



Did you know the World Council of Churches was officially founded on 23 August 1948? This means, in 2018 we are going to celebrate our 70th anniversary! A moment to take stock of the ecumenical legacy and develop visions for carrying it forward to the future!

As we prepare for the celebrations, we'd like to know from you: What is the greatest contribution the WCC has made during the last 70 years? Here are some ideas we have collected so far. You can vote on these or suggest more at

<https://www.facebook.com/events/1523958691013272/permalink/1527527517323056/> – or write to fellowship@wcc-coe.org!

- **Commitment to unity:** By becoming members of the World Council of Churches, the 147 churches who joined in 1948 and more than 200 additional ones since then are showing their commitment to Christian unity. (See: www.oikoumene.org/en/member-churches)
- **Theological convergence:** Dialogue on theological issues has brought the churches closer together in their understanding of Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry (www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/commissions/faith-and-order/i-unity-the-church-and-its-mission/baptism-eucharist-and-ministry-faith-and-order-paper-no-111-the-lima-text) as well as the Church's mission, unity, its being in the Trinitarian life of God, and our growth in communion as churches called to live in and for the world (www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/commissions/faith-and-order/i-unity-the-church-and-its-mission/the-church-towards-a-common-vision).
- **Seeing God's image in all human beings:** From its foundation (and indeed even in the lead-up to the founding assembly) the World Council of Churches' members and staff have helped foster an exchange of ideas and synergies between the human rights movement and the churches. A concrete example: the WCC's contributions to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948).
- **Sharing spiritual riches in song and prayer:** prayers for all and with all churches are probably the oldest expression of the longing for Christian unity (for example those of a Pentecostal movement arising in the 1740s in Scotland, with links to North America, or even Jesus' own prayer for his disciples in John 17:21). The idea of a yearly **Week of Prayer for Christian Unity** (www.oikoumene.org/week-of-prayer) goes back more than 100 years, and the Faith and Order movement (one of the movements that gave rise to the World Council of Churches) began publishing suggestions for such an "octave of prayer" as early as 1926. Since 1966, when the WCC Faith and Order secretariat began jointly publishing material for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity together with the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, the observance has grown into a global phenomenon involving many thousands of Christian communities throughout the world. Increasingly, churches are also following the **Ecumenical Prayer Cycle** (www.oikoumene.org/prayer-cycle) as a way of journeying in prayer through every region of the world during the course of the year.



- **Overcoming racism:** Rooted in insights of mission churches as well as ecumenical involvement with resistance to Nazism in World War II, from its inception the World Council of Churches identified the race issue as one of the greatest threats to the unity both of humankind and the churches. Following the assassination of Martin Luther King just weeks before he was to open the WCC IVth Assembly in 1968, and with apartheid in South Africa taking ever more inhumane forms, the WCC Programme to Combat Racism (PCR) launched in 1969 played a highly visible and controversial role in international debate about white-minority rule in Southern Africa. It supported reflection and action among churches in Southern Africa, provided direct humanitarian support to liberation movements, and was a leader in international campaigns for economic disengagement from apartheid.

(See: <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1758-6623.2004.tb00534.x/pdf>) Sadly, racism is still present in the world today, and so the work to overcome it continues: www.oikoumene.org/en/what-we-do/racism
- The WCC Human Rights Resources Office for Latin America (HRROLA, 1976-92) was a key instrument for the international ecumenical community to enable and support churches in 18 Latin American and Caribbean countries to stand by the victims of military dictatorships, organizing programmes of social, medical and legal assistance and calling prophetically for the restoration of democratic practice and institutions. (See www.oikoumene.org/en/press-centre/news/wcc-delegation-affirms-churches2019-commitment-to-human-rights-in-argentina)
- **Care for Creation:** Over the years, the WCC helped foster a movement for climate justice (www.oikoumene.org/climatechange) touching people around the world, including millions of Christians from all traditions marking a yearly Season of Creation (www.oikoumene.org/en/what-we-do/climate-change/time-for-creation) in prayer and action. Since the 1970s, the WCC has helped develop the concept of sustainable communities. It has been present at all UN climate change conferences since 1992, speaking out on the Biblical commands to protect life, do justice and love our neighbours.
- **Churches' Commitments to Children:** Churches are present – and often THE gathering point – in rural and urban communities. In the context of the pilgrimage of justice and peace, WCC member churches decided they should use this unique position to promote children's wellbeing at all levels of society, from parents and school teachers to decision makers in public and private sectors (see www.oikoumene.org/children). Within months, 95 churches and partner organizations have already committed to partner with each other on issues related to child protection, child participation and/or intergenerational climate justice.
- **Interreligious dialogue:** The ecumenical movement, ever since the world missionary conference at Edinburgh in 1910, widely seen as its starting point, has also discussed Christian



understanding of and relationship to other religious traditions. When the WCC was founded, it was eager to follow up on this controversial issue, together with the International Missionary Council, later integrated into the WCC. The study of concrete historical situations was one way of moving forward. It helped bring about the concept of dialogue with people of other faith traditions. With a first multifaith dialogue convened under WCC auspices in 1970, the WCC decided to not only consult about interreligious dialogue, but also to engage in it. Over the years, the WCC has made important contributions to interreligious trust and respect

(www.oikoumene.org/en/what-we-do/inter-religious-trust-and-respect), as well as to Christian self-understanding in its relation to other religions (www.oikoumene.org/en/what-we-do/christian-self-understanding), such as the document on Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World, published together with the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue and the World Evangelical Alliance in 2011.

Interfaith competence for the next generation of religious leaders is a particular focus. Since 2007, a summer school organized at the WCC's Ecumenical Institute at Bossey in cooperation with two local organizations of Jewish and Muslim inspiration, respectively, serves that purpose in an exemplary way.