

JWG Zoom Executive
3 February 2021
Communiqué

The Executive Committee of the Joint Working Group (JWG) between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches (WCC) held an online meeting on 3 February 2021 under the leadership of His Eminence Archbishop and Metropolitan Nifon of Târgoviște, Romanian Orthodox Church, and Most Reverend Diarmuid Martin, Catholic Archbishop Emeritus of Dublin. The participants were welcomed by Metropolitan Nifon, while Bishop Brian Farrell, Secretary of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, led the group in the opening prayer. During the time of sharing that followed, the participants focused on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on ecclesial life and ecumenical relations in different local contexts. It was noted that despite some critical voices, the great majority of church leaders and faithful support the vaccination campaign promoted by governments around the world.

Bishop Brian Farrell updated the group on the activities of the PCPCU, mentioning that most of the work with ecumenical partners is undertaken using modern means of communication. The PCPCU continues the fifteen ongoing bilateral dialogues, as well as multilateral relations with Christian World Communions and the Global Christian Forum. An important recent event was the publication in December 2020 of the document “The Bishop and Christian Unity: An Ecumenical Vademecum”. The Vademecum has found positive reactions not only in the Catholic Church but also in other churches. As every year at the conclusion of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, on 25 January 2021 ecumenical vespers were celebrated in the Basilica of Saint Paul Outside the Walls with participation of a limited number of representatives of various Christian traditions present in Rome. Many others joined the celebration online, including students from the Bossey Ecumenical Institute who normally would have been in Rome for their annual study visit.

In his update on the current activities of the WCC, Reverend Professor Dr Odair Pedroso Mateus, Interim Deputy Secretary General, pointed out that the pandemic has significantly impacted the work of the Council including the postponement of the election of the new Secretary General and the next Assembly now scheduled for September 2022. The Central Committee that will meet on line in June 2021 will take decisions regarding both issues. On 25 January 2021 an ecumenical prayer service was held online with the participation of the WCC member churches and ecumenical partners. The Faith and Order Commission is finalizing its studies on ecclesiology and moral discernment in the churches, and relevant studies and documents have been published. The Commission has also organized a series of webinars dedicated to bilateral dialogues. It also published a series of brochures on contemporary challenges facing the churches and the theme of the next assembly.

The Executive discussed the Tenth Report to be issued at the end of the current mandate, together with two study documents “Peace is a Treasure for All. Peace-building in Situations of Conflict and Violence” and “Migrants and Refugees – Ecumenical Challenges and Opportunities”. All three documents are in the final stage of preparation. They will be sent to the members of the JWG for comments. It is expected that the plenary of the JWG will approve them during its next meeting scheduled for April 2021.

The meeting concluded with a time of prayer led by Metropolitan Nifon.