

ANNUAL REVIEW 2021

Lament, Hope, and Courage



World Council
of Churches

The World Council of Churches (WCC) is a global expression of the modern ecumenical movement. As a fellowship of 352 churches present in more than 120 countries, the WCC engages in a quest for common witness to the good news of Christ, service to all the world's people, interreligious dialogue and cooperation, theological formation, and spiritual renewal.

Within the membership are most of the world's Orthodox churches, scores of Anglican, Baptist, Lutheran, Methodist, and Reformed churches, as well as many charismatic, independent, united, and uniting churches.

While the preponderance of the founding churches in the mid-20th century were from Europe and North America, the majority today are found in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Latin America, the Middle East, and the Pacific. Well over 580 million people belong to WCC member churches.

The WCC's programmes share responsibility for strengthening the fellowship, spiritual life, youth engagement, interreligious dialogue and cooperation, and building a just community of women and men.

At its 10th Assembly at Busan, Korea, in 2013, the WCC invited Christians and all people of good will to join a "Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace" as a coordinated embodiment of the vision and spirit of Just Peace, working together to heal a world filled with conflict, injustice, and pain.

This annual review of the activity of the World Council of Churches records many of the initiatives undertaken by the council during 2021 and continuing into 2022.

It tells the story of a unique organization that provides a workspace in which all are invited to reflect, speak, act, pray, and labour together in hope, to challenge and support one another, to share and debate the most pressing concerns of our day.



As we look around us at cruel wars in Ukraine and elsewhere in the world, taking thousands of innocent lives, and at increased militarization, political divisions and economic turmoil, it is important to remember that, ultimately, the God of life prevails.

It is important that we stand together as a WCC fellowship on a foundation of hope built by reconciliation and peace-building.

Strengthened by such faith and hope, we should not be afraid, we should not despair when we see what happens in our world today but confront it with courage.

During the period of mounting tensions over Ukraine and following the outbreak of the conflict, the WCC leadership and I have been intensively engaged in seeking ways to address the situation. On that very day of 24 February 2022 when the war started, I made a strong statement supporting the statement of Metropolitan Onufriy and called on President Putin to "stop this fratricidal war, and to restore peace to the people and nation of Ukraine."

It has not been possible to share in any public or semi-public domain in real-time most of our efforts. But I want to share with you this update on our initiatives thus far and what are currently envisaged as next steps.



WCC is in close contact with ACT Alliance regarding church-based humanitarian responses to the situation in Ukraine and in neighbouring countries due to the conflict. Most recently, a joint delegation visit took place in the region 14-18 March, to Hungary and Romania and border regions of Ukraine.

Having seen the impact of the conflict in the faces of refugees arriving in these neighbouring countries, and being aware of the plight and peril of all those civilians still trapped and unable to flee, we strongly underscore the urgent necessity of effective and secure humanitarian corridors to enable civilians to escape the fighting.

Before the conflict in Ukraine escalated, during 2021, the World Council of Churches fellowship drew together in prayer in unprecedented ways.

I believe God heard our prayers. We asked God for courage and wisdom. We trusted in God's promise to overcome whatever faced us. And we faced a lot. We lost many in the ecumenical family due to COVID-19 and other reasons.

Amid this sadness—perhaps even from this sadness—has grown a new commitment for active compassion for each other. If the COVID-19 pandemic reached all the regions of our planet, it has also revealed our unexpected vulnerability and interdependence. ■

*Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca
WCC acting general secretary*

Theological fruits in 2021

The WCC Commission on Faith and Order, through dialogue, publications, and webinars, continued to highlight the work of its three study groups, which looked to future activities with a sense of hope and a theological foundation that emerged from the pages of documents to transform our daily lives.

Study groups forge ahead

The first study group is working on a plan for a World Conference on Faith and Order in 2025. The last such conference organized by Faith and Order was in Compostela, Spain, in 1993. In its proposal, the study group reflected on purpose, theme, format, partners, promotion, and finances of a conference.

The study group on ecclesiology announced publication of 78 responses to *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*. To address the divisive topics coming from the responses, a volume of 16 key thematic papers written by the commissioners will be published ahead of the WCC 11th Assembly in 2022.

From the third study group, on moral discernment, the commission approved the study document *Churches and Moral Discernment: Facilitating Dialogue to Build Koinonia*. The document harvests

the fruits of the recent phase of commission's work on moral discernment, which began in 2015. During these years, the study group combined comparative study of 14 different church traditions with an analysis of 19 different historical examples of churches discerning on moral issues.

In its analysis, the study document describes some patterns in the complex negotiations between continuity and change as churches respond to moral challenges. At its core, the study document invites the churches to more deeply understand the significance of "the conscience of the church" in moral discernment processes and points to its ecumenical potential.

The Faith and Order Commission also mapped a path toward enlarging its work in order to better reflect the challenges raised by independent, evangelical, and Pentecostal traditions in the search for visible unity.

Prayer from the Canadian Council of Churches

A prayer for healing, gratitude, and a just transition "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?" (Romans 8:35)

Loving God,

We earnestly pray for healing, for the continued efforts to relieve human suffering, and for perseverance throughout these challenging times of the COVID-19 pandemic.

We are struck by the dedication and cooperation of virologists, biochemists, epidemiologists, and many other scientists working urgently in laboratories across Canada and around the world to develop tests, treatments, and vaccines to protect us from the ongoing ravages of COVID-19.

Now, with a shift in public attention, we pray for a just transition and recovery:

That public policy puts people's health and well-being first, no exceptions.

That we strengthen the social safety net, especially for people in long-term care homes.

That we experience solidarity and equity across communities, generations, and borders, also in the availability of vaccines for all.

That we uphold Indigenous rights, work in partnership with Indigenous Peoples, and prioritize access to immunization programs with all vulnerable populations.

May we respond with an abundance of hope, gratitude, and solidarity, trusting in the loving and ever merciful God, the source of all hope.

Amen.



Photo: Peter Kenny



Photo: Albin Hillert/CEC

“A focus on mission as well as on interreligious dialogue has become integral, and often indispensable, to the study of world Christianity”



Photo: Grégoire de Fombelle/WCC

Publications shared with WCC member churches

The Faith and Order Commission also published two new volumes, *Churches Respond to The Church: Towards A Common Vision, Volume I and 2*, that collect responses received to *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* between 2013 and 2020.

The responses address the church’s mission, unity, and its being in the trinitarian life of God in order to encourage and advance the churches’ growth in communion with each other in apostolic faith, sacramental life, mission and ministry for the sake of God’s world.

The commission was thankful to make the responses available to the wider public, said Rev. Dr Stephanie Dietrich, who served as an editor for the volumes. “We highly recommend these to everyone interested in the development of ecumenical ecclesiology to study how churches, ecumenical organizations and other bodies have responded to *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*,” said Dietrich during a webinar series designed to introduce

the wider WCC audience to the new volumes. “The responses clearly show that our search for Christian unity is as relevant as ever before, when churches seek together in their longing for unity in faith and life, as churches in and for the world.”

Rev. Dr Ellen Wondra, also an editor, described the publication as another stop in the reception of ecumenical conversations about the nature and mission of the church. “The responses are both appreciative of the work so far, and also rich in suggestions about how to advance both the conversation and mutual cooperation further,” said Wondra.

A webinar on moral discernment, held in June, presented a new study document, *Churches and Moral Discernment: Facilitating Dialogue to Build Koinonia*, which harvests the fruits of the study process begun in 2015.

Historic milestone in teaching ecumenism

Bringing churches together in a spirit of reconciliation and justice is embodied at the Bossey Ecumenical Institute, a message its director brought home as he opened an online conference on “Teaching Ecumenism in the Context of World Christianity.”

The early-June conference—the first of its kind—brought together 15 plenary speakers, 35 short paper presenters and some 150 emerging and senior scholars from around the world.

Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca, WCC acting general secretary and director of the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey, spoke at the start of the three-day academic conference.

“Ecumenism embodies the search for reconciliation and unity, emancipation from oppression, and the collaborative work of pursuing justice and peace,” said Sauca.

Food for thought on conceptual, theological dimensions

Sauca said ecumenism further provides space to examine the changing roles of religion in fostering identity at the intersection of faith, politics, and culture.

“World Christianity pays specific attention to how diverse local expressions of Christianity emerge in critical and creative tension and interaction with local religious and cultural realities,” he added.

“A focus on mission as well as on interreligious dialogue has become integral, and often indispensable, to the study of world Christianity,” he explained, addressing a conference that zeroed in on the relationship between ecumenism and world Christianity, across both the conceptual and theological dimensions.

WCC 11th Assembly Bible studies received by the fellowship

A series of Bible studies leading up to the WCC 11th Assembly, to be held in Karlsruhe, Germany, in 2022, became newly available to the WCC fellowship.

With the first published at the beginning of Advent 2021, the series is based on the assembly theme, “Christ’s love moves the world to reconciliation and unity” and is linked to significant Christian feast days.

The series of Bible studies continues a well-established tradition. Major ecumenical events, such as an assembly of the World Council of Churches, are nurtured by Bible study gathering people from different cultures and Christian traditions.

Authors of the Bible studies include Rev. Dr Susan Durber, moderator of the WCC Faith and Order Commission; Rev. Dr Kenneth Mtata, general secretary of the Zimbabwe Council of Churches; Archbishop Job of Telmessos, permanent representative of the Ecumenical Patriarchate to the WCC; and others.

The nine Bible studies are available in four languages.



Photo: Albin Hillert/WCC



Photo: Methodist Ecumenical Office in Rome / Kamla Ernest



Photo: Ivars Kupcis/WCC



Photo: Kamla Ernest

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, with the WCC’s first ever online global ecumenical prayer on 25 January, drew attendees from across the world who came together in a spirit of hope.

As he offered words of welcome, WCC acting general secretary Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca reflected that the online format allowed people to pray together wherever they are. “The global pandemic has shown just how fragile we are as humans, yet also how creative and resilient we can be when we pray and work together to bring hope and a sense of caring for each other and for the wider ecumenical family,” he said. “We are one world and one human family.”

The theme for this year, with materials prepared by the Community of Grandchamp in Switzerland, was “Abide in my love and you shall bear much fruit.”

Prayer is one of the fruits that is borne out of our abiding in Christ’s love, reflected Sauca. “As we gather in prayer, we do so as an affirmation and expression of our common vocation to pray for Christian unity and reconciliation among our human family.”

In a pastoral greeting, WCC moderator of the central committee, Dr Agnes Abuom, reflected that we are called as Christians and churches to move from separation to full visible communion in faith, life, mission, and witness. “This is the core vocation of the World Council of Churches,” she said. “But this vocation cannot be fulfilled if we do not pray together for the realization of this calling and vision.” ■



Photo: Andrei-Mihai Vlad

Prayer from the All Africa Conference of Churches

God of life, you promised your people abundant life. And this is what we seek and long for. At the same time, you tell us that in this world we will have tribulation. Still, you call us to have courage, for you have overcome the world. As the world finds itself in a time of a terrible pandemic, many families having to bury their loved ones and sustain pain and hopelessness, we ask you to grant us courage and wisdom so that we trust in your promise to overcome whatever faces us. Stand with us as we try to work in solidarity to stay safe and serve those in need of any kind of help in our interconnected and interdependent world.

Interreligious bridges: building new ones, strengthening existing ones

From classes to consultations, webinars to shared prayers, the WCC's interreligious work — marking 50 years in 2021 — expanded despite COVID-19, catching a momentum that will continue into 2022.

International Day of Human Fraternity

The WCC observed the International Day of Human Fraternity on 4 February, emphasizing the significance and value of unity among our one human family.

“Interreligious and Intercultural dialogue is key to breaking down barriers between diverse communities,” said WCC interim general secretary Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca. “Let us use this opportunity to break more walls, reach out to one another, and unite in our shared humanity.”

Sauca spoke during a panel discussion in the first edition of the International Human Fraternity Summit, hosted by the United Arab Emirates Ministry of Tolerance and Coexistence, under the theme “Human Fraternity for Working Together to Achieve a Better Future.”

The summit gathered global leaders to discuss policies to combat extremism, initiatives taken to promote human fraternity, and aims to achieve world peace.

Sauca reflected on the topic “How Human Values Help Eliminate Racism among Societies,” speaking about how increasing morals and integrity can help pave the way toward eliminating racism and discrimination.

“Worldwide the issue of racism is a reality,” he said. “We have identified in depth the significance of

the problem and have decided to face and solve it... Identification of the issue is the first step on the right path.”

Sauca urged all people to come together for the future of humanity. “It is impossible to be a faithful member of a religious community not respecting common human values,” he said. “Racism, xenophobia, discrimination are incompatible with our faith identity.”

He added that the realization that we are truly one family, brothers and sisters belonging to one humanity, is the greatest discovery of the suffering of the COVID-19 pandemic. “We have to insist on unity from a theological and spiritual perspective.”



Social cohesion in Iraq

A “Religious Consultation on Social Cohesion in Iraq,” held in Beirut, released a final communiqué, the fruit of wide interreligious participation that included religious and ethnic leaders of all Iraqi social sectors working together for peace in Iraq and the Middle East.

“Invited by the World Council of Churches and the Middle East Council of Churches, 40 representatives of religious authorities and leaders of various Iraqi religions, congregations, and ethnic groups, came together in Beirut to follow up on recommendations of the 2017 conference held in Beirut under the title ‘Interfaith Consultation of Social Cohesion in Iraq,’ and to discuss emerging challenges and future prospects for social cohesion in Iraq,” reads the communiqué.

Participants stressed the role of the state in providing protection for its citizens, preventing attacks based on their religious differences, securing restorative transitional justice, and suppressing hate speech. “The participants underlined the need to ensure sustainability of existence for all different groups, because, together, they constitute the wealth and richness of Iraq,” reads the communiqué. “This could be accomplished through the recognition that everyone has the right to be engaged in public affairs and decision-making mechanisms, especially on matters that directly affect their lives, as well as by building on the common history that brings Iraqis together and refining collective memory.”

Attendees agreed on the need to incorporate strict standards so as to accurately define legal terminology for better law enforcement in a practical manner that does not leave room for lack of accountability or oppression.

“Participants expressed their commitment to continue to work together to promote and spread both the culture of diversity and peaceful coexistence in Iraq, with practical application in public policies, education, media, and other areas,” the communiqué concludes. “Detailed recommendations are to be adopted and serve as the basis for next steps and a future action plan.”



Photo: Paul Jeffrey/WCC

During the interreligious gathering, religious and ethnic leaders from Iraq and the Middle East shared from different traditions their vision for social and religious cohesion in Iraq, assessing the current context and envisioning the way forward.

Dialogue on COVID-19

During a dialogue on COVID-19, WCC acting general secretary Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca reflected on “our shared vulnerability—and shared fate—as one humanity.”

Speaking during an August 2021 “Dialogue on COVID-19 and Consequences for Global Multilateral Cooperation,” Sauca offered a keynote speech focusing on urgent efforts to sustain a global, multinational dialogue and cooperation in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The conference was hosted by the Foundation Dialogue for Peace and moderated by Norway’s former prime minister, Kjell Magne Bondevik.

Along with the WCC, representatives from the Muslim World League and the World Health Organization shared experiences with ministers, ambassadors, politicians, peace associations, and others.



Photo: Ivars Kupcis/WCC

“In fact, of course, it is the pandemic that brings us together today, even as the virus and its variants run rampant and the enormous task of vaccinating, protecting, and aiding the population continues to tax our health and economic systems,” said Sauca. “But let it never tax our courage and fortitude!”



Photo: Ivars Kupcis/WCC

Sauca also met with Dr Muhammad Bin Abulkarim Al-Issa, secretary general of the Mecca-based Muslim World League and Aamir Javed Sheikh, head of the Norway-based Foundation Dialogue for Peace, at the Bossey Ecumenical Institute in August.

Small delegations from each organization discussed a wide range of topics, from challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic, to the interreligious summer school in Bossey, to the imperative of further strengthening interreligious cooperation.

“Is Christian Ecumenism a Model?”

WCC acting general secretary Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca, spoke on “Is Christian Ecumenism a Model?” at the G20 Interfaith Forum in Bologna, Italy, in September 2021.

“Christian ecumenism is a model for Christian communities that find themselves in relationships of indifference, conflict, or competition with each other,” said Sauca. “Ecumenism is therefore not a choice but an imperative for the churches despite – or because of – the counter-witness of their longstanding divisions.”

He noted that churches have lived for centuries in isolation or in conflict. “Only in the last century have many of them agreed to begin addressing together the causes of their separation,” he said. “But we still have a long way to go on the ecumenical road.”



Photo: Peter Prove/WCC

Bridge Builder Awards

As the Bridge Builder Awards were presented in a ceremony in Oslo on 22 November, interreligious peacemakers stood together to be recognized for their vital work in raising the values of respect, love, and tolerance for each other.

The award was presented by the Jury of the 14th August Committee Norway together with the Oslo Center.

As WCC acting general secretary Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca accepted a Bridge Builder Award, he shared the WCC's approach to interreligious peacemaking.

"We are aware that almost all the world's steepest challenges have an interreligious dimension," said Sauca. "Whether we are addressing international affairs, the environment, global economic justice, the rights of women and children, racism, the needs of refugees, and – not least – the task of theological education within our churches, in all these and other aspects of our work we seek to keep today's interreligious realities in mind."

The WCC received the 2021 Bridge Builder Award together with His Excellency Dr Mohammad Bin Abdulkarim Al-issa of the World Muslim League and His Excellency Chief Rabbi Michael Melchior of the Religious Peace Initiative.

"Wherever possible, we also seek to cooperate with our partners from other religious communities as well as with our many Christians partners, deepening the interreligious cooperation for the good of the wider world," said Sauca. "In our globalized situation, our work in interreligious dialogue, cooperation, and peacemaking holds the prospect of a genuine fraternity among religious communities to address conflicts but also to prevent them, to make and keep peace but also to root it in the hearts of people."

Nonetheless, the challenges posed by interreligious encounter also push us to address many tough questions, Sauca added. "We cannot pretend that the path of interreligious dialogue, cooperation



and peacemaking is an easy one," he said. "But this is where God calls us to go, trusting in God's accompaniment of us, and in God's good purposes for the whole of creation."

In closing remarks, H.E. Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, director-general of the World Health Organization, congratulated the winners of the Bridge Builder Award. "COVID-19 has highlighted just how important it is that the global community works to promote peace and understanding," he said. "The pandemic has exposed the fault lines in our world and deepened divisions," he said. "If there's one lesson we have learned, it's the lesson of interconnectedness."

As has been said many times, he added, no one is safe until everyone is safe. "As faith leaders you play a vital role in promoting the values in your own communities and around the world."

Prayer from the Caribbean Conference of Churches

"The people that walked in darkness has seen a great light; on those who live in a land of deep shadow, a light has shone." (Isaiah 9:1)

Ever-faithful and compassionate God, "Emmanuel", we thank you for accompanying us in this time of anguish. As we come into the light of your Presence, we open ourselves to the healing power of your Spirit, laying bare our brokenness, our anxieties, and our pain. In particular, we open to you the pain of separation and loss – especially the loss of loved ones to death's deep shadow.

Gracious God, we thank you that – despite its darkness – this moment has shed light on our common humanity. We pray that this sense of oneness of the human family may engender justice in the distribution of vaccines, and that the churches may courageously champion this cause and so give glory to your Holy Name.

Amen



Photo: Paul Jeffrey

Young theologians offer interreligious hope

Essays by five young theologians representing different church traditions have been chosen as the winning entries in an essay-writing competition organized to mark the 50th anniversary of the WCC Office of Interreligious Dialogue and Cooperation. Chosen by an international panel of judges from the Ecumenical Institute in Bossey and the WCC, the essays cover a range of themes and perspectives related to the topic of the competition, “The Future of Interreligious Dialogue.”

Lea Schlenker, a Lutheran theologian from Germany whose work focuses on intercultural theology and interreligious dialogue, especially Christian-Muslim dialogue, develops her essay around the theme of hospitality in her work entitled “From Shared Meals to Interreligious Conversations.”

Kritsno Saptanno, who works with the Research and Development Body of the Protestant Church in the Moluccas, Indonesia, focuses on dialogue with indigenous spiritual traditions in his essay, “Linguistic Hospitality: Welcoming Indigenous Religion into Interreligious Dialogue.”

Ioannis Christodoulakis, originally from Greece but currently a master’s student in Interreligious and Interchristian Dialogue at the Institute for Postgraduate Studies in the Orthodox Centre of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Chambésy, explores the theme, “The Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church and Its Interreligious Dialogue Approach.”

Nicole Kallsen, a non-denominational Christian who majors in International Studies at the University of Utah, explores dance as a form of interreligious dialogue in her essay, “Embodying Worldview.”

Christopher West, a priest in the Church of Ireland, explores faith, hope, and love as key principles for interreligious engagement in his article “The Future of Interreligious Dialogue: A Christian Theology of Engagement with Other Religious Traditions.”



Photo: Albin Hillert/WCC



Photo: Albin Hillert

Reflection and Prayers from the Christian Conference of Asia

God,
In faith and hope, we come to You and confess our weakness and vulnerability.
At this time of our fragility, fear, and death, we come to You.
Make us well, and we will be well,
Be our Saviour and we will be safe,
For us, You are our hope.

We believe that You are our strength; You are our shield;
In our helplessness, we trust that You are our refuge.
In our vulnerability, You are our shelter.
In the midst of darkness, You give us light and rays of hope.
In our pain and suffering, You give us the ability to live in hope with courage; and the wisdom to overcome all difficulties.
God of compassion, make us to be concerned for all those who are suffering due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
God of hope, heal us, protect us, and sustain us by Your divine grace.
Amen.

God of life,
We thank You for the gift of Your creation.
We confess our greed and ignorance that has made Your creation vulnerable.

God of the future,
Guide us to live in Your will.

God of love, Teach us to be compassionate,
Help us to open our eyes and stretch our hands out to comfort all those who are suffering.
Help us to embrace them,
Help us to accompany them with compassion and solidarity.

God of the universe,
You are mighty in power and gentle in love,
Restore us in Your Spirit,
Amen.

“We are bound to each other in universal kinship through God”

During a multilateral dialogue on the papal encyclical *Fratelli tutti*, WCC acting general secretary Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca spoke on “Fraternity, Interreligious Dialogue, and Social Justice.”

He joined religious leaders as well as representatives from the UN, International Labour Organization, World Health Organization, and International Red Cross on 15 April for the online event. He spoke on a panel with representatives from the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, Royal Institute of Interfaith Studies, and Latin American Rabbinical Seminary of the Conservative Movement in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

“Serving a Wounded World” more widely distributed

The WCC and the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue and Cooperation shared more widely the document “Serving a Wounded World in Interreligious Solidarity: A Christian Call to Reflection and Action during COVID-19 and Beyond,” which was co-produced by the two offices in 2020.

Meant to facilitate a wider reception of this document, translations were released on 5 February, just a day after the first UN-designated International Day of Human Fraternity, to encourage member churches to use the document as a tool for reflection and action in serving the “wounded” in a spirit of fraternity.




Faith-based organizations to COP26: “We must respond with the knowledge of science and the wisdom of spirituality”

In a message to the High-Level Ministerial Segment of the 26th Session of the Conference of the Parties (COP26), an interfaith liaison group urged a response to the climate emergency that balances science and spirituality.

“We are in a climate emergency,” urges the message, which was read by Rev. James Bhagwan, general secretary of the Pacific Conference of Churches, on behalf of the group. “Fixated on profit, our extractive and ultimately unsustainable systems of production and consumption have led us today to this climate emergency.”



Message from the Conference of European Churches



We are going through strange times. So-called “social distancing” in times of a pandemic contradicts our self-image as churches: Community and presence. At the heart of our Christian community lies fellowship. Holy Communion as a physical affirmation of common identity; the sign of peace as a gesture of reconciliation and mutual love; hymn singing as an act of gathering into shared fellowship.

During such times, we must highlight prayer as a sign of hope and fellowship.

Prayer is a reminder of our vulnerability and perishability, a cue to us that as humans we are not in control, but also a sign of the Church as a worldwide fellowship of mutual encouragement, praying for the healing of our communities. Praying together becomes a powerful vaccine against the loss of hope, against the absence of communal resilience and against the lack of human sustainability.



Pandemic can't stop ecumenical formation at Bossey

The Bossey Ecumenical Institute in January 2021 graduated a group of 29 students from 22 different countries and 19 different church traditions, all of whom completed certificates in Ecumenical Studies. Together, they adapted continuously to new developments and changing local restrictions related to COVID-19.

Then, in June, four new master's degree students finished their yearlong studies with a graduation ceremony as well.

New online course offering

Sixty students participated actively in the pilot of the online course “Together towards Unity: Being Church in a Fragmented World,” with students and faculty engaging across a variety of key topics and challenges in ecumenism today.

For the academic staff at Bossey, it was a deeply encouraging experience to teach ecumenism in an online format – not least in view of the opportunities it offers for engagement across the globe in a world that connects by digital means perhaps more than ever before.

The new online course built on the long-established Ecumenical Studies courses at Bossey

in addressing current changing dynamics and configurations of ecumenism through a new medium. In an international cohort of students, participants explore the biblical, theological, ethical, societal, interreligious, and missiological dimensions of ecumenism.

Argyro Delidaki from Greece was one of the participants in the course in the spring of 2021. “I found the course fulfilling; it was an excellent overview of the ecumenical movement. It was also firmly structured,” Delidaki reflected after the course.

“Additionally, I had the unique opportunity to communicate and exchange views with people from all around the globe. We became good friends and still maintain contact after the course,” Delidaki said.





Photo: Ivars Kupcis/WCC

Nurturing the WCC fellowship online

As the COVID-19 pandemic caused widespread loss and hardship, people across the world drew closer to the WCC in 2021, enabled by online channels of communication that helped them make connections in new ways.

On social media and on the new WCC website, WCC member churches joined in prayers, showed solidarity with Thursdays in Black, and perused the pages of *The Ecumenical Review*.

Social media channels were also crucial in helping people access over 100 online productions—including webinars, webcasts, podcasts, and video messages—that shared the prophetic work of WCC member churches.

A global ecumenical prayer for Christian unity—organized online as part of the annual Week of Prayer for Christian Unity—“was an extraordinary and inspiring moment of prayer, but also a powerful sign of

hope that we are a strong fellowship of churches united in Christ,” WCC acting general secretary Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca reflected.

As people sought comfort, peace, and accurate information, the WCC found new ways of being online that changed the way the global fellowship built bridges.

Against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic, WCC hosted dozens of webinars, prayers and consultations – online and in hybrid format, many of which with live interpretation – that ultimately fostered trust and confidence between different groups and helped the WCC to continue to share its work and voice.

During 2021, the audience of the WCC website grew by more than 50%, as a result of both renewed WCC online presence and active engagement with the WCC audience on social media. ■

Prayer from Latin America

**God of Life, God of Jesus of Nazareth,
Your son has taught me that we women are your daughters,
subjects of your love.**

**But in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic that plagues
humanity, I hear sad news from Colombia.**

Women are victims of violence within their homes.

**More than 37 women were murdered by their partners between
January and February 2021.**

**In the middle of the pandemic, an indigenous girl was raped and
killed by soldiers.**

**In Barranquilla, we women have to protest and demand that
women’s quotas be met in small municipalities.**

We pray, O God, for women who are victims of abuse.

**For women whose rights are not recognized in companies, in the
church, in universities, in the family, in politics, in the economy,
in society in general.**

**We pray for the women who, in the midst of this pandemic, have
been kidnapped, abducted.**

**For the women who are victims of sexual violence, even from
their husbands.**

**We pray for the women who cry because a teacher or a fellow
student has made indecent proposals to them.**

**We pray for the girls forced to stay away from school because
they are unable to attend their classes online.**

**In your grace, protect them, O God, and may your church bring
hope and relief in the midst of the pandemic and lift up its
voice to defend them.**

Amen

Milestones on a Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace



Pilgrim Team Visits in North America

The WCC's Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace continued in 2021, with a regional focus on North America. The fruits of the Pilgrim Team Visits to the region will feed into the WCC 11th Assembly in Karlsruhe.

Storytelling during Pilgrim Team Visits was deeply meaningful. "The experience of serving as a pilgrimage host was a good opportunity to engage the Canadian member churches of the World Council of Churches and to share some of the unique and meaningful stories around the themes of land and landlessness, truth and trauma, gender justice, and racial justice," said Peter Noteboom, general secretary of the Canadian Council of Churches. "For me personally it was a good opportunity to see what ministry and change looks like in local, community settings across Canada and to reflect on the situation and context of the church more generally."

Jim Winkler, president and general secretary of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA said: "I think the intersectionality of the four principal themes explored in the pilgrimage—gender justice, truth and trauma, land and displacement, and racial justice—was ratified and will feed into next year's WCC assembly in Karlsruhe."



Easter Initiative 2021

The WCC-Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (WCC-EAPPI) Easter initiative followed the footsteps of Jesus, spotlighting current realities under occupation.

While Christians around the globe prepared to celebrate Easter, occupation continued to severely affect communities in the same places where Jesus himself is said to have walked in the Easter story. An Easter Initiative by the WCC Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel set out to connect the biblical narrative with current realities in Palestine and Israel, to spotlight the injustices of life under occupation.

Taking stock of a series of geographical sites as described in the Bible as part of Jesus' life, the initiative provided opportunities for reflection on what life in those same geographical sites looks like today, both as holy sites treasured by local communities and in view of the injustices caused by occupation.

Through biblical reflection, prayer, advocacy engagement, and feature material highlighting present-day experiences in these sites, churches and partners around the world were invited to engage with the different narratives around Easter, also together with their local communities.



Photo: Albin Hillert

Global input invited for actions to promote digital justice

The fruits of a September symposium on “Communication for Social Justice in a Digital Age” were shared globally—with an invitation to contribute to an action plan for steps on the way to digital justice.

The manifesto drawn up at the symposium is being distributed, along with a full round-up of the symposium with links to videos, resources and ideas for follow up.

There is a great deal at stake, WCC central committee moderator Dr Agnes Abuom noted in a message to symposium participants.

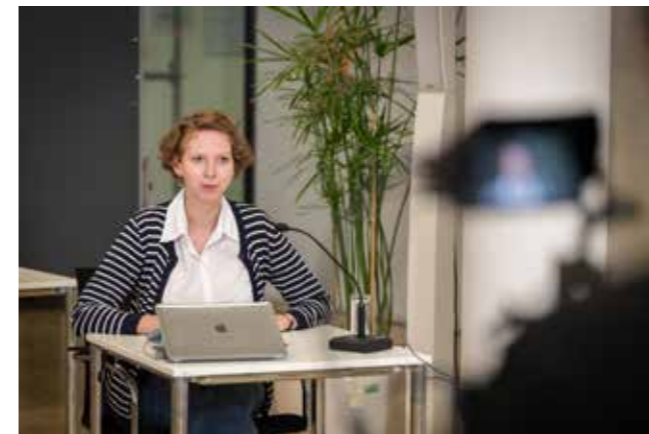
“This symposium has brought together research, experiences from different regions and communities, expert input, and ethical and theological reflection, all in the interests of building a vision of a more just digital (and human) society and actions to make that happen,” said Abuom.

The manifesto sets out the global context, theological perspectives, issues and challenges, and principles that are needed to promote communication

for social justice in a digital age. It calls for a “transformative movement” for change that requires global participation and action.

“To achieve digital justice, we need a transformative movement of individuals, communities, educational institutions, media agencies, and civil society – including communities of faith,” states the manifesto. “We need government policies and actions that are informed and supported by civil society, founded on human dignity, human rights, and democratic principles.”

Organizers of the symposium invited specific proposals for steps to carry out the actions outlined in the manifesto. In addition to the WCC and WACC, co-organizers were Brot für die Welt (Bread for the World), the Evangelical Church in Germany, Evangelische Mission Weltweit (Association of Protestant Churches and Missions in Germany), and the World Student Christian Federation.



Photos: Albin Hillert





Photo: Marcelo Schneider/WCC



Photo: Dinesh Suna/WCC



Photo: Marcelo Schneider/WCC

Ecumenical presence at COP26

From speakers to webinars, to physical presence to online gatherings, from prayers to outspoken advocacy, the WCC was involved before, after and during the COP26 Climate Change Conference, held in Glasgow, United Kingdom.

A 15-minute video co-produced by the WCC, ACT Alliance, and Lutheran World Federation portrayed a candid, passionate conversation about what churches and faith communities could and should be doing to ensure every voice is heard not only at COP26 but beyond.

At a side event during COP26, indigenous voices rang on the theme “Making Peace with Nature: Heeding the Call of Indigenous Peoples.” The virtual event drew enthusiastic supporters who waited outside the door of the meeting room in a show of solidarity.

The WCC also offered an online photo exhibition with work from British photographer Sean Hawkey that portrayed the

stark reality of climate change.

Global faith leaders, including WCC acting general secretary Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Saucă, signed onto a statement urging ambitious action to deliver climate justice for the world’s most vulnerable people and communities.

The WCC executive committee appealed for a “fundamental conversion towards a just and sustainable future” after COP26, expressing disappointment and dismay at its inadequate outcome.

“The science of climate change is implacable, not amenable to negotiation, and unforgiving of political short-termism,” the statement reads. “This is the last crucial decade for climate action to avoid the catastrophe long foretold. In Glasgow our political leaders have once again procrastinated on taking the actions that the climate emergency demands, and diminished the window of opportunity for taking that action.”



Photo: John Young/www.YoungMedia.co.uk



Photo: John Young/www.YoungMedia.co.uk



Photo: Marcelo Schneider/WCC



Photo: Marcelo Schneider/WCC

Confession from the Middle East Council of Churches

Confessions to the Creator

We confess to You, O Lord, that we have persevered in our sinfulness,

We admit to You, O creator of the universe, that we have corrupted Your creation,

We confess to You, Lord of the universe, that we have forgotten Your commandments,

We confess to You, Loving Father, that we have offended Your love,

We confess to You, O Most Merciful, that we did not show mercy to each other,

We admit to You, who are Able, that we were not able to curb our greed,

We confess to You, Redeemer, that we did not respect Your redemption,

We put Your gifts to ruin,

We destroyed the natural environment You endowed us with!

We destroyed the life You created!

We destroyed the creation that You redeemed!

In the midst of our tumultuous daily life, we forgot the distinction between good and evil, between truth and falsehood, and between truthfulness and blasphemy, and we hid behind masks that we borrowed from Your legacy and falsified them to meet our interests.

We forgot in our gasping behind the vain glories that Your trust in us has a right, so we created a society of consumption, prevented protecting the environment. We established injustice as a rule of life and deceitfulness as a guide to dealing with each other, and when we reached the end of times, we accused You of punishing us.

Because evil is so widespread in our togetherness, we forgot that You are the Lord of love, and thought that we are in the presence of the Lord of punishment that our minds invented! We have forgotten that we do not fear the Lord, but rather we love Him, and the good deeds that we do are not due to fear but spurred by identification with His boundless love which we seek to incarnate.

Because of the intensity of our ignorance, we thought that the pandemic that was about to destroy humanity was a punishment inflicted by You, and we forgot that we were the ones who produced it from our excessive darkness.

As we gather here to pray for the end of this pandemic, we are inspired by You and we admonish to ourselves and to each other, invoking Your boundless mercy.

From eternity to everlasting times, we will not forget that You redeemed us and sacrificed Yourself for us, so make us worthy of Your redemption and make us preserve the gifts that You have bestowed upon us.



Photo: Marcelo Schneider/WCC



Photo: Marcelo Schneider/WCC

Response to the COVID-19 pandemic

The WCC continued to push for accurate information and vaccine equity across the globe during 2021.

Amid the rollout of the COVID-19 vaccine, WCC acting general secretary Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca encouraged religious leaders to build trust, combat misinformation, and contribute to decisions accepted in their own contexts.

“Religious leaders of all faiths play a critical role in sustaining public trust in health authorities and services, as well as in the approved vaccines themselves,” said Sauca.

In March 2021, one year since the World Health Organization declared the spread of COVID-19 a global pandemic, the WCC observed a week of prayer.

The week invited a time of prayer and reflection on both the lament and the hope expressed and experienced across the world during what has been a year of unprecedented suffering, but also one when churches worked together in ever new ways to adapt, respond, and accompany communities

through mental, physical, economical, spiritual, and environmental crises.

Then, in April, during World Immunization Week, nine WCC church leaders from different continents assumed their roles as Vaccine Champions. They join a team of 300 specially assigned Vaccine Champions, mobilized by UNICEF, to raise awareness on the benefits of immunization.

The WCC also produced a first-of-its-kind handbook to help churches across the world promote good health in their communities and beyond. *Health-Promoting Churches, Volume II: A Handbook to Accompany Churches in Establishing and Running Sustainable Health Promotion Ministries* includes guidelines, resources, and tools to equip and support local Christian congregations in starting sustainable health ministries, as well as a theological and public health basis for health-promoting churches.

Prayer from the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA

God of all people and all nations hear us as we pray. We hear the news that more than 2.6 million people have died from this terrible pandemic, more than 500,000 in our nation alone, and we confess to becoming numb to the sorrow and pain. Help us to remember that these are not mere statistics on a chart or a graph. Remind us that each one was a human being with a family and friends, each is one of your beloved children. Do not allow us to move too quickly from our grief and become reckless in our desire to return to “normal.”

Give wisdom to our political and religious leaders, give strength to our public health officials. Provide comfort and rest for our first responders, nurses, doctors, and caregivers. Give us patience and perseverance for the days and months ahead so that we could continue on the path to healing and help us to unite in the common goal of defeating this awful virus. This we pray in Christ’s holy name.

Thursdays in Black

Thursdays in Black continued to gain momentum, strengthening its interreligious ties with Religions for Peace and the Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers.

The WCC also released new “virtual backgrounds” to help people raise awareness about gender-based violence.

Thursdays in Black ambassadors organized a series of Bible studies, beginning in August, to help people reflect on and respond to gender-based violence.

WCC member churches also continued to show their creative flair for Thursdays in Black by creating quilt patches that will eventually be part of a global exhibit, “Waterfall of Solidarity and Resistance,” to be displayed at the WCC 11th Assembly in Karlsruhe, Germany.

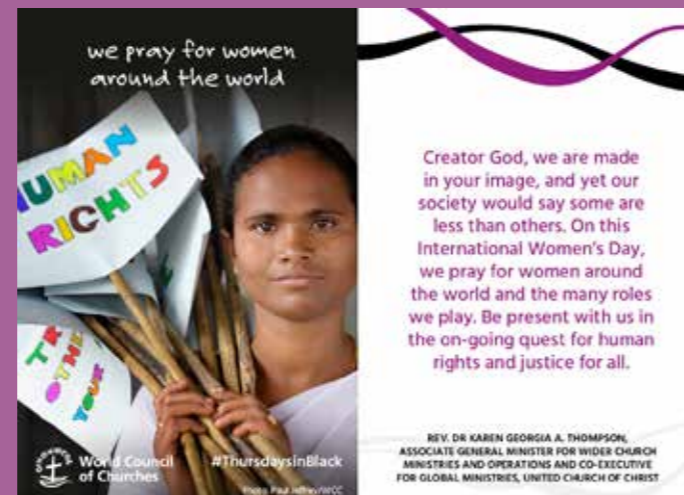
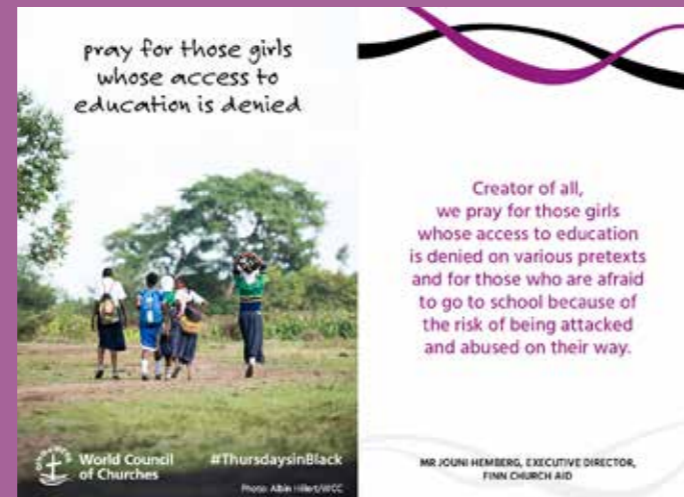
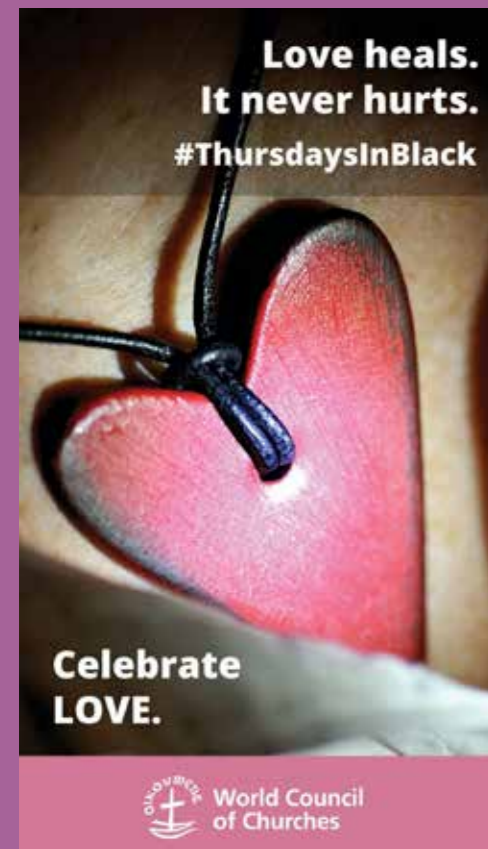


Photo: Albin Hillert/LWF

Protecting children

The WCC released an “Out of the Shadows” webpage sharing resources for helping individuals, churches, and communities act against violence against and abuse of children.

The new page explains why the WCC joined the “Out of the Shadows” campaign through its “Churches’ Commitments to Children” programme, in collaboration with the Just Community of Women and Men programme and the Ecumenical HIV and AIDS Initiatives and Advocacy (EHAIA) programme. The campaign aims to support local churches and regional partners in protecting children and adolescents from sexual violence.

The Out of the Shadows page offers several resources for free download, considering two regional contexts: Asia and Africa. All primary resources are translated into Spanish and French. The page also compiles news related to the various capacity-building workshops organized by churches in Africa and Asia.

Children in Africa

Church leaders in South Africa and Zimbabwe participated in online workshops on “Churches and Child Safeguarding” in August. Part of the WCC partnership program with UNICEF, “Churches’ Commitments to Children,” the workshops were designed to nurture churches where children feel welcome and safe.

Christian educators and other church leaders in Togo eagerly turned the pages of a new resource for children, a curriculum entitled “Because God Loves Me—Affirming My Value in Christ,” published by the WCC.

The Christian education programme encourages the full involvement of children, adolescents, and youth in becoming early proponents of nonviolence. Developed for children’s Bible study leaders, teachers, parish volunteers, and others who work with children, the curriculum serves as a guide to help churches live out their responsibility to protect all children, girls and women from gender-based violence. ■

On the way to the WCC 11th Assembly



Photo: Tobias Tiitscher

The WCC spent a significant amount of time in 2021 planning for the WCC 11th Assembly in Karlsruhe, Germany. The many people involved endeavored to keep the path to the assembly open and inviting. The assembly theme, “Christ’s love moves the world to reconciliation and unity,” is more vital now than ever.

As moderator of the WCC central committee Dr Agnes Abuom said during Germany’s four-day Ecumenical Kirchentag in May, “We will have an atmosphere and environment where those who come from outside of Europe will find space, and acceptance to engage with those in Europe from different traditions.”

She described the assembly theme as a powerful statement from an African perspective.

“If you have suffered slavery, racism, colonization, imperialism and you have always been trampled upon, it takes truly the love of God to forgive, to reconcile, and to walk to unity,” Abuom said.

The WCC Assembly Planning Committee in 2021 sharpened its vision for how the assembly will build

bridges to enhance sharing, dialogue, and togetherness.

The life of the assembly will combine elements of in-person gathering with online opportunities, allowing participation from across the globe. At the heart of planning is the spiritual life of the assembly, from daily prayers to thematic plenaries, from home groups to ecumenical conversations and “Brunnen” workshops.

The Assembly Planning Committee made plans for thematic plenaries, each exploring a different aspect of the assembly theme; from the purpose of God’s love, to the compassion of Christ, to affirming the wholeness of life, justice, and human dignity.

Brunnen, the German for “well,” will be a space of encounter at the assembly featuring workshops, networking zones, exhibitions, and cultural activities.

The committee also explored how the WCC 11th Assembly will address Christian unity and the churches’ common witness, as well as the unique European context of the assembly.

The planning committee is also reviewing assembly business, including the mandates of assembly

committees, proposals for monitoring consensus decision-making, training for committee leadership, and managing the business agenda of the assembly.

The committee is chaired by H. E. Metropolitan Gennadios of Sassima, vice-moderator of the WCC central committee, and co-chaired by Rev. Anne Heitmann, member of the central committee and church officer of the Evangelical Church in Baden.

Ecumenical Review focused on WCC 11th Assembly theme

Looking toward the assembly, the July issue of *The Ecumenical Review*, the WCC’s quarterly journal, offers a set of articles that focus on the assembly theme, “Christ’s love moves the world to reconciliation and unity.”

The issue opens with a reflection on the assembly theme prepared by an international WCC working group drawn from different regions and confessional traditions.

“The theme of any assembly sets a frame around the gathering of the fellowship and offers a picture of our life and journey together, setting the direction for future travel,” according to the assembly theme reflection.

It offers biblical and theological perspectives on the theme, against the backdrop of critical issues confronting churches and humanity as a whole.

The WCC’s acting general secretary, Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Saucă, in his article places the love of Christ within a trinitarian context, offering reflections from an Orthodox perspective on the just, merciful, and compassionate God.

Rev. Dr Susan Durber, moderator of the WCC Faith and Order Commission, notes that it is the first time that the word “love” has been placed at the heart of a theme. She explores whether the call to an “ecumenism of the heart” marks a turning point toward an ecumenism inspired by love.



**Christ’s love
moves the world
to reconciliation
and unity**

World Council of Churches
11th Assembly
Karlsruhe, Germany
31 August – 8 September, 2022

ABOUT THE WCC 11TH ASSEMBLY SYMBOL

The assembly symbol’s design is inspired by the dynamic expressions and variety of the ecumenical movement in its search for Christian unity and promotion of justice and peace.

The symbol is composed of a cross; a dove; a circle alluding to the concept of reconciliation; and crossed paths representing the various journeys, movement, freedom, and vibrancy of life that drive the WCC and its member churches around the world.



Photo: Tobias Tiltcher

Youth are ready

Youth also geared up for their special role in the assembly. A diverse selection of 26 young people designated as WCC stewards gathered online in June to take part in an orientation of stewardship and ecumenical formation, designed to build awareness, develop leadership, and strengthen global solidarity.

Samuel Williams, from the Anglican Church in Aotearoa, shared his enthusiasm about assembly preparations. “It was great to hear about the preparations for the assembly in Karlsruhe 2022, and see first hand the enthusiasm for this event from all the WCC staff,” he said. “Overall, this was a brilliant programme which renewed my enthusiasm in the global ecumenical movement.”

Staff are ready

As the WCC convened its staff planning days in March and again in October, both programmes

included experiencing “a day in the life” of the WCC 11th Assembly with daily prayer, plenaries, home groups, ecumenical conversations, and “Brunnen” workshops. Nearly 60 ecumenical officers convened online in October to plan their collective vision for the assembly.

Commissions, programmes, and partners are ready

The WCC Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, as well as the WCC Commission of the Churches on International Affairs, also planned their assembly contributions. And the Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the WCC planned the involvement of the Catholic Church in the assembly. Plans also solidified for the Global Ecumenical Theological Institute, which will take place in two phases—online and residential—under the theme “Christ’s Love (Re)moves Borders.”



Photo: Albin Hillert

Joy for Germany

In December, in a message to Baden and Württemberg churches, WCC acting general secretary Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca rejoiced in holding the assembly in Germany.

“Christians and churches in Europe and elsewhere—and first of all young people—are deeply concerned with the climate emergency and with growing inequalities and injustices catalyzed by the pandemic, such as unequal access to vaccination,” he said. “The search for just and peaceful responses to those global concerns is high on the agenda of the next global assembly of the World Council of Churches.”

Sauca also joyfully shared plans for the assembly in a private audience with Pope Francis in December. Sauca was accompanied by Cardinal Kurt Koch, president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity.

“I shared the theological and spiritual perspectives of the theme of the assembly, pointing out that the love of God in Christ is inclusive and has in view the reconciliation and unity of all creation,” said Sauca. “Then Pope Francis shared his own views on the theme. The whole meeting was a profound spiritual sharing.” ■



Photo: Sean Hawkey/WCC



WCC governance kept the fellowship together

During 2021, with WCC executive committee meetings in February, May, July and November, and a central committee meeting in June, the governance of the WCC continued, sometimes in-person and sometimes via videoconference.

In June, the central committee convened to prepare for 11th Assembly, address business matters, and strengthen the WCC fellowship through sharing and prayer. This was the first-ever meeting of the WCC central committee using electronic communications, and 124 of 155 central committee members and presidents from around the world were present.

In her opening address, moderator Dr Agnes Abuom provided a glimpse of how the global church is coping with the impact of COVID-19.

In spite of the tremendous challenges, churches have shown commitment to move together, Abuom concluded. “The task ahead of us is huge, but so is the opportunity for the church to re-establish itself in new ways, to reach new people with the love of Christ, and support the vulnerable and those in need,” she said.

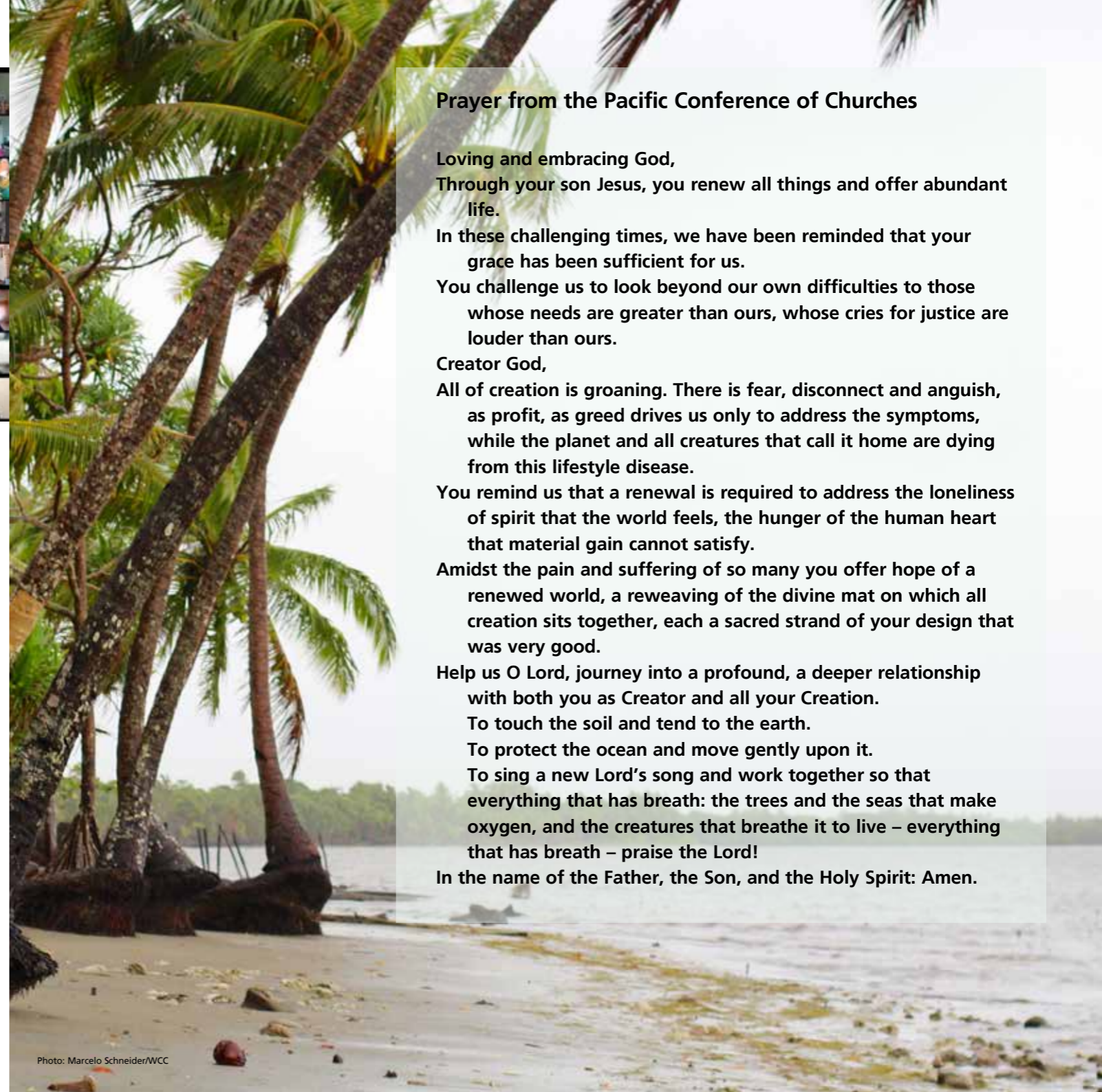
“By God’s grace, we are committed to stay and move together.”

In a solemn prayer, the central committee remembered those lost since the governing body last convened in 2018.

Those gathered thanked God for the courage, vision, and hard work of those who have passed away. “Eternal God, we thank you for the faithful disciples of every generation and for the communion of saints that transcends time and space,” they prayed together. “We rejoice in their wisdom, knowledge, and many gifts, and their unswerving commitment to unity.”



Photo: Ivars Kupcis



Prayer from the Pacific Conference of Churches

Loving and embracing God,
Through your son Jesus, you renew all things and offer abundant life.

In these challenging times, we have been reminded that your grace has been sufficient for us.

You challenge us to look beyond our own difficulties to those whose needs are greater than ours, whose cries for justice are louder than ours.

Creator God,

All of creation is groaning. There is fear, disconnect and anguish, as profit, as greed drives us only to address the symptoms, while the planet and all creatures that call it home are dying from this lifestyle disease.

You remind us that a renewal is required to address the loneliness of spirit that the world feels, the hunger of the human heart that material gain cannot satisfy.

Amidst the pain and suffering of so many you offer hope of a renewed world, a reweaving of the divine mat on which all creation sits together, each a sacred strand of your design that was very good.

Help us O Lord, journey into a profound, a deeper relationship with both you as Creator and all your Creation.

To touch the soil and tend to the earth.

To protect the ocean and move gently upon it.

To sing a new Lord’s song and work together so that everything that has breath: the trees and the seas that make oxygen, and the creatures that breathe it to live – everything that has breath – praise the Lord!

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit: Amen.

Photo: Marcelo Schneider/WCC

Green Village

The Green Village continued to see achievements and challenges during 2021 as the development project follows a master plan that came into effect in 2018.

The project will ultimately offer about 60,000 square meters of gross floor space, as compared to 15,000 square meters initially on the site in Grand-Saconnex, Geneva. The phase one buildings now under construction include Montreal, the residential building, and Kyoto, the first office building.

“We recognize that we have not just one building project but six or seven,” said Anne Glynn Mackoul of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the

East, USA, a member of the Green Village steering committee. “The WCC has to reimburse the pension fund loan; however, it aims to achieve much more.”

In undertaking the work, the WCC worked closely with the leading Swiss construction and real estate services company, Implenia.

“Given the overall objective for income from the project, land lease is being considered as a possible strategy for a Green Village plot, subject to the results of market tests and studies,” explained Mackoul. “The Montreal project launch was successful. The WCC is well on the way to meeting the net target result for Montreal.”

Archbishop emeritus Dr Anders Wejryd, Church of Sweden, also a member of the Green Village steering committee, spoke about important steps toward clean energy in the Green Village.

“For phase one, the Montreal and Kyoto buildings now under construction, energy for heating and cooling will be geothermal,” he explained. “The solar panels on the roofs will be connected to the main electricity grid and will produce electricity for the Green Village buildings.”

The energy plan is designed to meet the One Planet Living principles, which the WCC aims to adopt for the

whole Green Village site, in cooperation with future owners and tenants.

“A building project is complex,” added Wejryd. “We do not go forward without meeting challenges.” He referred in particular to the impacts of COVID-19 on the local real estate market. ■



Photo: Implenia



Photo: Implenia

WCC financial results 2021

FINANCIAL RESULTS 2021 (Swiss francs 000's)*	Unrestricted and designated funds	Restricted funds	Total funds	Total funds
*Unaudited	2021	2021	2021	2020
Income				
Membership and other unrestricted contributions	3,696	–	3,696	3,563
Programme contributions	–	12,444	12,444	11,289
Investment and currency (losses)/gains	(221)	920	699	4
Rental income, sales and other income	4,937	237	5,174	6,166
Gain on sale of land			–	18,948
Unrestricted income distribution	(2,262)	2,262	–	–
Total income	6,150	15,863	22,013	39,970
Expenditure				
Programme and other operating costs	3,141	3,851	6,992	11,527
Depreciation	1,985	158	2,143	2,499
Salaries	3,263	8,271	11,534	12,459
Taxation	(1,352)	6	(1,346)	1,954
Redistribution of costs; internal (sales)/charges	(2,803)	2,803	–	–
Total costs	4,234	15,089	19,323	28,439
Transfers between funds	2	(2)	–	–
Transfers to funds			–	6
Net surplus for the year	1,918	772	2,690	11,537

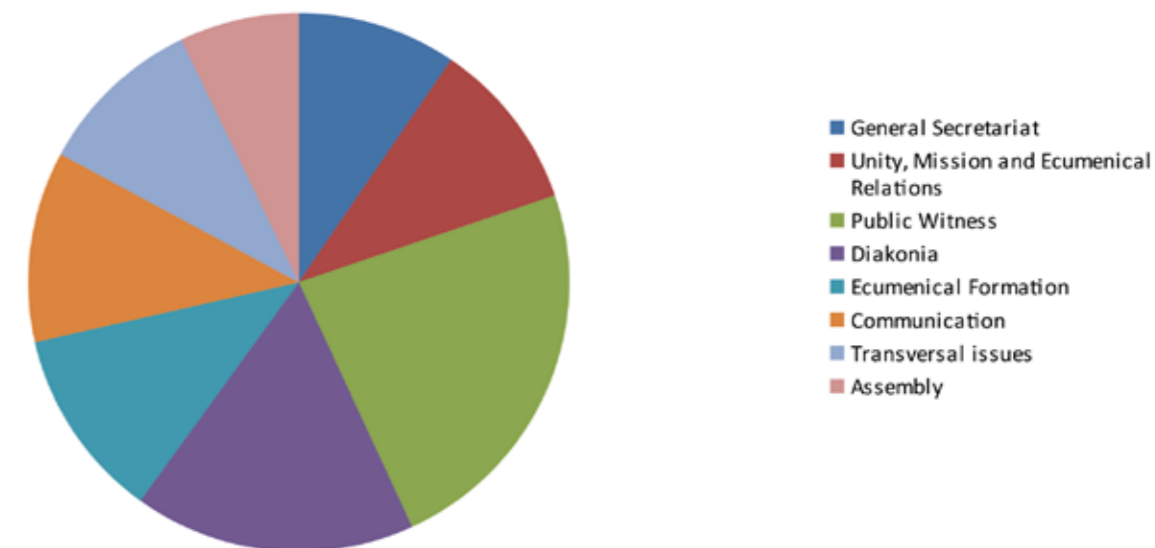
In 2021, contributions income increased by CHF 1.3 million (9%), reaching CHF 16.1 million. The increase may be set in comparison with the decrease of CHF 2.9 million (16%) suffered in 2020, when compared to 2019. The increase in 2021 was due to a gradual recovery from the impact of COVID-19, favourable foreign exchange rates, and contributions and grants for the WCC 11th Assembly.

Work continued on-line for most of the year, with very limited travel; programme implementation costs remained low compared to budget. Further to the decision of executive committee, CHF 500,000 of membership contributions were assigned to the assembly fund.

There were no land sales in 2021, while results for

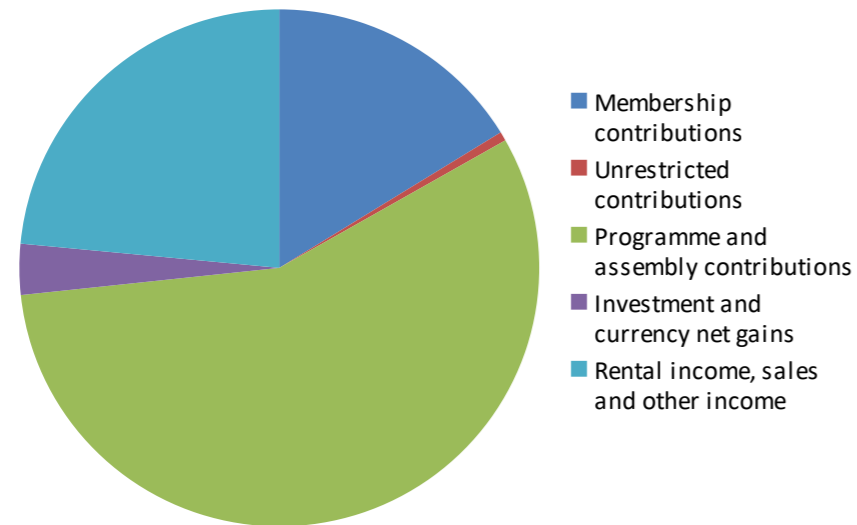
2020 included a gain on sale of land of CHF 18.9 million, and related costs of CHF 6.2 million. Tax provisions in 2020 related to the land sales proved to be over-prudent, at CHF 1.9 million. A favourable adjustment of CHF 1.4 million was recognised in 2021. All transactions related to taxation have impact only on the real estate development fund.

An overall surplus of CHF 2.7 million is reported for the year. The increase in funds results principally from the tax credit of CHF 1.4 million, and an increase to the endowment fund of CHF 0.6 million, from the year's investment returns. General reserves closed at CHF 7.4 million, increased by CHF 0.4 million from 2020. ■



WCC expenditure by programme 2021	CHF 000's	%
General Secretariat	1,433	10%
Unity, Mission and Ecumenical Relations	1,541	10%
Public Witness	3,513	24%
Diakonia	2,532	17%
Ecumenical Formation	1,727	11%
Communication	1,724	11%
Transversal issues	1,501	10%
Assembly	1,073	7%
	<u>15,044</u>	<u>100%</u>

Transversal issues in 2021 included *Church and Ecumenical Relations, Youth engagement in the ecumenical movement, Just community of women and men, Inter-religious dialogue and co-operation, Spiritual life and Overcoming racism.*



WCC sources of income 2021	CHF 000's	%
Membership contributions	3,571	16.2%
Unrestricted contributions	125	0.6%
Programme and assembly contributions	12,444	56.5%
Investment and currency net gains	699	3.2%
Rental income, sales and other income	5,174	23.5%
	22,013	100.0%

Income trends (Swiss francs 000's)	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Membership & other unrestricted contributions	4,206	3,877	3,928	3,916	4,040	3,947	3,563	3,696
Programme contributions	16,020	14,651	13,542	13,372	13,895	13,431	10,993	11,305
Assembly	138	115	55	68	73	378	296	1,139
Other income	8,998	6,948	7,483	8,074	6,765	8,415	6,170	5,873
Gain on sale of land	-	-	-	-	-	3,483	18,948	-
Total	29,362	25,591	25,008	25,430	24,773	29,654	39,970	22,013

FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTORS 2021

Main contributors

Note: The list includes member churches, ecumenical partners and other organizations that contributed more than CHF 20,000 to the WCC in 2021.

African Methodist Episcopal Church, American Baptist Churches USA, Anglican Church of Canada, Bread for the World, Brot für Alle, Catholic Committee for Cultural Collaboration, Christian Aid, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States, Christian Council of Sweden, Church of England, Church of Norway, Church of Scotland, Church of Sweden, Council for World Mission, DanChurchAid, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit, Eglise protestante unie de France, EKD - Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland, EKD - Evangelische Kirche in Hessen und Nassau, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, Evangelische Kirche A.u.H.B. in Österreich, Evangelisches Missionswerk in Deutschland, FELM, Finn Church Aid, Foundation for Theological Education in Southeast Asia, Fondation pour l'aide au protestantisme réformé, German Federal Foreign Office, HEKS - Hilfswerk der Evangelischen Kirchen Schweiz, Kerk in Actie, Korean Methodist Church, Methodist Church, New Venture Fund,

Norwegian Church Aid, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Presbyterian Church (USA), Presbyterian Church in Canada, Presbyterian Church of Korea, Protestant Church in Switzerland, Protestant Church in the Netherlands, Reformierte Landeskirche Aargau, Stichting Rotterdam, Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, The Episcopal Church, UNAIDS, Uniting Church in Australia, United Church of Canada, United Church of Christ, United Methodist Church, Uniting Church in Sweden.

Other contributors (less than CHF 20,000)

Member churches, ecumenical partners, other organizations, congregations and individuals ■



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