

# Moving in the Spirit



Report of the World Council of Churches  
Conference on World Mission and Evangelism

Edited by Risto Jukko and Jooseop Keum

## **MOVING IN THE SPIRIT**



# **MOVING IN THE SPIRIT**

**Report of the World Council of  
Churches Conference on World  
Mission and Evangelism**

**8-13 March 2018  
Arusha, Tanzania**

**Edited by  
Risto Jukko and Jooseop Keum**



**World Council  
of Churches**  
Publications

## MOVING IN THE SPIRIT

Report of the World Council of Churches Conference on World Mission and Evangelism

Copyright © 2019 WCC Publications. All rights reserved. Except for brief quotations in notices or reviews, no part of this book may be reproduced in any manner without prior written permission from the publisher. Write: [publications@wcc-coe.org](mailto:publications@wcc-coe.org).

*WCC Publications is the book publishing programme of the World Council of Churches. Founded in 1948, the WCC promotes Christian unity in faith, witness and service for a just and peaceful world. A global fellowship, the WCC brings together 350 Protestant, Orthodox, Anglican and other churches representing more than 560 million Christians in 110 countries and works cooperatively with the Roman Catholic Church.*

*Opinions expressed in WCC Publications are those of the authors.*

Unless otherwise noted, scripture quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version Bible, © copyright 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA. Used by permission.

Cover image: Vibrant Sunday worship at Christ Church Cathedral of Mount Kilimanjaro Diocese, Arusha, Tanzania, during the world mission conference, 2018.

Photos: Albin Hillert

Cover design, book design, and typesetting: Michelle Cook / 4 Seasons Book Design

Print ISBN: 978-2-8254-1721-8

Ebook ISBN 978-2-8254-1722-5

World Council of Churches

150 route de Ferney, P.O. Box 2100

1211 Geneva 2, Switzerland

<http://publications.oikoumene.org>

# CONTENTS

---

<i>A Word of Greeting</i>	Olav Fykse Tveit	ix
<i>Preface</i>	Risto Jukko	xi
<i>Foreword</i>	Jooseop Keum	xv
<i>Introduction</i>	Geevarghese Mor Coorilos	xxi
<b>Part One</b>	<b>From Arusha: Conference Outcomes</b>	1
1. The Arusha Call to Discipleship		2
2. The Arusha Conference Report		5
<b>Part Two</b>	<b>Toward Arusha</b>	21
3. From Achimota 1958 to Arusha 2018: A Journey to Arusha		
	<i>Lesmore Gibson Ezekiel and Jooseop Keum</i>	22
4. Arusha: A Confluence for Transformational Agenda and Discipleship in Africa		
	<i>Faustin Leonard Mahali</i>	33
<b>Part Three</b>	<b>In Arusha: Plenary Presentations</b>	41
5. Welcome Messages and Messages to the Conference		42
	Welcome by the Presiding Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT)	
	<i>Fredrick O. Shoo</i>	42
	Welcome by the Moderator of the the World Council of Churches Central Committee	
	<i>Agnes Abuom</i>	44
	Message from Pope Francis	45
	Message from His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew	46
	Message from the Archbishop of Canterbury	
	<i>Justin Welby</i>	48

6. Opening Address by the WCC General Secretary <i>Olav Fykse Tveit</i>	50
7. Address by the Conference Moderator <i>Geevarghese Mor Coorilos</i>	57
8. Keynote Speech: Transforming Disciples, Transforming the Future: Young African Women and the Search for a Liberated Future <i>Mutale Mulenga-Kaunda</i>	65
9. CWME: From Athens to Arusha: Director's Report <i>Jooseop Keum</i>	73
10. Panel Discussion on the Role of CWME	
Mission Thinking and Formation <i>Roderick Hewitt</i>	88
Mission as a Movement "Together towards Life" <i>Micheline Kamba Kasongo</i>	91
Mission: Unity and Diversity <i>Susan Durber</i>	95
Arusha 2018 and Global Mission <i>Christoph Anders</i>	97
<b>Part Four    In Arusha: Thematic Plenaries</b>	101
11. Perspectives on Evangelism as Contextual and Prophetic	
A European Perspective <i>Dimitra Koukoura</i>	102
A Chinese Perspective <i>Manhong Melissa Lin</i>	104
A Congolese Perspective <i>Isis Kangudie Mana</i>	107

A South American Orthodox Perspective <i>Iosif de Pátara</i>	113
A New Reformation: Evangelism as Life Together <i>Jin S. Kim</i>	117
12. Mission from the Margins: Becoming Disciples, Transforming the World (Luke 4:16-21) <i>Adi Mariana Waqa</i>	124
13. Missional Formation: Transforming the World, Equipping Disciples	
Action and Reflection on the Signs of the Times <i>Dhiloraj Ranjit Canagasabay</i>	129
Signs of the Times and the Importance of Discipleship Training <i>Nafkot M. Dessaleg</i>	132
Examining Formation as Discipleship in Theological Education: Risky Witnessing, History of Wounds, Compassionate Leadership <i>Septemmy E. Lakawa</i>	133
Examining Formation as Discipleship in Leadership Training <i>Mark MacDonald</i>	136
Examining Formation as Discipleship through the Example of a Missionary Society: Missionaries of Africa (White Fathers) <i>Richard Nnyombi</i>	139
Examining Formation as Discipleship in Mission Agency: A Mission Agency Reformed by the Call to Discipleship <i>Collin Cowan</i>	143
14. Embracing the Cross: Equipped Disciples	
Embracing the Cross Today in the Context of the Middle East <i>His Holiness Mor Ignatius Aphrem II</i>	148



Carrying the Cross of Poverty <i>Roberto E. Zwetch</i>	152
Carrying the Cross of the Experience of the Pan-African Women's Ecumenical Empowerment Network (PAWEEN) <i>Angelique Walker-Smith</i>	154
Carrying the Cross of Prejudice from a Dominant Culture <i>Kathryn Mary Lohre</i>	156
Keynote Address: Spiritual Dimension of Embracing the Cross <i>Vuyani Vellem</i>	159
"I Have a Dream" <i>Sang Chang</i>	163
I Have a Dream to Share with You <i>Brian Farrell</i>	166
<b>Part Five After Arusha: Reflections</b>	169
15. My Life after Arusha <i>Fredrick O. Shoo, Seoyoung Kim, and Tito Paredes</i>	170
16. From Arusha to Karlsruhe, and Beyond: Reflections on the Future of Mission <i>Risto Jukko</i>	175
<b>Appendices</b>	
1. <i>Accompanying Letter to the Arusha Call to Discipleship</i>	187
2. <i>Conference Leadership</i>	190
3. <i>The GETI Report</i> Amélé Adamavi-Aho Ekué	196

## A WORD OF GREETING

---

Moving in the Spirit, today we are witnessing a revival and renewal of Christian mission and evangelism in ways that constitute a new and liberating paradigm for the field and a promising contribution to a human future illuminated by justice and peace.

Presenting highlights and key documents from the 2018 world conference on mission and evangelism held in Arusha, Tanzania, and ranging across regions and confessions and disciplines, this volume captures the spirit of that new paradigm and traces the light it sheds on Christian mission, missiology, and missional formation, as well as on Christian discipleship, advocacy and service, prayer and spirituality.

Much of this exciting work is grounded in the recent, landmark ecumenical mission statement, *Together towards Life*,<sup>1</sup> related ecumenical documents,<sup>2</sup> and the practice and insights of those people, including Indigenous Peoples, around the world engaged in Christian mission and evangelism. While fully engaged with the African context in which the conference was held, this volume lifts up the signal themes of the new paradigm: mission from the margins, the mission of God's Spirit in the world, evangelism as transformative discipleship, and direct missional engagement with issues of ecological, economic, and gender justice. May they deeply inform our lives and work and our ongoing pilgrimage of justice and peace toward God's reign.

On behalf of the full fellowship of churches that is the WCC, I sincerely thank the organizers of the world conference, particularly the then-CWME director Rev. Dr Jooseop Keum and the entire mission and evangelism staff; CWME moderator Bishop Geevarghese Mor Coorilos; our hosts in Tanzania, in particular the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania, as well as the All Africa Conference of Churches; the current CWME director Rev. Dr Risto Jukko; the many ecumenical partners and observers at the meeting; and the more than 1000 active and enthusiastic participants in this vital and vibrant gathering.

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

---

1. *Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes—With a Practical Guide*, ed. Jooseop Keum (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2013).

2. For example, *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*, Faith and Order Paper 214 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2013).



## PREFACE

---

It is my great privilege and honour to write the preface of this report of the World Council of Churches (WCC) Conference on World Mission and Evangelism, which took place in Arusha, Tanzania, in March 2018. It was an extraordinary event in many ways, as the reader will discover in going through the conference material. The aim of this volume is to be as useful and user-friendly as possible for the reader, whether they are used to the ecumenical context or not.

The table of contents does not fully follow the programmatic or chronological order of the Arusha Conference. Instead, it starts with what most theologians, mission practitioners, and parish pastors would look for: the outcome of the conference. These are two documents or statements: the Arusha Call to Discipleship and the Arusha Conference Report, both in Part One of the book. Part Two contains two other documents that illustrate the history and development of World and African Christianity leading to the Arusha Conference on World Mission and Evangelism. The e-book also includes other documents leading directly to that outcome, as well as a link to the WCC mission statement *Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes* (2012/2013), which, of course, has been decisive for and influential in the conference. After exploring the outcome of the conference (Part One), the structure follows a time frame: toward Arusha (Part Two), in Arusha (Parts Three and Four) and after Arusha (Part Five), which tries to glimpse some impacts of the conference and look toward the future of the ecumenical mission movement.

Many report books are more or less compilations of the written material of a conference or seminar. To avoid this approach, the report is composed of three parts, or books. First, in keeping with the idea of user-friendliness, an e-book is the most complete version of the official documentation of the Arusha conference. The electronic format permits a longer version than a hard copy can achieve, as well as giving readers the option of opening links to other material on the internet. We have made good use of those opportunities. Much of the material from the Arusha Conference has been posted on the WCC website for several months, but here it is grouped together in the order listed in the table of contents. The e-book covers extensively the material of the Arusha Conference; it also includes devotions from Arusha and inspired by Arusha, consisting of the Bible studies presented in the conference and 12

plans for devotions following the 12 points of the Arusha Call to Discipleship, the devotions developed after the conference.

Second, the print version of the Arusha report offers highlights of the Arusha Conference – a selection of the main documents. Not every single document from the conference is included in the print version, as these can be found in the e-book. The print version is meant for those theologians and mission practitioners who work professionally in or for mission, either in theology or practice, and need a hard copy as a handy reference on their bookshelf.

Third, after the conference, which was a great experience of Christian unity, fellowship, and spirituality, there came an idea of trying to catch something of that experience and make it available to those who could not attend but wanted to experience (or refresh) some of the conference's spirituality and atmosphere. The outcome is the Arusha devotional resource book, as mentioned earlier. This part of our report is also available in a separate print version: it is meant for parish use, for pastors and lay people, in Bible study groups, prayer groups, mission groups, various devotions, and so on.

In the Appendices the reader will find the Accompanying Letter to the Arusha Call to Discipleship, the Conference Leadership, and a short report of GETI (Global Ecumenical Theological Institute). GETI was a group of more than 100 young theologians from 40 countries who joined the Arusha Conference. We have included here only a short report from GETI. The reader can find in the e-book a link to the full GETI report.

The opinions expressed in the various presentations in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of the World Council of Churches and its Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME).

To conclude, I would like to offer some words of thanks. To start with, it is clear that the Conference on World Mission and Evangelism in Arusha would never have come to be without the CWME and its moderator and vice-moderator, and without the indefatigable support of the leadership of the WCC. A great word of thanks goes to Rev. Dr Jooseop Keum for his tireless work for the conference. He is also co-editor of this report book with me. As his successor as the director of the CWME, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the WCC leadership, to the commission and its leadership, and to all the WCC staff for their support and hard work for the success of the conference. Special thanks go to Rev. Kyeong-Ah Woo for her work for the Arusha devotional resource book, as well as to Michael West for his editorial guidance and support for this report. I also wish to thank the African hosts,

the Local Host Committee, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania, other Tanzanian churches, as well as the All Africa Conference of Churches. We are also grateful to all the voluntary workers and stewards and, finally, to the participants from all over the world.

*Rev. Dr Risto Jukko*

*Co-Editor, Director of CWME*



# FOREWORD

---

The World Council of Churches' (WCC) Conference on World Mission and Evangelism – hosted by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania – was held at Ngurdoto Mountain Lodge & Tanzania Conference Centre, Arusha, Tanzania, from 8 to 13 March 2018. World mission conferences were first organized by the International Missionary Council (IMC) from 1921 to 1961, then by the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME) since the integration of the IMC and the WCC: Edinburgh 1910, Jerusalem 1928, Tambaram 1938, Whitby 1947, Willingen 1952, Accra 1958, Mexico City 1963, Bangkok 1973, Melbourne 1980, San Antonio 1989, Salvador 1996, Athens 2005, Edinburgh 2010, and Arusha 2018.

According to CWME by-laws, the main task of the Conference on World Mission and Evangelism is to provide opportunities for churches, mission agencies, groups, and national and regional councils concerned with Christian mission to meet together for reflection and consultation leading to common witness. Based on this mandate, CWME set four aims of the Arusha conference after carefully reading the signs of the times.

## **A Mission Conference**

As the conference was in the long tradition of the IMC and the WCC, it was important that it be planned and experienced as a *mission* conference. “Mission” was understood as a multivalent activity. That included joyful witness in word and deed to the person of Jesus Christ and his gospel; commitment to working for justice and reconciliation among all peoples and within all of creation; and participation in interfaith, secular, and ecumenical dialogue that seeks mutual understanding and common witness. It celebrated the unity of all peoples as it marvels at their God-given diversity. The conference reflected thoughtfully on various issues of missionary practice and sought new ways of being faithful to God’s mission in the world with the leading of the Spirit.

## **An Ecumenical Conference**

As the conference was organized by the CWME, it was important that it be planned and experienced as an *ecumenical* conference. First, this meant that conference participants were active representatives of mainline Protestant, Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Evangelical, Pentecostal, and African Instituted churches. Second, it meant that efforts were made to engage the conference delegates in a dialogue that was open, loving, and honest. Third, it celebrated



the unity of the churches and the unity between the church and mission already achieved, while lamenting that the scandal of disunity still mars the body of Christ. Fourth, it encouraged local ecumenical initiatives – especially in Africa – in their efforts to achieve unity among the churches in their particular areas. The conference has built connections with the WCC's vision of participating in a *pilgrimage of justice and peace*. The whole spiritual and pragmatic flow of the conference has been planned in the spirit of the pilgrimage of justice and peace.

### **An African Conference**

As the CWME conference took place in Africa for the first time since 1958, when it was held in Achimota, Ghana, it was important that it be planned and experienced as an *African* conference. The spirit of African rhythms, music, and art pervaded the environment in which the conference was held, and in the times of our worship together. The conference also attended to the signs of the times that particularly affect African peoples and African lands – signs of both threat and promise. Arusha was a source of the rich gifts of one of the most vibrant regions of World Christianity in terms of its spirituality and cultivation of Life, and made the contribution of the African context to current perspectives and understandings of mission, and to shaping mission theology and practice into the future. Indeed, Arusha was a truly an African conference. In the shaping of the conference spiritual life, theological insights, and missional leadership, the African churches have shown their quality of missional leadership.

### **A Young Leaders' Conference**

Arusha was a young leaders' conference. As the conference aimed to influence the future of mission thinking and practice in the next decade, it was important that youth of the church be present and actively participate. This meant that the 100 young students, scholars, and church leaders participating in the Global Ecumenical Theological Institute (GETI) programme took active part in all the worship events, plenary sessions, and workshop reflections. The young leaders took their rightful place in the conference, and they were inspired and equipped to continue the work of mission and the ecumenical movement in the future. A strong and creative leadership, contributions made by young and female speakers and participants, and inspiring inputs by young people were among the reasons for the great success of the Arusha conference. The conference did not merely recycle the people who always speak at ecumenical gatherings. Instead, the organizers brought many fresh approaches and voices of new and dynamic figures. Many participants found

the future hope of the ecumenical movement in Arusha. GETI played a key role in ensuring that Arusha would be a younger leaders' conference.

The Arusha Call to Discipleship is an excellent statement which will guide future ecumenical mission thinking and practice. It is also very good input for the remainder of the journey of the pilgrimage of justice and peace. The adoption of the Call, with unanimous consensus including all the non-delegate participants, has been modelled so that mutual discernment, ecumenical consensus, and costly commitment is possible even in large-scale ecumenical gatherings. The WCC mission statement *Together towards Life* focuses on mission from the margins; it has had an impact on the Arusha Call. The concept is reshaping missiologies, policies, and practices of churches and mission organizations and theological schools. Since Arusha, discipleship has become a new theme in ecumenical discourse and in many churches. Expect it to influence the next three years and the next assembly of the WCC in 2021.

The Arusha Conference on World Mission and Evangelism was the fruit of three years of preparation. It was a vibrant gathering of God's people to give thanks and praise for God's mercy and the continuous use of us for God's mission. Arusha was another historic mission conference, characterized by a dynamic vision of mission for the future and how we can move together in mission for justice and peace. Sharing stories and life in mission and committing to solidarity with those who suffer, including persecuted Christians, was featured throughout the conference: it shaped discussions, conversations, and reflections on how we could discern together the Spirit's leading and guidance during this momentous event. We were and are a learning community as we seek to grow together for the sake of God's mission. Many participants appreciated that the spiritual life was one of the conference highlights, with innovative, artistic, creative reflections on the multicultural nature of Christ's Body.

### **Moving in the Spirit: Called to Transforming Discipleship**

Given the aims of the conference and the discernment of the signs of the times, the CWME wrestled and prayed with ideas about a theme. The first part of the conference theme, with its reference to Galatians 5:25 – "If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit" – was profound in its very simplicity. As we discerned together the signs of the times, it was evident that despite the chaos of human disunity in which we live and witness today, there are many signs of the Holy Spirit giving life and creating hope. Africa, in particular, represents a site in which the Holy Spirit is breathing life into the church.

Moving in the Spirit brought the notion of pilgrimage, of an ongoing journey of all believers, led and guided by the Holy Spirit. This is a pilgrimage that is characterized by constant hope for a transformed world of justice and peace and a commitment to renewal in Christ. This theme offers a prophetic message amidst the complexities of today's world.

The second part of the conference theme called us to transforming discipleship. We are called to be disciples of Jesus of Nazareth, to whom we witness and whom we proclaim as we move in the Spirit. How we understand the phrase "transforming discipleship" carries three profoundly different and yet closely related meanings.

First, the very idea of discipleship is transformed. Discipleship is often understood merely in the sense of being in a loving, friendly relationship with Jesus. While this is a profound truth, the discipleship we intend to emphasize is one that is not only a relationship, but is actively engaged in continuing Jesus' mission in the world. To know Jesus is to follow him in what he did. In what the church's early theologians called "theosis" or deification, we share God's nature by sharing in God's mission. Discipleship, therefore, is what Pope Francis has called "missionary discipleship." It calls us to witness to Jesus and to the kingdom he preached, and, when appropriate, to proclaim Jesus' name and his gospel as well. It calls us to an evangelism that is done in Christ's way.

Second, we are called to be disciples who are constantly open to being transformed, individually and communally, in our following of Jesus. Discipleship commits us to embark on a spiritual journey that will constantly challenge us and shape us into people who reflect the Lord Jesus in our actions, words, and attitudes. Discipleship commits us to disciplines of prayer, to practices that shape our character and heart, and to the cultivation of habits that give us strength and courage to live lives of Christian witness.

Third, we are called to be disciples who are ourselves transforming, and as such we are privileged to join in the mission of the triune God, working together towards life, living out the values of the kingdom of God, and engaging in mission from the margins. In a world in which injustice seems almost insuperable, where hatred and racism seem to thrive, where suffering is so widespread and terrifying, our discipleship is costly. It calls us to put a theology of the cross into practice. It calls us to spend our energy and even offer our lives for the transformation that the kingdom promises. What will it mean for us, as individuals and churches, to be transformed in the power of the Holy Spirit? What will it mean to join the Spirit in transforming and healing a broken world?

Being grateful to all those together with whom we have made Arusha a historic event, I would like to conclude with a prayer:

*God of life,*

*We offer to you the 2018 Conference on World Mission and Evangelism in Arusha, Tanzania.*

*May we so move in your Holy Spirit that we will be transformed disciples transforming our world.*

*All for your glory, through Christ our Lord.*

*Amen.*

*Rev. Dr Jooseop Keum*

*Co-Editor*



# INTRODUCTION

---

It is my great honour and privilege as moderator of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME) to write this Introduction for the Arusha report.

Wolfgang Günther once said: “All mission conferences are occasions where we are called to make new discoveries of the grace and power of God, for ourselves, for the Church and the world, to face the new age and the new task with a new consecration.”

To me, this is precisely what the Arusha World Mission Conference has achieved: a new consecration to face the mission challenges of the new age and also to discover anew the divine grace and power.

The Arusha conference has been, without doubt, one of the most meaningful and successful ecumenical gatherings in the recent past. The CWME has received hundreds of responses and feedback of appreciation and affirmation of the way in which the conference was organized. Let me share with you just one of those many responses.

Rev. Dr Robina Winbush, the late, lamented associate general secretary of the Presbyterian Church USA and a distinguished member of the central and executive committees of the World Council of Churches (WCC), wrote in her letter to the former director of the CWME, Rev. Dr Jooseop Keum, “Without question, [Arusha] was one of the most meaningful events in my close to 30 years of ecumenical service.”

Arusha was also the biggest World Mission Conference (WMC) since Edinburgh 1910. Although it was planned for 700 to 800 participants, it eventually had more than one thousand participants (1,024, to be precise). In addition, local participants attended the conference as day scholars. The enthusiastic participation of delegates from WCC member churches, mission bodies, and wider constituencies of Roman Catholic, Pentecostal, and Charismatic churches exemplified their deep commitment to world mission and church unity.

As planned, Arusha turned out to be truly an *ecumenical* mission conference. In fact, it has been the biggest ecumenical gathering since the Busan assembly. As an ecumenical gathering, Arusha reflected on the wider issues and major trends of the ecumenical movement from a missiological perspective. As mentioned, the active participation of the WCC member churches, affiliated bodies, and wider constituencies was exceptional, making it a meaningful gathering. The leadership of the WCC central committee played a

key role in ensuring that it was genuinely an ecumenical mission event. The intensive missiological reflections on the global challenges have generated a renewed interest and vigour in the ecumenical movement. The adoption of the Arusha Call to Discipleship through consensus was a great example of this ecumenical spirit that permeated the conference in Arusha.

The Arusha conference was designed to be an *African* mission conference, and it was African to the core. It was African not simply in terms of its music, food, and culture, but more importantly through the active presence and participation, leadership, and theological contributions of African leaders. About one third of Arusha participants were African, probably an all-time record in WCC history. African churches have shared their gifts through their profound theological contributions, dynamic missional leadership, and rich spiritual and liturgical life. The conference drew inspiration from the African context in which it met. It was only the second time that a WMC met in Africa, since Achimota in Ghana (1958).

With the centre of gravity of global Christianity having shifted to Africa now, Arusha offered an opportunity to *feel* this shift. The “thirst for God” found at the core of African life was deeply felt in Arusha. Hearing from the African Instituted Churches and the Pentecostal churches allowed the conference to appreciate their contributions in reshaping African spirituality. The numerical growth of African Christianity is impressive by any reckoning, yet the churches remain challenged by the extent of poverty, disease, and conflicts that inflict pain and suffering on many. More positively, Africa’s deep awareness of the relational dimensions of life and the importance of community life helped the conference to recover life-giving values of the Bible.

The conference was deeply moved by the warm hospitality and generosity offered by the local host committee and the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC). The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania, with the close cooperation of other churches, worked tirelessly to make all participants feel at home. The CWME is immensely grateful to all of them for their dedicated leadership.

Arusha was a World *Mission* Conference. Standing in the long tradition of the International Missionary Council (IMC), Arusha has maintained this rich legacy. As in the case of previous conferences, Arusha also reflected deeply on various issues pertaining to mission theology and praxis and sought novel ways of being faithful to God’s mission in the world with the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Arusha was the first World Mission Conference to be held since the adoption of the new WCC mission statement, *Together towards Life* (TTL). The influence of TTL on the missiological discourse in Arusha was more than

obvious. The leading themes of TTL carried forward into the conference in Arusha. The fundamental affirmation of TTL that God's mission is essentially to give life in abundance was reaffirmed in the Arusha deliberations. The pneumatological turn taken by TTL in regard to the mission of God was reflected in the first part of the conference theme, "Moving in the Spirit." Through these reflections on the "movement of the Spirit" and through the spiritual life, Arusha expressed its commitment to the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace, the WCC's flagship programme.

By turning specific attention to transformative discipleship, a theme that is little developed in TTL, Arusha found a fresh focus for a vision of mission that draws deeply from TTL. Discipleship was affirmed as an invitation to both a relationship and a vocation. It is missionary, as it is led by the Holy Spirit in contexts of time and space that are in need of transformation. Various aspects of discipleship – such as liberation, gender justice, eco-justice, and interreligious harmony – were developed in plenaries, in workshops, in Bible studies, and through spiritual life at the conference.

Prayer and spiritual life were at the heart of the whole conference. This indeed was a major highlight. The conference offered multiple spaces for joyful celebrations. It offered rich opportunities to be in God's presence, rejoicing and lamenting before the triune God. Participants met for daily prayer – in the morning, at noon, and in the evening – which proved to be a well from which the participants drank deeply, finding unity and inspiration.

Guided and empowered by the word of God, challenged by reflective Bible studies, enriched by moving musical and artistic performances, and lifted up by the multitude of songs and prayers from all over the world, particularly from Africa, the conference affirmed its commitment to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ in life, word, and deed. The CWME is profoundly grateful to the spiritual life committee for the rich spiritual life in Arusha.

Yet another major highlight of Arusha was the substantial presence and dynamic participation and leadership of youth and women at the conference. All along, the CWME wanted Arusha to be primarily a young missiologists' conference, and we succeeded in fulfilling that goal to a great extent. About 42 percent of the total participants were women – an all-time high in the history of the ecumenical movement – and the presence of youth was 25 percent. This was by no means a small achievement. The leadership and contributions of young theologians, especially young women missiologists, at the conference was greatly appreciated. The GETI program, which was successfully coordinated both before and during the conference, contributed a great deal to ensuring the youthfulness of Arusha. The contributions of pre-conferences organized by youth, women, and the Ecumenical Disability



Advocates Network (EDAN) were commendable. Their presence and contributions provided Arusha with a concrete opportunity to live out “mission from the margins.”

The unanimous adoption of the Arusha Call to Discipleship has been a significant achievement of the Arusha Conference. This is an excellent missiological statement which, the CWME is certain, will guide and influence the future course of ecumenical missiology. This probably is the greatest achievement of Arusha.

All of this was possible basically due to the abundant grace we received from the triune God and because of the sincere prayers and support of many, including the central and executive committees of the WCC, in particular their leadership, the AACC, the local host committee in Tanzania, WCC staff colleagues, and many others.

The CWME is proud of the fact that we could successfully organize such a meaningful event, which was huge in both quantitative and qualitative terms. As moderator of the commission, my sincere gratitude and appreciation to the entire commission: to its conference planning committee, to its executive group, to the vice moderator, Rev. Dr Janet Corlett, and to the then-director, Rev. Dr Jooseop Keum. Dr Keum merits special mention here, as he was the chief architect of and brain behind the Arusha Conference. The CWME owes a great deal to Dr Keum for his vision and commitment to global mission and church unity.

The CWME is proud to present to you this comprehensive report of the Arusha Conference. As the director of the commission, Rev. Dr Risto Jukko, makes clear in his preface, the report contains the work that has gone into the preparations before the conference (such as reports of the various working groups of the CWME in preparation for the conference) and during the conference (including the presentations and deliberations at the conference, the Arusha Call and the accompanying letter). The report also contains reflections that address the future course of ecumenical missiology beyond Arusha.

In addition to the print edition of the report, the CWME is publishing an e-book version which will cover resources of spiritual life and worship in Arusha as well. It will also include some additional resources that have been prepared on the basis of the Arusha Call to Discipleship. CWME expresses its profound gratitude to all those who have worked hard in making these resources a reality, especially to the members of the working groups, Bridge Group, and spiritual life committee, and to Rev. (Kay) Kyeong-Ah Woo, the conference coordinator, for all their hard work. Our special thanks go to the new director of the commission, Rev. Dr Risto Jukko, who in such a short

time coordinated everything so efficiently that the time-bound process of publication of the reports was ensured.

It is the CWME's hope that the reports, both the print and the electronic versions, will be used extensively by our churches, mission colleagues, and partners worldwide. For those who were in Arusha, these resources will help you relive the Arusha experience; those who could not be there will get a taste of the rich mission banquet that Arusha was!

*In missio Dei,*

*Metropolitan Dr Geevarghese Coorilos Nalunnakkal*  
*Moderator, CWME*



## **PART ONE**

### **From Arusha: Conference Outcomes**

# 1. THE ARUSHA CALL TO DISCIPLESHIP

---

The World Council of Churches' Conference on World Mission and Evangelism met in Arusha, Tanzania, on 8-13 March 2018. More than one thousand participants – all of whom are engaged in mission and evangelism – gathered from many different Christian traditions and from every part of the world.

We joyfully celebrated the life-giving movement of the Spirit of God in our time, drawing particular inspiration from African contexts and spiritualities. Through Bible study, common prayer, and worship, and by sharing our stories together, we were encouraged to be witnesses to the reign of God that has come to us through the life, crucifixion, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Despite some glimmers of hope, we had to reckon with death-dealing forces that are shaking the world order and inflicting suffering on many. We observed the shocking accumulation of wealth due to one global financial system, which enriches few and impoverishes many (Isaiah 5:8). This is at the root of many of today's wars, conflicts, ecological devastation, and suffering (1 Timothy 6:10). This global imperial system has made the financial market one of the idols of our time. It has also strengthened cultures of domination and discrimination that continue to marginalize and exclude millions, forcing some among us into conditions of vulnerability and exploitation. We are mindful that people on the margins bear the heaviest burden.

These issues are not new for 2018, but the Holy Spirit continues to move at this time, and urgently calls us as Christian communities to respond with personal and communal conversion, and a transforming discipleship.

Discipleship is both a gift and a calling to be active collaborators with God for the transforming of the world (1 Thessalonians 3:2). In what the church's early theologians called "theosis" or deification, we share God's grace by sharing God's mission. This journey of discipleship leads us to share and live out God's love in Jesus Christ by seeking justice and peace in ways that are different from the world's (John 14:27). Thus, we are responding to Jesus' call to follow him from the margins of our world (Luke 4:16-19).

As disciples of Jesus Christ, both individually and collectively:

We are called by our baptism to transforming discipleship: a Christ-connected way of life in a world where many face despair, rejection, loneliness, and worthlessness.

We are called to worship the one triune God – the God of justice, love, and grace – at a time when many worship the false god of the market system (Luke 16:13).

We are called to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ – the fullness of life, the repentance and forgiveness of sin, and the promise of eternal life – in word and deed, in a violent world where many are sacrificed to the idols of death (Jeremiah 32:35) and where many have not yet heard the gospel.

We are called to joyfully engage in the ways of the Holy Spirit, who empowers people from the margins with agency, in the search for justice and dignity (Acts 1:8; 4:31).

We are called to discern the word of God in a world that communicates many contradictory, false, and confusing messages.

We are called to care for God's creation, and to be in solidarity with nations severely affected by climate change in the face of a ruthless human-centred exploitation of the environment for consumerism and greed.

We are called as disciples to belong together in just and inclusive communities, in our quest for unity and on our ecumenical journey, in a world that is based upon marginalization and exclusion.

We are called to be faithful witnesses of God's transforming love in dialogue with people of other faiths in a world where the politicization of religious identities often causes conflict.

We are called to be formed as servant leaders who demonstrate the way of Christ in a world that privileges power, wealth, and the culture of money (Luke 22:25-27).

We are called to break down walls and seek justice with people who are dispossessed and displaced from their lands – including migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers – and to resist new frontiers and borders that separate and kill (Isaiah 58:6-8).

We are called to follow the way of the cross, which challenges elitism, privilege, and personal and structural power (Luke 9:23).

We are called to live in the light of the resurrection, which offers hope-filled possibilities for transformation.

This is a call to transforming discipleship.

This is not a call that we can answer in our own strength, so the call becomes, in the end, a call to prayer:

*Loving God, we thank you for the gift of life in all its diversity and beauty.*

*Lord Jesus Christ, crucified and risen, we praise you that you came to find the lost, to free the oppressed, to heal the sick, and to convert the self-centred.*

*Holy Spirit, we rejoice that you breathe in the life of the world and are poured out into our hearts. As we live in the Spirit, may we also walk in the Spirit.*

*Grant us faith and courage to deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow Jesus: becoming pilgrims of justice and peace in our time. For the blessing of your people, the sustaining of the earth, and the glory of your name.*

*Through Christ our Lord.*

*Amen.*

## 2. THE ARUSHA CONFERENCE REPORT

---

### Moved by the Spirit

The theme of the conference, “Moving in the Spirit: Called to Transforming Discipleship,” suggests a movement of God’s people on a Spirit-led pilgrimage that is both ecumenical and transformative in character and purpose. With its broad participation from Protestant, Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Evangelical, Pentecostal, and African Instituted churches, the conference showed that the nature and character of mission and evangelism is truly multi-directional and multi-faceted. It indicated that there is not one centre but many centres impacting, shaping, and informing the understanding and practice of mission and evangelism in our time. Those present in Arusha were people from many parts of the world and of different ages, cultures, experiences, perspectives, and orientations, each with stories of suffering and struggle as well as of hope and determination, celebrating the richness of the diversity of God’s creation. Together we were able to adopt and issue the Arusha Call to Discipleship as an expression of our unity in the transforming mission of God in the world.

The conference offered multiple spaces for joyful celebrations, mutual sharing and learning, and theological reflection. It offered rich opportunities to be in God’s presence, rejoicing and lamenting before the triune God. The participants met for daily prayers – in the morning, at noon, and in the evening – which proved to be a well from which we drank deeply, finding unity and inspiration. Together with the daily Bible studies, our shared experience of worship became key when discerning what Christian discipleship involves today. Sharing our stories together was significant: in the plenary sessions, at the table talks, and during the warshas (workshops; this Kiswahili term conveys the idea of discerning together on critical and cutting-edge issues through sharing of experiences and knowledge). Guided and empowered by the Word of God, enriched by powerful musical and artistic performances, and encouraged by the multitude of songs and prayers from all over the world, the conference affirmed its commitment to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ in life, word, and deed.

The conference was deeply moved by the hospitality and generosity shown by the Local Host Committee and the welcome extended by the All Africa Conference of Churches. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania, in close cooperation with churches of various denominational affiliations in the region, worked tirelessly with the practical arrangements throughout the week to make all the participants feel comfortable and at home. Not least was



the ambitious programme on the Sunday morning when all participants were offered rich opportunities to worship in local congregations in the region.

Besides the thematic plenaries and the ensuing collective reflections on the theme, evangelism, mission from the margins, missional formation, and embracing the cross, the conference was also greatly enriched by the warshas. These brought people together in small groups around specific issues and challenges through sharing of experiences of struggle and opportunities for change. Nearly 60 warshas were organized under the broad categories of migration, evangelism, life in all its fullness, diversity, and formation.

There were also three sessions of Sokoni (a Kiswahili term which means a marketplace for exchange) to share ideas, experiences, and skills – and to celebrate. These sessions were around the dreams and visions of young people, women, and the movements of the marginalized communities.

In an effort to enrich the ongoing reflections on mission from the margins, the conferences of Indigenous young people, people with disabilities, and women preceded the main conference. These groups have often been objects and victims of certain expressions of mission and evangelism. These gatherings provided a rich array of experiences and opportunities to imagine more authentic forms of mission and evangelism in an increasingly exclusionary world.

## **Inspired by Africa**

The conference drew inspiration from the African context in which it met. In the sequence of world mission conferences that began in Edinburgh in 1910, this was only the second to be held in Africa, 60 years after meeting at Achimota, Ghana, in 1958. Tanzania – with its religious plurality, pursuit of social justice, commitment to peace and unity, and ethic of hospitality – provided a congenial context in which to hold the conference. Besides being known for its natural beauty, Arusha has been distinguished as a centre within the continent for the resolution of disputes, administration of justice, advocacy of human rights, and promotion of economic development. It is also an area where church life has been shaped by the East African Revival and finds vibrant expression today. The conference was greatly enlivened by young people from local churches who memorably contributed to its worship and deliberations.

Exposure to African spirituality and storytelling was both challenging and refreshing for the conference. The thirst for God that is found at the core of African life reminded participants that faith is a matter of the heart, that

*orthodoxy* and *orthopraxis* need to be complemented by *orthokardia* (spirituality). While the joy of the gospel was abundantly evident, participants were also made aware of the struggles of African communities with forms of Christianity that were complicit in colonialism or culturally alienating. Hearing from participants from the African Instituted Churches and the Pentecostal churches allowed those attending the conference to appreciate these churches' contribution to reshaping African spirituality. The numerical growth of African Christianity is impressive by any reckoning, yet the churches remain challenged by the extent of the poverty, disease, and conflict that inflict suffering on many. More positively, Africans' deep awareness of the relational dimension of life and the importance of community helped the conference to recover life-giving biblical values.

## **Informed by *Together towards Life***

This was the first World Mission Conference to be held since the WCC's adoption of the new mission affirmation *Together towards Life* (TTL) in 2012. It was evident from the discussions at the conference that TTL has redrawn the landscape so far as mission and evangelism are concerned, and has provided a new conceptual framework for missiological thinking.

Leading themes of TTL carried forward strongly into the conference. The pneumatological turn taken by TTL in regard to the mission of God was reflected in the first part of the conference title: "Moving in the Spirit." TTL's call for "transformative spirituality" was echoed in the second part of the conference title: "Called to Transforming Discipleship."

Other distinctive notes of TTL that resonated in the conference included the new landscape of World Christianity, a Trinitarian understanding of mission, fullness of life as missiological criterion, the flourishing of creation, God's economy of life, mission from the margins, healing and wholeness, unity and community, humble yet affirmative evangelism, interfaith dialogue, and cultural sensitivity.

At the same time, by turning attention to discipleship, a theme that is little developed in TTL, the conference found a fresh focus for a vision of mission that draws deeply from TTL.

The conference was conscious that to be a disciple of Christ is a matter of faith, and that it is from the affirmation of our faith that we discern the path of discipleship in our time. Therefore, in the face of today's challenges, the conference affirmed that there is a faith we can and do hold.

## Challenged by Our Global Crisis

Taking account of our global situation, the conference recognized that we are living in times when our shared life is volatile, uncertain, fragile, and fragmented. In some ways, the issues that trouble us are not new, but there is a sense that matters are escalating and there is need for new urgency in addressing them.

The conference lamented the ascendancy of death-dealing forces: the nationalism and fundamentalism that foment hatred, the militarism that stokes conflict, the greed that concentrates resources in the hands of the few at the expense of the many, and a new type of colonialism associated with the despotic reach of the culture of money.

As the conference heard from CWME moderator Geervarghese Coorilos: “There are new incarnations of Caesar. There are new avatars of Herod. There are new emperors. This is a new imperial era where numerous ‘little empires’ are being created within the orbit of a ‘mega empire’ that is working in hegemonic ways.”

In Arusha, we heard about issues such as forced migration, disease and its effects on the population, ecological degradation, war and conflict, gender inequalities, exclusion and marginalization, appropriation of land, poverty and unemployment, and a reduction of social welfare and security. These issues are reflected and replicated in all regions of the globe, and they are escalating.

When we analyze the causes of these injustices, we see one economic system producing the gross accumulation of wealth for 1 percent of the world’s population. This 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, forcing them into conditions of vulnerability and exploitation. Continual exploitation of God’s creation to obtain and maintain this economic system is creating conditions of ecological degradation.

Today’s world – where so many face the ravages of climate change, fear of the other, uncontrolled conflicts, hatred and discrimination, violence and displacement, unrelenting poverty, and the merciless domination of market forces – is a world that cries out for transformation. There is a need for the kind of authentic discipleship that will offer, and live out, convincing answers to this cry.

Expressing hope that the conference would open new possibilities for the ecumenical community for a creative engagement with the world, Jooseop Keum, director of the CWME, said:

The missionary movement has both inspired and given birth to the modern ecumenical movement during the last century as the churches have sought to respond to the challenges of history and to be witnesses to the good news of Jesus Christ for the world through visible unity.... The world is broken. Therefore, it is imperative for the ecumenical movement to boldly witness the unity in the triune God and to live it out for the unity of humanity. The world is yearning for a Christian discipleship which reconciles the broken and troubled world. In order to do so, unity of the church and mission is not an optional agenda.

Jin S. Kim, pastor of All Nations Church in Minneapolis, USA, charted a pathway for those seeking to follow Christ in this contemporary context, calling for a collective Christian response that proposes alternatives to an unjust world:

Christians are to be called out of a sick society built on the evils of racism, sexism, militarism, exploitation, ecocide and destructive competition. We are to create a new community of love.... We will have to participate in the broader economic system, but we will not allow capitalist dogma to influence our internal economics. We will draw people from our immediate context of great brokenness, but our mission will include the casting out of imperial demons and the healing of bodies and souls so that we can relate rightly to our God, our neighbours (human and non-human), and God's good green earth.

## **Called to Deepen Our Discipleship**

Discipleship is not something that begins with ourselves: "You did not choose me but I chose you" (John 15:16). It begins with a call that comes from beyond ourselves, the call that comes from our Lord Jesus Christ: "Follow me" (Matt. 4:19). One of the best-known features of Jesus' ministry is that he called certain individuals to follow him, to be his disciples.

Therefore, discipleship is an invitation both to a relationship and to a vocation. A relationship that is humble, vulnerable, and mutual, and finds itself growing in following Christ, in Christ's own ways; in finding God at work in situations of strife and struggle; and in empowering people to resist and transform structures and cultures in the name of the triune God. It is, therefore, a vocation of collaborating with God for the transformation of the world.

The conference sought to hear this call afresh, to deepen our understanding of what it means in today's context, and to engage ourselves more wholeheartedly and more comprehensively in the life of discipleship. Instead of

being preoccupied with institutional conformity or with securing power and wealth for ourselves, we heard anew Christ's call to take the risky path of following him. We have been stirred both to deepen our inward spiritual life and to express our discipleship in outgoing engagement with the world around us.

The conference asserted that discipleship is a vocation of transformation. It has the missionary character in that it is led by the Spirit to find God at work in contexts of time and space that are in need of transformation. First, the very idea of discipleship needs to be transformed. Discipleship is often understood merely in the sense of being a church member or practising personal piety. The conference sought to go further by thinking of discipleship as a matter of being actively engaged in continuing Jesus' mission in the world. In Pope Francis' phrase, we are called to be "missionary disciples." This will involve us, in our local contexts, in stepping outside the walls of the church and living out our faith in the spaces of everyday life.

Second, we are called to be disciples who are constantly open to being transformed, individually and communally, in our following of Jesus. Discipleship commits us to embark on a spiritual journey and to adopt a way of life that reflects the Lord Jesus in our actions, words, and attitudes. As the Lausanne Movement's Cape Town Commitment stated in 2010: "We need intensive efforts to train all God's people in whole-life discipleship, which means to live, think, work, and speak from a biblical world view and with missional effectiveness in every place or circumstance of daily life and work." The conference was conscious that in many contexts, "discipleship" is not a term in everyday use, and therefore sought language that might help to explain what it involves. Being "Christ-connected" was a phrase that found resonance – living the whole of our lives in close connection with Jesus Christ. It is not shared ideals that unite us, but rather our connectedness to Christ, our living Saviour and Lord.

Third, we are called to be disciples who have a transforming effect, and as such we are privileged to join in the mission of the triune God, to move in the Spirit, to work together towards life, to live out the values of the kingdom of God, to engage in mission from the margins, and to humbly bear witness to Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord. True discipleship creates a movement of resistance and hope, countering the death-dealing forces of our time and discovering fullness of life.

Dhiloraj Ranjit Canagasabay, Anglican Bishop of Colombo, offered the conference a vision of the life of discipleship:

The discipleship which is cast on us at our baptism has both an internal and external dimension. Our inner, personal discipleship arises through our prayer life, our study

of and reflection on the scriptures, through the sacraments and worship and through our sharing with fellow believers. We are additionally strengthened through our discipleship within our families and in our worshipping communities. This results in our discipleship in the footsteps of Jesus, bearing witness to the values of his kingdom in our communities, wider society, and in our nation.

## Disciples Caring for Creation

To be worthy missionary disciples, we need to be open to the wonder and mystery of creation, transformed by its beauty and called to action by its suffering. God has given us the responsibility to care for the earth: its natural resources and our environment. We have much to learn from Indigenous people, who have demonstrated a greater level of respect for our Mother Earth, recognizing that pollution from the use of fossil fuels and other mineral extractions does not bring honour and is not beneficial to nature and the long-term survival of the inhabitants of the earth. If evangelism is to bring good news today, it needs to entail the *kenosis* that puts the long-term sustainability of the earth ahead of our own short-term comfort and convenience. As TTL states: “Humanity cannot be saved alone while the rest of the created world perishes. Eco-justice cannot be separated from salvation, and salvation cannot come without a new humility that respects the needs of all life on earth” (§23).

A significant gesture was made by participants in the Global Ecumenical Theological Institute (GETI), who made an important contribution to the conference. During their pre-conference programme, they planted 12 Mringinga trees on the campus of Tumaini University, Makumira – an activity dedicated to the 70th anniversary of the World Council of Churches. Another meaningful gesture was the reusable water bottles issued to conference participants, without which thousands of empty plastic bottles would have been left in Tanzania.

## Disciples at the Margins

“Mission from the margins” was a key affirmation that was constantly heard and asserted throughout the conference. It indicated a paradigm shift in missiological discourse. “Mission from the margins” implies affirming the agency of those who are marginalized, participating in their struggles and sharing their hopes, overcoming the marginalizing tendencies, and resisting and confronting the forces of marginalization and exclusion in our specific contexts

of the world. “Mission from the margins” can remain rhetoric if conscious attempts are not made to avoid patronizing the marginalized, imposing solutions from positions of privilege, power, and safety without entering into their life-worlds of suffering and struggle. Based on this premise, the idea of “transforming discipleship” inspired many creative articulations.

In an unjust and exclusionary world, the gospel of Christ continues to rise from the margins and challenge the mighty to lay down their power and make way for the coming of justice. The gospel of Christ breaks out from communities that are despised but that turn out to be the most important of all. To that extent, mission from the margins is not a mere option, but an essential way of collaborating with God in today’s world. As TTL explains, those at the margins testify to the sinfulness of the world. Confronting and transforming the forces that marginalize and exclude people is an important aspect of Christian discipleship.

Indigenous peoples continue to suffer discrimination and exploitation at the hands of the powerful, yet their wisdom may hold the key to the future. Despite advances in gender awareness worldwide, women continue to be treated unequally and to suffer painfully at the hands of male power. Minority groups in many contexts experience discrimination, their culture and their very humanity treated with scant respect.

Through a message from the women’s pre-conference event, the conference was made aware of how much remains to be done to achieve gender justice. In this regard, churches and mission agencies have often been culprits as they have omitted to recognize the huge contribution made by women in mission over many years.

The Indigenous youth held a pre-conference meeting that passionately called for the agency of marginalized people to be recognized. They also made the point that the oppression they experience has been highlighted many times before. Now it is time for the churches to act!

As the main speaker in the “Mission from the Margins” plenary, a young Indigenous woman asserted on behalf of all the Indigenous peoples:

I am Adi Mariana Waqa, I am poor, I am bound, I am unfavoured, I am oppressed!  
But I am a precious child made in the image of God. I have agency, I am worthy, I have a voice, and I am free! I am free because I live and walk in the Spirit! I am free and I joyfully bear God’s good news and hope as Christ’s disciple from the margins transforming the world. Thanks be to God!

## **Disciples Committed to Evangelism**

Christ's call to discipleship has been distorted when responsibility for Christian witness has been delegated to professionals; baptism is a call to discipleship, and we are all called to follow the way of Christ in every dimension of our lives.

Across the world church we are living through a rediscovery of the reality that the mandate for evangelism is not restricted to any select group but is given to all disciples of Jesus Christ. Evangelism is from everyone to everyone, extending to all the invitation to personal conversion to a new life in Christ.

When evangelism seeks conversion, it means change in the evangelist as well as the evangelized. It is not to be understood as manipulating someone else into my own likeness. Rather, together we are called toward new life in Christ, calling the whole creation to abundant life in inclusive community.

If we wish evangelism to be convincing today, the first thing we must do is to be disciples. Humility and sacrifice are urgently needed to liberate the gospel from captivity to projects of self-aggrandizement. The more we are true disciples of Christ, the more effective our evangelism will be.

## **Disciples Reaching across Religious Boundaries**

The conference was impressed by the mutual respect and ease of interaction between different religious communities that prevails in many parts of Africa (and beyond). With sharp challenges to face at personal, communal, and national levels, in many contexts Christians have been creative in finding ways to work together across religious boundaries.

It is time to disown the model of evangelism as conquest and instead promote partnership, dialogue, and collaboration with believers of other religious traditions. It is time to redraw the boundary lines of religious differences so that they become way markers to peace, not battle lines for violence. "Come, Holy Spirit, heal and reconcile" – the prayer of the Athens World Mission Conference in 2005 – is now more relevant than ever.

A comprehensive orientation to the mission of God calls for a welcoming and hospitable way of life that is affirmative and bridge building. People of other faiths are to be welcomed in the process of learning and formation. Interreligious encounters and the mutual learning they offer need to be a part of missional formation. Therefore, theological education and congregational learning processes need to be implemented in a manner that enables an integrated interreligious participation without compromising Christian identity.



## **Disciples Sensitive to the Trends of Secularization**

Secularization is not a rejection of faith or being religious; rather, it should be regarded as a characteristic of the context in which both Christians and others view certain expressions of religious beliefs and practice. This has implications for the way in which mission is pursued today. Mission in secularized contexts requires sustained dialogue between Christian beliefs (gospel values) and the common convictions about life and the world. It also implies finding life-affirming allies, partnering for the sake of the common pilgrimage for justice and peace. In doing so, we celebrate and share the joy of Christ's gospel in an invitational and respectful manner. Proclamation and discernment are interrelated and mutually dependent as a dual dimension of discipleship in such contexts.

On the other hand, in contexts where secular politics of public life are threatened by certain dominant religious beliefs and traditions that marginalize and violate the dignity and rights of religious minorities, transforming discipleship asserts freedom of religion or belief. It nurtures and supports ideological struggles that promote just and inclusive expressions of common life. It does not call for desecularization to become Christians. Rather, it seeks to identify the contours of salvation that have already been created by the Spirit, while also discerning life-denying forces and idols in every sphere of life.

## **Disciples Committing to Community**

In a world that prizes individuality, at a time when society is increasingly atomized, and in a context where people are polarized by identity politics, Christ calls his disciples to community. Following him means moving away from a self-centred life to find fulfilment in generous self-giving – the way of Christ. The journey is one that transforms and shapes the lives of others; a journey not to be made alone, but together. Discipleship is not only vertical but also horizontal in its scope and expression.

In individualized societies, the perception of what is important and what is true is being shaped increasingly by personal experience instead of a transfer of tradition, knowledge, and facts. Therefore, the church must find ways to let people experience the importance and meaning of being disciples together. Of great importance are baptism and eucharist, both reminding people that they are part of the movement of God's Spirit in this world. Elites, distances,

and divisions based on social constructs of power and privilege have no place in the community that God wants to create.

The Ecumenical Disability Advocates Network (EDAN) played an important role at the conference, bringing from its pre-conference meeting a deep concern for inclusion and an understanding that moving in the Spirit involves sensitivity to those who are not yet included. Overcoming cultures and practices of discrimination and exclusion that deny the dignity and rights of others was held forth as an important indicator of the work of the Spirit.

Too often, churches have been comfortable clubs for “people like us” and have been easily abused to assert the interests of one identity set against others. Today we urgently need churches that break down the dividing walls of hostility and practise radical hospitality, living out the reconciliation and unity promised by Christ and forged by the Spirit. Too often, churches have been inward looking and preoccupied with their own internal concerns. Today we urgently need churches that are mainly and foremost churches in mission – agents of the Spirit in the transformation of the world. All of this calls for formation, an intentional journey of becoming disciples together.

## **Disciples Modelling Leadership**

Alongside the need to denounce the greed for power, wealth, and privilege in the life of our churches, the conference also pointed out the ways in which leadership is understood and exercised in our communities, churches, and Christian organizations. Unfortunately, some in our leadership structures today seem more preoccupied with privilege and power that come with their positions rather than with their calling to responsible stewardship. The conference asserted, “We are called to be formed as servant leaders who demonstrate the way of Christ in a world that privileges power, wealth, and the culture of money.”

Too often, the church has been moulded by prevailing patterns of the surrounding world, its leaders seeking power and wealth for themselves rather than modelling the sacrificial service seen in Christ. Today we urgently need church leaders who are, first and foremost, disciples, walking in the Spirit, forming and guiding communities that take the way of Jesus. Youth delegates reminded the conference of the importance of discipleship being worked out in real-life contexts.

Transforming discipleship in the spirit of mission from the margins creates for us a possibility to reset the ways in which we exercise power, share leadership, and organize our partnerships in mission. As leaders, it is important for

us to grasp that we must disciple in the context of relationship. One reason Jesus had such a lasting impact on his disciples is that he lived his message before them daily. He was both message and method. By walking with Jesus, they saw how he lived his faith in the real world. He prayed before them. He fed the poor. He had compassion on the multitudes. He healed the sick. In other words, he lived the life he wanted to reproduce in his disciples.

This vision of discipleship is geared to the formation of leaders who are equipped not only intellectually, but particularly at the level of spiritual discernment and personal transformation. It fosters a radical openness to the Spirit of God that finds expression in leadership marked by mutuality, reciprocity, humility, and interdependence. It provokes a radical openness to others that is life-affirming and profound in its integrity. This openness and humility have clear implications: respect, rights, and dignity are not denied on the bases of the cultures of domination, discrimination, and exclusion.

In today's global context, there is a formation that presents a sharp challenge to Christian discipleship. The culture of money seeks to define and dominate every aspect of human activity and every creature of God's world. It forms possessor-consumers to be compliant constituents of an economically constructed world. This formation influences both thought and behaviour. Capturing individuals and communities, it aspires to draw a comprehensive map of our human and ecological future. The human soul and human community are stunted by the institutionalization and amplification of greed in an unrestrained market society. The integrity and well-being of creation are directly and dangerously threatened. We must engage in a determined attempt to present, for this generation, a faithful alternative to the spiritual formation offered by the culture of money. This calls not only for prophetic critique but for practical local action to build an alternative economy, one that is just and sustainable.

A spirituality of resilience is at the centre of the theological and missional formation for discipleship. It requires the formation of communities of Christians that are resilient in the face of injustice, that are humble and courageous in persistently challenging the unjust system.

As the conference heard from Mutale Mulenga-Kaunda in its opening plenary:

The kind of resistance needed in the struggle against the life-denying forces requires that the followers of Jesus Christ are filled with the life-giving Spirit of God that alone can equip people with the necessary resources for transformative discipleship.... Disciples are formed through a process of belonging, believing, becoming,

and participating in order to live out the mission of God as demonstrated through Christ's mission in the church.

## Disciples Taking Up the Cross

Discipleship is a costly vocation. It is a matter of being broken and poured out for others in the service of mission. Where our ministries have become self-seeking, consumerist, and prosperity oriented, we need to hear anew Christ's call to take up our cross and follow him (Luke 9:23). We have far too often presented Christian vocation in ways that avoided disturbing the status quo and interpreted it as good behaviour of humility, resilience, servanthood, sacrifice, gentleness, cordial interpersonal relationships, and so on. Furthermore, it is risky because it involves confronting, exposing, and resisting such hostile forces as the rise of populist politics, the revival of racism and xenophobia, corporate greed, inequality and injustice in the global economy, renewed danger of nuclear warfare, and threats to the integrity of the earth itself. Behind all of these forces are powerful vested interests that will not take kindly to being challenged. Transforming discipleship is not going to be cheap. It requires us to step out of our comfort zones.

The conference was reminded of the definition of missionary discipleship given by *Mission and Evangelism: An Ecumenical Affirmation* in 1982: "The self-emptying of the servant who lived among the people, sharing in their hopes and sufferings, giving his life on the cross for all humanity – this was Christ's way of proclaiming the good news, and as disciples we are summoned to follow the same way."

Today, empires are striking back in new forms, with their own dictatorial requirements of allegiance to mammon, market, consumerism, militarism, sexism, racism, fascism, and fundamentalism. Bearing the cross implies a willingness to confront the logic of the empire and to lay down our lives for the sake of Christ and the gospel. As Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote: "when Christ calls a man [or woman] he bids him [her] to come and die."

On its final day, the conference was reminded by His Holiness Mor Ignatius Aphrem II, Patriarch of Antioch and All the East and Supreme Head of the Universal Syrian Orthodox Church, that this martyr path is a reality for many disciples today:

Christians face rejection in their societies. Severe forms of rejection lead to persecution where hatred is expressed in the forms of violence and the desire to exterminate. Christians throughout the world are victims of persecution; large numbers of

Christian communities in all continents face persecution on a daily basis. It comes in different forms and varies greatly: it can be the lack of freedom of religious beliefs, or actively killing innocent children or families while they are peacefully praying or worshipping the Lord.

In our neighbourhoods and globally, there are examples of peaceful co-existence but also of interreligious intolerance, bigotry, violence, and persecution. God has given us the ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18). The last thematic plenary, entitled “Embracing the Cross,” drew attention to the role of the Christian churches as peace builders in the midst of persecution and violence. Bringing hope might imply relief efforts, involvement in advocacy and development work, and actively supporting various forms of interreligious encounters, particularly among younger generations. Moreover, the conference sought answers to the question of what is a faithful response when our neighbours of another religion become targets of hatred and violence? How are we called, as disciples of Christ, to embrace the cross for their sake?

As stated by a Lutheran theologian from the USA, Kathryn Mary Lohre:

There is a unique role ... for the churches to play. We are just beginning to understand that equipping disciples for mission and evangelism today must include not only religious literacy and interreligious competencies but also the courage and humility to embrace the cross for the sake of our neighbours of other religions and worldviews, and to defend them against discrimination, bigotry, racism, and violence, regardless of its source.

## **Moving in the Spirit as Pilgrims of Justice and Peace**

We are led by the Holy Spirit to become pilgrims, journeying together, guided by the vision of God’s reign of justice and peace. Through spiritual renewal in Christ, we are called and led to be agents of transformation. As we heard in the sermon preached by Collin Cowan at the Sending Service:

Jesus’ calling of his first disciples was set in the context of the forces of empire that tempted him with popularity and pleasure over the principles of obedience and faithfulness to God. Jesus, having resisted the temptations, presented himself to the community as one not easily sold to the scandal of seduction. His call “Come, follow me” is a statement of rejection of the status quo, and a declaration of an alternative. It is an invitation to defy the established order, divesting oneself of all that is

known and held dear, to participate in God's work of transformation.... being ready to go against the grain of culture, to confront power, challenge status quo and exemplify a lifestyle marked by courage to stand up for what is right and commitment to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God (Micah 6:8).

In its final plenary, after full discussion and debate, the conference adopted and issued the Arusha Call to Discipleship.

## The Next Agenda

Through its diverse inputs from all across the globe – in the plenary sessions, the table talks, the warshas, and the Sokonis – the conference offered an excellent opportunity to reflect on the meaning and implications of mission and evangelism today and to engage in these in ways that are relevant and credible. It clearly showed that the churches' engagements in mission are truly an ecumenical enterprise when calling the Christian communities to adequately address, respond, and act together.

In the light of what has been heard, said, and expressed during the conference, the Harvesting Committee suggests the following as issues calling for sustained attention from the CWME in the coming years:

Mission as transforming discipleship in light of the reception of the Arusha Call 2018.

Mission from the margins as a paradigm for our time.

Mission and evangelism in a multi-religious world.

The relationship of mission, evangelism, and development work.

The relationship of costly discipleship and Christian unity.

*"If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit."  
(Galatians 5:25)*



## **PART TWO**

### **Toward Arusha**



### **3. FROM ACHIMOTA 1958 TO ARUSHA 2018: A JOURNEY TO ARUSHA**

---

*Lesmore Gibson Ezekiel and Jooseop Keum*

The Ghana Assembly of the International Missionary Council (IMC) from 28 December 1957 to 8 January 1958, christened the World Mission Conference, Achimota 1958, took place for the first time on African soil. The assembly was critical to the life of both the missionary and the ecumenical movements. Africa, even though it hosted such an important event in Christian witness, may be said to have played a rather minor role, notwithstanding the presence of some Africans at the conference.

The conference began shortly after Christmas in 1957 and extended into the new year of 1958. It was an amazing commitment that many missionaries, even until Bangkok 1972/73, used to gather together by the end of the year to reflect on the work that had been done throughout the year, and continued to meet that first week to plan the new year's work. The same was true for Achimota 1957/58. All the participants missed out on New Year's celebrations with their loved ones to take part in the conference.

#### **Brief Historical Background of the World Mission Conference**

The IMC was a pioneer ecumenical Christian body that fostered cooperation in missionary work between denominations for half of the 20th century. As the Protestant missionary enterprise expanded globally in the 19th century, division among different denominations caused many problems. Early missionaries tried to avoid competition in the so-called mission fields by agreeing to stay out of one another's territory, referred to in some traditions as "canonical jurisdiction," but as the work expanded, such agreements became woefully inadequate. Attempts were made to find a more comprehensive organizational and theological solution that would affirm the church as the one body of Christ and respond faithfully to the Great Commission to go into the entire world and preach the good news of the gospel of salvation, especially to those classified as "unreached."

Through the groundwork laid by leaders trained through the Student Volunteer Movement, the first World Missionary Conference was held in Edinburgh in 1910. The conference had 1,200 participants and was widely recognized as the beginning of the modern international ecumenical movement. The conference established a continuation committee, which inaugurated the quarterly journal *International Review of Mission(s)*. The experiences of World War I convinced the committee that a more permanent structure was needed to facilitate dialogue and cooperative action, and in 1921 the IMC was formed. The new IMC agreed not to speak on divisive doctrinal and ecclesial issues, but to focus instead on uniting Christians in a search for cooperation in world mission and justice action in international and interracial relationships. This latter goal spoke directly to European and North American domination of the missionary enterprise, and to missionary compromises and complicities with colonial powers and racist attitudes, which had brought discredit to the church. One early study commissioned by the IMC and written by J. H. Oldham (1874–1969) was published in 1924 as *Christianity and the Race Problem*.

The second World Mission Conference (an enlarged meeting of the IMC) was held in 1928 in Jerusalem. It focused on mission and the kingdom of God, and the relationship of Christianity to competing world views, both religious and secular.

It was followed ten years later by the third World Mission Conference in Madras, Tambaram, India, in 1938, which focused on the church as agent of mission and affirmed the close relationship between world peace and world evangelism. The issue of interfaith dialogues strongly emerged in Tambaram. World War II devastated the missionary enterprise, but it also made Christian leaders aware of the inherent strength of the African and Asian churches.

The fourth conference took place in Whitby, Canada, in 1947. It reflected on the fundamental changes in the world after the shocks caused by the Second World War. “Partnership in Obedience” was the theme.

The fifth conference was held in Willingen, Germany, in 1952. During the meeting, a strong emphasis on the centrality of the church in mission was refocused by the broad-based perspective that allows for the interpretation of existential events in the world to determine mission engagements. Mission was reinterpreted as the mission of God (*missio Dei*) rather than an activity of the church.<sup>1</sup>

The sixth conference brought delegates and other categories of participants to Achimota, Accra, Ghana, in 1957/58. The conference reflected and

---

1. W. R. Hogg, *Ecumenical Foundations: A History of the International Missionary Council and Its Nineteenth-Century Background* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1952).

deliberated extensively on the possibility of streamlining ecumenical mission engagements. When the World Council of Churches (WCC) was formed in 1948, the IMC was formally “in association.” Soon the question was raised as to whether the two global bodies should be integrated. There was a strong theological argument that church and mission belong together. Finally, the Ghana IMC assembly agreed to the integration of the two councils.

In a momentous way, the seventh conference (the last enlarged meeting of the IMC), which took place in New Delhi, India, in 1961, just before the third assembly of the WCC, was the consummation of the “integration” of church and mission in the practice of the IMC with the WCC, which became effective at the conference. By that singular event, the mission councils affiliated with the IMC became automatic affiliates of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME). From that day forward, the world mission conferences would be ecumenical in nature and outlook because of the wider denominational participation, including Orthodox churches and Roman Catholics as observers.<sup>2</sup>

The eighth World Mission Conference, the first WCC Conference on World Mission and Evangelism, was hosted in Mexico City in 1963. The conference theme was “Mission in Six Continents.” The perspective of mission was enlarged as a multi-directional movement “from everywhere to everywhere,” no longer a one-directional movement from West to East or North to South.

The ninth World Mission Conference took place in Bangkok, Thailand, in 1972/73. This conference became famous for its holistic approach to the notion “Salvation Today,” which was its theme. The theme was explored within the encompassing spiritual and socio-political aspects in equal measure as imperatives to Christian mission. “Contextualization” from Asia and a plea for “missionary moratorium” from Africa were creative and strong challenges to the CWME, which was still operating to some extent based on a Western paradigm of mission thinking.

The tenth conference took place in Melbourne, Australia, in 1980. The theme “Your Kingdom Come” was broadly reflected upon during the conference. What became central during the conference was the insistence on the particular role of the poor and churches of the poor in God’s mission.<sup>3</sup>

The 11th World Mission Conference took place in San Antonio, Texas, USA, in 1989. In view of the global situation of economic and ideological

---

2. <http://archived.oikoumene.org/en/who-are-we/organization-structure/consultative-bodies/world-mission-and-evangelism/history.html>

3. Ruth Rouse and Stephen Neill (eds), *A History of the Ecumenical Movement, 1517–1948* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1986).

conflicts, the conference theme was from the Lord's Prayer – "Your Will Be Done," with the subtitle "Mission in Christ's Way."

The 12th World Mission Conference, in Salvador da Bahia, Brazil, in 1996, was the fifth CWME-organized event. The conference was dedicated to exploring the relations between the gospel and cultures.<sup>4</sup>

In May 2005, the 13th World Mission Conference was held in a predominantly Orthodox country – Greece – for the first time, with a focus on pneumatological understanding of mission, and mission as "healing and reconciliation."

The approach of the centenary of Edinburgh 1910 prompted an attempt in Scotland to take account of Christian mission a century after the epoch-making conference. Edinburgh 2010 brought together the widest spectrum of World Christianity ever to engage in a shared global mission study. It was a moment of celebration, unity, and convergence of the missionary movement beyond a WCC conference on mission and evangelism.<sup>5</sup>

The most recent WCC Conference on World Mission and Evangelism took place again on African soil, in Arusha, Tanzania, on 8-13 March 2018, on the theme "Moving in the Spirit: Called to Transforming Discipleship."

## Milestone Achievement of the Achimota Conference

History has it that the overarching objective of the Achimota Conference in 1958 was to proceed to the integration of the IMC and the WCC. The majority approved, yet the Orthodox equated mission with proselytism. Latin American churches were uneasy about the WCC; the Norwegian Missionary Council feared that mission would be submerged in the WCC. Nevertheless, at the New Delhi Assembly in 1961, the IMC became the WCC's Commission on World Mission and Evangelism. The structural rebirth of the IMC as the CWME has had a profound theological significance. It demonstrates that world mission and mission to the world help constitute the essential life of the ecumenical community. Impressed by the decision to integrate the IMC into the programmatic framework of the WCC, W. A. Visser 't Hooft, the pioneer general secretary of the WCC, emphasized the necessary connection between the unity of Christians and world evangelization. Integration will

---

4. Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralistic Society* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1989).

5. See also Kenneth R. Ross, Jooseop Keum, Kyriaki Avtzi, and Roderick R. Hewitt, *Ecumenical Missiology: Changing Landscapes and New Conceptions of Mission* (Oxford: Regnum; and Geneva: WCC Publications, 2016), 6–146.

oblige the church in every land to rethink the missionary and apostolic nature of the church.<sup>6</sup>

What remains pivotal about the Achimota conference was the decision to merge the IMC into the life and witness of the WCC. Mission entered into the church, transforming it as a missional church, awakening the church to the fact that its nature is missionary, and seeking the unity of the church for the sake of mission. This was a significant development of the ecumenical movement and theology. It has also reduced the fragmentation and proliferation of church-based or Christian-based agencies in mission and ecumenical enterprises. Africa, in providing the socio-religious location for such a historic event, remains commended. Indeed, in the global South, particularly in Africa, there is no division between the church and mission, mission and development, evangelism and justice, unity and mission, or even ecumenism and evangelicalism. All are imperatives: all are to be happening together in one melting pot of the gospel. Africa has motivated this epistemological conversion in Achimota, an authentic unity as one family of God beyond a narrow concept of ecumenism as church unity.

Achimota conveyed an inescapable signal that Africa was and is critical in mission and ecumenical vocations. Achimota 1958 came soon after Ghana's attainment of independence. During that period, most African countries were negotiating their independence from the colonial imperial regime. That may have accounted for the ripeness of Africa to host the historic missionary event. In any case, locating the event on the soil of motherland Africa justified the religiousness of Africa despite the colonial regimes and intentional restrictions. Interestingly, within this same period, most foreign-mission planted churches in Africa were transferring leadership to so-called converted and trained Africans.<sup>7</sup>

## Africa Then

Africa was and is still a religious continent, despite the stereotypes and prejudices against it and its peoples. Africa's diverse cultures and traditions are profoundly religious, as all people recognize the existence of a supreme being, "a deity," who is revered – especially within the Sub-Saharan bloc of the continent – as being responsible for their fortune or misfortune. Africa, however, in the perceptions and activities of mission agencies and missionaries, was regarded as a mission field. This is not surprising, given that the continent was

---

6. WCC Report of New Delhi Assembly, WCC Archives, 2017.

7. IMC Conference Report, WCC Archives, 2017.

classified as an “unreached region” right after the Edinburgh 1910 missionary conference. This may account for the passive participation at the 1958 conference, even though it was hosted in Africa. Most of the churches in Africa were represented at the conference by foreign missionaries.<sup>8</sup>

Africa’s status as a mission field was evident in the composition of the IMC committee preceding the Achimota 1957/58 conference. Africa was viewed as a recipient or beneficiary of the foreign missionary enterprise. It may safely be assumed that Africa’s involvement in decision-making organs of international organizations like the IMC was the least required, as Africa was a presupposed “beneficiary” of decisions to be made. The use of “colonialism” was cautiously avoided during the conference for obvious reasons.<sup>9</sup> That may not be unconnected with colonial imperial powers that were in control of the continent. Unfortunately, some invitees from Southern Africa were not allowed to travel to Ghana for the event simply because they were considered a threat to the imperial regimes.

African delegates at the 1957/58 conference:

Rev. V. P. Thompson – Congo

Rev. Jean Lubikilu – Congo

Dr A. W. Blaxall – South Africa

Rev. Z. R. Mahabane – South Africa

Rev. Dr S. M. Renner – Sierra Leone

Mr Brewer – Liberia<sup>10</sup>

African consultants at the conference:

Dr. A. B. Xuma – South Africa

Rev. Seth Mokitimi – South Africa

Rev. Simon A. Mbatha – Zululand, South Africa

Dr David N. Howell – Liberia

Mr. Robert Gardiner – Ghana

The Rev. Din Dayal – Kenya

Dr K. A. Busia – Ghana

The Rev. Josue Danho – Congo<sup>11</sup>

---

8. Ibid.

9. Arthur P. Johnson, *A Study of the Theology of Evangelism in the International Missionary Commission 1921–1961* (1961).

10. IMC Conference Report, WCC Archives, 2017.

11. Ibid.

African observers at the conference:

Dr David Gelzer – French Cameroon

Rev. Georges Mabille – French West Africa (Senegal)

Rev. Ronald Dain – Kenya

Rev. T. Rasendrahasina – Madagascar

Sir Francis Ibiam – Nigeria

Rev. Merfyn Temple – North Rhodesia

Rev. Daniel Lungwa – Tangayika

Rev. Fred Rea – South Rhodesia

Rev. Patrick Mzembe – Nyasaland (Now Malawi)<sup>12</sup>

Church institutions within Africa that were invited to the conference:

Conseil Protestant du Congo

Ghana Christian Council

Northern Rhodesia Christian Council Kitwe (now Zambia)

United Christian Council Sierra Leone

Christian Council of South Africa

Alianca Evangelica de Angola

Inter-Mission Council Ethiopia

Fédération des Missions Protestantes, French West Africa (now Senegal)

Kenya Christian Council

Inter-Missionary Committee Madagascar

Mozambique Christian Council

Nigeria Christian Council

Nyasaland Christian Council (now Malawi)

South Rhodesia Christian Conference (now Zimbabwe)

Tanganyika Christian Council (now Tanzania)<sup>13</sup>

---

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid.

The names of the organizations clearly indicate how they were formed and administered to fit into the imperial regime of the time. All the organizations took new names after the independence of the various nation-states.

The vibrancy of the African church was evident during the open-air public worship at the stadium to herald the commencement of the last conference to be organized by the IMC. The stadium was filled to capacity.

The first prime minister/president of Ghana, Dr Kwame Nkrumah, graced the evening garden party for all the participants, held at Ghana University College, Legon. President Nkrumah mentioned in his speech at the party that Africa was a continent richly endowed with all that is required to transform it, including religion. He then formally welcomed all delegates and other participants to Ghana and wished them fruitful deliberations.<sup>14</sup>

## Africa Today

As many scholars and demographers have affirmed, Africa is a hub of religious activities with burgeoning growth. Christianity, especially, has continued to experience monumental expansion in both quantity and quality. Current global Christian demographic data indicates that Christians make up about 2.3 billion of the global population.<sup>15</sup> Africa contributes over 500 million Christians to the global Christian population.<sup>16</sup> Africa, Asia, and Latin America have been described as the current centre of gravity of Christian expression.<sup>17</sup> This exponential growth in Christian presence in Africa makes it obviously critical that Africa not be ignored in any discourse about Christianity and its impact on the global stage. Africa today can humbly say that it is a continent where Christianity is firmly rooted.

It is evident that homegrown Christian churches, especially those of Pentecostal orientation, are spreading fast and commissioning “missionaries” or pastors to different parts of the world. Pentecostal churches in Africa have branches in well over 90 countries. The mainstream churches in Africa are

---

14. Ibid.

15. Conrad Hackett and David McClendon, “Christians Remain the World’s Largest Religious Group, But They Are Declining in Europe,” Pew Research Center website, 5 April 2017, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/04/05/christians-remain-worlds-largest-religious-group-but-they-are-declining-in-europe>.

16. It is estimated that in 2015 there were 565 million Christians in Sub-Saharan Africa. See Kenneth R. Ross, Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, and Todd M. Johnson, eds, *Christianity in Sub-Saharan Africa* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), 4.

17. “The Explosion of Christianity in Africa,” Christianity.com website, <https://www.christianity.com/church/church-history/timeline/2001-now/the-explosion-of-christianity-in-africa-11630859.html>.



not also left in what may be considered “reverse mission.” The use of reverse mission may sound problematic, but church groups in the global South firmly hold to the notion that the global North, which used to hold sway in Christian presence, has gradually declined and needs to be re-evangelized. Afe Adogame offers a salient view of how reverse mission is conceived: “The rationale for reverse mission is often anchored on claims to divine commission to spread the gospel; the perceived secularization of the West; the abysmal fall in church attendance and dwindling membership; desecration of church buildings; liberalization; and on issues of moral decadence.”<sup>18</sup> Reverse mission is, rather, “mission from and to the margins” as the experiences of Christian witness in Africa and beyond. It is about conveying and spreading again and again the good news of the gospel to all the corners of the earth without imputing guilt and delegitimizing others.

The African indigenous churches, commonly referred to as African Instituted Churches (AICs), have also not been left out when it comes to contributing to the vibrancy of Christian expression in the continent and beyond. Their uniqueness is noticeable in their way of worship and their intense intercessory engagement. Their spread is beyond the boundaries of Africa: they have a presence in different parts of the world. They have succeeded in Christianizing African musical instruments and rhythms. The AICs also organized themselves into a vibrant continental ecumenical group. Their contributions to ecumenical fraternity cannot be ignored.

Ecumenically, African Christians have continued to contribute in tremendous ways to ecumenical conviviality globally. Africans have served and continued to serve in different capacities within the global ecumenical movement. African theologians and scholars have continued to contribute in impressive proportion to theological scholarship globally. Unlike what happened before and during the Achimota 1957/58 conference, Africans have been deeply involved in the planning and implementation of the 2018 WCC Conference on World Mission and Evangelism. By virtue of the compelling presence of Christianity on African soil and the contribution of Africa to World Christianity, there is no doubt that Africa plays a critical role in global mission and evangelism. As is abundantly evident, Africa will continue to play pivotal roles in World Christianity, particularly in all global ecumenical and confessional communions, through furthering the missional agenda of life, justice, and peace. Africans in diaspora are among the gifts of Africa to the world.

---

18. Afe Adogame, *The African Christian Diaspora: New Currents and Emerging Trends in World Christianity* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 169.

## Africa after Arusha

The theme of the Arusha 2018 Conference, “Moving in the Spirit: Called to Transforming Discipleship,” evokes the consciousness that African Christians are *called*, set apart, and commissioned to engage in discipleship that is empowering, transforming, and healing. Africa as a continent is confronted by forces that seek to snuff out life from humanity and the environment. Despite hostile global forces, Africa is not a continent of despair but of great hope and resilience. Forces such as politically motivated violence, refugee crises, irregular migration, exploitive capitalism, human rights abuses, human trafficking and the modern-day slave trade, massive economic disparity, poverty, racism, gender-based violence, xenophobia, violent extremism, muted apartheid, ecological catastrophe, food insecurity, disease, consumerism, dictatorial regimes, deplorable infrastructures, senseless fundamentalism, commercialization of the gospel, tokenism by so-called world powers, and negative ethnicity are not insurmountable. As people of faith planted on the soil of Africa, African Christians can avail themselves of the movement of the Spirit to confront these forces for a better Africa.

The theme of the Arusha Conference reminds us of our dependence on the Spirit of God to lead us in the vocation of transforming discipleship. Africa is no longer classified as a mission field but as a continent with enormous potential to impact World Christianity in profound ways. African churches and their leaders will no longer sit back and watch God’s gifts being plundered, abused, molested, and excluded. With Africa having hosted the 2018 World Mission Conference, Africa and its churches will be vigorous in life-giving mission and evangelism. The signs of hope are conspicuous around the continent. Christians in most countries are collaborating with people of other religious faiths – especially Muslims, because of their influencing presence in the continent – to engage in religious diplomacy and justice advocacy for different just causes. The institutional churches and ecumenical networks on the African continent are involved in empowerment initiatives, peace building, conflict prevention and transformation, gender participation, environmental conservation and preservation, food security initiatives, humanitarian and emergency responses, child protection, good governance campaigning, provision of quality education and comprehensive health care, and many other forms of *diakonia* and social ministry.

Having been recommissioned at the end of the Arusha World Mission Conference and moving in the Spirit, the church in Africa must renew and intensify its holistic ministry in mission and evangelism in ways that nourish life and resist life-denying forces. Continuing missional and theological

formation should be prioritized, repackaged, and decentralized for broad access. Creative approaches and digital platforms should be employed in equipping lay people for mission engagements. As a church of transformed disciples of Jesus Christ in Africa, the continent should feel the impact of transformed disciples in all spheres of human endeavours. Being transformed disciples is to be agents of transformation through the power of the Spirit of God in a world constantly challenged by life-destroying demons of the empires.

## 4. ARUSHA: A CONFLUENCE FOR TRANSFORMATIONAL AGENDA AND DISCIPLESHIP IN AFRICA

---

*Faustin Leonard Mahali*

### Why Arusha?

The choice of Arusha for the Conference of World Mission and Evangelism remains critically important in trying to understand the place of Arusha in many regional initiatives for human wellbeing.<sup>1</sup> In 1967, Tanzania declared its socialist ideology in Arusha for building the nation that would respect the human dignity and wellbeing of every person and group. This was branded by the late Mwalimu Julius Kambarage Nyerere as “African socialism.”<sup>2</sup> The Arusha Declaration became a tool to realize this African way of life.<sup>3</sup> This ideology was from the beginning viewed and reviewed critically, especially when it legitimized the nationalization of economic production and distribution. However, as in the words of the Rev. Joseph Sipendi, African socialism propagated by the Arusha Declaration sought to address the imbalance of ownership of property that could lead a few people to dominate others. It was not meant to deny people the right to own property.<sup>4</sup> The misinterpretation of this valuable ideology in the past, especially through Marxist theories,<sup>5</sup> has never denied its robust transformational power with regard to human dignity, equality, and freedom.

---

1. Arusha is representative of many cities in Africa where spirituality and Christianity grow amidst forces of globalization and secularization. See Kristine Greenaway, “WCC Approves 2018 World Mission Conference in Tanzania,” WCC website, 29 June 2016, <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/press-centre/news/wcc-approves-2018-world-mission-conference-in-tanzania>.

2. Julius K. Nyerere, “Ujamaa: The Basis of African Socialism,” in *Ujamaa: Essays on Socialism* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), 1–12.

3. Nyerere, “Arusha Declaration,” in *Ujamaa*, 13–37.

4. Joseph Sipendi, “Christian Concepts of Socialism and the Arusha Declaration,” in *The Arusha Declaration and Christian Socialism* (Dar es Salaam: Tanzania Publishing House, 1969), 29–34.

5. Nyerere himself vehemently opposes exploitative capitalism at the same time that he is suspicious of what he calls “European Socialism,” which he defines as “a violent version of socialism” born out of capitalism. See Nyerere, “Basis of African Socialism,” in *Ujamaa*, 11.

Through this strong foundation of humane struggles for human freedom and unity, Arusha became a place where the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda was established. The court aims to bring justice to the people of Rwanda who were affected by the genocide and the high number of human rights violations committed in 1994.<sup>6</sup> It is because of this and many other establishments that Arusha is sometimes dubbed the Geneva or The Hague of Africa. Today Arusha continues to be the headquarters of the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights.<sup>7</sup> Not long ago, Arusha played host to the Lutheran World Federation council meeting, with a focus on the topic of "Melting Snow on Mount Kilimanjaro: A Witness of a Suffering Creation."<sup>8</sup> Arusha, therefore, being the centrifugal force of the Lutheran community in Eastern and Central Africa, deserves this status as a confluence for life that has had roots in Africa since the creation of this world.<sup>9</sup> The choice of Arusha for the Conference on World Mission and Evangelism provided a context that stimulated participants to reflect on holistic integration of humanity into God's mission.

For the vision of the 2018 conference to be sustained and realized in Africa and the world at large, it has to deal with the past as a reflection of the present booming of churches and ministries in different parts of the continent and elsewhere. Why is Christianity, which in some ways was used by Western imperialists to colonize Africa, still finding its roots here? What have missionary churches in Africa missed when it comes to capturing the potential of African spirituality to multiply their numbers in addition to the experienced growth today? Why is it that Pentecostal and Charismatic movements are harvesting from such potential? What could be the driving force in winning disciples to churches in a context in which a majority of Africans live in superstition and hopelessness despite the continent's economic potential, its rich social value system, and its natural and human resources? These questions were key in addressing the role of Africa as "a confluence for transformational agenda and discipleship" reflected in Arusha 2018.

---

6. "International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda," US Department of State, <https://www.state.gov/j/gcj/ictr>.

7. "African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights," <http://www.african-court.org/en>.

8. "Former Tanzania Premier to Address LWF Council in Arusha, Tanzania," ELCT press release, 19 June 2008, <http://www.elct.org/news/2008.06.001.html>.

9. Remember also that Arusha is a region where in Oldvai Gorge is found the credo of humanity; see Ngorongoro Conservation Area Authority, <http://www.ngorongorocrater.org/oldupai.html>.

## Christianity in an African Context

The heart of the transformative power of the missionary agenda in Arusha has been in its paradigmatic shift from “mission” to “discipleship.” This shift is responsive to its history and hermeneutics of missionary work in Africa. This sensitivity had already taken place in the redefining of the Great Commission as a command by Jesus to engage Christians in liberating the oppressed and living in solidarity with the poor.<sup>10</sup> The meaning of mission was transformed by shedding the features of conquering and dominating people, retaining the sense of making disciples as God’s pure initiative to liberate and transform humankind and the entire creation. Discipleship as introduced for the 2018 conference carries heavier weight in making participants in mission equally important. It is the interaction of disciple-makers and the made-disciples that needs to be in balance if Africa is to sustain its potential as a ground of discipleship.

God has been active in Africa since time immemorial. These are paraphrased words of Africans who affirm that humanity in Africa is historical and theological (and therefore not pagan) and is part of God’s redemptive and saving act revealed in and through humanity.<sup>11</sup> This makes it easier to interpret God’s incarnational purpose in the historical and resurrected Jesus Christ. God who is revealed in a particular (Palestinian–Jewish) cultural context through Jesus Christ is equally revealed in the African context. Such a revelation does not uplift one culture over another, but serves the purpose of God’s continuity of pouring blessings on the whole of creation as manifested, especially, in biblical traditions. Africans need not be apologetic or polemical when making themselves disciples of Christianity, since Christianity is not ethnocentric, but accommodates all humanity and cultures. Christianity has survived and continues to grow in Africa due to its powerful message that resonates with much of African needs of redemption and salvation.<sup>12</sup> Africans

10. David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1991), 81.

11. See John Parratt, *Reinventing Christianity: African Theology Today* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1995), 105–36. In these pages Parratt agrees to the appeal by F. Eboussi Boulaga (105–122) and Benézét Bujo (122–136) that for Christianity to become relevant in Africa, it should appeal to its real needs of liberation. See also Peter Kanyandogo, “Rethinking African Ecclesiology Challenges from People’s Rights and Participation,” in P. Kanyandogo et al., eds, *Inculturating the Church in Africa: Theological and Practical Perspectives* (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2001), 104–105.

12. F. Eboussi Boulaga states, “The human being retains the ultimate, redemptive capacity to suffer and die in the refusal to accept this shipwreck of meaning by hoping against all hope that life will be the stronger, that life will bestow what it promises, and that God will ratify his truth by restoring life to the dead, in manner unimaginable.” *Christianity without Fetishes: An African Critique and Recapture of Christianity* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1984).

believe that the fullness of life given by God will be perpetuated by the entire community and transcend this fullness of life into continuity of the community in the future.<sup>13</sup>

In line with the basic principle that Africans are also created in the image of God, they henceforth recognize and maintain these relationships through ancestral worship. The issue is not how one defines worship or veneration at the expense of such a noble spirituality. It is obvious that the struggle over definitions of whether this is worship or veneration is not a problem of terminology, but a misconception of African spirituality itself. African spirituality has as its centre ancestral worship. Ancestors, who are living dead, men and women, are not gods, but mediators of the forces of life provided by God the Creator.<sup>14</sup> Such spirituality linked to ancestral worship provides an interpretation of life experiences in the physical and transcendental worlds. Denying the reality of ancestral worship means succumbing to creating African Christianity without roots and identity.

African Christianity should focus on the microcosm of the African way of thinking about life that is centred in the responsibility of providing service to the community as a security to oneself. Sin in the African context is therefore understood in terms of the systematic irresponsibility of a human being to fellow (other) human beings and to nature.<sup>15</sup> It follows then that the values expressed by African politicians and philosophers on African thoughts and experiences of life are mutually linked to African spirituality. The radical turn to social values that respect human equity and dignity as propounded by Nyerere in what he calls “*ujamaa*” (which can be translated as African socialism) in the Arusha Declaration reflects the general agreement by African philosophers and theologians that for any ideology or theology to put down deep roots in Africa, it must live in and integrate this God-given context.

In this case, the meeting between the need for a redeemed and prosperous Africa and the promise of eschatological salvation will definitely catch and convert the hearts of many Africans who live in destitute circumstances. Moreover, such a confluence keeps Christianity from being manipulated for mundane purposes, but rather serves the purpose of God, who wants human beings to become disciples of his saving act in Jesus Christ (see Matt. 16:24-28).

---

13. See Benézét Bujo, *African Theology in Its Social Context* (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1992), 30.

14. Faustin Mahali, *The Concept of Poverty in Luke from a Perspective of a Wanji of Tanzania* (Neuendettelsau: Erlanger Verlag [Makumira Publication Fourteen], 2006), 161.

15. See Bujo, *African Theology*, 31.

## Discipleship as a Paradigmatic Reinterpretation of *Missio Dei* in Africa and Beyond

According to Webster's Dictionary, a disciple is "one who accepts and assists in spreading the doctrines of another." This definition of a disciple disowns the disciples of the teachings and deeds they are likely to spread. These do not belong to the disciple. The genre of such a definition is not far from the Great Commission, which has been criticized today as focused only on commanding people "to go and make disciples" (Matt. 28:16-20). When Ugandan Bishop David Zac Niringiye was interviewed by Andy Crouch in 2006, he interpreted "go and make disciples" as "go-and-fix-it-people."<sup>16</sup> He suggests what he calls "the passage of Great Invitation by Jesus who says 'Come, follow me. I will make you fishers of men.'"<sup>17</sup> In his argument, it is not the missionaries (with their cultural affinities) who are at the centre, but rather Jesus who empowers the followers to do mission.<sup>18</sup> Thus, discipleship can be redefined as the whole process of becoming a follower of Jesus, his teaching, and deeds of redemption and salvation. In being filled with the power of the Holy Spirit, the follower attains the ability to spread this powerful message of life to others.

Putting the disciple at the centre of God's mission means rethinking how Christianity treats people and their respective cultures. This is not a new phenomenon. Biblical discipleship orients us well into this paradigm. Jesus' calling of disciples appears naturally in the normal life experienced by people (Matt. 4:18-22; 8:18-22; see also Mark 2:13-14; 3:13-19). Furthermore, Jesus' training of disciples is not only doctrinal but interactive and pragmatic (Matt. 13:10-11; Luke 9:18-27). Upon their call, disciples lived and accompanied Jesus in his entire ministry until his crucifixion. God's purpose of salvation incarnate in Jesus was inculcated and experienced by each disciple.

The early church struggled to live the example of Jesus Christ. People accepted and followed Jesus because of his fascinating and powerful teaching (Matt. 5:2-7:27) and admired his miraculous healing and restoration of human dignity.<sup>19</sup> Jesus' good news reached and radically transformed wealthy

16. "Experiencing Life at the Margins," Interview of the Rev. Dr David Zac Niringiye by Andy Crouch, Christianity Today website, 1 July 2006, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2006/july/31.32.html?start=2>.

17. Ibid.

18. See Faustin Mahali, "A Biblical Perspective on Mission Amidst Unsustainable Livelihoods in Africa," in *Mission Continues: Global Impulses for the 21st Century* (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 2010), 31.

19. All synoptic gospels narrate Jesus' healing ministries that are associated with empowering of discipleship among the healed and the witnessing audience.



and powerful people in the cities of the Roman Empire. Luke and Acts bring a radical ethos to wealthy people and to those in power in dealing with the social mess (Luke 4:18-19; see also Luke 6:20-25). The gospels do not justify poverty, but empower both rich and poor to deal with it. Salvation brought by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ as a manifestation of God's love to the world penetrates and interacts with different cultures. In so doing, it wins the hearts of many who become followers of the teaching and works of the gospel.

The invitation to discipleship demands that the inviter acknowledge the identity and dignity of the invitee (Acts 16:17-32). When we deliberate the agenda of discipleship, we need to listen to the voices that cry for the restoration of the core values of Christianity. Africa sets the example of people who fear God, as they know and affirm God's mighty power in creation. The sign of this is the transformation of these beliefs into the powerful message of Christ manifested in his teaching and healing ministries performed everywhere in Africa. A healthy individual needs a healthy community that experiences forgiveness of sins and an assured relationship with the divinity.

God wants us to live in communion and help each other. The Arusha Declaration hypothetically struggled to recapture lost human values and revive responsible communal life.<sup>20</sup> Disciples of God's merciful acts of salvation are supposed to reclaim their human dignity, the divine qualities resulting from being created in the image of God. God is the Creator and Helper.<sup>21</sup> He created man and woman to be partners and to help each other. Even the gender disparity between men and women created by human culture is self-defeated by the fact that we all are equally created in the image of God. In fact, other biblical texts refer to God as our partner, and this partnership has been manifested in the incarnate Jesus Christ, who is God with us and with the whole creation. A disciple therefore is in partnership with God and is a person who should accept the invitation and live the demands of the gospel.

The focus on discipleship and its process call also for a renewed care of creation. Environmental degradation through industries, modernized agriculture, and wars has led to global warming and climate change. Development has not benefited the majority of the world's inhabitants. People are displaced as a result of labour migration or effects of civil, national, and international

---

20. Nyerere, "The Purpose is Man," in *Ujamaa*, 92-93.

21. The term used for God as a helper is the same as the one used for a woman created to be a helper and partner of man. Ironically, if a man (male) looks at a woman (female) as a subordinate because of the creation story in Genesis 2:18 (see Ps. 10:14; 30:10; 54:4; 72:12; Is. 31:2), God then becomes equally subordinate to man (male) as applies to a woman. Thus, it should be clear that man and woman are both created in the image of God and are partners with equal status before God and before themselves.

wars, or have been robbed of their local motherland by a few local and global investors. Christianity as a global player in mission needs to revisit its theology of environment and what it calls progressive civilization. The Bible is very clear on certain points: a disciple is required to care for and maintain the ecological system so that this world can be safe and prosperous for the coming generations (Gen. 2:15; see Rom. 8:19-23).

The Arusha Declaration considered development in terms of people, land, and good governance. This describes well the stewardship advocated in the creation narrative. People need to be valued and live in a spirit of respecting each other's rights. Land needs to be carefully utilized to sustain God's creation. Corruption needs to be eradicated to ensure leadership and management of social institutions that care and work for the prosperity of all. A disciple needs to care for others and God's creation. In simple terms, Christianity will continue to grow in Africa and other continents and will be renewed in Europe and North America when it invites disciples and cares about their needs and the creation in which we live.

## **Conclusion**

The choice of Arusha for the 2018 Conference on World Mission and Evangelism has been an opportunity to revisit the way Christianity invites people into discipleship. The joyful growth of Christianity in the global South poses a challenge to its sustenance and the inculcation of its deep roots based on the biblical message. The opposite of this is doomed to make Christianity a superstitious religion.

There is a need to continue removing the stigma of the African context and African spirituality. The contextualization and inculturation of Christianity have remained on academic shelves. We cannot criticize independent churches and mega ministries in cities that win many disciples without examining where we went wrong with our process of inviting people into discipleship.

The church should be an inviting church, not a threatening or judging one. The gospel should have a place in people's hearts and transform them. This is the case when we read the biblical messages and look closely at the first disciples' life experiences. The church should be open and invite people to celebrate the good news bestowed on us in the life, work, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Christianity should deal with the real issues facing its followers and accompany disciples in experiencing Christ. The Christian message is clear: it works

against secularization, regards poverty as a vice, bars the use of wealth to dominate others, disapproves of corruption, and sees environmental degradation as sin. The Arusha Conference has been a place to revive these ideals and put humanity and sustainable development at the centre: in the words of Nyerere, the purpose is humanity [and creation]!

## **PART THREE**

### **In Arusha: Plenary Presentations**

## 5. WELCOME MESSAGES AND MESSAGES TO THE CONFERENCE

---

### **Welcome by the Presiding Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania** *Fredrick O. Shoo*

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

It is my honour and privilege to welcome you to Tanzania to participate in this important Conference on World Mission and Evangelism, taking place in the Arusha region under the theme “Moving in the Spirit: Called to Transforming Discipleship.”

At the outset, may I extend our word of welcome, *Karibu*, to Africa and Tanzania in particular. We are grateful that the World Council of Churches (WCC) agreed to our invitation to host this world conference in Tanzania. We also note that this is the second conference to take place in Africa, after the one held in Achimota, Ghana, in 1958.

We are blessed to host delegates from all over the world: from mission or church councils, including representatives sent by the member churches of the WCC, and from the Roman Catholic Church and its affiliated bodies and wider mission networks, in particular linked to evangelical and Pentecostal/charismatic churches and traditions. We welcome all of you to worship, reflect, deliberate, and celebrate God’s mission at this crucial moment in the world, when humanity still continues to violate God’s creation, justice, and peace. As the world enters the fourth industrial revolution, we need to ponder these two questions: Where is the place of spirituality? How will our missional pilgrimage address this era?

We are aware that the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME) reflected on the four basic aspects of this conference: that is, its missional, ecumenical, African, and youthful character. In its deliberations, the commission strongly expressed the need for the conference to reflect missiologically – in an African and ecumenical context – on the signs of the times in our world today. This is a world in which God is active and present, bringing completion to God’s creation. It is my hope that this environment is conducive enough for you to meet the conference objectives.

Looking at the content of the conference, I see crucial issues that will need our bold deliberations. I therefore would like to share with you the word of God to remind us of our kind of discipleship: “For God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline” (2 Tim. 1:7). I hope that we shall be vigilant in addressing global issues that threaten life in the world today.

A transforming discipleship calls us to leave our comfort zones and be ready to carry the cross. Fear and selfish interests can be serious obstacles to a truly transforming discipleship. Jesus, the master of the cross and resurrection, teaches us what it means to be transforming disciples, as he says: “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it” (Mark 8:34-35).

Our Local Host Committee and the Conference Preparatory Committee of the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) have worked together to ensure the conference embraces the African context. A joint process by the Conference Planning Committee and staff of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania was crucial in preparing the ground for the practical realization of this conference. There are efforts still going on to ensure that the delegates are as comfortable as possible. So we shall appreciate feedback from you in order to continue improving the environment.

Tanzania is a country with great and beautiful flora and fauna. There is much to see, to hear, to taste, to touch, and to learn. You are invited to experience this beauty by visiting places. We have planned church visits for you to experience the life of the church and the community.

May God bless this conference! Welcome, brothers and sisters!

*Asante Sana.*

*Bishop Dr Fredrick O. Shoo*

Presiding Bishop, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania

## **Welcome by the Moderator of the World Council of Churches Central Committee**

***Agnes Abuom***

Brothers and Sisters,

I greet you in the name of our Lord and saviour Jesus Christ. I take this opportunity on behalf of the World Council of Churches (WCC) to thank the presiding bishop, Dr Fredrick O. Shoo of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania, for graciously accepting to host this historic and watershed World Conference on Mission and Evangelism. Thank you for providing free and safe space to engage, shape, discern, and define future direction for mission thinking and practice. Now that the church in Tanzania has welcomed and allowed us to operate within its space, I take this opportunity to welcome all of us ... *Karibuni!*

The CWME conference on “Moving in the Spirit: Called to Transforming Discipleship” is situated within the broader global WCC celebration of its 70th anniversary by the ecumenical fellowship of churches. We will engage therefore with the theme of this conference within the backdrop of celebration, commemoration, and lament. We look back with gratitude to the Almighty God for the vision of our ecumenical men and women ancestors; their commitment, courage, and determination to pursue the call for unity of the church and unity of humankind at a time in history when the world was divided and ravaged by war, inhabited by fractured communities and broken relationships. Simply put, a society characterized by desperation and hopelessness. We are also aware that the 70 years are grounded in the pillar of mission which forms one of the foundation stones of the WCC.

The CWME conference coming back to Africa after 60 years – from Achimota to Arusha – is also an affirmation of and a station in our Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace. We will, during this conference, revisit the wounds, including wounds related to mission history and current experiences as expressed by the signs of the times. We are indeed aware of and concerned about the changing global, regional, and national contexts that are increasingly volatile and uncertain. Indeed, challenges facing the global human community have increased: for example, dislocation and displacement of communities due to conflicts and climate change; growing inequality between a few super rich and millions of poor people; growing populism, nationalism, individualism, xenophobia, and racism. Our context and its attendant challenges demand that mission and discipleship transform lives and communities to accept and respect the dignity of God’s image in every human being, and that no one

is excluded from the processes of a sustainable, peaceful, just, and prosperous world. It is a context where we will celebrate our gifts as we hear positive actions of how mission and transformative discipleship seek to provide a counter-narrative to the dominant oppressive one. We will celebrate together mission interventions and stories of people as subjects and not objects of mission strategies. It is our hope that this conference will offer opportunities to critically inquire whether mission strategies are unconsciously colluding and making peace with structures and forces of death or affirming the good news to the poor.

Brothers and Sisters, you are welcome to Arusha in East Africa, the bedrock of the famous East African Revival, whose spirit, we believe, will inspire the deliberations and spirituality of the conference. It is our hope and prayer that by the power of the Holy Spirit, and the vibrant and rich African, women's, and Indigenous peoples' spiritualities, we shall be bold to embrace a new dawn and new ideas, and break down the barriers as we build bridges to journey together as transforming disciples in fragile, fractured, volatile, and hostile contexts. You are all welcome to rise up to the drumbeats of a new moment and frontiers in history as we walk side by side embracing the movement of the Holy Spirit, and as we accept to take on the mantle of transforming discipleship. You are welcome to sit under the acacia tree as you consult and discern the will of God!

*Dr Agnes Abuum*

Moderator, Central Committee  
World Council of Churches

## Message from Pope Francis

"Peace to all of you that are in Christ" (1 Pet. 5:14). I extend my greetings and best wishes to you and to all those participating in the Arusha World Mission Conference. You have gathered from many parts of the world, as members of different Christian traditions, in order to pray and work together, so as to move forward in the spirit of the 1910 Edinburgh Mission Conference, which opened a new era in relations between Christian communities, for the sake of mission.

"Moving in the Spirit: Called to Transforming Discipleship." This theme, chosen by the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism of the World



Council of Churches during the 70th anniversary of its founding, powerfully reminds us that the Lord's mandate to bring the Gospel to all people is not a matter of power and influence in the world. Rather, it is a pressing call to discipleship which manifests itself in unfailing love of neighbour, whoever that may be. By transforming people, beginning with each one of us, the Gospel transforms the world. This work of the Holy Spirit within us begins in baptism, that transforming moment which unites all Christians in Christ, a unity that needs to be ever more visible, "so that the world may believe" (John 17:21).

I pray that the Holy Spirit will fill your hearts with the joy of the gospel, the good news of salvation in the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life" (John 3:16). To evangelize is to offer a convincing witness to this extraordinary truth. I pray that the conference will remind Christians of the magnificent, unique, and challenging responsibility we have to share this transforming message. God's word is unimaginable in its power. The Gospel speaks of a seed which, once sown, grows by itself, even as the farmer sleeps (cf. Mark 4:26-27).

Your conference is taking place in Tanzania, within the African continent. Having heard the good news, Africa proclaims the Word in its own distinctive way: in joyful solidarity with all, especially with those on the peripheries; in the richness of its family values; and in its commitment to the care of creation. In particular, the young people of Africa, moved by the Spirit, can be the "transformed disciples" who in turn can help to "transform the world" in truth, justice, and love.

May God grant his abundant blessings to you and to all those gathered for the conference. I pray that all Christians may truly live in the Spirit and witness to the hope that is ours, with gentleness and reverence (cf. 1 Pet 3:15). "If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit" (Gal. 5:25).

From the Vatican, 6 March 2018

## **Message from His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew**

It is with great joy that we greet the Conference on World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches in the beautiful city of Arusha, Tanzania, in the diverse African continent. The joyful witness to the person

of Jesus Christ and saving message of His gospel, as well as the reaffirmation of our common commitment to work together for justice and rapprochement among peoples, nations and religions, is something that will truly strengthen our collective mission and purpose in the world. This year, the World Council of Churches celebrates its 70th anniversary which adds to the celebratory spirit of this gathering, as well as encourages us all to continue our combined efforts to work toward venerable goals and aims.

We are, indeed, moving in the Spirit and are called to a transforming discipleship – a liberating and life-giving transformation promised to us by the Lord himself. How will the others know that we are His disciples? “By loving one another.” And how will we attain this divine gift? Through our faith, prayer, and personal spiritual cultivation.

Many times, the Orthodox Church is accused of placing too much emphasis on the spiritual life, liturgy and worship, thereby neglecting the social ministry and the practical dimensions of witness and outreach in our day; however, philanthropy is at the centre of ecclesial life and Orthodox witness in the world. For us Orthodox, the fullness of Christian life is expressed in the Eucharist, not only in the sense of worship, but also as Eucharistic witness in the world – in *diakonia* and Christian mission – as liturgy after liturgy. Theosis, as the traditional understanding of salvation in its eschatological perspective in Orthodox theology, means participation in God’s life through divine grace, and the dynamic experience and expression in ecclesial life through the power of the Holy Spirit.

In this sense, we wholeheartedly congratulate the theme of the conference, “Moving in the Spirit: Called to Transforming Discipleship,” as it wonderfully emphasizes that transformation has both vertical and horizontal dimensions. Despite all of the past challenges and hardships experienced by the African continent, we find ourselves today surrounded by a vibrant African Christian community, dancing and singing in the joy of the Resurrection, marching onward to the rhythm of the Holy Spirit in celebration of humanity’s emancipation from the grip of the devil granted by the victory of the Cross and our Saviour’s glorious Resurrection. We are joyfully witnessing a transformation and restoration that is already under way in Africa and we thank God for His rich and abundant mercy.

Therefore, let all take courage and make use of the wonderful opportunity to converse and learn from the diverse group of speakers and from the particularities of the culturally rich African mosaic. Open your hearts and minds and allow the Spirit which has called all of you today to Arusha to lead you to your own particular transformation, which will empower you in the ministry,

expand your horizons, enrich you as persons, and better equip you in the mission of a transforming discipleship for the world.

We would also like to take this opportunity to especially greet the impressive presence of youth at this conference, in whose talents, strengths, and youthful vigour we invest the Church's future, but in whom we also most certainly find the "active expression of the Church's God-loving and human-loving life in the present," as stated in the Encyclical of the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church, which took place on the island of Crete in June of 2016. May the divine zeal for mission and evangelism flourish in their young hearts, inspiring, motivating and mobilizing them to a renewed and dynamic ministry for the glory of the triune God.

With these words and humble greetings, we invoke upon you our heartfelt prayer, while encouraging you "to acquire the Holy Spirit so that being transformed, thousands around you will be saved."

## **Message from the Archbishop of Canterbury** *Justin Welby*

There is no question about the importance of world mission and evangelism. Since the great Edinburgh conference on world evangelization in 1910, there have been these regular meetings which have stirred up the people of God so that every disciple is a witness to Jesus Christ. May God bless you in what you are doing. And of course you are in East Africa, the greatest revival of the 20th century, the place that through that revival led to me finding Jesus Christ as my Lord and Saviour. What a wonderful gift that moment was for me.

The theme of this conference, as of course you know, is "Moving in the Spirit: Called to be Transforming Disciples." It's funny: everybody is talking about transformation. I've been spending today working on issues of evangelism, preparing evangelism. Everybody has used the word "transformation." I know in my own life the biggest transformation is to be born again. That's the truth and it's the Holy Spirit who does that. It's not us. We can't twist people's arms into it. We can't make it happen. It's the Holy Spirit moving who does that. At Pentecost, the transforming power of God broke in, and 3,000 people came to facing Christ, and that number grew in such a way that within 300 years the Roman Empire was transformed.

From that point, the church transformed by the Spirit set about transforming the world. You know, there's this extraordinary period that we hear about

in the first chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, between Ascension and Pentecost. A number of things happened. Jesus had promised the gift of the Spirit. The disciples gathered to pray and wait, and it is not difficult for the church of today to follow that pattern of praying, of waiting, and of going out. As we do that, the Spirit comes in because God is all grace.

I come so often to God saying, “How could you possibly use me? How could I be an archbishop? It’s ridiculous. Look at me!” And Jesus says: “Yes, but look at me. On the cross. From the empty tomb. At the Ascension. With the gift of the Spirit.”

We are made to be the people that God wants us to be. Over the last few years there’s been a great blessing given by the Spirit to the life of the church. It’s called “Thy Kingdom Come.” And we take that period, which is a great historic period of prayer for the church, between the 10th and the 20th of May this year. And there are wonderful resources on the web in many languages (the website is [thykingdomcome.global](http://thykingdomcome.global)). I do invite you to join in that. It’s not an Anglican thing. It’s a Christian thing. It’s all around the world. Last year 85 countries were involved. Let us join together as those early disciples did with a vision and hope for transformation, saying, “Thy Kingdom come, O Lord.”

## 6. OPENING ADDRESS BY THE WCC GENERAL SECRETARY

---

*Olav Fykse Tveit*

Mr President, Your Eminences, your Excellencies,

Presiding Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania, Bishop Fredrick Shoo, church leaders from the Christian Council of Tanzania,

Moderator of the World Council of Churches central committee, Dr Agnes Abuom,

Moderator of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, Metropolitan Geevarghese Coorilos,

Dear participants, dear sisters and brothers gathered as pilgrims in God's mission here in Arusha, Tanzania,

To address you at the beginning of the Conference on World Mission and Evangelism is a special honour. These events are milestones in modern church history. You are all gathered here by the invitation from the World Council of Churches (WCC), to discern together where the mission of the church is going in our time.

It is an honour also to have you here, representing churches, ecumenical partners, mission agencies. Some of you are involved in education for the next generations of servants and leaders of the churches in the GETI programme. Some of you are here to analyze and communicate what is happening in your context of mission. We are many here, with different tasks as church leaders, students, pastors, missionaries, deacons, and theologians. It is an honour as well to be here in Arusha, as guests of this beautiful country and of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania.

It is our privilege to call together this conference in the year of the 70th Anniversary of the World Council of Churches. Care for the mission of the church has always been a driving force behind the ecumenical movement, toward our common witness and service, and therefore also toward new insights and new commitments. In the WCC, which has also included the International Missionary Council since the third Assembly in New Delhi in 1961, the call to be one has always been inspired by the call to mission. You are participating in this anniversary by showing how the churches and their partners continue to commit themselves to be together in God's mission and in the discernment of what that means in 2018 and in the years to come. We have much to learn from the important and sometimes difficult discussions

of the past that can inform our work in the WCC and its Commission on World Mission and Evangelism. The call to meet here is supported by costly assets from our shared legacy.

As we gather here in Arusha, we bring a heightened awareness of our situation and landscape. We are well aware of the rich fruits of the work of the missionary movement. I personally know some of them and their great contribution to this church and this country. We are also well aware how important it has been to change the paradigm (as the missiologists call the ideas and patterns of mission) to a shared and mutually accountable relationship in mission. We are also well aware how significant the life of the church in this part of the world is for the whole *oikoumene*, the whole fellowship of churches in the WCC and beyond, as an expression of the vitality of the church and its witness to Jesus Christ in our time. We are also well aware here in this context of Africa how important it is to acknowledge that our witness and service always happen in a multi-religious and multicultural world. Furthermore, we are well aware that the mission of the church must work for a fair and just distribution of the resources of the world and participate in *diakonia* to address the injustices and the needs of people in our world today – whatever faith they hold and whatever context they live in. We are also, lastly, becoming well aware here that the mission of the church must contribute to the just peace that people require in all parts of the world, and particularly those who are living in conflict areas or have had to leave their homes as refugees.

In our reflections these days about where the Spirit is moving us as disciples of Jesus Christ today and tomorrow, we see ourselves in a world in desperate need of peaceful and just patterns of living together as one humanity in the one, vulnerable creation of God. Our common ministry in ecumenical mission and ecumenical *diakonia* is needed more than ever.

Like you, I am delighted that we now are here to start the work of this conference. We can thank the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism for their hard work to prepare this event – together with our colleagues in the WCC and the hosts here in Arusha.

Yet it is something more than an honour and a joy to stand here and address you. This is also an awesome moment, when we stand not only before one another but also before the triune God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and ask for guidance in the call given to us. So much is at stake, and it is important that we from the very beginning pray that the Holy Spirit will guide our reflections and conclusions.

Reflection on the mission of the church is not just about interesting and relevant methods of work, and about analyzing new trends in the world

important for strategizing mission work. The mission of the church is about life and death. The mission of the church is about salvation, liberation, and giving hope – through sharing the most costly and precious thing in this world: the love of God. It is the ministry of reconciliation, through which we are called to share the gift of God's reconciliation of the broken and sinful – the gift we all need. It is about how the gospel can have an impact on the life of every human being, how the ministry of reconciliation with God and with one another and with all creation can happen today and tomorrow – again and again. The future of the mission of the church is at stake, as we are here to reflect on its most basic rationale and purpose: to be church for others.

We know that changes and transformation happen all the time in this world. But in which direction are the transformations going? You are here to discern what kind of transformation God is calling us to promote. How is the Holy Spirit today moving us into the future God wants for the world? We are not just talking among ourselves, as specialists in ecumenism and mission and evangelism. We are talking with one another as representatives of the churches and the people in the churches – who in turn represent the many dimensions of the one humanity. We are talking to one another as disciples, called by Christ to move in the Spirit, not to discuss our own business, and definitely not our own interests, but the future of the mission of God in this world, in the life of this humanity, and in creation.

All this makes me feel awed, and a great sense of humility, as we open this conference. Who am I in this momentum, and who are we to do so?

It is a historical wind blowing today, filled with the legacy of the world mission conferences, of the new mission statement *Together towards Life*, of the anniversary of the WCC, and of the new momentum for sharing widely in the same mission of God. This is the wind of the Spirit, blowing through the ecumenical movement and moving us forward with signs of spring – life returning again but in new ways – through challenges and also facing adverse and cold winds.

It is not only today when we have this theme that the Spirit is moving us forward. There is no church, no mission of the church, no ecumenical movement, no mission movement, without the movement of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is working in the whole of creation and in the church. Ecumenical dialogues and sharing have helped all of us to recognize this multiple dimension of the work of God's Spirit, and it is a hallmark of the new mission statement. It is the same Spirit that instils life in creation and in the church. It is in this wider perspective we fully and truly can recognize the work of the Spirit in the church and in our mission.

The mission in which we are involved is not for protection of ourselves or what we have or where we are and how it used to be. Nor is the purpose of mission to ignore the presence of the local – and ordinary – church, with its gifts and credibility in mission and *diakonia*. We should not think that to be part of God's mission is by definition to focus on everything else and everywhere else than where God has actually placed us in this world. There is always a movement in mission. Sometimes this movement means many kilometres, crossing borders and oceans. But sometimes this movement is to move our and others' hearts and actions right where we are – to those who need us here and now.

It is also in this perspective that we reflect here that our participation in mission is part of being together on a Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace. This is the overall perspective of the work of the World Council of Churches in this period after the 10th Assembly in Busan. You are all invited to join this pilgrimage, which we pursue in all our programmatic work. Some of it is focused on how mutual sharing and accompaniment can be expressed through our visits to the many wounds and to the burning places where the ministry of reconciliation and the thirst for justice and righteousness are particularly strong.

One of the great risks we have when we talk about transformation is becoming superficial in the way we understand it. We should not fall into the trap of looking only at how much we have improved results: more effective evangelism, higher attendance in our meetings, more goodwill, more budgets, etc. That is not transformation in its fundamental sense. We are called to a God-given and God-oriented transformation. That means transformation for the common good and for everybody that God cares about. That means a focus on the whole human being created in the image of God. That means transformation for the better for all of us in our diversity and with our differences. That means transformation in all places – leaving no one behind (as the UN motto for the Sustainable Development Goals says, and which we share also as a vision for the transformation given by God). We have a responsibility for the whole of creation. The world in which we are called to be disciples is this world – as it is, as a local home and a global home – the only one we have.

The mission of God is something that the Spirit is driving. That does not mean that we are not involved or that we shall not do it ourselves. On the contrary, it does not mean that it only happens in big waves or in big trends that are analyzed by CNN or by well-educated missiologists and church historians. The movement of the Spirit is the transformation of hearts. It means change in our relationships. It is a transformation that leads to justice and peace. It is the transformation of the visible signs of the kingdom of God.



The focus on being together in a Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace – working, praying, and walking together – is a focus of movement in faith, in expectation, in openness, in humility, with a sense for where justice and peace, the values of the kingdom of God, are under pressure and must find new expressions. This is a trend, a momentum, now in the one ecumenical movement and in the World Council of Churches – and this conference is a significant expression of exactly that.

Another great sign of the movement of the Spirit is that it opens our hearts and our eyes and our ears so that the others matter more than ourselves. The expression “transforming discipleship” has a double meaning – in most languages – if it can be translated as a noun. It is the transformation of the world and the church that true discipleship leads to. And it is the transformation of the disciples themselves.

The order of these factors is not arbitrary. The mission of God in following Jesus Christ and his example is always pointing to the other, to those who are around us. The calling is about focusing on them – not us. If we first of all and most of all are occupied with ourselves, and what we shall change in our own lives – and, we could add, our own communities and churches – we definitely have a lot to do. But the primary focus on ourselves can be exactly the barrier for the real transformation we should contribute to. The liberation of and creative support for the life of others is also what liberates us.

We have to be ourselves, as God created us, and affirming one another as such. This is how we become part of God’s transformation. Not the other way around. There is something wrong in our faith and our love for God if we are so preoccupied with ourselves. The modern mission movement has had a very strong focus on the personal calling, commitment, and sacrifice. The higher the calling, the greater the sacrifice; the more you sacrifice, the stronger your commitment. I know that there are logical and personal – even spiritual – connections in this respect. The history of mission gives us endless examples of that. You do not do something that includes sacrifices if you don’t believe it is important and significant – and in this regard important for the kingdom of God. On the other hand, there have been many stories about children who had to pay the sacrifice for their parents’ choices, about colleagues and particularly spouses who have to pay high prices for the very personal calling many believe they have.

When we focus on the calling, the transformation that God is seeking in this world, we don’t become robots or fanatics. We are becoming the people God has created for the mission of God to be fulfilled in the world.

Disciples are not called to be alone. First and foremost, all Christian disciples are called to follow Jesus Christ. It is a case of learning, of imitation

of Jesus, that became the model of discipleship – that requires a relationship of mutual attention and sharing. This is expressed in the very significant text that most often connects the call to mission and unity, John 17: “The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me” (John 17:22-23).

The church following Jesus Christ is always together – because we are only church through this unity in the triune God. We are called together and we respond together.

How to find the way the Spirit moves? The ecumenical experience has taught us: by listening to the Word of God together and learning from one another. There is no way to say that I alone or we alone know the way the wind is blowing. Nobody knows where the wind is blowing, Jesus says (John 3). We all should have a reverence for the mystery in our faith and in our movement.

It is this solidarity in the Spirit, and in the imperative of learning from those at the margins, that so radically informs the vision of mission and evangelism in *Together towards Life* and that characterizes ecumenical engagement today.

It is only in sharing what the Spirit is doing and has done in our churches and communities and in our encounters with others that makes us able to discern this together. The practice of dialogue and the acknowledgment of mutual accountability have been developed as ecumenical tools that have brought many precious gifts to the fellowship of the WCC. These are among the costly pieces of our legacy that have changed the churches, the way we work in mission, the way we understand discipleship, the way we perceive what is a proper transformation. We have to be very sensitive and more accountable to our gospel values as we give our Christian witness and contributions in a multi-religious world.

Yet we should not at all take for granted or simply assume that we share the visions for what discipleship and mission are today. We do so in a wide circle today, and we give thanks to God today for this inspiring and encouraging reality. We do have a shared conviction that we must focus not on ourselves, but on the way we shall walk together, the work we shall do together, and the way we shall pray together. There is a growing common understanding of trying to not be so focused on ourselves, or our institutions, but on the calling we share, the needs of others, the tasks that are calling us every day in a world where the gospel is urgently needed – as never before.

This conference is a sign of where we have been led by the Spirit. Another important sign is the upcoming visit in June of Pope Francis to the WCC. It is a sign of how we are together in mission in our time. “Walking – praying – moving together” is the motto for this apostolic mission of the Holy Father. The same focus has been in the recent visits of many church leaders to the WCC. We are together in mission and service – as we do together all that we can do together.

The WCC has always called and should always call the churches to visible unity by calling us back to the basis of unity. This shared understanding of mission means sharing the gospel, our faith, and also the search for transformation toward justice and peace everywhere in the world where it is needed.

Let me end by sharing a vision of how this conference is and can be an expression of what we have done together and what we *are* together as churches in God’s mission. I believe that God is reminding us particularly in our time of what is the force driving the mission of church. It is the love of God, expressed in the love of Jesus Christ through his life, crucifixion, and resurrection, bringing salvation and reconciliation to the world. We should be stamped by the words of the Apostle Paul: “the love of Christ urges us on” (2 Cor. 5:14).

The movement of mission and the ecumenical movement are driven by one and only one power: the love of Christ. The love of Christ to become human, to be incarnate, to be one of us, to share the visions and the signs of the coming kingdom of God, to speak truth to all, particularly to the power of religion and government, to occupier, to all. His love expresses itself by taking anything and everything upon himself, so that the people might live. So that all of us might have hope.

The mission movement must be a vision of love to make ultimate sense. If this is done for the sake of the glory and power of its institutions, or for the dominance of churches in the world, it will fail in its calling.

Nothing but love can bring the transformation that is according to God’s will and that the world needs so desperately. The love that is driving us is the Spirit, who touches us and equips us to be the agents of transformation needed today – together with all peoples God has created to live together in this world. This world – in its pain, in its possibilities, in its redemptive promise – is our home. It is here that we bear witness and nurture signs of the coming reign of God.

## 7. ADDRESS BY THE CONFERENCE MODERATOR

---

*Geevarghese Mor Coorilos*

### Introduction

I greet you all in the most precious name of the Holy Triune God!

On behalf of the vice moderator of the World Council of Churches' (WCC) Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME), the Rev. Dr Janet Corlett, and the Rev. Dr Jooseop Keum, our director, and the entire commission, I should like to extend to all of you a very warm welcome. *Karibu!*

As moderator of the CWME, I have great pleasure in thanking you for having responded positively to our invitation to be part of this historic mission conference here in Arusha. It is our hope and prayer that your gracious presence and active participation and our praying and reflecting together here will make it a rich and meaningful encounter. Let me also take this opportunity to express, on behalf of all of us, my deepest sense of gratitude to the African churches, the All Africa Conference of Churches, and churches in Tanzania, especially the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania, for hosting us here and for the warm hospitality. *Asante!*

The Arusha World Mission Conference is historically significant on many counts. It marks the continuation of the rich tradition from Edinburgh 1910. Holding the Conference on World Mission and Evangelism has been an enduring legacy that CWME has inherited from the International Missionary Council (IMC), which was organized as a fruit of the first-ever World Mission Conference in Edinburgh 1910, out of which the modern ecumenical movement was born. The conference also assumes special relevance as it is designed as an African mission conference. The last time the IMC convened a mission conference in Africa was in Achimota (1958), where the historic decision to merge the IMC with the WCC was taken. The decision became a reality in the New Delhi Assembly of the WCC (1961). The main objective of the integration was that, with the merger, concerns of unity and mission would be held together in the life and work of the WCC. Six decades later, the Conference on World Mission and Evangelism has returned to Africa,

where the centre of gravity of World Christianity is now felt and where the Spirit is moving vibrantly. We sincerely hope that the spirit of Achimota, that is, the spirit of merging unity and mission, will be taken seriously here in Arusha. After the integration, WCC even amended its constitution to reflect the missionary nature of the church. It is also important that the World Council of Churches is celebrating 70 years of its existence and ministry this year, and the CWME is excited that the Arusha mission conference can celebrate this significant milestone. On questions of unity and mission, the Faith and Order Commission and the CWME have been working collaboratively, especially in the recent past. We have established a practice of inviting each other for major conferences and initiatives. The recent Faith and Order publication *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* also affirms that unity begins with mission, albeit with God's mission. We can partake in this *missio Dei* meaningfully only when we do it *together*. The CWME mission document *Together towards Life* (TTL) also highlights this interrelationship between mission and unity in its section entitled "Church on the Move." It articulates that the church is called to be *on the move* and hence church, by its very nature, is missionary, a pilgrim church, itself a notion which has much to contribute to the WCC's main programmatic thrust between the 10th and 11th assemblies of the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace. It is, therefore, our hope that the high priestly prayer of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ "that they may all be one ... so that the world may believe" (John 17:21) becomes an experiential reality in this conference.

## **Moving in the Spirit: Called to Transforming Discipleship**

This is the second term that I am serving the CWME as moderator. I feel really proud of being part of both of the commissions that I have had the privilege of serving. The previous CWME commission made a huge contribution to the world of ecumenical missiology by producing the new mission statement of the WCC, *Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes* (TTL) which has been widely received and affirmed. The current commission has been working hard, right from its inception, on organizing this conference which is an integral part of the mandate of the commission. At this moment, I want to thank the WCC central committee, particularly its leadership, for approving our proposal to hold this

conference here in Arusha around the central theme “Moving in the Spirit: Called to Transforming Discipleship.” We hope that the reflections that TTL has sparked will continue to influence our deliberations here in Arusha. I would like to share with you a few thoughts as we continue to ponder the theme of Transforming Discipleship.

## **Transforming Discipleship: Mission as Turning the World Upside Down**

According to David Bosch, mission is to turn to God; and to turn to God is to turn to the world. I would like to go a step further in this biblical direction and affirm that mission is to *turn the world upside down*. One of the salient features of the mission of the early disciples of Christ was the revolutionary nature and content of their discipleship. They were branded as subversives who *turned the world upside down*. In Acts 17:6, it was said about Paul and Silas that “these people who have been turning the world upside down have come here also.” What is even more striking is that the disciples of Christ were accused of questioning the decrees of Caesar and proclaiming that there was another Lord, Jesus Christ (Acts 17:9). Discipleship, for the early disciples of Christ, then, meant confronting the hegemonic empires and announcing the arrival of a new dispensation: the reign of Christ. Resistance is not a mere reaction to the status quo, but a proactive *no* to its oppressive character and a pursuit of justice, peace, and integrity of creation, which is what mission is all about. It is for the restoration of justice and in affirmation of life that we are called to resist the forces of “death,” and in that our discipleship stands out as transforming. This means that mission and evangelism today on Transforming Discipleship should be about *turning the contemporary world upside down*. Nothing less would qualify discipleship as transforming.

We live in a fast-changing world, and there is need to reflect deeply on the signs of the times. There are new incarnations of Caesar. There are new avatars of Herod. There are new emperors. This is a new imperial era where numerous “little empires” are being created within the orbit of a “mega empire” that is working in hegemonic ways.

We come across a supreme example of what we call mission as Transforming Discipleship in the witness of the early church, as we read in the book of Revelation. Suffering under the yoke of the Roman empire, the early church under the leadership of John resisted the imperial dictates of Rome. They

were required to declare the Lordship of Caesar once every year before the magistrate. As long as they did that, they had the freedom to believe in any other god and practise any other faith. However, the early church would not compromise on their fundamental faith and would proclaim Jesus Christ as their only Lord. Of course, they had to pay a heavy price for this kind of discipleship. It was costly discipleship all the way. Their unflinching faith in the lordship of Jesus Christ alone empowered them to challenge the dictatorship of the empire and its unjust decrees. The way the early church denounced the empire was indeed prophetic. Not only did the church challenge the empire, but it also announced its fall proleptically.

*“Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great!” (Rev. 18:2).*

Mission as Transforming Discipleship in today’s imperial global scenario is about challenging the empires of our times and announcing their fall as if they have already fallen. Discipleship is about challenging idolatries which try to replace the sovereignty of God with human power and money. It is about *turning the world upside down*.

Another characteristic of the Roman empire then was its worship of mammon alongside Caesar worship. The “harlot” in Revelation 18 represents the enormous wealth of the Roman empire and its luxury and pomp. In our own world today, dictatorship and neo-liberal capitalism are combined and imposed on citizens as a package by several contemporary imperial/fascist regimes. The greed-driven economy has effectively replaced the regime of justice and equity with mammon. Moving in the Spirit here would mean confronting the idolatry of money. On his pilgrimage toward Jerusalem, Jesus occupied the temple by cleansing it of the forces of mammon that had converted the temple into a marketplace, a trade centre, an exchange bureau, and a stock market (Matt. 21). Inside the temple, Jesus turned the tables of market forces upside down. Mission as Transforming Discipleship, then, is also about *turning the tables* of unjust economies *upside down*. TTL conveys this message thus: “We affirm that the economy of God is based on values of love and justice for all and that Transformative mission resists idolatry in the free market economy.”

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. The very word *oikoumene* had its original context in imperialism: the Roman empire, that is. As K. M. George would argue, the term *oikoumene* was understood almost as

a synonym for the hegemonic Roman empire. The expansion of the Roman empire was then identified with the building up of the *oikoumene*. We must remind ourselves of the fact that the context of the 1910 Edinburgh Mission Conference, where the modern ecumenical movement had its genesis, was also one of imperial triumphalism. The call for “the Evangelization of the whole world in this very generation” for many meant or resulted in the imposition of Western values of Christendom on the rest of the world. Mission as Transforming Discipleship today, then, is also about *turning* this imperial mission logic and praxis *upside down*. It is about *turning the world upside down*.

This would mean that we as churches and ecumenical movements should undergo a soul searching and renounce all traces of these imperial vestiges from our structures and ministries. Sadly, the logic and legacy of the empire has kept coming back to haunt us and at times to hijack the agenda of our churches, mission organizations, and ecumenical institutions. Rogate Mshana, the main coordinator of this conference here, a noted economist and ecumenist himself, warns us of this danger when he says, “Regrettably, money-theism has infiltrated some churches and made them forget that it is God’s justice that is at the heart of the Christian faith.” Partnerships in mission continue to be resource- and power-driven even now in 21st-century mission relationships to the extent that they miss out on the purpose of both mission and partnership, resulting in the sources and dynamics of money shaping and sustaining certain expressions of mission. As Jesus evicted the market forces from the life of the temple, we must get rid of the influence of mammon and its worship. Combating marketization of the temple was an integral element of Jesus’ pilgrimage towards the cross. Therefore, a Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace, Moving in the Spirit (our theme here), that does not address the issues of moral degeneration of the secular and the ecclesial world that we are part of, especially the influence of the idolatry of mammon and the logic of the corporate world, cannot be a sacred walk in the Spirit. This means that mission as Transforming Discipleship is about *turning the world upside down* – both the secular and the ecclesial world.

In a context where empires are striking back with their own dictatorial requirements of allegiance to mammon, market, consumerism, militarism, sexism, fundamentalism, and fascism, Transforming Discipleship implies a willingness to confront the logic of the empire and to lay down our lives for the sake of Christ and the gospel. In other words, martyrdom continues to be an important expression of discipleship. This was exemplified most poignantly recently (in 2015) when 21 Egyptian Christians laid down their lives



before terrorists. Even in the face of death, they had the courage to utter the name of Christ.

I am also proud to say that my own Holy Father, the Patriarch of the Syrian Orthodox Church, who is here with us and will address the plenary on Friday, has been on such a pilgrimage of justice and peace, risking his life for the sake of Christ. His Holiness escaped a bomb attack only narrowly during a visit to a congregation in Aleppo, Syria, last year. Despite warnings about personal security, His Holiness continues to take risks for the sake of Christ and his people in the Middle East. This is daring terrorism, fascism, and empire as part of Transforming Discipleship.

We lay down our lives for the sake of Christ not because we believe that Christ needs us to defend him but because our Discipleship of Christ calls us to uphold truth and justice, to restore these so that the poor, the earth, and all else may have life in all its abundance. As we have seen, Transforming Discipleship is “missionary discipleship,” as Pope Francis would put it. And there is profound joy in it.

About nine years ago, in Kandhamal in Odisha, India, Brother Suresh was brutally killed by Hindu fanatics. He was one among hundreds who gave their lives for Christ. Brother Suresh, then a new convert and an evangelist from the socially and economically disempowered Dalit community, was dragged from the bus he was travelling on and put into a pit, with his body completely buried up to his neck. He was given a last chance to give up his faith in Christ, but he would not surrender to their dictates. He said, “I am happy to sacrifice my life for Christ who sacrificed his life for me.” This is the joy of costly discipleship! As Bonhoeffer would say, this is “keeping close to [Jesus Christ].” Then they thrashed his head with a huge piece of rock. Today, Brother Suresh is celebrated as a martyr who witnessed that the gospel transforms the oppressed, giving them dignity and hope. Through their Transforming and costly Discipleship, they were able to turn the world upside down.

Mission as Transforming Discipleship also implies that we, as disciples of Christ, need to transform ourselves so that the world can be transformed, turned upside down, by us. We live in an age of consumerism with scant regard and respect for the environment. This has contributed to environmental damage which is almost beyond redemption. The Orthodox theological accent on *Askesis* is of great pertinence here. The Orthodox world of monasticism and asceticism is perhaps the locus where the tension between mastery and mystery is most creatively lived out. As “priests of creation,” humanity here voluntarily stays away from the world of greed and destruction and opts for an organic lifestyle that is kenotic. As Elizabeth Theokritoff puts it

succinctly, “In this living, matter and material things become means of ‘communion’ not ‘consumerism.’”

This *being* mode of mission, mission as living out an organic life, is therefore about replacing the world of consumerism with an alternate world of communion, a world of sharing and celebrating life, as TTL advocates. It is about *turning the world upside down*.

Mission as turning the world upside down is also about *reversal of existing mission paradigms*. One such paradigm shift was introduced by TTL in the form of mission from the margins (MFM). MFM is an alternative missional movement, a counter-cultural missiology. Mission in this sense is not any longer a one-way street where the rich, the powerful, the elite, and the global North are the sole agents of mission, and the poor and the global South are mere recipients of mission. Here, the language of “centre” and “margins” are constantly used to sustain power relations in mission. This is significant, as money, power, and mission have been historically close allies in world mission. MFM subverts this logic and turns the world of colonial mission enterprise upside down. It affirms the agency of the margins, the marginalized. The faithful in Asia Minor who formed the early church were primarily people of subaltern background. What is significant here, therefore, is that it was the marginalized themselves who organized the resistance movement against the Roman empire. It was mission from the margins. Mission from the centre has been associated with paternalism and a superiority complex. People at the margins have claimed the primary agency of God’s mission, where God chooses the vulnerable and the marginalized to fulfil God’s mission of establishing the just reign of God where the Magnificat vision (Luke 1) is materialized and where “the last will be first” (Matt. 20:16). The purpose of mission here is not simply to move people from the margins to the centre, but also to challenge those systems and people who tend to remain at the centre by keeping people on the margins. This has implications for our churches, mission bodies, and ecumenical institutions, too.

Let me conclude with a story, originally told by a bishop friend of mine. This is about a poor Dalit worker who used to travel by train to get to his workplace in India. Trains in India have different classes of travel, such as ordinary compartment, second class, first class, and different classes of air-conditioned coaches. This man, being a poor Dalit worker, could only afford to travel by ordinary coach. He had to stand in long queues every day to purchase his ticket and walk to the end of the platform, as the ordinary coaches are normally placed last. By the time he purchased his ticket and ran toward the end of the platform to catch the train, it would have left. He would miss the train on many days. Out of frustration, he once decided to lodge

a complaint with the Railway Minister. This is what he wrote in his letter: “Hereafter there should not be any last compartment on Indian trains. If you still want a last coach, make sure that it is at the very front of the train.” Joking aside, the message here is loud and clear: there is a determination in what the poor Dalit worker is saying here. It was a declaration that he was not willing to be the last and the least anymore and that he wanted to be part of the mainstream society. The impoverished and the disenfranchised clamour for a *turned upside-down world*, and this is the clamour of God, too. This is turning the world upside down. And this is precisely what mission as Transforming Discipleship is all about: *turning the unjust world upside down*; margins taking over agency of mission.

As the story indicates, the marginalized people are already involved in struggles to turn the unjust world upside down. Transforming Discipleship here is about following Jesus Christ who is present with them in their acts of resistance to injustice and oppression.

It is not enough to say that empires will fall. Like the early church did, we need to announce its fall as if it has already fallen.

Arundhati Roy would put it this way: “Our strategy should be not only to confront Empire, but to lay siege to it. To deprive it of oxygen. To shame it. To mock it.... The corporate revolution will collapse if we refuse to buy what they are selling – their ideas, their version of history, their wars, their weapons, their notion of inevitability.” And may I add, “their versions of mission and evangelism.”

Therefore, it is also not enough to say that another world is possible. Our mission is to announce its arrival as if it has already been ushered in. Our mission is to *turn the world upside down*. Nothing less will do.

We hope that our collective prayers and reflections around the theme of “Transforming Discipleship” will lead us into a Spirit-led pilgrimage of justice and peace.

With these words, may I once again welcome you all warmly to this historic mission conference. I hope our time together here will truly be a meaningful experience.

## 8. KEYNOTE SPEECH: TRANSFORMING DISCIPLES, TRANSFORMING THE FUTURE: Young African Women and the Search for a Liberated Future

---

*Mutale Mulenga-Kaunda*

The World Council of Churches leadership, members and staff,  
The Commission on World Mission and Evangelism,  
Distinguished guests,  
Sisters and brothers in the Lord Jesus Christ,

I am honoured to be invited as keynote speaker for this ecumenical gathering, especially as it is on International Women's Day, and also to represent the young African women's voice that interrogates the conference theme "Moving in the Spirit: Called to Transforming Discipleship." I commend the organizers of this event and in true African spirit (excuse the pun), I welcome each one of you to Africa: *karibusana!* You are truly welcome!

Storytelling has always been at the core of African women theologians' thinking as an approach to critically engage with our African realities. Stories are the key elements that constitute the oral text for so called his-tory, or rather herstory? Allow me to demonstrate the importance of storytelling as a relevant missiological lens by sharing a brief personal narrative to critically engage with the theme of our conference.

I belong to the Pentecostal family, but I am more than that. I am young, and an African woman but I am more than that. I have a story that has formed who I am and how I come to the Christian faith, a story that forms my identity. I don't carry one identity, but many. I was raised in the context of a family headed by a single parent. My mother, who was a nurse, "called deep on her courage" and divorced my father at the age of 33. My father left her with the huge responsibility of raising four small children. She was a member of the United Church of Zambia (UCZ), which is the single-largest Protestant church in Zambia, next only to the Catholic Church. During my high school days, I was introduced to Pentecostalism. Due to its vibrancy, many young people were attracted to this form of spirituality and I was among those who, as it were, was blown away by Pentecostal spirituality. However, my inquisitive, question-asking, faith-seeking-understanding disposition continued to

be ecumenical in nature. During this same period of my faith development, tragedy struck when my mother discovered that she had full-blown AIDS. In her search for healing and wellness she navigated between the UCZ, the Pentecostal Church, and African Traditional Spirituality, demonstrating the ecumenical and multi-faith perspective of her belief. My mother tried to find meaning and purpose of life from African Traditional Spirituality and Pentecostalism when she faced her struggle of life: sick, out of employment on medical grounds, and with teenage children to support, depression was inevitable. She died at the age of 46 and was laid to rest on the day I wrote my first exam paper for my final year in high school. I came out of the exam room and headed for the graveyard. We (my sisters and I) transitioned from a female (single-mother) headed home to a female teenager-headed home where I was the one taking care of my two sisters at the age of 17. I became a pre-school teacher after high school and because I was not a trained teacher, I only earned the equivalent of 100 dollars a month to care for the family. I had to mature swiftly because I needed to think as an adult even though I was only a teenager.

Indeed, as Brené Brown has maintained, “Stories are data with soul.”<sup>1</sup> I will use my story as a lens through which to interpret African women’s experiences, especially with regard to the theme of our conference. My story is not just a story of struggles, it is also a story of hope and is not unique to me. I am certain that the story is common among many young African women, and their experiences might be even more significant than mine. I draw on the three constitutive marks of this World Mission Conference, which are

1. It is ecumenical;
2. It features young leaders; and
3. It is a conference that is being held within an African context, the primary setting for ecumenical discourse.

These three features at their best embody the identity of the African environment and its peoples. Africans are indeed ecumenical by nature, as we float in our Indigenous/traditional, Islamic, and Christian world views easily in order to find meaning in life and in death. My story therefore illustrates how I am formed by the missionary-founded UCZ, the Pentecostal ecclesial tradition, as well as the African Traditional Religious world view to become what can be truly described as an ecumenical African woman.

---

1. See Brené Brown, “The Power of Vulnerability,” [www.ted.com/talks/brenebrownonvulnerability.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/brenebrownonvulnerability.html).

My personal story reflects some of the critical aspects of understanding the contemporary African feminist missiological context. The intersections in my story embody stories within that one story. The transitions from being raised in a family headed by a single mother to a female teenager-headed household. From caring for an ailing mother failed by the health care services of the State and whom my sisters and I had to regularly feed and bathe (culturally, we should never have been bathing my mother) when we were only teenagers, and finally dealing with the excruciating reality of the death of a beloved mother. It is these turns in my story that I will interrogate as potent missional signposts to engage in fashioning an African woman's perspective on transforming discipleship. Conversion and social/economic transformation are vital in order to realize transforming discipleship for young African women. I must admit not much has changed for many African women since my mother's departure. The contemporary young African woman may currently have more opportunities to serve in the public sphere, but gaps still remain in our male-dominated society, with men occupying many strategic positions; dare I say, even within ecclesiastical circles there remains a male prerogative because political and religious leaders are more concerned with their personal needs.

It is estimated that 83 percent of women globally are affiliated with a faith group because faith plays a crucial role in women's lives.<sup>2</sup> If the mission of God (*missio Dei*) is at work in a world full of injustice and inequality, then one must ask questions concerning how the mission of God is practised and what it hopes to achieve. If "fullness of life for all" constitutes the ultimate goal of the mission of God, then according to the World Council of Churches (WCC), "churches everywhere [must] walk together, to view their common life, their journey of faith, as a part of the pilgrimage of justice and peace, and to join together with others in celebrating life and in concrete steps toward transforming injustices and violence."<sup>3</sup> This is an invitation for people, especially African women who live on the margins, who suffer inequality, exploitation, and exclusion, to journey as partners in mission seeking God's promised gift of fullness of life. This presentation therefore postulates that gender inequality within the African context constitutes an urgent missiological issue and concern because it denies a significant part of God's creation, "life in all its fullness."

---

2. "The Gender Gap in Religion around the World." Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project (March 22, 2016), <http://www.pewforum.org/2016/03/22/the-gender-gap-in-religion-around-the-world>.

3. KAIROS Canada, Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace blog, <https://www.kairoscanada.org/what-we-do/prophetic-witness/pilgrimage-of-justice-and-peace>.

This commission of engaging in a missiological task of discerning how, when, and where God was at work in the lived experiences of a young divorced woman, teenage girls caring for their ailing mother, or a teenager heading a home and grappling with how she will gain entry into university is vital. The missional church is therefore one that is called to act in a radical way in facilitating the social and economic empowerment of women as an extension of its praxis of transforming discipleship. Let me recall at this stage another incident during the time my mother was critically ill. A week before my mother died, I bought an intravenous drip to use in giving her the necessary medicine to keep her alive. However, as I was too afraid to administer that, it was my younger sister who proved to be braver, as somehow she managed to do it. (My desire to become a nurse was tested here.) My mother was cared for at home by her daughters because we could not afford the cost of getting hospital care. (Quality health care in my country is commodified and available only to those able to afford it.) Her death in her bedroom led me to realize a missiological understanding that the state and the church falling short in their strategy of providing good-quality health care for all as central in their priorities had failed my family and many other families that lived on the margins. Both the state and the church focused on meeting inner-institutional maintenance needs rather than focusing on the wellbeing of others. The church, especially within the African context, has to serve as a missional resource for all people who live on the margins of their society, who are seeking to overcome forces that bequeath death. The kind of resistance needed in the struggle against the life-denying forces requires that the followers of Jesus Christ are filled with the life-giving Spirit of God that alone can equip people with the necessary resources for transformative discipleship. Through a missional process of radical missional formation, disciples are formed through a process of belonging, believing, becoming, and participating in order to live out the mission of God as demonstrated through Christ's mission in the church.

David Bosch, the South African missiologist, postulated in the 1990s that transforming mission as the framework through which the church engages in mission should be done from the margins.<sup>4</sup> As a teenager caring for my sisters, I often turned to the church for support in spite of all its inherent missional contradictions when I hit rock bottom and there was nowhere else to turn for help. To actively participate in the life of the church as a double-orphaned girl, trying to think through daily what my sisters and I would eat, always brought me to tears and led me to cry out to my mother, who could no longer

---

4. See David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1991).

respond, and then only after that to God! Bosch's missional perspectives concur with those of Paulo Freire, the Brazilian philosopher and educator who in his famous *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) called into question the model of education used to conscientize the public. Freire's perspectives also speak aptly to the reality of the missiological context that African women experience in their quest for authentic changes in their lives within the church and society. The way to achieve this transformative discipleship must begin with understanding the daily realities that shape the lives of people in their context, because transformation does not happen in a vacuum. The church has an important role to play in this process of facilitating transforming discipleship formation by emancipating itself from the socially constructed patriarchal barriers that are intentionally and unintentionally constructed to limit African women's participation in the missional mandate of the church and nation. However, the Achilles' heel that hinders radical transformative discipleship is linked to the exercising of power that restricts full participation of African women to work as mutual partners in church and society.

Transforming discipleship begins with a missional community, which embodies a community of faith that allows all to belong, believe, and become in order to fully participate. The teaching and learning process is never neutral: therefore, if the church seeks transforming discipleship for all, then for African women missional engagement that is consistent with the Spirit of Life must embrace all aspects of life to respond to the felt needs of people, both physical and spiritual.

The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agenda theme "Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development," or Agenda 2030, have also identified gender equality as a global priority. The SDGs assume that through gender equality, genuine transformative change can be achieved for girls, but only if they are consulted and their priorities and needs are taken into account. Therefore, young women and girls should be viewed not as beneficiaries of change but as agents of change, and their inclusion in the implementation of the SDGs is crucial. It is therefore important for the missional church that takes seriously its mandate of transformative discipleship to listen to the cries of young African women in their quest for fullness of life.

The conference theme, "Moving in the Spirit: Called to Transforming Discipleship," speaks poignantly to the African context and the urgent needs of women to experience life-giving transformation in church and society. Their quest is for justice and peace, and this journey toward life necessitates achieving transforming discipleship by all followers of Jesus, but specifically among ecclesial leadership. This model of discipleship necessitates leaders who are



competent, committed, compassionate, and consistent in their following of Jesus, who welcomes all and “leaves no one behind”<sup>5</sup>; and this, in practice, means that “no women must be left behind.”<sup>6</sup>

The slogan of the SDGs, “leave no one behind,” which also connects well with the WCC’s 2013 mission statement, *Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes*, affirms “fullness of life for all.”<sup>7</sup> Transforming discipleship therefore means moving (journeying / accompanying) together as a reciprocal community of women and men working together for the common good. As a 17-year-old African girl earning an equivalent of US\$100 a month, heading a home struggling with poverty, watching friends enrolled in university while my future dreams became dim, transforming discipleship then meant embodying the hope that God’s purpose for those who live on the margins would be fulfilled. I wrestled with prayers that seemed to go unanswered. I struggled with understanding how God’s life-giving Spirit would guide my path into an unknown future. Facing the uncertainty of the future, the faith in a God of Life is what kept me stronger. There is a girl like myself out there in this confusing and frustrating world seeking this God of Life who offers a fresh start, a second chance, a new beginning.

The ecumenical Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace invites the disciples to journey with those who have been at the receiving end of life-denying systems of marginalization, oppression, and exclusion in church and society, and this includes women – African women. Where do we search for stories of hope? Where do we look for African women with stories of hope? Is it possible to find women who are benchmarkers? We need women who show that Africa and her peoples embody the stories of resilience. Africans, out of their experience of many struggles, have learned how never to give up. In the darkest night, they agonize and wait patiently for the morning light, always like a phoenix rising out of ashes. The stories of hope from African women such as advocate Thuli Madonsela, the former South African public protector, speaks volumes to the resiliency of African women. During her time in office as the public protector, she spoke truth to power and called for transparency and accountability to rogue political powers. But there are many other stories of women in every African village who have risen out of ashes inflicted by state and religious systems of oppression and have made it against all odds.

---

5. This is the slogan of the SDG. See <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2016/leaving-no-one-behind>.

6. Ibid.

7. Jooseop Keum, ed., *Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2013).

In our own ecumenical community gathered here, we have living examples of African women, like our very own Mama Isabel Phiri, the deputy general secretary of the WCC. We can glean stories of hope from Mama Mercy Amba Oduyoye and the current moderator of the WCC central committee, Mama Agnes Abuom, to inspire hope to young African women. In many other international areas of service in the fields of entertainment, education, and sports, young African women are demonstrating their capacity to overcome adversity and create opportunities for enterprising success. All of these stories of hope and countless others should be gathered and put into creative but effective media to share with the diverse community of young African women. It is through access to such hopeful stories that transforming discipleship is formed. African women experience perpetually struggle with poverty, gender discrimination, and multiple religious identity as they seek for their felt needs to be met.

The paradox with my Pentecostal ecclesial identity is that my tertiary theological education happened within ecumenical institutions; that is, being mentored by scholars from many different ecclesial traditions. This is also the experience of many young African people. We are formed in an environment of unity in diversity. This is our experience of the missional model of discipleship formation: the journey happens with others. We accompany each other along the way, learning from each other so that we share freely God's gifts for the common good of all. This means that the ecumenical journeying of moving in the Spirit must be accompanied by an intentional agenda of transforming discipleship and meeting the needs of those in need. If indeed transformative discipleship is at the heart of mission in Christ's way, then following in his steps necessitates integration of spiritual transformation with social, economic, and political transformation and action that responds positively to the felt needs of people.

In conclusion, my story is not unique, but this and many stories of African women are "stories with soul": such stories put a human face to the struggles we often just see on TV. Hearing stories from real people who have experienced these struggles is I believe what Brené Brown called "data with soul." As a young African woman who was raised by a single mother, my future was bleak and uncertain, but I have been formed by the grace of God and by moving in the Spirit through the changing scenes of life's diverse experiences into a transformed / transforming disciple. My ecumenical identity constitutes a meeting point of discourses and competing global identities: I am a hybrid. I negotiate both global and local constructions of an African woman. Dare I say that human beings are ecumenical spaces of various discourses? Discipleship occasionally should be about listening to stories, because the narrator is

not just a storyteller; she is an active participant who has been constructed by the story. The listener is also not passive; the listener critically engages with the story in unspoken words as they reflect on their own personal story through the told story.

The signposts I have stated above show that African women are vulnerable to much more than what is articulated even in this presentation. My presentation was not meant to provide answers to this provocative conference theme; rather, my desire was to provoke, to cajole, to urge a rethinking. Therefore, I conclude with some questions that I hope will continue to facilitate further reflections by this conference:

1. In what way can transforming discipleship facilitate the church to engage in radical social, political, and economic transformation within African societies?
2. What are the ways in which transformative discipleship can address hegemonic masculinities within church and society that prevent the full participation of women?
3. Are there ways in which transformative discipleship can address new public religious discourses preoccupied with excessive materialism that are making radical inroads into African political spheres and prevent equal access to public resources?
4. What is the relevance of transforming discipleship in facilitating people who live on the margins to experience effective health care?
5. The African continent has a fast-growing youth population. Therefore, in what ways can the concept of transforming discipleship address the quest of young people for fullness of life?>

*Asante, Natasha, Ngiyabonga, Obrigado, Danke, Merci, Thank you.* I wish you all a fruitful conference, and I hope this sets the African context.

## 9. CWME: FROM ATHENS TO ARUSHA

### *Director's Report*

---

*Jooseop Keum*

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Thanks be to the Triune God for calling us to assemble for the World Mission Conference here in Arusha, Tanzania! Praise to the Lord for the ceaseless journey of ecumenical missionary conferences over the last 108 years! Welcome to Arusha; welcome to the World Mission Conference!

First, I wish to extend my profound gratitude to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania, as well as the churches in this country, for their invitation to hold the first Conference on World Mission and Evangelism in Africa since the integration between the International Missionary Council and the World Council of Churches (WCC) in New Delhi in 1961. The last World Mission Conference hosted in Africa was in 1958 at Achimota, Ghana. It was indeed a historic conference which inspired the integration of the church and mission councils, but with extremely limited participation from the hosting continent, the African people.

Today, we are gathering here in Arusha at the heart of the African independence and reconciliation movements. The history of Christian mission has been characterized by conceptions of geographical expansion from a Christian centre to the unreached territories and peoples, to the ends of the earth. But today we are facing a radically changing ecclesial landscape described as “World Christianity” where the majority of Christians are living in the global South and East. We celebrate that today the largest Christian population is living in Africa and the most powerful dynamism in mission is emerging from this continent – God’s wondrous work that could not have been imagined 60 years ago in Achimota.

Therefore, the Arusha Conference offers extraordinary opportunities to promote African inputs and leadership in world mission, and to show to best advantage the rich Christian diversity, collegiality, and fraternity of Africa with the spirit of the ecumenical movement. Indeed, one of the aims of this Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME) has been that it be planned and experienced as an African conference. This will mean that the conference will source the rich gifts of one of the most vibrant regions of

World Christianity in terms of its spirituality and cultural life. The conference will promote the contribution of the African context to current perspectives and understandings of mission and to the shaping of mission theology and practice in the future. We will affirm through the Arusha Conference that Africa is not a mission field any longer in a colonial sense. Rather, as our ancestors dared to declare as early as in Mexico City in 1963, mission is “from everywhere to everywhere,” and the African churches and Christians are leading this multi-directional movement.

Dear sisters and brothers: Are we ready to learn from Africa what God’s mission is today? Are we ready to be led by Africa forward, together towards life?

This director’s report will provide the highlights of the CWME work from Athens 2005 to Arusha 2018. I will also try to reflect on the theme of the conference from a pragmatic perspective of CWME.

## **Athens 2005 – Healing and Reconciliation**

In May 2005, the Conference on World Mission and Evangelism met near Athens, Greece, for the first time in a majority Orthodox context and, for the first time, with representatives from the Roman Catholic Church and from Evangelical and Pentecostal churches as delegates with full participation. The theme was “Come, Holy Spirit, heal and reconcile: Called in Christ to be reconciling and healing communities.” This allowed for a more humble approach to mission, reminding ourselves of the priority of God’s, the Holy Spirit’s, mission in the world, as the only one able to really bring healing and reconciliation in the full sense of the term. Within that overall dynamic of the presence of God in the world, the churches have a specific calling, which is to be ambassadors of reconciliation, and in particular to build, renew, multiply spaces where humans can experience something of God’s healing and reconciling grace.

In Athens, we prayed, “Come Holy Spirit,” and tried to grasp the meaning of the pneumatological dimension of mission. The new WCC mission document *Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes* (TTL) develops a whole missiology in the dynamic of the Spirit and shows how this leads to a spirituality of transformation. The WCC tenth assembly in Busan, South Korea, called for a common pilgrimage of justice and peace, and now Arusha convincingly builds on all this with the theme of “Moving in the Spirit.”

## **Edinburgh 2010 – Convergence between Ecumenical and Evangelical Understandings of Mission**

In the changing landscape of mission today, it is questionable whether the dichotomy of ecumenical and evangelical perspectives is still relevant to envisioning the future of world Christianity. One could also ask whether it is rather a hindrance to reformulating the future of mission. In fact, it is imperative to articulate a new approach to revitalize mission through convergence and cooperation between the ecumenical and evangelical understandings of mission. It is vital to seek a way of overcoming the missiological confrontations of the last century and to attempt to develop a new synergy between the two approaches.

One of the most significant missiological developments in the early years of the 21st century is an increasing exchange and mutual respect between the ecumenical and evangelical movements of mission. The Edinburgh Centenary Conference in 2010 has enlarged the fellowship and led to reconciliation among different mission streams. It has increased confidence among the partners involved, allowed for sharing of leadership and provided space for each other. Its final aim was relational, reaching in the long term a form of *koinonia* in mission. The CWME intentionally remained in a more supporting role of Edinburgh 2010 to nurture the fellowship. The CWME was open in Edinburgh for constant updates, modifications, and reformulations of its own positions on mission and evangelism, in the search for a new consensus on the matter.

An analysis of the “Common Call” produced at the Edinburgh conference shows that positions that the CWME had defended for decades have now become somewhat common ground: *missio Dei*, empowerment and humility, creation as scope of mission, holistic content of gospel, mission from everywhere to everywhere, unity and mission. There has also been a particular emphasis on pneumatology, where one can discern the influence of Pentecostal traditions. Indeed, Edinburgh 2010 was a moment of celebration, healing, and convergence of the missionary movement.

## **Recommendations for Conduct**

“Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World: Recommendations for Conduct”: recommendations regarding respectful actions on the part of missionaries, evangelists, and other witnesses when sharing the Christian faith

were issued in 2011, following a five-year series of consultations among the WCC, the World Evangelical Association (WEA), and the Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue (PCID) of the Roman Catholic Church. The three bodies include a combined membership of some 2 billion people representing nearly 90 percent of World Christianity. The document represents a formal agreement on “the essence of Christian mission” while also demonstrating that diverse Christian bodies “are able to work together and to speak together.” It was an unimaginable achievement that the three major global Christian bodies reached a consensus on ethical principles when mission engages in conversion of other faiths. In the text, the trinitarian understanding of mission, the kingdom of God, and interreligious and intercultural dialogue are emphasized. The CWME evangelism desk has played a key role in the drafting process; its collaboration with WEA has continued in the TTL chapter on evangelism.

## **Manila 2012: Together towards Life**

With more than 200 participants from around the globe, the CWME Pre-Assembly Event was held in Manila, the Philippines. Its aim was to seek renewed thinking on mission and evangelism, developing a draft of the new WCC statement on mission and evangelism. Participants analyzed a draft of the statement on mission and evangelism to be presented at the WCC 10th Assembly in Busan, Korea, in 2013. “This new document offers us an opportunity to challenge the global church to move out further into the deep end of mission and evangelism to engage the life-denying realities that are enslaving people,” said Roderick Hewitt. “The church has a mission to recognize and empower the marginalized as subjects of mission and not as objects only. Those on the boundaries are the frontiers in mission who can provide a vantage point for a new mission thinking that generates creative alternatives,” noted Olav Fykse Tveit, WCC general secretary, in his opening address.

Since the integration between the IMC and the WCC in 1961, the WCC mission statement issued in 1982, “Mission and Evangelism: An Ecumenical Affirmation” had been the its only official position statement on mission. After the 9th WCC Assembly in Porto Alegre, Brazil, in 2006, the CWME had been working on a new statement which went through a number of revisions, including a major one after the Manila event. Subsequently, the document was unanimously approved by the central committee in Crete, Greece, in September 2012 and was adopted by the Busan assembly in 2013 as the new WCC position statement. Having received credit from both the WCC

central committee and the assembly, TTL is one of the most significant missiological texts in WCC history.

Steve Bevans evaluated: “As far as I know, no other WCC document has thought so thoroughly or consistently about the implications of mission when reflected upon through the lens of God’s ever-present, all-pervasive, always elusive Holy Spirit.” “The significance of the statement lies in its concept of ‘mission from the margins,’ which emphasizes the universality of working for all God’s people, as well as the creation, despite divisions,” said Agnes Abuom, moderator of the WCC central committee. Konrad Raiser affirmed, “TTL is one of the most creative ecumenical texts produced in the early years of the 21st century.”

I would like to highlight the following new paradigms and missiologically significant elements of the new WCC’s mission affirmation.

First, *the new ecumenical affirmation focuses on the mission of the Holy Spirit (missio Spiritus)* as its theological framework within the trinitarian understanding of mission (*missio Dei*). This with the intention to embrace dynamism, transformation, and diversity as the main concepts of mission in changing landscapes today.

Second, *the statement concludes that the goal of mission is affirming life in all its fullness*. As God’s mission is life-giving mission, it attempts constantly to discern how we can together participate in *missio Spiritus* through our common witness.

Third, *“mission from the margins” is considered as the statement’s defining and creative perspective*. It involves a radical reversal of perspective – from the false notion that mission is done by the rich and powerful for those who are poor and powerless to the recognition that it is among the poor and powerless where God is really acting, and where Christians are called to join in God’s work. People at the margins are thus the primary agents of God’s mission of affirming life in its fullness.

Fourth, *creation and spirituality are at the heart of mission*. In this statement God’s mission is understood beyond anthropocentric goals. God’s mission is not only for the salvation of humanity but embraces the earth and the whole creation. Spirituality is a key element that reconnects humanity with God, creation and neighbours, inspiring mission as transformation, thus emphasizing the cosmic dimension of mission and unity.

Fifth, the new affirmation is an ecumenical conviction. It articulates diverse understandings of mission of different traditions and contexts and comprehensively addresses them through ecumenical convergence. *The new landscapes of World Christianity are highlighted* with the concepts of mission from the margins, issues of migration and economic globalization.



Lastly, *the new statement strongly affirms a renewed commitment to evangelism in humility and respect*. Sharing the good news of Jesus Christ is a major concern of mission. In every generation and every context, it is life-saving news to the whole world. The text examines how to communicate the gospel in an individualized, secularized, and materialized contemporary world.

Through the work on the new mission statement, CWME has continued its ceaseless journey into another chapter of ecumenical understanding and practice of mission to discern together what God's mission is today and tomorrow!

## **Busan 2013: Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace**

The mission plenary was one of the major plenaries on the programme at the Busan Assembly, after two consecutive assemblies of not having a plenary on mission (Porto Alegre, 2006; Harare, 1998). Three ecumenical conversations took place on mission and evangelism for deepening discussions on the new way of thinking and practising mission. Several workshops were organized in collaboration with key mission partners. The new mission statement was presented and warmly received by the Assembly. The concept of *Together towards Life* has theologically inspired the unity document and the beginning of the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace. The new WCC Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME) was successfully appointed by the central committee and embarked on a new journey as a multilateral table for the churches and their mission agencies for ecumenical co-operation and reflection on mission, with a special mandate to organize the Conference on World Mission and Evangelism in 2018.

## **Mission from the Margins**

It was widely recognized that one of the most creative parts of the new mission statement is the chapter on "mission from the margins": It has successfully reversed the traditional concept of "mission to the margins" and highlighted the role of the marginalized as subjects of mission. The entire chapter was contributed and drafted by participants in the former WCC project Just and Inclusive Communities (JIC). From Porto Alegre to Busan, there has been very close collaboration with the JIC project and CWME in various levels and areas. On the basis of this experience, the CMWE commission meeting in the Cook Islands in March 2013 suggested a more structured cooperation with JIC in the post-Busan pragmatic structure of WCC, particularly on the

issues of Migration and Multicultural Ministry, Indigenous Peoples and the Ecumenical Disability Advocates Network (EDAN). Therefore, since 2014, the project of “Mission from the Margins” has been successfully integrated in the CWME.

## Missional Formation

Following the approval of the TTL by the central committee in 2012, the CWME has been working on promoting the use of the document in missional formation – in the formal academic context, in the training of missionaries, and at local congregational level. A consultation held at Kochi, India, in 2013 produced a practical guide. The Pietermaritzburg consultation in South Africa in 2014 charted the direction for this missional formation process. Since then, in a variety of contexts around the world, educators have been making use of TTL in the pedagogical process. The third consultation, held at Matanzas in 2016, provided an opportunity for critical reflection on the work that has been done and, in particular, gathered the insights and resources needed to create a guidebook to equip those responsible for mission education and formation to use TTL to its best advantage.

## Ecumenical Missiology: 2016

As part of its work on missional formation, the CWME was instrumental in the preparation of a textbook centred on TTL: Kenneth R. Ross, Jooseop Keum, Kyriaki Avtzi, and Roderick R. Hewitt, eds., *Ecumenical Missiology: Changing Landscapes and New Conceptions of Mission* (Oxford: Regnum and Geneva: WCC, 2016). This book begins with reflections on the 1910 Edinburgh Missionary Conference and ends with *Together towards Life*. These last three words embody and capture the identity and vocation of ecumenical missiology. The book maps the ecumenical journey of the church’s missional engagement in the world and what is involved in its calling to bear witness to Christ. The content is organized into three sections: (1) it explores the issues that have shaped the understanding of mission across the 20th century. It draws this resource from the vast body of global ecumenical mission documents from the IMC and later the CWME; (2) it examines the key issues with which ecumenical missiology has been concerned across the century and examines them on a thematic basis; (3) it critiques the themes raised in TTL and provides a methodology for critical engagement with the text.

## Sharing Good News: 2017

A tool for renewal, *Sharing Good News*, edited by Gerrit Noort, Kyriaki Avtzi, and Stefan Paas, is a comprehensive and timely contribution to the field of evangelism that takes full measure of the distinct challenges and opportunities that face Christians in the contemporary world. The CWME evangelism desk carefully and systematically developed this resource through a multi-year consultative process and harvested the outcome in this book. The volume includes a systematic ecumenical framework for understanding evangelism in the present context. It also contributes to the particular challenges raised by secularization, migration, and interreligious and cross-cultural encounter, and provides theological work on the meaning of evangelism in relation to mission, ecclesiology, and spirituality. Eight case studies illustrate best practices and new paradigms in evangelism. For students, professors, clergy, and practitioners, it offers important keys to revitalizing Christian evangelism in the lives and discipleship of Christians.

## International Review of Mission

*International Review of Mission* (IRM) is one of the major fruits of the Edinburgh 1910 World Missionary Conference and is known as “the mother of all periodicals in the field of Christian mission studies” (Brian Stanley). It has been my honour to serve as the 13th editor on behalf of the commission for the last ten years. When I took up this role in IRM, I was overwhelmed by the rich, over a century old history, the pioneering contributions to the establishment of missiology and the “big names” of predecessors who were ecumenical giants, too. Till today, whenever I feel stuck in my thoughts, I revisit the editorials of J. H. Oldham, William Paton, Lesslie Newbigin, Philip Potter, Emilio Castro, Eugene Stockwell, Christopher Duraisingh, Anna Langerak, Jacques Matthey.... Particularly, when I was working on a new mission statement, the dialogue with my predecessors was a source of inspiration and encouragement. I have realized that none of them had an easier task than I, but they constantly wrestled to find answers to the question “What is God’s mission today?” I hope I have kept safe this remarkable journey of IRM that began 107 years ago. Ten years ago, IRM was in a crisis for survival in the age of digital publication. It was a wise decision to collaborate with Wiley-Blackwell for a better quality and service for authors and readers. With all the unfailing support of WCC Publications and Wiley-Blackwell, I am proud to report that IRM is ranked 23rd out of the 381 registered journals on theology

and religious studies in SCOPUS. It is in the top position in missiology. My deepest thanks go to all of you who have contributed to and read IRM!

## **CWME Commission**

The CWME intends to offer spaces to churches and people or movements engaged in mission and evangelism for sharing reflections, experiences, questions, and discoveries on content and methods of Christian witness today. The main priority is to empower churches and mission bodies to be in common mission and to do it in Christ's way. CWME fosters conferences, consultations, study processes, publications, visits, correspondence and other forms of contacts to discern together what is God's mission today and how we can participate in it. The work reported on just above is the major outcome of collegial work done by the commission, working groups, and staff. Forty-two commissioners and advisors represent WCC member churches, affiliated mission bodies, and the wider constituency – the Roman Catholic Church, Pentecostals, and Evangelicals. They all serve the commission, which meets every two years. Between commission meetings, the officers, the executive group, and the working groups meet regularly and work together.

## **Mission in the Ecumenical Movement**

What can be the role of mission at this juncture in the history of the ecumenical movement? This year, the WCC is celebrating its 70th anniversary. It is also the 60th anniversary since the historic decision in Achimota to integrate the two councils: the IMC and the WCC. In his director's report in the Bangkok (1972/73) conference, Phillip Potter emphasized that "We have learned from the beginning of the ecumenical movement, the issues of unity and mission are inextricably bound together." He reminded people that the integration was mainly led by the younger churches, with a call for the whole church to embrace its missionary tasks.

The missionary movement has both inspired and given birth to the modern ecumenical movement during the last century as the churches have sought to respond to the challenges of history and to be witnesses to the good news of Jesus Christ for the world through visible unity. However, we are facing a sharp challenge to define the vision and relevance of the ecumenical movement within the changing ecclesial and global landscapes of today.

In Manila I had shared a reflection that there are three vantage points with regard to the distinctive role of mission within the wider ecumenical

movement. First, mission can play a prophetic role in bringing together unity and justice discourses in the ecumenical movement. Mission provides a holistic approach that helps to affirm the integrity of the ecumenical movement because of the way in which it connects people and contexts.

Second, mission can play a creative role in the midst of the dilemma between movement and institution by bringing new visions of movement. It is inevitable that we develop institutions as a means of trying to secure the integrity of the movement. However, over time the institution can lose the vision for the movement and fall into the temptation to only serve its self-interest. In such a situation, mission can provide the bridge between movements and institutions through missiological imagination and action.

Third, mission has a distinctive role between the church and development agencies within the WCC. Our forebears had an ambitious plan to challenge and transform churches to become missionary congregations, recognizing the role of the church as the primary agent of mission. In spite of this ambitious project we must ask, “Where is the location of mission in the WCC today?”

Mission is all about the face-to-face encounter of people. It is about the stories of God’s people responding to the calling to be common witnesses to hope in Jesus Christ. Mission has an important role in reclaiming the human face, the powerful stories and testimonies of God’s people, an experience that we have all enjoyed throughout our time together towards life. The human stories of all God’s people contributing to God’s mission in the power of God’s Spirit can serve as a much-needed continuous challenge to the church and the ecumenical movement. Therefore, it is highly important to continuously commit ourselves to the ecumenical movement and put the mission agenda at the heart of the church.

## **Arusha 2018: Transforming Discipleship**

How can we describe the time and context in which we are living today? Metropolitan Geevarghese Mor Coorilos claims, “There are new avatars of Herod. There are new emperors. This is a new imperial era where numerous ‘little empires’ are being created within the orbit of a ‘mega empire’ that is working in hegemonic ways. In India, for example, an unholy alliance of religious fundamentalism, caste mentality, and the ideology of neo-liberalism is creating a fascist empire.” Division, fundamentalism, violence, and discrimination are all on the increase everywhere in the world. In our socio-political cultures, the darker side of human nature is overwhelming and without any shame. Greed of power, money, violence, and claims of jealousy are competing to search for

victims. The top leadership of the “global empires” and “little empires” are openly creating the politics of fear based on discriminating and bullying the other, particularly the weak, the minorities, the stranger, and the poor. We are gathered here in Arusha to respond to these challenges with the quality of ecumenical fellowship, the quality of transforming discipleship.

## Rediscovery of Faith at the Margins

The incarnation of Jesus took place among the people at the margins. At the time of the birth of Jesus, the people who gathered around him were people outside of the power structures. The birth of Jesus was astonishing, threatening news for those decision makers. They never expected that God would be revealed among the ordinary people. God chose the margin to inaugurate his kingdom. God was and is encountered among the powerless and in unexpected locations, not only among the privileged and powerful. Therefore, no one can understand the good news of Jesus Christ without incarnating it in the context of the margins. Discussing mission only in a meeting room, or table ecumenism, is never enough.

TTL suggests the concept of mission from the margins as a new direction of mission: “Mission from the margins seeks to counteract injustices in life, church, and mission. It seeks to be an alternative missional movement against the perception that mission can only be done by the powerful to the powerless, by the rich to the poor, or by the privileged to the marginalized. Such approaches can contribute to oppression and marginalization....” Living on the margins, however, can provide its own lessons. People on the margins have agency, and can often see what, from the centre, is out of view. People on the margins, living in vulnerable positions, often know which exclusionary forces are threatening their survival and can best discern the urgency of their struggles; people in positions of privilege have much to learn from the daily struggles of people living in marginal conditions.

I believe this is the beginning of the renewal of authentic discipleship. Discipleship without being among the people at the margins is not a discipleship of Christ. The Christendom model of Christianity and mission which has existed as a form of state religion has been associated for a long time with power. It is impossible to imagine how we could carry out the mission of the church without institutions and resources. However, whatever the means might be, there is no other way than *kenosis*. The way of Jesus is the only way to empower the church, mission, and the ecumenical movement.

We work with the empowerment of the Holy Spirit and rely on God and people rather than institutional support and protection. Although we do not have “gold and silver,” we have joy and commitment to the gospel and passion for justice. I believe that bringing this dynamism to the heart of ecumenical mission thinking and action is the first step of rejuvenating our movement.

## **Power of Love to Defeat Politics of Fear**

One of the key themes of the pneumatological approach in mission is the Spirit’s mission of hospitality together with charisma, dynamism, healing, diversity, and transformation. A fruit of mission spirituality is love and shalom: “go in peace.” God’s shalom calls for a radical hospitality overcoming hostility (*Ubuntu*). God’s shalom introduces the mission of a transforming hospitality of justice. According to Sung Jae Kim, justice is not only a standard that rejects the evil of hostility and hatred toward refugees and migrants, but it is also the power to transform hatred and hostility into hospitality. God’s hospitality is unconditional and eschatological. It is not God’s mission merely to extend an invitation to the guests and treat them nicely. Rather, this is a matter of ontological mission, of being together as one family in God’s shalom (*Ujamaa*) – a missional vision of unity (*Umoja*).

In a world context of the rise of racism and extremism, one of the key goals of the Arusha Conference should be to reflect on how we understand and give expression to the power of God’s love defeating the culture of hatred and the politics of fear. Are we presenting God’s love as good only for another world because some of us do not want to risk losing the benefits and privileges that various forms of structurally embedded injustice bestow on us? If so, are we not limiting the power of God’s love by seeking to witness in ways that are safe and comfortable, limiting it to the realm of the purely personal, granted to or accessed on certain terms and conditions, and limiting it as one that numbs and soothes rather than as one that heals and transforms?

We do believe that the power of God’s love is superior to the powers of death. We affirm that the power of the risen Lord subjugates the powers of death, even as the rest of the world embraces or remains indifferent to the powers of death in God’s beloved world. How then can we witness to God’s love in ways that our witness nurtures, protects, and enhances life, while confronting and transforming the denial of God’s gift of life?

The *Ecumenical Affirmation* defines missionary discipleship: “The self-emptying of the servant who lived among the people, sharing in their hopes and sufferings, giving his life on the cross for all humanity – this was Christ’s

way of proclaiming the good news, and as disciples we are summoned to follow the same way.” Therefore, kenotic leadership is a concrete expression of our discipleship. Jesus defeated the Pharisees, the Sadducees, King Herod, and even the Roman empire by the power of love on the cross, not on top of the tower of the temple or the royal throne. “Mission is the overflow of the infinite love of the Triune God.”

It is time to ask ourselves as missionaries: Are we true disciples of the gospel? What does this question mean for being Christians in today’s world? In my view, this question is more important than any other missiological discourse in today’s context. It is not a matter of numbers or resources. It is the quality of discipleship that will prove decisive. It is time for the issues of authentic discipleship to be given priority attention in ecumenical mission understanding, given today’s context where faith in power and money is threatening the credibility of the gospel. Do we believe that the power of love can transform a world of hatred and injustice? “The only thing that counts is faith working through love” (Gal. 5:6).

## Hope as Agent of Change

In chapter 13 of the Book of Acts, there is a shift of the centre of gravity in mission from Jerusalem to Antioch. The Christians in Antioch elected five leaders for their mission and ministry. One of them, together with Paul and Barnabas, was Simeon from Niger. A new-born religious community in Antioch, now taking the name “Christian,” elected a black African slave as their leader. The election of a slave as leader of the community was such a shock that it stirred up the whole society, and ultimately the entire Greco-Roman world! There was neither discrimination nor exclusion from the good news of salvation. In this way, the disciples powerfully witnessed to the values of the gospel of the kingdom of God. Indeed, the gospel was a sign of hope and transformation to those people who were living in a hopeless situation.

We believe that the gospel has a power to transform the world: personality, value, class, system, and society. The gospel of the kingdom of God challenges the world that keeps nurturing hopelessness. The world was not able to silence the small group of disciples in Antioch. We, as the servants of God, have a mission to share the good news with all humanity and creation which are longing for hope.

According to the Gospel of John, the Jewish leaders tried to kill Jesus for the first time after he healed the person who had been waiting for 38 years beside the pool of Bethesda. They said he had broken the sabbath (John



5:1-18). The system of Bethesda, which allows the one who can run first to take everything (healing), must be broken. The structure which prohibits the suffering people to clasp hands and walk together into “the stirring water of life” has to be changed. The Bethesda, named as “the house of grace” but which has no grace at all, has to be demolished even on the day of sabbath. From there, Jesus Christ builds up the cross, a new temple, the community of hope among us on our road to Emmaus and to Arusha.

People will know by the instinct of their hearts who we are and what theology we are talking about. People know by the instinct of their hearts whether we really believe in the vision of the new heaven and earth. The Holy Spirit is creating many new hopes with people at the margins. Our mission is to reveal this hope from the margins to the world, as the church of Antioch did. Therefore, our mission as disciples is proclaiming the hope of “God’s kingdom is coming, and already among us”! In the midst of agonies, despair, and cries of life, it is our mission as transforming disciples to seek alternative values, ways of life and communities to reveal the kingdom of God on earth by the power of the Holy Spirit.

## Our Calling

We are here to convene this World Mission Conference on the theme of “Moving in the Spirit: Called to Transforming Discipleship.” Before we try to address the people outside this Ngurdoto campus, or dare to address the world, it is all about our calling first as a community of mission. “If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit” (Gal. 5:25). As we discern together the signs of the times, it is evident that despite the chaos of human disunity in which we live and witness today, there are many signs of the Holy Spirit giving life and creating hope here in Africa.

The world is broken. Therefore, it is imperative for the ecumenical movement to boldly witness the unity in the triune God and to live it out for the unity of humanity. The world is yearning for a Christian discipleship which reconciles the broken and troubled world. In order to do so, unity of the church and mission is not an optional agenda. For the church to be the light of the world, the role of Christian disciples is crucial. People see the vision of God’s kingdom through us. Therefore, we ought to rediscover the simplicity, inclusivity, joy, kenosis, empathy, and prophetic imagination of our discipleship. There is no other way than the one our Lord Jesus Christ walked before us.

We are called to be humble leaders of this mission and take upon us this costly discipleship. Witnessing to faith, love, and hope in Christ for the divided churches, suffering people, and a fragmented world! That is the reason why we are called to Arusha by the Spirit of mission, the Spirit of transformation.

We are called to be disciples who are ourselves transforming, and as such we are privileged to join in the mission of the triune God, working together towards life, living out the values of the kingdom of God, and engaging in mission from the margins. In a world in which injustice seems almost insuperable, where hatred and racism seem to thrive, where suffering is so widespread and terrifying, our discipleship is costly. “The mission of God is always a transforming mission.”

Thank you! *Asante!*

## 10. PANEL DISCUSSION ON THE ROLE OF CWME

---

### Mission Thinking and Formation *Roderick Hewitt*

This reflection on the conference theme, “Moving in the Spirit: Called to Transforming Discipleship,” led me to ask the following pertinent questions: a) What are the missiological implications of this theme in response to the world setting the agenda for the church’s mission? b) What are the implications for equipping the people of God, laity and clergy leadership, to embody transforming discipleship? So far, the year 2018 resembles 2017 but on steroids, possessed by an unpredictable and disruptive spirit that is forcing this generation to learn how to live with uncertainty in all areas of life. The colossal shifts in the global political, economic, and religious landscapes are fast-tracked by the fourth Industrial Revolution and the emergence of identity politics advocated by leaders using the legitimate fears of people(s) as political tools to advance their narrow nationalistic policies to benefit their support. This has resulted in an environment of growing distrust and alienation of political leaders. The populist rhetoric of political and religious groups is also challenging acceptable standards of tolerance, political centrism, diversity, and pluralism, resulting in a coalescing of ideological forces of hatred, throwing overboard political correctness, values of decency, truth-telling, compassion, and simply common sense to create a toxic brew of global instability.

It is within this precarious global environment of uncertainty and unpredictability that the church beyond 2018 must engage in ministry and mission that bears witness to “Moving in the Spirit: Called to Transforming Discipleship.” If *moving in the Spirit* conjures up notions of pilgrimage, of an ongoing journey of all believers that is led and guided by the Holy Spirit, then the church’s public missional witness in this very difficult social, political, economic, and religious global context requires transformative discipleship from all of its agents. This audacious theme postulates that the missional mode or state of the church’s presence within any given context must be a movement controlled by God’s Spirit. It affirms that the church as a missional and praxeological community is called into a transforming lifestyle of discipleship that offers a continuous mode bearing witness in Christ’s way. This process of

equipping disciples is therefore intended to facilitate a subversive pedagogy that transforms the people of God into a community of disciples.

According to David Watson, “Christians (especially) in the west have largely neglected what it means to be a disciple of Christ. The vast majority of Western Christians are church members, pew fillers, hymn singers, sermon tasters, Bible readers, even born again believers or spirit filled charismatics – but not true disciples of Jesus.”<sup>1</sup> I interpret the thrust of this theme to be a timely warning to all contemporary Christians that the church’s ministry and mission face a grave risk when our witness in this world is blinded by what Paul refers to as the “god of this world” (2 Cor. 4:4). This deceptive god has lured us into putting our trust into false securities of life that replace and displace the sovereignty of the triune God of life. The invitation to become transforming disciples is not a self-improvement project along the lines of “7 habits for highly effective leaders,” but rather a present-continuous process of Spirit-determined change that Paul describes as “are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit” (2 Cor 3:18). The transforming work of the Spirit is the process whereby disciples are empowered, “how you turned to God from idols, to serve a living and true God” (1 Thess. 1:9).

This is a pilgrimage journey that is characterized by relationships of missional accompaniment in which the disciples engage in apocalyptic hope that constantly puts up resistance against the death-bequeathing idols/powers of this age. The missional agenda of the transforming disciples hopes and works hard for a transformed world of justice and peace and a commitment to continuous renewal in Christ. The transforming process is empowered by the Holy Spirit that gives life and meaning to the teachings of Jesus in order that each believer may embody the gospel (gospel-shaped life) in words and action. Transforming discipleship therefore calls for full participation in the gospel through visible public actions that demonstrate allegiance to the sovereignty of God in all areas of our lives.

This missional understanding of transforming discipleship has major implications for the model of formation that it embraces to equip all of the people of God. The church, with its non-conformist missional/theological heritage, must embody the gospel in its life and work to rediscover its Spirit-empowered identity, vocation, and witness. Every local church must therefore “be the gospel” by challenging the enslaving idolatries in every community and be counter-cultural disciples that feed the hungry, clothe the naked, care for the sick, and visit the prisoners (Matt. 25:36).

---

1. David Watson, *Discipleship* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1981), 16.

Missional formation that transforms disciples intentionally involves all of the people of God being equipped to discern and engage in God's mission. It begins with equipping the local congregation in mission and extends into the specialized field of theological education for those who have recognized their sense of call and are further called to serve as the official servants of the church's ministry and mission. Transforming discipleship is therefore a constitutive mark of being church. Congregational formation and ministerial theological education belong to the very essence of the church. They are indispensable to renew and re-form the church's identity, vocation, and ministry. The next phase of the church's ministry and mission to respond to the contemporary changing global landscape necessitates relevant reimaginations of discipleship formation that are contextually relevant. The early disciples of Jesus confirmed that following him has costly political consequences because "These people who have been turning the world upside down .... They are all acting contrary to the decrees of the emperor, saying that there is another king named Jesus" (Acts 17:6b-7). Disciples who are transformed live out different scales of social, religious, economic, and political values from those which our culture may celebrate, and therefore it means that following Jesus in our age may involve treading a fine line between compromise and withdrawal from the different challenges of life.

The way forward for the global mission of the church necessitates that its model of transforming discipleship must *eschew its triumphalist domineering heritage* and be clothed with respect and humility but also with confidence, not being ashamed of the gospel of Christ in its interreligious dialogue for justice and peace. This model of discipleship formation must also be fully embodied and engendered in order to provide openness to the flourishing of all people, a participatory team of the community of women and men working together.

Deception is the biggest threat to the Christian discipleship in our era. Therefore, formation that facilitates transforming disciples must embrace not only interdisciplinary pedagogy but gender justice in leadership formation. It is the responsibility of every follower of Jesus to ensure that they are biblically literate, politically conscious, and economically wise and just in order to fulfil the charge that Jesus gave to all his followers that they must take responsibility and equip themselves, so that "no one leads you astray" (Matt. 24:4). Formation pedagogy that embodies transformative discipleship in Christ's way gives focused attention to

1. Restoring divinity in humanity and reasserting what it means to be human.

2. Formation of many leaders to “become the gospel” and to live it out in ways that can facilitate good governance and socially responsible citizenship within the communities they serve.
3. Restoration of justice; new hermeneutics of reading the Bible.
4. Facilitating praxis of social justice and responsibility, because it is only through risky participation in the struggles of people seeking justice and finding effective contemplative practices that they will be spiritually empowered to live positively in the fast-changing postmodern culture.

## **Mission as a Movement “Together towards Life”**

### ***Micheline Kamba Kasongo***

The Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME) statement has largely defined the keywords of our presentation, such as “mission,” “mission as movement,” “mission from the margins,” “together towards life.” The work on mission in the churches has been redefined through the new World Council of Churches (WCC) mission statement, *Together towards Life* (TTL). Churches and mission actors have been invited to “re-think mission and its implications in evangelism as the action of the Spirit of God in the life of our World.” In other words, the issue of the margins has to be the centre of the mission. Thus, after the Busan Assembly in 2013, WCC structures that have been taking part in the mission programme are the Ecumenical Disabilities Advocates Network (EDAN), Indigenous peoples, migration, multicultural activities, and others.

The CWME states: “Mission has been understood as movement taking place from the centre to the periphery, and from the privileged to the marginalized of society.” This statement leads me to frame this paper in a disability perspective in the African context. I will use the passage of Acts 3:1-10. The research on which this paper is based sought to explore this text that I named “holistic healing for a transformative church.”

### **Curing or Healing?**

It is important to understand the difference between two words in the church mission, because as Theo Schmidts says, many churches have been using “hurting ministry” instead of “healing ministry.” In today’s context, people with

disabilities have felt hurt by events in the church or in crusades during the healing prayers. I argue that the use of a wheelchair, white cane, or walker for campaigning and attracting people to attend healing services or healing crusades, is a sign of humiliation and disrespect for people with disabilities. Thus, the simple difference is that *curing* is the restoration of health, an absence of symptoms and a remedy of disease, while *healing* is the restoration of wholeness.

### **Healing in This Text**

Healing in this text concerns the inclusion and respect of a human being, treating them with equality. Reinders says, “Every human being has an interest in being treated with equal respect, including the mentally disabled, inasmuch as everyone has an interest in being included as a respected member of society.”

Therefore, my overall objectives are the following:

- To raise awareness of disability issue. Disability is considered a global problem. It is a normal phenomenon to the extent that it exists in all societies and affects each population in a predictable and identifiable way. Ignoring this issue brings a crisis: this crisis manifests itself in the inequality of gender, the exclusion of people with different capacities, and the disregard for human rights.
- To engage in critical thinking and practice about what is meant by being in mission of movement. As I said at the beginning, the churches through the CWME statement in Busan have redefined the mission from the margins; together towards life is a challenge for a transformative church.
- To offer a new biblical understanding on the text of healing. The healing here is what I called “holistic healing,” the different ways of “moving together.” It changes the way we consider and see people differently in order to live in an inclusive society.

### **Mission as Movement**

Mission has been understood as movement because it gives place to marginalized people. The CWME says, “Now people at the margins are claiming their key role as agents of mission and affirming mission as transformation.” This had been started in the genesis of the ministry of Jesus.

### **Healing in the Gospel**

The link between Acts 2:43 and Joel’s prophecy (Joel 2:28-32) demonstrated “the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Jesus’ disciples and announces the good

news with healing and miracles.” In other words, the healing and miracles in the gospels and in the book of Acts show how the excluded have been integrated into society by Jesus’ ministry, emulated by the apostles.

### **Healing in the Context of Mission**

The expression “stand up and walk” (Acts 3:6b) contrasts with the man who spent a lifetime sitting and being carried, signs of his uselessness and hopelessness. When Peter (and John) told him to stand and walk, this gave him a sense of hope and the strength to restart his life, to be independent and to be free. Hence for this man, before he could receive physical healing, his soul and mind had to be healed. I like this biblical passage because it reveals three types of healing: social healing, physical healing, and spiritual healing. Thus I call it “holistic healing.”

### **Social Healing**

- Social healing is what verse 8 refers to in saying that once the man is cured, he enters the temple. This means that he joins other people; he joins his community in the temple.
- The text informs us that the man was carried all the time, but during the prayers he was left outside alone. He was a beggar, a poor man, and an “impure” man, excluded from activities such as prayer in the temple. He may have been a beggar for a long time, because those who went into the temple for worship knew and recognized him (v. 10). This means that the way they used to see him sitting was different from when they saw him standing and walking. Therefore, this changed the minds of people who portrayed and discriminated him.

### **Physical Healing**

Physical healing is referred to in the phrase “in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth ... walk” (vv. 6-7); it is also referred to in verse 8: “jumping up, he stood and began to walk.” This shows that through this name the power did flow: the “cripple’s” feet and ankles were strengthened and the man walked and leaped, living proof of the power of Jesus. The healing was instantaneous (a miracle), without further treatment needed. In this part I highlight the paradigm shift, the man’s change of position: he used to sit, being unable to stand and walk; but with words and action he was able to stand up and walk, even to jump. This is a visible change that this man experienced. The fact that he moves forward to a new life makes his life story different.



## **Spiritual Healing**

The spiritual healing described in verse 8 highlights that the first thing this healed man did was to enter the temple, approach the throne of God, and give thanks. The text seems to imply that the man might have been taught that he must sit outside the temple – not to pray, but to approach people to beg for money. He might also have been taught that he was impure, separated from God, and that only once he was healed could he enter the temple. Thus, when he felt strengthened in his feet and ankles, he entered the temple, “walking and leaping and praising God” (v. 8b).

## **Summary of My Interpretation**

I speak as a person with a disability who has experienced failed physical healing.

I demonstrated in my reflection that physical healing is not the only form of healing in this text, though initially, this story, in the Acts of the Apostles, aimed to supply many signs and miracles performed by the apostles.

There are other forms of healing (emotional, social, and psycho-spiritual) that I described above which challenge people with disabilities as well as leaders of the Christian church, who think that when a person with a disability is not healed, he or she is being denied fellowship with God and fellowship with other people.

## **“Together towards Life” in this context is the shifting to another life**

In this text I argue that before this man was physically healed, Peter and John took time to talk with him to show him that silver or gold could not limit his life. Therefore, he has to move on and see further in his life.

I noted that it is not the fact that this man could stand and walk which amazed people. Instead it is the way he scaled up to another new life. I do not deny supernatural healing because I do know that God is all-powerful in everything.

My understanding of physical healing here is the fact of seeing the person shifted to another level that was not expected, because many persons with disabilities have been so alienated by the culture and tradition of their context that they cannot do anything in their lives because they are disabled. Therefore, my statement to church leaders is that through liberative education, it is possible to empower persons with disabilities to revive hope and a new life.

In conclusion, my reading of this text is as a church leader for effective awareness of the integration of persons with disabilities in church. I should recognize that they need assistance to discover their real identities so they can take leadership in their respective communities for a transformative church.

## Mission: Unity and Diversity

### Susan Durber

I thank you for the privilege of speaking in this plenary and of being part of this gathering. I speak on behalf of the Faith and Order Commission, partner with the other World Council of Churches (WCC) commissions, embracing fellow travellers on the pilgrimage of justice and peace.

The ecumenical movement has always begun with mission. Whether you think of the 1910 Edinburgh conference or whether you have in mind the recent Faith and Order publication *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*, the search for unity begins with mission. And it begins not with *our* mission, but with God's mission, with God's great design for all creation.

But working out what that great design truly is has not always proved straightforward. There have been significant moments in all our journeys when we have recognized that we have often too easily confused our *own* designs with God's design. We have confused empire with mission. We have merged mission and development. We have pursued our own programmes and purposes and forgotten to listen to what God is already seeking to do among us, in Jesus Christ and through the gentle power of the Holy Spirit.

We have always needed one another to show us when we have deceived ourselves and forgotten that the mission is not ours, but God's, and that God's great design above all is revealed in Jesus Christ. We have come to see that, in order to understand the great design of God for the world, we need each other in all our diversity. We are none of us wise or discerning enough *on our own* to see the Christ who embodies the presence and the purposes of God. I need the Christ who lives in you, as you need the Christ who lives in me. Our unity is not needed so that we can feel good and at ease with one another, but so that we might see at last the truth that God is bringing.

The world today, and the church too, readily celebrates diversity. And diversity is well worth celebrating. It is good that God has made such a beautiful world full of difference and colour and distinctiveness. We have come to value the local, the particular, the distinctive identity, the different and the other. But the world, and to some extent the church today, has also begun to turn its face away from those things that might hold us, different though we are, together. There's a reaction now against internationalism, a suspicion of global agencies, even a questioning of words like "unity," in case they signify the domination of one community or path over another. In such a world the church has a radically counter-cultural witness to bring, a witness to a God who makes *communion* between those who are different, who invites us into

a truly “catholic” church, through time and history and across the world, a Christ who prays “that they may be one.” At the Uppsala Assembly of the WCC in 1968, we said that “catholicity is the opposite of all forms of egoism and particularism.” In a time when separation and difference are sometimes turned to violence and terror, we witness to a God who calls those who are different from one another to find their true and profound unity, to find the things that hold them together. We can share in God’s mission in many and different ways, but there will always be a need to say together, and in a clear *unison* voice, what we have discovered together about the fundamental nature of God and of God’s mission. There are times to celebrate diversity, but always, for Christians, it is a diversity bounded by a unity of love.

We will never be able to share in God’s great design fully unless we can do that together. From tackling climate change to bringing gender justice, from celebrating creation to proclaiming Christ, we cannot do these things fully and wholeheartedly and effectively unless we do them together, being clear with ourselves and with the waiting world about what we can say with one voice and with confidence and hope, too.

I want to celebrate the way in which the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism has always been committed to empowering churches and mission bodies to be engaged in *common* mission, in Christ’s own way “towards life.” I know that we need now to find ways to do this that are right for these times: post-colonial, attending to the world as it is and not as it was, faithful and adventurous, alive to the present but also profoundly rooted in the traditions of our shared faith. And we will need to look at those things for which the world often has little patience today: turning to our common roots, believing that people who are different really can be in true unity, and bringing down walls. We, as churches, should celebrate our global reach, our lived unity, our common traditions, not being defensive about such things, but properly proud of what God has done and is doing among us.

I am delighted that the Faith and Order text *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* has just been translated into Swahili, Mandarin, Bahasa Indonesian, and Armenian. We speak many different languages. We come from many different cultures and many different churches. And yet, and yet, in all our diversity we are still being made one people by the one God revealed in Jesus Christ and present with us in the Holy Spirit. So, may God who is Trinity bless us in the coming days of our meeting, that we may discover that profound oneness that the world cannot give, but that God is making among us as we embrace a “transforming discipleship.”

## **Arusha 2018 and Global Mission**

### ***Christoph Anders***

Moderator, dear Arusha participants, sisters and brothers,

It is my privilege and honour to speak in this plenary. I bring greetings from churches and mission organizations in Germany, such as Evangelische Kirche Deutschland (EKD) Evangelische Missionswerk (EMW). World mission conferences have often set the course for future debates, and I am convinced that this meeting in Arusha will prove to be very important for the global mission movement. Therefore I wish to mention four points.

#### **Discipleship in Secularized Contexts**

In my country, the waves of the Reformation Jubilee have subsided. The multi-vocal reality of Reformation as a “world citizen” and the ongoing relevance of its basic insights have been studied. The importance of education and formation for the global church was discussed in the Twin Consultation on Reformation, Education, and Transformation. There was a growing understanding of challenges and blessings for discipleship in European churches, marked by processes of secularization. We noted, however, that similar phenomena can be observed in regions outside the global North. In some corners of the worldwide mission movement there seem to be rather critical perceptions of secularization. For some, the visible results seem to be a failure of churches’ ministry and mission that they understood as a bulwark of resistance.

There are challenges for churches and Christians as followers of Jesus in highly secularized contexts. But by God’s grace true discipleship was, is, and will be possible in the churches of our region – and like in any other province of World Christianity, it is “costly,” using a phrase of Bonhoeffer’s. We have to accept new forms of committed faith practices defined by individuals outside the churches which may be examples of a possibly transforming discipleship. Churches, even those declining in numbers, want to stay close to the majority of people in their sufferings and hopes, but they also try to be present in the public sphere, willing to contribute to meaningful transformations of their societies. Clear standpoints are needed, but in doing so, Christians must respect plurality as a given, just like the irreducible diversity of world views and religious mindsets. This is the context, not the opponent of our mission and discipleship. So we wish to understand more deeply how far these experiences are relevant – not only for churches in Europe, but in other regions also.

## **Discipleship and Ways of Peace and Justice**

The difficult situations refugees and migrants face are discussed worldwide. In some European countries, this has turned out to be crucial for a peaceful coexistence; debates are often linked with the fact that the majority of refugees do not share Christian faith. Religious polarization and hostility are disturbing trends. Transforming discipleship needs to include the ministry of reconciliation, and old questions gain new urgency: What is the place for mission in the dialogue with people of other faiths? Can discipleship be Christ-oriented and yet open to crossing religious borders in joined action and spirituality for the fullness of life? In many countries, churches are confronted with growing tendencies of populism. Religions are often misused in such contexts; as a result, mainstream opinions in our societies tend to consider religions as a source for militancy rather than a contribution to peace. Here our witness needs to be committed to the struggle for freedom of religion and belief for all. We join in the prayer “God of life, lead us to Justice and Peace”!

## **Discipleship as a Call for Unity**

A shared understanding of a Spirit-moved and Christ-centred discipleship could make this conference a further encouraging step on the way toward a growing convergence between ecumenically oriented and evangelically grounded mission movements. In the worldwide reception processes of the ecumenical documents *Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World* and *Together towards Life* (TTL) from the World Council of Churches, we have experienced hopeful signs. For an ecumenical and missional presence of churches, it is of high importance that this meeting can strengthen cooperation with the Roman Catholic Church and the Pentecostal movement. These are central tasks of every world mission conference: to understand more deeply the diversity of Christian witness, to stand up against competition and fragmentation, to empower the fellowship in transforming discipleship, and to develop perspectives for a growing unity in church and mission.

## **Biblical Notion**

During our meeting we will certainly discuss many aspects, such as margins and centres, global North and global South, and World Christianity. I would like to close with Luke 13:29. Jesus tells us: “Then people will come from east and west, from north and south, and will eat in the kingdom of God.” At the end of times there is the call of God’s kingdom to all people. And they start to move on a very special pilgrimage because they are called to be part of a great feast, a divine banquet – a beautiful vision, which TTL also closes with. Sitting at God’s table, there will be ample time: no list of agenda items but a

perfect mutual understanding. Here in Arusha, the time is limited, but let's pray that our meeting will become a humble foretaste of this eschatological banquet.

Let's sit together at our tables full of joy and tell discipleship stories, listen to each other, and discuss different opinions. We will learn about the signs of the Spirit in different regions of the world, sing, and praise the Lord. Then, empowered by each other and God's Spirit, we may go home from Arusha to our countries as true disciples: serving the needs of the people, transforming our societies, and proclaiming the glory of the triune God.



*Participants in the WCC Conference on World Mission and Evangelism gather in Arusha, Tanzania, for six days of celebration, reflection, and prayer on "Moving in the Spirit: Called to Transforming Discipleship"*







*Dancers perform at the opening ceremony of the conference*



*Participants at Mission from the Margins plenary*



*Youth with signs at the Missional Formation plenary*



*Bishop Dr Fredrick Onael Shoo of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania addresses the gathering service*



*Daily Bible study deeply informed the conference and its understanding of discipleship*



*Orange consensus cards were for conference decision-making*

*Students staff an information booth at the conference Sokoni or marketplace*

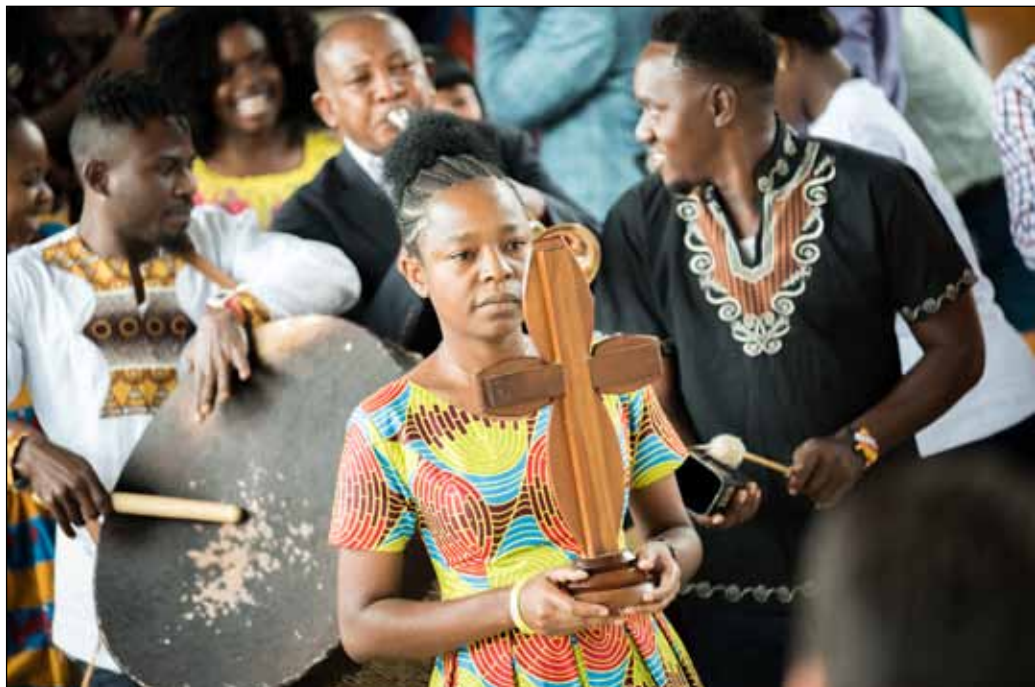




*Drummers perform at the plenary session on evangelism*



*Conference stewards pose for a group selfie*



*A procession at the opening session of the Global Ecumenical Theological Institute (GETI), held in conjunction with the conference*



*Theological students catch the spirit*



*Students plant trees as part of their service learning day*





*Witnesses delivering a message from the women of the conference*



*"Amen" in sign language expressed during the plenary session on Mission from the Margins*



*Dr Agnes Abuom reads a message from the women of the conference*



*A little girl accompanies her mother, as the choir from the Tanzanian Maasai Tribe performs*





*A congregation of over 1,000 people, the Arusha Mjini Kati Lutheran Church gathered to celebrate Sunday service, together with international visitors participating in the conference*



*Accepting the flame: morning prayer on the final day of the conference*



*A school choir from Arusha performs at the conference*



## **PART FOUR**

### **In Arusha: Thematic Plenaries**

# 11. PERSPECTIVES ON EVANGELISM AS CONTEXTUAL AND PROPHETIC

---

## A European Perspective *Dimitra Koukoura*

### Need for Evangelism

The workshop was discussing evangelism. A young man from the global South was studious and devoted to his missionary call. His question was spontaneous: “Who brought the gospel to your country? Since when have you been Christians?”

I replied: “Since the apostle Paul proclaimed the gospel of grace and truth in my hometown of Thessaloniki and in other Greek cities known from the Acts of the Apostles, eventually reaching Rome. Then, until the end of the first millennium, the Word of God spread throughout the European continent and beyond.”<sup>1</sup>

The young man was a little surprised, but he continued to ask: “If you Europeans have been Christians for almost two thousand years, why are your churches not full on Sunday and why do you not have young people among you?”

I agreed in part with the point of view, adding: “It is undoubtedly necessary to rekindle Christian testimony in Europe.”

The flame that enlightened the nations in Europe by offering the crucified and resurrected Christ as a way out of the fear and shadow of death (Matt. 4:16) has not been extinguished at all. In many cases, however, it has been “driven out” (Matt. 5:1).

### The Infrastructure of Indifference

The secularization of society, globalization, individualism, and indifference to religion are usually referred to as the root causes of the decline of Christian faith in Europe. To these should be added the storm of totalitarian regimes that prevailed for decades of the 20th century in many of its countries, and with inhuman means attempted to uproot the faith in the God of love from everywhere: from the way of life, from the memory, and from the heart of Christians. In the late 20th century, these regimes collapsed, but the virus of

---

1. See the missionary work of Sts Cyril and Methodius with the Slavic people (ninth century) and the work of their disciples with the Russians (tenth century).

atheism that has systematically penetrated the consciousness of three generations is difficult to heal.

But the test of Christian faith in Europe had already begun much earlier. The Age of Enlightenment overcame logic and aspired with intellectual human functions and technological means to interpret and control natural creation. Religious faith has been overcome, overpowered, and undermined.

Since then, the achievements of scientific research and its technological applications have been marvellous and beneficial to the peoples of all the earth. However, the dark aspects of the Enlightenment, individualism, exploitation, corruption, hypocrisy, and amoralism led to the current crisis of values that plagues Europe.

### **Mission: Sharing of Gifts**

It is time to place the lamp on the lampstand (Matt. 5:15), to illuminate those who will want to be in tune with the wavelength of God's grace and take up its gifts.

The message of the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church (Crete, 2016) clarifies the theological background of mission, its purpose, and its results:

Faithfully following the example of the Apostles and our god-bearing Fathers we have once again studied the gospel of freedom "for which Christ has set us free" (Gal. 5: 1). The foundation of our theological discussions was the certainty that the Church does not live for herself. She transmits the witness of the gospel of grace and truth and offers to the whole world the gifts of God: love, peace, justice, reconciliation, the power of the Cross and of the Resurrection and the expectation of eternal life.<sup>2</sup>

These gifts are invaluable and respond to the deeper needs of every human being. The question is how the recipients will be cultivated to receive them and how, after an initial enthusiasm, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, they will grow into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom they will also be built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit (see Eph. 2:20-22).

In a troubled field, the surface grass can cause temporary missionary euphoria. In Europe, however, the Christian faith resembles a tree with very deep roots and abundant spiritual fruits that have given hope and meaning to the lives of countless people through the ages. What is needed now is careful care with modern and effective methods for new fruition.

---

2. <https://www.holycouncil.org/-/message>

The transfer and reception of the message of the gospel is a complex process involving several equally important factors. For this reason, communication planning is being adopted by churches in Europe either for the re-evangelization of those who have been removed from the eucharistic community or for the evangelization of those who have never heard of the redemptive work of Jesus Christ.

Sowing is the work of Christ's associates; fruitfulness is the work of the risen God (2 Corinthians 9:11). The life of the church to date has shown that words are not convincing when not accompanied by similar works. And works are never enough if they do not come from an unwavering spiritual experience of the presence of Christ within human existence. Those who love God with all their soul and in all their intellect are those who give the good testimony of his love, peace, and righteousness. The light of the divinity that sanctifies the holy people – men and women – is the one that beams all over the home and leads other people to know and glorify the Father in heaven.

## **A Chinese Perspective**

### ***Manhong Melissa Lin***

A good friend of mine once shared this story with me. When she was in college many years ago, she tried to share the gospel with a classmate. But the classmate said that her whole family, including herself, were pious Buddhists and there was no way for her to be converted to a religion that was different from what her whole family embraced. My friend did not go any further because she didn't want to follow the earlier missionaries' teaching by implying that Buddhism was "a bad religion" for leading people's souls astray. She knew how to respect people's choice to follow a different religion, and therefore did not have the confidence to convince her friend. Without much contact with each other after graduation, around ten years later, at a class reunion, to her great surprise, my friend heard that her classmate had become a devoted Christian. During her time studying abroad, she felt so lonely that she desired to find something to meet her spiritual needs; she happened to pass by a church where she overheard beautiful singing inside. She had a strong feeling that this was a religion that could be trusted because it was once sincerely introduced to her by a classmate who was a trustworthy person. She started to visit that church and was later baptized there.

There might be various factors that brought this person into Christianity, but one thing worth mentioning is that the seed of the gospel was first sown by a trustworthy person. A trustworthy person is someone who practises what she or he preaches. For Chinese people, the practice is often more important than the preaching, as the ancient Chinese philosopher Confucius has said: "Judge people by their deeds, not just by their words." Within such a Chinese cultural context, to follow Jesus is to demonstrate our "good works" that can be seen, so that the name of our heavenly Father can be glorified (Matt. 5:16), and to bear "good fruits" to witness to who we are (Matt. 7:16-20). The growth of the Chinese church does not rely on any door-to-door evangelism or popular evangelists conducting massive outdoor revival meetings, but on the personal witness of each individual Christian. Chinese Christians are always encouraged to strive to live a life that is transformative, both for our spiritual journey and for our daily life. The exciting part is that our good works may unexpectedly bring people to Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit.

Nevertheless, Chinese Christians' good works do not merely serve the purpose of expanding the church. Otherwise, it would represent the lack of a comprehensive understanding of evangelism, and it would be discouraged in the Chinese context. Christians in China, as in most other Asian countries, are a small minority, surrounded by a vast number of people who either have no religious belief or follow other religious traditions. It is quite unlikely that all people would embrace Christianity even if Christians made enough effort, as envisioned by traditional missiology. At least, this is not going to happen in the foreseeable future. Then what are the Christians' "good works" and "good fruits" for? They exemplify the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. To follow Jesus in the Chinese context is to live out a Christ-like life. It is to let people see Christ in us. As long as the image of Jesus Christ is manifested to people through our love for our neighbours, our care for the strangers, our responsibility for society, and all other kinds of good works, whether they join the church becomes less important. The church is more about quality and less about quantity. It is not about success in numbers, but about whether it is faithful to Jesus' teaching by truly being the light of the world and the salt of the earth. To do evangelism in the Chinese context is to sow the seeds of the gospel and water them, in a Chinese way, and to pray for the growth with joy.

Evangelism in China, a country with a 5,000-year history, culture, and civilization, without being contextual is impossible. Evangelism in China is prophetic, and in a Chinese way. Prophecy in biblical narratives was about proclaiming the encouraging, liberating, and reconciling good news from God, and passing criticism on religious unfaithfulness and social injustice. In



the Chinese context, the prophetic good news should address the real concerns and issues of people's daily life more than the eschatological concern of soul-saving for eternity that was overemphasized by the old missionary movement which was prevalent in the Chinese church but is less relevant to the common Chinese people, who have always had more concerns about the here and now and this world since ancient times. For example, when a pupil of Confucius asked the Master about the meaning of death, the Master replied: "Know the meaning of life first, and then the meaning of death." The prophetic good news is about the transformation of the whole person: the soul, body, and mind; it is about transforming people's ways of living and the values they hold. To actively participate and play a constructive role in society is an effective way for the Chinese church to bring good news to people, and to criticize the injustice in society. Criticism usually tends to be in a more negative form to point out the faults and to urge correction. The collective witness of the Chinese church is to serve as a positive form of criticism to show Chinese people, including Christians, what is good, equal, and just, what is right to do, and what the Lord requires of us.

In his recent keynote address at the Christian Conference of Asia, Sri Lankan theologian Wesley Ariarajah pointed out that most of the prophetic criticisms in the Hebrew Bible and in Jesus' time were directed not only to social issues, but also toward the religious institutions of which the prophets were a part. To enable evangelism in the Chinese context to be more prophetic, the churches in China continue to engage in self-criticism and self-reflection to challenge our own belief and practices. These engagements include reflecting on whether we have enough humility to respect the traditional and contemporary Chinese cultures where the Holy Spirit is at work and where the gospel has been rooted, and to respect other religions and their followers by seeing them as companions on the pilgrimage of seeking wisdom, truth, and goodness, instead of condemning them as pagans, as the early fundamentalist missionaries taught. Our self-reflections, among many, also include how to address the issues of the negative influence of consumerism and the ideology of prosperity in our church, and the trouble of proselytism coming from outside.

In conclusion, the endeavours of Christian personal witness, the church's living out a Christ-like life, being content to be a small minority, addressing people's actual concerns and problems, actively participating and playing a constructive role in society, self-criticism and reflection, and many other factors jointly make evangelism both contextual and prophetic in China.

## **A Congolese Perspective**

### ***Isis Kangudie Mana***

I come from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It is based on the current reality in my country that I would like to speak to you and suggest appropriate corrective actions of an evangelism that can offer the Christian faith the strength to be an agent of profound and positive change in a fragile socio-political context, as is the case of the Congolese society.

I see this evangelism as a dynamic founded on a clear analysis of the hopes and expectations of the people in their understanding of the word of God, to broaden the horizons of a new way of recognizing their specific problems and solve them before God.

In view of the above, I dare to believe that the people of my country await the fulfilment of two requirements by Christian communities:

- continued attention to the meaning of their cries to God for their current political, economic, and socio-cultural situation; and
- a prophetic act to make people stand up for the changes according to the project that God has for his people in the Congo.

### **The Misery of a Whole People and Its Spiritual Significance**

In my humble opinion, the Democratic Republic of the Congo is currently under a political deadlock. Indeed, its ruling class and the political powers that seem to oppose it are unable to speak a language of truth and to trust each other in order to not only determine the higher interests of the state, but also to find a credible way to curb the other's institutional crisis. This will allow the creation and/or recreation of the conditions for a normal political life, along with credible elections able to help the people choose responsible leaders who will promote stable institutions that are committed to safeguarding their citizens and guaranteeing lasting peace. The majority of my country's politicians (including not only those in power but those in opposition as well) seem to me to be short-sighted, and the people agree with that vision.

Therefore, the political spectrum seems obstructed, and there is nothing to suggest that things will change in the short term. Shielded in themselves and by their capacity for violence, my political leaders of yesterday and of today only listen to themselves and those who worship them. However, they seem to dismiss any possibility of listening to the cries of the people who languish in indescribable misery. They are probably deaf. As for the opposition, it is diverse and no longer believes in peaceful change. This is how it steadily calls

the people to take charge in order to change things. Simply put, it invites people to fall into a logic of popular insurgency, for which some youth movements are already preparing.

Even civil society (at least one fringe of it), which is supposed to be working toward reconciliation of the operating powers for political and social peace, has strongly denounced the popular protest and the revolutionary action for change led by the people. Despite incessant calls by certain personalities and certain peace-promoting social groups – which defend true dialogue between political forces and call for a respect for the electoral calendar, in which no one seems to wholeheartedly believe – we feel that the country is in a political deadlock.

At the economic level, the reign of misery, suffering, and desperation today spreads its leaden cloak over the minds, hearts, and lives of the people. In the countryside as well as in the outskirts of big cities of the Congo, misery befalls the country before our very eyes with the devastation of innumerable diseases, visible signs of malnutrition in children and adults, the unbounded desolation of women who no longer know to which saint to turn to feed their children, and the despair of men before a country where the prospect of paid work seems truly unavailable. The violence of armed groups, official military forces and rebels on all sides dictates their laws over large parts of the Congolese land. Many men and women feel helpless, without real prospects for a better life.

Against this backdrop of death, the economy has become one of predation, corruption and constant extortion of public funds by faithless and lawless individuals across the board. The determination and ambition of getting the country organized to benefit the community have gradually dissipated. In my opinion, there is almost no State, in the true sense of the word, to regulate economic life. The gap between the rich, who accumulate the wealth of the country for their own benefit, and the poor, who are condemned to live in dire circumstances and unending misery, creates conditions for social turmoil that is brewing and in some circles is being planned. The DR Congo has its life hanging over a volcano; several country analysts await the great sinking of the Congolese nation into the bottom of a true volcanic abyss. It is this anticipation which portrays the biggest economic reality of the country: the fatal ending that would allow us to start from scratch.

This situation prompted a Congolese senator to write a book with an eloquent title: *La République des Inconscients* [The Republic of the Oblivious]. It speaks for itself. For those oblivious Congolese, music production serves as catharsis to forget the misery and to give an appearance of permanent happiness. In the Congo, music provides collective therapy, with great artists who offer great dance opportunities and unlimited pleasures to the public. The

country has thus become that of drunken dance parties and booming brothels where everything is drowned in alcohol and carnal glories. Everything: the worries, the miseries, the desperation, and death itself. Indeed, many of my fellow countrymen and women have found another way of false redemption through binge drinking. The DR Congo could, without a doubt, be one of the African nations where bistros, bars, dancing clubs, and nightclubs swarm every square kilometre. My country is framed, controlled, and appallingly regulated by breweries that design and create multiple brands of beer intent on making people drunk and drowning in unconsciousness.

In light of the above, I find that my country's socio-cultural situation has now become that of being accustomed to misfortune on the part of the population and of being confined to idiotic religiosities that expect that heaven will provide the solution for the problems of the Congo. We pray, we pray, we pray, night and day, and nothing changes. We fast and we organize endless invocation sessions to God without the country moving a single inch toward profound and positive change.

### **The Way Out of a Fatal Despair**

I have just described my country's political, economic, and socio-cultural context. On that subject, I have said nothing new. Everyone knows these realities, and everyone talks about them extensively, often excessively, and without the needed counterweight over the powers of resistance and resilience which abound in the country. This depreciative way of speaking about the Congo will not pave the way for a new evangelism of the country, such as the one I would like to speak to you about today. I will now take a positive and hopeful perspective and tell you what is left to say about my country from a prophetic evangelism perspective.

When we want to announce the Word of God in a politically fragile context such as the one I described, there is no point in dwelling on its at once striking dark side and feel overly scared. The Congolese people do not need an evangelism that tells them all day long what is wrong with them. They know better than anyone else all the dark forces that plunge them into desperation. They know in their flesh and soul what they endure day after day: the way of the cross for their fate and their misfortunes. What they need is to be shown specifically how the gospel gives them the physical strength, creates an imaginary of resilience and full life, opens up paths of hope, and makes them stand up to create an alternate destiny.

This is the evangelism that should truly be called prophetic evangelism.

It is prophetic in that it sees in a context of death a need for resurrection: "where sin increased, grace abounded all the more" (Rom. 5:20). It does not

focus on a catastrophic situation to imprison people in tombs of calamities. Its perspective is to show how Christ came to free the Congolese out of his tomb and create a new Congolese man, a new Congolese woman. Through this perspective, faith in Christ empties the Congolese political, economic, and sociocultural tombs of their essence of death, it empties them of their dead bodies so that the Congo and the Congolese come out alive, truly alive, into the plentiful life force.

With such a message, above all we aim for the creation and construction of the new imaginaries within the Congolese being: the imaginaries of faith in the Congolese humanity renewed in Christ for a standing Congo. Everyone knows the remarkable scene in the Gospel of the paralyzed man who waited for 38 years to step into the miraculous water that the angel occasionally visited. The first sick person who stepped into this water was healed. The paralytic was not able to. There was always a more agile sick person to step into the pool before him. Worse, there was no one to help put him into the pool. Jesus arrives, looks at him, and speaks to him as a human being endowed with humanity. He asks, "Do you want to be healed?" These words unleash in the paralyzed man the strength of faith and he finds in himself the healing energy. He rises, takes up his bed, and walks.

This passage defines all the strength of prophetic evangelism in a country like the DR Congo. What such evangelism aims to do is to awaken in the Congolese man and the Congolese woman the power and energy of their imaginary of faith in Jesus Christ. With this strength, with this energy, all the paralysis that the nation suffered shall be destroyed, defeated by the strength to stand up inspired by Christ, so that the Congo takes up the bed of desperation and walks on the road of hope and creativity. The purpose of prophetic evangelism is to create and promote an imaginary of faith. This, the country needs. All its citizens need it. The new evangelism of the Congo must focus on this task.

But creating and promoting an imaginary of faith is not the only requirement. There is another requirement. We find it in another passage of the gospel: that of Lazarus being brought back to life. The story is well known. Jesus learns of the death of his friend Lazarus, brother of Martha and Mary, in a family he knows well and where everyone expects him to manifest the might of his power. Three days have passed, and Lazarus has already been buried. Lazarus' sister even believes that everything has already ended and that there is nothing left to do: she said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died" (John 11:21). But Jesus has another reading of the events: the death of his friend purports to be the manifestation of God's mighty power. He goes to the tomb and calls his friend: "Lazarus, come out!"

The dead man follows, and Jesus tells those standing around, “Unbind him” (John 11:44). This is accomplished, and Lazarus regains his life force and his power of action among his own.

What strikes me in this passage of the gospel is this command by the Lord Jesus: “Unbind him.” It is in this command that I see the meaning of the liberating evangelism for my country. Like Lazarus, my country is to a certain extent dead. Hope seems to be lost in the face of this death: it is in this context of death that Jesus himself gives meaning to what happens to this nation: his death is intent on being a manifestation of the God’s mighty power. His strong word must be heard by all: the DR Congo must come out of the tomb. But this release is accompanied by the Lord’s watchword: “Unbind him.” It is this watchword that is at the heart of the prophetic evangelism project. It defines evangelism as an act of liberation. It is an act that must be carried out by liberation forces composed of men and women of faith in Jesus.

This means that their power of liberating evangelism is precisely the constitution and men’s and women’s affirmation as dissociation energies. That is precisely what prophetic evangelism is: the emergence, rise, affirmation, and act of liberation of the men and women of faith as dissociation powers. We need to awaken such forces in the country, we must bring them together, we must set them in motion so that the Congo can regain its life energy and its power of movement, change, and creativity. We can now see in the communities of faith this dynamic of dissociation and liberation, through a burning faith in the word of Christ to break the stillness of death and affirm God’s project for the Congo: the return to life, and to abundant life, in the words of the gospel of John (John 10:10). I cannot look my country today without reading its fate in light of Lazarus’ return to life.

This leads me to see in prophetic evangelism an act of resurrection and of holistic healing. In the words of a great Congolese theologian, it is the energy of the resurrection of Christ himself that I perceive as the energy of a new life, of a new destiny. Through resurrection, Jesus advances to a new life and completely sets humans down the path of this new life. This means that in him, everything changes reality, direction, and horizon: politics, economy, culture, and society as a whole. This is the new life that prophetic evangelism announces and promotes. This is its true essence: having a whole society under the sign of the spirit of God, for the radical change that the gospel manifests: entering a new heaven and a new earth perspective, the premises of which are clear throughout Jesus’ destiny.

Here we are at the heart of the gospel of life, of true life evangelism, with perspectives that overcome the confinement of men and women to pathologies of desperation and despair. With the resurrection of Jesus, I realize what

the prophet Ezekiel truly meant when he tells the astounding episode of the dry bones. I realize that I must read the fate of the DR Congo today through the signs of this wonderful and hope-filled text: the hope in the breath of God who gathers the dry bones, breathes into them the strength of God, and achieves what is impossible for man, but possible for God. Prophetic evangelism is the acceptance of that which is possible for God into our human impossibilities in today's Congo, this country where the great vision of Ezekiel 37:1-10 will be achieved.

In this country's politics, where the bones have been dried by a power which has no desire for change and an opposition that is stagnant in its incantatory demands, the breath of God is called upon to manifest itself in acts of cooperation, collaboration, and envisioning a different possible future. This means coming out of the politics of dry bones with a new energy that inspires people to stand up for peace and opens up horizons of prosperity and security; this is called good governance. Similarly, in the economy of dry bones which is present everywhere through disorganization, impunity, predation, corruption, misery, and death, the breath of God is called upon to transform society into a development society, thanks to an economy of sharing and happiness, into a new production force of wealth for all, of a life in abundance at the heart of the Congolese people.

We will build in the country a happy peaceful order, and it will be up to the citizens of Congo themselves to ensure this economic peace through the strength of the spirit of God, beyond the wars, conflicts, divisions, and rifts. This is where the work of an evangelism for acts of kindness, in view of an economy of good, away from the sterile prayers and moans that have made the Congo the land of an infertile and delusional Christianity, will focus. As for the spirit of the country, it will have to emerge from the culture of dry bones, where pessimism, fatalism, and defeatism reign. Its true culture shall be, under the spirit of God, the culture of unity of the country, strength of the people, and generosity of the peoples bound by the faith in God. This will be the work of prophetic evangelism, which sees reality through the eyes of God and changes it according to God's project. In this evangelism, the fruits of the spirit will blossom for a people under God's guidance: the union of hearts and consciences for a new world. We will then be before the fulfilment of Ezekiel's prophecy for our country:

"I will lay sinews on you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the Lord. ... And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people." (Ezek. 37:6, 13)

Prophetic evangelism is the triumph of this promise, which will awaken the great energy for change, for new hopes, for new horizons in the Congo. I believe in this approach for my country, and for all the people to whom evangelism opens the Spirit of God. Amen.

## **A South American Orthodox Perspective**

### ***Iosif de Pátara***

We declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life – this life was revealed, and we have seen it and testify to it, and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us – we declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. We are writing these things so that our joy may be complete. (1 John 1:1-4)

### **The Priority of Experience**

Evangelism is a natural, physiological, free, creative gut impulse that is inevitably prophetic in a person who has turned to Christ. It arises out of the experience of responding to the invitation to live a life turned to Christ: “Come and see” (John 1:46).

Experiencing Christ as they do in the community – in the church – Christians naturally wish to go out and share their experience with other people, their friends, their acquaintances, but above all with those who do not have this experience, so as to invite them to experience it. I stress the legitimacy of this basic, natural Christian impulse as an implication, an extension, of the actual experience of Christ. But the experience always precedes the subsequent impulse. You cannot give or communicate something you do not have, something you have not experienced. Direct experience of life, not *in* Christ, but *of* Christ, is basic. Otherwise, the way in which the church should be operating is reversed. I share what I have experienced: Christ himself. Sharing a mere belief or a theory about Christ is not communicating the gospel but an ideology. It is not life: it is proselytism.

### **The Failure of Ideologized Evangelism**

People, and above all the younger generations, are sceptical about religious institutions at all levels. That is a fact, and it is to be regretted that it is not



sincerely acknowledged. So any form of evangelism or mission done today in this ideologized context has minimal effect. That is, unless, depending on the sectors of society that are targeted, those receiving it have major life needs that can be met by the organizations and thus get caught up in programmes of that type.

We are used to seeing mission and evangelism as ideas directly related to institutionalized forms of religion, particularly Christian forms. I believe it is essential to understand that both of those ideas need to be reconnected to the original experience of the event that created the church. That “church event” in its most unadulterated form is free, creative, life-changing, liberating, and revolutionary. The example is Christ. We have distanced ourselves from that experience and have constructed a recalcitrantly religious Christianity. We have become entrapped in an environment that has made slaves of us: how is it possible for us, from out of that environment, to change society, men and women and young people? Evangelism that changes things is based on the Christ event. As we work day by day in each society and context, it is not imitating (imitating is a great trap), but in experiencing, as I am, where I am, and with whom I am. It is experiencing the love that Christ invites us to live out. Evangelism is an exercise, a continuing training. It is part of the asceticism to which we are all called.

In my context, I can observe many forms of evangelism. Many of them are classic – outdated, I would say – structuralized, ideologized; others are more free, others are targeted to particular groups, and still others focus more on the tremendous social differences there are in South America. It is a pick-and-choose evangelism. On which sectors of society are our evangelizing techniques having the greatest effect? Why? What impact are they having? Can it really be measured? Should it be measured?

### **Inconsistency – One of the Great Obstacles**

Lack of personal testimony – that is, inconsistency – in those engaged in evangelism is key in this process of understanding. We are to pass on what we have experienced. Otherwise it is proselytism. People know who it is standing in front of them, what they do and what they preach. And if there is no consistency between them, it is all useless.

Similarly, a stifling religious-ideological superstructure that suppresses the essential originality of the gospel is a key obstacle in the process. I firmly believe that any sort of evangelistic work in such a context reduces its effectiveness exponentially. In such a case, it is reduced to mere spiritualistic, moralistic, or liturgical propaganda. Obviously, that inconsistency I have just mentioned in my previous point has a direct reference here. I believe it is

called pharisaism, is it not? And it has deep roots, going back to the time of Christ, if I am not mistaken.

We need to go back to the original dynamism of Christianity: communion, or fellowship, or community – face-to-face direct personal relationships. Free, open, creative, human, but reaching out to God, taking place in the here and now, reaching out to the transcendent. We need to go back to the original experience. And, for that to happen, it is necessary to revitalize the primary eucharistic community, the parish. That is basic, the basic cell of the church. And the whole church in that small community of friends, brothers and sisters, human beings, is engaged in the same search, for God.

### **Evangelism and Numerical Church Growth**

According to the vision of the Holy Fathers of the Orthodox Church, the church is born and ends with creation. Many of them identify creation with the church because of their ontological presuppositions describing God's relationship with what is created. When the Fathers speak of church, they constantly mention the reality of communion, fellowship, and relationality. The glory of God, the infinite increate energy of God, is reflected in the whole of animate and inanimate creation. All is interrelated: the Creator with the created, all rational created beings, and similarly they with the natural creation. Everything is society, communion, fellowship. Everything is church. That is a vision of all that is, a basic, essential, prime vision. Everything else springs out of that.

The vision of the church as an institution is different from that. That is an undeniable reality. But the church is not an end in itself. It is only a means. The end is Christ. The mission of the church is to enable the healing of the relationships of all men and women to take place – to make them “christs,” that is, anointed ones – by means of God's grace. The church is God's natural sphere. It is wide in scope; it is liberating. In the true church, people are really what they are meant to be, because their relationships with God, with their neighbours, and with the creation are being healed. The growth of the church, microscopically, is identical with the awareness that people have of God: that is, how and how much they experience the gospel. That growth is relative, it comes and goes, since macroscopically speaking, it is identified with the dramatic – and sometimes tragic – evolutionary journey of human-kind toward God.

### **Orthodox Evangelism in South America**

“Come and see!” That is a key concept in evangelical and missionary work. It is an invitation – an invitation to live, to live all together in a different,

original, free, new, creative way, in awareness that atomization, individualism, and isolation are not situations that lead us to God. The gospel, the good news, is lived out in community, all together, with one another, and in one another, sharing the life-giving Word and food, just as the apostles and their successors did.

“Come and see!” When acquaintances, friends, and above all strangers ask me about Orthodox Christianity in Argentina or another South American country – some of them curious, others interested, others in some need – I simply say to them, “Come and see!” Perhaps it can be explained or described. But a description in words will never convey the actual experience. Experience is basic. The doors of the church, of our church, are open to all men and women. All are welcome to come, and see, and taste the sweetness of the Lord and how different it is to live in accord with the love that he practised.

“Come and see.” It is a challenge, above all to the younger generations, whose awareness is different, more pluriform, more wide ranging, more free. That is an awareness that cannot easily surmount the barriers put up by a Christianity that has become a religion.

Sometimes people prefer to go and see and taste elsewhere. Pseudo-churches abound in South America. It is a proselytism based on the needs of the persons targeted, people seeking miracles, an exercise in marketing, exploiting the psychological, educational, and cultural weakness of the most vulnerable, so as to manipulate them with a crude fetishism. Their meetings are packed with people who want to be cured, who are hoping for the miracle of finding a job or the love of their life. Everything is guaranteed in those meetings that are craftily manipulated by the clever managers of faith. Their fortunes flourish and their growth is enviable. Meanwhile, our churches are more and more empty. That is true. We are realistic and self-critical. Only the religious zeal of former immigrants – Arabs, Armenians, Russians, Greeks, Serbs, English, Germans, Swiss – is the driving force for their worship services and other activities. And the later generations? Has the church become the cultural enclave of a particular ethnic community? But the flow of immigrants from Europe ceased long ago! Is motivation lacking? Are ideas lacking? Are bearers of the message lacking? What shall we do to come out of the religious ghetto that we ourselves – Orthodox, Anglicans, Reformed – have created in the diaspora? Perhaps we have fallen into a trap of our own making. How can we resist this painful phenomenon of religiosity? How can we confront truth with the Truth? With more fanaticism, more dogmatism, more moralism?

In South America, there is widespread, genuine religious freedom. It is a fact. It has been given us. And it is also a challenge. But, beyond all the disagreements, all the difficulties, the false prophets, the exploiters, the

manipulators, we Latin Americans always have the sure certainty that God is with us, always and everywhere, always faithful to God's promise. So, we go and see and we share and live all together in diversity, knowing that God's love is the only way to live in our land, so diverse, so manipulated, so complex, but so criticized, put down, and underestimated. We are the South of Faith, the ontological south of the world, with our face bearing the marks of the suffering of centuries. But also still with a freshness and freedom of spirit, we demonstrate that we are of value, decent, happy and joyful, optimistic and spontaneous, with a heart wide open, always prone to falling, but always raising ourselves up again. Because, perhaps in our collective unconscious it is as clear as clear can be that only in community, fellowship, and communion can we go forward.

## **A New Reformation: Evangelism as Life Together**

*Jin S. Kim*

### **A Historical Perspective**

On October 31, 1517, an Augustinian monk named Martin Luther ignited a movement in the Western church that would lead to the Protestant Reformation. It was a bold response that captured the people's yearning for comprehensive reform of a church that seemed to have lost its moorings. In modern times it has become apparent to more and more Christians that the church seems obsessed with its own institutional survival, like a dog chasing its own tail. What kind of reformation do we need today for the church to remember its identity and live into its true mission?

Many positive reforms were instituted in the church through the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation, but it also caused the scandal of permanent schism. In 1999, representatives of the Lutheran World Federation and the Roman Catholic Church concluded two decades of dialogue by releasing a "Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification." Not only did these two church bodies find common ground on a point of doctrine that the Lutheran Reformation considered "the first and chief article"; more significantly, the mutual condemnations pronounced by the Lutheran Confessions and the Council of Trent over this doctrine were lifted after more than 400 years.

According to the Second Vatican Council, Protestants are not part of the true church but are to be considered "separated brethren" – in other words, family, but homeless. Thankfully, most Catholics and Protestants today seem

to agree that we are at least separated brethren, if not all “real” Christians. But this détente may be too little, too late. The logic of distrust, recrimination, schism, and endless splintering seems to be part of the DNA of the institutional church, and this logic is passed on like an infection to the faithful of every ecclesiastical tribe. More and more people are giving up on the church altogether. Who needs one more place of isolation and fracturedness in their lives?

Every few months at Church of All Nations (CAN), we offer a class for visitors who want to become members of our congregation, and by extension, of the church catholic. In the class, we discuss discipleship, membership, and the theological concepts at the core of our community. But the majority of class time is devoted to a 2,000-year overview of the Christian story. Why do we spend so much time discussing history? We see no other way to know who we are as a church, and where we are going, apart from knowing how we got here.

It doesn’t take long for our new member candidates to see that our congregation, though part of the mainline Presbyterian family, draws its inspiration from the radical reformers persecuted as Anabaptists by Roman Catholics, Lutherans, and Calvinists. The Anabaptists’ clear identification of church–state collusion as idolatry made them a threat to both the Catholic Church and the fledgling Protestant movement. At CAN, our commitment to costly discipleship doesn’t come from Reformed catechisms and creeds, but from the way that the confessing church emerged to challenge Nazi rule in Germany, and the daring witness of Christians like Dietrich Bonhoeffer – their courage, real-world theology, and pastoral insights.

Today, we see growing impatience with the institutional church’s accommodation to temporal power. Younger generations, no longer willing to give the church the benefit of the doubt, are driving the mass exodus out of the Western church, which they see as a primary source of pain and abuse in the world. But for those who have not given up on the church as a vessel of God’s grace and transformation, the contours of a new reformation are beginning to surface.

Our congregation, for instance, is trying to root itself in the anti-imperial gospel community that Jesus inaugurated in Galilee. We hope to be heirs of an unbroken tradition of radical faithfulness to the God of Israel. Though the church has given in to the temptations of empire throughout her history, we are encouraged by the long and continuous witness of uncompromising faithfulness to Jesus as well.

## The Early Church

What can we learn about reformation today from the early church? The gospel of Mark opens with John the Baptist proclaiming “repentance and the forgiveness of sins.” John was consciously hearkening back to the traditions of Moses and Elijah, legendary leaders of Israel who practised the dual roles of prophet and pastor. They boldly entered the courts of Pharaoh and King Ahab and demanded justice. They retaught the people how to live as family, how to practise hospitality, and how to rely on God for their daily bread. John the Baptist had a simple message: The kingdom of God is just around the corner, so you’d better get your act together. At the core of his teaching was an ancient biblical ethic of mutual aid and restorative justice: “Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise” (Luke 3:11).

Jesus opted to be baptized into the radical wilderness movement that John had faithfully stewarded for years. The gospels give us a portrait of a scandalously loving and spirit-filled messiah who healed those plagued with evil spirits. He dared to feed the hungry whose common lands had been gobbled up by massive estates. He taught the Galileans how to live with one another like Moses had originally taught them. God’s law was to love one’s neighbours as family, to not scheme about tomorrow, to not give in to the strife and petty jealousies that fracture communities and make them easy to divide and conquer.

When Jesus died, his followers experienced his presence among them. The brutal execution of their Lord could have ended the movement. Instead, they saw that Jesus refused to counter violence with violence. When the women reported an empty tomb, they took it as a sign of Christ’s vindication. The story of the resurrection and ascension of the Lord to “the right hand of the Father” became a rallying cry for those who knew Jesus in his lifetime. Jesus had stayed faithful to the Father, the God of his ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, even on pain of death. Rome had done its worst, its most terroristic act, and Jesus turned the whole spectacle on its head with the words “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing” (Luke 23:34). For the disciples, death had truly lost its sting.

Paul, the “strict constructionist” rabbi who sought to protect the integrity of Pharisaic Judaism by any means necessary, was also a privileged Roman citizen. He was interrupted on his way to Damascus by the stark presence of the resurrected messiah. Blinded by the Lord’s presence, Paul went from chief enforcer of temple law to “least of the apostles.” As an alternative to Caesar’s patronage in the imperial *familia*, Paul could now offer a place in the loving family of God, the body of Christ.

The church has certainly been a force for good in countless ways, and it is right for Christians to celebrate that heritage. But an honest accounting also requires us to admit that for most of its history, the institutional church has, in alternating ways, been both the master and servant of Western empires. Is there another way? Can modern disciples truly follow the Way of Jesus over the American way?

### **A New Generation**

The church continues only as the next generation accepts the call to be Christ's body and his hands and feet to the world. As a pastor in a mainline church for 25 years, I have noted the dwindling numbers of young people in the local church. The children of the baby boomers see the church today as complicit in, and co-opted by, the ways of the world. They have little interest in perpetuating the Constantinian arrangement in which churches produce loyal foot soldiers for the empire of the day.

The Protestant Reformation and the Radical Reformation were supposed to inaugurate a new era of integrity and faithfulness for the church. But today we see that whether a congregation is Lutheran, Methodist, Baptist, Quaker, Mennonite, or Presbyterian (like ours), they are overwhelmingly white, old, and declining. Such is the fruit of the Reformation after 500 years.

The church I currently serve was founded in 2004 with a demographic of mostly Korean American immigrants raised in this country, roughly 25 to 35 years old. In recent years, CAN has become a slightly majority-white church, although our members still hail from more than 25 nations and cultures. The one thing that hasn't changed is that two thirds of our congregation is made up of 20- to 40-year-olds. Ministering to a mostly millennial congregation has given us some insights along the way about the future of the church in a postmodern context.

Our goal is to be guided by the Holy Scriptures to interpret the times we live in and participate in the wild and unpredictable movement of the Holy Spirit in our midst. At this point, we could not do conventional ministry even if we wanted, because the younger generation will no longer be duped by church business as usual.

What is it that our young people don't buy anymore?

1. Uncritical patriotism and American exceptionalism (my country, right or wrong).
2. Unexamined white supremacy, both the nativism of the Right and the paternalism toward people of colour by the Left.

3. Unfettered consumerism at the expense of global fairness and environmental sustainability, and endless consumption as a personal coping mechanism.
4. Rugged individualism and the subtext of the American Dream – the accumulation of enough skills and wealth so as to be completely independent of community.
5. Christian denominational sectarianism, parochialism, and triumphalism in the face of religious pluralism.

Young people today are wondering if the local church can respond evangelically to their needs:

1. Our young people are searching for their *vocation*. Many are educated enough for a job or career in the present order, but are desperately searching for a calling.
2. Our young people hunger for *healthy relationships*, to meaningfully and deeply relate to another human being (half grew up in divorced or single-parent homes, and others in dysfunctional households).
3. Our young people are seeking enduring *Christian community* that functions like a diverse yet intimate family, as they are plagued with loneliness, isolation, and alienation.
4. Our young people are looking for *stability* in a highly mobile world, *and concreteness* in an increasingly virtual and socially networked existence.
5. Our young people desire *authentic faith*. They are prone to agnosticism or even raw atheism, as they see little evidence of a God who makes a difference in the religious institutions of the day, namely the local church.

### **A New Reformation**

Many professional religious leaders are working tirelessly for the church's renewal, hoping that a new reformation might save the institutional church from demise. But people today are not interested in institutional score keeping like membership, attendance, budgets, and square feet. If the only motivation for reformation is preserving a middle-class lifestyle for the clergy and preventing the sanctuary from turning into a condo, then people are saying,



Let the temple be torn down, for Jesus can raise it up in three days. Amen, so be it.

We firmly believe that, after 500 years, the Protestant Reformation is giving way to another tectonic shift in what it means to be church. A new reformation is coming indeed. One element of that reformation will be learning to live together in intentional Christian community. Our congregation has been forming households of unrelated people almost from our beginning, and now we have multiple community houses that are structured, ordered, and thriving. We were making steady progress, or so we thought, until we began to learn about the Bruderhof way. We were blown away by this community founded by Eberhard Arnold in Germany that goes back almost a hundred years – the lifelong commitment to the community, the common purse, working for businesses that are owned and operated by the overall community, the care of its members from cradle to grave (if they choose to stay). CAN is in the Minnesota twin cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul, a highly urbanized area, and cannot as yet match these characteristics. But we have been inspired by an actual community that has done it, is living out the Acts 2 way of being church, of sharing all things in common in an age of individualism, greed, loneliness, and despair.

For us, a radical reformation in our time demands that the church live into its vocation as *ecclesia*, meaning the “called-out ones.” Christians are to be called out of a sick society built on the evils of racism, sexism, militarism, exploitation, ecocide, and destructive competition. We are to create a new community of love. This does not mean withdrawal from society or indulging sectarian impulses. Church of All Nations is in the middle of an urban and suburban landscape and hopes to witness to God’s love for the world right here where we are.

Rather, we seek to pool our people’s resources, talents, ideas, and labour for the common good. We want our members to feel that their work is rewarding, that the fruits of their labour are being shared justly, that they work together, live together, play together, and pray together because it is very good and pleasant when kindred live together in unity. We will have to participate in the broader economic system, but we will not allow capitalist dogma to influence our internal economics. We will draw people from our immediate context of great brokenness, but our mission will include the casting out of imperial demons and the healing of bodies and souls so that we can relate rightly to our God, our neighbours (human and non-human), and God’s good green earth. We aspire to create an urban village founded on the love and teachings of Jesus Christ our Lord, to live life together, and to share God’s abundance with an impoverished world.

Is this part of the next reformation, or just a pipe dream? We are not sure, but we pray that Christians can live together in harmony as a counter-witness to a world falling apart.

## 12. MISSION FROM THE MARGINS

### *Becoming Disciples, Transforming the World (Luke 4:16-21)*

---

*Adi Mariana Waqa*

Paul tells us that those who live in the Spirit must also walk in the Spirit (Gal. 5:25). I suggest to you that becoming disciples, transforming the world (the theme of our “mission from the margins” plenary) is the mark of those who live and walk in the Spirit. And who better to show us exactly what that means in practice than our Lord Jesus according to Luke?

We see him standing in the synagogue proclaiming that the Spirit of the Lord was upon him, that he had been anointed to bring good news to the poor, proclaim release to the captives, restore sight to the blind, set free the oppressed, and proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.

There is no ambiguity here: to live and walk in the Spirit is to be the bearers of *the* good news! Through the power of the Holy Spirit, the good news is Christ, who brings the reign of God’s justice and peace to confront degenerative human conditions by transforming the hearts of those who should choose to love him. In short, becoming disciples is precisely to be Christ’s good news for a world that dearly and clearly needs his transforming love.

We are gathered today in Arusha to prayerfully rethink and reimagine the call to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matt 28:18-20). We come knowing that in many places we need to revitalize, rethink, and perhaps even revolutionize the church as an instrument of mission now and in the coming years.

If your experiences are like mine since my arrival in beautiful Tanzania on Monday for the Indigenous Youth Pre-Conference, then you will agree with me that it is an absolute joy to be here and that our gathering is an inspiring fellowship of the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, our task of discerning God’s mission for our times involves understanding the signs of the times and the implications of that for the mission we are called to serve.

As an Indigenous person, I cannot help carrying in my being and bringing along with me the pain and cry of Mother Earth, which is God’s precious creation. That is to say that the groaning of all of creation is with us, here – prompting us to remember that as disciples of Jesus, by the power of the Holy

Spirit, we are bearers of God's good news for all longing for justice, healing, and reconciliation.

Needless to say, becoming disciples and transforming the world are not possible without the good news of Christ breaking through with the power of the Holy Spirit.

Here we pause and ask a fundamental question: Is our notion of discipleship inclusive of those who exist in the marginal spaces of our times and world?

If so, then it follows that the church must view those in the margins with the same agency, dignity, and grace which Christ affords them in the gospels, remembering that God gives power and strength to the weak (Is. 40:29), the outcast, and those who go without.

I want to be clear that I make no exclusive claims on the margins – epistemologically or as a social location. While in this address I choose to remain within the parameters of Luke's social categories, I am mindful that even there, poverty is not limited to material realities and human captivity comes in various forms.

Our liturgical framing and movement in this plenary opens up a space for the church to pause, reflect, and, most importantly, listen to what the Holy Spirit has to say for the times we are living in. We live in times where Christian witness and service are more needed than ever before.

It is no accident that at this moment we are led to focus our attention on the margins and the marginalized. The profound significance of Luke's text is not only that it locates God's mission *at* and *from* the margins, but it also spells out in Jesus' own words what that mission from the margins looks like.

Indeed, Jesus proclaimed that the Spirit of the Lord was upon him to transform, empower, and liberate the poor in heart, spirit, and material riches. By doing this he affirmed the fact that God's mission begins always at the margins and not from the top echelons of institutions, governments, and powerful positions of affluence – Jesus operated from the margins, and it was from these margins that he brought the transformation we proclaim today!

As St Athanasius of Alexandria reflected in the 4th century, "For one who wanted to make a display, the thing would have been just to appear and dazzle the beholders. But for Him Who came to heal and to teach the way, was not merely to dwell here, but to put Himself at the disposal of those who needed Him, and to be manifested according as they could bear it...."

Can you imagine the impact on me as a young Indigenous person to discover that Jesus lived as a marginalized youth? A marginalized status that God bestowed on him from birth. How amazing is it that the all-powerful and omniscient God of the Universe should choose to enter into our humanity

as a helpless child surrounded by animals and witnessed to by shepherds and foreigners (Matthew 2:1-12; Luke 2:8-20)!

In this very conference, I believe we define youth as up to mid-30s, so I dare say Jesus would definitely be a youth here. And even if that were not the case, Jesus at the time he was walking this earth in Palestine would still have been far younger than the average age in many of our mainline churches today. Yet, as a young person on the margins, his agency has set the tone for God's mission in the last two millennia! Can we please savour this moment? This moment when the church is reminded that our redeemer and saviour was my age when he proclaimed his manifesto in his hometown of Nazareth!

A manifesto that defined his ministry in terms of subverting worldly power structures so that the weak and vulnerable can access the life-giving power of the Holy Spirit. A manifesto that characterizes God's loving mission as always beginning from lowly places, and with lowly people, whom the world often shuns and forgets. This is what mission at and from the margins looks like. And Christ's ministry at the margins worked because it was in these marginalized spaces that the sinful structures of oppression were manifested most evidently. In our day, it is at the margins that Christian witness and service can be seen in action in profoundly transforming ways. At the margins, the agency of the marginalized is not in dispute. More importantly, in marginal spaces any concerns to make distinctions between mission and *diakonia* could not be more irrelevant.

I see the WCC's commitment to the ministry of *diakonia* as a prophetic affirmation of Christian mission and discipleship from the margins. Its theological framing of *diakonia* is rooted in Christ's mission of service that liberates the oppressed, gives sight to the blind, and heals the sick. Clearly, mission and *diakonia* are integral to each other, and through the prophetic function of the Holy Spirit they work to transform the dysfunctions of our world so that God's reign of justice and peace can be rooted in the hearts of generations to come, who in turn become living witnesses to the transformational power of Christ.

Recognizing the agency of disciples at the margins continues to be a challenge for the church. One of my most memorable experiences at our Indigenous Youth Pre-Conference was having the space to try and unpack the church's traditionally centric approach to mission, which objectifies marginalized persons like me as recipients of the good news of Christ from privileged beneficiaries of systems that ignorantly sustain the injustices that compound my marginality. Our theme "Walking in the Spirit: Indigenisation as Transforming Discipleship" was an exercise in affirming and asserting our agency as young Indigenous people. Part of our message to this World Mission

Conference and to the world church is to say: “We are here, we exist, see us, hear us, we are integral to Christ’s church. We are poor, we are blind, we are captives, we are unfavoured, but we refuse to be invisible anymore, for we are Christ’s beloved, we have agency for we live and walk in the Spirit, and we too are bearers of Christ’s hope and we too are agents for transforming the world!”

Therefore, today is a call for a revolutionary reform of Christian mission, that in the era of information, technology, and globalization, where excessive consumerism and hedonism feed into the structures which uphold injustices of greed, violence, and oppression, *we the church, Christ’s church to which we belong*, can no longer afford to ignore the prophetic voices coming from the margins. The church must take the lead in preventing the subversion of the margins to tokenistic agendas that serve the mainstream while limiting their agency as bearers of the good news toward transforming the world.

Today, I have been given the privilege to stand before you, an Indigenous voice from the nation of Fiji in the region of Oceania. I am of the Aisokula tribe from the northern island of Taveuni and I come from a diverse group of peoples from the Pacific Ocean who are rich in history, spirituality, culture, tradition, and epistemologies.

The church has now been in our waters for almost 200 years, bringing with it the good news of Christ and transforming the religious landscape, where the church to this day remains a powerful and affluent entity in the region.

However, it must be noted that for many island nations, the historical backdrop to this conversion was the proliferation of Christianity on the tail of colonization. This issued the “wholesale condemnation” of our cultures as being “savage, lascivious, and barbaric,”<sup>1</sup> stripping many of us of our dignity while subverting our agency so that we become mere *receivers* of the good news and therefore never to be an equal.

By God’s grace, we as recipients of the good news reclaimed our agency by the power of God’s Holy Spirit, thereby joining the ranks of Christ’s faithful disciples. This has been true for many of us, the peoples of Oceania. We have received the good news within the context of our struggles and this has raised up disciples who live and walk by the Spirit, transforming our own lives as well as the contexts in which we find ourselves.

Throughout the Pacific, the problem of climate change continues to intensify, with the island nations of Kiribati, Tuvalu, and the Marshall Islands facing the fight for their very existence as higher sea levels threaten both homes and cultural identities. In recent years, escalating tropical cyclones throughout the region have created economic and structural havoc, not to mention the number of lives affected through death, psychological trauma, and

1. Epeli Hau’ofa, “Our Sea of Islands,” *The Contemporary Pacific* 6 (1994): 149.

impoverishment. Our natural resources continue to be exploited by corporate giants, with the nation of West Papua paying the highest price through an over 50-year genocide toward which most of the world has remained silent.

These are not isolated cases in our Oceania context. But as disciples of Christ from the margins, we continue to draw strength from the Spirit's life-giving power to prophetically contest the injustices of affluent countries who perpetuate oppressive exploits upon our lands and peoples.

As marginalized peoples, we do not have the economic and political power to change our situations, but as Christ poignantly demonstrated throughout his life-giving ministry, the power to radically transform the world is entirely possible through the power of the Holy Spirit.

So, as I stand here today in front of you, a very ordinary young Indigenous woman, with no special status or position in life to boast about, I speak on behalf of all my Indigenous siblings here this morning and those who cannot be here; on behalf of all our communities struggling to overcome the adversities that have become our norm; and on behalf of all those Indigenous heroes and heroines who have gone before us! I stand here and I say to you:

I am Adi Mariana Waqa, I am poor, I am bound, I am unfavoured, I am oppressed! But I am a precious child made in the image of God. I have agency, I am worthy, I have a voice, and I am free! I am free because I live and walk in the Spirit! I am free and I joyfully bear God's good news and hope as Christ's disciple from the margins transforming the world. Thanks be to God!

## **13. MISSIONAL FORMATION**

### ***Transforming the Word, Equipping Disciples***

---

#### **Action and Reflection on the Signs of the Times**

##### ***Dhiloraj Ranjit Canagasabay***

Rev. Professor Steve Bevans, moderator and dear delegates,

The gospel narratives call us unequivocally to a life of discipleship and servanthood. This is made clear not only through the direct words of our Lord Jesus but also through his many parables. “You did not choose me, but I chose you,” he says in John 15:16, and again in Mark 8:34, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.” That Jesus was very serious about the absolute need for self-denial – taking the path of the cross, of humiliation, rejection, and death – is made clear in his reference in Luke 14:26: “Whoever comes to me and does not hate *father* and *mother*, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and even life itself, *cannot* be my disciple.” This then is the absolute call with which Jesus beckons those who wish to follow him. In the words of Bonhoeffer, “when Christ calls a man he bids him come and die” – there is no room for cheap discipleship.

Very often in the gospels, this decision to follow Jesus follows an encounter, a transformational encounter, with him. Notice how drastic that transformation was in Matthew, who left his post at the customs house, and got up and followed him, or in Zacchaeus, who declared that he would restore fourfold what he had wrongly taken.

The encounter brings salvation or liberation, as it did to Zacchaeus and his household. Salvation not only in a purely individual sense, but also a freeing of his spirit, opening his eyes to the societal sin by which he had unjustly enriched himself. So this salvation was a wholly liberating experience.

At Jesus’ baptism, the gospel narrative tells us that the heavens opened and a voice proclaimed: “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased” (Mark 1:11). It was thereafter that Jesus withdrew into the wilderness to reflect on the form that his future ministry would take in the light of this proclamation. Rejecting the temptations of the use of power for his personal satisfaction, the use of his special relationship with God for a display



of showmanship and the shortcut and easy way to messiahship – the way of public adulation that he was offered – he resolutely chooses the alternative way of suffering and the cross. And so in the synoptic gospels he very often prefers to refer to himself as “Son of Man”: “The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45).

In my own diocese, when we gather in council every year, we set ourselves a theme, a vision to inspire us in our work in the coming year. This theme focuses our minds and permeates our thinking and action. “Intentional Christian Discipleship in a nation of many differences” is what we decided upon in 2016. In my own reflections to the council I said,

The Father commissions his apostles not to make CHRISTIANS but DISCIPLES. This is to be done by baptizing and teaching women, men and children to observe Jesus’ commandments. They are promised the supportive presence of the risen Lord until the end of time for this to be achieved. Those who believe and are baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit will upon entering the church also enter into communion with the Father, with the Son, and with the Holy Spirit. Thus the Church is before all “a communion.”

The first invitation which Jesus our Lord offered to those who showed interest in his life and teaching was to follow (to be a disciple), and that was literally what they did on the roads and through the villages of ancient Palestine. But it was not just a physical following – the following also involved a radical turning around of lifestyle, world view, and spiritual orientation. Discipleship takes place when individuals and communities intentionally, sacrificially, and consistently live every moment of their daily lives in commitment to following Jesus. Jesus asked all those who follow him to fulfil what he had commanded. One becomes a disciple of the risen Lord not through baptism alone, which is an external initiation rite that visibly makes one a member of the Jesus community, but by observing or being baptized into the teachings and practices of Jesus, of all that he has commanded.

True discipleship will certainly change the lives of individuals, families, churches, communities, nations, and the world. The tragedy and the painful state of our churches today is that they are filled with so many nominal Christians but with only few disciples. Jesus is in need of authentic disciples to carry forward his mission.

The discipleship which is cast on us at our baptism has both an internal and external dimension. Our inner, personal discipleship arises through our prayer life, through our study of and reflection on the scriptures, through the sacraments and worship, and through our sharing with fellow believers.

We are additionally strengthened through our discipleship within our families and in our worshipping communities. This results in our discipleship in the footsteps of Jesus, bearing witness to the values of his kingdom in our communities, in our wider society, and in our nation. Finally, this discipleship which we show forth in our lives throughout our earthly pilgrimage is offered to God at the end of our life's journey as a witness to our faithfulness to his call. So, even as on the cross Jesus' words and the manner in which he died convinced the Roman centurion that "Truly this was God's Son!" (Mark 15:39), so people ought to recognize that we have truly been disciples of our master.

It is said that when the evangelist Stanley Jones asked Mahatma Gandhi why he did not become a Christian, Gandhi replied "*Oh, I don't reject Christ. I like your Christ; I do not like your Christians. Your Christians are so unlike your Christ.*"

Let us who call ourselves disciples of Jesus be forever shamed and challenged by these words and be ever mindful of the fact that the world judges our profession of faith through the lives we lead.

The nature of our discipleship is not one that we can consider as forever fixed or static. We need to discern the mind of the Master, prayerfully, through our meditations on scripture and our interaction with the Jesus community. "What would Jesus have done" must be constantly in the forefront of our thinking through the many varied and complex challenges we face today. These may be as existential as the very practice of our faith and discipleship in hostile and dangerous circumstances, or stark, as we boldly stand for the values of God's own realm, confronting evil, injustice, and intolerance, or when we are called to grapple with issues that face our societies: gender discrimination and sexism; racism; the abuse of power; destruction of God's own creation, the natural environment; the huge and growing disparities in wealth and those which we sadly find within our very churches; unjust power structures; the abuse of children; the lure of pomp and wealth...

St. Paul enjoins us, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God – what is good and acceptable and perfect" (Rom. 12:2).

God calls to be true disciples of Jesus, choosing the way of servanthood, humility, self-emptying, and the cross, for the servant is not greater than the Master. "Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven" (Matt. 5:16).

## **Signs of the Times and the Importance of Discipleship Training**

***Nafkot M. Dessaleg***

I would like to begin by thanking the World Council of Churches for the invitation to attend this conference, which has been very enriching for me. I have also been able to participate in the Global Ecumenical Theological Institute (GETI) 2018, where we shared exceptional moments with young people from different parts of the world and different faiths. What a powerful experience!

With regard to today's topic, namely, the importance of discipleship training, I would like to start by sharing the thought that came to me as I reflected on the topic. When I had just arrived in Morocco, one of the first sermons I heard in my church, the Evangelical Church of Morocco, whose chairman is here in the room with us today, was that "You are the Bible that many around you will not have an opportunity to open, so live according to the Word and reflect His light."

I believe that this can be a message for all of us today, regardless of the context in which we find ourselves. The world with its greed (for money, power, and many other things that fail to glorify our God) seeks to seduce as many as possible. Consequently, the church and theological institutions have a very important role to play. Clearly, the goal is to train not only members of the clergy but above all women and men who reflect the light of Christ in society. This thought reminded me of a song that we used to sing in church, the words of which go like this: "If I am a farmer, make me a farmer to talk to farmers / if I am a politician, make me a politician to talk to politicians," and so on. (Unfortunately, I was unable to find the composer's name.) But I believe that this song, like the passage to which we shall refer later, simply means that the goal of our life on earth is to reveal Christ; when the song speaks of "talking," I do not think it is referring to evangelization as such, but rather to the revelation of Christ in our daily life, regardless of the field in which we work.

For our reflection, I have chosen Romans 8:18-21, which is also one of the fundamental texts for this conference:

I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

Unfortunately, I cannot speak of all the context of Romans chapter 8, but given that the room is filled with great theologians, I think that this text will only be a simple reminder. Yes, creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed, but this can only happen if we, the majority of church leaders, focus on the training of disciples. Jesus trained 12 disciples in some three years. Very often, we worry about the number of persons we wish to draw to Christ, without taking sufficient time to train them to ensure that they are walking properly with the Lord. Accordingly, it is more important than ever for us to focus on training disciples as we ourselves live as disciples. Creation is suffering and waiting for the sons and daughters of God to be revealed. Most of us who are here today are capable of training young people and adults, so let us not wait for others to do our job: let us act so that the light of Christ may shine forth in the world. My challenge to you this morning is the following: over the next three years or even a bit more, each of us should train at least 12 disciples in Christ who can reject the world's injustices and bring the Word of God into their daily lives.

## **Examining Formation as Discipleship in Theological Education: Risky Witnessing, History of Wounds, Compassionate Leadership**

***Septemmy E. Lakawa***

My experience of teaching mission studies, feminist theology, and trauma and theology at Jakarta Theological Seminary, the oldest Protestant and ecumenical seminary in Indonesia – the country with the world's largest Muslim population – is the basis for my reflection on the formation of Christian discipleship, which I call *witnessing discipleship*. I focus on the following intertwining dimensions: the sacramental and the political, the arts, and healing. In May 1998, not long before the resignation of the second president of Indonesia after he had ruled the country for 32 years, the nation witnessed political turmoil that was intertwined with an economic crisis and widespread violence. I was in my first year of teaching when one day, in the early afternoon, a young female undergraduate student, Obertina, came to my office. She was asking my opinion about whether she should join the student street protests. Fearing for her safety, I tried to persuade her not to join the protests. But knowing that I would not be able to convince her, I asked why she was insisting on joining. She answered, "Because I want to meet the Jesus that you have taught us in class."

This story illustrates when the theological becomes the political. Inspired by Mary Elizabeth Moore's pedagogy, I see teaching as a sacramental act. But it is at the same time a political act – a way of participating in God's work and imagination for the flourishing of humanity and the whole creation. The story also testifies to the riskiness of this formation, as it often involves an individual and collective response to injustice and violence in our everyday lives.

Two questions guide my reflection:

1. How do theological and missional formation empower and inspire students toward a vision of witnessing discipleship and transforming community?
2. What kind of teaching and formation are needed to equip students to imagine and to find ways toward that vision?<sup>1</sup>

The massive violence, riots, and pogroms in Indonesia in 1995–2005, which involved religious communities, challenged me to rethink the significance of martyrdom by reconnecting it to the question of mission in the context of the trauma of Muslim–Christian communal violence. The trauma perspective complexifies martyrdom, especially in dismantling and disconnecting violence from the sacrificial dimension of martyrdom. How can people live as witnessing disciples in the aftermath of religious violence? If trauma means “suffering that remains” (Shelly Rambo) or “the truth that is not available to us” (Cathy Caruth), what are we witnessing to in the aftermath of violence? How do we witness to the remaining suffering that challenges our “God is good” theology or “everything will be OK” theology that often glosses over suffering?

Witnessing to what “remains unknown” or to “the truth that is inaccessible to our language” (Caruth) challenges the Christian claim of the translatability and the sayability of the Christian gospel. This dimension ruptures our understanding of witnessing and, by implication, the formation of discipleship.

Trauma ruptures a theology that defines Christian witnessing as a practice of claiming the truth. It challenges the primacy of word, of verbal communication in the Christian witnessing practice. Trauma reveals a different language of witnessing: the unsayable, the language of silence, the language of wound. This is the language that has been abandoned in the mission and

---

1. These questions are inspired by Moore's questions: “What is the nature of Christian vocation?” and “What kind of teaching is needed to inspire and equip people toward that [Christian] vocation? See Mary Elizabeth Moore, *Teaching from the Heart: Theology and Educational Method* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press Intl, 1998), 2.

evangelism discourse. The late Kosuke Koyama, an Asian theologian, once said that Christianity is a noisy religion, referring to the Christian proclamation of the word. Our understanding of mission and evangelism has often been shaped by our one-sided emphasis on the sayability, the translatability, of the Christian message. Susan J. Brison, a survivor of a violent attack and assault that almost took her life, asks, “How can we speak about the unspeakable without attempting to render it intelligible and sayable?”

Here reintegrating arts – the language of wounds and beauty – into theological education and formation becomes crucial. In 2007, I started to offer dance as an integral part of the missional formation at the seminary through various platforms. Since 2012, theological aesthetics, especially healing arts, have been integrated into various courses. Healing becomes one dimension that is intentionally integrated into theological education, including in shaping the collective response to the questions of human sexualities that often wound individual and communal lives.

The formation also reveals the connection between women mentoring and leadership.

Two of our future faculty – Kartika, who is doing her doctoral study at Jakarta seminary, and Maraike, who is now taking a German course in Bochum for her doctoral study at Missions Akademie Hamburg University – are the examples. They shared that the experiences of co-teaching and the formation during their study have shaped their understanding and practice of discipleship. Maraike’s master’s thesis focuses on the narratives of Indonesian and Filipina migrant workers in Malaysia and their influence in shifting the local churches’ understanding of evangelism. Kartika’s research relates mission, trauma studies, and the theology of religions in the context of Indonesian history of trauma.

Witnessing discipleship is a discipleship that has scars; as Tig Notaro notes, “I have scars because my body heals.” In her reading that disrupts the common interpretation of the doubting Thomas, Shelly Rambo states that the “wounds cannot be easily seen or accessed ... the wounds are both concealed and revealed, engaged, and covered over.”<sup>2</sup> Recapturing the space of the upper room as a new landscape of what she called the “afterlife of trauma,” Rambo reminds us of the prevalence of Christian narratives that “erase wounds” rather than attending to them. The missional formation at theological institutions should also aim to form a community of witnesses that “attend to wounds rather than erase them.”<sup>3</sup>

2. Shelly Rambo, *Resurrecting Wounds: Living in the Afterlife of Trauma* (Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2017), 147.

3. *Ibid.*, 149.

The somatic images that go beyond just seeing the wounds – touching, breathing, sensing – invite other ways of reflecting on the formation of discipleship that takes place after the resurrection. Witnessing leadership as a result of the formation of discipleship is resilient in the face of death by continuing to insist, to breathe the breath of life, and to embody the story of the afterlife of trauma, persisting in loving life amidst the wounds that remain. Here, breathing as a metaphor of mission – inspired by my conversation with my mentor, Dana L. Robert – needs to be considered in our missional formation in our diverse communities.

## **Examining Formation as Discipleship in Leadership Training**

***Mark MacDonald***

The call of Jesus – “follow me” – is at the heart of the gospel. By this call, Jesus initiates the relationship that is the essential component of discipleship. More than an expression of piety, discipleship is an act of God within a context of human cooperation. Though it involves attention and action by the disciple, discipleship is the personal and communal embodiment of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. As we follow Jesus, the transforming presence of God definitively shapes our imagination and behaviour. Discipleship, therefore, is the matrix and manner of our formation in Christ. As such, it is the primary and indispensable location of the development and practice of leadership in Christian community.

In today’s emerging global context, there is a great challenge to Christian discipleship. This is seen most clearly in the conflict between our formation as disciples in the living Word of God and our formation as possessor-owners in a globalized market society. The tension here is not between Christian faith and a form of economy. Rather, it is the way the ideologies, images, and institutions of market society form human life. Here we find the site of one of our most consequential encounters with the powers and principalities that seek to dominate humanity and creation. The centrality of these issues to our world and to our souls makes this a central focus of our formation as disciples and the development of leaders in Christian community.

Though the struggle between these contrasting patterns of formation is not new, many features of our globalizing market society make it particularly threatening. The culture of money seeks to define and dominate every aspect of human

activity and every creature of God's world. It forms possessor-consumers to be compliant constituents of an economically constructed world. This formation influences both thought and behaviour. Capturing individuals and communities, it aspires to draw a comprehensive map of our human and ecological future.

Formation in the market society has consequences across a broad spectrum of life experience. When the life that is primarily shaped by economic forces gathers as a global community, it creates forces that threaten the quality and character of our eco-sphere. The human soul and human community are stunted by the institutionalization and amplification of greed in an unrestrained market society. The impulses and behaviours of a growing culture of possessor-consumers penetrate and control much of the structure of human society and its interaction with the environment. The integrity and well-being of creation is directly and dangerously threatened. Though market society has created some wealth for some people and massive wealth for a very few, in its wake is growing poverty around the world. The hard edges of market ideology have created a culture that is hostile to the poor.

Our electronic and digital devices provide the interface and the medium for this world assembled by economics. They accelerate its reach and impacts. They play a growing role in the formation of possessor-consumers. Though our devices have contributed to many aspects of life in ways that are commendable and beneficial, they come with a steep cost. We have the appearance of ownership and control of our devices, but we now see that they shape much of our vision, our community, and our life. Embedded in our personalized technology and social media are the values, ideals, and world view of the culture of money. As our experience is increasingly filtered by our technology, we have failed to calculate, much less comprehend, the ways our capacity for truth and love have been influenced.

We may identify idolatry as an almost unavoidable tendency in market society's project of moral and spiritual formation. The reach of the culture of money is almost universal. In the face of this, the agenda for those of us who would be faithful to God emerges with clarity and urgency. We must engage in a determined attempt to present, for this generation, a faithful alternative to the spiritual formation offered by the culture of money.

Spiritual formation, by discipleship and for discipleship, is now the place where we imagine and articulate our vision of justice, peace, and life. This must not be an attempted escape into an individualistic and other-worldly piety. The means and goal of our discipleship is the embodiment of the living Word of God in human and ecological community. It must be thoroughly practical and this-worldly to be effective. Together, we must learn how to live in this world in love, satisfaction, and service.



As an example of what this might look like, I turn to my land. While it is known among Indigenous peoples as Turtle Island, you are used to it being called North America. There, a growing number of Indigenous people have made discipleship the goal and means of leadership development. Mostly but not exclusively Anglican, this commitment is called Gospel-Based Discipleship. Engaging the gospel in prayerful gathering is the focal practice. It is recommended as a daily practice for everyone, with weekly gatherings of two or three together expected for those committed to leadership or leadership development. A gospel appointed for the day is read three times at the beginning of every gathering. This happens, whatever the purpose of the gathering, whether for prayer, eucharist, business, education, or leadership formation. With each reading, there is time for discussion, applying the gospel to the life situation of the group. The gospel provides the structure and texture of the gathering. Very often, we find the gospel providentially relates to the agenda and focus of the gathering.

The gospel is placed in the centre of the sacred circle, which is the gathering of two or three in the name and promised presence of Jesus, as proclaimed in Matthew 18:20. The circle is sacred by the presence of Jesus and the acknowledged presence of God in the culture and history of the people. This affirmation is a pointed contrast to colonialism's assessment of Indigenous life. The missions sought to replicate the institutions of Western churches in Indigenous communities: in many cases, stating openly the intention to entirely displace Indigenous culture and lifeways.

Gospel-Based Discipleship is a serious attempt to provide gospel formation in an Indigenous context. This takes place in a challenging environment. As is found around the world, the dispossession of Indigenous people from the land in Turtle Island is accelerated by climate injustice, continuing extreme poverty, and a new type of colonialism associated with the despotic reach of the culture of money. It seeks to be a prophetic alternative to the culture of money, living gospel values in the non-market society of Indigenous cultural life. We pray that it is a part of a larger global movement of the Spirit.

## **Examining Formation as Discipleship through the Example of a Missionary Society: Missionaries of Africa (White Fathers)**

***Richard Nnyombi***

Like most missionary societies, the Missionaries of Africa have a formal formation programme, part of which is demanded by Rome. But we also have another formation programme specific to us, which I would call the informal and family programme. It corresponds to our identity and Spirit as Missionaries of Africa which we inherited from our founder, Charles Cardinal Lavigerie, and our predecessors in the Society in whose footsteps we follow. This informal family programme contains our charism and core values, and it is for us the foundation of the formal seminary programme. It is this informal programme which empowers us even after the seminary formation to share the good news of Jesus Christ with the world in general, but specifically with Africa and the African world.

### **Main Characteristics of Our Informal Formation Programme**

#### *Life of the Society*

This essentially includes the life and commitments of our Founder (Father), Charles Cardinal Lavigerie, and the major missionary orientations. Our founder's passion, love and commitment for Africa remain one of the major sources of our missionary inspiration. I loved everything connected with Africa, her past, her future, her mountains, her pure sky, her sun, the great lines of her desert" (Lavigerie, Instructions, 27 March 1884).

#### *Official and Popular Names of the Society*

Our official name is: Society of the Missionaries of Africa. This name spells out our field of missionary activities (our battlefield). These words of our Founder clearly express it: "The Society has in fact a specific aim which it may never lose sight of without losing its very reason of existing. That aim is, to be directed towards the non-Christian people of Africa. The Society may not undertake any work which is not connected with that aim" (Circular Letter of November 1874).

This implies that our formal formation programme has to be connected with Africa and the African world. It is for this reason that most of our formation houses are in Africa.

Our popular name is the White Fathers, and for our female branch, the White Sisters. We got this name because of our official habit (dress), which

is the traditional white *gandoura* (cassock), the dress of the Arabs. To this we added the cape (*bernous*), red hat (*cechia*), and the rosary around the neck, which also resembles the “Muslim rosary” (*tasbih*).

The reason for choosing this as the official habit was inculturation among the people with whom we are living and working. Our founder even gave permission to change this habit in other places if need be, and only keep the rosary because of our being dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of Jesu (Our Lady of Africa).

### *Community Life*

We live and work in community: the ideal community is at least three members. It is even better when this community is international, interracial, and intercultural. Community is a privileged place for bearing witness together to the values of the kingdom of God. “Love each other, remain united in heart and thought. Form truly a single family. Have a strong *esprit de corps*, in the Christian sense of the term. Defend each other, support each other, help each other always. May discord never find a place among you. In a word, be not only united, but one” (Circular Letter, 11 November 1874).

One of the kingdom values which has been taken as our motto is charity (*caritas*). We have as symbol for this motto the pelican feeding its young ones with its blood.

### *Inculturation: “Be all things to all”*

The first step in our effort of inculturation in any place where we are sent is learning the local language, because this is the key to entering into the culture of the people.

The Society has also its own specific method for achieving its aim. That method consists in drawing near to the native peoples of Africa by adopting their exterior manner of life: their language in the first place, but also their dress and their food, according to the example of the Apostle: *Omnibus omnia factus sum ut omnes facerem salvos*: I have become all things to all men so that I may save all (1 Cor. 9: 22). (Circular Letter of November 1874)

### *Internationality*

From the beginning, our founder wanted an international society. “It is my ambition that in speaking of your little Society, which by its origins is the humblest and the last in the line of Missionary Societies, it is said of it that at least it is Catholic above all else” (Missionary Send-Off, 9th Caravan). All our formation houses, at least after philosophy, are international.

*Interreligious and Ecumenical Dialogue*

The Society of the Missionaries of Africa was founded in Algiers, Algeria, in 1868. (The following year, 1869, a female institute, the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa, was founded.) The cultural, social, and religious context was Islamic and therefore interreligious dialogue, specifically Christian–Muslim Dialogue, became part of our identity and mission. Interfaith dialogue also became part of our missionary involvement when we opened a community in Jerusalem in 1878.

*Commitment to Social Justice*

One of the activities in which the first missionaries had to be involved was the fight against the slave trade in Africa. The founder himself was very much involved in this struggle (1888–1889) in Europe. His catchword in this campaign against the slave trade was “I am a man and nothing human is foreign to me....”<sup>1</sup> And in his address to the pioneer missionaries to Equatorial Africa, he exhorted them in these words: “Go, my sons, go to teach them this doctrine. Tell them that this Jesus died for them on the cross, in order to carry all these freedoms to the world: freedom of souls against the yoke of evil, freedom of people against the yoke of tyranny, freedom of consciences against the yoke of persecutors, freedom of body against the yoke of slavery” (Algiers, 20 June 1879).

In our formation programme, our candidates have to take courses that will inspire, challenge, and equip them for this type of ministry.

**Structure and Content of Our Formal Formation Programme***Initial formation*

We have different phases that a future missionary of Africa has to go through before making his final (perpetual) missionary vows – in other words, before he becomes a full member of the Society. These are

- Come-and-See sessions (1 week to 1 month)
- Pre-seminary phase (6 to 9 months)
- First Phase (3 years): mainly philosophical, human, social, and religious studies
- Second Phase (1 year): Spiritual year (Novitiate) – reflection and prayer; deeper attachment to the person of Christ; introduction to the life of the Society (history and major missionary orientations)

---

1. Terence 195/185–159 BCE.

- Third Phase (2 years): apostolic training – initiation into missionary life, especially in Africa, outside one's home country (the study of the language and culture of the people is key in this phase)
- Fourth Phase (3–4 years): intellectual, professional, and apostolic formation

In all these stages, there are some common elements: Team<sup>2</sup> / community life, spiritual and prayer life, deepening the knowledge and spirit of the founder and the Society, and pastoral involvement.

The programme aims at an integral formation which caters to the academic, human, spiritual, and professional needs of the candidates and mission. It also aims to promote the growth of the individual and the community.

### *Ongoing formation*

This programme is designed to help the members who have made their perpetual missionary vows to deal adequately with the different stages of their missionary experiences and human development. “The primary responsibility for ongoing formation rests with each individual missionary” (Constitutions and Laws #145).

## **Challenges to Our Formation Programme**

Among the many challenges to our formation programme, I would like to mention three:

**Clericalism:** Its root cause is weak ecclesiology and missiology and the religious context from which our candidates come and where they will eventually be working.

**Religious fundamentalism:** Again, this is mainly from the influence of the religious context in which our candidates come from and where they will be working. Religious fundamentalism is contrary to our interreligious / ecumenical dialogue and openness, considered to be part of our heritage from the time of the founder.

**Fear of committing oneself to work for justice and peace:** The earthen vessels of the contemporary generation in which we carry the message seem to be more fragile than those of our founder and predecessors, and they are therefore very fearful about being involved in this prophetic ministry.

---

2. In formation houses, there are teams. Each team has a formator; the role of the formator could be compared to that of Jesus with the disciples of Emmaus.

It is one thing to know and have the skills for this ministry; it is another to have the passion and the courage to be involved in it, whatever the cost.

## **Conclusion**

I would like to conclude with a quote from our Constitutions and Laws (CL), Chapter on Formation:

Called to be witnesses to the Gospel, we want, like the Apostles, to be trained by Christ. Formation is above all else a work of grace, but calls for a constant effort on our part to be faithful to the Spirit and to become interiorly free. Prayer, study, experience, these are the main elements of our formation, which is never completed. It prepares us and makes us constantly better fitted for our task, taking into account both the present and the future needs of the mission in Africa. (CL 2018, #107)

## **Examining Formation as Discipleship in Mission Agency: A Mission Agency Reformed by the Call to Discipleship *Collin Cowan***

### **Imperative for a Mission Agency**

The Council for World Mission (CWM) names as its mission statement “Called as partners in Christ to mutually challenge, encourage and equip churches to share in God’s mission.” This statement resonates with the theme of this World Mission Conference, “Moving in the Spirit: Called to Transforming Discipleship,” and particularly the focus for this plenary session, “Transforming the World, Equipping Disciples.”

For CWM, our partnership in Christ is the imperative for engagement with churches. Through this understanding of our relationship with Christ, we dare to claim the right to hold each other accountable to a pattern of discipleship that is grounded in the mission to which Jesus committed himself and for which he died. In 1977, when CWM was born, we divested ourselves of the outmoded mission paradigm, which presumed that some had more light and truth to impart than others, and where mission was dominated and coloured by monocultural norms and values of the global North. While it may be said that the early missionaries had no choice than to present the gospel through the lenses of their cultural understanding and social location,

the result was that Indigenous cultures were decimated, plurality and diversity discarded, and the spirit of community, with all its freedom and life-breathing potency, lost.

In this way 1977 introduced a new era and ethos in mission thinking and practice for the missionary societies that came together to form CWM. This new era is marked by divestment of dominant donor-recipient power arrangements, discovery of our mutual accountability and interdependence, and a decision to accompany each other in taking our call to discipleship seriously. This journey has been a very challenging one for us. We have had to learn along the way lessons of trust, of letting go, and of embracing alternatives and options we least thought possible. Desmond van der Water, former general secretary, in reflecting on the first 30 years of this journey, asked whether we could now speak of mission accomplished. A good, provocative question, which only reveals that mission can never be fully accomplished because every moment offers new challenges and opportunities, calling the church into a constant state of reformation.

My contribution to this plenary, therefore, is the story of our struggle and search for a model of engagement with God's mission that is grounded in a spirituality of hope, informed by a missiology of radical engagement, and propelled by the invitation of Jesus to a lifestyle of reversal. Our present strategic direction commits us to interlocking priorities centred on enabling member churches to develop missional congregations; we named empire as the context in which this mission finds expression. With this commitment to mission in the context of empire, compelling us to counter-cultural values and transformative praxis, we have come to recognize that the courage and consistency required is costly to the neat and well-ordered community of church. However, if we would take seriously the call to move in the Spirit, within the context of a groaning creation, the choice is clear – transformative discipleship, which is hope-inspired, radical in nature, and functions in reversal. Herein lays the task of mission organizations and agencies.

### **Mission Grounded in a Spirituality of Hope**

Hope is at the centre of CWM's mission for such a time as this, and we regard it as God's gift to the oppressed, the dislocated, and the restless. We affirm that hope springs from the bowels of discontent and provides the spiritual energy that keeps us restless yet resilient until our change comes. We believe that as long as we remain discontented with life as it is, we are in a mindset to reject this social order and to search for something different and better.

We believe that God's gift of hope is that which inspires us to radical engagement with the world as we know it, to the end that healing may be

experienced by all and peace become the new basis for life in community. For us, hope is rooted in the subversive theology of the resurrection. Jesus of Nazareth was killed. We all stand to face death in the end, but for many in the world, the end is constantly present, and the very air they breathe is mixed with the stench of death under systems that steal, destroy, and kill. And they die – in infancy, in their youth, in poverty – before they even live. The news that even death could not hold him is beyond radical. And the invitation to “Go tell my disciples that I am risen,” to regroup and carry on the mission for which Jesus was killed, is revolutionary.

Theologian Jürgen Moltmann – in his book *The Sun of Righteousness, Arise!* – discusses the central role of resurrection in Christian theology and observes that the resurrection connects the actual event of Christ overcoming death to the promise of God’s hope for cosmic renewal. This has a critical role in Christian theology, if not, in fact, the mandate for mission itself. Moltmann argues, and correctly so, that in the light of the numerous crises in the world – human and ecological – we have come to see ourselves and even the earth as mortal, as only born to die and, in many cases, cruelly. This backdrop gives the illusion that the death-dealing structures of our times have the last say. That death wins. But we know that is not how it ends. The resurrection guarantees us that death does not triumph, and therefore let us not be so willing to be surrounded by it. The church is called to “believe in the power of resurrection and prepare the way for the kingdom of God in the context of today’s apocalyptic horizon.” The Church must awaken to the fact that with the raising of Jesus, God himself has arisen, to fulfil his promises to all those he has created. Moltmann summarizes that the hope for the resurrection of the dead is not an answer to the human yearning for immortality; it is a response to the hunger for righteousness and justice.<sup>1</sup>

### **Mission Informed by a Praxis of Discernment and Radical Engagement (DARE)**

In a time when imperial powers, systems of oppression and violence, continue to exploit, divide, despoil, and threaten our world, CWM offers DARE as a vital voice of counter-imperial consciousness. As an international mission organization, we have wrestled since the 1970s with how to decolonize mission – its theory, theology, and praxis – and how to proclaim fullness of life through Christ at a time when all of life is threatened. CWM, through DARE, clarifies its prophetic role in the present political and social landscapes and in allegiance to the God of life who, according to the prophet Mary, brings down the mighty from their thrones.

---

1. See Jürgen Moltmann, *Sun of Righteousness, Arise! God’s Future for Humanity and the Earth* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010).



DARE, as discernment and radical engagement, enables CWM to participate in the formation of disciples for our moment and time, sending a clear signal, first to ourselves and then to the world, that our loyalty and obedience is to the God of life, who calls us to take on the life-giving mission for which Jesus lived and died. DARE declares that we are on the side of the radical, communitarian Jesus who dared to name thieves and robbers as the destroyers of life and presented himself as God's mediator and messenger of life in fullness – an alternative to the eternal Rome of his time.

### **Mission Responsive to Jesus' Call for a Lifestyle in Reversal**

According to Matthew's gospel, Jesus' calling of his first disciples was set in the context of the forces of empire that enticed and seduced him to consider power, popularity, and pleasure over the principles of obedience and faithfulness to God. Jesus, having resisted the temptations, presented himself to the community as one not easily sold to the scandal of seduction. His call to "Come, follow me" is a statement of defiance and an invitation to depart from the incentives and inducements that could mar the perspectives of his would-be followers and brighten their prospect of making any positive and life-changing difference to the world in which they lived. In Mark's gospel, Jesus encounters King Herod, in all his pomp and glory, throwing a party for the officials and nobles of society. Jesus refused to join the party; instead, he and his disciples retreated to the desert, and a large crowd followed them. Those who followed Jesus and his disciples were the ordinary people, those who were not so privileged to join Herod's party because they did not measure up to the social criteria. Jesus invited his disciples to feed the crowd, an invitation that shocked the disciples but demonstrated for them that Jesus was actually inviting them to a reversal of mindset.

Behind the safe doors of our churches, we have learned to label the chaos of reality as secular and therefore not the task of Christian disciples. One pastor may have believed just that once upon a time, but he soon came to realize that one act of obedience is better than a hundred sermons, and that to be Christian is to share the suffering of God in the world. A time came when obedience to him meant liberation from the narrow view that the minister's consecration to the mission of God excludes political and social activism, which are considered secular. He said, "It was not enough to bind the wounds of the victims beneath the wheel but to seize the wheel itself" and "When Christ calls a man [or woman] he bids him [her] come and die." Reverend Dietrich Bonhoeffer answered this very call when he rose up against Adolf Hitler's Nazi regime.

Here we may also draw insight and inspiration from David Livingstone, a pioneering missionary of the London Missionary Society, whose courageous and inspirational words live on: “I am prepared to go anywhere, provided it be forward.... All that I am I owe to Jesus Christ revealed to me in His divine Book.... If you have men who will only come if they know there is a good road, I do not want them. I want men who will come if there is no road at all.”

Transformative discipleship is about life in reversal, a readiness to go against the grain of culture, to confront power, challenge status quo, and exemplify a lifestyle marked by the courage to stand up for what is right and commitment to pursue justice and peace. In this regard, discipleship interpreted contextually is alert to the signs of the times, attuned the urgency of Jesus’ call to follow him, and positioned to offer a path to liberation and hope. Transformative discipleship calls us to think through the meaning of life in the midst of turmoil and consider ways of response in light of the call of Jesus of Nazareth to join him in establishing an alternative community based on justice and peace, a community in which all are accepted and embraced, and none refused or excluded.

### **Conclusion: Holding Fast to the Reformation Agenda**

In a rather moving presentation to the World Communion of Reformed Churches General Council in Leipzig, Germany, distinguished professor Jürgen Moltmann challenged his audience to consider that “the ecumenical movement is missing the reformation agenda.” Moltmann made this call against the backdrop of the many complex and controversial issues on the agenda of the General Council and his sense of the temptation into which we so easily fall: to compromise mission out of convenience or need to maintain the neatness of the organization. Speaking later in that General Council, I agreed with Moltmann’s assertion and argued that the reformation agenda is being stymied by our love for remaining the way we are and maintaining the way we are viewed, irrespective of how many categories are created and excluded in the process. We say that it is in the interest of the unity of the church, but I fear that true unity, true communion, is being compromised, even sacrificed, by this “colonization of the imperial logic.”

If this World Mission Conference is true to the World Council of Churches’ commitments in *Together towards Life*, then transformative discipleship is a central concern and the call for mission agencies to accept its role in missional formation is critical and urgent. This call for reformation is meant to ground us, to take us back to the foundation of our calling, and to stir in us a passion for walking with Jesus in radical “troubling (of) the waters” of our time.

## **14. EMBRACING THE CROSS**

### ***Equipped Disciples***

---

### **Embracing the Cross Today in the Context of the Middle East**

#### ***His Holiness Mor Ignatius Aphrem II***

Your Excellencies, Reverend Clergy, dear brothers and sisters,

We would like to thank the moderator and director of the Conference on World Mission and Evangelism for inviting us to participate in this Mission Conference in Arusha, Tanzania. Also, we would like to thank our host, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT), particularly the presiding bishop, Dr Fredrick Shoo, for their hospitality.

#### **Mission of the Church**

The mission of the church is the salvation of the souls. Therefore, the universal church constantly seeks to spread the gospel of Christ among all the nations, in order for the world “to know Christ and the power of his resurrection” (Phil. 3:10), so they may believe in him as the saviour and redeemer. The church offers a haven for those who seek to grow spiritually and to better understand the purpose of life beyond the material existence.

In Christianity, “God is love” (1 John 4:8); therefore, Christians’ mission is to spread the culture of love among all those who are around them. It is the love for God, reflected in the love of the neighbour.

Since love is a relationship, the mission of the church is to correctly build these relationships. Every believer is invited to strengthen his relation with God, a relation of sonship and adoption. God initiated this relationship through his act of sublime love by dying on the cross for our sake; it is our call as Christians to show our love to God by obeying his commandments and carrying the cross of witnessing to Christ in our daily lives.

Likewise, Christians are called to love their neighbour, without personal profit of any sort. It is the love based on self-sacrifice, emptying one’s self, and giving unconditionally in accordance with our Lord Jesus’ words to his disciples: “No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends” (John 15:13). Moreover, a close connection exists between love and

service; our Lord affirms that “whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant” (Matt. 20:26). He himself gave us an example of this serving ministry by washing the feet of his disciples though he is the Lord and Master (see John 13:1-5). Thus, we understand the mission of the church to be that of ministering to the world in order to sanctify it.

In today’s world, people seem to be focused on themselves; it is easy to be drawn to self-centrism and egoism. However, nurturing one’s basic spiritual needs should not lead to narcissism or self-centralism. Nurturing one’s basic spiritual needs is a healthy way to seek spiritual growth “until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ” (Eph. 4:13). We are then called disciples of Christ.

### **Discipleship and Persecution**

School students, innocently in their beautiful minds, always dream to be like their teachers, that is to be good disciples who would reach what they think is full knowledge that their teachers have.

In Christianity, we are called to be good disciples of Christ. We see in our Lord’s teachings a model to follow. Therefore, in good faith and with strong conviction, we aspire to imitate the Lord. As Christians, we know that discipleship is a responsibility great enough to consume other worldly desires. It is the way we embrace the cross of our Lord and cast off the pursuit of what is vain in the world. Discipleship is to dedicate one’s self entirely for Christ.

The resonating words of our Lord – “Remember the word that I said to you, ‘Servants are not greater than their master.’ If they persecuted me, they will persecute you; if they kept my word, they will keep yours also” (John 15:20) – show the great cost of discipleship. With witnessing to the Lord both in word and in deed comes persecution and tribulation.

Christianity is not welcomed in the world because it puts people out of their comfort zone. It challenges their worldly philosophical convictions with the simplicity of the word of the cross: “For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God” (1 Cor. 1:18). “For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written: ‘He catches the wise in their craftiness’” (1 Cor. 3:19). It invites people to walk the path of the cross, which is an uncharted territory by the majority. It is to let go of the love of material things and to hold to spiritual rewards promised in the world to come. Therefore, Christians face rejection in their societies. Severe forms of rejection lead to persecution, where hatred is expressed in the form of violence and the desire to exterminate. Christians throughout the world are victims of persecution;

large numbers of Christian communities in all continents face persecution on a daily basis. It comes in different forms and varies greatly: it can be the lack of freedom of religious beliefs, or actively killing innocent children or families while they are peacefully praying or worshipping the Lord. In the Middle East, in our homeland as the Syriac Orthodox Church, our people have faced many tribulations and genocides throughout the centuries. Some one hundred years ago, a massive genocide in the Ottoman Empire aimed at eliminating Christianity from the land of its birthplace. More than half a million Syriac-speaking people were massacred in the most horrible ways, together with the Armenians, Greeks, and other religious minorities. We continue to suffer from persecution in Iraq and Egypt. In Syria, terrorist groups such as ISIS, Al-Nusra, and others have targeted Christian congregations and completely destroyed many of our churches.

Recently, we visited the Syrian city of Deir El Zor after it was liberated from the terrorist groups; the city had a small population of Christians from different denominations before it was attacked by the terrorists. When the terrorists entered the city, Christians were forced to leave their homes and jobs, fearing for their lives. They sought refuge in neighbouring cities. During our visit, we met the only Christian man who stayed in the city for the entire time, deprived of the freedom to pray in the church or to practise his Christian faith.

We were shocked to see the extent of destruction that took place in the city. The terrorist groups destroyed the city's historic suspension bridge. They destroyed all the churches in the city. For the first time after more than five years, we were able to celebrate the divine liturgy in the city; we did that on the ruins of our Syriac Orthodox St. Mary Church there, with pages from old manuscripts and liturgical books under the rubble.

As a sign of our commitment to our humanitarian mission, we opened a clinic to help the poor get the medical assistance they needed, serving two dozen Christians who have returned, but mostly thousands of Muslim brothers and sisters.

Despite this discouraging situation, we continue to preach forgiveness. We continue to be witnesses of Christ in this world because we have faith in his words: "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:10). We also implemented many projects of relief and development throughout Syria and Iraq, in the most destroyed places. We are still assisting, with our humble means, the people suffering from the terrorist attacks in Syria. In Damascus, we are offering help in the relief to the families which were forced to leave their houses, escaping the dangers of the continuous attacks by the terrorists. We are with them,

feeling their pain and sharing their daily sufferings. Around our residence, an innocent child – Elias – was killed by a mortar over a month ago; his parents were severely injured. His family buried his remains without telling his mother, whose medical condition was so critical that they feared the sad news might complicate her condition further. Facing the cruelty and beastly behaviour of those who desire to sow hatred and war, the Syriac Orthodox Church, as a witness of Christ, along with the other sister churches, is trying to offer hope to all the victims of such inhuman behaviour. We are faithful to our call to be ambassadors of Christ, that is, witnesses to the gospel of peace and love.

### **How Can We Continue to Embrace the Cross?**

During this turmoil in the Middle East, a great number of Christians have left their countries. In order to better understand the importance of Christian witness and how to preserve its existence in our part of the world, we wish to highlight the following:

- a) Our presence is a necessity not only for Christianity to continue in the land where it was born, but also for the people of the area. Christians have always been an essential element of reconciliation and bridge building among different ethnic and religious components of the region.
- b) We need to bring hope to our people that they still have a future in their homeland by tending to their needs, both in terms of security and financial help. For that, all churches in Syria have been actively engaged in relief efforts as well as in developmental projects to create job opportunities for our people.
- c) Interreligious dialogue on the academic level alone is not sufficient; we need to initiate joint activities such as workshops, seminars, and camps among Muslim and Christian young people.
- d) We need the support of our brothers and sisters throughout the world in two main areas: advocacy and development.
- e) Christians can survive only under secular governments where they could be treated based on the principle of citizenship with equal rights and obligations.

### **Conclusion**

Mission in the church has evolved: from witnessing in word to witnessing in deeds and blood. The church today is faithfully embracing the cross of Christ and follows him to Calvary trusting that, from death, life is given in him.

## Carrying the Cross of Poverty

**Roberto E. Zwetch**

Dear friends, sisters and brothers in the Spirit of Jesus!

I come from southern Brazil, from the city of Porto Alegre, known for having hosted the World Council of Churches (WCC) Assembly of 2006, but also various gatherings of the World Social Forum. I am grateful for the challenge that this conference poses to me, as a missionary, to witness from a continent assailed by poverty which affects millions of people, besides minority ethnicities and many vulnerable groups, such as people with HIV/AIDS and others. I request permission to speak dressed in this *Kuzma*, a cloth made of cotton by the women of the Ashaninka Indigenous people, who live in Amazonia between Brazil and Peru. I used this vestment when I was ordained, in 1986, to the ministry of the gospel in the Evangelical Church of Lutheran Confession in Brazil (IECLB), when I was working as a missionary among the Kulina Indigenous people in Acre, on the border of Peru and Bolivia. On that occasion, I explained to the small congregation that I decided not to use the traditional black clergy robe as a sign of insertion in the culture of the Indigenous peoples and commitment to their struggle for life, human rights, and dignity. Also, when we got married, my wife and I decided to use only the tucum ring as a sign of our matrimony and our alliance with the Indigenous cause.

In this event, I propose that the use of this vestment be a symbol of the challenge which the theme presents to us: "Carrying the Cross of Poverty." Freed by the gospel of Jesus and his Spirit for a new life, to take on the cross of Christ – which frees us from sin, injustice, and death – means more than just proclaiming his name. There is something inherent in the Christian faith which calls upon us to carry the pain and suffering of the people, in solidarity, communion, and love. Ten years ago, I wrote that the love of God can and must be lived and experienced in com-passion (passion with) for the other. That is why I understand mission as compassion. The mission of God is not and has never been neutral. It places us in the path of those who suffer the most, of the people treated unjustly, of the landless or expatriated peasants, of the people who are worth nothing in the eyes of the dominant system, as the Classical Pentecostal churches taught us over 100 years ago. One must take up the cross of Christ as the cross of the crucified, of yesterday and of today, as Leonardo Boff, Milton Schwantes, and Dom Pedro Casaldàliga, bishop of the Catholic Church, who has celebrated 90 years, wrote. Only thus will there be liberation!

Can you imagine the *weight* of this commitment? The burden is enormous compared with what is currently happening globally and in particular here in Africa and in Latin America and the Caribbean. Indigenous people are seeing their lands invaded by mining multinationals, agro-business companies, and hydroelectric projects of the national governments. Afro Brazilian brothers and sisters, descendants of enslaved Africans, who have resisted 350 years on communal lands which we call *Quilombos*, struggle for dignity and the right to live communally on the freed-up lands of their ancestors. Women of all classes suffer daily from domestic violence. Thus, the house can no longer be, simply, the sweet home from the patriarchal perspective. Femicide grows in Brazil, in Central America, in Mexico. A current statistic points out that in Brazil alone, in 2013, 4,762 assassinations of women were registered: approximately 13 female homicides daily. Sadly, Brazil is among the countries with the highest rate of female homicides: it occupies *the fifth position* in a ranking of 83 nations.<sup>1</sup> Doctor Lourdes Bandeira, sociologist and professor at the University of Brasilia, the capital of my country, affirmed: "This situation is equal to a permanent state of civil war."

In 2016, Brazil suffered a true parliamentary coup, conducted by the oligarchies which could not tolerate the fourth mandate of a popular government. Allies of the elites, of the multinationals, of the private banks, supported by corporate media, took down a president who had been constitutionally elected in 2014, leading the country into a political and social crisis never seen before. At this moment, legislative projects are imposing severe losses for the workers, the consequences of which we will know in the near future. Following the global tendency, the loss of workers' rights and the imposition of informality will define, for many years, the life of the majorities, with already foreseen results of an increase in extreme poverty, violence, and human and environmental degradation, making life not viable mainly for Brazilian youth.

In this context, the Christian churches cannot step back or omit to be involved. If the meaning of their existence is to become historically an instrument of the love and compassion of God for God's people, the path to follow will be prophetic and in solidarity with the pain of the world. It is among the "smallest" of these that we will find Jesus, as he prophetically announced in his parable (Matt. 25). The meaning of the evangelizing announcement will propose a trustworthy hope which is rooted in reality. Hope that is incarnated in the life and in the expectations of millions of youth, women, children, elderly, as well as in the migrant people who are increasingly flocking to Brazil in recent years, such as from Haiti, Venezuela, Senegal, Ghana, Palestine, Syria. Thus,

---

1. Data from the *Mapa da Violência 2015* [Violence Map] (Cebela/Flacso), <https://dossies.agenciapatriciagalvao.org.br/dados-e-fontes/pesquisas>.



the main actors will be youth, women, and people without fame or power, as Elsa Tamez wrote in her history of the women in the Jesus movement.

I end my testimony honoring the *memory* of the Indigenous leader and teacher Marcondes Namblá of the Xokleng/Laklanó people of the state of Santa Catarina, who was brutally assassinated on the 1st of January of this year as he was working on a beach of that southern state. Namblá, 38 years old, was married and had five children, leaving them orphans along with the children of the Indigenous school where he was teaching to strengthen the language and recovery of their culture. He was an active member of the Assembly of God and was supported by the missionary project of the Lutheran Church. He had recently concluded the Intercultural Indigenous Teaching Program of the Federal University of Santa Catarina (UFSC) in preparation for a master's programme. His premature death is a hard blow for that people. In recent years, an unforgivable regression has occurred with regard to the Indigenous rights which are embodied in the Federal Constitution of 1988. The wave of racist intolerance, stimulated by the authorities, is also happening in other states of the federation, mainly against the Guarani-Kaiowá people in Mato Grosso do Sul, who are experiencing truly tragic days with summary expulsions from their lands and recurring assassinations of important leaders.

How to carry these crosses in such a difficult moment? I believe that if we trust only in our human strengths, there is no way out. Poverty will increase, and with it all the violence which accompanies it. More than ever, we need to pray and trust in the strength and power of the Spirit of Christ. And thus empowered, we need to concretely wear the pain, the struggle, and the hope of our peoples. As Dr. Walter Altmann, ex-moderator of the WCC central committee, wrote: "Christ can already be found where those who are suffering are found." The living God bless and keep you in peace, which is the fruit of justice!

## **Carrying the Cross of the Experience of the Pan-African Women's Ecumenical Empowerment Network**

***Angelique Walker-Smith***

The apostle Peter is remembered as a saint who was martyred on the cross for the sake of Jesus the Christ. Our African brother Simon of Cyrene is remembered as the one who carried the cross for Jesus. These men and other non-African men are often remembered along with a few names of African people

in church history, but the names and memory of the pan-African woman of faith carrying the cross have often been buried or hidden. Here are the testimonies of just a few of us.

In the Old Testament, you may know me as Hagar. I was from Egypt and enslaved by Abraham and Sarah. I was cast out by them to the desert to nurse my child, the son of Abraham. But God delivered us.

My name is Zipporah from Ethiopia, wife of Moses. Before we married, my sisters and I gave him water and welcome in a foreign place. I was a bearer of family wisdom demonstrated by my father, who taught Moses that sustainable change comes with shared leadership and discipleship of all the people.

My name is Saint Josephine Bakhita from Sudan. I was taken away to be enslaved and to live in Italy, but God called my name. I embraced the monastic life and gave prayerful witness to the power of the Holy Spirit and spiritual disciplines that sustain one's life of costly discipleship, later referenced by our brother Dr Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

My name is Sojourner Truth from the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church; I posed the question "Ain't I a Woman?" And the answer came back in the United States' Constitution up until 1865 that said you are three fifths of a white person and you shall be called property. But I knew God called my name as an Evangelist and I kept my Bible close and told the good news of Jesus the Christ and that women of every race and nation matter.

My name is Missionary, Mother, First Lady, Supervisor, Prophet, and Prophetess in many churches in Africa and the African diaspora. We have prayerfully cared for the orphaned, the sick and shut-in, the widowed, those affected by hunger and poverty today and during the periods of slavery and colonialism led by church and non-church leaders. We who have not only given birth, nursed, and raised our own children but with non-consent did the same for our colonial masters and mistresses and their children. We, deacons and deaconesses, have blessed, anointed, and buried broken bodies and spirits of our children after the crucifixion of lynching, war, slavery, police brutality, racism, and mass incarceration.

My name is Evangelist, while knowing the pain of refusal to acknowledge my call to leadership in roles and titles of Pastor, Minister, Reverend, Priest, or Bishop, although I know God called me to ordained ministry.

My name is Pastoral Healer in places where I am counted among the 65 million refugees who have left our beloved homes because of conditions like climate change, conflict, war, hunger, and poverty that have made my home unsustainable. Yet they call me stranger and alien because I have tried to find a new home in the prosperous countries that have built their economies with the ancient natural resources of my lands and enslaved labour of my ancestors.

My name is the Rev. Dr Rena Karefa-Smart from the Caribbean, United States, and Sierra Leone. I am a scholar and ordained church leader who called the world churches to prayer when I wrote liturgies for the first global assembly of the World Council of Churches in 1948. I also carried the processional cross for all of us at the beginning of the global assembly of the WCC in Evanston, Illinois, in 1954.

Pan-African women have borne and continue to bear the cross as disciples of Jesus the Christ. You may not know our names, but God does. In the stillness and nightmares of the night and at the dawn of the day, God has called us and is calling us. Are you listening with us? The cross is ours to bear, but so is the great resurrection!

“Hush, hush, somebody’s calling our names.... O my Lord, what shall we do?” The Pan-African Women’s Ecumenical Empowerment Network (PAWEEN) invites you to accompany us on the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace.

## **Carrying the Cross of Prejudice from a Dominant Culture**

***Kathryn Mary Lohre***

Today we participate in God’s mission and evangelism in an increasingly multi-religious world. In our neighbourhoods and globally, there are examples of peaceful co-existence but also of interreligious intolerance, bigotry, violence, and persecution. Amidst this, God has given us the ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:18). Freed in Christ to love and serve our neighbour, what is our faithful response when our neighbour of another religion is the target of hatred? How are we called, as disciples of Christ, to embrace the cross for their sake?

In the fall of 2010, anti-Muslim bigotry in the United States reached a fever pitch as Terry Jones, a pastor of a small non-denominational church in Florida, threatened to burn copies of the Qur’an on the ninth anniversary of September 11, 2001, and the 24-hour news cycle was spinning controversy around the so-called Ground Zero Mosque proposal which would, among other things, create a forum for interreligious understanding and cooperation. In short, anti-Muslim bigotry was going unchecked in our public discourse.

In response, Jewish, Christian, and Muslim leaders – including 14 from the Orthodox, Protestant, Evangelical, and Catholic churches – gathered at the

National Press Club in Washington, DC, for an emergency interfaith summit. They released a joint statement standing in solidarity with their Muslim neighbours. As a longer-term strategy, they formed a coalition, the Shoulder to Shoulder Campaign, with a mission dedicated to ending anti-Muslim bigotry through the mobilization of non-Muslim faith communities.<sup>1</sup>

While hate crimes against Jewish and black Americans remain the highest, crimes against Muslims have risen at alarming rates – and of course we must name the intersections. In 2016 alone, hate crimes against Muslims rose almost 20 percent, fuelled by the anti-Muslim sentiment expressed during the presidential campaign. Another uptick is expected for 2017, stoked by the policies of the administration in its first year.

Eight years in, the coalition has expanded to include 35 members and the campaign strategy has diversified. Local capacity building and advocacy have been added to ongoing work nationally and in partnership with global initiatives such as the 2016 Marrakesh Declaration on the Rights of Religious Minorities in Predominantly Muslim Majority Communities and the follow-up Alliance of Virtue conference held last month in Washington, DC.

There is a unique role, I would assert, for the churches to play. We are just beginning to understand that equipping disciples for mission and evangelism today must include not only religious literacy and interreligious competencies, but also the courage and humility to embrace the cross for the sake of our neighbours of other religions and world views, and to defend them against discrimination, bigotry, racism, and violence, regardless of its source.

The dominant Christian voices in American public discourse are no longer those of the churches in the ecumenical family, but those of certain Christian leaders who teach and preach bias and bigotry – and whose credos are often championed by a president who is not held to any religious, moral, or ethical standard. The American public does not differentiate one set of Christian voices from another, and so the Christian witness in the US is deeply diminished, sometimes distorted to the point of betraying the gospel. We need you, our sisters and brothers in Christ, as we seek to be faithful witnesses amidst these scandalous realities.

Martin Luther clung to the theology of the cross. “A theology of the cross excludes triumphalism; we who know God’s promise of gracious, trustworthy love need not have all the answers as we acknowledge the deep mysteries of God. We can live humbly within these limits and still stand in courageous solidarity and loving compassion with all who suffer.”<sup>2</sup> Today, in the United States, that includes the American Muslim community. Thus, as the

1. <https://www.shouldertoshouldercampaign.org>

2. “Luther and Contemporary Inter-Religious Relations,” from the ELCA Consultative Panel on Lutheran–Jewish Relations, 2016, [http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Why\\_Follow\\_Luther\\_Past\\_2017.pdf](http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Why_Follow_Luther_Past_2017.pdf).

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America we are working in partnership to educate our church about Islam; to encourage dialogue and cooperation with Muslims; to advocate for religious freedom and civil liberties; and to participate in moral, public resistance when necessary.

In his *Letters and Papers from Prison* Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote:

Against folly we have no defense. Neither protests nor force can touch it; reasoning is no use; facts that contradict personal prejudices can simply be disbelieved – indeed, the fool can counter by criticizing them, and if they are undeniable, they can just be pushed aside as trivial exceptions. So the fool, as distinct from the scoundrel, is completely self-satisfied; in fact, he can easily become dangerous, as it does not take much to make him aggressive.<sup>3</sup>

Just over a year ago, on the night of January 28, I put my four children to bed, hugged my husband, and headed for the airport for the first of several nights in a row. Protests had spread from JFK airport in New York to major airports across the country in response to the executive order “Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States.” The order, which would ban nationals from several Muslim-majority countries, was interpreted as the president delivering on his campaign promise of a “Muslim ban,” but it also put a halt to refugee resettlement from those countries, with the exception of Syrian Christian refugees.

On the train, a woman handed me a black marker and a poster board. I hastily wrote in large letters: “Lutheran Christians love their Muslim neighbours” and on the other side, “Lutherans welcome refugees.” The woman sitting next to me glanced at my sign and said: “I didn’t know there were Christians who would come.” She shared that she had been raised Christian but had left the church as an adult to escape what she described as hatred, especially against Muslims. As the train arrived at the airport terminal, we decided to stick together, joining a remarkably diverse coalition.

Bonhoeffer was right: protests cannot defend against folly. But as called and sent disciples of Christ, we must protest whenever and wherever the gospel is diminished, distorted, or betrayed, or when our neighbours are under threat or experiencing bigotry and violence. Freed in Christ, we are called to embrace the cross to protest the suffering of any and all people, and the fullness of creation. It is costly discipleship, but not when compared to the cost borne by the One who embraced the cross once and for all.

---

3. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, “After Ten Years,” in Eberhard Bethge, ed., *Letters and Papers from Prison* (New York: Touchstone, 1997), 1–17, at 8.

I want to close by acknowledging that there are other witnesses here, with different stories, including painful stories of Christians embracing the cross of violence perpetrated by Muslims. I give thanks to God for this opportunity to learn from and with each other as we seek to equip disciples for mission and evangelism in today's multi-religious world.

## Keynote address: Spiritual Dimension of Embracing the Cross

### *Vuyani Vellem*

He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me." (Mark 8:34)

Moderator, fellow delegates, mothers, fathers, sisters and brothers,

My immense gratitude for the honour and privilege accorded me to make this humble contribution in this august and historic conference of the Council on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME) of the World Council of Churches. *Jambo!*

Do we remember what Dietrich Bonhoeffer once said: "Pray and struggle for justice"<sup>1</sup>?

Prayer is one of the most important resources for Christian spirituality. It is said that the missionaries came and "They taught us to pray with our eyes closed. When we opened our eyes, they had the land and we had the Bible."<sup>2</sup> With the land still in their hands, now it is prayer itself that is squeezed out of our souls and our crushed consciences. Today in our world, the skies are throttled, mountains are crumbling, streams and the deeps that bowed in prayerful glory to God are left roaring and their waves lifted on high in piercing groans. Creation is groaning! To pray and to pursue justice is heavy and deep.

To embrace the cross is to grasp that among other things, spirituality is a product of ideology and faith – a liberating combination of ideology and faith for the affirmation of the whole of life for me. With ideology we are able

---

1. See Clodovis Boff, *Feet-on-the-Ground Theology: A Brazilian Journey* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1987), 97.

2. This well-known saying in South African Black theology is often attributed to Desmond Tutu, but in fact was spoken by the late Kenyan leader Jomo Kenyatta.

to tell our stories and relate to our existence, grasp the contestations that exist among us, the forms of exploitation and our modes of struggle for life. Ideology offers a vision of what is possible: it is aspirational and on its basis we are guided ethically; we are able to choose between right and wrong, good and bad, and ultimately, we are guided by ideology to legitimize power and the ethos of our lived experiences. Admittedly, ideology can exist independently much as faith can; however, dangerous ideology is a permanent danger to faith, and faith without ideology is as toxic.

As an expressive means through which we participate in our own histories and herstories as conscious agents,<sup>3</sup> ideology combines with faith in Jesus Christ as the liberator and produces a spirituality epitomized and exemplified in struggles against the bigotry of racism, Nazism, xenophobia, homophobia, patriarchy, triumphalism, and fascism, confronting death without fear. This spirituality enables us to learn how to die in order to live. To learn to die is an epitome of supreme sacrifice – sacrifice that epitomizes victory over evil. Undisputedly, spirituality is about the affirmation of life and protest against the architecture of empire and empires that succeed to conceal their original sin of racism. Prayer and struggle for justice is to embrace the cross, the powerless power of God that decolonizes and liberates humanity and the whole of creation against oppression and life-killing systems of knowledge. Prayer is a subversive spiritual resource; it is the powerhouse of the liturgy that speaks back to tyrannical forms of power with unwavering faith in the God of life.

From Achimota to Arusha, we embark on a journey of return! It is about our future, *Ikamnva*, to go back to our future. As Amilcar Cabral avers, “The return to one’s origins is therefore not a voluntary gesture, but the only viable answer to the imperious challenge of concrete, historical necessity, determined by the irresolvable contradiction”<sup>4</sup> – yes, the continuing irresolvable ambivalence enunciated in the dungeons of Elmina and the transatlantic slave trade, a civilization conceived on an irrational ideology that marked black bodies as less than human. Our journey of return thus passes in, through, and out of the hegemonic ethnocentric core of mission and evangelism in marriage with the spirit of conquest. Cabral says, “every indigenous social layer or class is obliged to define its position in terms of this contradiction.”<sup>5</sup> To engage this irresolvable, cultural, and spiritual contradiction that bedevils colonized societies and colonizing powers today, the very sustained ethos of the colonial

3. See Robert Fatton, Jr., *Black Consciousness in South Africa: The Dialectics of Ideological Resistance to White Supremacy* (New York: University of New York Press, 1986), 41.

4. Amilcar Cabral and Michel Vale, “The Role of Culture in the Struggle for Independence,” *International Journal of Politics* 7:4 (1977): 27.

5. Ibid.

matrix of power is a continuous challenge to embrace the cross.<sup>6</sup> To return to our origin is not voluntary but spiritually necessary. It is to follow Jesus.

Remember that we have survived in our continent and the global South, a history of “Christianize or I shoot you,” “Civilize or I shoot you,” “Develop or I shoot you,” “Neo-liberalize or I shoot you,” “Democratize or I shoot you.”<sup>7</sup> Now we live in a shameless fascist world of “do not come next to me” after the neo-liberal ethos made it possible for democracy to kill by law.

The journey of return is dangerous: it entails embracing a spirit that defeats fear, which according to Steve Biko<sup>8</sup> is reason to stultify the participation of the wretched of this world in the project of their return to the restoration of their dignity. For reasons of fear, the cross has continued to elude us!

“That the analogy between the cross and the lynching tree should have eluded the Christian agents of white supremacy is not surprising,”<sup>9</sup> Cone argues. How could we be surprised when Vasco da Gama and his crew chanted *Te Deum Laudamus* after invading the palace of Kilwa here in Tanzania? Liturgy and prayer have served to elude us from the violence of the cross. Many indeed continue to be eluded by the analogy between the cross and the black woman’s body in the dungeons of the Elmina Castle. The analogy between the civilizing mission and the cross eludes us in our throttled systems of higher learning; we fail to connect the cross with the deification of a form of democracy completely detached from the daily bread needed by millions of people on the margins, yet only 1 percent of the total population enjoys 99 percent of our global wealth.

It is *the heart to feel* the burden of the cross that distinguishes elusion from the spiritual embrace of the cross of Jesus.<sup>10</sup> “Pray and struggle for justice.” To pray and struggle for justice is to fully grasp that “prayer holds the word of faith the way the earth holds the seed until it sprouts.”<sup>11</sup>

---

6. See examples and affirming lessons from the ecumenical movement which must be mentioned in passing: The Programme to Combat Racism, the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women, AGAPE, and what the Accra Confession designates as Empire.

7. See Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni, *Empire, Global Coloniality and African Subjectivity* (Oxford: Berghahn, 2013), Kindle edition, 22 of 104. Ndlovu-Gatsheni cites Ramon Grosfoguel; this is paraphrased.

8. Steve Biko, *I Write What I Like: Selected Writings* (Johannesburg: Picador, 2004), 165.

9. James Cone, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2011), 31–32.

10. See *ibid.*, 37–41. Cone specifically analyzes Reinhold Niebuhr’s understanding of the cross and argues that Niebuhr had eyes to see Blacks suffering, but lacked the heart to feel it as his own. It is the analogy of the lynching tree that we are focusing on at the moment.

11. Boff, *Feet-on-the-Ground Theology*, 97.



We surely must hold onto the seed that was planted by CWME in Melbourne.<sup>12</sup> Melbourne saw the disorder of humanity as a starting point of mission and evangelism as we today hold on to move together towards life. We hold on against a heartless, hardening husk of the world, one without a heart to feel, whose disorder, according to Percy More, is marked by: “[The] persistence of invidious racism, student protests such as #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall, demands for a decolonised curriculum, and the continual presence of neo-colonialism, neoliberalism and a detotalised black identity.”<sup>13</sup>

We hold on against this heartless world, revived by student protests showing that “Colonization and decolonization as well as coloniality and decoloniality are increasingly becoming key terms for movements that challenge the predominant racial, sexist, homo- and trans-phobic conservative, liberal, and neoliberal politics of today.”<sup>14</sup>

To embrace the cross is the capacity by the conquering, destructive spirit to accept defeat. This is what those who have experienced defeat in their histories and herstories offer to the world. To accept defeat is to have a heart that can feel. Bonhoeffer had the heart to feel and demonstrated “an existential interest in blacks.”<sup>15</sup> He preached in Harlem! He felt the ghetto! Solidarity is not a matter of pigmentocracy, but a conscious response to the demands of the cross, whose embrace is impossible without a trans-valuation of values. The cross is the absolute opposite of human value systems,<sup>16</sup> the Bonhoefferian “paradoxical agility” we inherit in Christ, the only viable answer to the irresolvable contradiction that plunges the colonized to opposites with the colonial matrix of power. Existential commitment to the wretched is the recognition that those nailed on the cross are a community with a subversive historical memory. It is to remember that “The fundamental elements that form the basis of the survival of the victims as a self-conscious and self-creating people are never destroyed.”<sup>17</sup> Defeat means the defeat of a heart that cannot feel the pain of the poor, the pain of the Palestinian, that of women who continue to do more unpaid care work than richer ones, the current

---

12. See David Bosch, “In Search of Mission: Reflections on ‘Melbourne,’” *Missionalia*, 9 (1981): 3–18.

13. Mabogo Percy More, *Biko: Philosophy, Identity and Liberation* (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2017), xi.

14. Nelson Maldonado-Toress, “Outline of Ten Theses on Coloniality and Decoloniality,” <http://fondation-frantzfanon.com/outline-of-ten-theses-on-coloniality-and-decoloniality>.

15. Cone, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*, 41–42.

16. *Ibid.*, 35.

17. Takatso Mofokeng, “The Crucified and Permanent Cross-bearing,” *Journal of Black Theology* 7:1 (1993): 23.

global attitudes that devalue the status and abilities of poor women in the global South.<sup>18</sup>

In conclusion, we can nourish the seed of our prayer if we learn that spirituality is not an *idea* but a *verb*. We can embrace the cross when we hold that there is no spirituality without life, and spirituality is impatient life against the disorder of humanity. When the verbs of the faith of the victims move away from the promises of the powerful, and when the oppressed return to their origin and their historical memory, then prayer becomes a subversive verb that inflicts convulsion and the collapse of the fortresses of Empire. When the students march and sing during #FeesMustFall, chanting and singing, “*Siyabasaba na?Asibasabi!*” (Are we afraid of them? We are not!), hope ceases to be an idea, but a verb of dislocation from a life-killing order. The cross of Jesus for struggling masses is a paradox fraught with “ironic tenacity.”<sup>19</sup>

*Kubi, Kubi, Siyaya, Noba Kubi Siyaya, Noba Besibulala Siyaya* (No matter how bad, we are going, no matter if they are killing, we are going). We follow Jesus who was crucified and killed for justice: “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.” *Asante.*

## “I Have a Dream” Sang Chang

This session deals with the last part of the plenary on “Equipped Disciples: Embracing the Cross”: “I Have a Dream.”

What are the fundamental characteristics of “equipped disciples”? I propose two critical aspects of equipped discipleship as the theme suggests: embracing the cross, and having a dream.

Let’s explore this idea from the gospel story of Jesus and his disciples in Mark 8:27-34 and Matthew 16:13-28. This story is about the event that took place as Jesus and his disciples were on the way to villages of Caesarea Philippi. Jesus first asked his disciples, “Who do people say that I am?” Then he asked, “Who do you say that I am?” This is the most fundamental question in the New Testament. This was not a question only for his disciples there, but for all of us here. Peter answered, “You are the Messiah [Christ].”

---

18. See Oxfam International, “Reward Work, Not Wealth” (January 2018), 25, <https://www.oxfam.org/en/research/reward-work-not-wealth>.

19. Cone, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*.

For this answer, Peter was commended by Jesus. Indeed, Peter's answer, in its very essence, marks the beginning of discipleship. Then Jesus continued to speak about his way of the cross. At this moment, Peter rebuked Jesus severely to not do such a thing. In return, Jesus rebuked Peter, even calling him Satan. "Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things." Clearly, the way of the cross means to be on the side of God. Those who deny or avoid the cross are not disciples of Jesus but of Satan. Being on the side of God means to carry the cross of dedication, sacrifice, persecution, poverty, and commitment to transforming the world that is full of injustice, conflict, and suffering. Equipped disciples should keep asking themselves whether they are on the side of God whenever they are confronted with problems, questions, and moments of decision making. Christian discipleship is always costly.

The next question to ask is this: What kind of dream should equipped disciples have in such a secularized, materialized world of today, which threatens even the credibility of the gospel? A disciple's dream is not possible apart from Jesus's teaching and vision. Christians are those who participate in Jesus's vision – that is, God's vision. Then, what aspect of life indicates that we participate in God's vision and dream?

It is prayer. Prayer is an act of "amen" to God's vision and will. When we pray, our vision, dream, and commitment become renewed and strengthened. In the gospel, we find Jesus teaching his disciples how to pray, and what to pray for. The Lord's Prayer is not only reflective of Jesus' teaching, but it further contains his radical vision of fulfilment of the kingdom of God on earth. The petition in the Lord's Prayer, "thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," demonstrates the vision, aspiration, and dream with which disciples must be equipped. In other words, "as thy will is realized in heaven, it will likewise be realized on earth." This is our dream and aspiration.

We find the concrete vision for the realization of God's will on earth as already realized in heaven in the following petitions: "give us our daily bread" and "forgive our debts as we forgive our debtors."

One of God's concerns is centred on bread, or food. We human beings are inevitably dependent on food. Life is more than food, of course. Yet one cannot survive without nourishment of food. Life depends on it. When we pray to God, we do not say "my Father," but "our Father." God belongs to all of us. Likewise, bread belongs not only to me, but to all my brothers and sisters. Only when the bread is "our bread" is it God-given. Otherwise, it becomes something selfish, and greedy. Therefore, we have to be aware that, when there are people who do not have bread and go hungry in our world today,

it raises the critical question of the quality of bread, which we are having for ourselves only; it does not deserve to be called “our bread given by God.”

As we see in the words “give us” and “our daily bread,” we should not pray for accumulation or monopolistic possession of bread, but for sharing of bread. That is God’s justice. Remember that in the gospel, the kingdom of God is always depicted as the great feast.

The injustice of this world – that is, the lack of compassion and sharing, and the greed for possession – is shockingly evident in the disparity of wealth and overconsumption in some parts of the world, in heavy contrast to the poverty and starvation in the rest of the world. The rich are getting richer at the expense of the poor, and the poor continue to be poorer. Today, equipped disciples are commissioned to stand on the side of God, and to resist and transform all life-destroying forces of injustice in the social systems and structure. God’s vision – our dream – now tells us that justice is to be realized on earth so that bread is for everybody, every day, and not for some greedy individuals or for some parts. It is God’s justice.

Jesus also taught his disciples to seek God’s forgiveness in the Lord’s Prayer: “forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.” Our God is a forgiving God. Forgiveness is the core of Jesus’ whole ministry. It should be noted that in the Lord’s Prayer, the petition for forgiveness of our sins is conditioned on our granting of forgiveness to others. We cannot ask God for forgiveness if we are not prepared to forgive. It assumes repentance on the part of the recipient. Therefore, we are led to ask ourselves: Are we ready to forgive others? Are we working on mutual forgiveness? It is truly God’s vision and equipped disciples’ dream that reconciliation and peace be realized on earth when forgiveness is not only from God, but also from ourselves to others. Our God is God of forgiveness and peace.

The ultimate equipment of disciples depends on their willingness to embrace the cross, and also on their dream toward the God-given vision. Equipped discipleship is commissioned to work together, embrace the cross, and have God’s vision as their dream and commitment for a transformed world of justice and peace. When equipped disciples give up or ignore standing on the side of God, they are not disciples anymore, and their dream is no longer God-given vision and aspiration.

I have a dream. More precisely, we have a dream – of sharing our bread, and of mutual forgiveness. That is the dream of justice and peace, which is our God-given vision and aspiration. This dream directs us, motivates us, challenges us, and strengthens us to move along our pilgrimage of justice and peace to transform the world until “thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

## **I Have a Dream to Share with You**

### **Brian Farrell**

I dreamt that in these past days Jesus came to Arusha. Jesus came to the Conference on World Mission and Evangelism. And as he wandered around, looking, listening; he heard our conversations, he sat in on our workshops and plenaries. Along the way he stopped many of us and his gaze challenged us. He looked into the eyes of each one of us; and in that moment perhaps we each heard again the same transforming invitation he addressed to his first disciples so long ago: “Follow me” (Matt. 4:19).

I felt uneasy and even hurt. In my dream, I dared to say, “Lord, I am following you. I am your disciple; I am a missionary of your good news!” And Jesus smiled and nodded in assent. But there was a sadness in his eyes. It seemed that he realized that, for all our claim to be his followers, there was something we had not fully grasped or understood about the mission he had entrusted to us.

There is a poem written by an Anglican priest about a hundred years ago in the context of the terrible upheaval of the First World War. The author called it “Indifference.” It tells what happened when Jesus came to Birmingham, in England, or maybe to Arusha, or to wherever Christians are gathered together:

*When Jesus came to Golgotha, they hanged Him on a tree,  
They drove great nails through hands and feet, and made a Calvary;  
They crowned Him with a crown of thorns, red were his wounds and deep,  
For those were crude and cruel days, and human flesh was cheap.*

*When Jesus came to Birmingham [or wherever!], they simply passed Him by.  
They would not hurt a hair of Him, they only let Him die;  
For men had grown more tender, and they would not give Him pain,  
They only just passed down the street, and left Him in the rain.*

*Still Jesus cried, ‘Forgive them, for they know not what they do,’  
And still it rained the winter rain that drenched Him through and through;  
The crowds went home and left the streets without a soul to see,  
And Jesus crouched against a wall, and cried for Calvary.*

*(G. Studdert Kennedy, 1883–1929)*

There is no cheap grace; there is no cheap mission or evangelism. Too often, we and our churches have failed to see what Dietrich Bonhoeffer so deeply experienced in the drama of his own imprisonment: God does not come to our help, does not save us, from his omnipotence, but from his weakness. And “what has cost God much cannot be cheap for us.” In his weakest moment, on the cross, Jesus redeemed the world. Too often, we and our churches want discipleship without the cross: we want to evangelize without the cost of discipleship!

Because we and our churches have resources, because we have ideas and plans, we trust that we will succeed. The deadliest challenge to discipleship and evangelism is to stop relying on grace in order to rely on our human and material strengths. Essentially, we make God superfluous, all the time saying that we are doing his work.

Not all our sisters and brothers make this mistake. The martyrs of all times, and those of today, in Africa, in the Middle East, in Asia and Latin America, put their trust solely in the saving grace of Christ. In their moment of greatest weakness, in their humiliation and their pain, grace is made real and uniquely effective. In “losing” their lives, they are able to generate Christ again in our world. They bear witness that without the cross there is no resurrection.

As the Conference on World Mission and Evangelism was coming to an end, I dreamt that the sadness had almost gone from Jesus’ eyes. He heard us talk about “embracing the cross,” becoming “transformed disciples in order to transform the world.” He seemed reassured that we would go back home to remind our churches that grace is offered in weakness, not in earthly power: “God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong” (1 Cor. 1:27).

It seems to me that, as a result of the Arusha Conference, Jesus expects us to call our churches

to be communities of missionary disciples who “go forth”; communities which boldly take the initiative, go out to others, seek those who have fallen away, stand at the crossroads and welcome the outcast – that touch the suffering flesh of Christ in others; communities that care for the grain and do not grow impatient with the weeds;

to be communities that bridge distances, that walk and work together, and do not use their differences to remain separate and self-sufficient;

to be evangelizing communities filled with the joy of the gospel that warms the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus, because

those who accept his offer of salvation are set free from sin, sorrow, inner emptiness, and loneliness. (see Pope Francis, *The Joy of the Gospel*, 1, 24).

When we see Jesus leaning against a wall and pining for Calvary and the cross, let us never be afraid; let us gather around him and lift him up, and go forth with him, in the Holy Spirit, to preach the gospel to every creature. Amen. So be it.

## **PART FIVE**

### **After Arusha: Reflections**



*Editor's (RJ) note: A purpose of any mission conference is not just simply organize a conference for the participants, but to have an impact on many levels – personal, communal, regional, or global. The WCC Arusha Conference on World Mission and Evangelism, which had a heavy emphasis on missional spirituality, indeed has had an impact on many levels. In what follows in the first part are three personal testimonies, or witnesses: one from Africa (Tanzania), one from Asia (Korea/UK), and one from Latin America (Peru).*

*The second part of these post-Arusha reflections is a more theological and longer reflection, trying to see how developments and current themes of ecumenical mission, visible and audible in Arusha, may be embodied in the near future, especially in relation to the next WCC Assembly in Karlsruhe, Germany, in 2021 – with the theme “Christ’s Love Moves the World to Reconciliation and Unity” – and even beyond.*

## 15. MY LIFE AFTER ARUSHA

---

### **Fredrick O. Shoo**

First of all, we thank God and our Lord Jesus Christ for making us members of his church worldwide. It was a great honour to our church in Tanzania to host the conference. To me this was a great experience to meet sisters and brothers in Christ from the whole world. This experience gave me a feeling of belonging to a large family of faith.

The conference had a great impact on me and the community I serve. There is a new awakening on what it means to be disciples of Christ in our context, both locally and globally. In and through Christ we are indeed transformed. The Holy Spirit has the power to transform us and change us into agents of sustainable transformation only when we are humble enough to listen.

The organization of the conference was very good. One would wish to have more time for discussions, testimonies, and sharing of experiences.

All in all, I can say it was a great event and a memorable experience for many participants, and a great honour for us as Africans.

*Rev. Dr Fredrick O. Shoo is the presiding bishop in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania, which was a hosting church of the Arusha Conference on World Mission and Evangelism.*

## Seoyoung Kim

The Arusha Conference on World Mission and Evangelism was a significant experience in my life. It was the first time that I participated as a delegate; visited the continent of Africa; and served as a roundtable Bible study facilitator.

First of all, I was impressed by all participants who were representing the various countries, cultures, and churches. All of us had different backgrounds, but we shared one faith together. From the opening performance, with the attendees following a musical band, holding a huge cross and singing to the Lord, to the sending service at the end, sharing wooden crosses for each participant, all these programmes led me to consider the meaning of discipleship and the ecumenical movement. In particular, group discussions in each section were the most important time to me, as I could hear stories from different contexts and expand my horizons on diversity issues. I have also realized that the deep understanding of my own context is highly important to practise the love of God.

Second, I was grateful that I participated in two warshas (workshops): “Land and Water for Transforming Lives” and “Indigenous Spiritualities, Theologies of the *Oikos*: A Gift for the Transformation of the World.” The workshops have led me to continue my research on the theology of water. In fact, before those workshops, I was questioning my decision to continue my studies, as I did not have strong confidence in my topic. When I joined the workshop on “Land and Water for Transforming Lives,” the attendees were sharing the stories of land and water from each context.

For example, in Kenya, the forests were being cleared at a rapid rate. The land was deeply depleted due to water shortages, and there were also shortages of food. The word for rain in the Masai language has the same meaning as God. The word for hunger and drought are also the same. In Costa Rica, the Presbyterian Church has developed the concept of watershed discipleship. The urban watershed also required engagement. The rural area, which people believed to be environmentally well preserved, was in fact heavily contaminated with agro chemicals and pesticides – especially due to the heavy cultivation of pineapples. In South Korea, the streams and rivers were being dammed because of economic development, and this was having a negative impact by undermining the environment.

We also sought to find ways to overcome environmental injustice. I was shocked by all kinds of stories shared at the meeting. I had read a lot of articles on the global water crisis, but I did not have a chance to meet people who faced the water crisis in their daily life.

The workshop “Indigenous Spiritualities, Theologies of the *Oikos*” was also a great opportunity for me, because we had the chance to meet an Indigenous

person from the South Pacific. He told us that the Pacific Islands where he lives with his family were being threatened by rising sea levels due to climate change. He spoke emotionally, stating, "We all have a responsibility in this!" His words led me to think deeply about how individuals or churches work together to seek ecological water justice. The two workshops rekindled my enthusiasm for my research on the theology of water.

A year after the conference in Tanzania, I am pleased to say that I have followed my path and dedicated myself to researching the theology of water. I have met my supervisor, Professor Peter Scott, who is well respected in this field of study, and fellow colleagues who are also contributing to the topic of eco-theology and environmental ethics at the University of Manchester. Although the theological understanding of water, from and through the perspectives of biblical hermeneutics and in the context of the global water crisis, has not yet been studied in detail, I am thankful for being able to develop the theology of water in response to the context of a growing global water crisis.

Third, I appreciated that all programmes at the conference were well organized. The participants represented diversity in regards to denomination, gender, race, and age. I was surprised by the number of female participants, in particular. They were not there only to attend the conference but also to lead plenaries or events. I was also grateful that the conference was held in Tanzania, Africa. Though it was a short period of time, I saw the reality of poverty and the culture while attending the Sunday worship service. I also have a memory of a heavy shower after the service; the local people were very happy to see and feel the rain, and said that it is a blessing from God. Since then, I have tried to appreciate the rain and thank God for it, even though the weather in Manchester is frequently gloomy and it rains often.

The only thing which was inconvenient was the accommodation, since it was quite far from the conference hall. Unfortunately, there was no place to rest during the daytime, so some delegates were too tired to attend the evening programme. If I were to organize the next conference, I would find the accommodation closer to the conference hall so that participants would not have to spend so much time travelling to the workshops. If that was impossible, I might offer some common areas for people to rest in between the programmes.

I am thankful that I have deeply thought about God's mission with the leading of the Spirit since attending the Arusha Conference on World Mission and Evangelism.

*Rev. Seoyoung Kim is an ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea (PROK). She is doing a PhD in religions and theology at the University of Manchester, UK.*

## Tito Paredes

Arusha, in the African continent and particularly in Tanzania, was an incredible experience and learning event. I enjoyed it immensely and felt privileged to be part of it. The African expression and leadership of the conference was very encouraging. Congratulations for this! Also, to me the Arusha Conference was a confirmation of what missiologists have been saying in the last 20 years. One of them, Samuel Escobar, a Peruvian missiologist, has affirmed: “A systematic observation of the reality of the global church has also made us aware of the new balance of numerical and spiritual strength in the Christian church. As we look at the religious map of the world today we find a marked contrast between the situation at the beginning of the twentieth century and the present situation in the early twenty first century.”<sup>1</sup>

As is well known, Andrew Walls also affirmed, regarding this topic, that “within the last century there has been a massive southward shift of the center of gravity of the Christian world, so that the representative Christian lands now appear to be in Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa, and other parts of the southern continents. This means that Third World theology is now likely to be the representative Christian theology.”<sup>2</sup>

In my perspective, these affirmations of Escobar and Walls, in light of the Arusha Conference, should help us refocus the reality and debate about the centre of gravity of Christianity today. It seems to me that to talk about the polycentric perspective of mission at the expense of the new landscape of Christianity, although not denying aspects of it, tries to minimize the reality that the centre of gravity of Christianity is in the global South, and appears to be holding onto old colonial paradigms in a new way.

The Arusha Call to Discipleship and the process of being involved in the ecumenical movement as an Evangelical-Pentecostal from Latin America has been a challenging, delightful, and at times frustrating experience. Challenging and delightful, as Arusha helped us to deepen our call to be transforming disciples, in constant transformation as well as called to be agents of transformation with God. Since Arusha, we have been involved with our different Evangelical–Pentecostal brothers and sisters in transforming mission among the people of God as well as in the Peruvian and Latin American world that God loves so much that he sent Jesus not only to die for us, but to model transforming discipleship.

---

1. Samuel Escobar, *A Time for Mission: The Challenge for Global Christianity* (Nottingham, UK: Inter-Varsity Press, 2003), 13.

2. Andrew E. Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1996), 9, 10.

One of the huge issues in Latin America that Arusha touched on is the violence and discrimination against women, racism, and discrimination of Indigenous peoples and LGBT groups. Our churches and communities are trying to respond, yet much more needs to be done. We have a challenge here. In addition, an issue not much talked about in Arusha is the reality of corruption involving private sector companies as well as government authorities. Corruption has touched presidents, ministers, congressmen, political parties, top justice officials, judges, as well as rank-and-file officials. Service and gain to oneself has been the praxis, rather than to be of service to the people that authorities, companies, and businesses are supposed to serve.

Many people of Peru, as well as part of the church leadership, have been involved in peaceful street demonstrations, demanding an end to corruption and to violence against women and other vulnerable communities. We are encouraged by the results, and we continue in faith and hope, trying to be transforming disciples following Christ, sustained by the Holy Spirit and embraced by our good God.

If I were to organize another Conference on World Mission and Evangelism, I would make sure there would be a more balanced representation in light of the reality of the new centre of gravity of Christianity. I would make sure the theological voices of Africa, Asia, and Latin America be heard more loudly. I would ensure a more democratic participation of all. For example, although we saw a good number of Latin Americans in the conference, their voices were not heard in the plenaries, particularly Evangelical and Pentecostal voices. I would make sure they would be on key committees and places of leadership.

*Tito Paredes is director of CEMAA (Evangelical Center of Andean-Amazonian Mission) in Lima, Peru, and professor of anthropology and mission in the "Orlando E. Costas" master's programme in theology. He is also a commissioner of the CWME of the World Council of Churches.*

## 16. FROM ARUSHA TO KARLSRUHE, AND BEYOND

### *Reflections on the Future of Mission*

---

*Risto Jukko*

The World Council of Churches (WCC) Conference on World Mission and Evangelism in Arusha, Tanzania, in 2018 has been a remarkable lens through which we can look at the future of mission and of the ecumenical movement. The constituencies of the Arusha Conference and their denominational, spiritual, and theological backgrounds have been ecumenically much wider than the list of member churches of the WCC.<sup>1</sup> This is why the Arusha Conference has not only been a conference on world mission and evangelism, it has been a great conference on Christian unity. This conference has been much more ecumenical than, for instance, the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh in 1910, which is generally called the starting point of the modern ecumenical movement.<sup>2</sup> Basically, one can argue, the ecumenical – in the original meaning of the Greek word *oikoumene*, “universal”<sup>3</sup> – mission was gathered in Arusha, Tanzania. This Arusha report convincingly illustrates the fact.

Jesus’ words at the beginning of John 17:21 (“that they may all be one”) are often quoted by leaders of churches and of the ecumenical movement when stressing Jesus’ will of the unity of his followers, that is, the need for unity of all Christians. However, nobody should make a truncated reading of John 17:21 – reading only the beginning of the verse, quoted above – because the verse ends with Jesus’ words expressing clearly that the unity of his followers is not unity in itself: the unity of Christians has consequences and purpose in the same way as trinitarian unity has consequences: “that the world may believe that you [Father] have sent me [Jesus].” If the absolute intratrinitarian unity had not included the sending [in Latin: *missio*] of the Son and the Spirit, there would have been no Christian church or mission.

---

1. WCC member churches: <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/member-churches>.

2. See, e.g., Brian Stanley, *The World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh 1910* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2009).

3. See, e.g., Norman E. Thomas, *Missions and Unity: Lessons from History, 1792–2010* (Eugene, Ore.: Cascade Books, 2010), xxiv; Willem Visser ‘t Hooft, “The Word ‘Ecumenical’: Its History and Use,” in Ruth Rouse and Stephen Charles Neill, eds, *A History of the Ecumenical Movement 1517–1948* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1986), 735–40.

Jesus' commission to go and make disciples (Matt. 28:18-20) is still valid and engaging to every church and individual Christian. Based on their unity in Christ (e.g., Eph. 2:14-16), all Christians are sent out and together are called to be witnesses to the risen Christ "that the world may believe." In the same way as the modern ecumenical movement, embodied to a large extent by the World Council of Churches, was born out of mission, the Arusha Conference on World Mission and Evangelism was conceived by the unity of Christians: unity in mission, and mission in unity.<sup>4</sup> Along with Pope Francis' historical visit to the Ecumenical Centre in Geneva in June 2018, the Arusha Conference was probably the most ecumenically extensive expression of the church's unity and mission by the World Council of Churches in its 70 years, its jubilee year.<sup>5</sup> It has been a real display window of the unity and mission of all Christians, going beyond the limits of the official structures of the ecumenical movement.

The ecumenical movement has two theological founding pillars: unity and mission.<sup>6</sup> They both need one another, and they both depend on one another. Mission is always ecumenical by nature, and unity always has the missionary dimension (John 17:21). Christians cannot do mission in Christ's way (see, e.g., Luke 4:18-19) if they are not united and their witness is not common. But the followers of Jesus cannot "do unity," that is, be united and be in fellowship with one another, without being "sent," like the Son and the Spirit, and involved in giving common witness through their unity. That may be

---

4. The moderator of the WCC Commission on Faith and Order, Rev. Dr Susan Durber, emphasized this in Arusha 2018 and her contribution to this publication: "The ecumenical movement has always begun with mission."

5. See <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/about-us/wcc-history>. The World Council of Churches was founded in 1948, 38 years after the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh in 1910, and 27 years after the foundation of the International Missionary Council (IMC) in Lake Mohonk, USA, in 1921. On the IMC, see, e.g., William Richey Hogg, *Ecumenical Foundations: A History of the International Missionary Council and Its Nineteenth-Century Background* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1952); Tom Stransky, "International Missionary Council," in Nicholas Lossky et al., eds, *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2002), 595–98.

6. E.g., Philip Potter, director of the World Council of Churches' Division of World Mission and Evangelism (1967–1972), said in his report on the Assembly of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism in Bangkok 1972/1973 that "as we learned from the beginning of the ecumenical movement, the issues of unity and mission are inextricably bound together." Philip Potter, "Christ's Mission and Ours in Today's World," in *Bangkok Assembly 1973. Minutes and Report of the Assembly of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches, December 31, 1972 and January 9-12, 1973* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1973), 51–63, at 59. Potter later served as the general secretary of the World Council of Churches from 1972 to 1984.

one of the problems of “table ecumenism”<sup>7</sup> at a high level, when ecumenical discussions and celebrations become detached from the life and questions of Christians in local congregations.

Both mission and unity have found their structural expression within the WCC in the form of two commissions. Mission has found its structure in the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME), which had its beginning in New Delhi in 1961 when the International Missionary Council merged with the World Council of Churches in the 3rd General Assembly of the WCC.<sup>8</sup> Unity has found its structural expression in the Commission on Faith and Order, concentrating largely on ecclesiological questions.<sup>9</sup> However, mission is not only practice and worship, it is also theology, and ecclesiology is not only theology, it is practice and worship as well.

In Arusha 2018, the then-director of CWME, Rev. Dr Jooseop Keum from South Korea, mentioned in his director’s report three dimensions or vantage points by which mission can foster and strengthen the unity of Christians and the ecumenical movement, and in particular the WCC, in the near future.<sup>10</sup> The first vantage point is mission’s prophetic role. In this rapidly changing ecclesial, political, and ecological landscape of ours, mission can offer a holistic approach bringing unity, mission, justice, and peace together. The Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace is an initiative of the WCC member churches, and especially the theological emphases and practical activities of “mission from the margins,” as mentioned in the WCC mission document *Together towards Life*: promoting justice and peace plays a prophetic role in and for this pilgrimage (§§36–54).<sup>11</sup> Mission helps the ecumenical movement and the WCC by connecting people, their stories, and their contexts. Today’s missiologists often and keenly refer to the story

7. “Discussing mission only in a meeting room, or table ecumenism, is never enough.” Jooseop Keum, former director of the WCC Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, at Arusha 2018 (see chapter 9 of this publication).

8. See, e.g., Donald W. Norwood, ed., *Pilgrimage of Faith: Introducing the World Council of Churches* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2018), 36–53.

9. Faith and Order had its first meeting in Lausanne in 1927, 21 years before the foundation of the World Council of Churches, but it joined the WCC in 1948. See Tislington Tatlow, “The World Conference on Faith and Order,” in Rouse and Neill, eds, *A History of the Ecumenical Movement 1517–1948*, 405–41; Günther Gassman, “Faith and Order,” in Lossky et al., eds, *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, 461–63.

10. See chapter 9 in this publication.

11. See Jooseop Keum, ed., *Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes – with a Practical Guide* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2013), 14–21, <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/commissions/mission-and-evangelism/together-towards-life-mission-and-evangelism-in-changing-landscapes>.



of the road to Emmaus, where the risen Jesus walked with two disciples and encountered and engaged them in a powerful way (Luke 24:13-35). This is an example of God's mission in which Jesus meets normal human beings with their stories, life situations, and backgrounds. Their immediate reaction – “that same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem” – is the result of this encounter. They go and witness to this encounter with the risen Lord (verses 33-34). For many participants, the Arusha Conference on World Mission and Evangelism has been an experience and example of this close connection of other people's stories and their contexts meeting other Christians and the risen Christ.

Another way in which mission fosters the unity of Christians and the ecumenical movement, and in particular the World Council of Churches, is the support it can offer to renew the structures, organizations, and institutions. It is clear that mission by its very nature is not, and cannot be limited to, a mission agency, a church's mission department, or the WCC's programme, project, or commission. Theologically and conceptually understood, mission cannot be placed in an institutional, structural, or programmatic box. If mission must be described, it can be said to be a dynamic movement, Christians participating in the mission of the triune God (e.g., John 15:26-27; John 16:7; Matt. 10:16; Mark 16:16; Luke 24:48-49). David J. Bosch has famously said that “the definition of mission is a continual process of sifting, testing, reformulating, and discarding.”<sup>12</sup>

All human organizations – Christian or not, business enterprises or non-profit organizations – have an inadvertent tendency, as the years go by, to slowly begin to serve their own institutional or organizational interests. Often an increasing amount of energy and resources is spent in making sure that the institution itself can continue to function, and its own existence is guaranteed. Challenging organizational introversion, mission can bring creativity, new ideas, and visions into this kind of situation, can remind churches and Christian organizations why they exist, and can make them reorient themselves toward the outside world, the neighbour and creation, and help them find their inherent missionary nature and joy in participating in God's mission. As mission is always on the move, it can build bridges between churches and institutions through missiological imagination and action. For this purpose, too, it is clearly said in the by-laws of the WCC Commission on World Mission and Evangelism that mission and evangelism “have a structured place at the heart of the WCC.”<sup>13</sup> The structured place should guarantee a renewing

12. David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books 2008 [1991]), 511.

13. World Council of Churches, “By-Laws of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism as adopted by the WCC Central Committee in 2016,” 1.

dimension of mission to have space within the ecumenical movement and to resist the temptation to concentrate only on programmes, administration, and organization. However, it can be legitimately asked today: Where do we find mission in the structures of churches and in the ecumenical movement? Where is missiology in theological education and formation of future church co-workers?

The third vantage point of mission within the life of churches and the ecumenical movement is to remind them that there is a theological distinction between them and humanitarian or development organizations (NGOs), and that mission is an inherent characteristic and dimension of the church. One of the great theological discoveries since the International Missionary Council conference in Willingen, Germany, in 1952 has been the central role of the church and local congregations in mission. A local congregation is not a development agency. Its origin, purpose, self-understanding, and *raison d'être* are different (see Acts 2). A major theological and ecclesiological difference is that "local congregations have the privilege of forming a community marked by the presence of the risen Christ." (*Together towards Life*, §73).<sup>14</sup> A local congregation, by its nature, is a primary agent in God's mission. Even if some activities of NGOs and local congregations – as well as mission agencies – might look the same when observed from the outside, and even empirical research would give similar results of their humanitarian or *diakonia* or development activities, there is a theological difference: local congregations are primary agents of mission.

On the level of local congregations and the everyday life of Christians, the Arusha Conference Report<sup>15</sup> presents five themes that the Conference Harvesting Committee suggested to the conference participants and wider constituencies in world mission. First, they should call sustained attention to mission as transforming discipleship in light of the reception of the Arusha Call to Discipleship 2018.<sup>16</sup> The second theme is mission from the margins as a paradigm for our time. Third, mission and evangelism in a multi-religious world is proposed as one central topic. It has been dealt with at least since 2011, when the ecumenical document *Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World*<sup>17</sup> was published. The fourth proposed theme is the relationship of mis-

14. Keum, ed., *Together towards Life*, 27.

15. See chapter 2 in this publication. Also in *International Review of Mission* 107:2 (Dec. 2018), 547–60.

16. See chapter 1 in this publication. Also in *International Review of Mission* 107:2 (Dec. 2018), 542–43.

17. <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/interreligious-dialogue-and-cooperation/christian-identity-in-pluralistic-societies/christian-witness-in-a-multi-religious-world>.

sion, evangelism, and development work. And fifth comes the relationship of costly discipleship and Christian unity.<sup>18</sup>

## Discipleship and Christian Unity

In light of what is said above, in relation to the Christ-connected way of life mentioned in the Arusha Call to Discipleship, and in relation to the theme of the WCC's 11th assembly in Karlsruhe, Germany, in 2021, "Christ's Love Moves the World to Reconciliation and Unity" (see 2 Cor. 5:18-21), I will deal here with the relationship of discipleship and Christian unity, which is already, and will be most probably even more, an important missiological theme in the years to come.

To start with, the word "disciple" or "discipleship" (in Greek: μαθητης or mathētēs) can be found in the gospels and the Book of Acts 261 times, basically describing the followers of Jesus.<sup>19</sup> Jesus called people to follow him, so discipleship cannot be something an individual takes as a decision prior to contact with Jesus or with his followers or without having ever heard of Jesus. Nobody becomes a disciple of Jesus by accident (see, e.g., John 1:48; John 15:16). When we think of Jesus' words in the Gospel according to Matthew 10:37-39 (cf. Luke 14:26-27) and of the apostles whom Jesus called through a personal invitation to follow him, the adjective "costly" may sound strange and even redundant, as 11 of the 12 closest disciples of Jesus were killed because they followed him and had faith in him, that is, because of their discipleship. They followed Jesus' words and example to the end (see John 15:13).

As the lives and deaths of the 12 apostles show, discipleship and mission are more than closely connected. At the end of the Gospel according to Matthew we have what is commonly called the Great Commission. Mission, and especially the modern mission movement, has been much inspired by the words of Jesus when he says, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matt. 28:18-20). The Greek verb forms of this passage reveal some interesting dimensions of discipleship. "Going" has been much emphasized, but reading the Greek text in verses 19 and

18. As can be noted, there is a thematic overlapping between these topics. This is especially true of the first and the last issue concerning discipleship overlap; the same can be noticed about the third and the fourth issue, concerning mission and evangelism. The Arusha Conference Report was drafted and finalized during the conference itself in March 2018.

19. [https://www.sbl-site.org/assets/pdfs/tbv2i7\\_fosterdiscipleship.pdf](https://www.sbl-site.org/assets/pdfs/tbv2i7_fosterdiscipleship.pdf).

20, it literally says “πορευθέντες,” that is, “going”; “μαθητεύσατε,” “make disciples” (imperative form); “βαπτίζοντες,” “baptizing”; “διδάσκοντες,” “teaching.” Out of these four verb forms only one, “make disciples,” is in the imperative form; the other forms are participle forms. It seems that Jesus is underlining going and disciple making, which consists of “baptizing” and “teaching.” This brief linguistic analysis of the pericope means that we cannot ignore disciple making (and not, of course, going), which describes a change of a person from being a non-disciple to being a disciple of Jesus. A spiritual, ontological, and qualitative change of a person is a work and gift of God, made possible when the witnesses of the risen Christ go to all nations and baptize and teach people.

Many traditional churches, especially in the global North, hardly mention the word “disciple” or “discipleship” in their ecclesial vocabulary, with the possible exception of the pulpit. They have traditionally baptized and offered Christian education in the form of catechism. Now baptism and Christian education have increasingly become an issue, especially in Europe and North America, where a decreasing number of people are baptized and an increasing number of people who have been baptized are unaware (in the sense of being uneducated) of, or are indifferent to, the meaning of baptism, to say nothing of the basics of the Christian faith, and many of them are leaving the membership of a church. If Christian discipleship means being actively involved in, and engaged with, God’s mission in the world, it also means Christians leaving the church buildings and going outside, to all nations. “All nations” can be found right on the home street, or at least possibly not so far from it – if we are ready to go and make disciples.<sup>20</sup>

In the Gospel according to Mark, we read that Jesus “appointed twelve, whom he also named apostles, to be with him, and to be sent out to proclaim the message” (Mark 3:14). Interestingly enough, an important aspect of being a disciple or a follower of Jesus is “to be with him.” It seems that it is an essential condition of Christian discipleship. Both the words of Jesus in Matthew as well as the apostle Paul’s words to the Corinthians (2 Cor. 5) refer to the fact that discipleship can be said to be a state of existence or being. Discipleship means *being* a disciple of somebody. Being a disciple of Jesus means being in a continuous relationship with him. Jesus says in the Gospel according to John: “The Father and I are one.” (John 10:30). The relationship between God the Father and God the Son is unbroken and eternal.<sup>21</sup>

20. For more on mission and evangelism in Europe see, e.g., Gerrit Noort, Kyriaki Avtzi, and Stefan Paas, eds, *Sharing Good News: Handbook on Evangelism in Europe* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2017).

21. Rowan Williams, *Being Disciples: Essentials of the Christian Life* (Grand Rapids, Mich.:

In the same way, the disciple of Jesus is expected to have an unbroken and continuous relationship with Jesus, to be with Jesus.

Being with Jesus and being sent out to proclaim the gospel message means at least three things in a practical sense.<sup>22</sup> First, it means nurturing and taking care of the spiritual or devotional dimension of being a Christian: regular reading and studying of the Bible and praying, as well as taking part in the communion (sacraments) and the life of a Christian community.<sup>23</sup> Even if the call to discipleship is individual and personal, disciples are interconnected and live in the fellowship and community with one another. Second, this state of “being-continuously-with-Jesus” causes in his disciples a new type of attentiveness to all people, places, and phenomena in life, looking at everyone and everything with expectancy and hope. Christians are not escapists, but they know that there is hope for the future. And third, it means – and here we come to the practical dimension of mission – approaching and meeting those people Christ is already with. These are people with characteristics we can find in the gospels, very often people in the margins, but not only them. Jesus meets all kinds of people in the gospels. This third aspect strengthens and makes visible the characteristics of Christians whom Pope Francis has called “missionary disciples.”<sup>24</sup> “Missionary disciples” of Jesus are transforming disciples. In the same way as they are transformed by the continuous being with Jesus, they themselves are transforming actors changing their environment near and far.

One way of seeing the relationship between discipleship and Christian unity is to see it through the theme of the next WCC Assembly in Karlsruhe in 2021: “Christ’s Love Moves the World to Reconciliation and Unity.” Mission and unity are based on reconciliation and Christ’s love. The biblical reference of the next WCC assembly theme can be found in 2 Corinthians 5: “And he [Christ] died for all, so that those who live might live no longer

---

Eerdmans, 2016), 12–15, refers to Jesus’ words in John 12:26a: “Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also.” Based on this, he argues that the state of being of Jesus’ disciple includes not only mission – proclamation and *diakonia* – and unity, but also closeness to the Father. Williams concludes that “the heart of discipleship is bound up with the life of the Trinity” (15).

22. I loosely follow here Williams, *Being Disciples*, 16.

23. See, e.g., Wonsuk Ma and Kenneth R. Ross, eds, *Mission Spirituality and Authentic Discipleship* (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 2013), in which the articles strongly link spirituality with discipleship.

24. “Every Christian is a missionary to the extent that he or she has encountered the love of God in Christ Jesus: we no longer say that we are ‘disciples’ and ‘missionaries’, but rather that we are always ‘missionary disciples’.” Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* (2013), §120, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco\\_esortazione-ap\\_20131124\\_evangelii-gaudium.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html).

for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them. ... God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation ... For our sake he [God] made him [Christ] to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Cor. 5:15, 18, 21). Reconciliation and discipleship belong together, as "a radical cross-centred reconciliation cannot be separated from the call to radical obedient discipleship."<sup>25</sup> In this sense discipleship is said to be "costly," as God made Christ to be sin, for human beings and their reconciliation. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life" (John 3:16).

The biblical passages cited show how mission, unity, and missionary discipleship are all based in God's reconciliatory action in Christ. The emphasis of reconciliation in mission has been a pertinent theme in mission studies and practice at least since the 1990s, and became more visible in the ecumenical mission movement at the WCC Conference on World Mission and Evangelism in Athens in 2005, and has been important topic since then.<sup>26</sup> The theological and practical consequences of reconciliation will engage mission and missiological reflection for years to come, and show, once more, how mission and unity are intertwined.<sup>27</sup> Mission includes this reconciliatory aspect that leads to unity. In fact, reconciliation has three important dimensions: between God and human beings, between human beings themselves (and within themselves), and of the creation or cosmos (see Rom. 8:22).

God reconciling creation, translated into a theological emphasis on ecological and environmental questions, is something so evident and urgent that mission cannot simply ignore it, as it affects the world everywhere. Theology of creation helps Christians to see that human beings are not authorized to wound nature or destroy it in a fatal way. Humanity does not own God's creation, but is responsible for it. The WCC mission statement *Together towards Life* deals with ecological issues from the mission point of view. It says very clearly: "Excessive greed and unlimited consumption which lead to continuous destruction of nature must end. ... Mission has creation at its heart."<sup>28</sup>

---

25. Robert Schreiter and Knud Jørgensen, eds, *Mission as Ministry of Reconciliation* (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 2013), 4.

26. Robert J. Schreiter published his seminal *The Ministry of Reconciliation: Spirituality and Strategies* in 1998 (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books). The Report of the WCC Conference on World Mission and Evangelism, Athens, Greece, May 2005, edited by Jacques Matthey, has as its title "*Come, Holy Spirit, Heal and Reconcile!*" (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2008); Schreiter and Jørgensen published their *Mission as Ministry of Reconciliation* in 2013.

27. See, e.g., Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 463–67.

28. Keum, ed., *Together towards Life*, 38.

As mission has creation at its heart, it must take ecological and environmental questions very seriously, both in the church as well as in society. The challenge is no more or less than the survival of the globe and humanity. The common vision of the preservation of the planet should bring Christians and churches even closer to another, and beyond, together with other world religions, and with all people of goodwill, work for the preservation of the nature and the survival of the creation. The prophetic voice of the church should be raised everywhere to speak for the creation and urge everyone to take action. If this is not done, there will be a huge eco-catastrophe facing creation and all human beings. What is even worse, the consequences of environmental destruction are often felt first by those who are already suffering and in a vulnerable position, in the margins. Every church and mission body should have an environmental plan, as Christian discipleship naturally includes responsible, environmentally sustainable individual and communal behaviour.<sup>29</sup>

To conclude, in the face of all the challenges ecumenical mission is facing and will face in the near future, two dimensions seem to me to be decisive for the future of Christianity and mission. The first brings us back to the meanings of the word “ecumenical,” *oikoumene*. There is a need to overcome the dispersion and division among Christians and churches, and a need to understand that mission can be done only ecumenically, that is, Christians together. This does not mean that there should be only one global mega-church, but there is no future if Christians cannot understand each other better and find their fundamental unity and, based on that, work together for the best of their neighbours and for this world, threatened by human sinfulness. This must be done “not only because the task [mission] before us is too immense to be credibly and effectively tackled by a fragmented church, but because the very nature of mission militates against this kind of ecclesiastical empire building.”<sup>30</sup> The composition of the WCC Commission on World Mission and Evangelism is a sign of hope in that the members of the commission, with their various theological, denominational, and spiritual backgrounds, are ecumenically from a much wider spectrum than the list of member churches of the WCC itself.<sup>31</sup> The old misunderstandings between the “ecumenical” and “evangelical” mission movements concerning the contents and nature of mission, dating back to the 1960s and 1970s, should be left behind for the sake

---

29. See, e.g., Kapyia J. Kaoma, ed., *Creation Care in Christian Mission* (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 2015).

30. David J. Bosch, *Believing in the Future: Toward a Missiology of Western Culture* (Valley Forge, Penn.: Trinity Press International, 1995), 58.

31. The same remark also concerns the WCC Commission on Faith and Order.

of unity and mission. There is only one God, and only one God's mission in which we all together are called to participate (see Eph. 4:4-6).

The second factor, the role of which is increasingly gaining in importance on the level of both theology and practice of mission is the local congregation. We cannot speak about mission without speaking about church. The theme of a "missionary structure of the congregation" was studied within the frame of the WCC in the 1960s,<sup>32</sup> but when the world is becoming increasingly globalized and localized at the same time, and mission has become multi-directional and many-faceted, the role of a local congregation in God's mission cannot be overestimated. A local congregation is responsible for mission and unity in the context and environment it is celebrating and living. The responsibility for mission and unity cannot be taken by any other, be it regional, national, or global church body or organization, because they do not daily meet local people in the same way as local Christians see and meet them. The local congregation has to take seriously God's reconciliation and look for unity and mission with other churches and fellowships. This unity is an encouragement for an ever-deepening individual and communal discipleship and, at the same time, a call to mission, as it leads the members of a local congregation to go out "that the world may believe."

What is happening in many churches, especially in the global South, is an encouragement to many churches in the global North. Churches in the South, especially in Africa and Latin America, but also in many places in Asia, are growing, as they are reaching out and witnessing to the risen Christ on a local level. They have agency and they are showing a concrete example of mission from the margins, doing evangelism, serving people, fostering unity of Christians, doing advocacy, and working for justice and peace. They have a prophetic voice for those vulnerable groups of people in the margins of their societies that are excluded and discriminated, sometimes with violence, be it women, youth, Indigenous people, Blacks, LGBT people, or any other group.

The practice of mission is only as strong as Christians, disciples of Jesus, are, faithfully giving witness to the risen Lord together with other Christians, with courtesy and respect (see 1 Pet. 3:15-16). Mission is always more, because God and God's mission are always more than a visible empirical project to be evaluated by administrators – which is important, too. But the impact of the Christians of a local congregation, living as Jesus' disciples, on their context and environment is not only an empirical mission project. An inherently missionary church, embodying the universal church and participating locally in

32. It was a 1961–1966 study project called "The Missionary Structure of the Congregation" (see, e.g., Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 382–84). The final report was published by the WCC: *The Church for Others and the Church for the World* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1967).



God's mission, is not a measurable programme. It cannot be, as it is the Spirit of God who inspires Christians to a kenotic lifestyle and cross-bearing and accompanies God's people in their witness to the incarnate, crucified, resurrected, and ascended Christ, present among his people in the Spirit.<sup>33</sup> Christ's love moves us all to reconciliation, unity, and mission, and Christ himself takes us into his future.

---

33. Keum, ed., *Together towards Life*, 37; Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 518.

# APPENDICES

---

## Appendix 1

### **ACCOMPANYING LETTER TO THE ARUSHA CALL TO DISCIPLESHIP**

*The purpose of this Accompanying Letter to the Arusha Call to Discipleship is to offer a sociological and theological context for the Arusha Call. It seeks to give a greater foundation for some of the concepts in the Arusha Call. While the Report of the Conference goes into greater depth of the issues raised and outcomes of the Pre-Conferences and the Conference, the Accompanying Letter is meant to be a bridge between the Report and the Arusha Call.*

#### **Sociological Context**

The Tanzanian churches and people in their warm hospitality and extensive preparation for the Conference created a space where we could hear the Spirit speaking to us in new and powerful ways. We give thanks to God for the opportunity to gather and discern together in this beautiful country.

In Arusha, we acknowledged the strides that the Church had made in dealing with different social challenges. However, when we heard personal stories of pain and anguish we felt like the strides the Church had made were like a drop in the ocean and the Church needed to do much more in the wake of new realities in the African context and the wider world. The issues that the speakers brought out included those of forced migration, disease and its effects on the population, ecological degradation, war and conflict, gender-based violence, appropriation of land, poverty and unemployment, and a reduction of social welfare and security. These issues impacted heavily on the family structures disintegrating them further and thus contributing to the brokenness of the world. We were made aware of the residues of colonialism and the effect of neo-colonialism on church and society. All of the speakers named global and local realities that led to exclusion and marginalization on the basis of social location and sexual identification, particularly highlighting those most vulnerable.

The Ecumenical Disability Advocates Network, Indigenous Youth, and Women's Pre-Conferences noted the particular challenges and gifts these groups bring to the call of discipleship and the work of mission and evangelism.

While it is not possible to note all marginalized communities in the world, during the Conference, we did hear from Indigenous Communities, Youth, Women, Sexual Minorities, Differently Abled Persons, Economically Vulnerable Communities about the realities of marginalization. Often members of these groups struggle against theological constructs and missional practices that do not lead to justice and peace. We are challenged to claim a missiology that includes the depth and breadth of God's beloved community.

### **Theological Claims**

We can and do believe that the Holy Spirit moved over chaos in the beginning of creation, God created life and declared that it was good. God intends for holistic relationships within creation that foster wholeness of life for all.

We can and do believe that God entered a broken and sinful world – a world that was fractured by oppression and torn apart by human greed – through Jesus of Nazareth whom we confess to be the Christ of God. God took on human flesh and moved into neighbourhoods – the neighbourhoods of those living in poverty, dwelling under the occupation of imperial forces, suffering under oppression and struggling with illness in mind, body, and spirit. We have confidence in this Jesus who preached good news to the poor, recovery of sight to the blind, release of the captives and restoration of God's reign (Luke 4:18-19).

We can and do believe that all are called to be disciples through their baptism in Christ. Discipleship is both a gift and a calling, to be active collaborators with God for the transformation of the world. It demands sacrifice, taking up our cross, walking in the power of the Resurrection, claiming our identity as beloved of God, and a deep connectedness to Christ. For those empowered and privileged and for those restricted to the margins of society and church living under oppression, these are realized in unique ways. For all, being transformed as disciples, God's will becomes our will.

We can and do believe that extending our worship into the world and continuing the "Liturgy after the Liturgy," we are all called as disciples to give a witness of faith to those near and those far off (from everywhere to everywhere), in accordance with the Lord's clear command before His ascension, "And you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8 NRSV).

We can and do believe that we are called to mission and evangelism, sharing the good news in word, deed and life, witnessing to the gospel of grace and truth and offering to the whole world the gifts of God: love, peace, justice, reconciliation, the power of the Cross and of the Resurrection and the expectation of eternal life.

We can and do believe that evangelism in its truest sense is entrusted to the disciples and through them to all believers. Mission is no longer just to the margins. In today's world, the focus is not only the evangelisation of those who do not know Christ, but also the re-evangelisation of those who fail to follow Christ is the unceasing duty of the Church. As we heard stories from the margins from where God is working vibrantly, we saw how mission is emanating from the margins. For those who have been in the centre of power, we must be willing to learn from those on the margins who follow the Liberating Lord.

We can and do believe that we are called into the life-giving mission of the Triune God. By the Spirit we discern and participate in God's mission. As we move in the Spirit we become pilgrims, journeying together and celebrating life in great diversity.

The Christian call to discipleship invites people to worship the God of grace who promises fullness of life for all, to follow in the way of Jesus who said, "I came so that everyone would have life, and have it in its fullest" (John 10:10 CEV), and to be empowered and transformed by the movement of the Spirit.

Jesus prayed that his followers would reflect the unity of the Triune God, commanded them to do the liberating work of restoring holistic relationships within all creation and gave to his followers the gift of the Holy Spirit to empower them for this work. We claim this as our hope and our calling.

This act of discipleship leads us to live out God's love in Jesus Christ by inspiring justice and peace in ways that are different from the world (John 14:27). It is the Holy Spirit who accompanies us on the journey of faith, teaching us the way of Christ, empowering us to resist and reject powers of domination that would demand our allegiance and refreshes us for the mission to which we have been called.

We can and do receive and share this faith, both as a personal calling and as a community of followers of Jesus moving toward a life of fullness, giving witness to the ultimate reign of God and God's intention of a world marked by justice and love. This is a transforming calling and mission. We are transformed personally and collectively and are agents of God's transforming love in a broken world. We hear this call, which unites us in our hopes and our prayers.

*The Conference Harvesting Committee*

## **Appendix 2**

### ***Conference Leadership***

#### **CWME Officers**

Metropolitan Dr Geevarghese Mor Coorilos (Moderator), Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East

Rev. Dr Janet Corlett (Vice-moderator), Methodist Church, United Kingdom

Rev. Dr Jooseop Keum (Director), Presbyterian Church of Korea

#### **List of Commissioners**

Rev. Christoph Anders, Evangelisches Missionswerk in Deutschland

Rev. Claudia Bandixen-Widmer, Mission 21, Switzerland

Mr Kenneth T. Ben, Cook Islands Christian Church

Rev. Prof. Stephen Bevans, Roman Catholic Church – Society of the Divine Word

Rev. Michael Blair, United Church of Canada

Mr Juarês Bongo Manico, Igreja Evangélica Congregacional em Angola

Mr Johannes Bronsveld, United Protestant Church of Belgium

Rev. Dr José Luis Casa, Presbyterian Church (USA)

Dr Emily Jane Colgan, Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia

Metropolitan Dr Geevarghese Mor Coorilos, Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East, India

Rev. Dr Janet Corlett, Methodist Church, UK

Rev. Canon Virginia Carol Doctor, Anglican Church of Canada

Mrs Gertrude Oforiwa Fefoame, Ecumenical Disability Advocates Network

Archpriest Mikhail Goundiaev, Russian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate)

Ms Jingqin Gu, China Christian Council

Rev. Gomar Gultom, Huria Kristen Batak Protestan (HKBP)

Rev. Dr Rob Hay, World Evangelical Alliance

Ms Elena Kelly, Iglesia Morava en Nicaragua

Dr Thomas Kemper, United Methodist Church – General Board of Global Ministries

Ms Vanna Kitsinian, Armenian Apostolic Church (Holy See of Cilicia)

Dr Sr Mary John Kudiyirippil, Roman Catholic Church – Suore Missionarie Serve dello Spirito Santo

Mr Win Htut Thar Kyi, Myanmar Baptist Convention  
Prof. Dr Baard Mæland, Church of Norway  
H.E. Metropolitan Dr Makarios of Kenya and Irinoupolis, Greek Orthodox  
Patriarchate of Alexandria and All Africa  
Mrs Jennifer P. Martin, Council for World Mission, Jamaica  
Mrs Hilda Matshoba, African Methodist Episcopal Church  
Mr Philip Modayil Mani, Church of South India  
Archbishop John Muhambi Akhura, African Church of the Holy Spirit  
Rev. Dr Radu Muresan, Romanian Orthodox Church  
Ms Rhoda Musa, Reformed Church of Christ in Nigeria  
Mrs Aino Nenola, Orthodox Church of Finland  
Ms Eva Christina Nilsson, Church of Sweden  
Fr Richard Nnyombi, Roman Catholic Church – Missionaries of Africa  
Rev. Dr Opoku Onyinah, The Church of Pentecost, Ghana  
Dr Ruben Elías (Tito) Paredes Alfaro, Centro Evangélico de Misiología  
Andino Amazónica  
Rev. Heather Elizabeth Robinson, Moravian Church in Jamaica  
Rev. Dr Ho-Suhk Suh, Korean Methodist Church  
Lic. Maria Margarita de la Torre Saransig, Consejos de Pueblos y Organizaciones Indígenas Evangélicas del Ecuador (FEINE)  
Rev. Deacon Nephon Tsimalis, Ecumenical Patriarchate  
Prof. Mika Vähäkangas, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland  
Ms Aikaterini Voulgari, Church of Greece  
Ms Veronica Wiesner, Iglesia Evangélica del Río de la Plata  
Rev. Prof. Kenneth R. Ross, Church of Scotland (Minute taker)

### **Conference Planning Committee**

Metropolitan Dr Geevarghese Mor Coorilos (Chair), Syrian Orthodox  
Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East  
Dr Agnes Abuom (Moderator of WCC central committee), Anglican  
Church of Kenya  
Rev. Dr Jooseop Keum (Director), World Council of Churches  
Rev. Kay Kyeong-Ah Woo (Conference coordinator), World Council of  
Churches  
Dr Rogate Reuben Mshana (Chair, Local Host Committee), Evangelical  
Lutheran Church in Tanzania  
Ms Kyriaki Avtzi (CWME Staff, Plenary), World Council of Churches  
Dr Katalina Tahaafe-Williams (CWME Staff, Sokoni), World Council of  
Churches  
Dr Amélé Ekué (GETI), World Council of Churches

Dr Rommel Linatoc (Art Director), National Council of Churches in the Philippines

Mr Marc-Henri Heiniger (Plenary Producer and Floor Manager), World Council of Churches

Rev. Dr Janet Corlett, Methodist Church, United Kingdom

Rev. Michael Blair, United Church of Canada

Rev. Dr José Luis Casa, Presbyterian Church (USA)

Mrs Jennifer P. Martin, United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands

Ms Eva Christina Nilsson, Church of Sweden

Fr Richard Nnyombi, Missionaries of Africa, Rome

Rev. Dr Opoku Onyinah, The Church of Pentecost, Ghana

Rev. Prof. Kenneth R. Ross, Church of Scotland

Dr Sudipta Singh, Council for World Mission

Ms Aikaterini Voulgari, Church of Greece

### **Spiritual Life Committee**

Rev. Dr Janet Corlett (Chair), Methodist Church, UK

Rev. Dr Ester Pudjo Widiastih (Worship Coordinator), World Council of Churches

Rev. Dr Lawrence Iwuamadi (Bible Study Coordinator), World Council of Churches

Ms Hannelore Schmid, World Council of Churches

Rev. Christoph Anders, Association for Protestant Missions and Churches in Germany (EMW)

Mr Kenneth Ben, Cook Island Christian Church

Mr Johannes Bronsveld, Église Protestante Unie de Belgique

Rev. Dr Lesmore Gibson Ezekiel, Lutheran Church of Nigeria

Rev. Dr Sahaya Gnanaselvam Antony, Roman Catholic Church

Rev. Merlyn Hyde-Riley, Jamaica Baptist Union

Dr Sr Mary John Kudiyirippil, Suore Missionarie Serve dello Spirito Santo

Rev. Dr Jennifer S. Leath, African Methodist Episcopal Church

Prof. Dr Rommel Linatoc, National Council of Churches in the Philippines

Mr Jorge Lockward, United Methodist Church

Rev. Dr Radu Muresan, Romanian Orthodox Church

Mr Iain McLarty, Church of Scotland

Rev. Dr Kenneth Mtata, Zimbabwe Council of Churches

Prof. Bridget Ngeiyamu, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania

Mr Daniel Njoroge, Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria and All Africa

Ms Pauline Nyamwitha Mwangi

Ms Saya Ojiri, Anglican Church in Japan

Rev. Seth Ole Sululu, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania

### **Local Host Committee**

Dr Rogate Mshana (Chair)  
Mr Brighton Killewa (ELCT General Secretary)  
Bishop Alinikisa Cheyo  
Rev. Fr John Kihanga  
Mr William Kivuyo  
Mrs Elizabeth Lobulu  
Rev. Dr Faustin Mahali  
Ms Mary Mmbaga  
Dr Paulo Mmbando  
Rev. Prof. Dr Aidan G. Msafiri  
Mrs Donatha Mugassa  
Mr Loata Laiser Mungaya  
Ms Patricia Mwaikenda  
Rev. Dr Ainekisha Mwombeki  
Rev. Dr Angela Olotu  
Ms Magreth D. Ringo  
Rev. Lazaro Rohho  
Rev. David Shao  
Mr Arthur Shoo  
Rev. Seth Sululu

### **Conference Harvesting Committee**

Rev. Prof Kenneth Ross (Co-moderator), Church of Scotland  
Rev. Dr Robina Winbush (Co-moderator), Presbyterian Church (USA)  
Rev. Adele Halliday, United Church of Canada  
Rev. Dr Deenabandhu Manchala, United Church of Christ  
Rev. Prof Néstor Míguez, Argentine Federation of Evangelical Churches (FAIE)  
Rev. Prof Esther Mombo, Anglican Church of Kenya  
Fr Martin Ritsi, Orthodox Christian Mission Center  
Rev. Dr Johannes Zeiler, Church of Sweden

### **List of CWME Affiliated Bodies**

Argentine Federation of Evangelical Churches (FAIE)  
Association for Protestant Missions and Churches in Germany (EMW)  
Austrian Missionary Council  
Bahamas Christian Council  
Canadian Council of Churches  
Christian Council of Ghana



Christian Council of Trinidad and Tobago  
Church of Christ in Thailand  
Church of Jesus Christ on Earth by His Special Envoy Simon Kimbangu  
Churches Together in Britain and Ireland  
Communion of Churches in Indonesia (PGI)  
Community of Churches in Mission (CEVAA)  
Council for World Mission (CWM)  
Council of Churches in Sierra Leone  
Council of Churches in Zambia  
Council of Churches of Malaysia  
Cuban Council of Churches  
Danish Mission Council  
Evangelical Federation of Mexico  
Federation of Evangelical Churches in Uruguay  
Federation of Protestant Churches in Madagascar  
Finnish Ecumenical Council  
French Evangelical Department for Apostolic Action  
Hong Kong Christian Council  
Irish Council of Churches  
Jamaica Council of Churches  
Malawi Council of Churches  
Marist Missionary Sisters, Rome  
Middle East Council of Churches  
Mission 21 – Basel Mission  
Missionaries of Africa, Rome  
Missionary Commission of the United Protestant Church, Belgium  
Myanmar Council of Churches  
National Christian Council in Japan  
National Christian Council of Sri Lanka  
National Council of Churches in Australia  
National Council of Churches in Bangladesh  
National Council of Churches in India  
National Council of Churches in Korea  
National Council of Churches in Pakistan  
National Council of Churches in the Philippines  
National Council of Churches of Singapore  
National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA  
Netherlands Missionary Council  
Portuguese Council of Christian Churches  
Puerto Rico Council of Churches

Sisters of Our Lady of the Apostles, Rome  
Society of the Divine Word, Rome  
South African Council of Churches  
Swedish Mission Council  
Swiss Mission Council  
United Evangelical Mission (UEM)  
World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC)  
Zimbabwe Council of Churches

## Appendix 3

### *The GETI Report*

#### ***Let's Go to Arusha and Learn Together: The Global Ecumenical Theological Institute as Pilgrimage Experience***

***Amélé Adamavi-Aho Ekué***

#### **Ecumenical Companions on the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace**

110 participants from 40 countries, representing 15 church families and a fully gender-balanced team of 24 academic facilitators, embodying a broad spectrum of traditions, languages and cultures, from all the eight membership regions of the WCC formed the heart of the Global Ecumenical Theological Institute (GETI) 2018 as an ecumenical pilgrimage in companionship. The intergenerational conversation between participants and facilitators, as well as among the academic facilitators characterised the companionship and mutual learning experience. This companionship became particularly visible at three distinct moments at the conference: the midday prayer, the *sokoni* and the evening programme on 9 March 2018 were undoubtedly one of the highlights of this gathering. GETI 2018 participants, like Dr Mutale Kaunda and Nafkot Dessalegn, contributed significantly to the CWME conference debate by offering widely discussed keynotes and participating in plenary panel sessions.

#### **Ecumenical Partners**

GETI 2018 was designed from the outset as ecumenical partnership project, with the intention to increase the ownership and participation in the project. The creation of the Network of Higher Ecumenical Theological Education (NIHETE), which served as ecumenical reference group, was crucial in this respect. The members, representing theological institutions all over the world contributed to bring this vision to life. They offered valuable input to the preparatory process by way of supporting the Ecumenical Theological Education team in the design of the GETI 2018 curriculum, offering

methodological ideas, proposing the academic facilitators, helped with selecting study resources, and established institutional links.

The collaboration with the local host committee and the GETI 2018 partner institution *Tumaini University Makumira* (TUMA), where the pre-CWME conference phase of GETI 2018 was held, was critical for the realisation of the project. The high degree of dedication of the local host committee, whose exquisite hospitality and cooperation cannot be enough recognised, their availability and friendliness at all times, helped to bridge different working styles, understanding of time and planning rhythms, which belong to the intercultural learning experience GETI 2018 provided.

### **A Team Pilgrimage: Cross-programmatic Collaboration**

From the outset, the Commission on World Mission Conference embraced the idea of an accompanying GETI 2018, and so did various programme areas across the WCC. The openness to this idea is owed to the determination of the Mission and Evangelism team to organise a World Mission Conference in Arusha that would be *African, ecumenical, and youthful*. It paved the way for a fruitful cross-programmatic collaboration, grounded in sharing of information, common meetings and preparatory travels to Arusha. Most of all, this collaboration found expression in the consistent engagement with GETI 2018 as full-fledged part of the conference programme and the insistence to make the faces and voices of GETI 2018 emerging theologians visible and audible.

Undoubtedly, GETI 2018 would not have been implemented without the gracious support and collegial advice of the entire Ecumenical Formation, Youth and Interreligious Dialogue and Cooperation and Communications teams. Decidedly, GETI 2018 was also the fruit of a concerted team effort. The team's targeted fundraising initiatives enabled the recruitment of additional staff, respectively the increase of available staff time. The financial management and logistic expertise represented in the team, as well as the high level of commitment and readiness to work beyond the allocated work time warranted for an efficient planning and implementation process at all times. Staff roles were complementary and conducive all through the planning process. A demanding staff situation and a subsequent staff change early 2018 were part of the team pilgrimage experience, carried by all with high levels of sensitivity and commitment. The application of best practices from the Ecumenical Institute Bossey in terms of income monitoring, with a remarkable amount of income generated through participants' contributions, as well as the application and admission process management and a good stewardship of resources belong to the noteworthy achievements of the project.

## **A Pilgrimage in Ecumenical Theological Education**

### **Encountering the theme and study areas – *Learning***

GETI 2018 with its theme *Translating the word, Transforming the World* (echoing the CWME conference theme) was first and foremost a learning experience nurtured by the readiness of the GETI 2018 community – participants, facilitators and team – to fully engage with the World Mission Conference, the local context and with one another as a pilgrim learning community. This was supported by an e-learning programme around the five GETI 2018 core study areas. This ‘learning by immersion’ was continued in the residential phase at Makumira and at the conference venue. Learning as pilgrimage in ecumenical theological education was furthermore illustrated by the living example of 12 study groups, which journeyed together remotely and *in presentia* from January to March 2018. In these groups emerging theologians from different backgrounds learned to listen to one another and to share their stories. They were accompanied by a tandem of academic facilitators who had open ears and hearts for the richness of their engagement with texts of the ecumenical reader, published for this occasion, and with the panels during the conference.

It was remarkable how the participants – many of whom were for the first time on the African continent – succeeded in both immersing into a new context and at the same time learned from one another, their academic facilitators and guest lecturers. Undoubtedly, one of the highlights of the pre-conference phase was the presence of high-profiled ecumenists, such as Prof. John S. Mbiti, who spoke to the participants in a very engaging language about mission history on the continent, when “Africans first fell in love with God”, or Prof. Esther Mombo, who in her lecture established the connection between the engagement of African women theologians and the emphasis on justice related issues in the ecumenical movement.

### **Encountering the context – *Sharing***

Another important component of GETI 2018 was the shared experience in the local context of the Meru Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT). Being able to see first-hand the efforts of the local population to address issues of sustainability through initiatives of alternative energy production was crucial for the GETI 2018 community. The context became through this activity more than a mere venue: climate change and food security emerged as matters directly connected with the living conditions of the host community. A service-learning day with a symbolic tree-planting action on the campus of TUMA, dedicated to the WCC 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary, gave expression of GETI participants’ faith in action and sharing of responsibility

for God's creation. They woke with the rising sun and marched towards the plantation site – a prayerful and elated, solemn moment when hundred pairs of hands joined to bring life-spending tree plants into the earth. The conversations among participants did not cease on this day, as on many of the following. It became apparent for all: Participating in God's mission demands small acts of caring for one another and for creation.

### **Encountering God and one another – *Celebrating***

Among the themes the participants themselves lifted up was the question on how the gospel can be concretely translated in their respective churches and communities. One of the most poignant discoveries in this process was the *living library*, a method by which participants were invited to share their stories around life-changing or stereotyping experiences and to serve as 'living books' for their peers. This form of exchange allowed participants to discover how the gospel message indeed permeates their own life and stimulates them – sometimes in an uncomfortable, yet necessary manner – to be more aware for the vulnerabilities of all created life and the attitudinal changes it demands from all.

Last not least, GETI 2018 was a genuine *spiritual* pilgrimage experience. It allowed the GETI 2018 community to grow together, celebrating the diverse gifts brought to the table and into the spiritual encounter with God and one another through an enriching prayer life. The regular pattern for the prayer life included the reading of a biblical text and the recitation of a news article on an actual event, as reference to the signs of the time. Participants thus continuously translated the Word and found meaningful ways to articulate how this Word resonates with their aspirations of transforming the world. The GETI 2018 fellowship at the World Mission Conference in Arusha was a gift to the ecumenical movement on its pilgrimage of justice and peace – a vibrant opportunity to learn, share and celebrate, and an experience to be prolonged until the next GETI at the WCC Assembly in Karlsruhe 2021.

*Amélé Adamavi-Aho Ekué is WCC Programme Executive for Ecumenical Theological Education and Professor of Ecumenical Ethics at the Ecumenical Institute Bossey.*