



World Association for
Christian Communication

www.waccglobal.org | info@waccglobal.org

308 Main Street, Toronto ON, M4C 4X7, Canada
Telephone: +1 416-691-1999

President: Rev. Dr. Samuel W. Meshack
General Secretary: Philip Lee DD (hc)

Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit
General Secretary
World Council of Churches
P.O Box 2100
1211 Geneva 2
Switzerland

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Dear Rev. Dr Tveit,

In celebration of the World Council of Churches' 70th anniversary, I bring warm greetings on behalf of the Board of Directors, the Members and Partners of the World Association for Christian Communication – which is also celebrating its 50th anniversary this year.

WACC began its own pilgrimage of justice and peace in 1968, and among its founders was Philip Potter, later General Secretary of the World Council of Churches. Nineteen sixty-eight was also the year in which the WCC's Uppsala Assembly issued a major statement on "The Church and the Media of Mass Communication". It is noteworthy that many of the concerns raised by the Uppsala Statement were echoed at WACC's foundational meeting in Oslo, where the opening address was given by the Rt. Rev. Dr Fridtjov Birkeli, at that time recently appointed Bishop of Oslo. He said:

"If we are to give leadership in mass communication, we must maintain our integrity on the highest possible level, morally as well as spiritually. We must realize fully both how creative and how destructive the mass media can be. Human rights must be preserved not only for the producers but also for the receivers, so as to give free way to what is noble, honourable and meaningful and to put certain limits around what may be destructive, ugly and wicked."

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The WCC's farsighted Uppsala statement underlined the ethical dimension of public outreach, noting that "communication is the fabric of life" and calling on the churches to help "unmask all pseudo-communication which divides rather than unites, points to ourselves rather than others, sows enmity rather than reconciles, imprisons rather than liberates."

It is in this light that, in recent years and partly owing to WACC's advocacy, communication has come to be recognized as a human right – one that cannot be denied and without which individuals or communities cannot exist or prosper. As both the WCC and WACC are fully aware, communication strengthens human dignity and affirms human equality.

Communication rights are fundamentally related to issues of inclusion and exclusion, equality and inequality, access and denial. Both South and North, information and knowledge are essential for people to respond adequately and meaningfully to the opportunities of political, social, economic, and cultural change.

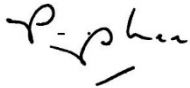
In all these respects, communicators have a duty to take a stand for justice. The struggle for the dignity of all women, and all men, requires that communicators become effective advocates of human rights – including the right to communicate – as well as defenders of the integrity of all creation.

WACC pursues these goals, for example, through promoting gender justice, especially through an internationally recognized research project called the Global Media Monitoring Project. The WACC Europe Region and the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe – with support from the WCC – recently examined media representations of refugees and migrants in Europe and are advocating with media for inclusive and informed coverage. In addition, WACC provides financial and technical support for grassroots projects aimed at strengthening the communication rights of marginalized and excluded communities.

In its public outreach, WACC tries to bring the theme of communication for all to the attention of church leaders and their constituencies worldwide. In this regard, I note that it has been a long time since a WCC Assembly focused on the theme of communication (1968 in Uppsala and 1983 in Vancouver).

WACC has a long history of working with the World Council of Churches and I would like to recognize here the role of your Director of Communication, Marianne Ejdersten, as a member of WACC's Board of Directors.

In light of these considerations, and with the greatest respect, I would like to propose that it is time to explore a WCC Assembly statement on communication and just and peaceful communities. WACC offers to work with the WCC on such ethical issues as social media and disinformation, the power of information locked up in global media corporations, and the changing media environment linked to shifting economic and political issues. All of these have a significant impact on our joint pilgrimage of justice and peace.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Philip Lee". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Philip Lee
General Secretary