Kristen Jawa (GKJ) [Indonesia]
Hong Kong Council of the Church of Christ in China
Huria Kristen Batak Protestan (HKBP) [Indonesia]
Huria Kristen Indonesia (HKI)
Iglesia Filipina Independiente [Philippines]
Korean Christian Church in Japan
Korean Methodist Church
Lao Evangelical Church [Laos]
Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church [India]
Mar Thoma Syrian Church of Malabar [India]
Mara Evangelical Church [Myanmar]
Methodist Church in India
Methodist Church in Malaysia
Methodist Church in Singapore
Methodist Church of New Zealand
Methodist Church, Sri Lanka
Methodist Church, Upper Myanmar
Myanmar Baptist Convention

Orthodox Church in Japan
Presbyterian Church in Taiwan
Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea
Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand
Presbyterian Church of Korea
Presbyterian Church of Pakistan
Protestant Church in Sabah (PCS) [Malaysia]
Protestant Church in Timor Lorosa'e [Timor-Leste]
Samavesam of Telugu Baptist Churches [India]
United Church of Christ in Japan
United Church of Christ in the Philippines
United Evangelical Lutheran Churches in India
Uniting Church in Australia

Caribbean

Church in the Province of the West Indies [Bahamas]
Convention baptiste de Haïti
Iglesia Metodista de Puerto Rico
Iglesia Metodista en Cuba
Iglesia Presbiteriana-Reformada en Cuba
Jamaica Baptist Union
Methodist Church in the Caribbean and the Americas [Antigua and Barbuda]
Moravian Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands [Jamaica]
Moravian Church in Suriname
Moravian Church, Eastern West Indies Province [Antigua and Barbuda]
Presbyterian Church of Trinidad and Tobago
United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands [Jamaica]
United Protestant Church of Curaçao

Europe

Altkatholische Kirche Österreichs [Austria]
Arbeitsgemeinschaft Mennonitischer Gemeinden in Deutschland [Germany]
Armenian Apostolic Church (Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin)
Baptist Union of Denmark
Baptist Union of Great Britain
Baptist Union of Hungary
Christkatholische Kirche der Schweiz [Switzerland]
Church in Wales
Church of England
Church of Greece
Church of Ireland

Church of Norway
Church of Scotland
Church of Sweden
Czechoslovak Hussite Church [Czech Republic]
Ecumenical Patriarchate [Turkey]
Eglise Protestante Unie de Belgique [Belgium]
Eglise protestante unie de France
EKD-Evangelische Kirche in Mitteldeutschland [Germany]
EKD-Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche in Bayern [Germany]
EKD-Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche in Norddeutschland (Nordkirche)
[Germany]
EKD-Evangelisch-Lutherische Landeskirche Hannovers [Germany]
EKD-Evangelisch-Lutherische Landeskirche in Braunschweig [Germany]
EKD-Evangelisch-Lutherische Landeskirche Sachsens [Germany]
EKD-Evangelisch-Lutherische Landeskirche Schaumburg-Lippe [Germany]
Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church
Evangelical Baptist Union of Italy
Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren [Czech Republic]
Evangelical Church of Greece
Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Poland
Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Romania
Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Slovakia [Slovak
Republic]
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hungary
Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland
Evangelical Lutheran Church of Iceland
Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia
Evangelical Methodist Church in Italy
Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Portugal
Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Romania
Evangelische Kirche A. und H.B. in Österreich [Austria]
Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland [Germany]
Evangelisch-reformierte Kirche Schweiz EKS [Switzerland]
Iglesia Española Reformada Episcopal [Spain]
Iglesia Evangélica Española [Spain]
Katholisches Bistum der Alt-Katholiken in Deutschland [Germany]
Lusitanian Church of Portugal
Mennonite Church in the Netherlands
Methodist Church [United Kingdom]
Methodist Church in Ireland
Moravian Church European Continental Province (Netherlands)
Old-Catholic Church in the Netherlands

Old-Catholic Mariavite Church in Poland
Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania
Orthodox Church in the Czech Lands and Slovakia [Slovak Republic]
Orthodox Church of Finland
Polish Autocephalous Orthodox Church
Polish Catholic Church in Poland
Presbyterian Church of Wales
Protestant Church in the Netherlands
Reformed Church in Hungary
Reformed Church in Romania
Reformierte Christliche Kirche in der Slowakei [Slovak Republic]
Reformierte Christliche Kirche in Serbien [Serbia]
Remonstrant Church [Netherlands]
Romanian Orthodox Church
Russian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) [Russian Federation]
Scottish Episcopal Church
Serbian Orthodox Church
Silesian Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession [Czech Republic]
Slovak Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Serbia
Undeb yr Annibynwyr Cymraeg [United Kingdom]
Union des Églises Protestantes d'Alsace et de Lorraine [France]
United Free Church of Scotland
United Reformed Church [United Kingdom]
Uniting Church in Sweden
Waldensian Church [Italy]

Latin America

Asociación Bautista de El Salvador
Asociación Iglesia de Dios [Argentina]
Convención Bautista de Nicaragua
Iglesia Anglicana de Sudamérica [Chile]
Iglesia Cristiana Bíblica [Argentina]
Iglesia de Misiones Pentecostales Libres de Chile
Iglesia Evangélica de los Discipulos de Cristo [Argentina]
Iglesia Evangélica del Río de la Plata [Argentina]
Iglesia Evangélica Luterana Boliviana
Iglesia Evangélica Luterana en Chile
Iglesia Evangélica Luterana Unida [Argentina]
Iglesia Evangélica Metodista Argentina
Iglesia Evangélica Metodista en Bolivia
Iglesia Luterana Salvadoreña [El Salvador]
Iglesia Metodista de Chile
Iglesia Metodista de Mexico

Iglesia Metodista del Peru
Iglesia Metodista en el Uruguay
Iglesia Morava en Nicaragua
Iglesia Pentecostal de Chile
Iglesia Presbiteriana de Colombia
Igreja Episcopal Anglicana do Brasil
Igreja Evangélica de Confissão Luterana no Brasil
Igreja Metodista no Brasil
Igreja Presbiteriana Independente do Brasil
Igreja Presbiteriana Unida do Brasil
Misión Iglesia Pentecostal [Chile]

Middle East

Armenian Apostolic Church (Holy See of Cilicia) [Lebanon]
Church of Cyprus
Coptic Orthodox Church [Egypt]
Episcopal Church in Jerusalem and the Middle East [Palestine - Israel]
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan & the Holy Land [Palestine - Israel]
Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Iran
Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Egypt, Synod of the Nile
Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria and All Africa [Egypt]
Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East [Syrian Arab Republic]
Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem [Palestine - Israel]
Holy Apostolic Catholic Assyrian Church of the East [Iraq]
National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon
Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East
The Episcopal / Anglican Province of Alexandria [Egypt]
Union of the Armenian Evangelical Churches in the Near East [Lebanon]

North America

African Methodist Episcopal Church [USA]
African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church [USA]
American Baptist Churches USA
Anglican Church of Canada
Canadian Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Canada
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States
Christian Methodist Episcopal Church [USA]
Church of the Brethren [USA]
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America [USA]
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada

Hungarian Reformed Church in America [Canada]
International Council of Community Churches [USA]
International Evangelical Church [USA]
Latvian Evangelical Lutheran Church Worldwide [USA]
Moravian Church in America [USA]
National Baptist Convention of America, Inc. [USA]
National Baptist Convention USA, Inc.
Orthodox Church in America [USA]
Polish National Catholic Church [USA]
Presbyterian Church [USA]
Presbyterian Church in Canada
Progressive National Baptist Convention, Inc. [USA]
Reformed Church in America [USA]
Religious Society of Friends: Friends General Conference [USA]
Religious Society of Friends: Friends United Meeting [USA]
The Episcopal Church [USA]
United Church of Canada
United Church of Christ [USA]
United Methodist Church [USA]

Pacific

Church of Melanesia [Solomon Islands]
Congregational Christian Church in American Samoa
Congregational Christian Church in Samoa
Eglise Protestante de Kanaky Nouvelle Calédonie
Église protestante Maohi [French Polynesia]
Ekalesia Kelisiano Tuvalu
Ekalesia Niue
Evangelical Lutheran Church of Papua New Guinea
Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga (Methodist Church in Tonga)
Kiribati Uniting Church
Methodist Church in Fiji and Rotuma
Methodist Church of Samoa
Presbyterian Church of Vanuatu
United Church in Papua New Guinea
United Church in the Solomon Islands
United Church of Christ - Congregational in the Marshall Islands

Appendix 5: Constitution and Rules of the World Council of Churches

(as amended by the central committee of the WCC in Geneva, Switzerland, June 2022 and with Rules I and VI as confirmed by the 11th WCC Assembly in Karlsruhe, Germany, September 2022)

Constitution

I. Basis

The World Council of Churches is a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the scriptures and therefore seek to fulfil together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

II. Membership

Churches shall be eligible for membership in the fellowship of the World Council of Churches who express their agreement with the basis upon which the Council is founded and satisfy such criteria for membership as the assembly or central committee may prescribe. The central committee shall consider applications for membership in accordance with Rule I.

III. Purposes and functions

The World Council of Churches is constituted by the churches to serve the one ecumenical movement. It incorporates the work of the world movements for Faith and Order and Life and Work, the International Missionary Council, and the World Council of Christian Education.

The primary purpose of the fellowship of churches in the World Council of Churches is to call one another to visible unity in one faith and in one Eucharistic fellowship, expressed in worship and common life in Christ, through witness and service to the world, and to advance towards that unity in order that the world may believe.

In seeking koinonia in faith and life, witness and service, the churches through the Council will:

- promote the prayerful search for forgiveness and reconciliation in a spirit of mutual accountability, the development of deeper

relationships through theological dialogue, and the sharing of human, spiritual and material resources with one another;

- facilitate common witness in each place and in all places, and support each other in their work for mission and evangelism;
- express their commitment to diakonia in serving human need, breaking down barriers between people, promoting one human family in justice and peace, and upholding the integrity of creation, so that all may experience the fullness of life;
- nurture the growth of an ecumenical consciousness through processes of education and a vision of life in community rooted in each particular cultural context;
- assist each other in their relationships to and with people of other faith communities;
- foster renewal and growth in unity, worship, mission and service.

In order to strengthen the one ecumenical movement, the Council will:

- foster the living fellowship of the member churches and the coherence of the one ecumenical movement;
- nurture relations with and among churches, especially within but also beyond its membership;
- establish and maintain relations with national councils, regional conferences of churches, organizations of Christian world communions and other ecumenical bodies;
- support ecumenical initiatives at regional, national and local levels;
- facilitate the creation of networks among ecumenical organizations;
- work towards maintaining the coherence of the one ecumenical movement in its diverse manifestations.

IV. Authority

The World Council of Churches shall offer counsel and provide opportunity for united action in matters of common interest.

It may take action on behalf of constituent churches only in such matters as one or more of them may commit to it and only on behalf of such churches.

The World Council of Churches shall not legislate for the churches; nor shall it act for them in any manner except as indicated above or as may hereafter be specified by the constituent churches.

V. Organization

The World Council of Churches shall discharge its functions through an assembly, a central committee, an executive committee, and other subordinate bodies as may be established.

1. The assembly

- a. The assembly shall be the supreme legislative body governing the World Council of Churches and shall ordinarily meet at eight-year intervals.
- b. The assembly shall be composed of official representatives of the member churches, known as delegates, elected by the member churches.
- c. The assembly shall be an expression of the living fellowship of member churches, shall strengthen the one ecumenical movement, and shall have the following functions:
 - i. to elect the president or presidents of the World Council of Churches;
 - ii. to elect not more than 145 members of the central committee from among the delegates which the member churches have elected to the assembly;
 - iii. to elect not more than 5 members from among the representatives elected to the assembly by churches which do not fulfil the criteria of size and have not been granted membership for exceptional reasons;
 - iv. to determine the overall policies of the World Council of Churches and to review programmes undertaken to implement policies previously adopted;
 - v. to delegate to the central committee specific functions, except to amend this constitution and to allocate the membership of the central committee granted by this constitution to the assembly exclusively.

2. The central committee

- a. The central committee shall be that governing body of the World Council of Churches with primary responsibility and authority to:
 - i. carry out the vision and policies of the assembly and to determine and develop the strategies to do so;
 - ii. deepen the living fellowship of member churches, and shall include opportunities for fulfilling together the common calling that is the basis of membership;

- iii. seek to provide coherence and strategic leadership to the one ecumenical movement, and provide opportunities for consultation among Christian churches on issues of mutual concern;
 - iv. be responsible for elaborating institutional and programmatic strategic plans based on the policies adopted by the assembly and for ensuring their implementation;
 - v. exercise the functions of the assembly itself delegated to it by the assembly between its meetings, except the assembly's power to amend this constitution and to allocate or alter the allocation of the membership of central committee.
- b. The central committee shall be composed of the president or presidents of the World Council of Churches and not more than 150 members.
- i. Not more than 145 members shall be elected by the assembly from among the delegates the member churches have elected to the assembly. Such members shall be distributed among the member churches by the assembly giving due regard to the size of the churches and confessions represented in the Council, the number of churches of each confession which are members of the Council, reasonable geographical and cultural balance, and adequate representation of the major interests of the Council.
 - ii. Not more than 5 members shall be elected by the assembly from among the representatives elected to the assembly by churches which do not fulfil the criteria of size and have not been granted membership for exceptional reasons.
 - iii. A vacancy in the membership of the central committee, occurring between meetings of the assembly, shall be filled by the central committee itself after consultation with the church of which the person previously occupying the position was a member.
- c. The central committee shall have, in addition to the general powers set out in (a) above, the following powers:
- i. to elect its moderator and vice-moderator or vice-moderators from among the members of the central committee;
 - ii. to elect the executive committee from among the members of the central committee;
 - iii. to elect committees, commissions, and consultative bodies;

- iv. to initiate and terminate programmes and to set priorities for the work of the Council within the policies adopted by the assembly;
 - v. to elect the general secretary;
 - vi. to elect one or more deputy general secretaries, and to make provision for the appointment of all members of the staff of the Council;
 - vii. to decide membership matters;
 - viii. to adopt the reports of executive committee actions, and to receive the budget and financial reports;
 - ix. to determine and develop the strategies to deliver the goals set by the assembly, including institutional policies for programme and finance and to secure financial support for the Council;
 - x. to plan for the meetings of the assembly, making provision for the conduct of its business, for worship and study, and for common Christian commitment. The central committee shall determine the number of delegates to the assembly and allocate them among the member churches giving due regard to the size of the churches and confessions represented in the Council; the number of churches of each confession which are members of the Council; reasonable geographical and cultural balance; the desired distribution among church officials, parish ministers and lay persons; among men, women and young people; and participation by persons whose special knowledge and experience will be needed;
 - xi. to delegate specific functions to the executive committee, or to other bodies or persons, and to hold them accountable for that delegation.
- d. The central committee can delegate to the executive committee such authority necessary to ensure fiduciary responsibility and accountability for governance of the Council, including monitoring programmes, finance and personnel matters.

3. Rules

The assembly or the central committee may adopt and amend rules not inconsistent with this constitution for the conduct of the business of the World Council of Churches.

4. By-laws

The assembly or the central committee may adopt and amend by-laws not inconsistent with this constitution for the functioning of its committees, consultative bodies and commissions.

5. Quorum

A quorum for the conduct of any business by the assembly or the central committee shall be one-half of its membership.

VI. Other ecumenical Christian organizations

1. Such world confessional bodies and such international ecumenical organizations as may be designated by the central committee may be invited to send representatives to the assembly and to the central committee, in such numbers as the central committee shall determine; however, these representatives shall not have the right to participate when decisions are taken.

2. Such national councils and regional conferences of churches, other Christian councils and missionary councils as may be designated by the central committee may be invited to send representatives to the assembly and to the central committee, in such numbers as the central committee shall determine; however, these representatives shall not have the right to participate when decisions are taken.

VII. Amendments

The constitution may be amended by a two-thirds vote of the delegates to the assembly present and voting, provided that the proposed amendment shall have been reviewed by the central committee, and notice of it sent to the member churches not less than six months before the meeting of the assembly. The central committee itself, as well as the member churches, shall have the right to propose such amendment.

RULES

I. Membership in the fellowship of the World Council of Churches

The World Council of Churches is comprised of churches which have constituted the Council or which have been admitted into membership and which continue to belong to the fellowship of the World Council of Churches. The term “church” as used in this article could also include an association, convention or federation of autonomous churches. A group of churches within a country or region, or within the same confession, may choose to participate in the World Council of Churches as one member. Churches within the same country or region or within the same confession may apply jointly to belong to the fellowship of the Council, in order to respond to their common calling, to strengthen their joint participation and/or to satisfy the requirement of minimum size (rule I.3.b.iii). Such groupings of churches are encouraged by the World Council of Churches; each individual church within the grouping must satisfy the criteria for membership in the fellowship of the World Council of Churches, except the requirements of size. A church seeking affiliation with a grouping of autonomous churches which is a member of the World Council of Churches must agree with the basis and fulfil the criteria for membership.

The general secretary shall maintain the official lists of member churches that have been accepted to belong to the fellowship of the World Council of Churches, noting any special arrangement accepted by the assembly or central committee. Separate lists shall be maintained of member churches belonging to the fellowship of the World Council of Churches that do or do not participate in decision-making.

1. Application

A church that wishes to join the World Council of Churches shall apply in writing to the general secretary.

2. Processing

The general secretary shall submit all such applications through the executive committee to the central committee together with such information as he or she considers necessary to enable the central committee to make a decision on the application.

3. Criteria

Churches applying to join the World Council of Churches (“applicant churches”) are required first to express agreement with the basis on which the Council is founded and confirm their commitment to the purposes and functions of the Council as defined in articles I and III of the constitution. The basis states: “The World Council of Churches is a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the scriptures and therefore seek to fulfil together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.”

Applicant churches should give an account of how their faith and witness relate to these norms and practices:

a. Theological

- i. In its life and witness, the church professes faith in the triune God according to the scriptures, and as this faith is reflected in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed.
- ii. The church maintains a ministry of proclaiming the gospel and celebrating the sacraments as understood by its doctrines.
- iii. The church baptizes in the name of the one God, “Father, Son and Holy Spirit” and acknowledges the need to move towards the recognition of the baptism of other churches.
- iv. The church recognizes the presence and activity of Christ and the Holy Spirit outside its own boundaries and prays for the gift of God’s wisdom to all in the awareness that other member churches also believe in the Holy Trinity and the saving grace of God.
- v. The church recognizes in the other member churches elements of the true church, even if it does not regard them “as churches in the true and full sense of the word” (Toronto statement).

b. Organizational

- i. The church must produce evidence of sustained autonomous life and organization.
- ii. The church must be able to take the decision to apply for formal membership in the World Council of Churches and continue to belong to the fellowship of the World Council of Churches without obtaining the permission of any other body or person.
- iii. An applicant church must ordinarily have at least fifty thousand members. The central committee, for exceptional reasons, may dispense with this requirement and accept a church that does not fulfil the criteria of size.

- iv. An applicant church with more than 10,000 members but fewer than 50,000 members that has not been granted membership for exceptional reasons under rule I.3.b.iii, but is otherwise eligible for membership, can be admitted as a member subject to the following conditions: (a) it shall not have the right to participate in decision-making in the assembly, and (b) it may participate with other churches in proposing five representatives to the central committee in accordance with rule IV.4.b.iii. Such church shall be considered as a member church belonging to the fellowship of the World Council of Churches in all other respects.
- v. Churches must recognize the essential interdependence of the member churches belonging to the fellowship of the World Council of Churches, particularly those of the same confession, and should make every effort to practise constructive ecumenical relations with other churches within their country or region. This will normally mean that the church is a member of the national council of churches or similar body and of the regional/sub-regional ecumenical organization.

4. Consultation

Before admitting a church to membership in the fellowship of the World Council of Churches, the appropriate world confessional body or bodies and national council or regional ecumenical organization shall be consulted.

5. Decision on acceptance

The Central Committee shall consider applications for membership according to the consensus model of decision making. The application shall be accepted for a specified interim period of participation in the work of the World Council of Churches and for interaction with the local fellowship of member churches. The member churches of the World Council of Churches shall be consulted during the interim period. The Central Committee shall assess whether a consensus of member churches has developed in favour of the application, in which event the applicant church shall be considered a new member church. If there is no consensus, the Central Committee shall deem the application rejected.

6. Resignation and Suspension

- a. A church which desires to resign its membership in the fellowship of the World Council of Churches can do so at any time. A church which has resigned but desires to re-join the Council must again apply for membership.

- b. The central committee may suspend the membership of a church:
 - (i) at the church's request; (ii) because the basis of, or the theological criteria for, membership has not been maintained by that church or; (iii) because the church has persistently neglected its responsibilities of membership as described under rule II.
- c. When the central committee suspends the membership of a church, the general secretary shall ascertain whether the reason for the suspension is resolved, can or cannot be resolved, and shall present progress reports to the executive committee until the process for the suspension is concluded. Any decision about the membership status of the church shall be taken by the central committee.

II. Responsibilities of membership

Membership in the World Council of Churches signifies faithfulness to the basis of the Council, fellowship in the Council, participation in the life and work of the Council and commitment to the ecumenical movement as integral to the mission of the church. Churches which are members of the World Council of Churches are expected to:

1. appoint delegates to the assembly, the major policy-making body of the Council, and participate in council with other member churches, in the ethos of consensus, in shaping the ecumenical vision and the ecumenical agenda;
2. inform the Council of their primary concerns, priorities, activities and constructive criticisms as they may relate to its programmes as well as any matters which they feel need expression of ecumenical solidarity or which merit the attention of the Council and/or churches around the world;
3. communicate the meaning of ecumenical commitment, to foster and encourage ecumenical relations and action at all levels of their church life and to pursue ecumenical fellowship locally, nationally, regionally and internationally;
4. interpret both the broader ecumenical movement and the World Council of Churches, its nature, purpose and programmes throughout their membership as a normal part of their own reporting to their constituency;
5. encourage participation in World Council of Churches programmes, activities and meetings, including:
 - a. proposing persons who could make a particular contribution to and/or participate in the Council's various committees, meetings and consultations, programmes, publications and staff;
 - b. establishing links between their own programme offices and the appropriate World Council of Churches programme offices; and

- c. submitting materials for and promoting Council communications resources: books, periodicals and other publications;
6. respond to decisions of the central committee which call for study, action or other follow-up by the member churches as well as respond to requests on matters referred by the central or executive committee or the general secretary for prayer, advice, information or opinion;
7. make an annual contribution to the general budget of the Council: the amount of the contribution shall be agreed upon in consultation between the church and the Council and shall be regularly reviewed;
8. participate, in ways commensurate with their resources and in consultation with the Council, in assuming responsibility for the costs of the Council's programmes and for expenses related to travel and accommodation of their representatives to Council events.

The implications of not fulfilling such obligations shall be such as the central committee shall decide.

III. Churches in association with the World Council of Churches

A church that agrees with the basis of the Council may request in writing to be received as a church in association with the World Council of Churches, stating its reasons for requesting this mode of relating with the Council. If the reasons are approved by the central committee, such a church may be accepted to be in association with the World Council of Churches.

Churches in association with the World Council of Churches:

1. can send representative(s) to the assembly and the central committee who can speak with permission of the moderator, but not participate in decision-making;
2. can be invited to participate in the work of the commissions, consultative bodies, reference and advisory groups of the Council as consultants or advisers;
3. have the possibility of participating in the work of the World Council of Churches as described, but will not be identified with decisions taken or statements issued by the Council;
4. shall make an annual contribution to the general budget of the Council; the amount of the contribution shall be agreed upon in consultation between the church and the Council and shall be regularly reviewed; no financial support will ordinarily be made

available from the Council to such churches to facilitate their participation.

The general secretary shall maintain a list of churches in association with the Council.

IV. The assembly

1. Composition of the assembly

a. Persons with the right to speak and the responsibility to participate in decision-making

The assembly shall be composed of official representatives of the member churches, known as delegates, elected by the member churches, with the right to speak and with the responsibility to participate in decision-making

- i. The central committee shall determine the number of delegates to the assembly well in advance of its meeting.
- ii. The central committee shall determine the percentage of the delegates, not less than 80 percent, who shall be both nominated and elected by the member churches. Each member church shall be entitled to a minimum of one delegate. The central committee shall allocate the other delegates in this group among the member churches giving due regard to the size of the churches and confessions represented in the World Council of Churches, the number of churches of each confession which are members of the Council, and reasonable geographical and cultural balance. The central committee shall recommend the proper distribution within delegations among church officials, parish ministers and lay persons; and among men, women, young people and Indigenous peoples. The central committee may make provision for the election by the member churches of alternate delegates who shall serve only in place of such delegates who are unable to attend meetings of the assembly.
- iii. The remaining delegates, not more than 20 percent, shall be elected by certain member churches upon nomination of the central committee as follows:
- iv. If the moderator or any vice-moderator of the central committee is not elected a delegate within the provisions of paragraph ii. above, the central committee shall nominate

such person to the member church of which he or she is a member. Paragraphs v. and vi. below apply to such nominees.

- v. The central committee shall determine the categories of additional delegates necessary to achieve balance in respect of:
 - a. the varied sizes of churches and confessions;
 - b. the historical significance, future potential or geographical location and cultural background of particular churches, as well as the special importance of united churches;
 - c. the presence of persons whose special knowledge and experience will be necessary to the assembly;
 - d. proportions of women, youth, lay persons and local pastors;
 - e. participation of Indigenous peoples;
 - f. participation of persons with disabilities.
- vi. The central committee shall invite the member churches to propose the names of persons in the categories so determined whom the churches would be willing to elect, if nominated by the central committee.
- vii. From the list so compiled, the central committee shall propose the nomination of particular individuals to their respective member church.
- viii. If that member church elects the said nominee, he or she shall become an additional delegate of that member church.
- ix. The member churches shall not elect alternate delegates for such delegates.

Member churches are encouraged to consult regionally in the selection of the delegates described in paragraphs ii. and iii. above, provided that every delegate is elected by the church of which he or she is a member in accordance with its own procedures.

b. Persons with the right to speak but not to participate in decision-making

In addition to the delegates, who alone have the right to participate in decision-making, the following categories of persons may attend meetings of the assembly with the right to speak:

- i. Presidents and moderator or vice-moderator(s):* Any president of the Council or moderator or vice-moderator of the central committee who has not been elected delegate by their church.

- ii. *Members of the outgoing central committee:* Any member of the outgoing central committee who has not been elected delegate by his or her church.
 - iii. *Representatives of churches which do not fulfil the criteria of size and have not been granted membership for exceptional reasons:* Each one of these churches may elect one representative.
 - iv. *Advisers:* The central committee may invite a small number of persons who have a special contribution to make to the deliberations of the assembly or who have participated in the activities of the Council. Before an invitation is extended to an adviser who is a member of a member church, that church shall be consulted.
 - v. *Delegated representatives:* The central committee may invite persons officially designated as delegated representatives by organizations with which the World Council of Churches maintains relationship.
 - vi. *Delegated observers:* The central committee may invite persons officially designated as delegated observers by non-member churches.
- c. Persons without the right to speak or to participate in decision-making
- i. *Advisors to Member Church Delegations:* Persons representing the ecumenical interests and relationships of the member churches who accompany their delegations.
 - ii. The central committee may invite to attend the meetings of the assembly without the right to speak or to participate in decision-making:
 - a. *Observers:* Persons identified with organizations with which the World Council of Churches maintains relationship which are not represented by delegated representatives or with non-member churches which are not represented by delegated observers.
 - b. *Guests:* Persons named individually.

2. Assembly leadership

- a. At the first decision session of the assembly, the outgoing central committee shall present its report which must include an accounting of its work since the previous assembly and also shall present its proposals for the moderatorship of the assembly and for the membership of the business committee of the assembly and make any other proposals, including the appointment of other

committees, their membership and functions, for the conduct of the business of the assembly as it sees fit.

- b. At the first or second decision session, additional nominations for membership of any committee may be made in writing by any six concurring delegates.
- c. Election shall be by ballot unless the assembly shall otherwise determine.

3. Assembly agenda

The agenda of the assembly shall be proposed by the central committee to the first decision session of the assembly. A delegate may propose changes to the agenda in accordance with rule XIX.6.c. New business or any change may be proposed by the business committee in accordance with rule IV.5.b.

4. Nominations committee of the assembly

- a. At an early decision session of the assembly, the assembly shall elect a nominations committee from the official church delegates to the assembly. The nominations committee shall include balanced representation of the membership of the assembly and representation of the major interests of the World Council of Churches. No person serving on the nominations committee of the assembly shall be eligible for nomination as president of the World Council of Churches or member of the central committee.
- b. The nominations committee shall make nominations for the following, consulting as necessary with the business committee of the assembly:
 - i. the president or presidents of the Council;
 - ii. not more than 145 members of the central committee from among the delegates which the member churches have elected to the assembly;
 - iii. not more than 5 members of the central committee from among the representatives elected to the assembly by the churches which do not fulfil the criteria of size and have not been granted membership for exceptional reasons.
- c. In making nominations, the nominations committee shall have regard to the following principles:
 - i. the personal qualifications of the individual for the task for which he or she is to be nominated;
 - ii. fair and adequate confessional representation, recognizing the significance to the fellowship in having a wide representation of confessions;

- iii. fair and adequate geographical and cultural representation;
 - iv. fair and adequate representation of the major interests of the Council.
 - v. as to delegates of churches referenced in IV.4.b.iii above, attention be given to churches from confessions not otherwise represented on the central committee;
- d. The nominations committee shall satisfy itself as to the general acceptability of the nominations to the churches to which the nominees belong.
 - e. Not more than seven persons from any one member church shall be nominated as members of the central committee.
 - f. The nominations committee shall secure adequate representation of lay persons, and adequate balance of men, women and young people, so far as the composition of the assembly makes this possible.
 - g. The nominations committee shall present its nominations to the assembly. Alternative nominations may be made in writing by any six delegates from at least three member churches, provided that each such alternative nominee shall be proposed as an alternative to a particular nominee.
 - h. Election shall be by ballot unless the assembly shall otherwise determine.
5. Business committee of the assembly
- a. The business committee of the assembly shall consist of the general secretary, the moderator and vice-moderator or vice-moderators of the outgoing central committee, the presidents of the World Council of Churches, the co-moderators of the permanent committee on consensus and collaboration participating as delegates, the moderator or designated member of the assembly planning committee participating as a delegate, the moderators of assembly hearings and committees (who may appoint substitutes), plus ten persons nominated from assembly delegates who are not members of the outgoing central committee, who shall be elected in accordance with rule IV.2 If a co-moderator of the permanent committee and/or the moderator of the assembly planning committee are not delegate(s), he/she shall be invited as an adviser to the assembly and its business committee with the right to speak but not to participate in decision-making.
 - b. The business committee shall:

- i. coordinate the day-to-day business of the assembly and may make proposals for rearrangement, modification, addition, deletion or substitution of items included on the agenda. Any such proposal shall be presented to the assembly at the earliest convenient time by a member of the business committee with reasons for the proposed change. After opportunity for discussion on the proposal, the moderator shall put the following question to the assembly: Shall the assembly approve the proposal of the business committee? The assembly shall decide the question by consensus, according to Rule XIX.
 - ii. consider any item of business or change in the agenda proposed to the business committee by a delegate under rule XIX.6.c;
 - iii. determine whether the assembly sits in general, hearing or decision session as defined in rule XIX.2;
 - iv. receive information from and review the reports of other committees in order to consider how best the assembly can act on them.
6. Other committees of the assembly
 - a. Any other committee of the assembly shall consist of such members and shall have such authority and responsibilities as are proposed by the central committee in accordance with rule IV.2 or by the business committee after its election and accepted by the assembly.
 - b. Any such committee shall, unless the assembly otherwise directs, inform the business committee about its work and shall make its report or recommendations to the assembly.

V. Presidents

1. The assembly shall elect up to eight presidents of the World Council of Churches.
2. The presidents should be persons whose ecumenical experience and standing is widely recognized by the member churches and among the ecumenical partners of the World Council of Churches in their respective regions and ecclesial traditions.
3. By virtue of office, the presidents will be members of the central committee.
4. Presidents may be invited to moderate sessions of the central committee or assembly as provided by the rules.

5. The central committee may invite the presidents to undertake certain tasks or reflections and report back to the central committee.
6. The term of office of a president shall end at the end of the next assembly following his or her election.
7. Should a vacancy occur between assemblies, the central committee may elect a president to fill the unexpired term.
8. A president who has been elected by the assembly or by the central committee to fill a vacancy shall not be eligible for election for a second consecutive term of office.

VI. Central committee

1. Members

- a. The central committee shall consist of the president or presidents of the World Council of Churches together with not more than 150 members elected by the assembly (see constitution, article V.2.b).
- b. If a regularly elected member of the central committee is unable to attend a meeting, the church to which the absent member belongs shall have the right to send a substitute. Such a substitute shall have the right to speak and to participate in decision-making. If a member, or his or her substitute, is absent without excuse for two consecutive meetings, the position shall be declared vacant, and the central committee shall fill the vacancy according to the provisions of article V.2.b.iii of the constitution.
- c. Members of the central committee, shall:
 - i. promote the values of the ecumenical movement;
 - ii. advocate for and interpret the work of the World Council of Churches, especially in their respective regions and ecclesial traditions;
 - iii. enhance World Council of Churches contact with the leadership of the churches in their regions;
 - iv. assist in assuring the financial stability of the World Council of Churches; and
 - v. familiarize themselves with the WCC constitution and rules, review documents relevant to the specific areas of work they have undertaken, and enter into the ethos of consensus.

2. Participants

- a. Any member church, not already represented, may send one representative to the meetings of the central committee. Such a representative shall have the right to speak but not to participate in decision-making.
 - b. Advisers for the central committee may be invited by the executive committee after consultation with the churches of which they are members. They shall have the right to speak but not to participate in decision-making.
 - c. Moderators and vice-moderators of committees, commissions and consultative bodies who are not members of the central committee may attend meetings of the central committee and shall have the right to speak but not to participate in decision-making.
 - d. Associate councils (rule XIII), Regional ecumenical organizations (rule XIV), Christian world communions (rule XV) and Specialized ministries engaged in witness and service (rule XVI) recognized by the central committee shall be invited to send an adviser to meetings of the central committee, who shall have the right to speak but not to participate in decision-making.
 - e. International ecumenical organizations (rule XVII) recognized by the central committee may, at the discretion of the executive committee, be invited to send an adviser to meetings of the central committee, who shall have the right to speak but not to participate in decision-making.
 - f. Staff of the World Council of Churches appointed by the central committee as specified under rule XI.3 and 4.a and b. shall have the right to attend the sessions of the central committee unless on any occasion the central committee shall otherwise determine. When present they shall have the right to speak but not to participate in decision-making.
3. Leadership of the central committee
 - a. The central committee shall elect from among its members a moderator (the “moderator”) and a vice-moderator or vice-moderators to serve for such period as it shall determine, normally for terms that coincide with the terms of the central committee from assembly to assembly.
 - b. The moderator shall be the chief governance officer of the World Council of Churches and has primary responsibility for assuring the coherence of the work of the central committee and of the executive committee and for assuring that the ethos of consensus characterizes all aspects of the governance of the Council.

- c. The moderator shall have primary responsibility for chairing sessions of the central committee and of the executive committee, sharing this role with the vice-moderator(s). The moderator, in consultation with the vice moderator(s) and the general secretary may delegate responsibility for moderating specific sessions of the central committee and/or executive committee to one of the presidents or to members of the central or executive committee with specific expertise and familiarity with and commitment to facilitating the process and ethos of consensus discernment.
- d. The leadership of the central committee together with the general secretary shall plan and lead the meetings of the central committee and the executive committee. Together they shall identify issues that belong to the central committee for discernment and decision or further action, or belong to the executive committee. They shall ensure that sessions and committees of the central committee have appropriate leadership and resources (information and time) to enter into the process and ethos of consensus discernment, and that the sessions and committees of the executive committee have sufficient resources and expertise to undertake all responsibilities that have been delegated to the executive committee, and that all documentation for the meeting has been prepared and made available to the members of the relevant governing body in a timely manner.
- e. The moderator and vice-moderator(s) and session moderators shall: (i) encourage the participants in meetings to challenge one another and the member churches to deepen their fellowship and mutual accountability; (ii) ensure that the meetings foster the common understanding and vision of the World Council of Churches; (iii) cultivate the ethos and facilitate the process of consensus discernment, and (iv) help to foster coherence within the ecumenical movement.
- f. The general secretary of the World Council of Churches shall be secretary of the central committee, and shall have the right to participate in all sessions of the central committee, except when discussing a topic related to him or her, but shall not vote or use indicator cards.

4. Meetings

- a. The central committee shall ordinarily meet during or immediately following the assembly during which it was elected (the “organizing meeting”), approximately one year following the assembly, and thereafter biennially. The general secretary shall convene the

- organizing meeting. The central committee shall be discharged when its report has been received by the subsequent assembly.
- b. The central committee shall determine the dates and places of its meetings and of the assembly. In lieu of or in addition to its ordinary meetings the central committee may decide to convene electronically. In the event it is not possible for the central committee to meet in person, the executive committee may call for a meeting of the central committee to be held electronically.
 - c. The executive committee may call an extraordinary meeting of the central committee whenever it deems such a meeting desirable. The executive committee shall call an extraordinary meeting of the central committee upon the request in writing of one-third or more of the members of the central committee. The executive committee shall determine whether the meeting will be in person or electronic, according to the items proposed for the agenda.
 - d. Notice to the central committee for an in-person extraordinary meeting shall be provided not fewer than ninety (90) days and not more than four (4) months prior to the meeting. Notice to the central committee for an electronic extraordinary meeting shall be provided not fewer than thirty (30) days and not more than sixty (60) days prior to the meeting.
 - e. The general secretary shall take all possible steps to ensure that there is fair and adequate representation of the membership of the World Council of Churches and of the major interests of the Council in accordance with rule VI.9. In case a quorum will not be secured, the general secretary shall inform the leadership of the central committee for action.

5. Functions

In exercising the powers set forth in the constitution and delegated to it by the assembly, the central committee, on behalf of the membership of the World Council of Churches, shall have the following specific authority and responsibility to govern the work of the Council:

- a. Set the vision and strategic objectives of the World Council of Churches consistent with policies adopted by the assembly, as well as plan and provide for the subsequent assembly and report to the subsequent assembly the actions it has taken during its period of office;
- b. Address emerging issues affecting the life and witness of the churches, including those identified by the assembly, the central committee, commissions and consultative bodies;

- c. Address matters referred to it by member churches and issue statements on any issue or concern with which the Council or its member churches may be confronted, in accordance with rule XII;
- d. Decide membership matters;
- e. Set programme strategies and goals;
- f. Ensure the financial stability of the World Council of Churches;
- g. Elect the general secretary of the World Council of Churches;
- h. Receive reports from the general secretary of his or her leadership and management of the Council and hold the general secretary accountable for the work of the staff, ensuring that the programmes and activities of the Council have remained consistent with the constitution, these rules, and the defined self-understanding and ethos of the Council;
- i. Elect the moderator and vice-moderator(s) and executive committee;
- j. Delegate specific governance functions to the executive committee by rule and hold the executive committee accountable;
- k. Provide for the organizational structure to fulfil the responsibilities of the central committee, including committees, ad hoc committees, reference, advisory and working groups, as necessary;
- l. Set policy guidelines for all aspects of the Council, including but not limited to, staff, programmes and relationships;
- m. Elect commissions and approve their bylaws, and elect WCC representatives to the joint consultative bodies, incorporate into its life their ongoing work, including but not limited to:
 - i. Commission on Faith and Order;
 - ii. Commission on World Mission and Evangelism;
 - iii. Commission on Education and Ecumenical Formation;
 - iv. The Commission of the Churches on International Affairs;
 - v. Young People in the Ecumenical Movement Commission;
 - vi. Commission on Health and Healing.
- n. Establish reference groups to accompany the work of major programmes or ecumenical initiatives of the Council, elect their members and approve their mandates, budgets and terms.
- o. Adopt rules or bylaws consistent with the Constitution and these rules to govern its work;
- p. Delegate to its executive committee such authority necessary to ensure fiduciary responsibility and accountability for governance

of the Council, including monitoring programmes, finance and personnel matters;

- q. Take such other actions or delegate such other specific tasks to other bodies or persons necessary to fulfil the responsibilities and exercise the authority established by the Constitution of the World Council of Churches and to deliver the broad goals and policies set by the assembly;
- r. Report to the assembly the actions and decisions it has taken during its period of office; it shall be discharged when its report has been received.

6. Election and term of the Executive Committee

- a. There shall be two election processes for the executive committee between assemblies.
- b. During the organizing meeting, the central committee shall elect the first executive committee comprising twenty members, which executive committee shall serve for the period of the first four years following the assembly (the “first executive committee”).
- c. During the meeting of the central committee that immediately precedes the end of the four-year term of the first executive committee, the central committee shall elect an executive committee of twenty members to serve until the report of the central committee has been received by the next assembly (the “second executive committee”).
- d. No elected member shall serve more than three four-year periods on the executive committee.
- e. Vacancies on the executive committee shall be filled provisionally by the executive committee itself with another member of the central committee. The vacancy shall be filled by election during the subsequent meeting of the central committee.

7. Committees of the central committee

- a. The central committee shall elect standing committees as described in rule X.
- b. The central committee may elect as needed at each meeting and for the duration of the meeting, ad hoc committees to advise the central committee on any questions arising which call for special consideration or action by the central committee.
- c. Committees of the central committee shall work during the meeting of the central committee, shall be supported by World

Council of Churches staff working in related areas, and shall propose recommendations for decision to the central committee.

- d. The central committee may compose ad hoc committees or working groups to undertake specific mandates or remits to be completed within a specific timeline outside of the meeting of the central committee.
 - e. Participants in the central committee (rule VI.2) may be assigned to one committee.
8. Reference Groups and Advisory Groups
- a. Reference groups to accompany the work of major programmes or ecumenical initiatives of the Council may be proposed by the central committee or by the executive committee, or by the general secretary. The respective governing body shall elect persons to reference groups and shall approve their mandates, budgets and terms.
 - b. The general secretary may propose advisory groups to advise the general secretary on matters internal to the WCC staff, specific projects, or to stimulate discussion on emerging issues. The composition, mandate, term and budget for such advisory groups shall be approved by the executive committee.
9. Guiding policies on representation
- a. The formation of all committees, commissions, joint consultative bodies, ad hoc committees, reference, advisory and working groups and shall have regard to the following principles:
 - i. the personal expertise of the individual for the task for which he or she is to be nominated;
 - ii. fair and adequate confessional representation;
 - iii. fair and adequate geographical and cultural representation;
 - iv. fair and adequate representation of the major interests of the World Council of Churches;
 - v. the general acceptability of the nominations to the churches to which the nominees belong;
 - vi. fair and adequate representation of lay and ordained persons, Indigenous peoples, and persons with disabilities, and balance of men, women and young people.
 - b. All nominations will reflect the target balances adopted by central committee for the most recent assembly.

- c. In addition to the foregoing, with respect to the election of members of committees, commissions and consultative bodies, the central committee shall consider the representative character of the combined membership of all such committees in relation to the member churches, giving due regard to the broadest feasible representation of member churches.

VII. Nominations committee of the organizing meeting of the central committee

1. In its first meeting during or immediately after the assembly (the “organizing meeting”), the central committee shall elect a nominations committee which shall:

- a. Nominate persons from those elected as members of the central committee for moderator and vice-moderator or vice-moderators of the central committee;
- b. Nominate persons from those elected as members of the central committee to membership of the executive committee; and
- c. Nominate two additional persons from those elected as members of the central committee to serve as moderator of the programme committee of the central committee and as moderator of the finance policy committee of the central committee.

2. The names of persons to serve on the nominations committee of the organizing meeting shall be proposed by the general secretary, following consultation with the co-moderators of the permanent committee on consensus and collaboration, to the first session of the organizing meeting, and shall include, insofar as possible, balanced representation of the membership of the central committee and representation of the major interests of the World Council of Churches.

3. No person serving on the nominations committee of the organizing meeting shall be eligible for nomination to the positions of moderator, vice moderator(s) of the central committee, members of the executive committee, moderators of the programme and finance policy committees of the central committee. Persons named to serve on this committee shall be advised of the limitations of this rule prior to their accepting to serve on this committee.

4. In making nominations, the nominations committee shall have regard to principles set out in rule IV.4 and/or VI.9 and shall consider the specific skills and profiles necessary to undertake the responsibilities of moderator and vice moderator(s) of the central committee, moderators of the programme and finance policy committees and members of the executive committee.

5. The nominations committee shall present its nominations to the next session of the organizing meeting of the central committee. Any three members of the central committee may make an alternative nomination, provided that each such alternative nominee shall be proposed as an alternative to a particular nominee.

6. Election shall be by ballot unless the central committee shall otherwise determine.

7. Following the election of the moderator and vice moderator(s), the moderators of the programme and finance policy committees and of the executive committee, the nominations committee of the organizing meeting shall be discharged.

VIII. Executive committee

1. Governance authority

- a. The executive committee shall be entrusted with and made accountable for specific governance authority and responsibility of the World Council of Churches as delegated by the central committee, with authority to establish limits and guidelines within which management and staff of the Council shall implement the policies and programmes of the Council.
- b. The executive committee shall be accountable to the central committee, and shall present to each central committee meeting a report of its work. The central committee shall consider such a report and take such action in regard to it as it thinks fit.

2. Meetings

- a. The executive committee ordinarily shall meet twice annually. The executive committee shall determine the dates and places of its meetings and may decide to convene in person or electronically.
- b. The leadership of the central committee may call an extraordinary meeting of the executive committee by electronic communications whenever they deem such a meeting necessary. Notice to the executive committee for an extraordinary meeting shall be provided not fewer than ten (10) days prior to the meeting, and not more than twenty-one (21) days.

3. Composition of executive committee

- a. The executive committee shall be composed of the moderator and vice-moderator or vice-moderators of the central committee, twenty

other members of the central committee and the moderators of programme committee and the finance policy committee of the central committee.

- b. The moderator, vice moderator(s) and general secretary shall invite to the meetings of the executive committee advisors, including from among ecumenical partners. The advisors shall have the right to speak but not to participate in decision-making.
- c. The moderator, vice moderator(s) and general secretary are to ensure that the meeting of the executive committee has sufficient resources available to accomplish its work, always having in mind the need for preserving a due balance of the confessions and of the geographical areas and cultural backgrounds, and of the major interests of the World Council of Churches.
- d. If a member of the executive committee is unable to attend, he/she has the right—provided that the moderator is consulted prior to the meeting—to send a member of the central committee as a substitute. Such a substitute shall—as far as possible—be of the same region and church family, and shall have the right to speak and the responsibility to participate in decision-making.

4. Leadership of the executive committee

- a. The moderator of the central committee shall also be the moderator of the executive committee.
- b. The general secretary of the World Council of Churches shall be the secretary of the executive committee and shall participate in all sessions of the executive committee, except those sessions discussing issues relating to him or her, but shall not vote or use indicator cards.

5. Functions

- a. In exercising the powers delegated to it by the central committee, the executive committee assumes fiduciary responsibility for the governance of the World Council of Churches and shall have the following specific authority and responsibility:
 - i. Ensure implementation of the strategic objectives set by the central committee;
 - ii. Oversee the finances of the World Council of Churches, ensuring its financial stability, overseeing the investments, encouraging income development, approving the budget, and if necessary, imposing limitations on expenditures; provided that the executive committee upon approval of the annual

- financial report and accounts, shall send the annual financial report and accounts and budget to members of the central committee and the member churches;
- iii. Open or close any subsidiary legal entities of the World Council of Churches;
 - iv. Monitor resource management, assuring that the human, physical and financial resources the World Council of Churches needs are available and properly employed;
 - v. Monitor programmes and activities of the World Council of Churches, and, when necessary, direct that activities are initiated or terminated;
 - vi. Issue statements on any issue or concern with which the World Council of Churches or its member churches may be confronted, in accordance with rule XII;
 - vii. Recommend to the central committee the mandate and size of commissions and joint consultative bodies to resource the major areas of work of the World Council of Churches;
 - viii. Appoint staff in accordance with rule XI;
 - ix. Establish and monitor personnel policies and staff rules;
 - x. Ensure the integrity of the operations of the World Council of Churches in compliance with Constitution and Rules of the World Council of Churches, applicable laws, regulations, and best practices;
 - xi. Manage risk, assessing risks to the institution (including financial risk) and ensure that strategies are in place to handle risk;
 - xii. Organize itself into committees, sub-committees and working groups;
 - xiii. In between meetings of the central committee, nominate persons for committees, commissions, joint consultative bodies and working groups;
 - xiv. Establish reference groups to accompany the work of major programmes or ecumenical initiatives of the Council, elect their members and approve their mandates, budgets and terms.
 - xv. Approve the composition, mandate, terms of and budget for advisory groups;
 - xvi. Delegate authority for specific time-bound matters to the moderator and vice moderator(s) and general secretary.
- b. If twenty members of the central committee have concerns arising out of either the financial statements, or the budget, they shall make

known their concerns to the General Secretary and the Executive Committee in writing, within 45 days of the sending of the financial statements and the budget. In that event, with regard to any concern related to the financial statements, the executive committee shall be required to respond to that concern. With regard to any concern related to the budget, the executive committee shall reconsider that item. The executive committee's decision on reconsideration shall be final.

6. Sub-Committees of the executive committee

- a. The executive committee shall appoint sub-committees, which shall meet during meetings of the executive committee, and which shall advise the executive committee in exercising its authority and responsibility. Unless otherwise specified, the executive committee shall designate a moderator for each sub-committee. The sub-committee(s) may include one or more advisors, who may speak but not participate in decision-making. The sub-committees shall include the following:
 - i. Programme sub-committee, which shall be moderated by the moderator of the central committee's programme committee and shall assist the executive committee in
 - a. ensuring implementation of the strategic programmatic objectives set by the central committee;
 - b. initiating and terminating projects and activities;
 - c. monitoring and overseeing the ongoing programs, projects and activities, including the task of the allocation of resources;
 - d. providing for and making recommendations for regular evaluation of programmes, projects and activities in light of strategic objectives set by the central committee.
 - ii. Finance sub-committee, which shall be moderated by the moderator of the central committee's finance policy committee, and shall assist the executive committee by
 - a. recommending the annual appointment of the elected auditor;
 - b. considering and recommending to the audit committee, the appropriate scope of the audit;
 - c. recommending for approval the annual budget for the following financial year, and the capital expenditure budget;

- d. recommending for approval the framework budget for the year after the following financial year;
- e. monitoring the implementation of the income and fund-raising strategy;
- f. monitoring adherence to the approved budget, and recommending corrective actions if necessary;
- g. making proposals for long-term financial goals and strategy for consideration by the finance policy committee;
- h. considering and recommending accounting policies for adoption;
- i. monitoring adherence to policies issued by central committee, including those governing general reserves and investments;
- j. ensuring the proposed loans, guarantees, pledges and any other unusual transactions are presented for approval by executive committee;
- k. ensuring compliance with laws and regulations concerning financial transactions, including the requirement to maintain a system of internal controls according to international standards; and
- l. receive the report of the statutory elected auditor and recommend approval of the financial statements.

The executive committee shall ensure that the finance sub-committee has sufficient expertise to accomplish its mandate and may appoint an advisor to the sub-committee. The executive committee may delegate to the leadership of the finance sub-committee, composed of the moderator and two additional sub-committee members, the authority to authorise and approve for issue the financial statements following recommendation of the audit committee. The leadership of the finance sub-committee may act on financial matters as specifically authorised by the executive committee between meetings, reporting back to the executive committee.

- iii. Personnel, Staffing and Nominations sub-committee, which shall assist the executive committee in:
 - a. As to personnel matters, undertaking oversight of human resources policy and strategy, ensuring the World Council of Churches follows best practice in its

treatment, development and deployment of all staff, with specific attention to the following:

1. Recruitment and retention policy including years of service, policy for redundancy and redeployment
 2. The code of ethics
 3. Staff appraisal and continuing professional development
 4. Whistle-blowing policy
 5. Grievance and disciplinary policies
 6. Support for staff in implementing changes in staffing policy, particularly when significant structural change is envisioned
 7. Staff rules.
- b. As to staffing matters, preparing decisions for the appointment of staff according to rule XI;
- c. As to nominations matters:
1. Recording and processing changes in the membership of the central committee and its committees;
 2. Preparing the recommendations of the executive committee to the central committee with regard to the mandate and size of commissions, joint consultative bodies and reference groups.
- d. As to governance matters, recording and processing proposals for the amendments to the Constitution and Rules of the World Council of Churches made in accordance with article VII of the constitution and rule XX.
- iv. Public Issues sub-committee shall assist the executive committee in preparing statements and/or minutes.
- b. Audit Committee. Its terms of reference are approved by the central committee. Elected by the executive committee, it reports directly to the executive committee.

IX. Permanent committee on consensus and collaboration

1. At its first full meeting after an assembly, the central committee shall elect from among its members the membership of the permanent committee on consensus and collaboration (the “permanent committee”), consisting of fourteen members, of whom half shall be Orthodox.

2. The Orthodox members of the nominations committee of the central committee, in consultation with all Orthodox members of the central committee, shall nominate the seven Orthodox members, and the other members of the nominations committee of the central committee shall nominate the remaining seven. The central committee as a whole shall elect the permanent committee. For election of the permanent committee, the provisions of rule VII.5. shall not apply: no counter nominations shall be accepted from the floor.
3. Of the overall membership at least half shall be members of the executive committee. Proxies may substitute for absent members. Advisers may be invited from member churches. Observers may be invited from non-member churches, or on occasion from churches in association with the World Council of Churches.
4. Two co-moderators shall be elected by the membership of the permanent committee, one by its Orthodox members, and one by the other members. Any vacancy in the permanent committee will be filled through the same process as the election of its members.
5. The term of the members of the outgoing permanent committee shall conclude upon election of replacement members following an assembly. The permanent committee shall be considered a committee of the assembly and shall advise the business committee of the assembly.
6. The permanent committee will have responsibility for:
 - a. continuing the authority, mandate, concerns and dynamic of the Special Commission (mandated by the eighth assembly, Harare, Zimbabwe, 1998);
 - b. giving advice and making recommendations to governing bodies during and between assemblies in order to contribute to the formation of consensus on matters proposed for the agenda;
 - c. facilitating improved participation of the Orthodox in the entire life and work of the Council;
 - d. offering counsel and providing opportunity for action in matters of common interest;
 - e. giving attention to matters of ecclesiology.
7. The permanent committee will report to the central committee and to the executive committee.

X. Standing committees of the central committee

1. Standing committees shall be understood to be those permanent committees defined in this rule. Standing committees are to accomplish the work required of their mandates during meetings of the central committee.

2. At the first decision session of the second meeting of the central committee, the central committee shall receive from the executive committee a proposal for appointments to standing committees of the central committee, and shall elect members of standing committees of the central committee. With the exception of moderators of the programme and finance policy committees who were elected at the organizing meeting of the central committee (rule VII), the executive committee shall propose moderators of standing committees, considering the specific skills and profiles necessary to undertake the responsibilities of serving as moderator.

a. The committees shall include, but not be limited to:

- i. Governance and Nominations Committee
- ii. Programme Committee
- iii. Finance Policy Committee
- iv. Policy Reference Committee
- v. Public Issues Committee
- vi. Communications Committee

c. Members of the central committee shall each be proposed for one standing committee of the central committee, with due regard being paid to the specific expertise and interests of the member and overall balances within the committee.

d. Participants in the central committee (rule VI.2) may also be assigned to participate in the work of one standing committee.

3. The Governance and Nominations Committee will have responsibility for:

- a. Assisting the central committee to monitor the organisational structure, including committees, sub- committees, commissions, consultative bodies and working groups in accordance with the Constitution and Rules;
- b. Preparing nominations for the election of the committees of the central committee, commissions, consultative bodies and reference groups;
- c. Monitoring the adoption of rules and bylaws consistent with the Constitution to govern the work of the Council;
- d. Receiving and processing any proposals for the amendments of the Constitution and Rules;

- e. Receiving and processing replacements or substitutions in the membership of the central and the executive committees for action by the central committee.

4. Programme Committee

- a. The central committee shall elect from among its members the moderator and the twenty-three members of the programme committee together with up to eight advisors.
- b. The programme committee will have responsibility for:
 - i. Considering in particular the theological inter-relationship of World Council of Churches' programmes and the implication of programmes and activities for the relationships among member churches and with ecumenical partners;
 - ii. Assisting the central committee, by considering various inputs, clarifying options and devising a process to determine and develop the strategies that will deliver the broad outcomes set by the assembly. At the second meeting of central committee this will involve helping central committee engage with proposals for the eight-year strategy;
 - iii. Assisting the central committee to hear, with respect to programmatic work, the views and hopes of the churches; respond to key issues identified by commissions; and review, reshape and develop the goals of programme work in the light of changing circumstances and needs;
 - iv. Reviewing the executive committee's report on program work, and bringing to the central committee recommendations for action;
 - v. Ensuring adequate plans are in place for the mid-term and pre-assembly programme evaluation.

5. Finance Policy Committee will have responsibility for recommending policies related to:

- a. The membership contributions scheme and campaign, general reserves and investments;
- b. Long term financial goals and the income and fund-raising strategy to achieve them, consistent with the vision and strategic objectives of the World Council of Churches;
- c. Significant issues concerning financial reporting, internal controls, accountability and compliance with laws and regulations, income generating projects, based upon reports from the finance sub-committee of the executive committee.

6. The Policy Reference Committee will have responsibility for:
 - a. Assessing relationships among member churches and with ecumenical partners, and suggesting appropriate actions to the central committee;
 - b. Assisting the central committee to take note of and analyse ecclesial and ecumenical developments;
 - c. Assisting the central committee in the preparation of policy guidelines for relationships;
 - d. Considering membership matters and bringing to the central committee recommendations for action.
7. The Public Issues Committee will have responsibility for:
 - a. Assisting the central committee in the preparation of policy guidelines for international affairs;
 - b. Analysing emerging issues in international affairs affecting the life and witness of the member churches, including those identified by the assembly, commissions and consultative bodies;
 - c. Preparing and proposing public statements and/or minutes for action by the central committee, according to procedures adopted by the central committee.
 - d. Receiving and analysing proposals from members of the central committee for public statements and/or minutes;
8. The Communications Committee will have responsibility for:
 - a. Recommending to the central committee policy guidelines regarding the communications and publications of the World Council of Churches;
 - b. Monitoring the communications strategy of the Council, evaluating communications effectiveness, and making recommendations toward the short term and long term strategic goals and thematic foci for communicating the mission and work of the World Council of Churches;
 - c. Evaluating and encouraging the development and coherence of WCC communication efforts of the general secretariat, programmes and governing bodies;
 - d. Assessing and encouraging member church participation in communicating the mission and work World Council of Churches;
 - e. Ensuring that adequate plans are in place for strategic collaboration between the Council and ecumenical organizations, other faith-based communications agencies, and regional networks for

communicating thematic foci of the Council and for communicating the mission and work of the World Council of Churches.

XI. Staff

1. a. A general secretary shall be elected by the central committee in accordance with rule XIX.10.a.iii and the procedures adopted by the central committee for the search for and election of the general secretary.

b. When the position of general secretary unexpectedly becomes vacant, between two meetings of the central committee, the executive committee shall provisionally appoint a general secretary who shall serve until the election of a new general secretary by the central committee, and shall initiate the search process for a new general secretary.
2. The general secretary shall lead the work of the World Council of Churches and shall serve as its chief executive officer, including final responsibility for work of the Council and its staff.
3. In addition to the general secretary, the central committee shall elect one or more deputy general secretaries. In consultation with the executive committee, the general secretary shall nominate his or her candidate(s) for the open position(s) and the central committee shall vote to elect the nomination in accordance with rule XIX.10.a.iii. The normal term of appointment for the deputy general secretary or secretaries shall be five years, with the possibility of renewal.
4. The general secretary shall provide for the appointment of or appoint staff to conduct the continuing operations of the Council.
 - a. For staff leadership positions of direct responsibility for major programme or management areas of the Council, and those to whom are directly delegated responsibilities of the general secretary, the general secretary shall propose persons to fill such positions, and the executive committee shall make the appointment(s).
 - b. At the beginning of the tenure of a new general secretary and at the time of any significant programmatic or structural reorganization, the general secretary and the executive committee together shall determine which specific staff positions come under this provision. Appointments to these positions shall be reported to the central committee.
 - c. The general secretary shall appoint other programme executive staff, and report those staff appointments to the executive committee.

- d. The general secretary shall appoint specialized, administrative and house staff.
5. The normal terms of appointment for the general secretary shall be five years, unless some other period is stated in the resolution making the appointment, with the possibility of a one additional appointment.
6. Retirement shall normally be that designated by Swiss law, but in no case shall it be later than the end of the year in which a staff member reaches the age of sixty-eight.
7. The general secretary shall ensure that the following policies regarding the staff of the World Council of Churches are implemented for all staff levels, and composition of staff related to these policies shall be reported to the executive committee:
 - a. The primary consideration in the recruitment and appointment of staff shall be the necessity of securing the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity.
 - b. Due account shall be taken of the importance of recruiting staff on as broad and fair a confessional and geographical basis as possible.
 - c. All posts shall be open equally to men and women and selection of personnel shall be made without distinction as to race and gender.
 - d. Staff members shall demonstrate commitment to the aims and spirit of the World Council of Churches and shall serve the whole Council.
 - e. Applicants from member churches shall demonstrate support of their application from the leadership of the member church.
 - f. Every effort shall be taken to have staff and leadership inclusive of both men and women and balanced according to region and confession.
 - g. Decisions regarding staff shall be consistent with WCC priorities, with human resources policies, periodic assessments, and exit protocols managed with concern for the person as well in compliance with local law.

XII. Public statements

1. In the performance of its functions, the World Council of Churches through its assembly or through its central committee may issue statements on any situation or concern with which the Council or its constituent churches may be confronted.

2. While such statements may have great significance and influence as the expression of the judgment or concern of so widely representative a Christian body, yet their authority will consist only in the weight which they carry by their own truth and wisdom, and the publishing of such statements shall not be held to imply that the Council as such has, or can have, any constitutional authority over the constituent churches or right to speak for them.
3. Any commission may recommend statements to the assembly or to the central committee for its consideration and action.
4. When, in the judgment of a commission, a statement should be issued before approval of the assembly or central committee can be obtained, the commission may do so provided the statement relates to matters within its own field of concern and action, has the approval of the moderator of the central committee and the general secretary, and the commission makes clear that neither the World Council of Churches nor any of its member churches is committed by the statement.
5. Between meetings of the central committee, when in their judgment the situation requires, a statement may be issued, provided that such statements are not contrary to the established policy of the Council, by:
 - a. the executive committee when meeting apart from the sessions of the central committee; or
 - b. the moderator and vice-moderator or vice-moderators of the central committee and the general secretary acting together; or
 - c. the moderator of the central committee or the general secretary on his or her own authority respectively.

XIII. Associate councils

1. Any national Christian council, national council of churches or national ecumenical council, established for purposes of ecumenical fellowship and activity, may be recognized by the central committee as an associate council, provided:
 - a. the applicant council, knowing the basis upon which the World Council of Churches is founded, expresses its desire to cooperate with the Council towards the achievement of one or more of the functions and purposes of this Council; and
 - b. the member churches of the World Council of Churches in the area have been consulted prior to the action.
2. Each associate council:

- a. shall be invited to send a delegated representative to the assembly;
 - b. shall be invited to send an adviser to meetings of the central committee; and
 - c. shall be provided with copies of all general communications sent to all member churches of the World Council of Churches.
3. In addition to communicating directly with its member churches, the Council shall inform each associate council regarding important ecumenical developments and consult it regarding proposed Council programmes in its country.
 4. In consultation with the associate councils, the central committee shall establish and review from time to time guidelines regarding the relationships between the World Council of Churches and national councils of churches.

XIV. Regional ecumenical organizations

1. The World Council of Churches recognizes regional ecumenical organizations as essential partners in the ecumenical movement.
2. Such regional ecumenical organizations as may be designated by the central committee:
 - a. shall be invited to send a delegated representative to the assembly;
 - b. shall be invited to send an adviser to meetings of the central committee; and
 - c. shall be provided with copies of all general communications sent to all member churches of the World Council of Churches.
3. In addition to communicating directly with its member churches, the Council shall inform each of these regional ecumenical organizations regarding important ecumenical developments and consult it regarding proposed World Council of Churches programmes in its region.
4. The central committee, together with the regional ecumenical organizations, shall establish and review as appropriate guiding principles for relationships and cooperation between the World Council of Churches and regional ecumenical organizations, including the means whereby programmatic responsibilities could be shared among them.

XV. Christian world communions

1. The World Council of Churches recognizes the role of Christian world communions or world confessional bodies in the ecumenical movement.
2. Such Christian world communions as may be designated by the central committee and which express their desire to this effect:
 - a. shall be invited to send a delegated representative to the assembly; and
 - b. shall be invited to send an adviser to meetings of the central committee; and
 - c. shall be provided with copies of all general communications sent to all member churches of the World Council of Churches.
3. The central committee shall establish and review as appropriate guidelines for relationships and cooperation with Christian world communions.

XVI. Specialized ministries engaged in witness and service

1. Specialized ministries are those church-based, church-related or ecumenical offices and organizations and alliances or associations thereof within the family of World Council of Churches member churches, serving the ecumenical movement particularly in the areas of mission, diakonia, relief, development and advocacy.

Any specialized ministry committed to ecumenical witness and service may be recognized by the central committee as an ecumenical organization with which the World Council of Churches has working relationship, provided:

- a. the organization, knowing the basis upon which the World Council of Churches is founded, expresses its willingness to relate to and cooperate with it on those terms; and
 - b. the member church or churches with whom the specialized ministry is related do not formally oppose this form of relationship.
2. Each specialized ministry thus recognised:
- a. shall be invited to send a delegated representative to the assembly;
 - b. shall be invited to send an adviser to meetings of the central committee; and
 - c. shall be provided with copies of all general communications sent to all member churches of the World Council of Churches.
3. In addition to communicating directly with its member churches, the Council may inform each of these specialized ministries regarding important

ecumenical developments and consult with it regarding proposed World Council of Churches programmes in its area of commitment and expertise.

4. In consultation with specialized ministries, the central committee shall establish and review from time to time guidelines regarding the relationships between the World Council of Churches and specialized ministries.

XVII. International ecumenical organizations

1. Ecumenical organizations other than those mentioned under rules XIII, XIV, XV, and XVI may be recognized by the central committee as organizations with which the World Council of Churches has working relationships, provided:

- a. the organization is international in nature (global, regional or sub-regional) and its objectives are consistent with the functions and purposes of the Council; and
- b. the organization, knowing the basis upon which the World Council of Churches is founded, expresses its desire to relate to and cooperate with it.

2. On the basis of reciprocity, each international ecumenical organization:

- a. shall be invited to send a delegated representative to the assembly; and
- b. shall be provided with copies of general communications sent to all member churches of the World Council of Churches.

XVIII. Legal provisions

1. The duration of the World Council of Churches is unlimited.

2. The legal headquarters of the Council shall be at Grand-Saconnex, Geneva, Switzerland. It is registered in Geneva as an association according to art. 60ff. of the Swiss civil code. Regional offices may be organized in different parts of the world by decision of the central committee.

3. The World Council of Churches is legally represented by its executive committee or by such persons as may be empowered by the executive committee to represent it.

4.

5. The World Council of Churches shall be legally bound by the joint signatures of two of the following persons: the moderator and vice-moderator or vice-moderators of the central committee, the general secretary, the deputy general secretary or secretaries. The moderator of the central committee (or a vice-moderator acting together with the general secretary or a deputy general secretary of the World Council of Churches) shall have power to authorise other persons, chosen by them, as registered signatories to act on behalf of the World Council of Churches in fields circumscribed in the power of attorney.

6. The Council shall obtain the means necessary for the pursuance of its work, from the contributions of its member churches, from donations, grants and bequests, as well as from income generated from its properties and other assets.

7. The Council shall not pursue commercial functions but it shall have the right to act as an agency of interchurch aid, to publish literature in connection with its aims, and to use its properties and other assets for the purposes of generating income to support its work. It is not entitled to distribute any surplus income by way of profit or bonus among its members.

8. Members of the governing bodies of the Council or of the assembly shall have no personal liability with regard to the obligations or commitments of the Council. The commitments entered upon by the Council are guaranteed solely by its own assets.

9. Official correspondence from the Council to member churches or members of governing bodies ordinarily shall be by standard post to the address of record. When the member church or member of governing bodies has provided an electronic address, official correspondence may also be transmitted by electronic means, and shall have the same legal significance as correspondence by post.

10. Electronic means—teleconference, video-conference and similar technologies—may be used for consultation and decision-making, by the central and executive committees and their standing and sub-committees, as well as all committees, commissions, consultative bodies, reference and advisory groups, guided by principles of consensus, and subject to rule XIX.11.

11. Decisions can be taken in between regular ordinary meetings of the governing bodies, when determined necessary by the leadership of the central committee, by postal or electronic means voting, subject to Rule XIX. 12.

XIX. Conduct of meetings

1. General

- a. These provisions for conduct of meetings shall apply to meetings of the assembly, the central committee, the executive committee and all other bodies of the World Council of Churches. During an assembly, the titles “president, moderator and vice-moderators of the central committee” shall refer to the persons holding those offices in the outgoing central committee. During the term of a central committee such titles shall refer to the current presidents and leadership of that central committee. Where a section of this rule refers to the assembly it shall be understood to refer also to the body in session, with the necessary changes having been made. In the case of the assembly business committee, the leadership of the central committee shall be understood to have the corresponding responsibility.
- b. “Delegate” shall mean an official representative of a member church to an assembly with the right to speak and the responsibility to participate in decision-making (rule IV.1.a). For meetings of the central committee, “delegate” shall mean a member of the central committee or that member’s substitute (rule VI.1.b), with the right to speak and the responsibility to participate in decision-making.
- c. “Participant” shall include delegates as well as persons invited to the assembly or a meeting of the central committee as persons with the right to speak but not to participate in decision-making (rule IV.1.b and VI.2).

2. Categories of sessions

The assembly shall sit in one of the following categories of sessions: general, hearing or decision. The business committee shall determine the category of session appropriate for different parts of the agenda.

- a. General session
General sessions shall be reserved for ceremonial occasions, public acts of witness and formal addresses. Only matters proposed by the central committee or by the business committee shall be included in general sessions. No decisions shall be made during general sessions.
- b. Hearing session
Hearing sessions shall be designated for plenary presentations, discussion, dialogue, and exchange of ideas as a resource for developing understanding, deepening fellowship among member churches and coming to a common mind on matters on the agenda. A wide range of perspectives shall be encouraged during hearing sessions. No decisions shall be made during hearing sessions, other

than to move to a decision session, if deemed necessary or to deal with a point of order or procedural proposals.

c. Decision session

Decision sessions shall be designated for matters requiring a decision, including:

- i. adoption of the agenda;
- ii. proposal for change in the agenda;
- iii. appointments and elections;
- iv. reception or adoption of reports or recommendations;
- v. actions to be taken on recommendations or proposals of committees or commissions, or arising out of hearing sessions;
- vi. adoption of accounts and financial audits; and
- vii. amendment of constitution or rules.

3. Moderating sessions

a. A moderator for each session of the assembly shall be designated before an assembly by the outgoing central committee, and during an assembly by the business committee, as follows:

- i. in general sessions one of the presidents or the moderator of the central committee shall preside;
- ii. in hearing sessions one of the presidents, the moderator or a vice-moderator of the central committee, or a delegate with specific expertise in the subject matter of the hearing, shall preside;
- iii. in decision sessions the moderator or a vice-moderator of the central committee or delegate to the assembly who was a member of the outgoing central committee shall preside.

b. The role of session moderators shall be:

- i. to preside in a manner that assists the meeting to be open to discerning the will of God and ensures that the needs and purposes of the Council are met in the way business is carried out;
- ii. to convene the session, announcing the category of session;
- iii. to facilitate and encourage discussion and dialogue for the exchange and development of ideas, to cultivate the ethos of consensus, and to assist the meeting to come to a common mind;

- iv. during decision sessions, to test any emerging agreement on a particular point and whether the meeting is ready to move to a decision by consensus;
 - v. in the event the category of session is to change during a session, to announce the change in category, providing a break in the session to mark the change in category; and
 - vi. to close the session.
- c. The moderator shall consult with the recorder for the session to ensure that the developing consensus is accurately noted and any changed wording promptly made available to the meeting.
 - d. All moderators, recorders and rapporteurs shall undertake specific training in conducting meetings based upon the consensus model of decision-making, as described in these rules and the accompanying guidelines.

4. Moderator of the assembly

The moderator of the assembly shall announce the opening, suspension and the adjournment of the assembly.

5. Official minutes, records and reports

- a. The business committee shall appoint recorders from among delegates for each decision session. Their role shall be to follow the discussion of a decision session, to record the language of the emerging consensus, including final language of decisions taken, and to assist the moderator of the session in discerning an emerging consensus using best available technology. Recorders shall also assist the moderator in ensuring that the final agreed wording of a proposal is made available to delegates before a decision is made.
- b. The business committee shall appoint rapporteurs for each hearing session and for committee meetings for which official minutes are not maintained, to prepare a report of the meeting including major themes and specific proposals. A rapporteur appointed for a committee meeting shall function as a recorder of that meeting, and shall be supported by World Council of Churches staff working in related areas.
- c. The business committee shall appoint minute-takers to record the official minutes of general, hearing and decision sessions of an assembly or any meeting for which minutes must be kept, and may include a record of the discussion and motions, and shall report the decisions. The minutes will normally incorporate by reference any report of the meeting. The minutes shall be signed by the moderator and the minute-taker for the session and shall be sent to

the participants of the meeting. For all minutes other than minutes of an assembly, if there is no objection within six months from the sending of the minutes, the minutes shall be considered to be accepted. The first full central committee meeting following the organizing meeting shall confirm the minutes of the assembly.

- d. Decision sessions shall produce official minutes, a record and/or report.
- e. If, after the close of a meeting, a member church declares that it cannot support a decision of the meeting, the member church may submit its objection in writing and have its position recorded in the minutes or report of a subsequent meeting. The decision itself shall not be rescinded by this action.

6. Agenda

- a. Matters may be included on the agenda of a meeting according to the procedures indicated below. Normally, matters included on an agenda will be based upon reports, recommendations or proposals that previously have been fully considered and have the consensus support of the proposing group or committee.
 - i. Assembly agenda
 - ii. The agenda of the assembly shall be proposed by the central committee to the first decision session of the assembly for approval. A delegate may propose changes to the agenda in accordance with this rule, section c. New business or any change may be proposed by the business committee in accordance with rule IV.5.b.
 - iii. Central Committee agenda
 - iv. The agenda of the central committee shall be proposed by the executive committee at the first decision session of the central committee meeting for approval.
 - v. Executive Committee agenda
 - vi. The agenda of the executive committee shall be proposed by the leadership of the central committee at the first decision session of the executive committee meeting for approval.
 - vii. Agenda of standing committees
 - viii. Agendas shall be proposed by the leadership of the central committee and published for all standing committees and shall be approved at the committee's first session.
- i. The business committee shall ensure that the moderator is advised before each session, and if appropriate during breaks within a

session, as to the conduct of the business and the priority of various agenda items.

- j. A delegate may propose to the business committee an item of business to be included on, or any change in, the agenda. If after consideration the business committee has not agreed to the proposal, the delegate may appeal the decision to the moderator of the assembly in writing. The moderator shall at a convenient time inform the assembly of the proposal, and a member of the business committee shall explain the reasons for this refusal. The delegate may give reasons for proposing it. The moderator shall then without further debate put the following question: Shall the assembly accept this proposal? If the assembly agrees to accept the proposal, the business committee as soon as possible shall bring proposals for the inclusion of the matter or the change in the agenda.
- k. Matters concerning ecclesiological self-understanding: Where a matter being raised is considered by a delegate to go against the ecclesiological self-understanding of his or her church, the delegate may request that it not be submitted for decision. The moderator shall seek the advice of the business committee in consultation with this delegate and other members of the same church or confession present at the session. If agreed that the matter does in fact go against the ecclesiological self-understanding of the delegate's church, the moderator shall announce that the matter will be removed from the agenda of the decision session and may be considered in a hearing session. The materials and minutes of the discussion shall be sent to the member churches for their study and comment.
- l. Agendas shall be proposed, amended and/or adopted in accordance with this rule, and rules IV.3, IV.5, and VI.3.e.

7. Speaking

- a. In hearing sessions, participants wishing to speak either may submit to the moderator a written request or may queue, but may speak only when called by the moderator.
- b. In decision sessions of the assembly or central committee, only delegates may speak. Delegates wishing to speak during in person meetings either may submit to the moderator a written request or may queue, and during electronic meetings may use the electronic equivalent for queuing, but may speak only when called by the moderator.

- c. In sessions of committees and advisory bodies where both hearing and decision may take place, participants who are not delegates have the right to speak but not to participate in decision-making.
 - d. The moderator shall decide who shall speak, ensuring that a fair distribution of opinions is heard, and may take advice on the order of speakers from a small sub-committee of the business committee. If time allows and others are not left unheard, the moderator may permit speakers to intervene more than once.
 - e. When called by the moderator, a speaker shall speak from a microphone, first stating his or her name, church, country, and role at the meeting, and shall address all remarks to the moderator.
 - f. Remarks will normally be limited to three minutes; however, the moderator may use discretion in allowing extra time if there is a difficulty in language or interpretation or if the issues being discussed are unusually complex.
 - g. Procedural proposals—hearing or decision sessions: Provided that a speaker is not interrupted, a delegate may ask for clarification of the pending matter or may raise suggestions about procedure. The moderator immediately shall provide clarification or respond to the suggestion for change of procedure.
 - h. Points of order—hearing or decision sessions: This provision is available to question whether procedures being followed are in accordance with these rules, to object to offensive language, to make a point of personal explanation, or to request that a meeting move to closed session. Points of order may be raised by a participant at any time, even by interrupting another speaker. A participant gains the attention of the moderator by standing and calling, “point of order!” The moderator shall ask the participant to state the point of order and then (without discussion) shall rule on it immediately.
 - i. If any delegate disagrees with the moderator’s decision on a procedural proposal or point of order, the delegate may appeal against it. In this case the moderator will put this question, without discussion, to the meeting: “Does the meeting concur with the decision of the moderator?” The delegates present shall decide the question according to the decision-making procedures then being employed.
8. Reaching consensus: seeking the common mind of the meeting
- a. Consensus shall be understood as seeking the common mind of the meeting without resort to a formal vote, in a process of genuine

dialogue that is respectful, mutually supportive and empowering, whilst prayerfully seeking to discern God's will.

- b. Decisions will normally be by consensus, unless otherwise specified by the rules.
- c. A consensus decision on a particular matter shall be recorded when one of the following occurs:
 - i. all delegates are in agreement (unanimity); or
 - ii. most are in agreement and those who disagree are satisfied that the discussion has been both full and fair and do not object that the proposal expresses the general mind of the meeting.
- d. A consensus decision shall mean that there is agreement about the outcome of a discussion. This may mean agreement to accept a proposal or a variation of a proposal; it also may mean agreement about another outcome, including agreement to reject a proposal, to postpone a matter, that no decision can be reached, or that there are various opinions that may be held. When consensus has been reached that various opinions can be held concerning a matter, those various opinions shall be recorded in the final wording of the minutes and the report and the record of the meeting.

9. Decision-making by consensus

- a. A proposal or recommendation considered in a decision session may be affirmed, modified or rejected. Delegates may suggest modifications, and the moderator may allow discussion on more than one modification at a time. Reaching a common mind may require a series of steps, if there is a variety of opinions being expressed. As discussion proceeds, the moderator may ask the meeting to affirm what is held in common before encouraging discussion on those aspects of a proposal about which more diverse opinions have been voiced.
- b. To assist the moderator in discerning the mind of the meeting and to move efficiently towards consensus, the recorder of the session shall maintain a record of the discussion. Delegates may be provided with indicator cards to facilitate participation; consensus indicator cards shall not be used for voting.
- c. A delegate or the moderator may suggest that the matter under discussion be referred for further work to an appropriate group holding a range of points of view. This suggestion itself shall be tested to discern the mind of the meeting. If agreed, the business committee shall schedule consideration of the matter for a later session.

- d. When it seems that the meeting is close to agreement on an outcome, the moderator shall ensure that the wording of the proposal (or the proposal as varied during the course of the discussion) is clear to all delegates, and then test whether there is consensus on that outcome. If all are agreed consistent with rule XIX.8.c.i, the moderator shall declare that consensus has been reached and the decision made. If the meeting is not unanimous, the moderator shall invite those who hold a minority view to explain their reasons if they wish and to indicate whether they can agree with a decision pursuant to rule XIX.8.c.ii. If so, consensus shall be declared.
- e. If, after every effort has been made to reach consensus, agreement cannot be reached and it is the opinion of the business committee, or, in the case of meetings of the central or executive committees, the leadership of the central committee, that a decision must be made before the meeting concludes, the moderator shall ask the business committee, or, in the case of meetings of the central or executive committees, the leadership of the central committee, to formulate a proposal for how the matter may be considered again in a new form. At the later decision session where this new approach is considered, the meeting itself shall decide whether a decision must be made at this meeting, and, if so, shall proceed on any one of the following courses, which may be followed sequentially:
 - i. to work further towards consensus on the proposal in its new form;
 - ii. to work to reach agreement among most delegates with some delegates recording an objection, in which event a meeting shall record acceptance of the proposal, providing that each delegate who does not agree is satisfied with that outcome and has the right to have his or her viewpoint recorded in the minutes, in the report, and in the record of the meeting; or
 - iii. to move into voting procedures to decide the matter (rule XIX.10).
- f. When a meeting discusses by consensus procedures a matter for which decision must be reached at that meeting and there is no ready agreement in accordance with rule XIX.9.e.i or ii, the moderator may offer a procedural proposal: “That the meeting resolve the proposal now by vote”. Except for matters described in rule XIX.6.d, “matters concerning ecclesiological self-understanding”, the moderator shall announce that a vote to decide this change of procedure shall be taken. Delegates shall indicate by voting whether they agree that the matter shall be decided by a vote. If 85 percent of delegates present vote in favour of moving the matter to

a voting process, the matter shall so move. If fewer than 85 percent of delegates present vote in favour of moving the matter to a voting process, the matter shall not so move, and the meeting shall decide, again by vote of 85 percent of delegates present, whether discussion should continue to achieve consensus or whether discussion should be discontinued.

10. Decision-making by vote

- a. Some matters require decision by vote, rather than by consensus. The following matters require decision by vote:
 - i. amendments to the constitution (two-thirds majority of the assembly);
 - ii. confirmation by the assembly of amendments proposed by the central committee to rules I, VI, and XX (two-thirds majority of the assembly);
 - iii. elections (simple majority with specific procedures for election of the general secretary);
 - iv. selection of assembly venue (simple majority);
 - v. adoption of yearly accounts, financial audit reports and appointment of the auditors (simple majority).
- b. For matters that have been moved from consensus procedures to decision-making by vote in accordance with rule XIX.9.e.iii or rule XIX.9.f, and for matters reserved to a voting procedure according to subsection a. of this section, the following procedures shall be followed:
 - i. All motions must be moved and seconded by a delegate, and the mover has the right to speak first.
 - ii. In discussion following the seconding of a motion, no delegate may speak more than once, except that the delegate who moved the motion may answer objections at the end of the discussion.
 - iii. Any delegate may move an amendment, and if a seconder supports it, the amendment shall be considered simultaneously with the original proposal.
 - iv. When discussion is concluded, including the right of the mover to reply (XIX.10.b.ii.), the moderator shall call for the vote by show of hands in the case of meetings held in person, and by the equivalent electronic indication in the event of electronic meetings, and shall put any amendment first. If approved, it will be incorporated in the original proposal, which will

then be put to the vote in the same manner, without further discussion.

- v. If the mover seeks to withdraw a motion or amendment during the discussion, the moderator will seek the consent of the meeting for the withdrawal.
- c. A delegate may move to close the discussion, but in doing so shall not interrupt a speaker. If seconded, the moderator shall call for a vote on this motion immediately without discussion. If two-thirds of the meeting agree, the voting process will then begin. If the motion fails, discussion will proceed, but the same motion to close discussion may be moved again as the discussion continues, but not by the delegate who moved it the first time.
- d. Voting shall be by show of hands in the case of meetings held in person, and by the equivalent electronic indication in the event of electronic meetings and the moderator shall ask first for those in favour, then for those against, and finally for those who wish to abstain from voting. The moderator shall announce the result of the vote immediately.
- e. If the moderator is in doubt, or for any other reason decides to do so, or if a delegate requests it, a vote on the matter shall be taken immediately by count of a show of hands in the case of meetings held in person, and by the equivalent electronic indication in the event of electronic meetings. The moderator may call tellers to count those voting and abstaining. A delegate may ask that voting be by secret ballot, written or electronic if secrecy can be secured, and, if seconded, and if a majority of delegates present and voting agree, a secret ballot shall be taken. The moderator shall announce the result of any count or secret ballot.
- f. A majority of the delegates present, including those who choose to abstain from voting, shall determine a matter being decided by vote unless a higher proportion is required by the constitution or these rules. If the vote results in a tie, the matter shall be regarded as defeated.
- g. If the moderator wishes to participate in the discussion, he or she shall relinquish the position of moderator of the session to another presiding officer until the matter has been resolved.
- h. A moderator entitled to vote as a delegate may do so, but may not cast the decisive vote in the event of a tie.
- i. Any two delegates who voted with the majority for a previously decided matter may request that the business committee or, in the case of meetings of the central or executive committees, the

leadership of the central committee, propose reconsideration of the matter. The business committee or the leadership of the central committee, shall bring the proposal to the next decision session and may express an opinion as to whether the matter should be reconsidered. Reconsideration shall take place only if two-thirds of delegates present agree.

- j. Anyone voting with a minority or abstaining from voting may have his or her opinion recorded in the minutes, in the report, and/or the record of the meeting.

11. Electronic meetings

- a. Preference shall be given to meeting in person for meetings that have significant aspects of strengthening and deepening the fellowship, such as WCC governing bodies, commissions and consultative groups;
- b. Electronic means, such as teleconference, video-conference and other technologies, may be used in lieu of in person meetings, for consultation and decision-making, when a quorum is present and the following conditions have been met:
 - i. notice of the meeting has been duly provided to all participants;
 - ii. the designated technology feasibly allows consultation among the number of participants in the meeting, and for the subject matter to be discussed;
 - iii. all participants have access to the designated technology; and
 - iv. all participants have access to the documentation for the meeting in advance of the meeting.
- c. Principles of consensus shall guide all such meetings;
- d. Minutes of electronic meetings may draw only from material that has been introduced into the audible stream of the meeting.

12. Postal and Remote Electronic Decisions

- a. The central committee may, in extraordinary circumstances, decide on matters reserved for decision in accordance with rule XIX.10 by postal or remote electronic decision. “Extraordinary circumstances” shall be understood to be unforeseen situations that occur preventing the central committee from meeting in person without undue risk, in the judgment of the executive committee, or meeting electronically, or, when meeting electronically and the meeting moves to voting in accordance with rule XIX.10.b, and the decision to be taken concerns matters that must be taken for the good order of the Council;

- b. The executive committee may, by consensus, agree during a meeting to decide a matter in between its meetings, according to designated processes and timelines;
- c. Such matters may be decided by postal or remote electronic vote decision, provided:
 - i. The proposal for such decision with supporting documentation shall be communicated to the respective governing body, including, in the case of the central committee, an explanation of the extraordinary circumstance and significance of the matter that requires decision outside of a meeting;
 - ii. A date and time by which the decision must be registered shall be established, no sooner than ten (10) days nor later than twenty-one (21) days following the initial request for decision in the case of the executive committee, and no sooner than thirty (30) days nor later than forty-five (45) days following the initial request for decision in the case of the central committee;
 - iii. At the same time that the question is sent for decision, an electronic platform, accessible to all, shall be established for a specified time as a hearing period, for discussion, questions and answers, to be accessed prior to decision-making. Points of order and points of procedure must be posted to the electronic platform within seventy-two (72) hours of the opening of the hearing period, and must be decided by the moderator within seventy-two (72) hours thereafter. Following the conclusion of the time designated as the hearing period, during the remaining days of the period designated in Rule XIX.12.c.ii, decisions shall be registered through the platform. No amendments may be put to proposals for postal or remote electronic decision;
 - iv. In the case of a question put to the central committee by the executive committee, at the end of the time designated for the hearing period, the leadership of the central committee, having heard the discussion, may suspend the process and return the question to the executive committee for reformulation or may withdraw the question;
 - v. The decisions registered shall be accessible only to scrutineers designated by the leadership of the central committee from among the executive committee;
 - vi. A proposal will be considered approved under this rule when at least seventy-five (75%) percent of the respective governing body has responded and two-thirds (2/3) of those responding

register a decision in favour of the proposal. If fewer than seventy-five (75%) percent respond, the proposal may not be decided through electronic means, all decisions received shall be disregarded, and the matter shall be included on the agenda of the next ordinary meeting of the executive committee;

- vii. A report of the result of the decision shall be sent electronically within seven (7) days of the close of the decision period, and shall be reported to the executive committee during its next ordinary meeting;
- viii. This rule may not be interpreted to negate the provisions Rule VI.4.c.

13. Languages

The working languages in use in the World Council of Churches are English, French, German, Russian and Spanish. The general secretary shall make reasonable effort to provide interpretation for any one of those languages into the others and shall endeavour to provide written translation of the specific wording of proposals. A participant may speak in another language only if he or she provides for interpretation into one of the working languages. The general secretary shall provide all possible assistance to any participant requiring an interpreter.

XX. Amendments

Amendments to these rules may be proposed at any session of the assembly or at any session of the central committee by any member and shall be decided according to the procedures in rule XIX.9; if the meeting shifts from consensus to voting, then the procedures in rule XIX.10 will apply. In this case, the proposed change must receive a two-thirds majority of those present to be adopted. No alteration in rules I, VI and XX shall come into effect until it has been confirmed by the assembly. Notice of a proposal to make any amendment shall be given in writing at least twenty-four hours before the session of the assembly or central committee at which it is to be considered.

WCC 11th Assembly Programme

	WEDNESDAY 31 AUGUST	THURSDAY 1 SEPTEMBER	FRIDAY 2 SEPTEMBER	SATURDAY 3 SEPTEMBER
7.00 - 8.00		Business Committee 7.00-8.15	Business Committee 7.00-8.15	
8.30 - 9.00	Accreditation 8.30-10.00	Morning Prayer 8.30-9.15	Morning Prayer 8.30-9.15	Morning Prayer 8.30-9.15
9.00 - 9.30		Movement 9.15-9.45	Movement 9.15-9.45	Movement 9.15-9.45
9.30 - 10.00	Orientation Plenary 10.00-11.00	Thematic Plenary 1: The purpose of God's love for the whole creation – reconciliation and unity 9.45-11.15	Thematic Plenary 2: Europe 9.45-11.15	Assembly Committee 9.45-11.15
10.00 - 10.30				
10.30 - 11.00	Coffee Break/Brunnen 11.00-11.30	Coffee Break 11.15-12.00	Coffee Break 11.15-12.00	Coffee Break 11.15-12.00
11.00 - 11.30	Opening Plenary (Inc Business) 11.30-13.00	Home Groups 1 12.00-13.15	Home Groups 2 12.00-13.15	Assembly Committee 12.00-13.15
11.30 - 12.00				
12.00 - 12.30	Lunch/Brunnen/ Committees 13.00-14.30	Lunch/Brunnen/ Committees 13.15-15.00	Lunch/Brunnen/ Committees 13.15-15.00	Lunch 13.15-15.00
12.30 - 13.00				
13.00 - 13.30	General Secretary and Moderator Reports 14.30-16.00	Business Plenary 1 15.00-16.30	Business Plenary 2 15.00-16.30	Assembly Committee 15.00-16.30
13.30 - 14.00				
14.00 - 14.30	German Welcome Session 16.00-17.00	Coffee Break/Brunnen 16.30-17.00	Coffee Break/Brunnen 16.30-17.00	Coffee Break 16.30-17.00
14.30 - 15.00				
15.00 - 15.30	Break & Movement 17.00-17.30	Ecumenical Conversations 1 17.00-18.15	Ecumenical Conversations 2 17.00-18.15	Assembly Committee 17.00-18.15
15.30 - 16.00				
16.00 - 16.30	Opening Prayer 17.30-19.00	Movement 18.15-18.30	Movement 18.15-18.30	Movement 18.15-18.30
16.30 - 17.00		Evening Prayer 18.30-19.00	Evening Prayer 18.30-19.00	Evening Prayer 18.30-19.00
17.00 - 17.30	Dinner 19.00-20.30	Movement 19.00-19.15	Movement 19.00-19.15	Movement 19.00-19.15
17.30 - 18.00		Confessional Meetings 19.15-20.45	Regional Meetings 19.15-20.45	Dinner 19.15-20.45
18.00 - 18.30	Pilgrimage to Marktplatz 20.30-21.00	Dinner/Brunnen 20.45-22.15	Dinner/Brunnen 20.45-22.15	Light Show at Castle 20.45-22.30
18.30 - 19.00				
19.00 - 19.30	Marketplatz Entertainment 21.00-22.30			
19.30 - 20.00				
20.00 - 20.30				
20.30 - 21.00				
21.00 - 21.30				
21.30 - 22.00				
22.00 - 22.30				

SUNDAY 4 SEPTEMBER		MONDAY 5 SEPTEMBER	TUESDAY 6 SEPTEMBER	WEDNESDAY 7 SEPTEMBER	THURSDAY 8 SEPTEMBER	
		Business Committee 7.00-8.15	Business Committee 7.00-8.15	Business Committee 7.00-8.15	Business Committee 7.00-8.15	
Sunday Church Services Weekend Pilgrimage Programme 8.30-13.15		Morning Prayer 8.30-9.15	Morning Prayer 8.30-9.15	Morning Prayer 8.30-9.15	Morning Prayer Closing Plenary 8.30-11.00	
		Movement 9.15-9.45	Movement 9.15-9.45	Movement 9.15-9.45		
		Thematic Plenary 3: Affirming the wholeness of life 9.45-11.15	Thematic Plenary 4: Affirming justice and human dignity 9.45-11.15	Thematic Plenary 5: The bond of Christian unity and the churches' common witness 9.45-11.15		
		Coffee Break/Brunnen 11.15-12.00	Coffee Break/Brunnen 11.15-12.00	Coffee Break/Brunnen 11.15-12.00		
		Home Groups 3 12.00-13.15	Home Groups 4 12.00-13.15	Home Groups 5 12.00-13.15		
Lunch 13.15-15.00	Weekend Pilgrimage Programme	Lunch/Brunnen/ Committees 13.15-15.00	Lunch/Brunnen/ Committees 13.15-15.00	Lunch/Brunnen/ Committees 13.15-15.00	Lunch 13.15-15.00	
Assembly Committee 15.00-16.30		Business Plenary 3 15.00-16.30	Business Plenary 4 15.00-16.30	Business Plenary 5 15.00-16.30	Central Committee 15.00-18.00	Departures
Coffee Break 16.30-17.00		Coffee Break/Brunnen 16.30-17.00	Coffee Break/Brunnen 16.30-17.00	Coffee Break/Brunnen 16.30-17.00		
Assembly Committee 17.00-18.15		Ecumenical Conversations 3 17.00-18.15	Ecumenical Conversations 4 17.00-18.15	Business Plenary 6 17.00-18.15		
		Movement 18.15-18.30	Movement 18.15-18.30	Movement 18.15-18.30		
	Evening Prayer 18.30-19.00	Evening Prayer 18.30-19.00	Evening Prayer 18.30-19.00			
Dinner 19.00-20.00	Dinner/Brunnen 19.00-21.45	Dinner/Brunnen 19.00-21.45	Dinner/Brunnen 19.00-21.45			
Host Churches Evening 20.00-22.30						



World Council of Churches

Religion/Ecumenism

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