



World Council of Churches

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Geneva, 22 April 2022

To the members of the WCC central
committee

WCC Update on the war in Ukraine 25 January to April 2022

Dear members of the central committee,

I wanted to update you all on the WCC's work related to Ukraine, as I know you are working and praying earnestly for peace in this conflict and throughout the world.

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

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

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

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

In a letter to H.H. Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and all Russia on 19 April, I urged Patriarch Kirill to "intervene and ask publicly for a ceasefire for at least few hours during the Resurrection service." <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/wcc-acting-general-secretary-letter-to-his-holiness-kirill-patriarch-of-moscow-and-all-russia-russian>

I have asked the WCC Communication to prepare this overview of the various statements, letters and feature material published since the war started. Most of the materials are translated into German, French, Spanish, Russian, and Ukrainian. Media worldwide are writing daily on the role of the WCC. As of today, more than 3,000 articles have been published, with more being released every day. For those interested in receiving the daily media reports, please send an email to media@wcc-coe.org and we will add you to the list.

Yours in Christ,

Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Saucă
Acting General Secretary

All the Press Releases in English including videos and photos.

WCC press release 19 April – WCC acting general secretary letter to His Holiness Kirill, Patriarch of Moscow and all Russia

<https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/wcc-acting-general-secretary-letter-to-his-holiness-kirill-patriarch-of-moscow-and-all-russia-russian>

WCC press release 19 April – WCC urges Patriarch Kirill: “intervene and ask publicly for a ceasefire during the Resurrection service”

<https://www.oikoumene.org/news/wcc-urges-patriarch-kirill-intervene-and-ask-publicly-for-a-ceasefire-during-the-resurrection-service>

WCC press release 14 April – WCC extends condolences to Caritas upon death of staff in Ukraine

<https://www.oikoumene.org/news/wcc-extends-condolences-to-caritas-upon-death-of-staff-in-ukraine>

WCC press release 14 April – Fr Ioan Sauca: “God is on the side of those who are suffering”

<https://www.oikoumene.org/news/fr-ioan-sauca-god-is-on-the-side-of-those-who-are-suffering>

WCC letter 13 April – Condolences to Caritas upon death of staff in Ukraine

<https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/condolences-to-caritas-upon-death-of-staff-in-ukraine>

WCC press release 13 April – Conference calls on churches to listen, speak the truth and advocate for human rights

<https://www.oikoumene.org/news/conference-calls-on-churches-to-listen-speak-the-truth-and-advocate-for-human-rights>

WCC press release 4 April – Church leaders in Africa highlight impacts of Ukraine war on food security

<https://www.oikoumene.org/news/church-leaders-in-africa-highlight-impacts-of-ukraine-war-on-food-security>

WCC press release 4 April – WCC expresses abhorrence at reported atrocities in Ukraine

<https://www.oikoumene.org/news/wcc-expresses-abhorrence-at-reported-atrocities-in-ukraine>

WCC statement 4 April on evidence of atrocities in Ukraine

<https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/wcc-statement-on-evidence-of-atrocities-in-ukraine>

WCC press release 30 March – WCC encourages singing, praying for peace as creative ideas abound

<https://www.oikoumene.org/news/wcc-encourages-singing-praying-for-peace-as-creative-ideas-abound>

WCC press release 30 March – WCC convenes roundtable on Ukraine, calls for diplomacy instead of threats, dialogue instead of confrontation

<https://www.oikoumene.org/news/wcc-convenes-roundtable-on-ukraine-calls-for-diplomacy-instead-of-threats-dialogue-instead-of-confrontation>

WCC 30 March message from participants in ecumenical round table on Ukraine

<https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/message-from-participants-in-ecumenical-round-table-on-ukraine>

WCC press release 23 March – WCC to presidents of Russia and Ukraine: “a peaceful solution is in your hands alone”

<https://www.oikoumene.org/news/wcc-to-presidents-of-russia-and-ukraine-a-peaceful-solution-is-in-your-hands-alone>

WCC press release 23 March – Church response to refugees, “I’m seeing the image of God in you”

<https://www.oikoumene.org/news/church-response-to-refugees-im-seeing-the-image-of-god-in-you>

WCC press release 23 March – WCC acting general secretary responds to First Lady of Ukraine: “I pray that peace may prevail and the war will stop”

<https://www.oikoumene.org/news/wcc-acting-general-secretary-responds-to-first-lady-of-ukraine-i-pray-that-peace-may-prevail-and-the-war-will-stop>

WCC press release 23 March – Youth across the world voice prayers for the people of Ukraine

<https://www.oikoumene.org/news/youth-across-the-world-voice-prayers-for-the-people-of-ukraine>

WCC press release 23 March – Local churches are frontline response for 10 million displaced Ukrainians, shares WCC and ACT Alliance

<https://www.oikoumene.org/news/local-churches-are-frontline-response-for-10-million-displaced-ukrainians-shares-wcc-and-act-alliance>

WCC press release 18 March – ACT Alliance, WCC delegation visits Hungary, Ukraine and Romania with a focus on humanitarian needs, church response

<https://www.oikoumene.org/news/act-alliance-wcc-delegation-visits-hungary-ukraine-and-romania-with-a-focus-on-humanitarian-needs-church-response>

WCC press release 11 March – Churches respond to growing humanitarian needs in Ukraine and bordering countries

<https://www.oikoumene.org/news/churches-respond-to-growing-humanitarian-needs-in-ukraine-and-bordering-countries>

WCC press release 11 March – WCC appalled by escalating impact on civilians of conflict in Ukraine

<https://www.oikoumene.org/news/wcc-appalled-by-escalating-impact-on-civilians-of-conflict-in-ukraine>

WCC press release 10 March – Patriarch Kirill responds to WCC acting general secretary’s letter urging voice for peace

<https://www.oikoumene.org/news/patriarch-kirill-responds-to-wcc-acting-general-secretarys-letter-urging-voice-for-peace>

WCC press release 4 March – As needs grow in Ukraine and neighboring countries, churches offer crucial humanitarian aid

<https://www.oikoumene.org/news/as-needs-grow-in-ukraine-and-neighboring-countries-churches-offer-crucial-humanitarian-aid>

WCC press release 3 March – WCC joins call for equal treatment of black and brown people stranded at Ukrainian border

<https://www.oikoumene.org/news/wcc-joins-call-for-equal-treatment-of-black-and-brown-people-stranded-at-ukrainian-border>

WCC press release 2 March – WCC acting general secretary to Patriarch Kirill of Moscow: “raise up your voice so that the war can be stopped”

<https://www.oikoumene.org/news/wcc-acting-general-secretary-to-patriarch-kirill-of-moscow-raise-up-your-voice-so-that-the-war-can-be-stopped>

WCC press release 25 February – WCC urges President Putin to stop war, restore peace to Ukraine

<https://www.oikoumene.org/news/wcc-urges-president-putin-to-stop-war-restore-peace-to-ukraine>

WCC press release 25 February – In Ukraine, “such a war has no excuse, neither from God, nor from people”

<https://www.oikoumene.org/news/in-ukraine-such-a-war-has-no-excuse-neither-from-god-nor-from-people>

WCC press release 25 February – WCC urges to stop this war, and to restore peace to the people and nation of Ukraine

<https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/wcc-urges-to-stop-this-war-and-to-restore-peace-to-the-people-and-nation-of-ukraine>

WCC press release 24 February – WCC calls for an immediate end to the current armed hostilities

<https://www.oikoumene.org/news/wcc-calls-for-an-immediate-end-to-the-current-armed-hostilities>

WCC press release 22 February – WCC gravely concerned for people of Ukraine amid escalating tensions

<https://www.oikoumene.org/news/wcc-gravely-concerned-for-people-of-ukraine-amid-escalating-tensions>

WCC press release 25 January – WCC urgently appeals for peace for the people of Ukraine

<https://www.oikoumene.org/news/wcc-urgently-appeals-for-peace-for-the-people-of-ukraine>

WCC 25 January – Statement on Ukraine

<https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/statement-on-ukraine>

Photos

https://oikoumene.photoshelter.com/galleries/C0000_4U7GBA7EYQ/G0000P7vh8b4EYew/Solidarity-visit-Eastern-Europe

Videos

Media briefing - Solidarity visit Hungary, Ukraine, Romania

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xN6kPv8H8mc&list=PLI22eVXX9FYk3HsnNG34yj_Rymr6ML1DQ

Dr Isabel Apawo Phiri, WCC deputy general secretary - Solidarity visit Hungary, Ukraine, Romania

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vfwtQqTIRQg>

Elena Timofticiuc, executive director of AIDRom - Helping refugees in Romania

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mDdgb30H7Gg&list=PLI22eVXX9FYk3HsnNG34yj_Rymr6ML1DQ&index=2

Zota Ionut Lucian, a social worker with AIDRom - Helping refugees in Romania

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uupUt1U4uF0&list=PLI22eVXX9FYk3HsnNG34yj_Rymr6ML1DQ&index=3

Rudelmar Bueno de Faria, ACT Alliance general secretary - Solidarity visit Hungary, Ukraine, Romani

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zWfsPLRP6js&list=PLI22eVXX9FYk3HsnNG34yj_Rymr6ML1DQ&index=5

Thorsten Göbel, ACT Alliance director of programs - Solidarity visit Hungary, Ukraine, Romania

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IdeGagWtuxI&list=PLI22eVXX9FYk3HsnNG34yj_Rymr6ML1DQ&index=4

Peter Prove, Director of the WCC Commission of the Churches on International Affairs - Solidarity visit Hungary, Ukraine, Romania

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Ml8uelpPao&list=PLI22eVXX9FYk3HsnNG34yj_Rymr6ML1DQ&index=6

Fr Ioan Sauca: “God is on the side of those who are suffering”

The World Council of Churches (WCC) has, since the first day of the war in Ukraine and even in the months before, been working and praying earnestly for peace in this conflict and throughout the world. From the beginning, the WCC has called for an immediate end to armed hostilities, to stop the war and has appealed also for an immediate end to indiscriminate attacks with an escalating impact on civilians in Ukraine. WCC News met online with the WCC acting general secretary Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca to get the latest update on the work of the WCC.



Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca, acting general secretary, World Council of Churches. Photo: Ivars Kupcis/WCC
14 April 2022

This is in brief the update on the work done in February-April:

On 25 February Sauca said the “WCC urges President Putin to stop war, restore peace to Ukraine”. The World Council of Churches affirmed and supported the appeal issued on 24 February 2022 by His Beatitude Metropolitan Onuphry of Kyiv and All Ukraine (Moscow Patriarchate). This call must be heard, Sauca said. “WCC makes the same appeal to President Putin, to stop this fratricidal war, and to restore peace to the people and nation of Ukraine.”

A joint delegation from the WCC and ACT Alliance visited in March Hungary, Ukraine and Romania, where they stood in solidarity with churches that continue to serve as first responders to this grave crisis.

WCC acting general secretary Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca sent an open letter to Patriarch Kirill, urging him to mediate so that the war can be stopped. Sauca also sent letters to Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin, president of the Russian Federation, and Volodymyr Oleksandrovytch Zelensky, president of Ukraine, urging them that a peaceful solution is in their hands alone.

Another open letter from Sauca was sent to Ukrainian First Lady Olena Zelenska, sharing prayers that peace may prevail and the war may stop, so that he can celebrate Easter in Kiev.

Saucu also convened an ecumenical roundtable consultation on the situation in Ukraine, which took place 30 March at the Bossey Ecumenical Institute.

Those gathered included senior representatives of WCC member churches from several European countries neighbouring and directly affected by the current conflict. The purpose of this meeting was to consult, share perspectives on the conflict and its causes, and to discern possible paths forward.

- 1. Many are asking the WCC to "expel" the Moscow Patriarchate from the WCC for its recent positions on the war in Ukraine. Is it possible that the WCC makes this decision? What are the reasons for not taking it? And what reasons instead would lead to a possible exit of Moscow from the WCC?**

Fr Ioan Sauca: The decision to suspend a member church from the WCC fellowship is not in the authority of the general secretary but of the central committee, our governing body. The WCC Constitution clearly stipulates the conditions for a suspension in Rule I,6 : "The central committee may suspend the membership of a church: (i) at the church's request; (ii) because the basis of, or the theological criteria for, membership has not been maintained by that church or; (iii) because the church has persistently neglected its responsibilities of membership.

And such a decision is taken by the central committee of the WCC only after serious discernment, hearings, visit to and dialogue with the churches concerned, and debates.

- 2. Do you have any such examples of suspension/exclusions from WCC?**

Fr Ioan Sauca: WCC was confronted with similar cases in the past. Most well-known is the case of the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa which supported and argued theologically for apartheid. That created strong debates and condemnations from other WCC member churches. In the end, it was that church which "excluded" itself from the WCC as she felt she did not belong there anymore. But it was not the WCC which suspended or excluded her. However, in the meantime she was readmitted.

There were other cases of open confrontations, in particular between churches coming from the Soviet Bloc and the Western world threatening to either be excluded or to leave the WCC during its Nairobi 1975 and Vancouver 1983 assemblies.

The most clear cases much closer to our time were in the Canberra Assembly in 1991. During that assembly, the Gulf War became one of the most divisive issues. The great majority of delegations agreed unanimously and stated unequivocally that the war "is neither holy nor just." However, vocal opposition to the demand for an immediate and unconditional cease fire came from other delegations, mainly from American churches and the Church of England : "Do we

want to feel good or do good?”, asked those who opposed to ceasefire. Many warned that the conflict threatened to inflame Christian-Muslim tensions in various parts of the world and to divert precious resources from the poor. Theological questions were asked about churches defending the war. The burning question “could churches openly defending a war be members of our fellowship” surfaced timidly and some asked that those be excluded.

Once again, the WCC did not opt for a radical solution, or decide to exclude those churches. The desire to continue the dialogue with one another was a stronger option. On the one hand, the motion suggesting “We call upon [the churches] to give up any theological or moral justification of the use of military power, be it in war or through other forms of oppressive security systems, and to become public advocates of a just peace” was defeated. On the other, the emphasis was not only on a public statement, but also an all-night vigil for peace.

The spiritual approach prevailed. The most frequently quoted line at Canberra came from the general secretary of the MECC. Asked which side of the war God is on, the answer was: “God is on the side of those who are suffering.”

Then we had similar cases with churches involved in the genocide in Rwanda in 1994 and in the Balkan War during the same period.

To be more concrete, during the war in Yugoslavia, there was serious pressure to suspend the membership of the Serbian Orthodox Church. Initially, Patriarch Pavle had given support to political leaders and to the majority of the people who saw the war as a legitimate way of defending the national identity and the historical homeland. However, when he realized that he had taken false steps in the political arena, he had the grace to apologize publicly. He took the risk of participating in the massive anti-government protests in Belgrade. He had the courage to publicly declare that, “If a Great Serbia should be held by committing crime, I would never accept it; may Great Serbia disappear, but to hold it by crime – no (...) May we disappear, but disappear as humans, because then we will not disappear, we will be alive in the hands of the living God.” An exemplary pastor, a holy man of God! A costly and bold witness to the values of our Christian faith in a difficult and sensitive situation which could serve as a guideline and example for discernment today.

The only church which has been suspended for many years, but was visited many times and with whom WCC engaged in dialogue but without a satisfactory outcome was the Kimbanguist Church. The matter of disagreement has been on a clear theological stand which did not correspond anymore with the WCC Trinitarian basis. After long debate and dialogues, with the church itself and with the other WCC member churches from the region and with All Africa Conference of Churches, this church discontinued recently its membership with the WCC.

3. Father Ioan, what is your personal opinion and how do you see a possible outcome in the next central committee in June 2022?

Fr Ioan Sauca: I cannot predict the decision of the coming central committee but I can see that it will be one of the very hot issues on the table.

My personal opinion? Things are very complicated these days and we live in a turning point of history. As many others, I suffer a lot, in particular as an Orthodox priest since I am aware that both in Russia and in Ukraine the Orthodox Churches have great numbers of faithful. And the tragic events, the great suffering, death and destruction are in deep contradiction with Orthodox theology and spirituality, with what our forefathers and mothers have showed us through their personal lives in history.

As you have seen, I did my best to be bold and prophetic: I condemned the Russian aggression on Ukraine. Supporting the statement of Metropolitan Onuphry, I called it a “fratricidal war” and expressed concern and care for the victims, refugees and so much suffering and destruction. I wrote to Patriarch Kirill, I called the two presidents to stop the war and a WCC delegation visited the borders of Ukraine from Hungary and Romania and met with the refugees.

We all feel hopeless, angry, frustrated, disappointed—and humanly and emotionally tend to go towards immediate radical decisions.

Yet, as followers of Christ, we were entrusted with the ministry of reconciliation and the theme of the WCC 11th Assembly reminds us all that the love of Christ moves the whole world to reconciliation and unity. I cannot deny my faith and our vocation even in difficult moments. It would be very easy to use the language of the politicians but we are called to use the language of faith, of our faith. It is easy to exclude, excommunicate, demonize; but we are called as WCC to use a free and safe platform of encounter and dialogue, to meet and listen to one another even if and when we disagree. This has always been the WCC and I would suffer greatly if during my time this vocation will be lost and the nature of the WCC changes.

I believe in the power of dialogue in the process towards reconciliation. Imposed peace is not peace; a lasting peace has to be a just peace. War cannot be just or holy; killing is killing and that has to be avoided through dialogue and negotiations. And to reach that it is not enough to stop the conflicts but to try to understand the root and the causes and that can happen only through dialogue, by listening first to the victim and then the perpetrator. And I still believe that even the perpetrator can be changed, transformed by the power of dialogue and the work of the grace of God, by assuming the faults and wrongdoings, by repairing the damages and by advancing towards the way of just peace. It may sound idealistic and utopic when we are confronted with strong signs of war crimes, but our Holy Scriptures and our history give us many such examples. We have to continue on the path of our faith with hope.

What I came to admire is the wisdom of our predecessors. Visser 't Hooft made such great efforts to bring the churches from the Soviet bloc in the WCC, despite their "support" to the ugly Communist ideology and to their "support" to the totalitarian regimes. They were asked to join the international fellowship as churches. And the churches who lived under that oppression have gained so much.

To conclude: I will not stop speaking against any aggression, invasion or war; I will continue being prophetic but I will do my best to keep the WCC what it was meant to be and to keep the table of dialogue open. Because if we exclude those that we do not like or do not agree with, with whom are we going to speak, how can we advance to reconciliation and lasting just peace?



Ukrainian refugees enjoy a hot meal, at an AIDRom support point by the Sculeni border crossing connecting Romania and Moldova on 17 March 2022. The border crossing at Sculeni, near Iasi, Romania, serves as an entry-point for Ukrainian refugees fleeing the atrocities of war caused by the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. Located at Romania's eastern border, the crossing sees Ukrainian refugees enter Romania after passage through Moldova. Photo: Albin Hillert/WCC

4. There is also an ongoing "conflict" between the Orthodox churches. What is the WCC planning to do to avoid tearing?

Fr Ioan Sauca: The World Council of Churches seeks to encourage its member churches to address their disagreements and divisions through prayer for each other, theological dialogue and common work whenever and wherever possible. While the WCC has no legal authority over its member churches, it creates ecumenical spaces where they can address what separates them if they so wish. The theological dialogue that helped Oriental and Eastern Orthodox churches to come closer to each other began in the early 1960s as the two Orthodox families met together in one of the WCC spaces: The Commission on Faith and Order.

The various ecumenical spaces created by the World Council of Churches contributed to build bridges and trust between Orthodox Churches which were isolated from each other due to historical circumstances. It can be said that the decades of preparing and preceding the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church in 2016 through the pre-conciliar conferences held in Chambésy coincided with the intensification of inter-Orthodox relations facilitated by the World Council of Churches.

The upcoming Inter-Orthodox Pre-Assembly Consultation, which continues a custom started forty years ago, will be held in May in Cyprus and will bring together representatives from all Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Churches, who will reflect on the main theme and the day themes of the assembly. Participants will have the opportunity to share their expectations for the assembly and beyond, but also to address the current imperatives and challenges, as well as the critical issues that churches and the world are facing today.

To be even more bold: if the WCC was not to convene such a meeting, the Orthodox Churches would have not been able to come all together. We see here again what a blessing the WCC is for the reconciliation of the churches.

5. Many speak of "the death of ecumenism" due to the inability of the Orthodox churches to speak to each other. How much is the war affecting the ecumenical dialogue between the Churches?

Fr Ioan Sauca: I would disagree with those speaking of "the death of ecumenism" because of the inability of some Orthodox churches to speak to one another. The Orthodox family is not the first and the only one to face internal tensions and divisions today. I would rather defend the thesis that one of the most serious challenges facing the ecumenical movement today is to deal with tensions and divisions "within" the same family of churches, instead of "between" families of churches. There is a serious, I would say fundamental, methodological difference, between initiating and encouraging a dialogue of divided church families (what the ecumenical movement was called to do) and churches who are of the same family (what the ecumenical movement is facing today in several cases). Surprisingly, most of the requests coming to WCC today to mediate for healing and reconciliation are from divided churches belonging to the same confessional family.

Disagreements between two churches, serious as they may be, will not kill the ecumenical movement. The search for Christian unity comes from the confession that the Church of Christ is one, despite our human (and often sinful) divisions. We engage in the ecumenical movement not because it is producing many results but above all because it is a gospel imperative.

Orthodox churches – both Eastern and Oriental – always called for a stronger focus in the WCC on the search for Christian unity, despite all crises and lack of interest in the ecumenical goal expressed by some groups. The fact that representatives of these churches agreed to come together to a consultation prior to the WCC 11th Assembly shows a great commitment to this cause and to staying together, consulting, and learning from each other. Of course, there are growing ecumenical challenges, many of them caused by the different approaches to moral and ethical issues.

Therefore, I do not see this time as "death of ecumenism." On the contrary, I see more than ever the relevance and the importance of a body like WCC. It remains the only and unique free space that brings together churches from all over the world, to dialogue and find fellowship together. If we did not have the WCC these days, we would have had to invent it. It is the only way towards reconciliation and unity.



17 March 2022, Siret, Romania: Aid workers provide support to incoming refugees from Ukraine at the Vama Siret border crossing, Romania. The Vama Siret border crossing connects northeast Romania with Ukraine. Located north of Siret and further in the south the city of Suceava, the crossing connects Romania with the Ukrainian village of Terebleche and further north the city of Chernivtsi. Following the invasion of Ukraine by Russian military starting on 24 February 2022, close to half a million refugees have fled across the Ukrainian border into Romania. In the past 24 hours, government figures indicate more than 50,000 people have crossed the border in search of refuge, an estimated 20 percent of whom are expected to stay in Romania, rather than transit into other European countries.
Photo: Albin Hillert/WCC

6. War fills hearts with hate. How can peace be built?

Fr Ioan Sauca: Let me share one concrete example from the Korean Peninsula: The WCC central committee in 2018 opened with a sermon by Rev. Dr Sang Chang (WCC Asia president), sharing about her journey with her mother from North Korea to South during the Korean War. Through prayer and honesty with the North Korean soldiers, she and her mother weren't killed. Rev. Chang said, "My mother's honesty provided trust between us and the North Korean soldiers to open up their hearts. Through this experience, I came to believe that honesty begets trust, and trust begets miracles."

The process of reconciliation and peacebuilding requires mutual trust; to help us to realize that peacebuilding means to stop demonizing, and to stop being so skeptical and distrustful. War surely fills our hearts with hate, but our journey of peacebuilding fills our hearts with love because it's deeply rooted in trust.

Peace is not determined simply by agreements; it takes great effort and commitment of trust. The ecumenical efforts for peace and reunification on the Korean Peninsula should be a good example. When the WCC convened its first meeting of Christians between the North and South in Glion, Switzerland in 1986, each side tested the other, openly confessing mistrust. At the conclusion, however, it was the celebration of Eucharist – that powerful symbol of the unity and trust of all children of God – which broke down the invisible walls of division. Christians from the North and South dissolved into tears and embraces. This is the beginning of the process of peacebuilding, and since then the WCC has been the only channel that convenes this annual ecumenical encounter to promote the mutual trust on the Korean Peninsula.

In 2020, which marked the 70th anniversary of the start of the Korean War, as an ecumenical expression of both lament and hope, the WCC launched the Global Prayer Campaign for Korea: “We Pray, Peace Now, End the War.” During the campaign, the WCC shared stories of separated families and victims of the Korean War, apologies of soldiers, churches’ ecumenical efforts for peace and reunification on the Korean Peninsula, and prayers from all over the world. We did this because we believe prayer could help us to turn our hearts from hatred to love, from fear to trust,