

World Evangelical Alliance & World Council of Churches

International and Ecumenical News (WEA & WCC, Aug.-Sept. 2013)

New Emerging WEA Global Task Force on Disaster Management August 2, 2013.

Under the leadership of an emerging World Evangelical Alliance Global Task Force on Disaster Management, the Philippine Council of Evangelical Churches (PCEC) is hosting a regional Consultation in Manila September 16-20, 2013 on the theme 'Solidarity in Disaster Management'.

Advanced by the PCEC, Micah Network, Integral Alliance, the Humanitarian Disaster Institute at Wheaton College, and other like minded bodies, the Manila Consultation is the latest in a series of ongoing regional consultations leading towards the WEA General Assembly in Seoul, South Korea, October 18-26, 2014, and a WEA Global Congress on Disaster Management in 2018. For more information on the Manila Consultation, please follow this link. Registration is limited and filling up quickly.

<http://www.pceconline.org/events/dmc.htm>

(WEA)

World Week for Peace in Palestine Israel

During the week following the International Day of Prayer for Peace (22 to 28 September 2013), church organizations, congregations, and people of faith are encouraged to make a common witness by participating in worship services, educational events, and acts of advocacy in support a just peace for Israelis and Palestinians. The theme of the week in 2013 is: "Jerusalem, the city of justice and peace - Pray, educate, and advocate for justice in Palestine." The Palestine Israel Ecumenical Forum (PIEF) of the World Council of Churches invites member churches, faith-based communities, and civil society organizations to join together in 2013 for a week of advocacy and action in support of an end to the illegal occupation of Palestine and a just peace for all in Palestine and Israel. Congregations and individuals around the globe who share the hope of justice shall unite during the week to take peaceful actions, together, to create a common international public witness:

Here, **Christian World Service** asks churches to continue to pray for, and support the people of Egypt, Syria, Palestine, and those who are providing shelter to more than 2 million Syrian refugees. **The International World Day of Prayer Committee** asks members to listen to the voices of the protests... the frustration, and violence including against women and minorities like Christians and moderate Muslims...

Ecumenical panel on a New Financial and Economic Architecture 29.8.13

A newly established ecumenical panel of economic experts seeks to develop advocacy strategies for churches working to realize ethical, just and sustainable systems of economics and finance. The panel held its first meeting from 23 to 25 August in Bossey, Switzerland. This Ecumenical Panel has been created by the World Council of Churches (WCC), the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC), the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and the Council for World Mission (CWM). The document, titled "São Paulo Statement: International Financial Transformation for the Economy of Life", encourages visible actions ensuring social inclusion, gender justice and care for the environment while setting clear "limits to greed" and promoting an "economy of life". "The financial system must work for the people and not vice versa," said Barry Herman, pointing out the significance of the financial transaction tax, calling it an issue to be addressed in order to translate the spirit of the São Paulo statement into action. While some countries have introduced a tax on financial transactions and raised considerable financial resources, Herman stated that "campaigns are needed to increase tax payments by tax evaders, who are overwhelmingly big companies and the more affluent segments of society." (WCC)

Prayer Requests for Syria and North India. Integral Alliance, a WEA Global Partner, shared prayer requests for their work in Syria :

Since the fighting began back in 2011, more than 6.8 million Syrians have been affected by the Crisis inside with 4.25 million living as internally displaced people. Inside Syria people lack food, safe drinking water and their health status is deteriorating rapidly. A further 1.85 million Syrians are living as refugees in neighbouring countries, with an average of 6,000 more fleeing over the border on a daily basis. The United Nations is calling this the worst humanitarian crisis since the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. Funding is limited, and the UN have only seen a 35% response to their call for funding. Pray for favour, funding and opportunity for Integral Members and their partners to respond, in Syria, Lebanon and Jordan. Please pray strength for Christian communities reaching out, and for the love of God to be communicated through their actions.

(WEA)

Churches around World prepare to act for “God of life, lead us to justice and peace”. This is the theme of the 10th Assembly of the WCC will take place from 30 October to 8 November in Busan, Republic of Korea. (A selection from our region in Aug.-Sept.).

Indonesian churches prepare to contribute a spirit of diversity to the WCC assembly. With 15 million members of various ethnicities and backgrounds, in 88 churches, Indonesian churches hope to make a dynamic contribution to the assembly...Church members, name diversity as a basis of wisdom which, they say, has a great potential to strengthen justice and peace, particularly amidst growing conflicts in the world.

“I believe diversity is not only relevant for the Christians, said the Rev. Dr Henriette Hutabarat Lebang, of the Christian Conference of Asia, “ but also for other believers. This means more people wish to see how diversity can help create actions that can be implemented beyond the church’s walls.” “The impacts of the free market policy and globalization” said Rev. Dr A.A. Yewanggoe, chairperson of the CCI, “lead us into crises in which the poor suffer more, and therefore churches need to address such injustice.”

70 church leaders of India in their statements for “God of life, lead us to justice and peace”, have stressed the importance of celebrating life in fullness, vibrancy, dynamism and fervour, irrespective of caste, creed, colour, class, gender or ethnicity. This was focused on concerns of the Indian churches and articulating challenges faced by the ecumenical movement in local contexts.

Human right activists working on social issues also addressed the consultation and reflected on the assembly theme from their perspectives of struggle for justice and peace. “Justice and peace are to be established not for a life of comfort and prosperity but for the fullness of life of God’s entire creation,” said Bishop Dr Taranath Sagar, president of the NCCI. **Special Consultations** have also been held or are being held in preparation, in Europe, Africa, Australia and in north and south America.

Time to pray for God’s creation

In an Encyclical on 1 September, the beginning of *A Time for Creation*, a global event which invokes prayers for creation, eco-justice and peace with the earth (each year since 1989), the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople encouraged the churches to pay attention to the “human interventions impacting the ecological balance”. The balance of the world’s ecology is disturbed through destructive actions such as “deforestation, depletion of water resources, the overall exploitation of natural and energy resources, together with the pollution of immense land or marine regions by spilling or depositing toxic and chemical materials,” stated Bartholomew I.

In 2008, the World Council of Churches (WCC) Central Committee also affirmed the invitation “to observe through prayers and action a special time for creation, its care and stewardship.” The Churches Together in Britain and Ireland has compiled resources to assist churches in observing A Time for Creation. Their theme for this year is “Water Justice”, corresponding with the United Nations International Year of Water Cooperation. (WCC)

Never Short of Surprises

(Dr. Brian Stiller from Malaysia, 4. 9. 13).

News of Christians being persecuted in Muslim countries tends to override stories of remarkable opportunity, which are overshadowed instead by Muslim religion and politics. Like Indonesia Malaysia is predominantly Muslim, so much so that the government makes popular its assumption that to be ethnic Malay one is automatically Muslim and if Muslim then Malay. Fixed in its statutes are regulations that make it unlawful to evangelize a Malay, and if a Malay chooses to convert, there is a protocol through which they must go to complete their conversion. We were startled by the news on January 2010 that an Assemblies of God church had been burned to the ground. But a breaking point in the struggle for Christians to operate with freedom, the catastrophe was turned to opportunity. Historically there has been conflict with the use of “Allah” by Christians in their Bible translation. On December 31, 2009, in response to Christian objections at a government ruling that “Allah” was only to be used by Muslims and their holy books, the high court ruled that it was permissible for Christians to use the name. Riots broke out and on January 8th, 2010 Pastor Leang's church was broken into and seven Molotov cocktails thrown in. Before anything could be done the church was destroyed. It was here disaster became opportunity. when asked by a television reporter for his

response Pastor Leang said, “We forgive.” And followed it up, noting they would not press charges. Within days the leader of the opposition, a Muslim, toured the burned-out site. Following him the prime minister too a Muslim, visited. While this was going on, the church had built another sanctuary some distance away. Even though completed they still didn’t have their permit. The prime minister learning of that, visited the burned down church, and signed their permit authorizing the other church, which was now ready for occupancy. Political chatter soon included such notes as, “Well, we should be like the Christians and forgive.” (WEA)

Churches to observe International Day of Prayer for Peace. The WCC is calling its member churches to observe the International Day of Prayer for Peace on 21 September.

This year parishes and individuals are invited to pray using the theme of the WCC 10th Assembly, “God of life, lead us to justice and peace”. The International Day of Prayer for Peace is commemorated by the WCC in conjunction with the United Nations-sponsored International Day of Peace on 21 September. “There’s fresh news each day of injustice, violence and suffering, and the WCC assembly theme itself is a prayer for peace,” said Jonathan Frerichs, WCC programme executive for peace-building and disarmament. “It’s an active prayer – a witness to faith, a cry of hope and a pledge to be disciples for peace together. May God hear us from International Peace Day to the assembly and far beyond.” Churches are invited to pray for peace and to also share their prayers via Facebook or Twitter (#peaceday). The idea was born in a meeting between the general secretaries of the WCC and the UN in 2004. We would like to ask you to pray the theme – pray it for the world, pray it for the church, pray it for the churches attending the WCC assembly, pray it with the assembly. GodGod of Life....God of Life, Lead....God of Life, Lead Us.... God of Life, Lead Us to Justice.....God of Life, Lead Us to Justice and Peace. Each word and phrase of the assembly theme are a kind of prayer. The nine words together are a statement of faith, a cry of hope, an affirmation of unity and a pledge to discipleship. (WCC)

WCC and WEA call churches to speak against corruption 2. 9. 13

The World Council of Churches (WCC), in association with Micah Challenge International, allied with the World Evangelical Association (WEA), invites all churches to join a global call to action against corruption – which impacts poor people the most. Studies have shown that every year over 1 trillion US dollars are lost from the global economy through bribes, dishonest deals and tax evasion.

With its central emphasis from 14 to 20 October, the global call to action, EXPOSED 201,3 will engage people around the world in raising their voices against corruption. The campaign offers suggestions for positive and practical engagements of resisting corruption. It aims to hold 2000 vigils with the poor across the globe, while collecting 1 million signatures for the campaign and presenting a million more at the G20 meeting set to take place in November 2014. “Corruption is rooted in and propagated by our prevailing economic structures, cultures and value systems” said the WCC general secretary, which are driven by “greed, relentless pursuit of power, profit and material gain by corporations, political bodies, administrators and individual actors,” (WCC)

WEA Secretary General Urges Religious Liberty for Arab Christians

In addressing ‘the challenges facing Arab Christians,’ at a conference in Amman, Jordan, convened by King Abdullah II ibn al-Hussein, Sept. 3-4, Dr. Tunnicliffe spoke of the increasing suffering and persecution of Arab Christians in recent years, stating that “this is despite the fact that Arab Christians have been loyal citizens in all the countries of the Arab world for two thousand years.” He emphasized the importance of religious freedom for a prospering society and that “Christians in the Arab world deserve to be treated respectfully and with honor”...Representatives of various churches in the region had been invited to...give voice to leadership of Arab Christian Churches and together discuss and find possible solutions.’ In Syria and Egypt especially, Christians have been victim of targeted attacks from Muslim extremists and have asked for continuous prayer. In light of current discussions of a possible military intervention in Syria, Dr. Tunnicliffe sent a letter from the conference to the White House and the United Nation’s Security Council, stating that Christians in the region clearly oppose these plans...” any military intervention by the United States will have a detrimental effect on the situation and in particular for Christians in Syria,” he wrote. (WEA)

Awareness of Armenian genocide Exhibition in Geneva 6. 9. 2013

The Armenian genocide has been recognized as the first genocide of the 20th century, with several historians documenting the number of Armenians killed at around 1.5 million. It is alleged that their deaths were brought about by agents of the Ottoman Empire through deportation, torture, starvation, massacres... The World Council of Churches (WCC) and the Armenian Apostolic Church are hosting a one-month exhibition on the Armenian genocide, displaying information on the history of genocidal events in the Ottoman Empire which killed more than a million Christian Armenians between 1915 and 1923. Open to the public until 30 September, the exhibition is being held at the Ecumenical Centre in Geneva, Switzerland, addressing the theme "Because I live, you too shall live" (John 14:19). The exhibition is organized by the Armenia Inter-Church Round Table Foundation.

At the opening of the exhibition, Fr. Mesrop Parsamyan, vicar general from the Armenian Diocese of France, said, "People need to know what happened... Knowing the history of the Armenian genocide is one way to make sure that such atrocities never happen again. There is still a need for churches, communities and governments to recognize the Armenian genocide, and condemn these events in order to pave the way for reconciliation and healing of the scars from the past," said Parsamyan. Yet "the God of life has let Armenians carry on their journeys for justice and peace," he said. The WCC assembly theme in Nov., "God of life, us to justice and peace" is important for the Armenians who are demanding condemnation of the Armenian genocide from the international community, added Parsamyan. The exhibition will travel to other countries.

WCC and Global Christian Forum seek Christian unity together 12. 9. 13

A World Council of Churches (WCC) seminar has marked the strengthening of relationships between the WCC and the Global Christian Forum (GCF), affirming their distinctive and complementary roles in the quest for Christian unity.

The seminar brought together representatives of the WCC and GCF, along with members of other international ecumenical organizations. The GCF, established in 1990 following a call from the WCC 8th Assembly in Harare, was founded to create a space to bring together churches and organizations not structurally part of the WCC with those already engaged in councils of churches. The GCF now represents diverse churches and Christian organizations, promoting encounters among churches and traditions which previously have not been in conversation with each other. At the seminar, the Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit, general secretary of the WCC, spoke about "conciliar ecumenism and the role of councils in rapidly changing ecclesial landscapes". ... Quoting Paul's letter to the Romans, Tveit stressed the need of "welcoming one another, appreciating one another and calling one another in Christian unity" despite differences in traditions and practices. The WCC statement on unity, which will be presented at the assembly in Busan, observes that the "unity of the Church, the unity of the human community and the unity of the whole creation belong together." The Rev. Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, member of the GCF committee focussed in his presentation on the new developments in World Christianity: "We are living in the most significant times of change in Christian history, depicting a shift in the presence of the world's Christians,... We are observing a spiritual resurgence of non-Western Christianity throughout the world," said Granberg-Michaelson, who is author of a book titled *From Times Square to Timbuktu: The Post Christian West Meets the Non-Western Church*. He argued too that it is important to bring ... Christian traditions like those of Evangelicals and Pentecostals into ecumenical encounters, focusing on shared values of spirituality.

Rev. Dr Richard Howell, general secretary of the Asia Evangelical Alliance, agreed "There are several examples of the GCF initiatives where the concept of 'sharing of faith and journeying together with Christ' has helped to break the walls of prejudice among Christian traditions, including Catholic, Pentecostal and Charismatic traditions," said Howell. He shared examples from Asia, where joint collaborations between the [Roman Catholic] Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences and the Christian Conference of Asia managed to extend voices of those who were not part of the ecumenical dialogue before. Howell added that as part of such initiatives, GCF will organize programmes using the document *Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World*, produced jointly by the WCC, the World Evangelical Alliance and the Roman Catholic Church, for further discussions on Christian unity.