

## 7. Report of the Delegates to the World Council of Churches

The World Council of Churches (WCC) is the broadest and most inclusive of 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 is a unique space where its member churches can reflect, speak, act, worship, and work together, challenge and support each other, share and debate with each other. As members of this fellowship, they are called to the goal of visible unity in one faith and one eucharistic fellowship. Together they 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.

The WCC executive committee confirmed Ioan Sauca as interim general secretary. With the 2020 Central Committee meeting postponed due to COVID-19, the search process for a permanent general secretary is delayed by a year.

The global impact of COVID-19 has highlighted the need for greater religious, political, and social solidarity. Through the work of the WCC, congregations benefitted from a variety of resources providing spiritual engagement, trusted medical information, and news throughout the world. The WCC:

- Created a webpage in five languages with authoritative information on the pandemic and advice for churches.
- Made available the expertise of a COVID-19 support team of medically trained and pastoral staff to advise churches on reframing their gatherings and providing pastoral care.
- Joined in a global prayer day on May 14.
- Held online consultations with global health providers throughout the year.
- Published spiritual resources for faith communities to grapple spiritually with the new reality brought on by the coronavirus and come to terms with its meaning for their lives.
- Issued a message on Pentecost, entitled "Waves of despair, tongues of fire," that reflected on the mighty presence of God.
- Urged governments to bolster support for healthcare and social protection.
- Addressed health and wider issues in an issue of the *International Review of Mission*.

The Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace—an outgrowth of a peace emphasis first proposed by Brethren and Mennonites in the 1990s—advocates on behalf of those experiencing violence and injustice. Delegations are sent annually to troubled places to be a living letter of hope as well as an international witness to conflict. In 2020, the Pacific region was a focus area and visits were made, first in person and then virtually, to areas of need, including the Fiji Islands and Australia’s northeast coast.

Church of the Brethren representative Jeff Carter attended a meeting of the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs (CCIA) in Brisbane, Australia. The February gathering focused on concerns such as rising sea levels, the impact of nuclear testing over the last century, aboriginal rights, and climate change. Meeting in Australia in the midst of widespread wildfires and as international airports scrambled to mitigate the approaching COVID-19 made palpable the interconnectedness of the global community, thus reinforcing the work of the CCIA. The need for a proactive, holistic, and systemic just peace, which includes the environment and global economy, was affirmed in a tangible way.

Due to COVID-19, the 11th World Assembly was postponed from 2021 to 2022. The Assembly, which meets every seven or eight years, will take place in Karlsruhe, Germany, with the theme “For the love of Christ urges us on” (2 Corinthians 5:14).

The WCC brings together 350 churches, denominations, and church fellowships in more than 110 countries and territories throughout the world. It represents over 500 million Christians and includes most of the world’s Orthodox churches, numerous Anglican, Baptist, Lutheran, Methodist, and Reformed churches, as well as many United and Independent churches. While the majority of the founding churches, including the Church of the Brethren, were European and North American, today most member churches are in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Latin America, the Middle East, and the Pacific.

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 Commission of the Churches on International Affairs.

David Steele, general secretary  
Elizabeth Bidgood Enders, delegate  
Glenn Bollinger, alternate  
Jeff Carter, Central Committee member