

# Ecumenical Visions for the 21st Century



# Ecumenical Visions for the 21st Century

A Reader for Theological Education

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**Edited by Mélisande Lorke and Dietrich Werner**

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This volume is accompanied by a CD-ROM with additional readings; in the table of contents the additional readings are listed in shaded type.

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## Foreword by Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit

I WARMLY WELCOME THE BOOK *ECUMENICAL VISIONS FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY: A READER for Theological Education*, produced by the Programme on Ecumenical Theological Education (ETE). It has been prepared as a core anthology for the Global Ecumenical Theological Institute (GETI), which will be held prior to and during the 10th Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Busan, South Korea, from 26 October to 9 November 2013. It is also meant as a long-term resource for theological courses and reflection on the future of ecumenism in the context of world Christianity in seminaries and theological faculties around the world.

Equipping a younger generation of ecumenically committed theologians and educators and inspiring them to articulate their vision of ecumenism for the 21st century is the goal of GETI and the current work of ETE. It is also of primary importance and a strategic interest for the World Council of Churches as a whole. It is the generation of younger theologians from all regions of the world today that will give shape to Christian unity, common witness and joint service in the cause of justice and peace under the different circumstances of our times today. The world needs people with Christian passion, spiritual commitment, theological competence and persistence to recapture and rearticulate a biblically well-grounded ecumenical vision and what it implies for the unity of the church in the context of world Christianity in the decades to come. Theological education and ecumenical formation play a key role in this endeavor.

The 10th Assembly in South Korea also points to the urgency and potential for churches to come together in a spirit of genuine and committed prayer, through its theme: “God of life, lead us to justice and peace.” Orthodox traditions have reminded us that all proper Christian theology is rooted in doxology and prayer. Christian theology is invited to join with the prayers and longings of the whole church for the one God of life, who sustains and renews us. Christian theology is invited to listen and reflect on the cries for justice and peace in this world, to relate the essence of the gospel to the agonies of people and creation suffering today. There is a creational, even cosmic horizon for Christian hope and its theological reflection suggested in the theme’s invocation of the God of life.

The double accountability of Christian theology to the church and the world, and the urgent concern for a new and inclusive ecumenical theology of life—facing the dramatic challenges of environmental destruction, land grabbing, violation of human rights and indigenous identities, the perpetuation of long-lasting regional and global and religious conflicts—also forms the core of this collection of key ecumenical texts from the work of the WCC in the past two decades. The 65 core texts gathered here shed light on key areas and thematic fields with which WCC-related programmes and commissions have been dealing. Many of the topics also

will be formally part of the agenda of the assembly: Church and unity, mission and evangelism, peace and justice, Bible and hermeneutics, migration and migrant churches, HIV and AIDS, health and healing, interreligious dialogue, common prayer, ecumenism in the 21st century, ecumenical formation, youth, men and women in the community of the church, as well as *diakonia* are all represented here.

I congratulate and thank the team in ETE and all WCC staff colleagues who developed this initiative and those who have supported this anthology with advice and textual contributions. We hope that this volume will be a stimulus for deepened interest in ecumenical dialogue, theological discernment and active participation in the common tasks of world mission, common witness for justice and peace, Christian unity and interreligious dialogue in decades to come.

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

## Foreword by Rev. Dr Sam-Hwan Kim

ON BEHALF OF THE KOREAN HOST COMMITTEE FOR THE WCC 10<sup>TH</sup> ASSEMBLY IN BUSAN 2013, it is my outmost pleasure and honour to extend warm greetings of welcome to the GETI group to Korea.

This anthology is indeed a timely and most welcome publication to facilitate intensive deliberations and discussions of the GETI group, who are envisioned as future leaders in the global ecumenical movement.

The Korean Host Committee will do everything in its power to render every possible support of a successful gathering of the GETI group and to ensure fruitful discussions and lively exchanges throughout the assembly.

We hope that the WCC 2013 assembly will leave an everlasting signature and be a milestone of mutual enrichment in the ongoing ecumenical theological discourse, with the GETI group members as future key persons in the continuing ecumenical journey. We feel deeply gratified in welcoming the GETI group, because we also care about the future generation, and we offer our continuous work in collaborative ecumenical efforts with all our sisters and brothers in faith. We firmly believe that members of the GETI group will grow and develop themselves into the great leaders responding of the future to the call of God.

I herewith express my sincere gratitude for the publishers' efforts in bringing out this magnificent publication and wish everyone a memorable and inspiring participation in the GETI and time in Korea.

*Rev. Dr Kim Sam-Hwan*  
Moderator  
Korean Host Committee  
For the WCC 10<sup>th</sup> Assembly 2013

## Foreword by Rev. Dr Jong-Wha Park

PUBLICATION OF THIS WORKBOOK FOR THE GLOBAL ECUMENICAL THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTE (GETI) programme is a precious gift timely offered, along with the preparation for the 10th Assembly of the WCC in Busan this year. It is designed to help people who are eager to become acquainted with the ecumenical movement up to now, in theory and practice, and actively to participate in envisioning our future ecumenism, transforming our world and Christianity in the 21st century.

With such a “common understanding and vision” of a wider ecumenism in the WCC and beyond the WCC, young leaders are sincerely invited from among our member and non-member churches of the WCC to be positive actors in the GETI programmes before and during the 10th Assembly of the WCC in Busan.

*Ecumenical Visions for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* introduces vital concerns and programmes of the ecumenical movement today and tomorrow as they relate to the global, Asian and Korean contexts. In addition, dozens of ecumenical issues are presented, explained, and debated, each with relevant texts and references for further study and considerations. We are very happy that GETI also offers with its guide book a theologically and practically “open space” (*Madang*) of exchange and encounter.

On behalf of the Korean Host Committee(KHC) for the 10th Assembly, I offer heartfelt thanks to the editorial team, and I welcome all who are coming to GETI and supporting the programme.

*Rev. Dr Jong-Wha Park*  
Vice Moderator of KHC  
for Theology and International Relations

## Editors' Preface by Mélisande Lorke and Dietrich Werner

*“Brought by the Holy Spirit into One Fully Committed Fellowship”*

TEACHING ECUMENISM IS VITAL FOR THE FUTURE OF WORLD CHRISTIANITY. WHEN THE ecumenical movement began after the first world mission conference in Edinburgh in 1910, only some 300 Christian denominations existed (the majority of which were to be found in the North). Teaching about ecumenism could still be regarded as a prerogative for a small *avant-garde* of selected western church people and a few pioneering ecumenical leaders in the 20th century. In the 21st century, however, with the majority of Christianity now having shifted to the global South and with the number of Christian denominations having multiplied exponentially,<sup>1</sup> study of world Christianity and ecumenism—in all geographical contexts and periods—is a must for every church representative and religious educator around the world.

Studying ecumenism does not mean forgetting or marginalizing one's own denominational tradition and ecclesial identity. Rather it is about widening one's own understanding of the church and its mission to a global perspective. To be the church and to give witness to the one gospel of Jesus Christ in any context of the world has to relate to the global church. It is to give responsible and visible expression to the fact that any local church is an integral part and embodiment of the universal church of Christ, which in ancient creedal tradition is confessed to be the one, holy, apostolic and catholic church. This conviction was expressed in the oft-cited WCC New Delhi statement of 1961:

We believe that the unity which is both God's will and his gift to his Church is being made visible as all in each place who are baptized into Jesus Christ and confess him as Lord and Saviour are brought by the Holy Spirit into one fully committed fellowship, holding the one apostolic faith, preaching the one Gospel, breaking the one bread, joining in common prayer, and having a corporate life reaching out in witness and service to all and who at the same time are united with the whole Christian fellowship in all places and all ages in such wise that ministry and members are accepted by all, and that all can act and speak together as occasion requires for the tasks to which God calls his people.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Some 40,000 Christian denominations were estimated to exist in 2010, see: Todd M. Johnson, Kenneth R. Ross (eds), *Atlas of Global Christianity*, Edinburgh University Press 2010.

2. See the full text at: <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/assembly/new-delhi-1961/new-delhi-statement-on-unity.html>.

That all Christian churches will be “brought by the Holy Spirit into one fully committed fellowship” is a key element in the vision of the ecumenical movement. It is also the core vision behind this collection of recent ecumenical key texts from the WCC and its ecumenical partners. Working toward one fully committed fellowship requires formation and deliberate theological training.<sup>3</sup> Learning about contemporary ecumenism involves studying other Christian church traditions in one’s own context and region, including their theological heritage and self-understanding. Furthermore, it includes learning about the achievements, crucial questions and emerging convergences of the whole global ecumenical movement and recollection of the “ecumenical memory.”<sup>4</sup>

There are many textbooks, anthologies and proper introductions to major debates and theological achievements of the historical ecumenical movement.<sup>5</sup> The key sources and crucial texts of historical ecumenism in the 20th century are not repeated or included in this anthology.

Rather it is the purpose of this volume to provide a collection of more recent texts that discuss the core themes, the new shapes and emerging challenges of ecumenical Christianity in the 21st century. So the focus has been to include official statements and reference texts of the WCC and some of its major ecumenical partners from the past 20 years and in the context of world Christianity in the 21st century. Despite its length, we do not claim this publication to be all-embracing and comprehensive but rather an overview of some major current ecumenical themes and topics.<sup>6</sup>

The project was undertaken as a resource for the Global Ecumenical Theological Institute (GETI), planned by the ETE programme of WCC in cooperation with Korean and other partners in order to bring together 150 advanced students of theology for an intensive global study course prior to and during the 10th assembly of WCC in Busan, South Korea, in October/November 2013.

The criteria for the selection of these texts were:

- Sources which present one of the major recent themes, key issues and concerns reflected in the work of one of the programmes of WCC and its ecumenical partners in the years after the Porto Alegre assembly (2006);

3. See: “Magna Charta on Ecumenical Formation in Theological Education in the 21st Century—10 Key Convictions,” in: Dietrich Werner, *Theological Education in World Christianity: Ecumenical Perspectives and Future Priorities*, PTCA Publication, No 2, Kolkatta, 2011, 34–41. See also major volumes on theological education and ecumenism which have been published before the 10th WCC assembly by ETE: Dietrich Werner, David Esterline, Namsoon Kang, Joshva Raja (eds), *Theological Education in World Christianity*, Regnum Publishers, Oxford 2010; Isabel Phiri, Dietrich Werner (eds), *Handbook of Theological Education in Africa*, Regnum Publishers, Oxford 2013; Hope Antone, Hyunju Bae, Wati Longchar, Huang Po Ho, Dietrich Werner (eds), *Asian Handbook for Theological Education and Ecumenism*, Regnum Publishers, Oxford 2013.

4. See Dietrich Werner, “Preserving the Memory(ies) of the Ecumenical Movement: A Crucial Task for World Christianity Facing the pluralisation of Ecumenical Actors and the Acceleration of Information Flows,” ch. 9 in Michael Nai Poon, Marek Rostrowski (eds), *Mission, Memory and Communion; Documenting World Christianity in the Twenty-First Century*, A CSCA Publication Singapore 2013.

5. See, for example, Michael Kinnamon and Brian E. Cope (eds.), *The Ecumenical Movement: An Anthology of Key Texts and Voices*, WCC Publications 1997, new edition forthcoming; see also Noel Davis and Martin Conway (eds): *World Christianity in the 20th Century: An SCM Reader*, and *World Christianity in the 20th Century: An SCM Core Text*, SCM Press 2008.

6. See other WCC documents on: [www.globethics.net/web/de-world-council-of-churches-collection?layoutPlid=4297674](http://www.globethics.net/web/de-world-council-of-churches-collection?layoutPlid=4297674) or [www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/](http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/).

- Sources which relate to the main themes and proposed issues to be reflected in the 10th Assembly of the WCC in Busan and its Korean and Asian partner churches under the theme “God of life, lead us to justice and peace”;
- Sources which reflect some common authorship, corporate ownership and authoritative status within the WCC and thereby are beyond the level of just individual theological voices and essays (formally the authority level of the collected texts varies significantly, as only some of them have been officially authorized as statements endorsed by the WCC Central Committee, while others are common texts or conference papers from occasions related to or organized by the WCC);
- Sources which are appropriate to serve as a basis for a solid discussion in a seminar with theological students.

The theological collection here—this cannot be underlined strongly enough—by no means presents the whole of the theological work of the WCC in the past 20 years. There is much more which has been worked out by the different components and programmes active in the global ecumenical movement. The collection presented here displays a partial view on some major themes, no more or less.

The collection of key texts on ecumenism and World Christianity, presented as the GETI Reader for Busan assembly has been prepared so:

- that the book is available in print *for student and faculty participants* to be used for the two weeks Global Ecumenical Theological Institute in Seoul and Busan, 25 October to 9 November 2013;
- that the printed version be accompanied by a *digital version of an enlarged GETI texts collection, with additional texts* and which is available on an accompanying CD-ROM and for more long-term use on a special website;<sup>7</sup>
- that both the printed as well as the digital resources of this textbook can serve also the wider purpose of serving as a *reader for regional courses on ecumenism, World Christianity and inter-faith issues to be held by theological seminaries, faculties and Christian educational institutions all around the world* in 2013 and subsequent years after the assembly;
- that each of the main texts is accompanied by a short introductory paragraph giving some information on the background and key contents of the relevant text and proposing *three discussion questions* as a starter for learning and study processes in theological seminaries.

People interested can find more WCC related resources on the WCC website<sup>8</sup> and also in the special collection of WCC-related articles and statements in GlobeTheoLib.<sup>9</sup>

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7. [www.globethics.net/geti](http://www.globethics.net/geti).

8. [www.oikoumene.org/en/resources.html](http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources.html).

9. [www.globethics.net/web/de-world-council-of-churches-collection?layoutPId=4297674](http://www.globethics.net/web/de-world-council-of-churches-collection?layoutPId=4297674).

The initiative of ETE and its related networks of some 70 regional associations of theological schools to bring together more than 150 advanced theological students, educators and researchers from younger generations for a high level ecumenical theological institute in Busan underlines that the future generations of theologians and their nurture and accompaniment do play a crucial role for the future of the ecumenical movement as well as for the unity of the church in the current situation of World Christianity as a whole. The majority of those serving in key positions of churches and the ecumenical movement today have been part of youth programmes and ecumenical formation experiences in crucial stages of their life before, whether this has taken place in Bossey Ecumenical Institute or in courses of similar institutions in the majority world. It is vital for those from younger generations that they realize that in discerning and trying to articulate their own authentic vision for ecumenism, mission and dialogue for their contexts today they are not left alone. They are accompanied and nurtured by a host of faith witnesses, ecumenical traditions and ecumenical visions which have been articulated before them or by committed groups contemporary to them. These ecumenical visions and traditions need to be remembered, studied and critically discussed in order to sharpen the theological assessment of ecclesial, social and ethical challenges today before they can be reappropriated and translated in relation to the conditions of our times. This GETI Reader, *Ecumenical Visions for the Twenty-First Century*, therefore is not a collection of ready-made recipes and easy answers which immediately fit each local context, but rather it is a collection of key theological texts reflecting essential areas of convergence as well as ongoing theological dialogue between churches participating in the “unique fellowship of churches” presented within the WCC.

For the completion of this reader and textbook on contemporary themes in ecumenism we thank various institutions, persons and programmes which have supported this project:

- we express deep gratitude for gracious general support for the Global Ecumenical Theological Institute (which also has made this publication possible) to several partners: Luce Foundation, EMW Hamburg, CANACOM, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, Church of Sweden, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Foundation for Theological Education in South East Asia, World Communion of Reformed Churches, Lutheran World Federation, FAP, Mission 21, United Evangelical Mission, Council for World Mission, MF School of Theology Oslo, Norway and several others.
- we express sincere gratitude to EMW Hamburg (Dr. Michael Biehl) and to Badische Landeskirche in Karlsruhe, Germany (OKR Susanne Labsch), which have specifically supported the printing costs;
- we appreciate support and advice received from many colleagues in WCC programmes who have helped to propose and identify key texts to be included as well as WCC publisher Michael West, who has overseen production of this publication and its copublication with Christian Literature Society of Korea;
- we acknowledge very committed support in terms of editorial work and software management by the Global Digital Library for Theology and Ecumenism (GlobeTheoLib);



- we thank the typesetter, Michelle Cook, who managed to develop a proper layout for all the various texts and their complex different settings.

We do hope that this volume will serve the training and education of young ecumenical leaders all around the world. Through reading these texts, may they be inspired by the ecumenical work that has been done in the generation before them. Through learning about the ecumenical past and present, may they empower themselves to shape the future of ecumenism in the years to come—to the glory of God, following the path and witness which Jesus Christ has mandated his disciples to follow until the ends of the earth (Acts 1: 8).

## Acknowledgements

*Except where otherwise stated, all texts reprinted in this anthology are from WCC programmes, consultations and working groups. Apart from acknowledgment of our gratitude to other, non-WCC sources, this list also provides or links to additional background information and related websites on the issues and agencies involved:*

*Excerpt 4:* Reprinted from Todd M. Johnson and Gina A. Bellofatto, “Upon Closer Examination: The Status of World Christianity,” in *River of God: An Introduction to World Mission*, edited by Doug Priest and Stephen Burris, Eugene, Ore.: Wipf and Stock, 2012, pp.108–124.

*Excerpts 6, 7, 9, 10, 12:* Reprinted with kind permission from: Hope Antone, Wati Longchar, Huynju Bae, Huang Po Ho, Dietrich Werner (eds), *Asian Handbook for Theological Education and Ecumenism*, Regnum Publishers, Oxford, 2013.

*Excerpt 8:* Reprinted with kind permission from *Journal of World Christianity*, 2010, Volume 3:1, pp.18-46.

*Excerpt 11:* Reprinted with kind permission from: Dietrich Werner, David Esterline, Namsoon Kang, Joshva Raja (eds), *Theological Education in World Christianity*, Regnum Publishers, Oxford, 2010, pp. 436-42.

*Excerpt 13c:* The People’s Forum Peace for Life traces its roots to the International Ecumenical Conference on Terrorism in a Globalised World, held in Manila in September 2002 (sponsored by the World Council of Churches, the Christian Conference of Asia and the National Council of Churches in the Philippines), where it was resolved to form a new ecumenical alliance to gather faith-based resistance to the terror of war and economic globalisation. The project proposal for the People’s Charter for Peace for Life was coordinated by Prof. Kim Yong-Bock, Seoul: [http://www.peaceforlife.org/programs/peacecharter/188-a-peoples-charter-on-peace-for-life-project-proposal;which includes the background document](http://www.peaceforlife.org/programs/peacecharter/188-a-peoples-charter-on-peace-for-life-project-proposal;which%20includes%20the%20background%20document).

*Excerpt 30:* Reprinted with kind permission from homepage of Kairos Palestine, where additional information can be found on the background and reactions to this document: <http://www.kairospalestine.ps/>.

*Excerpt 32:* Additional background information on this text and the decade to overcome violence can be found on the website: <http://www.overcomingviolence.org/en/resources-dov/wcc-resources/documents/declarations-on-just-peace/ecumenical-call-to-just-peace.html>.

*Excerpt 33:* Detailed information on the background and discussion of the Accra Confession can be found on the website: [http://warc.jalb.de/warcajsp/side.jsp?news\\_id=1157&navi=45](http://warc.jalb.de/warcajsp/side.jsp?news_id=1157&navi=45).

*Excerpt 35:* Reprinted with kind permission from: "Listening to Creation Groaning: Main Issues in Creation Theology," in: *Listening to Creation Groaning*, John Knox Series No 16, Lukas Vischer (ed), Geneva, 2004, pp. 9-31.

*Excerpt 36:* Reprinted with kind permission from "The Consultation's Findings," in *Witnessing in the Midst of a Suffering Creation: A Challenge for the Mission of the Church*, John Knox Series 19, Lukas Vischer (ed), Geneva, 2007, p.1-17.

*Excerpt 38:* Detailed information on the background of the Bern conference and the papers of this conference can be found under the websites: <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/public-witness-addressing-power-affirming-peace/middle-east-peace/promised-land-international-theological-conference-bernschweiz-10-14-september-2008> and: <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/public-witness-addressing-power-affirming-peace/middle-east-peace/bern-perspective..>

*Excerpt 39:* Full documentation and lectures from the Hofgeismar consultation will be available on the website of PIEF: <http://archived.oikoumene.org/en/programmes/public-witness-addressing-power-affirming-peace/churches-in-the-middle-east/pief/pief-home.html>.

*Excerpt 45:* Background information on the world mission conference 2005 and this document as well as the subsequent one can be found under: <http://www.mission2005.org/>.

*Excerpts 55, 57:* Published with permission from: Dietrich Werner, *Theological Education in World Christianity, Ecumenical Perspectives and Future Priorities*, PTCA Series No 2, Kalkutta, 2011.

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