



Ecumenical Pilgrimage

*Walking, Praying
and Working Together*



World Council
of Churches

The World Council of Churches (WCC) is a global expression of the modern ecumenical movement. As a fellowship of 350 churches present in more than 110 countries, the WCC engages in a quest for common witness to the good news of Christ, service to all the world's people, inter-religious 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 500 million people belong to WCC member churches.

The WCC's programmes share responsibility for strengthening the fellowship, spiritual life, youth engagement, inter-religious 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 2018 and continuing into 2019.

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.



Photo: Albin Hillert/WCC

Foreword by the general secretary

As I enter my tenth year serving the World Council of Churches, I am grateful that we were able in 2018 to celebrate the WCC's 70th anniversary, its ecumenical legacy, and the fruits of Christian fellowship among our member churches. From the papal and patriarchal visits to the return to our founding location in Amsterdam, it was a banner year.

But the 70th anniversary of the WCC's founding in 1948 was not only an exciting year but also an extremely productive one. This brief publication highlights important events, initiatives and programmatic developments of 2018. With pride I call your attention to the ecumenically supported strides for peace in several international venues, advances in consensus among those who labor in mission and evangelism, progress in the partnerships of the WCC and its ecumenical partners with UN agencies, and the convergence of decades of ecumenical work in health and healing to overcome HIV, care for children and promote gender justice.

*“Make every effort to maintain the unity
of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” —Ephesians 4:3*

Indeed, the historic visit of Pope Francis on 21 June was emblematic of our work and an affirmation of the shared ecumenical journey of “Walking, Praying and Working Together,” a pilgrimage that embraces Christians of all regions and confessions.

As you can also tell from the stories here, our fellowship has taken concrete steps in the ecumenical quest for unity, precisely by walking, working and praying together. Our journey of faith ties our perennial quest for unity to action and advocacy for peace and justice around the world. Indeed, our unity is for the sake of God’s world: One Christian fellowship united in service to the one human family.

We welcome your deeper engagement in the ecumenical endeavour, to act in effective solidarity and make a real, even vital, difference to the human future. And we encourage you to keep up with WCC news and development — and to join the pilgrim steps of the Ecumenical Prayer Cycle — at oikoumene.org. ■



Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit
General Secretary, World Council of Churches



A close-up photograph of two hands clasped together in a gesture of unity or prayer. The hand on the left is wearing a beaded bracelet with yellow, green, and blue beads. The background is blurred, showing a red balloon and a person's arm in a dark sleeve.

Faith and Order Commission completes pivotal “Come and See” document

The search for Christian unity continues to grow and evolve. During 2018, the WCC Faith and Order Commission continued to employ theological reflection as a tool to build unity among churches. A new Faith and Order publication entitled “Come and See” explores this unity agenda in light of challenges to peace and justice in many contexts across the world. The commission — a multilateral, global forum of ecumenical theology — is constituted by official representatives of churches belonging to the main historical streams of Christianity, including the Roman Catholic Church. Theologians from 33 countries in five continents consider a wide range of issues and areas of ecumenical work. ■

Conference on World Mission and Evangelism



Photo: Albin Hillert/WCC

Gathering brings vibrant, colourful worship life

The Conference on World Mission and Evangelism, held 8-13 March 2018 in Arusha, Tanzania, drew more than 1,000 people from different Christian traditions across the world. The theme of the conference was “Moving in the Spirit: Called to Transforming Discipleship.”

Tanzanian dance, vibrant choral performances, and treasured liturgy: the African worship experience in Tanzania had something for everyone searching for meaning.

Storytelling and a spirit of sharing set the stage for the entire week for representatives of mainline Protestant, Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Evangelical, Pentecostal, and African-instituted churches.

Dr Agnes Abuom welcomed everyone in a Gathering

Service. “The conference on ‘Moving in the Spirit: Called to Transforming Discipleship’ is situated within the broader and global WCC celebration of its 70th anniversary by the ecumenical fellowship of churches,” she said. “We will engage therefore with the theme of this conference within the backdrop of celebration, commemoration and lament.”

“Call to Discipleship”

Participants from the WCC Conference on World Mission and Evangelism issued a “Call to Discipleship” on the closing day of the conference.

“Despite some glimmers of hope, we have to reckon with death-dealing forces that are shaking the world order and inflicting suffering on many,” the statement reads. “We observed the shocking accumulation of

wealth due to one global financial system, which enriches few and impoverishes many.”

The statement also notes that a global imperial system has made the financial market one of the idols of our time and has strengthened cultures of domination and discrimination that continue to marginalize and exclude millions.

Global Ecumenical Theological Institute

Gathering in Makumira near Arusha, more than 100 theology students from around the world participated in the Global Ecumenical Theological Institute.

Held under the theme of “Translating the Word, Transforming the World,” the institute offered students of theology and religious studies an intense academic



study course in ecumenical missiology, as well as an inspiring environment for fellowship among young people from the fullest possible breadth of Christianity.

In a symbolic event dedicated to the WCC’s 70th anniversary, students planted 12 trees at Tumaini University Makumira.

The ceremony was preceded by common prayer and reflection on what it means for the students to live together in the world today and how a sustainable future can be ensured for generations to come. ■





Photo: Albin Hillert/WCC

VOICES FROM
THE CONFERENCE
ON WORLD
MISSION AND
EVANGELISM

"The ecumenical movement as a mission movement should resist empires of our times. However, many a time during the past two decades of my engagement, I felt that some of our ecumenical institutions themselves are not free from the value orientations of the modern-day empires."

— Metropolitan Dr Mor Geevarghese Coorilos,
WCC Commission on World Mission and Evangelism

"The truth we are all sharing with the world is a living truth coming out of the life of people, it is not a dead dogma."

— Prof. Dr Dimitra Koukoura, Ecumenical Patriarchate

"Women can shape new understandings especially in interreligious relationships in the aftermath of violence."

— Septemmy E. Lakawa, professor of Mission Studies, Jakarta Theological Seminary, Indonesia

"This mission conference is very significant to us as a group of indigenous youth; we are here not only because our voices need to be heard but also to pave the way for the future."

— Lesieli Samiu, Methodist Church of New Zealand

The global Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace continues



Photo: Ivars Kupcis/WCC

During 2018, the WCC celebrated many steps toward reconciliation and international progress across the world, even while pledging to strengthen the pursuit of justice and peace for all people. In many countries, Pilgrim Team Visits brought close accompaniment to people in contexts of conflict and division. The visits are expressions of companionship on the common journey of the whole WCC fellowship in search of the unity for which churches strive.

Korean Peninsula

JUNE In the wake of the Panmunjom Declaration and the summit of Chairman Kim Jung Un with US President Donald J. Trump, the WCC reassessed prospects for peace on the Korean peninsula. As the year unfolded, through delegations, worship and dialogue, the WCC coordinated what could be defined as Pilgrim Team Visits on many levels.

JUNE The Ecumenical Forum for Peace, Reunification and Development Cooperation on the Korean Peninsula was held. The forum issued a call to “Seek Peace and Pursue It.” As a deep gesture of unity, Christians from

North and South Korea linked arms to sing a 600-year-old folk song, Arirang, the unofficial anthem of a united Korea that existed until civil war divided the country.

SEPTEMBER National Council of Churches in Korea general secretary Rev. Dr Lee Hong Jung and Dr Chang Sang, WCC president for Asia, attended the 3rd Inter-Korean Summit in Pyongyang. Both also spoke earlier in the year when Pope Francis visited the WCC.

NOVEMBER A Roundtable for Peace on the Korean Peninsula convened in Atlanta, Georgia (USA).

South Sudan

In 2018, as peace talks continued to unfold, church leaders in South Sudan urged the parties to prioritize peace to end misery for millions trapped or dispersed by the prolonged war.

MARCH South Sudanese church leaders said in their Easter message that churches remain committed to hope and refuse “to yield to fear or indifference” in their troubled homeland.



Photo: Albin Hillert/LWF



Photo: Albin Hillert/WCC

APRIL WCC moderator Dr Agnes Abuom delivered a greeting at the installation of Rev. Justin Badi Arama, the fifth archbishop of the South Sudan Episcopal Church.

MAY A WCC Pilgrim Team visited South Sudan under the theme “African Women of Faith and Gender Justice.” The delegation affirmed that gender equality is a foundation for a peaceful, sustainable world. WCC deputy general secretary Prof. Dr Isabel Apawo Phiri presented a paper on “Women and Ecumenical Engagement for Peace in South Sudan,” reflecting on the experiences of the visit.



Photo: Peter Williams/WCC

In the same month, representatives of the South Sudan Council of Churches, accompanied by the WCC, engaged in a series of meetings in New York to advocate for a pathway toward peace.

Democratic Republic of Congo

FEBRUARY The WCC participated in a day of prayer and fasting, called for by Pope Francis, for South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

JUNE The WCC central committee called out the “deepening political, human rights and humanitarian crisis” and the risk of further conflict, human rights violations and atrocities in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

AUGUST WCC leaders visited the Democratic Republic of Congo to meet with religious leaders and government officials, and to express solidarity with the people and pray for just peace with the churches. The delegation released a message to the Congolese people that commended steps taken to ensure the success of the electoral process, acknowledged challenges ahead, and made recommendations for pursuing peace and well-being. During a sermon in the Protestant Cathedral in Kinshasa, WCC general secretary Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit reflected that “making peace is holy work” and “a great and compelling life task.”



Photo: Marcelo Schneider/WCC



Photo: Marcelo Schneider/WCC

JUNE A Pilgrim Team visited Kinshasa under the theme “African Women of Faith and Gender Justice,” to acknowledge and build women’s roles in church and society.

Colombia

As part of a focus on the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace in Latin America and the Caribbean (see page 14), the WCC undertook a series of solidarity visits to communities in Colombia.

FEBRUARY The Pilgrimage Reference Group met in Bogota, Colombia, when a WCC delegation visited the headquarters of the Conference of Latin American Bishops (Roman Catholic). WCC deputy general secretary Prof. Dr Isabel Apawo Phiri said: “The WCC expresses its concern for the continuation and fulfilment of the peace process in Colombia.” The Pilgrim Team focused on issues related to the peace process, gender-based violence, land-based injustices and displacement, visiting the regions of Valledupar, Barranquilla, Cartagena, Chocó, Cali and Cauca.

FEBRUARY A delegation from the Oikotree movement also travelled to Colombia. Oikotree is a faith-based network

initiated by the WCC, World Communion of Reformed Churches, and Council on World Mission. “Churches can play a fundamental role in building peace in Colombia,” said Colombia president Juan Manuel Santos. “Building peace requires changing prejudices, learning to forgive, changing attitudes towards many things in life.”

JUNE WCC’s central committee issued a statement reflecting that, despite a peace agreement, the long journey of regional churches and the WCC in support of peace in Colombia is not over.

JULY WCC general secretary Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit said: “With the Presbyterian Church of Colombia, and ecumenical partners, we join those committed to peace in actions to protect the peace-builders.”

Palestine and Israel

During 2018, the WCC’s “12 Faces of Hope” Seek #JusticeAndPeace campaign continued to be displayed by churches and organizations across the world. Participants of the WCC’s Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI) continued to share their



Photo: Albin Hillert/WCC

observations globally. In October, a Jerusalem administrative appeals court invalidated a decision by the state to bar entry into the country by Dr Isabel Apawo Phiri, deputy general secretary of the WCC.

Yet amid these positive highlights, serious challenges arose. WCC decried violence on the Israel-Palestine border after more than 100 people were killed and more than 13,000 injured by excessive violence from Israeli forces against civilian protestors in Gaza.

JUNE The WCC central committee condemned the violence as disproportionate and indefensible, stating: “It is

our firm belief that all actors – Israeli and Palestinian – must strive for a just peace.”

SEPTEMBER The WCC invited churches, faith-based communities, and civil society organizations around the world to join together for the World Week for Peace in Palestine and Israel.

OCTOBER Church leaders in the Holy Land organized an ecumenical visit to the threatened Bedouin community of Khan El Ahmar. They shared biblical prayers, focusing on references to the Beatitudes.

YOUTH IN ASIA TRAINING FOR RELIGIOUS AMITY HELD IN HONG KONG

The annual Youth in Asia Training for Religious Amity was held at the Tao Fong Shan Christian Centre in Hong Kong in July. Drawing young women and men from across the WCC fellowship in Asia as well as theological institutions, the focus of the 2018 YATRA was “Passionately Christian and Compassionately Interreligious.”

Rev. Dr Lo Lung-Kwong, general secretary, Hong Kong Christian Council, preached at the opening service to mark the inauguration of the training. Lo remembered how his own ministry was shaped through his involvement in the ecumenical movement, and exhorted participants to recover the “movement” dimension of the ecumenical movement for the well-being of all in a multi-religious world.

Syria

In a triumph of peace and education over violence and adversity, the Antioch Syrian University opened its doors in September in Ma’arat Sednaya, about 20 km from Damascus. In December, WCC general secretary Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit hosted a lunch in gratitude for the services rendered by the United Nations special envoy for Syria, Staffan de Mistura.

Despite this hopeful news, WCC reiterated calls for peace throughout 2018, decrying continuing violence and pressing the international community to work together to help Syria achieve peace.

FEBRUARY In a statement, the WCC expressed its dismay at the dramatic escalation of military actions against civilians in the Eastern Ghouta section of Damascus, Syria.

APRIL The WCC reiterated its call for peace, urging the international community to find a way to break the cycle of violence by finding “a political solution.”



JUNE The WCC central committee called for release of Syriac Orthodox Archbishop Yohanna Ibrahim and Greek Orthodox Archbishop Paul Yazigi, who were kidnapped near Aleppo, Syria, in April 2013.

“The Syrian people in liberated and hard-to-reach areas are in huge need of humanitarian support. We need support from the ecumenical movement to raise awareness.”

— Very Reverend Archimandrite Dr Alexi Chehadeh

Ethiopia

After the leaders of Ethiopia and Eritrea signed a declaration pronouncing that the war between the two countries was over, WCC general secretary Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit praised the agreement. In another joyful development, the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, a WCC founding member church, declared an end to the 27-year-old schism that had torn it apart.

In a letter to Ethiopian prime minister Dr Abiy Ahmed, Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit, WCC general secretary, wrote: “This is a remarkable achievement and a historic moment for the entire Christian family.”

The WCC executive committee commended the “season of reconciliation and restoration in the region.” ■



Photo: Georgina Goodwin/WCC

Global conference on xenophobia

Religious leaders and civil society representatives of different countries and diverse Christian churches gathered in Rome in September for the World Conference on Xenophobia, Racism, and Populist Nationalism in the Context of Global Migration to discuss the urgent task of combating the world's increasing fear of so-called strangers.

Migrants and refugees attended the conference, offering a firsthand perspective on how political and social responses have either led to grave injustices or, on the other hand, have given them hope.

Participants explored the pivotal role that churches can play in promoting a just and peaceful society. In this context, “populist nationalism” connotes the deliberate manipulation and exacerbation of people’s fears, concerns and insecurities about the negative impact of migration on their families, communities and cultural identities, for the purposes of political self-interest and electoral advantage. ■



Photo: Marianne Ejdersten/WCC

The Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace in Latin America and the Caribbean

Lenten campaign highlights water justice in Latin America

The WCC Ecumenical Water Network focused on Latin America for its Seven Weeks for Water Lenten campaign, which created momentum toward World Water Day.

“In Latin America many countries are water rich and yet 45% of the population does not have access to safe drinking water. I hope that our Lenten campaign on water justice helped address this issue in Latin America,” said Dr Isabel Apawo Phiri, WCC deputy general secretary.

“The Lenten campaign draws our attention to the fact that more and more countries are getting water stressed day by day,” added Phiri. “I was shocked to hear that by 12 April 2018, Cape Town, where I have

lived for several years, is going to run out of water, unless the residents drastically change their consumption pattern urgently.”

Eco-School held in El Salvador

NOVEMBER The second edition of the WCC Eco-School on Water, Food and Climate Justice was held in San Salvador, El Salvador, as participants discussed the nexus between water, food and climate justice.

“Hunger amidst plenty is the great contradiction of our time,” said Dr Ángel Ibarra, vice minister of environment and natural resources of El Salvador. “Last year, almost 821 million people were underfed and hungry, but at the same time, 1.9 billion people are overweight and 650 million are obese.”

Based on last year’s Eco School in Africa, the second edition brought together 35 young people representing churches and faith-based organizations from 14 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The two-week training equipped participants with the tools to become “eco ambassadors” to advocate for a more sustainable and just earth, inspired by their ecumenical commitment.



Photo: Marcelo Schneider/WCC



Photo: Marcelo Schneider/WCC



Mexico hosts school on global “Economy of Life”

AUGUST A ten-day programme on global economics with participation from church leaders and young activists from diverse backgrounds opened in Mexico City.

The Ecumenical School on Governance, Economics and Management for an Economy of Life started with a strong musical message: the song “Bring your own chair,” calling everyone — not just those sitting at the powerful G20 roundtable — to bring their own chair and make their voices heard when it comes to global economic policymaking.

The school is a joint initiative of the WCC, World Communion of Reformed Churches, and Council for

World Mission. It aims to develop economic literacy within churches by equipping current and future leaders with a better understanding of churches’ engagement in mission and witness for economic justice.

WCC voices deep concern for Nicaragua

JULY The alarming number of civilian casualties in Nicaragua has raised “deep concern for the weakening of human rights and the fragility of the state of law,” said WCC general secretary Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit.

AUGUST “We have sought to support dialogue as a means to resolve differences, and to reaffirm and strengthen calls for justice, peace and respect for diverse



Photo: Albin H. Wertz/WCC



Photo: Marcelo Schneider/WCC

ways of thinking in contemporary societies,” reads a message issued by the members of an ecumenical delegation that visited Nicaragua.

The visit offered pastoral accompaniment to the churches in the context of pain and trauma suffered by many people, and accompanied them in the midst of their efforts to find solutions.

WCC expresses solidarity with indigenous peoples

APRIL The United Nations in New York City hosted the 17th Session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. The WCC assisted with participation from the Ecumenical Indigenous Peoples Network Reference Group and co-sponsored a public event that explored ways that the church can more deeply interact with indigenous communities.

The WCC also supported a UN petition from French Polynesia in its continuing efforts to outlaw nuclear weapons. French Polynesia, or *Ma’ohi Nui* in its indig-

enous name, includes Tahiti and 117 other islands and atolls, covering more than 4 million square kilometres.

NOVEMBER The International Indigenous Peoples Movement for Self-Determination and Liberation and the WCC held a learning exchange activity in the Ecumenical Centre. The activity was attended by indigenous peoples’ organizations and support networks from the Philippines, Zambia, Peru, and Colombia.

Argentina hosts forums on modern slavery, violence against children

MAY Under the auspices of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, an international forum on modern slavery convened in Buenos Aires, Argentina. This forum, the second of its kind, was entitled “Old Problems in the New World.”

AUGUST Churches also denounced increasing violence against children in Argentina. Churches, civil society organizations and almost 100 children and adolescents — many of whom experience poverty and violence daily



Photo: Albin Hillert/WCC

— attended a consultation organized by the WCC in the town of Pilar, north of Buenos Aires, Argentina.

SEPTEMBER Ecumenical officers from Latin America and the Caribbean gathered in Argentina for a regional meeting of some 30 people with responsibilities for ecumenical relations in several churches in the region of Latin America and the Caribbean. It was the first regional meeting of its kind.



Photo: Albin Hillert/WCC

Seminar on *diakonia* held in Cuba

JULY “Christ’s call for abundant life (John 10:10) means that the church must work to address the enormity of challenges, including access to water resources, care for creation, and adequate health care,” said Rev. Matthew Ross during a WCC seminar on young people’s involvement in

“Ecumenical *Diakonia* and Sustainable Development,” held in Matanzas, Cuba.

The event was a key part in WCC’s work on *diakonia* — the church’s work in service to humanity—in the context of the 2018 focus on Latin America and the Caribbean. The activity was held in partnership with the Evangelical Theological Seminary at Matanzas.

“The issue of poverty and economic injustice in this region is one that the church cannot ignore and shows the immense importance of *diakonia* in addressing these challenges.”

—Rev. Matthew Ross, WCC programme executive for *Diakonia* and Sustainable Development

Global Christian Forum issues challenge of “mutual love”

APRIL The Global Christian Forum met in Bogota, Colombia, and urged the churches of the world to take up together the challenges of peace, unity and costly discipleship.

The forum, which connects a broad range of global Christianity, held its third gathering under the theme “Let mutual love continue” (Hebrews 13:1). It brought together a wide variety of Christian traditions, with 251 church leaders from nearly every stream of global Christianity and 55 nations.

The forum builds trust among Christian traditions, reflected WCC general secretary Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit. “Mutual love cannot be reserved to my community, to my faith tradition or nation,” he said. “It flows out of God’s love for this world like the rivers of life in the beautiful image of the new creation in the book of the Revelation to John.” ■

WCC celebrates 70 years



Beginning with a visit to the China Christian Council in January, the WCC celebrated 70 years of existence throughout 2018 with special prayers, hymns, worship services, and meetings with church leaders from across the globe, including Pope Francis. His historic visit on June 21, celebrating the “Ecumenical Pilgrimage: Walking, Praying and Working Together,” drew a warm global response.

The Ecumenical Review, the quarterly journal of the WCC, commemorated the anniversary by publishing an article, address, or book chapter by each of the WCC’s seven general secretaries since 1948 under the title “Walking Together, Serving Justice and Peace.”

The WCC thanks all the member churches and friends who sent 70th anniversary greetings. Visitors were able to move through the lobby of the Ecumenical Centre in Geneva, where an exhibit featured 90 faces

of people who told part of the story of the WCC’s first 70 years.

Central committee focuses on unity, fellowship

As it met in June, the WCC central committee focused on unity and fellowship under the theme “Walking Together, Serving Justice and Peace.” The central committee reflected that the 70th anniversary of the WCC was an opportunity to mark the achievements of the past decades in working for Christian unity and action, and to look to challenges ahead as a fellowship of churches responding to God’s call for unity, mission, justice and peace. The central committee also focused on expanding and deepening the churches’ understand-



Photo: Albin Hillert/WCC

ing of their common pilgrimage, and how committee members can best communicate the concept of pilgrimage and the living fellowship when they return to the churches they represent.

“A long common pilgrimage on the path to unity”

In February, the Ecumenical Centre hosted a visit by Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby, who spoke on the theme of an “ecumenism of action” and stressed the contribution of the ecumenical movement as one that has helped many otherwise distant churches to get to know each other.

In June, representatives of churches worldwide gathered at Geneva’s St Pierre Cathedral for a service of celebration, at which His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew urged continued efforts for unity, justice and peace. “We celebrate a long common pilgrimage on the path to unity, Christian witness, and the commitment to justice, peace, and the preservation of creation,”



Photo: Albin Hillert/WCC



Photo: Albin Hillert/WCC



Photo: Marie Renaux/WCC



Photo: Ivars Kupcis/WCC

said the patriarch in his homily during the service.

The Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople was one of the founding members of the WCC.

The patriarch praised common efforts to respond to the major challenges of the age, as well as the “constructive cooperation” between the WCC and the Roman Catholic Church, which is not a WCC member but works with the council in various areas.

Making history: Pope Francis visits the WCC

On 21 June, the landmark visit of Pope Francis was a further highpoint of the ecumenical commemoration of the WCC’s 70th anniversary.

At the Ecumenical Centre, Pope Francis spoke about walking toward Christian unity and the pitfalls that we encounter on the journey.

“For us as Christians, walking together is not a play



Photo: Albin Hillert/WCC

to strengthen our own positions, but an act of obedience to the Lord and love for our world. Let us ask the Father to help us walk together all the more resolutely in the ways of the Spirit,” said the pope.

“I wanted to take part personally in the celebrations



Photo: Fredrik Lerneryd/WCC



Photo: Joanna Lindén-Montes/WCC

marking this anniversary of the World Council, not least to reaffirm the commitment of the Catholic Church to the cause of ecumenism and to encourage cooperation with the member churches and with our ecumenical partners.”

At Bossey, Pope Francis and WCC share gifts that focus on the marginalized

The pope’s pilgrimage included a visit with students and faculty at the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey, near Geneva. There too, Pope Francis and WCC leaders exchanged gifts at a simple, open-air ceremony in the garden. WCC general secretary Rev. Dr Olav Fykse



Photo: Peter Williams/WCC

Tveit and Pope Francis each shared sculptures that symbolized the need to include people who often find themselves marginalized from society.

Tveit presented Pope Francis with a carved wooden cross sculpted for the pontiff’s visit by Karim Okiki, a 33-year-old deaf man from Kenya, with facilitation from the WCC-Ecumenical Disability Advocates Network. Three disability symbols carved on the cross represent blind or visually impaired, physically impaired and deaf people.

In return, Pope Francis offered the WCC a sculpture for the chapel in the Ecumenical Centre called “Crucifixion.” It was produced in 1990 by internationally renowned sculptor Alberto Ghinzani from Pavia in Italy.

Pilgrims gather from far and wide in Amsterdam

In August, hundreds of people gathered from across the world for an ecumenical prayer service at the Nieuwe Kerk, a 15th-century church in Amsterdam, to celebrate the WCC’s 70th anniversary at the very spot where the



Photo: Albin Hillert/WCC

organization was founded in 1948.

Under the theme “Walking, Praying and Working Together,” the service featured special music, greetings from the Council of Churches in the Netherlands, and a procession of pilgrims from all over the world.

In his sermon, titled “The Love of Christ Compels Us,” Tveit looked back on the first WCC assembly in 1948 in Amsterdam, reflecting on the difficult questions the delegates were asking at the time.

“The assembly message from Amsterdam shows that the delegates were bold in speaking to the reality of the world,” he said. “Their faith was a hope, against the realities of many of their recent experiences.”

“Walk of Peace” draws young crowd

A “Walk of Peace” in Amsterdam gathered hundreds of young people and religious leaders who celebrated the ecumenical movement and challenged each other to accomplish even more.

The walk paused for reflection at several houses and buildings — including a synagogue, the Sant’ Egidio Community, the Armenian Church — all of which carried stories of blessings, wounds and transformation.

WCC moderator Dr Agnes Abuom urged the young people to make tomorrow greater than today and yesterday.



Photo: Albin Hillert/WCC



Photo: Albin Hillert/WCC



Photo: Albin Hillert/WCC



Photo: Magnus Aronson/WCC



Photo: Albin Hillert/WCC



Photo: Albin Hillert/WCC

Thursdays in Black gains new momentum

The WCC re-energized its “Thursdays in Black” campaign, urging women and men to join the movement and stand up against a culture that enables rape and sexual violence.

With a new visual identity, Thursdays in Black has been flourishing with increased participation across the globe, from Saint Lucy’s Day performers in Sweden; to the Anglican community in Uganda; to an open air, common prayer in Kingston, Jamaica.

In August, in Abuja, Nigeria, nearly 150 young people came out to support Thursdays in Black through a street walk. As Rev. Ikechukwu Anaga addressed young people and the media, he said: “When the issues of rape and every form of violence, especially against our women and girls, are reduced to the barest minimum and perpetrators brought to book, our world will be a better place for our generation and generations unborn.” ■

“The establishment of the WCC is because our ancestors believed in a peaceful, prosperous future in spite of the World War I and II experiences and devastation inflicted on the people and nature,” she said.

Unfortunately, the wisdom of youth does not receive its due attention, Abuom continued. “May I on behalf of the adults on this walk repent the bureaucratization and tokenization of young people in the ecumenical movement,” she said.

Commemorating women, addressing the wounds at global consultation in Jamaica

As a Global Consultation on the Decade of the Churches in Solidarity with Women opened in October, WCC leaders offered words of encouragement and determination for the future.

WCC general secretary Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit spoke of how gender justice is a vital element in the journey toward justice and peace.

“Here, now, on the 20th anniversary of the Ecumenical Decade of the Churches in Solidarity with Women, 1988-1998, we pause on this long, inspiring yet often arduous pilgrimage toward gender justice to acknowledge the courage, faith, and achievements of these pioneers of a fully inclusive ecumenical movement,” said Tveit. “We owe them so much.”

Tveit visited Jamaica as well as Barbados, Trinidad and Antigua, where he preached, met with religious leaders and visited communities. ■



Fifty years after Uppsala assembly, WCC returns with renewed commitment

Fifty years after its assembly in Uppsala, Sweden, decisively turned to public engagement, the WCC returned to Uppsala in November to renew its commitment to engaging in and addressing issues of public concern and the common good.

In a sermon in the Uppsala Cathedral, WCC general secretary Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit remembered that, on 4 July 1968, Dr Martin Luther King Jr. would have entered the very same cathedral to preach at the opening service of the WCC Fourth Assembly. “He never came,” said Tveit. “On April 4 he was assassinated, for being the salt and the light in the world that he was called by our Lord Jesus Christ to be.”

A special Ecumenical Weekend was held in Uppsala to promote unity and solidarity in Christ against populist trends. Under the theme “Behold, I make everything new!” 150 guests gathered to reflect on current challenges for ecumenism.

In an historic Joint Day of Reflection on Ecumenical *Diakonia* and Sustainable Development, the WCC and ACT Alliance reflected jointly on how the organizations work together in service to the world and how that work contributes to the broader agenda for sustainable development.

WCC moderator Dr Agnes Abuom was awarded the Plaque of Saint Eric by the Church of Sweden for her work and her efforts toward Christian unity. ■

Water and climate change: let justice flow



Water as a human right

MARCH At the 8th World Water Forum, convened in Brasilia, Brazil, the WCC Ecumenical Water Network took part in a series of activities to challenge the corporate takeover of water bodies around the world. WCC member churches and partners ratified the “Ecumenical Declaration on Water as a Human Right and a Public Good,” originally released 13 years ago.

APRIL To commemorate Earth Day, a photo exhibition entitled “The Blood Flows and the Rivers Run Dry,” featuring the work of photographer Sean Hawkey, portrayed the need for water justice in Latin America.

JULY During the High Level Political Forum of the United Nations, the Ecumenical Water Network planned a side event on safe water, sanitation, and sound management of freshwater ecosystems. A panel, “Water and Faith Communities towards Achieving SDG 6,” held at the Church of the Covenant in New York, focused on the Sustainable Development Goal related to the human right to water.

AUGUST The WCC joined its partners in Sweden for World Water Week. A “Water and Faith” day explored how faith-based groups can work with the public and private sectors on water justice. “Water is a gift of God, a gift of creation, and it is necessary for survival,” said WCC general secretary Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit through a video message. Mufti Mohammad Zoubi of Jordan, said: “Wherever you find water you will also find wealth. Water is easily found but it is also one of the most precious things if we lose it.”

OCTOBER The Ecumenical Water Network was also represented at the International Sanitation Convention in India, coinciding with the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi and organized by the Indian government.

NOVEMBER The WCC observed World Toilet Day, with a theme “When nature calls,” with reflections and a morning prayer, led by the Ecumenical Water Network, about the human right to dignified sanitation.

DECEMBER WCC continues to press for more participation from the civil society in the structure and work



Photo: Albin Hillert/WCC

UBS AND WCC GROW PARTNERSHIP

The United Bible Societies is expanding its partnership with the WCC, one fruit of which was copublication in 2018 of *Your Word Is Truth*, a volume highlighting the distinctive contributions of ten confessional traditions to interpretation of the Bible.

of the World Water Council, which held its 8th General Assembly in Marseille, France.

2018 world climate conference

SEPTEMBER A group of ecumenical pilgrims started a journey toward the 2018 World Climate Conference in the hosting city Katowice, Poland. “Go then!” (*Geht doch!* in German) was their motto. They ended their journey for climate justice upon arrival at the St Stephen’s Church in Katowice, where they were warmly welcomed by delegations from the WCC and other groups.

As the climate summit began, global church organizations including the WCC, Lutheran World Federation

and ACT Alliance called for global solidarity and urgent action to support communities at the frontline of climate change.

Faith-based groups also gathered in Katowice for an Interfaith Talanoa Dialogue to take stock of the collective global efforts to reduce the emissions of greenhouse gases.

“God wants the world, God wants us to steward it.”

— Swedish Archbishop Anders Wejryd, WCC president for Europe

“We wonder when the leaders of our world will realize how late we have left our response to the climate crisis.”

— His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew

“There is responsibility for politicians to get necessary agreements to save the planet. This is a political, moral task that goes beyond any border.”

— Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit, WCC general secretary.



Photo: Albin Hillert/WCC

For the healing of the world



Photo: Georgina Goodwin/WCC

WCC strengthens commitment to children

Across the globe, from national campaigns to grassroots efforts, the WCC strengthened its commitment to children.

Protecting children from any kind of violence has always been and should remain an essential message of Christianity. His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew told a gathering at the WCC for World Children's Day.

The patriarch was the keynote speaker at an event involving the WCC and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in November.

"It is important to bear in mind that children do not only represent our future but that they are in fact the present upon which the future is being built," said Patriarch Bartholomew.

The WCC also continued its work on overcoming the HIV epidemic, particularly in children. In July, the WCC hosted a Faith Networking Zone at the 22nd International AIDS Conference in Amsterdam.



In November, within the framework of the PEPFAR-UNAIDS Faith Initiative, the WCC Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance shared discussions and events with young people and children. The events, which included workshops and candid discussions, aimed to mobilize faith communities to promote prevention, access to treatment and care of people with HIV in Kenya.

The Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance also launched a children's letter-writing campaign as an opportunity for young people to learn more about HIV prevention and treatment, and speak out on a range of issues, many involving younger children.

In December, a "High-Level Dialogue to Assess Progress on and Intensify Commitment to Scaling Up Diagnosis and Treatment of Paediatric HIV" was convened by His Eminence Peter Appiah Kodowo Cardinal Turkson, prefect of the Dicastery for the Promotion of Integral Human Development, along with PEPFAR, UNAIDS, WHO, and EGPAF in collaboration with Caritas Internationalis and the WCC Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance at the Pontifical Academy of Sciences in Vatican City.

The WCC is also involved in organizing local and regional workshops, which make a profound difference in the lives of young people and their communities.

The WCC Ecumenical HIV and AIDS Initiatives and Advocacy (EHAIA) programme accompanies member churches in the schools they own or operate by providing safe spaces for students to receive adequate information about HIV and AIDS prevention and treatment. The students are also able to discuss difficult issues of sex and sexuality.

Rev. Pauline Wanjiru Njiru, Ecumenical HIV and AIDS Initiatives and Advocacy regional coordinator for Eastern Africa, said the young people are “game changers,” given that 65 percent of the African population is 25 years or younger. “The church and the government must invest in young people, especially in interventions geared towards curbing new HIV infections,” she said.

In Uruguay, hope shines for young people in the Barrio Borro community through an Ecumenical Support Project. The Obra Euménica Center — an educational center for children and adolescents created by the Methodist Church, Waldensian Church and German Church 45 years ago — receives 300 children and adolescents daily for classes, vocational training, counselling, creative workshops and training in nonviolent communication.

WCC expands Health and Healing programmes

The WCC approved an Ecumenical Health Strategy that begins building momentum for health-promoting churches.

Gathering in Charlotte, North Carolina (USA), in December, an international group convened by the WCC worked on strengthening efforts and tools for health-promoting churches, particularly to aid churches in integrating health work into their core ministry.

Taking stock of recent resonance on issues of health and healing among churches around the world, WCC programme executive for Health and Healing Dr Mwai Makoka reflected, “We have very good theological foundation for working on health. We are not at a point where we are questioning if churches and Christians should work on health. We are well beyond that. The churches are ready. The momentum is there.”

A new “toolkit” to empower churches to promote better health in their congregations is in the making.

WCC to strengthen its prophetic voice

In November, the WCC executive committee approved a Communication Strategy through 2021, the year of the next WCC Assembly.

“The goal of WCC communications is to raise the profile and impact of the work of the WCC,” the strategy reads. “Communication is an important strategic tool for the WCC and its member churches and ecumenical partners to sustain influence, gain visibility and promote good causes.”

The strategy also reflects how the landscape for communication has changed and therefore requires a stronger prophetic voice. “The WCC seeks to lift up and convey the authentic experiences, stories, insights, and values of people and communities within the churches that might otherwise not be heard, even if they are critical of our habitual or accepted practices or challenge principalities and powers,” the strategy reads. ■



Photo: Albin Hillert/WCC

GREEN VILLAGE VISION BECOMING REAL

How do you envision a site for the ecumenical and justice work of the future? Concretely, it might look like the Green Village: a state of the art, pedestrian-friendly, environmentally responsible campus in a park-like setting at the heart of the international sector of Geneva, sustainably designed and built for creating community around shared work for justice and peace.

With its Area Development Plan fully approved, Green Village got underway in 2018. It will include a renovated Ecumenical Centre; new office space for commercial and civil society organizations, including the WCC, its sister organizations and tenants; and residential space.

Learn more about Green Village at green-village.ch.



Photo: Albin Hillert/WCC



Photo: Albin Hillert/WCC



Lights for the future

In 2019, visit the WCC website for news on ...

... an extensive Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace Asia Focus-2019. General secretaries and other high-ranking national church leaders from nine Asian countries gathered in Chiang Mai, Thailand, in September to pave the way.

... more details regarding the 11th Assembly, to be held in Karlsruhe, Germany, in 2021.

... ongoing news from the Faith and Order Commission regarding the reception of and responses to *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*.

WCC financial results 2018

Financial results 2018 (Swiss francs 000's)*	Unrestricted and designated funds	Restricted funds	Total funds	Total funds
*Unaudited	2018	2018	2018	2017
Income				
Membership and other unrestricted contributions	4 040	-	4 040	3 916
Programme contributions	-	13 968	13 968	13 439
Investment and currency (losses)/gains	(123)	(480)	(603)	817
Rental income, sales and other income	6 723	645	7 368	7 257
Unrestricted income distribution	(4 034)	4 034	-	-
Total income	6 606	18 167	24 773	25 429
Expenditure				
Programme and other operating costs	4 385	9 596	13 981	11 794
Depreciation	2 522	154	2 676	1 882
Salaries	4 505	8 077	12 582	12 473
Redistribution of costs; internal (sales)/charges	(2 840)	2 840	-	-
Total costs	8 572	20 667	29 239	26 149
Transfers between funds	-	-	-	-
Transfers to funds	(61)	(48)	(109)	(36)
Net decrease in funds for the year	(2 027)	(2 548)	(4 575)	(756)

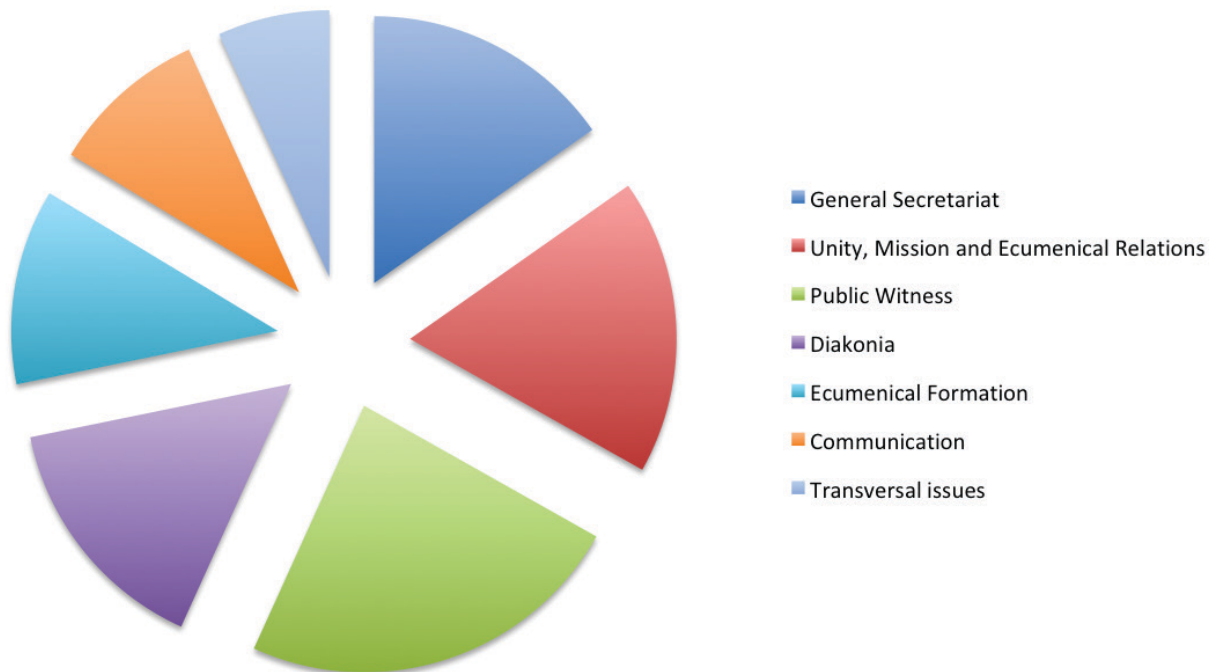
In 2018, contributions and rental income increased by CHF 0.8 million. Overall, total income reduced by CHF 0.7 million compared to 2017 because of adverse investment results experienced in the last quarter of the year.

The financial dimension of the extraordinary events and activities in the anniversary year, including the Conference on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME), central committee, the Papal visit and other celebrations, are reflected in an increase of CHF 2.2 million in Programme and other operating costs, which total almost CHF 14 million in 2018, compared to CHF 11.8 million in 2017.

The decrease in funds and reserves of CHF 4.6 million is close to forecast. It includes a net drawdown

of programme funds of CHF 1.4 million; CHF 1 million of drawdown in endowment funds, representing both investment losses, and distribution to programmes; and CHF 1 million in accelerated depreciation, recognizing the anticipated shorter useful life of sections of the Ecumenical Centre, which are to be replaced with new buildings in 2023-2025.

The Council's reserves may be assessed in the light of a recent land evaluation, detailed in the notes to the financial statements 2018, which quotes CHF 109 million as the estimated value of the plot of 33,000m² in Grand-Saconnex, Geneva. The approved budget for 2019 includes a net increase in funds, to be generated from the first transactions in the real estate development project. ■

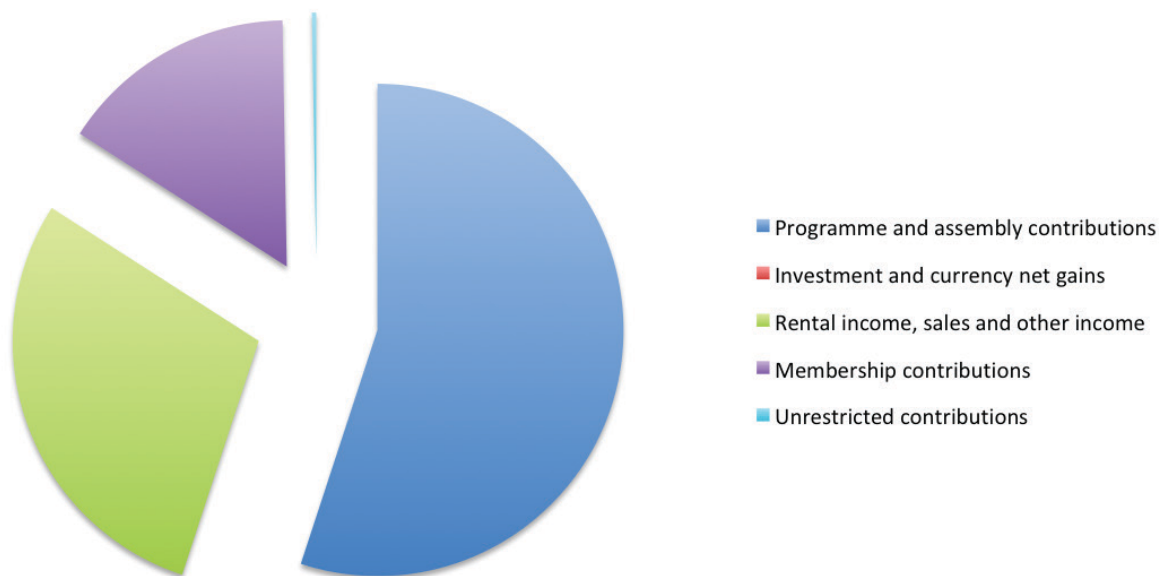


WCC Expenditure by programme 2018	CHF 000s	%
General Secretariat	3 109	15%
Unity, Mission and Ecumenical Relations	3 646	18%
Public Witness	4 813	23%
Diakonia	3 056	15%
Ecumenical Formation	2 414	12%
Communication	1 950	10%
Transversal issues	1 603	8%
	20 591	100%

Transversal issues in 2018 included Church and ecumenical relations, Youth engagement in the ecumenical movement, Just community of women and men, Inter-religious dialogue and co-operation, and Spiritual life.



Financial report



WCC sources of income 2018

	CHF 000s	%
Programme and assembly contributions	13 968	56,4%
Investment and currency net gains	-603	-2,4%
Rental income, sales and other income	7 368	29,7%
Membership contributions	3 969	16,0%
Unrestricted contributions	71	0,3%
	<u>24 773</u>	<u>100,0%</u>

Income trends 2018 (Swiss francs 000's)	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Membership and other unrestricted contributions	4 605	4 388	4 120	4 206	3 877	3 928	3 916	4 040
Programme contributions	16 802	17 214	16 871	16 020	14 651	13 542	13 372	13 895
International Ecumenical Peace Convocation	492	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Global Christian Forum	174	17	-	-	-	-	-	-
Assembly	145	1 021	2 112	138	115	55	68	73
Other income	6 447	7 409	8 179	8 998	6 948	7 483	8 074	6 765
Total	28 665	30 049	31 282	29 362	25 591	25 008	25 430	24 773

Main contributors

Note: The list includes member churches, ecumenical partners and other organizations that contributed more than CHF 20,000 to the WCC in 2018.

African Methodist Episcopal Church, American Baptist Churches in the USA, Anglican Church of Canada, Arbeitsgemeinschaft Christlicher Kirchen in Deutschland, 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 im Rheinland, 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, Evangelisches Missionswerk in Deutschland, Evangelisch-Reformierte Kirche des Kantons St Gallen,

FELM, Finn Church Aid, Fondation pour l'aide au protestantisme réformé, Foundation for Theological Education in Southeast Asia, Hassib Sabbagh Foundation, Hilfswerk der Evangelischen Kirchen Schweiz, Kerk in Actie, Methodist Church, Mission 21 - Evangelisches Missionswerk Basel, NCC Australia - Act for Peace, Norwegian Church Aid, Presbyterian Church (USA), Presbyterian Church in Canada, Presbyterian Church of Korea, Protestant Church in the Netherlands, Reformierte Landeskirche Aargau, Religious Society of Friends, Schweizerischer Evangelischer Kirchenbund, Stichting Rotterdam, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, The Episcopal Church, UNAIDS, UNICEF, United Church of Canada, United Church of Christ, United Methodist Church, Uniting Church in Australia, Uniting Church in Sweden, World Communion of Reformed Churches ■

Other contributors (less than CHF 20,000)

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



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