
The World Council of Churches (WCC) is the broadest and most inclusive among the many organized expressions of the modern ecumenical movement, a movement whose goal is Christian unity. It is a visible manifestation of the prayer Jesus prays for his disciples as recorded in the Gospel of John.

“I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, 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” (John 17:20-21).

The WCC brings together churches, denominations, and church fellowships in more than 110 countries and territories throughout the world, representing over 500 million Christians and including most of the world’s Orthodox churches; scores of Anglican, Baptist, Lutheran, Methodist and Reformed churches; and many united and independent churches. While the bulk of the WCC’s founding churches were European and North American, such as the Church of the Brethren, today most member churches are in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Latin America, the Middle East, and the Pacific. There are now 350 member churches.

For its member churches, the WCC is a unique space—one in which they can reflect, speak, act, worship and work together, challenge and support each other, share and debate with each other. As members of this fellowship, WCC member churches:

• are called to the goal of visible unity in one faith and one eucharistic fellowship;
• promote their common witness in work for mission and evangelism;
• engage in Christian service by serving human need, breaking down barriers between people, seeking justice and peace, and upholding the integrity of creation; and
• foster renewal in unity, worship, mission and service.

Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace

The Church of the Brethren’s peace commitment has been programmatically embraced by the World Council of Churches since the 1990s when Dr. Fernando Enns of the German Mennonite Church and then Church of the Brethren general secretary Dr. Donald Miller proposed a public emphasis entitled Peace Among the Cities. This program grew into the Decade to Overcome Violence, which encountered and encouraged peace testimonies from member churches and highlighted the global struggle for peace and those places of greatest conflict and promise.
Concurrent with actionable programmatic witness, a collection of ecumenical scholars, to include Bethany Theological Seminary professor Dr. Scott Holland, composed *An Ecumenical Call of Just Peace*. Just Peace is a systemic understanding for proactive peace-building and a praxis-oriented rebuttal to Augustinian’s notion of Just War.

The Decade to Overcome Violence culminated in the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation in Kingston, Jamaica, where *An Ecumenical Call of Just Peace* was affirmed and passed on to the 10th Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Busan, South Korea. In Busan, the work and witness of the *Ecumenical Call of Just Peace* were received and led to a new and current WCC program: the Ecumenical Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace.

Today, the Church of the Brethren-inspired and -supported peace witness continues in the WCC-affirmed Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace. The pilgrimage is an invitation to Christians and people of goodwill everywhere to work together in a common quest, renewing the true vocation of the church through collaborative engagement with the most important issues of justice and peace, healing a world filled with conflict, injustice, and pain. Resources for personal and corporate study are available through the WCC website.

**Central Committee**

In June 2018, the Central Committee, the governing board of the WCC, met in Geneva, Switzerland. As part of the meetings, the Central Committee hosted a number of distinguished guests in recognition of the 70th anniversary of the founding of the World Council of Churches.

Sunday morning’s worship was held in St. Pierre’s Cathedral. The large Reformed church hosted a public worship wherein the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, first among Orthodox patriarchs, delivered the morning sermon. Midweek, Beatrice Finn, 2017 Nobel Peace Prize recipient, addressed the Central Committee, noting the importance of her work with the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons and its long-held partnership with the WCC.

The WCC engages many social issues, including anti-racism, climate change, migration, international conflict and civil war, and inter-religious dialogue. Non-proliferation of nuclear weapons has gained recent attention through the WCC’s work with ICAN and Ms. Finn’s presence and that of the Nobel Prize was both inspiring and convicting.

The meetings concluded with a visit from His Holiness, Pope Francis. He delivered the sermon during the morning convocation, and then spoke in a specially hosted lecture in the afternoon. During his remarks, he noted that Christian disunity undercuts the center of our evangelical witness and invited participants to consider the ways in which we might work together, each with our own identity, focused on the faith to which Christ calls us.
As the largest collection of Protestant churches worshiping with the heads of
the Orthodox Church and Roman Catholic Church, the worship experiences re-
vealed the possible witness of the three major historic divisions within the
church when we seek to glorify God through our unity in Jesus Christ. Through-
out the meetings there was the recurring refrain of Jesus’ prayer for his disciples,
that we be one so that the world might believe.

11th World Assembly
Preliminary work is underway in planning for the 11th World Assembly in Karl-
sruhe, Germany, which will take place in 2021. Under the working theme
“Christ’s love moves the world to reconciliation and unity,” based upon “the
love of Christ compels us,” from Paul’s letter to the church in Corinth (2
Corinthians 5:14), the theme will serve as a planning guide for worship, insight
sessions, and assembly programs.

Meeting every seven years, the assembly draws together delegates from member
churches as well as global nonprofits, Christian bodies that are in fellowship
but are not members, and official observers.

Church of the Brethren representatives to the World Council of Churches are
Elizabeth Bidgood Enders, delegate, and Glenn Bollinger, alternate. Jeff Carter
serves on the Central Committee and the WCC’s Commission of the Churches
on International Affairs.

David Steele, general secretary
Elizabeth Bidgood Enders, delegate
Glenn Bollinger, alternate
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