

### **“Current Dialogue” Launch – WCC General Secretary**

Today is a historic day for the World Council of Churches – the launch of Current Dialogue as the WCC’s third academic journal, 71 years after the first issue of Ecumenical Review and 108 years after the International Review of Mission was first published.

I am grateful we can celebrate this event in the presence of so many ecumenical and interreligious partners, especially our colleagues from the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue.

Current Dialogue was originally founded by the WCC in 1980. It was one of the world’s first regular publications dealing with issues of interreligious dialogue and relationships, bringing a distinctive ecumenical perspective to interreligious questions.

Now, in its new format and style, and taking its rightful place alongside The Ecumenical Review and the International Review of Mission, we look to Current Dialogue to enhance and expand interest in interreligious engagement in fresh and fruitful ways, and address with integrity and insight some of the most pressing questions of our times.

Over the past forty years, issues of interreligious engagement have increased in significance, and the way in which followers of different faiths work together and relate is now one of the most important issues in the contemporary world, not least in peace making and reconciliation.

This makes it all the more important that we find serious and respected methods to explore further and expand interest in interreligious engagement in fresh and fruitful ways, and to address with integrity and insight some of the most pressing questions of our times.

So I am delighted that Current Dialogue is now being published by Wiley in cooperation with the World Council of Churches in a format that will raise its profile - and allow it to serve as a theologically vibrant and academically serious platform for debate on issues at the heart of interreligious engagement from an ecumenical perspective.

Current Dialogue thereby joins the WCC’s two other journals which have been published by Wiley since 2009: the Ecumenical Review and the International Review of Mission, both of which have been closely associated with the history of the World Council of Churches.

The Ecumenical Review first appeared just before the founding assembly of the WCC in 1948 in Amsterdam.

Its history, however, goes back to the first attempts in the 1930s to bring together the two great ecumenical movements of Faith and Order and Life and Work, which identified the need for an “authoritative, Christian, ecumenical review” under the auspices of the future World Council.

The International Review of Mission has an even longer history, going back to 1912 when it was founded following the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh two years earlier to be a means of international exchange of ideas and information within what was called the new discipline of “missionary science.”

Over the more than seven decades following the founding of the World Council of Churches, these journals have played a vital role in providing such a space for debate and discussion on challenges facing the ecumenical movement – discussion and debate that can often be uncomfortable but is nevertheless necessary.

Writing in the first issue of the Ecumenical Review, the WCC’s first general secretary, W. A. Visser ‘t Hooft, referred to his hope that the journal would offer “truly ecumenical conversation” reflecting “that common struggle for that truth” which transcends all Churches and all people. “We therefore ask our readers,” he wrote, “not merely to tolerate but to welcome uncompromising frankness of speech.”

With its new style and format matching that of the other two journals, Current Dialogue will be able to reach out to a wider audience. As well as being produced in the print version you see today, Current Dialogue will be available online to more than 5000 institutions around the world through Wiley subscriptions, and to another 5000 institutions in low and middle-income countries through the Research4Life scheme. In Egypt, for example, through a national licencing initiative, anyone connected to the internet has access to Wiley journals, including Current Dialogue, Ecumenical Review and the International Review of Mission.

Current Dialogue, like our other two journals, will offer critical and creative insights not only for academic institutions and researchers, but also to grassroots ecumenical and interfaith practitioners, faith leaders, and faith-based organizations.

Together, our three journals play a vital role in articulating the ecumenical vision and visions; stimulating research and supporting ecumenical education and formation; sharing *current insights and perspectives* arising from the work of the WCC and the wider ecumenical movement; and keeping the ecumenical memory and history alive.

Finally I would like to express my gratitude to all those who have made possible this new venture for Current Dialogue: Wiley, the publishers; those who have accepted to be members of the editorial board; and the editorial team of Peniel Rajkumar as editor and Simone Sinn as managing editor.

There is great potential in this venture, and my hope and wish is that Current Dialogue will empower global faith communities to work further for peace and harmony by providing high quality academic material to be used as resource for discussion and reconciliation processes.