



World Council of Churches Annual Review 2005



OKOUMENE

“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.”

From the Constitution of the
World Council of Churches

WCC Annual Review 2005

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Introduction



The year 2005 was shaped by two major areas of engagement for the fellowship of churches that forms the WCC: a special focus on mission and evangelism culminating in the world mission conference, and renewed efforts in the area of interreligious dialogue. This was also a year of intensive preparation for the 9th Assembly in early 2006, including an evaluation of programmatic work which has laid the foundation for a refocusing of our future activities.

The world mission conference in Athens in May, the thirteenth since the great gathering of missionaries in Edinburgh almost a century ago, brought together an impressive spectrum of Christian churches, reaching far beyond the traditional WCC membership to embrace Roman Catholics, Evangelicals and Pentecostals. The message of mission as healing that was affirmed by the event is a powerful one, and the reflection and exchange at the conference will undoubtedly nourish work in evangelism and witness for many years. The mission conference was also the first to be held in a predominantly Orthodox context, and manifested the hospitality and contribution of this family of churches to the life and work of the WCC.

Dialogue with other faiths has formed a core part of the WCC mandate and agenda for decades. The two major initiatives taken during 2005 are evidence of the renewed attention and importance that the WCC is giving to interfaith dialogue in a global context of growing violence and tension. While interfaith initiatives have multiplied in recent years, rarely has such a broad gathering of religious leaders and scholars met in order to make a critical appraisal of the state of dialogue, as was the case with the "Critical Moment" conference in June in Geneva. The outcomes of the meeting point to a qualitative shift in interreligious dialogue, moving beyond encounter to deeper forms of collaboration. In a world in which we can perceive growing conflicts of identity, I am convinced that the WCC has a special responsibility to nurture a dialogue among cultures and faiths.

“To maintain its vitality and relevance in the 21st century, the ecumenical movement will need not only to transform its structures and style, but also to recover the strength of its spiritual and faith origins”



The pre-Assembly evaluation report presented to the central committee in February 2005 offered an unprecedented review of the WCC's activity, based on a broad survey of member churches and partners. The evaluation looked at all of the WCC's programmatic efforts over a period of years, and critically assessed levels of knowledge, participation and support within the constituency. The results point to some of the major successes of the WCC – but also reveal the need for important changes in style and priorities if the WCC is to maintain its relevance after almost 60 years of work.

The year also saw the completion of new research prepared for the 9th Assembly confirming the extraordinary breadth of the WCC membership. With the new members accepted in 2005, the total number of churches forming the WCC becomes 348, representing more than 560 million believers in all regions.

I believe that the WCC's strength remains its ability to bring together this wide spectrum of the Christian world around a common agenda and to form a common voice. Despite many challenges facing the fellowship, I am convinced that the WCC's unique contribution is needed more than ever, and that the first Assembly in the new century, in 2006, will mark a new stage on the ecumenical journey.

Throughout the year, new efforts were made to explore the role of spirituality in our ecumenical life. In many places we see a quest for authentic spirituality, often expressed outside the traditional forms of being church, which gives evidence of the thirst for expressing faith that invites more creative, less bureaucratic and more relational values in Christian living. To maintain its vitality and relevance in the 21st century, the ecumenical movement will need not only to transform its structures and style, but also to recover the strength of its spiritual and faith origins as a source of renewal and engagement that links work for unity with witness to the world, things of the spirit with action for liberation, justice and peace.

The World Council of Churches aims to promote Christian unity in faith, witness and service.

Within the contemporary world where the map of Christianity is being radically redrawn, the World Council of Churches (WCC) represents a unique global “fellowship of churches” - 348 member churches from North and South, East and West, and from the Anglican, Protestant, Orthodox, Old Catholic, Pentecostal and uniting church traditions - that commit themselves to stay, to pray, to act and to journey together.

The modern ecumenical movement began in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when Christians began increasingly to pray and work together across denominational boundaries. By the 1920s, several pioneering movements had been formed to advance the cause of church unity worldwide.

In 1937, church leaders from Protestant and Orthodox traditions agreed to establish a World Council of Churches, and in 1948 representatives of 147 churches gathered in Amsterdam to constitute the WCC. Since that time, a growing number of churches on every continent have joined this search for Christian unity.

Today the WCC works with its members on a broad range of issues, ranging from theological dialogue, education, interfaith relations, to action for justice and peace. The WCC is governed by an elected central committee, moderated in 2005 by Catholicos Aram I, head of the Armenian Apostolic Church (Cilicia). A new governing body and officers are to be elected by the 9th Assembly. Since 2004, Rev. Dr Samuel Kobia (from Kenya) is the general secretary and heads the 170 staff based at the WCC headquarters in Geneva. The WCC maintains offices in the USA, the Middle East, Eastern Europe and the Pacific and also operates programmes in other regions.

In February 2006, the WCC holds its 9th Assembly in Porto Alegre, Brazil, gathering thousands of participants from virtually every Christian tradition to pray, celebrate, deliberate and act together. Full details of the 9th Assembly are available on: www.wcc-assembly.info



Rev. Dr Samuel Kobia
WCC General Secretary



Year in Review 2005

Orthodox churches prepare for 9th Assembly

A meeting of Orthodox member churches took place in January in Rhodes, Greece, to prepare for the WCC's 9th Assembly. The meeting reflected on the Assembly themes of grace and transformation, offered a prayerful meditation to the Assembly, and affirmed the work and recommendations of the Special Commission on Orthodox Participation in the WCC, which outline significant changes in culture and work methods for the organization.

WCC at the World Social Forum 2005

"Affirming life in dignity: enhancing justice and rights in a globalized world" was the overall theme for the WCC's participation in the 5th World Social Forum in January in Porto Alegre, Brazil. WCC delegates organized a series of seminars that affirmed the dignity of life in a world suffering from the consequences of economic globalization, including a panel on women's spirituality and their key role in resistance, a seminar dealing with peace and reconciliation, and a panel on ecological debt.

Global ecumenical alliance against poverty and injustice

The WCC, together with ecumenical agencies and churches working in the field of relief and development, agreed on the creation of a new international alliance of church-related organizations to address issues of poverty and injustice. Consensus on the new international ecumenical initiative, likely to use the name ACT - Action by Churches Together, was achieved in a series of consultations during 2005. General secretary Rev. Dr Samuel Kobia underlined the historic nature of the agreement, remarking that the plans ushered in "a new era of collaboration between churches, ecumenical agencies and the WCC".

Central committee urges clarity and coherence

The WCC central committee - the last before new elections in 2006 - meeting in February, outlined an extensive reshaping and streamlining of WCC activity to better equip the global Christian body for a "fast-changing" world context and new patterns of church life. Endorsing an evaluation of programmatic activity, the WCC's central committee urged the Council "to do less and to do it well" in order "to develop greater clarity and coherence in its unique role as a global fellowship of churches". As part of an underlying shift in organizational culture, the 158-member body also adjusted its rules and adopted consensus decision-making procedures.

Economic measures for peace in Israel/Palestine

The WCC central committee also agreed to encourage the Council's member churches to use their investments "responsibly in support of peaceful solutions" to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The WCC governing body encouraged the Council's member churches "to give serious consideration to economic measures that are equitable, transparent and non-violent" as a new way to work for peace by looking at ways to avoid economic participation in illegal activities related to the Israeli occupation. The decision, which resembled those of some WCC member churches, attracted widespread international attention - and reactions.

Concern for the Christian minority in Bangladesh

Religious intolerance and the need to strengthen interfaith dialogue at the grassroots level were discussed by WCC general secretary Rev. Dr Samuel Kobia and Prof. Dr Iajjudin Ahmed, president of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, during a visit to the country in March. Kobia expressed concern with increasing acts of religious intolerance and violation of minority rights in the Muslim-majority country. The WCC leader also asked president Ahmed to consider declaring Easter Sunday as a public holiday, which met with a positive response from the head of state.



Coming to consensus: central committee approves change in culture



People first: new alliance to confront poverty and injustice



Pope John Paul II: outstanding figure in modern Christendom

The WCC expressed its "profound sadness" following the death of Pope John Paul II. WCC central committee moderator Catholicos Aram I said that Pope John Paul II will remain an "outstanding figure" in the modern history of world Christendom, adding that "his relentless effort to make the Gospel of Christ a living reality in the life of people, and his continuous advocacy for justice, human rights and freedom made him an exceptional figure of great achievements". The WCC general secretary Rev. Dr Samuel Kobia emphasized that "Pope John Paul II will be remembered as one of the most courageous spiritual leaders of our time".

Decade to Overcome Violence Asia focus

Asia has the potential to become economically prosperous in the near future, but is also likely to see increasing disparities of health and wealth. These injustices are themselves a form of violence that may in turn lead to yet more expressions of violence in the region. This potential scenario makes the focus on the Asian region in 2005 by the Decade to Overcome Violence (DOV) all the more relevant.

This assessment was voiced by Rev. Rothangliani R. Chhangte from the American Baptist Churches in the USA during the formal launch of the DOV Asia focus at the general assembly of the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) on Saturday 2 April in Chiang Mai, Thailand.

Athens world mission conference 2005

More than 600 representatives of churches and mission organizations gathered in Athens in May at the 13th Conference on World Mission and Evangelism, under the theme "Come, Holy Spirit, heal and reconcile - Called in Christ to be reconciling and healing communities". The event, one of the broadest such gatherings, included strong Roman Catholic as well as Pentecostal participation, and was the first to be held in a predominantly Orthodox country since the first world mission conference in 1910.

WCC delegation in Greece

"The church does not close its eyes to the burning issues of our times, issues that can only be dealt with effectively through coordinated efforts and a united Christian witness," stated Archbishop Christodoulos of Athens during a meeting with a WCC delegation in Athens in May. Meetings were held with members of the 12-person Holy Synod of the Church of Greece and other hierarchs. Kobia expressed the "deep gratitude" of the Council for the invitation of the Church of Greece to host the world mission conference, and for the "splendid welcome" of the Holy Synod.

WCC marks "new phase" in global interreligious dialogue

Meeting in Geneva in June, representatives of the world's main faith communities proposed to reshape the approach to global interreligious dialogue in order more effectively to face threats posed by the current world context. Attending the WCC's "Critical Moment Conference", over 130 Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu and other religious leaders, academics, human rights activists, humanitarian workers, journalists, and people experienced in working across religious traditions and from virtually all regions outlined strategies to emphasize interreligious dialogue also as common action, including new education and training programmes and exchanges that foster a culture of dialogue. Calling the conference a "landmark event", the WCC leadership reiterated the strengthened commitment of the worldwide fellowship of churches to interfaith dialogue and understanding.

Churches and terror

An ecumenical consultation on the theme of terrorism, human rights and counter-terrorism gathered church, political and academic specialists in Geneva. Convened by the WCC, the consultation studied the ethical dimensions of violence and terror - and the controversial political responses from around the world. Churches and religious communities have been affected by acts of terror, and the clampdown on terrorist suspects, in several regions. The WCC has led ecumenical initiatives to maintain dialogue and exchange across political and faith dividing lines. The event prepared the background for a statement on terrorism, counter-terrorism and human rights for the WCC 9th Assembly in 2006.



With Archbishop Christodoulos of Athens



Liberation theologian Leonardo Boff speaks at the World Social Forum 2005



WCC hosts interreligious dialogue, Geneva



WCC general secretary in audience with Pope Benedict XVI

Kobia meets with Pope Benedict XVI

A three-point agenda for further collaboration - understanding of the church, spirituality, and ecumenical formation - was proposed by the WCC general secretary Rev. Dr Samuel Kobia to Pope Benedict XVI during their first meeting on 16 June at the Vatican. Kobia also invited the pope to visit the WCC headquarters "as yet one more concrete step in our long journey towards visible unity". In his remarks, Benedict XVI assured Kobia that the church he heads is "eager to continue cooperation" with the WCC, and expressed hope that the visit had been "fruitful, strengthening the bonds of understanding and friendship between us. The commitment of the Catholic Church to the search for Christian unity is irreversible."

Kobia on official visit to the Russian Orthodox Church

The head of the Russian Orthodox Church, Patriarch Alexis II, expressed gratitude for actions of "authentic Christian solidarity" by ecumenical organizations during the Soviet period, and affirmed the commitment of his church to full participation in the WCC, during a meeting with a WCC delegation visiting Moscow in June. The patriarch also welcomed the results of the Special Commission on Orthodox participation in the WCC, which was set up by the Council in 1998 to address the concerns of its Orthodox membership and to enable their voice to be more effectively heard.

WCC inaugurates ecumenical research centre

A renewed library and research facility was officially inaugurated by the WCC in June as part of a long-term effort to renew academic research capacity in ecumenism and theology - an effort made possible by a donation from the Banque Pictet Et Cie. Situated outside Geneva, on the grounds of the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey, the site complements the main library and archives located at the WCC's headquarters in Geneva.

With this new phase of development, the WCC library and archives now form one of the leading international academic resources on theology and ecumenism. The library contains over 130,000 books, periodicals, and thousands of unique archival documents, photos and videos covering the history of the ecumenical movement from the 19th century to the present day.

Kobia in Cuba: for religious equality and against the blockade

All Cuban churches should receive equal treatment by the state in order to meet the challenges raised by their pastoral ministry, said a WCC delegation received by Cuban President Fidel Castro at the end of a four-day visit to the island in August. During meetings with Protestant and Catholic church and ecumenical leaders, the delegation witnessed at first hand the negative consequences of the economic embargo imposed on the island by the USA.

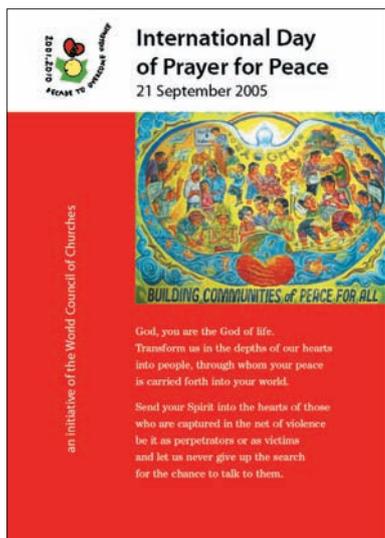
International day of prayer for peace

In 2005, for the second year running, churches representing over 560 million Christians worldwide were invited to mark the UN International Day of Peace, 21 September, as an International Day of Prayer for Peace. Launched in 2004 by the World Council of Churches in the framework of its *Decade to Overcome Violence: Churches Seeking Reconciliation and Peace (2001-2010)*, the initiative calls on churches all over the world to arrange for services or vigils on 21 September, as well as to include prayers for peace in their services on the Sunday before or after that day. The WCC message to the churches emphasized that "Christian spirituality is not a call to retreat from social action and public life. As injustice and violence grow, we have all the more reason to pray with and for one another and for our world."

www.overcomingviolence.org

WCC "compassion and solidarity" with victims of Hurricane Katrina

The World Council of Churches expressed its compassion, and the solidarity of WCC member churches, with all the victims of Hurricane Katrina that struck the southern coast of the USA in September. "The whole fellowship of the World Council of Churches unites in prayer for the people, leaders and churches of the United States as you come to grips with the tragedy brought to your shores by Hurricane Katrina. We pray for those who mourn, who suffer, who search for meaning. And we pledge our solidarity with those who have begun the task of rebuilding broken walls and restoring stricken lives. In particular, we hold in our prayers all the church relief agencies, workers and volunteers who are struggling to assist those in need," the WCC pastoral message to US churches stated.



Space of dialogue: the ecumenical research centre at Bossey

WCC executive urges churches to exercise unique potential for peace

Churches must take responsibility to nurture healing in broken societies and to promote peace, urged the WCC executive committee in public statements on Haiti and small arms adopted in September 2005, at its last full meeting prior to the WCC 9th Assembly in 2006. In a statement on small arms and light weapons, the committee urged churches to exercise their "unique potential" to curb demand for guns and "to affirm God's vision of life in peace and fullness" by "changing public attitudes, shaping community values and becoming a public voice against gun violence". Referring to the critical situation in Haiti, the committee acknowledged the "enormous challenges faced by the people and the witness of the churches in the country". It also underlined its "concern for the current unstable political situation", as well as for the extreme poverty, violence and human suffering experienced by the island's population.

WCC general secretary visits Ethiopia

"As custodians of an ancient spiritual heritage, Ethiopian Christianity has a unique contribution which is of central importance in Africa and to the ecumenical family worldwide," stated the general secretary of the World Council of Churches, Rev. Dr Samuel Kobia, during his first official visit to the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church in September 2005. Meeting at the start of the visit with Patriarch Abune Paulos, leader of the 38-million-member Ethiopian Orthodox Church, Kobia contrasted the "moral wealth" of the African continent with the "fear and poverty" which marks the lives of so many in Africa, whose people struggle with "HIV and AIDS, insecurity, corruption and conflict".



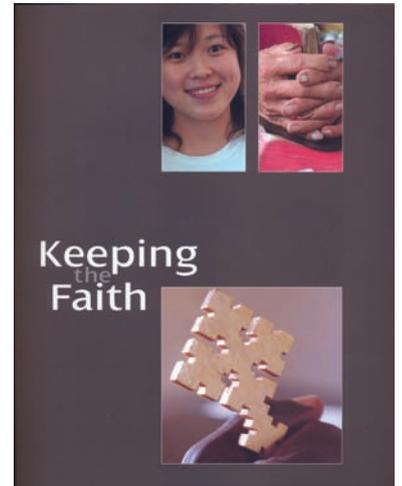
In Ethiopia, custodians of an ancient spiritual heritage

"Keeping the Faith": WCC launches multimedia project

The ecumenical movement is a reality for people and congregations around the world who live their faith on a daily basis. An integrated communication project, "Keeping the Faith" shows this reality, and conveys the vitality of the ecumenical movement today. The project offers a glimpse of the immense spiritual riches and cultural diversity within the ecumenical movement and the Christian world. Launched ahead of the WCC 9th Assembly taking place in February 2006 in Brazil, the project includes a mobile exhibit, photo essays, a book and a website: www.keeping-the-faith.info

Geneva interreligious event focuses on identity

Co-organized by the WCC and the Geneva Interreligious Platform with the support of Pictet & Cie, a three-day interreligious weekend entitled "My neighbour's faith and mine. Religious identities: for better or for worse?" included a public panel discussion, a youth forum, an international colloquium, an inter-faith celebration, and a cultural exhibition. The November weekend offered the Geneva public an opportunity to explore avenues towards better mutual understanding and acceptance of religious and cultural diversity. Both the WCC and the Geneva Interreligious Platform are active in Geneva, and foster dialogue and understanding among different faiths; the WCC has been involved in the field of interreligious dialogue for over thirty years.



Keeping the Faith: a multimedia mosaic



Critical moment: encounter of faiths and cultures



WCC delegation visits the Russian Orthodox Church

Nurturing the Fellowship of Churches

As the most inclusive body bringing the Christian churches together at the global level, and with one of the widest networks of ecumenical partnerships, the WCC affirms that its main objective is to assist the churches in their search for visible unity and to serve the oneness and coherence of the ecumenical movement.

The entire year was marked by preparations for the 9th Assembly of the WCC in Brazil, in February 2006. Almost all activities related to this major event in the life of the Council and of the ecumenical movement as a whole.

The general secretary continued his series of visits to member churches and ecumenical partners in advance of the Assembly, and during 2005 he met with church, civil society and political leaders in Bangladesh, Cuba, Denmark, Ethiopia, Greece, Haiti, Norway, Russia, Sweden, Thailand, and the Vatican, among others. The dialogue enabled questions and challenges to be articulated in advance of the Assembly by the churches and other partners.

The central committee, meeting in February 2005, finalized the Assembly preparations, including the reception of an important pre-Assembly programme evaluation report, which was the first time a global evaluation of WCC activity had been undertaken. It also received eight new churches into the fellowship of the WCC.

Reviewing the partnership between the WCC and church-related aid and development agencies, the

central committee created a new process for strengthening cooperation. The committee also agreed to move to a consensus method of decision-making, which was one of the results of the Special Commission on Orthodox Participation in the WCC.

The network of ecumenical officers, responsible for international and inter-church relations in their churches, was further strengthened in advance of the Assembly, which many were invited to attend as "advisors to the delegation". This group plays an important role of liaison and interpretation between the WCC and its member churches. Most WCC member churches also belong to confessional groupings, or Christian World Communions, and efforts to nurture these partnerships continued during the year.

The Joint Consultative Group between the WCC and Pentecostal churches, most of which are not members of the WCC, finalized its report. The group recommended further dialogue, and encouraged regional encounters, opening the way for reinforced collaboration.

The celebration of the 40th anniversary of the Joint Working Group between the WCC and the Roman Catholic Church in November 2005 offered an opportunity to harvest some of the fruits of four decades of collaboration. At a consultation in Geneva, the two parent bodies listed a number of "new challenges" that are demanding a response from Christians together, and pointed to new forms of collaboration.



“The WCC affirms that its main objective is to assist the churches in their search for visible unity and to serve the oneness and coherence of the ecumenical movement”



40th anniversary meeting of the Joint Working Group between the WCC and the Roman Catholic Church

Building the Unity of the Church

Faith and Order works with the churches to identify and affirm the bases of their common faith and commitment to one another within the ecumenical fellowship. This involves detailed theological work, clarifying what is common and fundamental in the churches' convictions and self-understandings. Faith and Order's mandate includes working on all sources of division among churches – theological, historical, cultural, social.

Faith and Order worked on completing and publishing the studies pursued since the previous WCC Assembly in 1998. This included taking stock of the results – and the experience – of the Faith and Order plenary commission meeting held in Kuala Lumpur in 2004.

A major study on ecclesiology came to fruition with the publication of *The Nature and Mission of the Church: A Stage on the Way to a Common Statement*. The challenge here was to state what the churches can now say together about the church – while identifying realistically the issues which divide them and how these might be overcome. Texts were produced also on the challenges posed by ethnic and national identities to the unity of the church and its witness; and on theological issues posed by the search for peace in a violent world. Study processes continued in several areas including the practice and mutual recognition of baptism, and ecumenical hermeneutics (how churches understand – or misunderstand – one another's texts, symbols, rites

and practices). Through reflecting on how worship can support – or pose problems for – the search for unity, and by producing practical materials for worship use, Faith and Order continued to support this area of the life of the church.

A text on *Christian Perspectives on Theological Anthropology* produced in 2005 explored contemporary challenges to the idea of human beings made "in the image of God", challenges coming from scientific developments but also from issues such as gender, disabilities, poverty and social deprivation.

In a new project, together with the monastic community of Bose in Italy, Faith and Order sought to identify and celebrate exemplary witnesses to the Christian faith. This initiative has a distinctive, and challenging, ecumenical dimension: churches have been asked to identify each other's saints, not only their "own".

As in previous years, material for use in the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity was prepared and published jointly with the Roman Catholic Church, which is a full partner in this area of the WCC's mandate. Faith and Order (working with a South African group) organized the preparatory meeting for the materials for 2007. This challenging material links Christian unity to the churches' witness in the face of HIV and AIDS, poverty, and violence. Increasing interest in the Week of Prayer material is being shown by the churches at grassroots level.



“Faith and Order works with the churches to identify and affirm the bases of their common faith and commitment to one another within the ecumenical fellowship”



Churches Seeking Peace

“We will strive together to overcome the spirit, logic and practice of violence. We will work together to be agents of reconciliation and peace with justice in homes, churches and societies as well as in the political, social and economic structures at the global level”

WCC Central Committee statement, Geneva, 1999

The “Decade to Overcome Violence – Churches Seeking Reconciliation and Peace 2001–2010” (DOV) was a prophetic decision of the WCC’s 8th Assembly in 1998 which rapidly became one of the WCC’s emblematic initiatives. In 2006, the DOV reaches its mid-term.

The WCC publicized the Decade’s call within the ecumenical family and encouraged the involvement of churches and groups in their own contexts. During the five years since the launch, the DOV coordination office of the WCC has promoted study and reflection, working to mobilize thousands of churches, organizations and individuals in actions for peace.

The 2005 DOV regional focus was launched at the 12th Assembly of the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) in Thailand under the guiding theme “Building Communities of Peace for All”. An inter-religious conference held near Jakarta was one of several highlights in the region, and many national councils of churches also gave profile to peace-building in their programmatic efforts.

The DOV was strongly represented at the WCC’s world mission conference in Athens in May 2005 which featured a plenary discussion on “Mission and Violence”. The peace-making mission of the church was also reflected in the theme of the event “Come, Holy Spirit – Heal and Reconcile: Called in Christ to be reconciling and healing communities”.

The 2005 International Day of Prayer for Peace on 21 September, launched by the WCC in 2004, was widely publicized and an information leaflet with action and prayer ideas was produced in four languages. A DOV electronic newsletter was initiated and plans for a new DOV website progressed, with simplified access to information and greater interactivity. The average number of hits on the DOV website grew to around 200,000 per month, with a growing proportion of visitors coming from non-Western countries, confirming the worldwide potential of the internet and interest in the DOV.

Initial preparations for the DOV annual focus on Latin America in 2006, as well as planning for DOV mid-term activities at the WCC’s 9th Assembly in Brazil, were priorities for the staff throughout the year.

The popular DOV study guide continued to be in high demand and was translated into a number of new languages, facilitating its use in local communities as well as by church leadership. The DOV office plans a revised version after 2006, along with other information resources.

The international DOV Reference Group, meeting in 2005, recommended several strategic priorities for the second half of the Decade, including increased alliance-building, communication, and interdisciplinary approaches. The group also urged more focus on the role of youth in overcoming violence, the re-emergence of forms of militarism, interpersonal violence, interreligious cooperation, and the spirituality of non-violence.



Churches in International Affairs

WCC's efforts in the areas of ecumenical advocacy and conflict resolution are carried out in a rapidly-changing international environment. The need for a new political ethos in international affairs, manifested in the crisis of the United Nations, presents both a challenge and an opportunity for the ecumenical movement. Since 1946, the Churches' Commission on International Affairs (CCIA) has brought a united and prophetic church witness to the international political arena. Through the CCIA, the WCC facilitates greater involvement of churches and ecumenical actors in local and national conflict prevention, civilian protection and post-conflict reconciliation.

Throughout the year, attention was given to formulating church and ecumenical contributions to the UN Reform process. A comprehensive letter expressing the WCC's proposals and concerns was sent to the UN Secretary General in April 2005. The WCC's UN Office in New York renewed links with the NGO working group on the Security Council, and developed communication with a network of churches and organizations on international affairs and UN advocacy.

In the area of disarmament and demilitarization, the WCC took part in arms control meetings with UN agencies, governments, NGO partners and churches. During this critical period in nuclear affairs, a WCC delegation presented church policy at the Nuclear

Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference at the UN. The WCC executive committee adopted the WCC's first policy statement on the control of small arms and staff helped strengthen the Ecumenical Network on Small Arms, mobilizing churches to address the misuse and spread of millions of firearms worldwide.

The WCC was involved in discreet peace efforts and mediation in several countries in Africa and Asia, and gave particular priority to the Middle East. Plans advanced to launch the Jerusalem Ecumenical Centre (JEC), a joint initiative of the Heads of Churches in Jerusalem in association with the Middle East Council of Churches and the WCC.

A special study on "the responsibility to protect – ethical and theological reflections", dealing with issues related to military intervention for humanitarian purposes and the responsibility of the states and sovereignty, culminated in a high-level seminar in April, bringing together theologians, diplomats and political science scholars.

In a complex global arena, the WCC sought to nurture a proactive and united role of the churches in political life and efforts for peace and examined more closely the links between international affairs and interreligious dialogue and concerns.

“In a complex global environment, the WCC sought to nurture a proactive and united role of the churches in political life and efforts for peace”



Churches in Dialogue with Other Faiths

“Does the quest for religious identity, evident in many places around the world today, lead inevitably to opposition to other religious traditions?”

There is a growing call in political and civil society circles for religious leaders to engage in dialogue for the sake of peace, to address issues of vital concern for society and the world and to contribute to the building of a sustainable society. There is also a recognition that religion can play a political role either as a transforming or destabilizing force.

The involvement of the WCC to facilitate encounter between Christians and people of other faiths in situations of controversy as well as in contexts of mutual support has existed for more than 30 years and echoes its own mandate “to foster dialogue and cooperation with people of other faiths in order to build viable human communities”. 2005 proved to be a year in which unprecedented priority was given to interfaith dialogue.

A critical moment

Among the diverse actions undertaken in the area of interreligious relations in 2005 were three overarching priority activities: a major “critical moment” conference, an interreligious event in Geneva and preparation for interfaith participation in the 9th Assembly in 2006.

The “Critical Moment” conference (7-9 June 2005) brought together over 130 religious leaders, scholars and activists to critically assess current efforts in the area of interreligious dialogue and to identify new directions and initiatives. The conference outlined strategies to give more emphasis to cooperation and common action, discussed the need for symbolic actions which promote healing of historical memory and enable

discussions of divisive issues, notably those of religious violence and questions of conversion.

Fortresses into wellsprings

Does the quest for religious identity, evident in many places around the world today, lead inevitably to opposition to other religious traditions? And how, in contexts of religious and cultural plurality, can we move beyond tolerance to positive respect between religions?

During the weekend of 12-14 November, a series of events - public panel discussion, youth forum, international colloquium, interfaith celebration, cultural exhibition - offered the Geneva public an opportunity to explore avenues towards better mutual understanding and acceptance of religious and cultural diversity. Various prominent Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish and Muslim personalities in the field of interreligious dialogue, as well as almost 100 young people from all over Europe and the Middle East, were involved in the events, jointly organized by the Geneva Interreligious Platform and the World Council of Churches (WCC).

Entitled “My neighbour’s faith and mine. Religious identities: for better or for worse?”, the three-day weekend was designed to respond to contemporary criticisms of religions, accused of neglecting the spiritual while at the same time being perceived as being at the root of numerous conflicts.

A text “Fortresses into wellsprings - soothing the thirst for spirituality, affirming human dignity”, produced by an interreligious group close to the WCC, interpreting different aspects of religious life today and the quest for a sustainable spirituality,



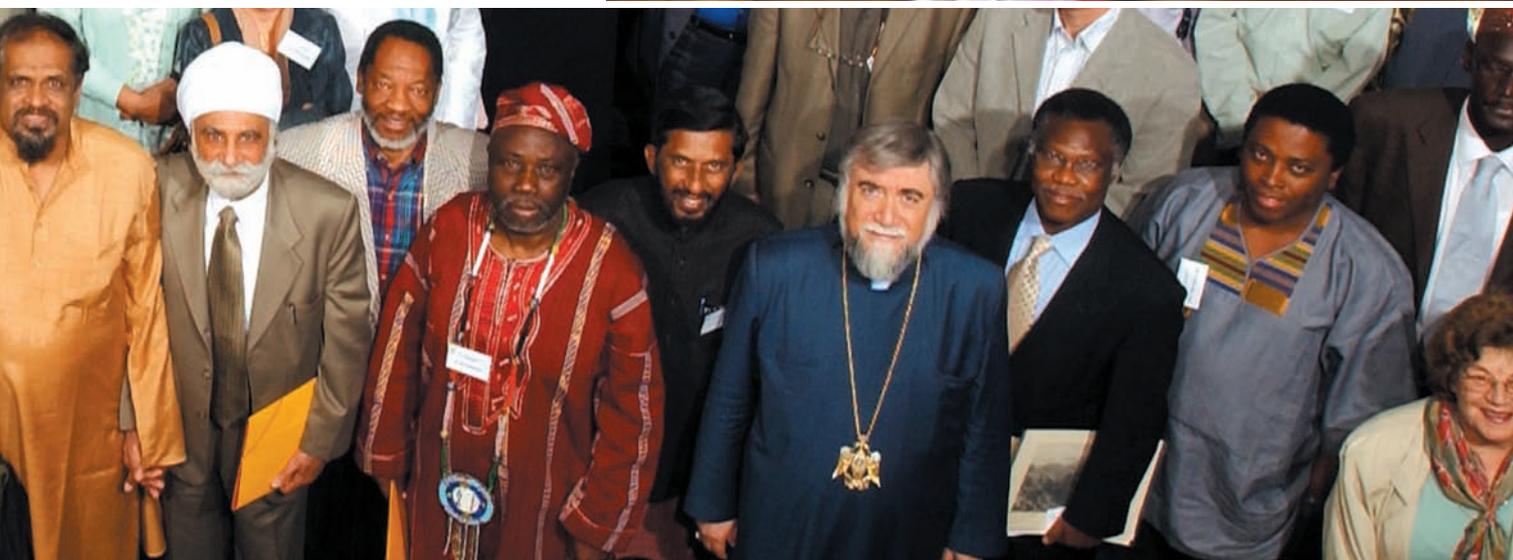
served as a foundational text for the various interreligious manifestations. A colloquium on tolerance and a panel on identity discussed questions on how to construct a viable religiously plural society. A two-day youth forum focused on issues such as "Religious identity in the making: How do we become who we are?" "Making sense in a plural world: What strategies do we use?" and "Religious and spiritual authorities: Who are our models?" The interreligious weekend was organized with the support of the Geneva private bank Pictet & Cie.

From the periphery to the centre

Preparations for the interreligious presence in the 9th Assembly took off in the latter part of 2005. Some thirty guests of other faiths were invited to take part in the Assembly in various capacities and in various programmes. Planning for the Assembly included a major focus on interreligious relations and dialogue as a core issue for the WCC and as a vital challenge in the life of the member churches.

Christians in almost all parts of the world live in religiously plural societies. Persistent plurality and its impact on daily lives require new and adequate ways of understanding and relating to peoples of other religious traditions. The rise of religious extremism and militancy in many situations has accentuated the importance of interreligious relations. Religious identities, loyalties and sentiments have become important components in so many international and inter-ethnic conflicts that some say that the "politics of ideology", which played a crucial role in the twentieth century, have been replaced in our day by the "politics of identity".

Although interreligious relations and dialogue have been part of the WCC since 1971, it is obvious that the present demands require new thinking and new strategies. Interreligious relations and dialogue cannot be conducted in separation from other manifestations of Christian involvement, whether political or theological, and it is likely that WCC will increase its focus on this area following the 9th Assembly in 2006.





Come, Holy Spirit, Heal and Reconcile!

In 2005, the main focus of the WCC's Mission and Evangelism programme was the Conference on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME), which took place in Athens, Greece, 9-16 May, under the theme "Come, Holy Spirit, heal and reconcile! - Called in Christ to be reconciling and healing communities". The conference provided a space for the WCC member churches and the wider mission constituency to address central theological questions related to peace, violence and reconciliation from the specific angle of the church's understanding of and involvement in mission and evangelism, past and present. This was the 13th conference to date since the first gathering in Edinburgh in 1910.

Member churches of the WCC sent representatives of the Orthodox, Protestant, Anglican, Baptist, Independent, United, African Instituted and Pentecostal traditions. In addition, a significant number of Pentecostal and Evangelical churches not belonging to the WCC were in attendance and, for the first time at such a conference, a substantial delegation of representatives from the Roman Catholic Church came not as observers but full members. The event brought together over 650 young people, women and men involved in frontiers of Christian witness, church and mission leaders, theologians and missiologists, to exchange their experiences and think together about priorities in mission and the future of Christian witness. For many, the conference was characterized primarily by its "expanding participation".

The atmosphere of the conference differed from many ecumenical assemblies, allowing considerable time for common prayer, Bible study and small group discussion of matters relating to the themes of reconciliation and healing. Plenaries explored sub-themes such as the Holy Spirit and mission, faith and healing, overcoming violence, the theology of reconciliation, confronting HIV and AIDS and promoting a church that is open to people of every physical and spiritual condition. Marketplaces of ideas and experience, bearing the Greek name "synaxeis", gave further opportunities to examine issues not on the formal agenda.

The conference participants recognized that divisions among Christians persist, but that changes affecting the world in the new millennium form an unprecedented challenge to Christian mission and witness, and call the churches to repentance and reconciliation. A "message", or formal letter from the conference to the churches, drafted by participants during the week, was agreed by the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism.

Evangelism

Throughout the year the mission and evangelism programme supported the churches and mission bodies in their evangelistic task to share the good news of the gospel ecumenically, stimulating them to explore relevant methods, programmes and theologies of holistic evangelism.



Urban Rural Mission

During the year, much of WCC's Urban Rural Mission (URM) work, which is a core part of the mission programme, focused on supporting the URM regional networks in empowering the poor and marginalized. At the global level, staff facilitated the development of training resources for community-building and were involved in aspects of the mission conference.

Churches in health and healing

WCC was also actively involved in health work, which has been a traditional focus of this area of the Council. WCC facilitated the participation of grassroots health workers in the 58th World Health Assembly in Geneva. Along with its ongoing work to combat HIV and AIDS, the WCC promoted reflection on the greater participation of people living with HIV and AIDS in the life of the church. Persons living with HIV and AIDS were engaged in various capacities in all regions, and were resource persons and plenary speakers for key ecumenical gatherings during the year. Specific input was given to the development of a work-place policy and guidelines for churches and related organizations. Various training programmes and meetings were supported in different parts of the world, including a major interreligious meeting on HIV and AIDS in Moscow.

www.mission2005.org

“Participants recognized that divisions among Christians persist, but that changes affecting the world in the new millennium form an unprecedented challenge to Christian mission and witness”



Churches Caring for Life

“The WCC continued to explore a ‘theology of life’ focusing on the *oikoumene* as God’s household of life”

Since its inception, the WCC has spoken out with a prophetic voice against injustice, inequality, asymmetries in power and exclusion of millions from the fruits of development, and has called for transformation. In recent years, the WCC has strived to uphold alternatives to globalization, in both theological reflection and practical actions.

The WCC continued to explore a “theology of life” focusing on the *oikoumene* as God’s household of life. The neglect of relationships relevant for life and survival of humankind not only aggravates, but is at the origin of much of the crisis of life. In this perspective, the WCC gave priority to study, networking and advocacy in the areas of climate change, water for life and genetic engineering.

A milestone in ecumenical reflection on economy and ecology was marked with the publication of the AGAPE (Alternatives to Globalization: Addressing People and the Earth) document and the AGAPE Call to Action, which provided a critique and proposals for alternatives, in preparation for the 9th Assembly in 2006.

The WCC was in the forefront of the ecumenical presence at the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre early in the year, and led a series of workshops on ecological debt and alternatives to economic globalization. Advocacy on trade issues continued, in close collaboration with the WCC-founded Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance.

Working with young adults from the churches, the Council sought to offer ecumenical experience and leadership skills, and to strengthen the role of young people in the churches and the ecumenical movement through participatory action, education and community building.

As part of its commitment to transformative justice, healing and renewal of communities, the WCC engaged with concerns of racism and other forms of discrimination, and continued its work on indigenous rights. The WCC worked closely with the Latin American Council of Churches (CLAI) to strengthen networks of indigenous peoples and to advocate for their rights at the UN and other international fora. The spirituality of indigenous people is an increasing area of attention.

Significant achievements in the work of the Ecumenical Disabilities Advocates Network (EDAN) were made. The decentralized office is now situated at the headquarters of the All Africa Conference of Churches in Kenya.

In a series of solidarity visits to women in conflict situations, an ecumenical team visited Pakistan and met with women, in particular members of the vulnerable Christian minority there.

Much of the work in the area of justice and ethics of life was decentralized and carried out by staff and offices outside Geneva. While this approach has generally increased local ownership and impact, it will be further assessed following the 9th Assembly.



Churches Serving Human Need

Diakonia in the service of human need has always been central to the life of the churches and, from its origins, to the WCC. Over the years, the ecumenical understanding of diakonia has grown to encompass more than service to human beings, but also increasingly to address the structural roots of injustice, to transform relationships and to heal and reconcile communities.

The WCC works with churches to empower marginalized groups, including uprooted people, in their struggle for dignity and for sustainable communities, and strengthens ecumenical cooperation, relationships and solidarity in all regions. The work of the Diakonia and Solidarity team in 2005 was shaped by both the demands of the world and the upcoming WCC 9th Assembly in 2006.

Among various critical events that impacted churches and communities, the Asian tsunami of December 2004, followed by other serious natural disasters in Central America, the Caribbean, Pakistan/India and the USA in 2005, all demanded actions of solidarity by the WCC. Linking with ACT (Action by Churches Together) International, the WCC's office for emergency response, the Diakonia and Solidarity team was also involved in supporting the churches in these extreme situations.

In Asia, for example, staff facilitated the training of more than 400 volunteers in trauma counselling to work with children in the tsunami-affected areas in four of the worst-hit countries. Prospects for peace in Sudan led to intensive staff work both to support churches and councils of churches in the new era and to continue to advocate internationally for support for the implementation of the peace plan.

Recognition of the WCC's long-term advocacy efforts with the UN High Commission for Refugees on behalf of uprooted people reached new levels when staff met with the High Commissioner in person to urge closer collaboration, especially in the field.

Several examples illustrate how WCC worked with churches in all regions during 2005. The Middle East office, based in Beirut, saw a change in staff, and relationships with the churches and ecumenical organizations were strengthened. The Ecumenical Women's Solidarity Fund in former Yugoslavia underwent an evaluation and prepared new strategies after more than a decade of action. The Eastern Europe office (Poland) continued its programme of capacity-building in the region, focusing on Moldova, considered to be the poorest



country in Europe. The WCC Office in the Pacific, based in Fiji, carried out a wide range of programmes in the region with particular emphasis on climate change and HIV and AIDS.

In a major new initiative, the WCC played a leading role in negotiations to develop a global ecumenical alliance against poverty and injustice, likely to use the existing name of ACT – Action by Churches Together, which is currently used by the WCC-related emergency coordination office. The new body is intended to enhance cooperation in the field of development and to promote a better transition from relief to development, and is likely to imply a significant realignment of ecumenical work in this area.

“Diakonia in the service of human need has always been central to the life of the churches and, since its inception, to the WCC”



Education: Carrying the Ecumenical Vision

“The WCC’s action in the area of ecumenical education aims to develop anew an ecumenical consciousness in the churches”

The urgent need for a renewal of ecumenical vision and practice within the churches and the broader ecumenical movement is increasingly recognized. The WCC’s action in the area of ecumenical education aims to develop anew an ecumenical consciousness in the churches. The programme understands ecumenical formation as a process of theological reflection and critical thinking which moves beyond learning about one another within the church to learning from and with one another.

The year 2005 was dominated by preparations for the WCC Assembly in 2006. These provided opportunities for particular educational inputs, for example, involvement in planning the process and material for the Bible studies. A study resource supplement to the journal EEF-NET, *Getting Ready*, was used by churches and ecumenical bodies to reflect on the nature of the WCC and some of the assembly issues.

Ecumenical formation sessions and courses of up to a week were facilitated for the WCC’s Round Table partners, for WCC staff and for church institutions in several countries. Staff continued to give active encouragement to ecumenical networks of educators such as OIKOSNET and the Coordinating Group for Religious Education in Europe. Resources for ecumenical formation were produced or revised. *The Holistic Education Resource Book: Teaching and Learning in an Ecumenical Context* was welcomed

by ecumenical educators as giving access to thinking and practice emerging from secular education as well as from within the ecumenical movement, and a CD-ROM *Practicing Ecumenical Learning* was revised.

The Ecumenical Theological Education programme continued to emphasize the importance of contextualized theological education curricula and the formation of ecumenical leaders at all the levels of church structures. Theological consultants worked for the WCC in several regions. For example, in Asia, efforts focused on the promotion of a theological curriculum in response to the HIV and AIDS pandemic, as well as religious pluralism, and current trends in tribal and indigenous peoples’ theologies. In Africa, the “Tamar Campaign: Stop Sexual Violence in Africa” was launched with significant follow-up activities taking place in a number of countries.

The WCC scholarships programme continued to assist the education and training (both theological and non-theological) of people working for churches and church-related organizations. In 2005, 100 scholarships were awarded, including nine group-training scholarships. The majority of applications awarded continue to be for non-theological studies and the relative lack of funds for theological scholarships remains a challenge for the WCC. The five-yearly external evaluation of the scholarships programme was undertaken in 2005, and the report will be available in 2006.



Bossey: An Ecumenical Laboratory

Since October 1946, thousands of women and men from all over the world and every Christian confession and culture have come to the WCC's Ecumenical Institute at Bossey for seminars, conferences and to attend the Graduate School of Ecumenical Studies. Many have testified to life-changing experiences in this "ecumenical laboratory", and groups of Bossey alumni have been formed in many countries. Bossey shapes ecumenical thought through inter-cultural and inter-confessional encounter, through study in residential programmes and through common worship and life in community.

As an ecumenical meeting place, Bossey constitutes a free and safe space of mutual encounter and challenge between Christians from all over the world. Positioned in the avant-garde of the ecumenical movement, Bossey offers an academic platform where some of the most acute contemporary challenges confronting the churches today are debated and analyzed in an attempt to find common responses.

The best-known Bossey programme is the Graduate School of Ecumenical Studies which annually trains around 30 students from all regions of the world and from various denominations who will contribute to ecumenical dialogue and formation in their own contexts. The 56th session of the Graduate School of Ecumenical Studies (2004-

2005) was held under the theme "For Thine Is the Kingdom and the Power and the Glory: God's Power and Human Accountability". The 57th session of the school (2005-2006) focuses on "Grace, Healing, Transformation: Exploring the Theme of the 9th Assembly of the WCC". Bossey also offers a Master of Ecumenical Studies and a new Ph.D. in Ecumenical Studies for ecumenical researchers. The Institute and its academic programmes are affiliated with the University of Geneva.

Bossey uses a variety of methodologies such as lectures, Bible studies, seminars, individual study and research accompanied by tutoring and group work. Each member of the teaching faculty offers a module related to the theme of the Graduate School, approaching it from the perspective of their special expertise: ecumenical biblical hermeneutics, ecumenical theology, missiology and social ethics. Along with an individual dissertation, students are required to sit oral exams to assess their overall academic achievement.

In May, the Institute mourned the death of the Academic Dean, Rev. Dr Faitala Talapusi from the Congregational Christian Church in Samoa, after a period of illness. The departure of other faculty members was prepared, and the Bossey leadership initiated plans to renew the teaching faculty and to ensure academic continuity at the high standards to which Bossey aims.



“Bossey shapes ecumenical thought through inter-cultural and inter-confessional encounter, through study in residential programmes and through common worship and life in community”

NOT WAR BUT CLASS WAR



The Quest for Peace with Justice in the Holy Land

The WCC's Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI) was established in February 2002, following a call from the local heads of churches in Jerusalem for an international ecumenical presence in Palestine and Israel. This initiative seeks to accompany Palestinians and Israelis in their non-violent actions and concerted advocacy efforts to end the illegal occupation of Palestine and supports a just peace in the Middle East through advocacy and through the presence and witness of "ecumenical accompaniers".

Based in seven main locations in the occupied West Bank, volunteer ecumenical accompaniers monitor and report violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, support acts of non-violent resistance alongside local Christian and Muslim Palestinians and Israeli peace activists, offer protection through non-violent presence, engage in public policy advocacy, and stand in solidarity with the churches and all those struggling against the occupation. Since its establishment, 256 Ecumenical Accompaniers (EAs) originating from more than 30 churches and ecumenical partners in 13 countries have participated in the programme.

During 2005, the general political situation in the region saw increasing violence and tension affecting the local civilian populations, with a worsening social and humanitarian impact on the communities where EAPPI is present. The year saw

the expansion of the Israeli separation barrier around East Jerusalem and south towards and around Bethlehem, leading to the establishment of new checkpoints in the form of terminal buildings. The complete isolation of greater Jerusalem from the West Bank is nearing completion, and is of particular concern to the WCC.

The advocacy focus of the programme was consolidated during this period with the arrival of a new international programme coordinator in January, and a communication and advocacy officer was employed from July onwards. Staff and national coordinators took part in an advocacy workshop in February, and significant media impact was observed in several countries. A new quarterly magazine, "ChainReaction", and a monthly electronic newsletter were introduced.

In September, a "theological reflection" on ecumenical accompaniment was held in Geneva. The workshop increased understanding of the programme within the Council, and allowed an analysis of how the EAPPI can act as a model for other programmes within the WCC constituency. A first evaluation of the programme took place in June, involving a range of partners, ecumenical accompaniers, beneficiaries and local churches. The aim of the evaluation was to assess the WCC's involvement in EAPPI, the implementation of plans, and to outline the future work of EAPPI. The report will be available in 2006.



Churches in the Struggle against HIV and AIDS

Today it is estimated that 26 million people are living with HIV and AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa. The WCC has been highlighting the HIV and AIDS issue since the onset of the epidemic which is acknowledged to be the most critical health challenge currently facing the world.

In 2002, the WCC launched its Ecumenical HIV/AIDS Initiative in Africa (EHAIA) with the churches and a number of ecumenical partners. EHAIA has as its goal the prevention of the spread of the virus and a full life in the community for those infected or affected by HIV. The WCC through EHAIA strives to "break the silence" and to get church leadership committed to confronting HIV and AIDS beyond the traditional roles of teaching and caring; promotes education focusing on change of behaviour and attitude among laity, clergy and youth; and supports other advocacy and networking initiatives throughout the continent.

In the course of 2005, the EHAIA programme, through five regional offices throughout Africa, implemented 131 activities, including thematic workshops, training courses, publication projects, and regular activities such as advising church leaders or providing assistance to activists to raise resources. The activities covered a diverse range of initiatives.

EHAIA's theological consultants developed a curriculum for theological education by extension, integrating HIV into teaching and education

courses. This specific way of teaching future pastors, evangelists and lay preachers gains importance in Africa, where Christianity is spreading and the churches' capacity for extensive training of leaders is dwindling.

In another example of work, in Chad, EHAIA worked with predominantly evangelical churches on a consultation that explored biblical understandings of HIV and AIDS, and brought the local churches to a greater understanding of HIV and AIDS not as a form of punishment, but as an issue to which the churches have a moral obligation to respond.

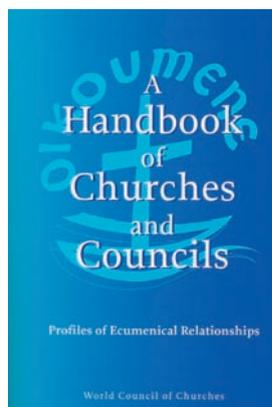
Stigma and discrimination are still the biggest challenge in the churches' efforts against the spread of HIV and AIDS. Fighting stigma remains rightfully the first objective of EHAIA. Not surprisingly, progress to change behaviour resulting from deeply rooted cultural values and habits is slow so far compared to the spread of the virus. Nevertheless EHAIA has been instrumental in encouraging church leaders at all levels to change attitude and engage in action, and staff and resources are increasingly used by the churches. Cooperation with the African Network of Religious Leaders Infected and Affected by HIV and AIDS (ANERELA+), which was formalized in 2005, was particularly fruitful. But EHAIA and church leaders alike recognize that much more will be needed if churches are truly to contribute to overcoming the deadly shadow of AIDS in Africa.



“EHAIA strives to ‘break the silence’ and to get church leadership committed to confronting HIV and AIDS”



Recent WCC Publications and Resources



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www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/news/pubs/index-e.html

During 2005 WCC Publications issued a range of documentation, manuals and books of common prayer for major events, including the world mission conference and the WCC's 9th Assembly. In addition to the production of these resources, and the journals *International Review of Mission* and *The Ecumenical Review*, a series of other books was issued during the year and can be ordered through our website or directly from WCC Publications.

A Handbook of Churches and Councils, compiled by Huibert van Beek, is not simply a handbook of the member churches of the World Council of Churches. It combines, in one volume, all the conciliar and confessional bodies and their membership, and demonstrates concretely the reach of the ecumenical movement. It also reminds us that the ownership of the movement rests not only with the WCC but with all the partners. This expanded 2006 reference work is the successor to two earlier volumes, *Directory of Christian Councils* and *A Handbook of WCC Member Churches*.

February 2006.
638pp. ISBN 2-8254-1480-8. Price CHF 55.00

From Harare to Porto Alegre tells the story, in words and photographs, of the World Council of Churches' witness and work from its Eighth Assembly in 1998 to the eve of the Ninth Assembly in 2006.

November 2005, richly illustrated
230pp. ISBN 2-8254-1456-5. Price CHF 24.00
Available also in French, German and Spanish

Keeping the Faith is a photo essay on the diversity and strength of world Christianity. It depicts people of faith in many different nations taking action within and beyond their communities, living out the reality of today's church in today's world.

Fully illustrated in colour, 28 x 28 cms
64pp. ISBN 2-8254-1477-8. Price CHF 30.00

Faith and Order at the Crossroads: Kuala Lumpur 2004 is the record of the Faith and Order plenary commission meeting held in Malaysia in 2004. It touches on such issues as the nature of the church, baptism, interreligious dialogue and identity.

Faith and Order Paper no. 196
484pp. ISBN 2-8254-1423-9. Price CHF 40.00

Listen to the Women! Listen to the Earth!, by Aruna Gnanadason, appeals for a holistic approach to the Christian stewardship of creation. The author seeks common ground between the social justice commitment in liberation theologies and the environmental consciousness of eco-feminist theologies.

Risk Book Series no. 111
130pp. ISBN 2-8254-1472-7. Price CHF 16.00

Orthodox Witness Today, by Bishop Hilarion Alfeyev of the Russian Orthodox Church, is a collection of essays providing a critique of secularization in contemporary societies. The author calls for "a true dialogue" among Christians seeking to discern religion's proper public role.

244pp. ISBN 2-8254-1448-4. Price CHF 28.00
Receive One Another: Hospitality in Ecumenical Perspective, edited by Diane Kessler, reports the conclusions of the Massachusetts Council of Churches following a project encouraging "ecumenical hospitality". Practical advice suggests how members of local churches may come to share one another's spiritual lives more fully.

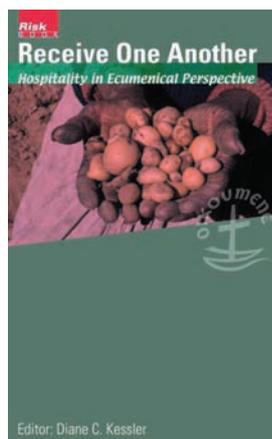
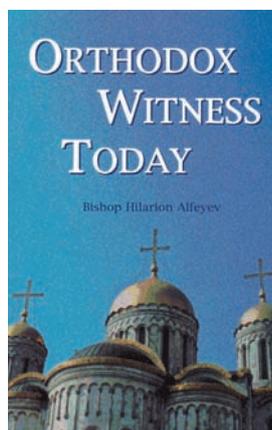
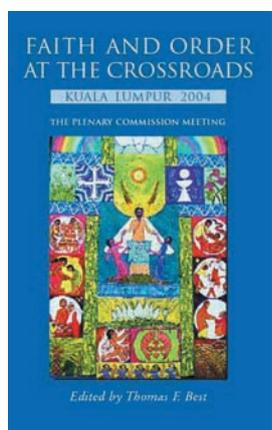
Risk Book Series no. 110
106pp. ISBN 2-8254-1411-5. Price CHF 17.00

Nurturing Peace: Theological Reflections on Overcoming Violence, edited by Deenabandhu Manchala, draws on three years of consultations on the theological dimensions of violence and peace. The authors examine profound problems confronting the peace-maker, yet they also discover signs of hope.

Risk Book Series 112
96pp. ISBN 2-8254-1478-6. Price CHF 16.00

Religions Today: Their Challenge to the Ecumenical Movement, edited by Julio de Santa Ana, is the report of a six-year study process undertaken by the Ecumenical Institute in Bossey, Switzerland. The authors suggest possibilities for a fully ecumenical Christian approach to interreligious dialogue.

316pp. ISBN 2-8254-1459-X. Price CHF 30.00



Listening With Love: Pastoral Counselling. A Christian Response to People Living with HIV/AIDS, by Fr Robert Igo, OSB. *Listening with Love* is designed for all those Christians who are called to help people cope with HIV and AIDS. Step by step, it introduces us to the basic medical facts and guides us through practical, loving approaches that enable us to empathize and communicate with those whose lives have been transformed by the disease. This Bible-based manual shows us how best to help people living with HIV and AIDS to overcome their fears.

136pp. ISBN 2-8254-1454-9. Price CHF 16.00

Worlds of Memory and Wisdom: Encounters of Jews and African Christians, edited by Jean Halpérin and Hans Ucko. This book on African-Jewish encounters discloses a fascinating chapter in a genuinely intercultural dialogue conducted at the highest intellectual level. The aim of the editors was to focus on subjects pointing to a commonality of concerns and purpose. The three consultations, in Nairobi, Johannesburg and Yaoundé, deal with fundamental issues, such as Ancient Wisdom in both cultures and its value for contemporary life; Family Community and Tradition as a way to the future; and The Challenge of Peace Building. These texts, in the original English or translated from French, will remain of lasting value as a source of inspiration and sound reflection.

161pp. ISBN 2-8254-1429-8. Price CHF 25.00

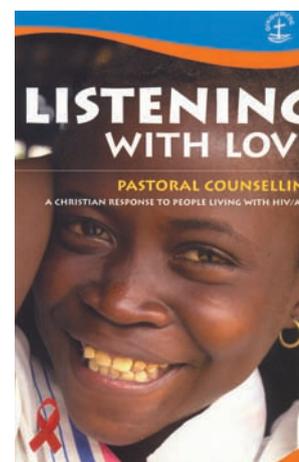
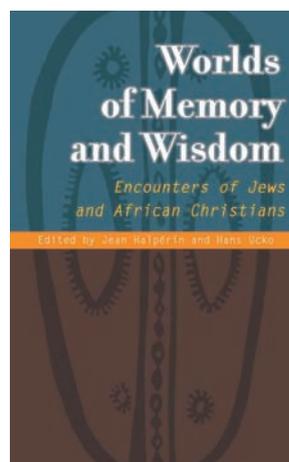
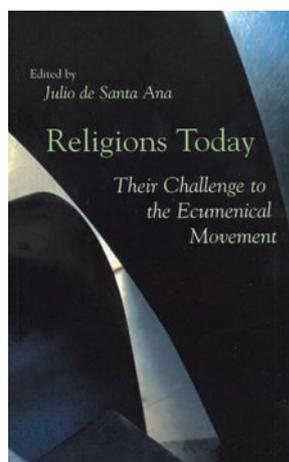
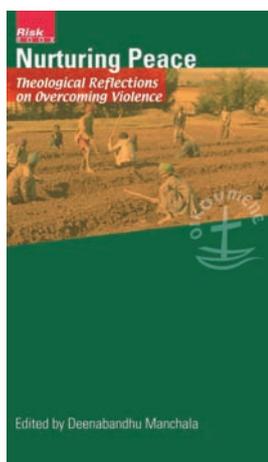
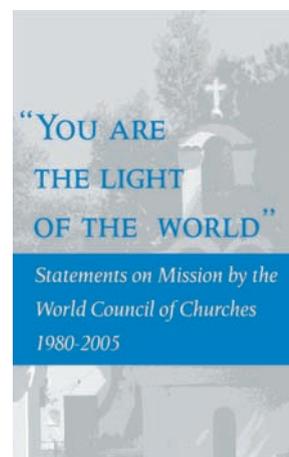
Also available in French: *Sagesse et Mémoires Croisées*.

The Nature and Mission of the Church: A Stage on the Way to a Common Statement. Faith and Order Paper 198. What is the church and what is it for? Such questions remain central to the work of Faith and Order, as perhaps the most inclusive and diverse church-based theological forum in the world. Building on earlier ecumenical work, especially *The Nature and Purpose of the Church* (1998), this document identifies honestly the issues which still divide the churches and offers a framework for their common confession, life and witness.

70pp. ISBN 2-8254-1463-7. Price CHF 11.00

You are the Light of the World: Statements on Mission by the World Council of Churches 1980-2005. A compendium of statements on Christian mission produced within the World Council of Churches (WCC) from 1980 through early 2005: including Mission and Evangelism: An Ecumenical Affirmation (1982), Mission and Evangelism in Unity Today (2000) and The Healing Ministry of the Church (2005). Prepared for the WCC's conference on world mission and evangelism of May 2005 in Athens, Greece, this volume provides a rich resource for study, dialogue and commentary on approaches to Christian mission - and on the theme of the Athens conference: *Come Holy Spirit, heal and reconcile*.

162pp. ISBN 2-8254-1435-2. Price CHF 18.50



WCC Member Churches 2005

WCC member church statistics by region and church family

The information presented here is based on membership figures as declared by WCC member churches for the WCC Ninth Assembly (2006) as registered before March 2005. The church count includes the 348 member churches and incorporates the "international" membership of the churches which may be in more than one country or region.

The choice of church family corresponds to the self-identity of the individual churches.

Contact information for all WCC member churches is published each year in the *WCC Directory*.

Full descriptions of each member church, as well as information on other ecumenical bodies, are available in the *Handbook of Churches and Councils*. Both resources can be ordered from WCC Publications.

Table 1: Member churches by region

Region	Total member churches	Number of WCC member churches %	Total church membership	Total church membership %
Africa	93	27%	132 000 000	23%
Asia	74	21%	62 500 000	11%
Caribbean	13	4%	2 600 000	< 1%
Europe	81	23%	287 000 000	50%
Latin America	27	8%	4 400 000	< 1%
Middle East	12	3%	9 700 000	2%
North America	31	9%	72 000 000	13%
Pacific	17	5%	2 000 000	< 1%
Total	348	100%	572 200 000	100%

Table 2: Member churches by church family

Family	Total member churches	Number of WCC member churches %	Total church membership	Total church membership %
African Instituted	9	3%	21 340 000	4%
Anglican	32	9%	67 703 000	12%
Assyrian	1	< 1%	350 000	< 1%
Baptist	25	7%	26 600 000	5%
Disciples	6	2%	1 400 000	< 1%
Free	17	2%	1 305 000	< 1%
Hussite	1	< 1%	130 000	< 1%
Independent	3	< 1%	3 600 000	< 1%
Lutheran	54	16%	58 700 000	10%
Mar Thoma	1	< 1%	1 100 000	< 1%
Methodist	38	11%	36 810 000	6%
Non-denominational	2	< 1%	16 100 000	3%
Old Catholic	5	1%	4 700 000	< 1%
Orthodox Eastern	15	4%	208 700 000	36%
Orthodox Oriental	7	2%	67 350 000	12%
Pentecostal	7	2%	482 000	< 1%
Reformed	97	28%	30 430 000	5%
United and Uniting	28	8%	25 400 000	4%
Total	348	100%	572 200 000	100%



WCC Governing Bodies and Staff Leadership 2006

Presidents (elected in February 2006)

Archbishop Dr Anastasios of Tirana and All Albania	Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania
Mr John Taroanui Doom	Maohi Protestant Church, French Polynesia
Rev. Dr Simon Dossou	Protestant Methodist Church in Benin
Rev. Dr Soritua Nababan	Protestant Christian Batak Church (HKBP), Indonesia
Rev. Dr Ofelia Ortega	Presbyterian-Reformed Church in Cuba
Patriarch Abune Paulos	Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church
Rev. Dr Bernice Powell Jackson	United Church of Christ (USA)
Dr Mary Tanner	Church of England (United Kingdom)

Executive Committee (elected in February 2006)

Africa:	
Bishop Ivan Manuel Abrahams	Methodist Church of Southern Africa (South Africa)
Dr Agnes Abuom	Anglican Church of Kenya
Pastor Antonio Pedro Malungo	Evangelical Reformed Church of Angola
Ms Iyabo Oyekola	Church of the Lord Aladura Worldwide (Nigeria)
Asia:	
Bishop Samuel R. Azariah	Church of Pakistan
Rev. Dr Margaretha M. Hendriks-Ririmasse	Protestant Church in the Moluccas (Indonesia)
Ms Hae-Sun Jung	Korean Methodist Church
Caribbean:	
Ms Nerissa Celestine	Church in the Province of the West Indies (Grenada)
Europe:	
Ms Inger Aasa-Marklund	Church of Sweden
Metropolitan Prof. Dr Gennadios of Sassima	Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople
Bishop Dr Hilarion of Vienna and Austria	Russian Orthodox Church
Bishop Dr Rolf Koppe	Evangelical Church in Germany
Mr Graham G. McGeoch	Church of Scotland
Archbishop Nifon of Targoviste	Romanian Orthodox Church
Bishop Dr Vasilios of Trimithus	Church of Cyprus
Ms Outi Vasko	Orthodox Church of Finland
Latin America:	
Rev. Dr Walter Altmann	Evangelical Church of the Lutheran Confession in Brazil
Middle East:	
Metropolitan Bishop of Damiette	Coptic Orthodox Church (Egypt)
North America:	
Ms Carmen Rae Lansdowne	United Church of Canada
Rev. Dr Larry Pickens	United Methodist Church (USA)
Rev. Dr Tyrone Pitts	Progressive National Baptist Convention, Inc. (USA)
Bishop Vicken Aykazian	Armenian Apostolic Church (Holy See of Etchmiadzin) (USA)
Pacific:	
Rev. Sanele Faasua Lavatai	Methodist Church of Samoa

Staff Leadership Group (membership until March 2005)

Rev. Dr Samuel Kobia	(Kenya: Methodist Church in Kenya), General Secretary
Mr Georges Lemopoulos	(Turkey: Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople), Deputy General Secretary
Ms Geneviève Jacques	(France: Reformed Church of France), Director of Programme
Dr William Temu	(Tanzania: Roman Catholic Church), Director of Management
Rev. Sabine Udodesku	(Germany: Evangelical Church in Germany), Executive Secretary

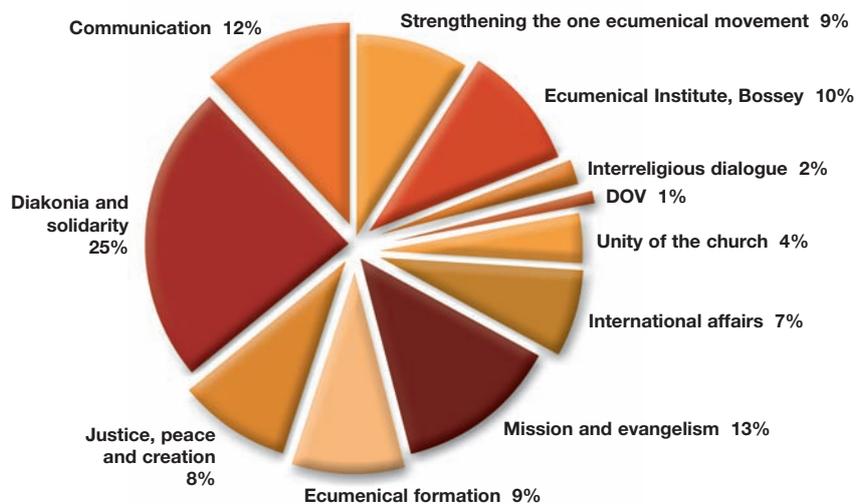
WCC Financial Overview 2005

Financial results 2005 (Swiss Francs 000's)

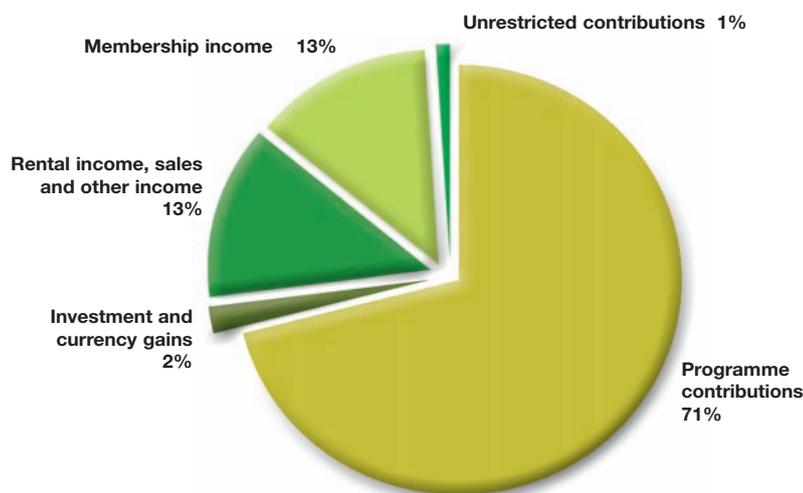
Note: The results for 2005 are unaudited, as prepared on 30 May 2006. Prior year comparatives are audited consolidated results. Audited consolidated results for 2005 will be presented in the WCC Financial Report 2005.

	Unrestricted and designated funds 2005	Restricted funds 2005	Total funds 2005	Total funds 2004
Income				
Membership and other unrestricted income	6,740	-	6,740	7,325
Programme Contributions	-	34,516	34,516	32,433
Investment and currency gains/(losses)	244	1,322	1,566	(5)
Rental income, sales and other income	3,907	2,522	6,429	5,955
Unrestricted income distribution	(5,469)	5,469	-	-
Total Income	5,422	43,829	49,251	45,708
Expenditure				
Direct programme costs	-	11,300	11,300	12,394
Operating and other programme costs	3,533	13,989	17,522	13,966
Salaries	4,309	14,614	18,923	18,383
Redistribution of costs	(3,954)	3,954	-	-
Total costs	3,888	43,857	47,745	44,743
Transfers to/(from) funds and current liabilities	90	361	451	(343)
Net increase/(decrease) for the year	1,624	333	1,957	622

WCC expenditure by core programme 2005



WCC sources of income 2005



WCC Income and Donors 2005

WCC income trends 1999 – 2005 (Swiss Francs 000's)

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Programmes	29,007	29,610	28,894	27,209	27,134	27,276	27,161
Multilateral sharing	14,978	11,664	9,935	8,209	6,276	5,345	4,665
Membership	6,269	6,690	6,306	6,537	6,401	6,510	6,426
Assembly	-	-	-	-	435	627	3,004
Other income	8,557	1,599	1,955	2,221	6,965	5,950	7,995
Total	58,811	49,563	47,090	44,176	47,211	45,708	49,251

WCC financial contributors 2005

Note: The list includes all member churches, partner organizations and other bodies that have contributed more than 20,000 Swiss Francs to the WCC in 2005.

Main contributors

American Baptist Churches in the USA
 Anglican Church of Canada
 Brot für Alle (Switzerland)
 Christian Aid (UK)
 Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the USA
 Christian Council of Sweden
 Church of England
 Church of Greece
 Church of Norway
 Church of Scotland
 Church of Sweden
 Church of the Brethren (USA)
 Church of the Province of Southern Africa (South Africa)
 Church World Service (USA)
 CIDA-Canadian International Development Agency
 Comitato Cattolico per la Collaborazione Culturale (Vatican)
 Conseil Suisse des Missions Évangéliques (Switzerland)
 Council for World Mission (UK)
 DanChurchAid (Denmark)
 Diakonisches Werk der EKD (Germany)
 EED-Church Development Service (Germany)
 EKD-Evangelical Church in Germany
 Episcopal Church in the USA
 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
 Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark
 Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland
 Evangelical Reformed Church of Aargau (Switzerland)
 Evangelical Reformed Church of St Gallen (Switzerland)
 Evangelisches Missionswerk in Deutschland (Germany)
 Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches
 Fédération Suisse des Femmes Protestantes (Switzerland)
 FinnChurchAid (Finland)
 Foundation for Theological Education in Southeast Asia (USA)
 HEKS-EPER (Switzerland)
 Hong Kong Christian Council
 ICCO-Interchurch Organization for Development Cooperation (Netherlands)

Kerkinactie/Global Ministries, Protestant Church in the Netherlands
 Korean Methodist Church
 Mennonite Central Committee - Northwest Europe Office (Germany)
 Methodist Church, UK
 Mission Covenant Church of Sweden
 Nathan Söderblom Memorial Fund (Sweden)
 National Council of Churches in Australia - Christian World Service
 Norwegian Church Aid
 Peace Watch Switzerland
 Pictet & Cie (Switzerland)
 Presbyterian Church (USA)
 Presbyterian Church in Canada
 Presbyterian Church of Korea
 Protestant Church in the Netherlands
 Reformed Church in America
 Reformed Church of France
 Reformed Churches of Bern-Jura-Solothurn (Switzerland)
 Religious Society of Friends (UK)
 Remonstrant Brotherhood (Netherlands)
 Stichting Rotterdam (Netherlands)
 United Church of Canada
 United Church of Christ (USA)
 United Methodist Church (USA)
 United Nations University (Tokyo) (Japan)
 United Reformed Church (UK)
 Uniting Church in Australia
 World Association for Christian Communication (UK)

Other contributions

Other member churches (below 20,000 CHF)
 Other specialized ministries (below 20,000 CHF)
 Other organizations
 Individuals
 Local congregations
 Local denominational bodies
 Local ecumenical bodies
 Other local contributions

WCC on the World Wide Web

WCC e-news

<http://www.wcc-coe.org/e-news>

Stay informed about WCC programmes and activities, receive press releases and regular information on WCC work by e-mail with this new service from WCC. Users can also select from a choice of online WCC newsletters.



World Council of Churches

<http://www.wcc-coe.org>

The main website of the World Council of Churches is a unique resource for those interested in the role and vision, structures, programmes, relationships and resources of the broadest and most inclusive among the many organized expressions of the modern ecumenical movement.

Decade to Overcome Violence

<http://www.overcomingviolence.org>

<http://www.vaincrelaviolence.org>

<http://www.gewaltueberwinden.org>

<http://www.superarlaviolencia.org>

The interactive website of the Decade to Overcome Violence is designed to stimulate involvement, facilitate exchange and provide information, ideas, contacts, stories and other resources. Visitors can sign up for e-mail news, download materials on the theology of peace and practical ways of overcoming violence, submit information and stories.

WCC 9th Assembly

<http://www.wcc-assembly.info>

The website of the WCC's Ninth Assembly in Porto Alegre, Brazil, in 2006 contains background information, documents and resources related to this unique event gathering thousands of Christians from around the world for fellowship, prayer, celebration and reflection.

Conference on World Mission and Evangelism

<http://www.mission2005.org>

The world mission conference took place in Greece in May 2005. The website contains a full record of this global event, including background documents, reflections on mission, healing and reconciliation, as well as video recordings and photos from the gathering.

Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel

<http://www.eappi.org>

Maintained in Jerusalem by staff of the WCC's Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel, the EAPPI site provides up-to-date news, photos and eye-witness accounts of the volunteer workers accompanying Palestinians and Israelis in non-violent actions and concerted advocacy efforts for peace and justice.

PhotoOikoumene - Photos for professionals

<http://www.photooikoumene.org>

PhotoOikoumene features professional-quality photos related to church and society that document the life of the ecumenical movement. These are available for purchase by editors, journalists, agencies, publishers, audio-visual producers and other multipliers.

Websites of WCC-related organizations:

Ecumenical News International

www.eni.ch

Action by Churches Together International

www.act-intl.org

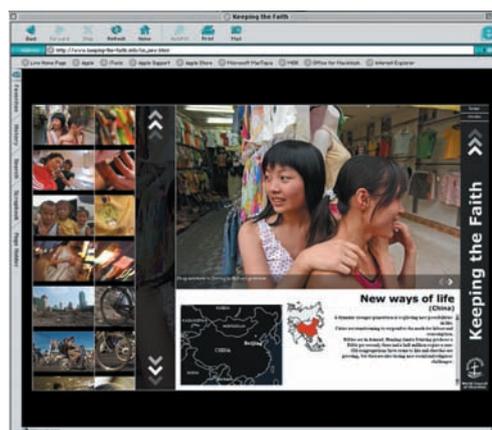
Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance

www.e-alliance.org

Ecumenical Church Loan Fund

www.eclof.org

Although the information given here is in English, many of the above websites are multilingual. The content of the websites of WCC-related organizations is editorially independent of WCC.



Keeping the Faith

<http://www.keeping-the-faith.info>

'Keeping the Faith' is an integrated exhibition, web and book project of the WCC launched in 2005. This attractive website contains multimedia stories of church life from around the world, all exploring the reality of the living church in diverse cultural contexts.

WCC Programmes and Activities 2005

CP01 Strengthening the One Ecumenical Movement

- 01 Giving leadership to the work of the WCC
- 02 Fostering membership relations
- 03 Widening the fellowship
- 04 Promoting the coherence of the ecumenical movement

CP03 Ecumenical Institute, Bossey

- 01 Ecumenical formation
- 05 Visiting professors
- 06 Bossey publications

CP04 Dialogue with Neighbours of Other Religions

- 01 Deepening relations with partners in dialogue
- 02 Enhancing dialogue on issues of common concern
- 03 Christian identity and religious plurality

CP06 Decade to Overcome Violence

CP07 Unity of the Church

- 01 Ecclesiology
- 02 Baptism (worship)
- 03 Ecumenical hermeneutics
- 04 Theological anthropology
- 05 Ethnic identity, national identity and the search for unity
- 06 Theological reflection on peace
- 07 Other Faith and Order activities

CP08 Ecumenical Advocacy and Peaceful Resolution of Conflicts

- 01 Peaceful responses to conflicts and war (including Ecumenical Focus on Africa)
- 02 Ecumenical advocacy
- 03 Public issues and publications
- 04 Jerusalem Ecumenical Centre

CP09 Mission and Evangelism: Promoting the Ministry of Reconciliation

- 01 Conference on World Mission and Evangelism
- 02 Mission study: study process on reconciliation and healing in mission
- 03 Evangelism
- 04 Mission in solidarity with the poor (Urban Rural Mission)
- 05 Health and healing

CP10 The Challenge of Ecumenical Formation

- 01 Ecumenical formation
- 02 Ecumenical theological education
- 03 Scholarships

CP11 The Ethics of Life and Alternatives to Globalization

- 01 Economic globalization: affirming alternatives
- 02 Being church: strengthening voices of youth
- 03 Caring for life: theology of life
- 04 Being church: strengthening voices of racially oppressed and indigenous peoples
- 05 Being church: strengthening voices of women
- 06 Ecumenical Disability Advocates Network (EDAN)
- 07 Publications

CP12 Diakonia and Solidarity

- 01 Creating spaces for analysis and reflection
- 02 Decentralized capacities
- 03 Sustaining relationships for solidarity and witness
- 04 Ecumenical advocacy on uprooted people
- 05 Strategic Initiatives Fund
- 06 Multilateral solidarity
- 07 Building capacities
- 08 Developing a coherent and holistic approach to meet human needs

CP14 Communicating the Fellowship

- 01 Media relations
- 02 World Wide Web
- 03 Visual arts
- 04 Programme liaison

CP15 Telling the Ecumenical Story

- 01 Publishing books and producing other communication vehicles
- 02 Sales, marketing and distribution
- 03 Managing the library and archives of the WCC
- 04 Language services

E1 Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel

- 01 Ecumenical accompaniers
- 02 Awareness building and advocacy

E2 Ecumenical HIV/AIDS Initiative in Africa

This page comprises a complete list of WCC core programmes and activities as structured in 2005. Core programmes CP02 and CP13 were discontinued before 2004 and are not listed here



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