



Saksbehandler: Beate Fagerli

Saksdokumenter:

Rapport nr. 22/2008 **Beate Fagerli**
Report from Visit of Revd Dr Walter Altmann to the Church of
Norway and the Norwegian Missionary Society, May 13–15, 2008
(vedlegg)

Brev til KV v/Dr. Walter Altmann (vedlegg)

Brev til KV v/Dr. Agnes Aboum (vedlegg)

Saker fra de økumeniske organisasjonene

Kirkenes Verdensråd (KV)

Sammendrag

Leder i Kirkenes Verdensråds sentralkomité og president i Den evangeliske kirke av den augsburgske konfesjon i Brasil (IECLB), Dr. Walter Altmann, besøkte Norge fra 13.-15. mai 2008. Formålet med besøket var å utveksle informasjon om situasjonen i Kirkenes Verdensråd og å informere om og utdype vennskapssamarbeidet mellom IECLB og Den norske kirke. I tillegg besøkte Walter Altmann IECLBs mangeårige samarbeidspartner i Brasil, Det Norske Misjonsselskap (NMS) i Stavanger, sammen med representanter for Mellomkirkelig råd.

Altmann informerte om den nåværende situasjonen i Kirkenes Verdensråd i et møte med KVs samarbeidspartnere i Norge og Den norske kirkes representanter i KV-relaterte organer. I tillegg ble han utfordret på å følge opp KVs engasjement i Midtøsten, i menneskerettighetssaker og i forhold til KVs ansvar overfor kirkemedlemmer som en hovedaktør i det videre økumeniske landskap. En særlig utfordring var ansvaret for å tenke helhetlig rundt fornyelse av KVs lederskap i forbindelse med søkeprosessen etter ny generalsekretær.

Som en direkte oppfølging av hovedsaker fra møtet ble en skriftlig henvendelse sendt Dr. Altmann fra sekretariatet.

Leder og generalsekretær i Mellomkirkelig råd fulgte opp spørsmålene omkring KVs lederskap med en skriftlig henvendelse til Dr. Agnes Aboum, leder for KVs nominasjonskomité for ny generalsekretær.

Forslag til vedtak

Mellomkirkelig råd tar saken til orientering

**Visit of Revd Dr Walter Altmann
To the Church of Norway and the Norwegian Missionary Society,
May 13–15, 2008
Report**

Abbreviations:

IECLB: Igreja Evangélica de Confissão Luterana no Brasil (Evangelical Church of Lutheran Confession in Brazil)

MKR: Mellomkirkelig Råd (Council on Ecumenical and International Relations, Church of Norway)

NMS: Norwegian Mission Society

CCIA: Churches Commission on International Affairs

Visit to Oslo, May 13 - 14

Meeting with the Minister of Church and Cultural affairs, Mr Trond Giske

Present: Revd Dr Walter Altmann, WCC and IECLB, Mr. Trond Giske, Minister, Revd Anne Lise Brodtkorb, secretary to the Ministry, Revd Ingrid Vad Nilsen, MKR, Revd Dr Olav Fykse Tveit, MKR, Ms. Beate Fagerli, MKR

The minister welcomed the Revd Dr Altmann and the group, and gave initial introductions to the recent developments of the relationship between the state and Church, and work initiated regarding democratic structures.

Revd Dr Altmann presented IECLB and current issues the church is dealing with; as climate change, indigenous peoples and land rights. A brief introduction to the issue of Aracruz was given. Dr. Altmann then presented the organisation of WCC and work areas as International affairs, human rights issues, environmental issues and ecumenical dialogue. Revd Ingrid Vad Nilsen pointed out that during its 60 years of existence; the WCC has influenced the agenda of its member churches in many ways, including the Church of Norway. This implies that ecumenical commitment - including membership fees to the ecumenical organisations is seen as part of the nature and work of the church.

On behalf of Church of Norway the visit was seen as an important opportunity for giving information about the ecumenical commitment of the church.

Situation of the World Council of Churches

Present: Revd Dr Walter Altmann, WCC and IECLB, Bishop Øystein Olsen, Methodist Church in Norway, Bishop Olav Skjevesland, Church of Norway, Revd Ørnulf Steen, Norwegian Christian Council, Revd Sven Oppegaard, MKR, Revd Kjell Magne Bondevik, CCIA (WCC) and Oslo Centre for Peace and Human Rights, Ms. Kirsti Guvsåm, Sami parliament, Revd Atle Sommerfeldt, Norwegian Church Aid, Revd Ingrid Vad Nilsen, Revd Dr Olav Fykse Tveit, Revd Sven Oppegaard, Ms. Beate Fagerli, MKR

WCC leadership

Revd Dr Altmann gave an introduction to the work of the WCC, which is available in its Project Outlines 2008 – 2010 and Plans up to 2013. At the same time WCC is facing challenges in a period of transition involving change in leadership, among other the search process for a new general secretary. In this situation it is important to make a good institutional basis for a new general secretary. In some ways this is a test for the

ecumenical commitment of WCC's member churches, as it was expressed in WCC's first General Assembly in Amsterdam 1948: "We intend to stay together".

Wider ecumenical context

Following this, the Porto Alegre assembly in 2006 was successful in many respects. An important point is the wider ecumenical context where the Global Christian Forum in its looser structures plays an increasing role. Revd Dr Altmann highlighted that the Global Christian Forum have roots in the WCC, and it is essential to WCC to continue this process. It should be noted that WCC is not an expression, but one of several expressions of ecumenism, even if it is a privileged one. However, it is a recognised expression of being church, as its social and political commitment is an essential part of being church. But in this new situation WCC will have to increase its efforts of establishing new ecumenical relationships, with churches and Christian organisations, as well as development and aid organisations. Among other fora, this can be done through the Global Christian Forum.

CCIA

Revd Kjell Magne Bondevik gave a presentation of the report and recommendations delivered by the CCIA. Main recommendations include WCC's involvement in the Middle East region, where it is recommended to increase lobbying among US churches. It is further recommended to expose and involve member churches in advocacy at the United Nations. HIV/AIDS and climate change remain important focus areas where the churches should act in a way where they contribute with an added value. Interfaith dialogue is another area of CCIA, recommending a focus on a main dialogue challenge between the so-called Muslim world and Western world. Within this area a Code of Conduct for Conversion is a hot issue, as well exploring what inter-religious marriage implies, including positive models.

Topics of discussion

- The issue of China and human rights was raised. It was recognised that although this is a sensitive area because of the member churches in China, WCC should still bring up the issue in public, otherwise its role as being prophetic is reduced to rhetoric. Even if the responsibility for the security of people and groups calls for caution, there would still be ways of making ones position with regards to human rights clearer.
- Another task for the WCC's member churches with regards to the issue of inter-faith dialogue would be to clarify the difference and purpose of inter-faith dialogue versus mission. The role of inter-church dialogue for inter-faith dialogue is worth a note.
- For the National Councils of Churches it is important that both the Global Christian forum and World Council of Churches continue. Important to note is that WCC is seen as the council where churches *commit* themselves to ecumenism.
- The Sudan Network and the process in Sudan could be networking contact and a huge asset for input on reconciliation processes.
- Regarding the current staff leadership situation in WCC, it would be essential for member churches that the process is kept fully transparent. One should affirm the legacy of the current general secretary. In preparations for the change of the general secretary, the WCC should grasp the opportunity to also look into the structure of the staff leadership group, and whether there are alternative ways of sharing the leadership responsibilities. One crucial point is to make sure that WCC is rooted in its membership.

- There is a sense of need to revive the visibility of Faith and Order. Would there be ways of resourcing F&O, e.g. through secondment of theologians? Would common assemblies contribute to achieve common ecumenical goals? An important aspect would be to look at how Faith & order can serve the wider ecumenical community, also outside its constituency.
- A discussion took place around churches involvement in the Middle East situation, particularly the Palestine-Israel conflict. It is a task to listen to both parts, with regards to both occupancy and security. In fear of hurting one community, churches may avoid speaking up. It is important to remember that not speaking may also hurt a (local) community.
- In WCC's involvement with the United Nations, it would be helpful to develop a way of preparing delegations, as well as a strategy for following up with member churches, e.g. through information, campaigns and advocacy.

Strong appreciation was expressed, for the information given, and for Revd Dr Altmann's willingness to listen and bring concerns and inputs to the WCC.

The meeting was followed by a lunch with Olav Skjevesland, presiding bishop, Revd Jens-Petter Johnsen, Director of the Church Council, Revd Ingrid Vad Nilsen, Revd Dr Olav Fykse Tveit, Revd Sven Oppegaard and Ms. Beate Fagerli

Latin American churches' role in civil society

Present: Revd Dr Walter Altmann, Revd Eilert Rostrup, Karibu Foundation, Ms Kirsti Guvsám, Sami parliament, Ms Kristine Hovland and Ms Daniela Rapisarda, Norwegian Christian Council, Mr Arne Dale and Mr Sindre Tollefsen, Norwegian Church Aid, Dr Silke Lechner and Dr Ellen Ueberscär, German Kirchentag, Ms Estrid Hessellund, Mr Sven Thore Kloster, Dr Gard Lindseth, Revd Ingrid Vad Nilsen, Revd Dr Olav Fykse Tveit, Ms Beate Fagerli, MKR

Revd Dr Altmann gave a general introduction to the representation of Christian Churches in Latin America. Where traditionally the Roman-Catholic church has been strong, Pentecostal and neo-charismatic movements are growing fast. At the same time the spectre is becoming more diverse, also with regards to the presence of other religions. Only a few churches are members of the WCC, some more hold membership in CLAI, the ecumenical council of churches in Latin America. The diversity within CLAI makes the churches' involvement in civil society a big issue in itself. Some of the important challenges are the demarcation of indigenous territories, programmes in favour of the poorest in society, ecological concerns, internal debt versus health issues, agrarian reform and land issues, illiteracy and education programmes, human rights and urban crime.

Topics of discussion:

- On the issue of church and state relations in Brazil, Revd Dr Altmann explained some federal attempts of establishing various councils on education, food and security. Sufficient co-operation has not been in place regarding the agrarian reform. This implies land issues which also involve state-run companies, which becomes an economic issue. However, as major oil fields have been discovered, the economic situation is quite stable. Altogether there are fair signs of co-operation between the state and churches in Brazil.
- Upon a question on the general ecumenical relations in Latin America, Revd Dr Altmann explained that there are efforts being made to strengthen the bonds between the Latin American countries. There have been historic changes, e.g. Nicaragua and

Colombia are exceptions from the general ecumenical development in the region. Brazil has, on the other hand, also developed good inter-regional co-operation with e.g. South Africa and India. The ecumenical situation in Latin America in general shows that even if there are signs of disagreements between some churches and parts of the leadership, the ecumenical spectre has widened and ecumenical liberation theology methodology has silently influenced even conservative churches and become part of the life of the churches.

- The Aracruz Cellulose Company was discussed. IECLB has recently delivered a report on the Company's dealings in several areas of Brazil, which concludes with the company's violation of human rights at several points. A short version of the report is available in English. The report is of great importance to Norway, as it challenges the ethical standard of the Norwegian Pension Fund investments in the company. The Norwegian Church Aid and Church of Norway will follow up on having the full report translated and develop a strategy for follow up. The work of IECLB is most appreciated.

Evening programme

A short visit was made to the Brazilian Ambassador to Norway.

In honour of Revd Dr Walter Altmann, a dinner was hosted at the Holmenkollen Park Hotell. Among the guests was Dr Agnes Aboum, the moderator of the WCC search committee.

Visit to Stavanger, May 16

Meeting with leadership and programme secretaries of the Norwegian Mission Society (NMS)

Present: Revd Kjetil Aano (general secretary), NMS, Ms Anne Karin Kristensen, NMS, Revd Sven Ragnvald Tjora, NMS, Revd Leif Hadland, NMS, Revd Vidar Bakke, NMS, Mr Jacob Veia, NMS, Revd Dr Olav Fykse Tveit, MKR, Ms Beate Fagerli, MKR

NMS

After a round of presentations, the General Secretary of NMS gave a short introduction to the organisation, its roots in low-church, Lutheran mission commitment, and the recent process of identifying its current purpose. Today this identity is reflected in three major programme areas;

- Evangelisation and church work
- Diakonia and development
- Management and organisation

He raised some issues of major importance to the organisation. What is the role of a western-based, revival-based mission society in a world where the church is becoming global? There is a challenge of communicating with NMS' own people in a situation that has changed from its traditional roots. There is also an acknowledgement of mission not belonging to the western church, but to the church of God. A painful, but liberating process of defining mission in a new situation and include the perspectives of diakonia in the process was necessary. However, in this process it has also been important to avoid being dependent on the heritage for the sake of conservatism, as well as avoiding majority go-with-the-flow –theology for the sake of convenience. A result of this has led to independent work on e.g. the issue of human sexuality.

IECLB

Dr. Altmann introduced the IECLB. The church is not primarily a missionary church, but a church tradition which has been kept through immigration. The development of the church grew out of active church life. E.g., out of the need for educating pastors the theological education was established. The co-operation with NMS has also had an influence on the church. In its ecumenical dimension the church finds sharing to be an essential part of itself. There is therefore a wish to continue the co-operation.

Some years back the church experienced difficulties with a neo-Pentecostal influence where the issue of re-baptising of members and even pastors created great difficulties. Now, however, there is a new, positive mood. Currently a mission document for 2008 – 2012 is under work. Last year the theological basis for the concern for and understanding of mission was finalised, called "God's mission, our passion".

Among other things, raising the consciousness for organisation, including a fundraising campaign has been initiated. In this process the need for developing the infrastructural communication tools of the church have become clear.

WCC

When looking at the global scenery of the WCC, it is clear that one of the main 3 roots is mission. Dr. Altmann commented on the strong focus on evangelisation, and agreed with the fact that this requires additional needs; added support in certain areas, teaching focus and support of on-going local projects.

Communication strategies

At this point, areas of co-operation among IECLB, Church of Norway and NMS were discussed. The importance of mutual commitment reaching out also to local areas was pointed out. This means there is a need for continued communication and space for common sharing. In addition to improved communication strategies between the different parts of our organisational structures, concrete support for a concrete communication project in Brazil is proposed. There is a need for better strategies, newsletters, web-work as part of a missionary campaign.

The role of LWF

Another point of discussion is how the Lutheran World Federation can help us in communication and project implementation. NMS expressed its appreciation of the work of DMD, and its willingness to contribute to the work of the department.

Global Christian Forum

The wider community of churches, particularly evangelical and Pentecostal churches have an impact on the life and work of our churches as well as its missionary activities. Necessarily this has a great impact on the life of the World Council of Churches, although it is important that the initiative of e.g. the Global Christian Forum comes from the WCC. It would be important to relate to these movements, and to remain active within the framework of the Global Christian Forum, as well as sharing the ownership of the Edinburgh 1910 heritage.

Visit to the School of Mission and Theology

Present: Revd. Dr. Walter Altmann, Revd Dr Knut Holter (dean of the faculty), Dr Odd Magne Bakke, Revd Kjetil Aano, Revd Dr Olav Fykse Tveit, Ms. Beate Fagerli

Dr Holter gave an introduction to the School, its history and current courses. The last 15 years the percentage of non-European students has increased to 11, 5 % of the total number of students, which is a high percentage in Norwegian terms. Cross-cultural training is an important part of the education, although language and cultural barriers do exist. Networking and exchange of students and teachers take place with 7 other institutions, which also includes sharing of infrastructure, research, library resources etc. Curitiba has been included recent years, after Brazil was included on the list of countries for quota programme funding. Curitiba was chosen, since Sao Leopoldo already has an exchange programme going with Oslo.

Possibilities for consultations and exchange between the on-going faculty exchange-projects were discussed. *Not least the regular flow of information between faculties, organisations and church leadership is important.*

Afternoon programme

The visit was concluded with a short meeting, a guided tour of Stavanger Cathedral and dinner hosted by the Bishop of Stavanger, Ernst Baasland.



CHURCH OF NORWAY

National Council, Council on Ecumenical and International
Relations, Sami Church Council

Dr. Agnes Aboum

Date: 26.06.2008

Our ref: 06/244-35 BFA

Your ref:

Letter to Dr Agnes Aboum re. WCC leadership

Dear Dr Aboum,

Please receive our warm greetings from Norway!

It is with great fondness that we remember your visit to Norway in May this year, and we are happy that you gave us the opportunity to meet with you.

During our meeting the issue of a new general secretary in the World Council of Churches was raised. Connected to this issue, we would like to reiterate a particular concern. The needs for a WCC leadership which is both capable of communicating an ecumenical vision, as well as managing the organisation and administration, is a lot to ask from one person. We therefore find it timely to suggest that the structure and composition of the overall leadership be reconsidered.

The search for a new general secretary gives a unique opportunity for the WCC to look into the current model of leadership, the sharing of tasks among elected members of the leadership, as well as the appointed members of staff. We believe it would be of benefit to the organisation to look into several inter-related issues, such as

- The churches' need for visionary leadership
- The organisation's need for administrative leadership
- The role of the general secretary, in relation to elected leadership, and to member churches
- The role and composition of staff leadership, in relation to programmes and administration, as well as with regards to balances and renewal

We also find it crucial that the search process for a new general secretary be transparent and open, in order to secure the understanding of the member churches, and strengthen the support for the new leadership.

As you know, at the time you were in Oslo, we also had Revd Dr Walter Altmann visiting. Part of his visit was dedicated to information and dialogue on the situation and role of the World Council of Churches. Seeing your role as moderator for the Search Committee for a new general secretary of the World Council of Churches, we believe you may find the letter and report following Dr Altmann's visit relevant. Please find these enclosed in this letter.

As we bring our concerns to you for consideration, we would also assure you of our gratitude for the task you have taken on, our continued support and our prayers for the process.

Yours in Christ,
Kind regards

Ingrid Vad Nilsen
Sign.
Moderator
Council on Ecumenical and International
Relations

Olav Fykse Tveit
General secretary
Council on Ecumenical and International
Relations



CHURCH OF NORWAY
National Council, Council on Ecumenical and International
Relations, Sami Church Council

Revd Dr Walter Altmann

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Date: 26.06.2008

Our ref: 06/244-36 BFA

Your ref:

Letter to the WCC leadership

Dear Revd Dr Altmann,

It is with great pleasure we remember your recent visit to the Church of Norway. We take this opportunity to send you our warm greetings from Norway, as we enclose a report from your visit.

Keeping in mind our meeting on the situation and role of the World Council of Churches, we would like to highlight a few of the many issues which were raised during our conversations.

A particular current challenge is the search for a new general secretary. It is of great importance to us that the World Council of Churches and its leadership are firmly rooted in its member churches. We therefore believe that a fully transparent search process is crucial to laying solid foundations for the new leadership. Recognising the legacy of the current general secretary must be part of this process, and should include reflection on the role and task of this very central position. Seeing that the needs for a leadership which is both capable of communicating an ecumenical vision, as well as managing the organization and administration, is a lot to ask from one person, we would raise a question regarding the structure of the leadership. We believe that the search for a new general secretary gives an opportunity for the WCC to look at the roles and sharing of tasks among elected members of leadership, as well as appointed members of the staff leadership group.

The issue of leadership cannot be separated from the role and tasks of WCC in the current global situation. As new forms of dialogue between the churches are finding their way into the ecumenical movement, the WCC must face the challenge of continuing to be relevant in this multi-faceted landscape. We acknowledge that e.g. the Global Christian Forum and many regional and bilateral ecumenical dialogues have emerged as a result of the work of WCC. For member churches, as well as for National Councils of Churches, it is important that the Global Christian Forum and the regional and bilateral dialogues continue to exist as ecumenical platforms. However, it is important that this takes place without disrupting the relevance of the WCC. The crucial point is for WCC to continue to be, and see itself, as the council where churches *commit* themselves to ecumenism.

We believe there is a strong commitment to the WCC among the churches. However, it is not always clear in what way this commitment should manifest itself, whether it is through economic support, direct involvement in concrete projects or through common prayer and worship. There is great variation in which areas and to what extent the member churches are involved, which does not necessarily mirror the activities and involvement of the churches at the local level. On one hand there is a common interest in mission among the churches, on the other hand there is also a need for defining what mission implies. There is also a sense of need to revive the visibility of Faith and Order. Are there ways where churches could contribute, through resources, secondment and theological contributions? Would common assemblies contribute to achieve common ecumenical goals? An important aspect would be to look at how Faith and Order can serve the wider ecumenical community, also outside its constituency.

The work of WCC in a number of social and political areas reflects the interest of churches on a local level. We believe that the common efforts of churches are of immense importance to local communities, to the churches themselves, as well as to WCC. The WCC remains the most valuable common platform where churches together can speak up against injustice and make a lasting impact on the future. We are facing a number of on-going conflicts, structures of oppression and abuses of human rights, as the situation in the Middle East, in China, in Sudan, which all represent a complex web of challenges, we would like to remind WCC of its particular task as a voice of the churches. In fear of hurting one community, churches may avoid speaking up. Then again, not speaking up might also hurt a (local) community. It is crucial for the churches that WCC remains a voice of the marginalised and oppressed, a voice for justice and peace, and a space for reconciliation.

With our gratitude for your time, your willingness to listen and your commitment to our common vision, we assure you of our prayers, support and warmest wishes for the tasks ahead.

Remaining one in one calling and commitment to the one Christ,

Kind regards

Olav Fykse Tveit
General secretary
Council on Ecumenical and International
Relations

Beate Fagerli
Senior advisor

Council on Ecumenical and International
Relations