

ANNUAL REVIEW 2022

# Christ's Love Moves the World to Reconciliation and Unity



World Council  
of Churches

## United by faith for action

By the time you peruse this Annual Review, the World Council of Churches (WCC) will have transitioned into new leadership with what I believe is an exciting and sustainable future.

I would like to take this time to express my gratitude to the WCC leadership and staff who have served in the past, and those who will carry the legacy forward into 2023.

I never expected to serve as the WCC acting general secretary—and certainly not for nearly three years! What we achieved, we achieved together.

As the WCC's 11th Assembly ended, I heard a clear message: Churches have asked us to remain as the platform that brings Christians together even in very difficult times.

Particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, many of the requests that the WCC received from member churches were for spiritual, biblical, or worship resources. I have received many positive messages about how, during a terrible time for so many, the fellowship drew closer together.

Moreover, by the end of my service as acting general secretary in December 2022, I realized we had received more messages about the positive impact of the WCC's 11th Assembly than I could count!

Seeing the world from the perspective of others, showing compassion for one another, and building trust as a vital part of our ecumenical journey are all signs of Christ-like love that move us to walk truthfully and wholeheartedly beside one another.

I have so many memories from 2022, and you will see many of them represented in these pages. From pilgrim visits to inter-religious bridge-building, from South Korea, to Moscow, Bahrain, the Middle East, Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, Israel, and Ukraine. My last travels took me to the Holy Land, where I realized that now,



perhaps more than ever, the churches and all people stand before a unique moment in history.

We are experiencing global crises related to climate change, health, food security, and energy. We are not alone in facing these challenges, but we have a particular role in responding.

I believe the WCC will act as a global fellowship—together—to confront them. I believe the WCC's new leaders will bring about transformational ideas and actions. We have strengthened our relationships within our global fellowship and our relationships and cooperation with people of other faiths as companions on our pilgrimage of justice and peace, based on our common values in responding to the pressing challenges of our times.

May you continue to be united by faith for action.

*Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca  
Former acting general secretary, March 2020-Dec 2022  
World Council of Churches*



Photo: Albin Hillert/WCC

As we enter a new phase for the WCC, the accomplishments of our former leaders and of our member churches have set before us the ability to heal and restore a suffering and broken world. As we address the current global challenges, we realize the importance for Christian unity and vision to foster justice and peace to make the world a better place for all creation.

The year 2022 was a momentous one, drawing together over 4000 people at the 11th Assembly of the WCC. Although I was not directly involved in the assembly, I would like to express my sincere thanks and appreciation to all who worked so hard to make it such a successful

and significant event. It was so good to gather together after the COVID-19 pandemic in such large numbers to pray, learn, share, dialogue, fellowship, and discern together God's directions for the future and continued work and witness of the WCC.

My prayer is that as we continue to harvest the ideas and mandates from the 11th Assembly, we will start developing a new strategic plan for the next eight years with fresh insights and renewed passion and desire for ecumenical work and future engagements. It is my prayer and hope that this plan will guide the work and witness of the WCC in the ensuing years to greater levels of faithful commitment and collaboration as we proclaim Christ's love to the world.

As you read the Annual Review of 2022, may the pages here open in your own mind new possibilities of understanding, encouragement, excitement, and hope, leading you to work towards justice, reconciliation, and unity!

*Rev. Prof. Dr Jerry Pillay*  
*General secretary*  
*World Council of Churches*

The WCC is a fellowship of 352 member churches who together represent more than half a billion Christians around the world. Within the membership are most of the world's Orthodox churches, scores of Anglican, Baptist, Lutheran, Methodist, and Reformed churches, as well as many charismatic, independent, united, and uniting churches.

While the preponderance of the founding churches in the mid-20th century were from Europe and North America, the majority today are found in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Latin America, the Middle East, and the Pacific. Well over 580 million people belong to WCC member churches.

The WCC's programmes share responsibility for strengthening the fellowship, spiritual life, youth engagement, interreligious dialogue and cooperation, promoting wellness, combatting

racism, and building a just community of women and men.

At its 11th Assembly in Karlsruhe, Germany, in 2022, the WCC invited Christians and all people of good will to join a "Pilgrimage of Justice, Reconciliation, and Unity" as a coordinated embodiment of the vision and spirit of working together to heal a world filled with conflict, injustice, disease, inequity, and pain.

This annual review of the activity of the World Council of Churches records many of the initiatives undertaken by the council during 2022—including the WCC 11th Assembly—and continuing into 2023.

It tells the story of a unique organization with a prophetic voice—a voice of hope and support that leads to action and response to today's most pressing concerns.

# United by faith for action

## Ushering in a new era of leadership

For the World Council of Churches (WCC), 2022 was a significant year, full of challenges yet full of hope as well. The WCC's 11th Assembly drew Christians together in prayer, and new leaders started their tasks accompanied by global prayers and the foundation set by the leaders before them. WCC member churches continued striving to address global challenges in their own contexts, even as the fellowship collectively strived for visible unity.



Photo: Albin Hillert/WCC



Photo: Peter Williams/WCC

## New general secretary elected

The central committee elected Rev. Prof. Dr Jerry Pillay as the new general secretary of the WCC. He is the ninth general secretary in the WCC's history since the fellowship of churches was founded in 1948. Pillay, a member of the central committee, was most recently dean of the Faculty of Theology and Religion, University of Pretoria. A member of the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa, he is from South Africa. He took up his position on 1 January 2023.

“If we learn to trust the work of the Holy Spirit, we can find each other even through difficulties,” he said.



## **Bishop Dr Heinrich Bedford-Strohm elected as moderator of the central committee**

The WCC central committee has elected Bishop Dr Heinrich Bedford-Strohm of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria as its new moderator.

As moderator, Bedford-Strohm serves as the chief governance officer of the WCC, and has primary responsibility for assuring the coherence of the work of the central committee and of the executive committee and for assuring that the ethos of consensus characterizes all aspects of the governance of WCC.

Bedford-Strohm expressed how honoured he is to have been elected to the position. “The ecumenical movement is my passion,” he said. “It has been my life for a long time.”

The WCC 11th Assembly elected its 150-person central committee, the main decision-making body of the WCC between assemblies and 8 WCC presidents from different regions and church families.

The central committee also elected two vice moderators, Rev. Merlyn Hyde Riley, Jamaica Baptist Union; and H.E. Archbishop Dr Vicken Aykazian, Armenian Apostolic Church (Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin), and the executive committee.

Among the elected executive committee members are 48% women and 52% men, 80% ordained and 20% lay, 8% Indigenous persons, 4% persons with disabilities, and 12% youth.

## **Deep thanks for committed service**

The WCC fellowship expressed deep thanks and offered farewell prayer in December 2022 for staff members who have retired or moved to serve elsewhere, including WCC acting general secretary Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca; WCC deputy general secretary Prof. Dr Isabel Apawo Phiri; interim deputy general secretary and Faith and Order director Rev. Dr Odair Pedroso Mateus; and the Rev. Dr Risto Jukko, director of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism.

WCC member churches and staff also expressed their deep appreciation for the outgoing WCC central committee and its leadership. The moderator Dr Agnes Abuom, and vice-moderators Bishop Mary Ann Swenson and Metropolitan Prof. Dr Nifon of Targoviste, received gifts of gratitude for their particularly committed service during a difficult time.

Also honoured were those who passed away. The opening prayer of the meeting of the central committee in June 2022 offered tributes to ecumenical friends who had passed away, including special tributes to the late Metropolitan Gennadios, who served as vice moderator. Through prayer, hymns, and meaningful words, central committee members expressed their grief at losing members of the global ecumenical family.

# A fellowship growing together

The WCC fellowship grew to 352 member churches in more than 120 countries. The WCC central committee welcomed two new member churches—The First African Church Mission (Nigeria) and the Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa. The First African Church Mission is an African Instituted church with over 1 million members. The Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa is a Pentecostal church with over 1.3 million members. The applications of both churches were accepted by the central committee in 2021 for an interim period. Following consultation with the member churches, the central committee received both churches in February 2022 as members of the WCC

fellowship and invited them to send delegations to the 11th Assembly.

The central committee also recognized the continued membership of the Anglican Province of Alexandria. The province was formed out of the Episcopal Church of Jerusalem and the Middle East, which has been a WCC member church since 1976, as the result of significant growth and development of the church in Egypt, North Africa, and the Horn of Africa.





Photo: Albin Hillert/WCC



Photo: Albin Hillert/WCC



Photo: Godong

**WCC Easter message: Christ’s resurrection “a source of healing, wholeness, and renewal”**

Amid feelings of despair in our world, Christ’s resurrection is a source of hope and new life, wrote WCC acting general secretary Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca in an Easter message.

“As we look around, we see only signs of destruction and death,” wrote Sauca. “The victims of economic and ecological injustices are increasing throughout the world.”

**WCC presidents on Pentecost: “The Holy Spirit moves the church towards a new vision”**

The WCC regional presidents shared a message for Pentecost, “The Holy Spirit moves the church towards a new vision.”

The presidents recalled the commitment of the church to bring good news to those who suffer the most from armed conflicts, from the harmful effects of economic ambition throughout this time of pandemic, and from the devastating damage that we have caused the planet.

“Acts 1 and 2 relate that, in Jerusalem, the apostles received the promise of the power to witness and the encouragement of the Holy Spirit to bring the good news to all ends of the earth,” the message reads. “It is not until Acts 8 that these geographical advances in evangelization are reported: not through the mouths of the apostles but instead though Philip, a deacon.”

**WCC Christmas message: “the love of God in Christ is meant indeed for all people, for the whole of creation”**

The WCC Christmas message, signed by Sauca, reflected on the love of Christ—a love that is for all. “The joyful message of the first Christmas states that the love of God in Christ is meant indeed for all people, for the whole of creation,” read the message.

# Visible unity

## A fellowship praying together

### **Week of Prayer for Christian Unity drew together churches across the world in hope**

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2022, held 18-25 January, drew together churches across the globe to reflect on the hope and joy in Matthew 2:2, “We saw the star in the East, and we came to worship him.”

The Middle East Council of Churches, based in Beirut, Lebanon, was the convener for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2022 drafting group.

The reflections explored how Christians are called to be a sign to the world of God, bringing about unity. Drawn from different cultures, races and languages, Christians share in a common search for Christ and a common desire to worship him.

### **World Week of Peace in Palestine and Israel**

The World Week of Peace in Palestine and Israel, was held 15-22 September 2022, with many across the globe participating in prayers and theological reflections.

The WCC offered spiritual perspectives on the realities of living in Palestine and Israel and resonated with the theme of the week, “Faith, Hope and Love in Action.”







### World AIDS Day prayer laments faltering progress, urges churches to be “agents of life”

Gathering for a World AIDS Day prayer, the WCC reflected on the latest UNAIDS report and prayed that churches will renew their commitment to becoming agents of life for those suffering from HIV and AIDS.

The prayer, offered in a hybrid format, was attended by WCC and UNAIDS staff, as well as by concerned people across the globe.

### Praying with the Korean Peninsula

The National Council of Churches in Korea, with the World Council of Churches, published a “2022 Easter Prayer for Peace and Reunification on the Korean Peninsula” with a message of reconciliation and unity.

“Hear our prayers for the reconciliation and reunification on the Korean peninsula, deep in the shadows,” the prayer read. “Have mercy upon us!”

The prayer called for the aspiration of the Korean people for peace, prosperity, and reunification of the Korean Peninsula to remain a priority.



Photo: Grégoire de Fombelle/WCC



Photo: Albin Hillert/WCC

# A fellowship caring for creation

## Seven Weeks for Water

Seven Weeks for Water 2022 had a regional focus on Europe. In line with the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace, Seven Weeks for Water took the global fellowship on a pilgrimage of water justice in Europe.

The reflections explored various water issues affecting the Europe region and various perspectives, among others, inequalities, gender, and interfaith views.

During Lent in 2022, churches in Europe had many activities focused on the Seven Weeks for Water. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, most activities were held as virtual events.



Photo: Albin Hillert/WCC

## Listening to the voice of planet

The WCC led and participated in many prayers and reflections to celebrate the Season of Creation 2022, with the theme, “Listen to the Voice of Creation.”

One prayer lamented that creation is suffering because of the destructive sins of selfishness, anthropocentric greed, disobedience, and isolation from God and from creation. “Open our spiritual ears and transform our whole being to live your holy words and to react to the voice of your creation so that peace, harmony, joy and eternal life will abound in this world,” the prayer read. “We also thank you, God Creator, because your creation is speaking about your glory and gracious love in every form of life.”

## COP 27: A critical occasion for re-envisioning

WCC member churches participated in COP 27, held in Egypt, on an unprecedented level, pushing collaboratively for a just, sustainable global community. A WCC delegation comprised of representatives from WCC member churches and partner organizations lifted voices, experiences, and perspectives of those most affected.

As a statement on COP 27 noted, there are communities and nations already facing catastrophic impacts of climate change but whose urgent appeals other members of the international community have failed to heed.

“COP 27 is a critical occasion for governments to together re-envision, develop, commit to and implement a roadmap towards a fossil fuel-free, post-growth, equitable, and sustainable tomorrow, and to tackle the greatest existential challenge to life on the planet,” read the statement.

As faith-based organizations noted in a message to COP 27, “We bring narratives that demand us all to act with justice.”

These efforts coalesced into an urgent call from faith leaders for higher ambition at COP 27. “While negotiations stall, people are dying, and livelihoods are being lost as a result of the impact of climate change,” the message read. “The COP 27 negotiations are slow and lacking in ambition.”



Photo: Valter Hugo Muniz/WCC



Photo: Valter Hugo Muniz/WCC



Photo: Valter Hugo Muniz/WCC

# A fellowship pursuing justice across the world



## The war in Ukraine

Since the beginning of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the WCC has been urging an end to the war.

On the day the Russian army invaded Ukraine, the WCC called for an immediate end to the armed hostilities in a statement “denouncing any and every use of deadly armed force to resolve disputes that could be resolved by dialogue.”

Shortly after the war began, WCC acting general secretary Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca endorsed an appeal issued by the head of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) and urged President Putin to stop the war and restore peace to the people and nation of Ukraine.

The WCC and ACT Alliance sent a joint delegation to the region in solidarity with church-based humanitarian responses in Ukraine and in neighbouring countries. The visit to Ukraine, Hungary, and Romania took place in March 2022.

The same month, the WCC convened a roundtable on Ukraine, calling for diplomacy instead of threats, dialogue instead of confrontation. The ecumenical consultation took place at the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey. Those gathered included senior representatives of WCC member churches from several European countries neighbouring and directly affected by the current conflict.

At a second roundtable in June in Bossey, Switzerland, senior representatives of WCC member churches from several European countries neighbouring and directly affected by the current conflict gathered to consult





Photo: Albin Hillert/WCC

each other on relevant developments since the first roundtable.

Participants of the gathering regretted that it was not possible for the representatives from Russia and Ukraine to travel to join in these consultations, though they had accepted the invitation to do so. “Obviously, the absence of these key counterparts constituted a fundamental obstacle to the purpose for which we convened – that of dialogue and mutual consultation,” read a message from the roundtable.

The message from the meeting also included: “We denounce the military aggression launched by the leadership of the Russian Federation against the people of the sovereign nation of Ukraine. We affirm the right

of the people of Ukraine to defend themselves against this aggression.”

### Urging peace

In a letter to Patriarch Kirill of Moscow, Sauca asked the patriarch to intervene and ask publicly for a ceasefire for at least a few hours during the Resurrection service.

“The tragic situation of the war in Ukraine has brought tremendous suffering and loss of lives,” wrote Sauca. “May such a short ceasefire be a foretaste and a proof that a lasting peace can be achieved.”

The Russian Orthodox Church has been a WCC member since 1961.

## Visiting Ukraine and Moscow

In an August 2022 solidarity visit to Ukraine, a WCC delegation, led by WCC acting general secretary Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca, met with the Ukrainian Council of Churches and religious organizations, church leaders, and state institutions working with religious issues, listening, and learning from the victims of the ongoing war and making sure that the members of the delegation of Ukrainian churches can leave the country and attend the WCC 11th Assembly in Karlsruhe.

“We came here to show our solidarity with people in Ukraine, and to make sure the voice of Ukraine is present at the upcoming WCC assembly in Karlsruhe,” said Sauca to Olena Bohdan, head of the State Service of Ukraine for Ethnic Affairs and Freedom of Conscience.

Patriarch Kirill and Sauca met in October 2022 in Moscow, and discussed how churches are called to be peacemakers.



## Pursuing peace in the Middle East

A WCC delegation visited Syria, Lebanon, and the Holy Land in July 2022—the first time in 10 years for such a comprehensive visit to Syria by the WCC to the region—listening to the hopes and concerns of churches in the Middle East.

WCC acting general secretary Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca, led the delegation to Syria which also included the leadership from the MECC and ACT Alliance. Sauca said he heard and listened to the concerns of people in the region amid the many challenges they are facing. “We came to listen to the situations and expectations of our sisters and brothers in the Middle East so that we can share those with the WCC 11th Assembly,” he said. “You have the power to continue your witness and presence here in this cradle of Christianity. I see you have a strong faith in witnessing to who you are and what is your message.”

Sauca also expressed the solidarity of the member churches with the people of Middle East. “As sisters and brothers from other parts of the world, we are with you. Please be sure you are not alone,” he said. “We are aware of your struggles and tragedies, and we express our solidarity with your struggle for survival and for a better life for future generations.”

Sauca also visited twice Jerusalem and the West Bank, meeting with patriarchs and heads of Christian communities as well as local clergy and laity.

“We were, in these days, an ecumenical family in fellowship in prayers, and we remain united in our commitment that justice for the Palestinians is not lost,” he said. “I heard many expressions of appreciation for the WCC, for all those Christians around the world who have visited, who have spoken out against all human rights violations, and who have been working for justice and peace for this land and its people.”



Photo: Albin Hillert/WCC



Photo: MECC

## Easter Initiative highlighted sacredness of Jerusalem as well as obstacles to peace

While Christians around the globe prepared to celebrate Easter, high holidays for Muslims and Jews—Ramadan and Pessach—were also being celebrated at the same time in 2022. At this confluence of sacred celebration, the very sacredness of Jerusalem was especially evident for locals and visitors alike. But the sacredness of the Holy City and its inhabitants was also increasingly threatened by consequences of the ongoing occupation, such as discrimination and violence.

An Easter initiative by the WCC Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel set out to connect the sacredness of Jerusalem with what is sacred to us as human beings: home, worship, family, identity, human dignity and life, and solidarity.

The Easter Initiative looked at how the sacredness of Jerusalem and its inhabitants are threatened, shedding light on human rights violations that occur in Jerusalem and that are detrimental to the character of Jerusalem as the City of Peace for people of different religious and national backgrounds.

**FAMILY**  
*is sacred*

We pray for families and communities who are challenged by foreign occupation and threatened by external pressures.



World Council of Churches EAPPI

**WORSHIP**  
*is sacred*

We pray for those who are prevented from freely worshipping you, and all those who endure harassment and violence because of their worship.



World Council of Churches EAPPI

**SOLIDARITY**  
*is sacred*

Help us, O Lord, to see your face in every person who is poor and needy, in every person who is sick or captive, in every person who needs care and guidance.



World Council of Churches EAPPI

**HOME**  
*is sacred*

We pray for refugees, asylees, and all those who have been forced to leave their homes or to live without homes.



World Council of Churches EAPPI

**HUMAN DIGNITY AND LIFE**  
*is sacred*


As we, O Lord, go through the difficulties and challenges of this life, may we continue to believe that you are with us, and that you accompany us and love us.



World Council of Churches EAPPI

**IDENTITY**  
*is sacred*

We ask you to help us to express our Christian identity with pride, and to be an example of your love on this earth.



World Council of Churches EAPPI





Photo: amfrm .ir



Photo: President's Office



Photo: Albin Hillerts/WCC

### **A welcome from Iran**

Sauca visited WCC member churches in Iran and had a dialogue with other religious leaders. Church leaders in Iran warmly welcomed the WCC delegation.

Sauca offered a lecture in Iran on “Serving Our Wounded World in Interreligious Solidarity: An Urgent Call for Us”

During the public lecture at the Ahlul Bayt International University in Iran, he reflected on how we can improve human relations in the post-COVID-19 era.

“I firmly believe that the wisdom and values of our religious traditions, singly and in solidarity, can play a critical role in healing our wounded world and saving and sustaining our one humanity,” he said.

### **Historic meeting with Israeli president Isaac Herzog**

Israeli president Isaac Herzog formally received Sauca in November 2022, marking the first meeting between a WCC leader and an Israeli president.

Together, the two leaders considered both history and the future and agreed on the importance of working together on building bridges towards lasting peace, reconciliation, and security for all within the framework of international law.

Sauca reiterated the WCC policies regarding Israel and Palestine and mentioned that the WCC, through its Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel, has been present in the Holy Land since 2002 towards ensuring human dignity and rights for all.

### **With Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas on path to “work for justice and peace”**

Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas formally received Sauca for a meeting to discuss just peace in Palestine and Israel.

The Palestinian president extended words of gratitude to all the churches for their ongoing support for the Palestinian people. “We are one people,” said Abbas. “All churches are all our holy places.”



### **Inaugural pre-meeting: WCC Jerusalem Liaison Advisory Committee**

The Jerusalem Liaison Office Advisory Committee will work under the framework of the WCC's policy on Palestine and Israel. The committee is responsible for providing guidance, advice, and support to the WCC programmes and staff based in Jerusalem and operating under the Jerusalem Liaison Office. Its specific tasks will be to advise the WCC general secretary on how best to respond to relevant developments through its programmes and activities in order to promote a just peace in Palestine and Israel, help sustain the Christian presence in the Holy Land, and receive information about the work of the different programmes and activities of the Jerusalem Liaison Office.



### **Interreligious bridge-building**

WCC acting general secretary Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca attended a Human Fraternity and Global Tolerance Alliance Roundtable in February 2022.

Prior to the programme, he met with H.H. Mohammad Bin Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, who is the crown prince of the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, deputy supreme commander of the United Arab Emirates Armed Forces and the de facto ruler of Abu Dhabi. Members of the Higher Committee of Human Fraternity, of which Sauca is a member, also attended the meeting.

Saucu also served as a special panellist during the event itself, which was held at Expo2020 Dubai under the patronage and presence of His Excellency Sheikh Nahayan Mabarak Al Nahyan, U.A.E. minister of Tolerance and Coexistence.





Photo: NCKK

### Visits to member churches in Korea

Amid rising military tensions on the Korean Peninsula, a WCC delegation visited member churches in Korea to express continuing solidarity of the global ecumenical fellowship with the churches of Korea searching for peace and reunification on the Korean Peninsula.

Sauca expressed his heartfelt appreciation for the inspiration and commitment of the churches in Korea for the ecumenical Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace since the WCC's 10th Assembly in Busan. "Since the WCC's 10th Assembly in Busan," Sauca observed, "the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace has become the paradigm of the worldwide ecumenical movement, engaging churches and partners in a common journey, and the recently concluded WCC's 11th Assembly in Karlsruhe decided to continue the pilgrimage, as a Pilgrimage of Justice, Reconciliation, and Unity."



Photo: Milost.sk

### 26th Pentecostal World Conference in Seoul

The acting general secretary sent a message to the 26th Pentecostal World Conference that took place in Seoul, South Korea in October 2022, hosted by the Yoido Full Gospel Church, the world's largest Pentecostal congregation.

The theme of the conference was "Pentecostal Revival in the Next Generation," accompanied by the prayer "Holy Spirit, come, raise up the next generation!"

Participants underlined that our world needs a spiritual and moral renewal, including leaders open to constantly being transformed by the Holy Spirit to be able to speak prophetically to the challenges of our times. One of the key messages was that revival happens when relationships of all sorts are being restored.

## A fellowship walking in solidarity



Photo: Marcelo Schneider/WCC

The WCC continued its focus on Pilgrim Team Visits, accompanying member churches in many challenging contexts by hearing the stories, visiting the wounds, and walking together. For example, WCC Pilgrim Team Visits to Italy, Armenia, Norway, continued the WCC's accompaniment for communities in their quest for justice and peace under the theme of "Christ's love moves the world to reconciliation and unity," through the lenses of post-war trauma healing, gender justice, and migration.

In Italy, the WCC Pilgrim Team saw rich examples of the diaconal work promoted by WCC member churches in assisting refugees and migrants. One of the objectives

of the visit was the will to express solidarity and accompaniment with refugees and migrants arriving in Italy. It also aimed to solidify ecumenical bonds among WCC member churches in the country, the Federation of Protestant Churches in Italy, and related organizations and networks in their efforts to operate humanitarian and social projects that welcome and help refugees integrate into society.

The Pilgrim Team Visit to Armenia expressed solidarity and accompaniment with sisters and brothers in Armenia through interaction with grassroots groups and religious leaders, focusing on issues of trauma healing, defending of religious and



Photo: Ani Ghazaryan Drissi/WCC



Photo: Ani Ghazaryan Drissi/WCC



Photo: Joy Eva Bohol/WCC

cultural monuments, and diaconal work of member churches in Armenia.

In Norway, a visit with Indigenous Sámi communities took place. In the Arctic region, which is heating up twice as fast as the global average, Indigenous Peoples are bearing the brunt of climate change impacts. Sámi people in Norway and other parts of Northern Europe face increasing threats to their ways of living as well as social and cultural dislocation.

### Breaking the silence

During a Women’s Pilgrim Team Visit held on International Women’s Day 2022, women from North America and other parts of the globe continued to explore the theme “Stony the Road: Women’s Voices of Faith, Courage, Resistance, & Resilience.”

The visit was organized by the WCC in collaboration with the National Council of Churches (USA).

In an opening prayer and reflection, Bishop Mary Ann Swenson, at the time WCC central committee vice-moderator, said that International Women’s Day is a day to celebrate voices of faith and courage—but also to visit wounds.

“The theme this year for International Women’s Day is ‘Break the bias’”, said Swenson. “We can celebrate women’s achievements,” she said. “We can build workplaces where women thrive.”

Another North American Women’s Pilgrim Team Visit in February 2022 brought together poetry, prayer, very difficult questions, and, most of all, the impact—and pain—of telling the truth.





Photo: Paul Jeffrey

### A way forward for HIV and AIDS response

The WCC led joint planning between civil society networks and faith actors in the HIV and AIDS response in India, the Dominican Republic, Indonesia, and Jamaica.

With support from UNAIDS, the WCC conducted consultations between civil society actors and faith leaders, engaging and re-engaging them in the HIV response in these four nations—a model that can potentially be replicated.

The consultations were held in the presence and with the input of ministries of health, national HIV programs, recipients and sub-recipients of the Global Fund, and representatives of the Country Coordinating Mechanisms. Using the main recommendations of the Global AIDS Strategy and other global actors, plans were developed for a sustainable HIV response focusing on the inequalities that drive the epidemic.



Photo: Albin Hillert/WCC

### Faith and Order evaluates seven years of work

The WCC Commission on Faith and Order convened its study groups to evaluate seven years of common theological work.

Between morning and evening prayers, the study groups discussed their ecumenical theological work in the areas of ecclesiology, ethics, and contemporary challenges to mission, and prepared the ground for the future work of the commission.

The commission reviewed and improved its plans for the commemoration of the 1700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea, a unique opportunity to help contemporary churches to grow in the common understanding of the apostolic faith, an essential contribution to Christian unity.

### Green Village: Sale of land and office building as first phase nears completion

During 2022, an important milestone was achieved at Green Village, the development of the WCC's estate in Geneva in partnership with Implenla, the leading Swiss construction and real estate services provider. Swiss Life Investment Foundation bought a land plot from the WCC and contracted Implenla to construct the Kyoto building, with nine floors and 14,000 m<sup>2</sup> of gross floor space. Tenants will benefit from the project's innovative sustainable concepts.



Photo: Grégoire de Fombelle/WCC



### **Thursdays in Black ambassadors look back with both gratitude and lamentation**

As the service of WCC Thursdays in Black ambassadors drew to a close, they reflected on the positive changes they were able to make, as well as the pain of knowing how many women in the world are still suffering from gender-based violence.

During the tenure of the 26 ambassadors, the Thursdays in Black campaign for a world free from rape and violence has grown—locally, regionally, and globally.

As leaders in their community, the ambassadors demonstrated their commitment to being visible and outspoken in the Thursdays in Black movement. By standing together from many sectors and many countries, they conveyed a sense of solidarity against violence and injustice.

They led a series of Bible studies to help individuals and congregations reflect on sexual and gender-based violence, listen to the word of God, and apply their faith and vision of justice, peace, and love. They also released three joint statements that, in addition to addressing specific current challenges, called on faith communities to prevent gender-based violence in their own spaces.



### **One century of ecumenical theology—now at your fingertips**

As the WCC's first substantial digital publication and its largest free collection, the Faith and Order Papers opened a new frontier for scholars, ecumenists, and anyone interested in traversing the twists and turns of the path towards Christian unity.

Alongside the Faith and Order papers the digital library contains more than a century of ecumenical theology—a theology focused on overcoming divisions among Christian churches.

### **Gender Justice Principles**

The WCC central committee, during its February 2022 meeting, approved a set of Gender Justice Principles that clearly define the WCC's own approach to gender justice.

A Gender Advisory Group developed the principles through many rounds of review by leadership and staff as an internal document for WCC staff, governing bodies, commissions, and reference groups.

# A fellowship communicating prophetically



Photo: Albin Hillert/WCC

Accepting the paper “A New Communications Paper for the 21st Century: A vision of digital justice,” the WCC central committee emphasized that communication is critical in our digital age.

The WCC statement urged that “technologies are placed at the service of people rather than governments or corporations.”

The paper considered the results of a symposium on “Communication for Social Justice in a Digital Age” held in September 2021.

## **WCC honoured with Geneva Engage Award**

The WCC was honoured as a top non-governmental organization for its work in 2021, receiving a third-place Geneva Engage Award on 1 February 2022 for effective and inspiring social media outreach and engagement.

The award, presented by the Geneva Internet Platform, DiploFoundation, and the Canton of Geneva, encourages convergences around development, human rights, digital, and other policy issues between communities worldwide and International Geneva, host of many international negotiations with an impact across countries and continents.



# A “living laboratory”

## Ecumenical Institute at Bossey

In January 2022, a group of more than 30 Bossey students joined faculty members, partners and friends of Bossey in celebrating the experience of “a school of life,” as they earned their post-graduate Certificates in Ecumenical Studies.

Alongside the regular components of studies at Bossey, such as engagement with local church communities, visits to ecumenical partners and the Vatican, and not least the half-year-long experience of living in community with fellow students from all over the world, the study year of 2021/2022 also saw the Ecumenical Institute mark 75 years of ecumenical formation.

## Bossey celebrates graduates of first “Cours en théologie interculturelle”

Twelve graduate students from different churches in Switzerland and France, and originally coming from nine different countries, attended the first course in Intercultural theology offered at the WCC’s Ecumenical Institute at Bossey. This was the first time such a programme has been offered in Bossey in French.

The course was a cooperative effort of French and Swiss WCC member churches and different organizations concerned with and involved in questions around formation in intercultural and contextual theology.



## GETI 2022 at the 11th Assembly

The programme on Ecumenical Theological Education (ETE) brought a global gathering of young and emerging ecumenical theologians to reflect together on the theme, *Christ’s Love (Re)moves Borders*, which echoed the 11th WCC Assembly theme, *Christ’s Love Moves the World to Reconciliation and Unity*. The notion of Christ removing and moving borders indicated in the GETI theme, suggests an onward incremental movement towards reconciliation and unity in our world.

The Assembly affirmed Global Ecumenical Theological Institutes (GETIs) and Regional Ecumenical Theological Institutes (RETIs) as platforms for ongoing ecumenical formation.





## 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches

*The WCC 11th Assembly—full of colour, light, prayers, and human connections—was a special milestone of 2022. The following pages offer an overview of an assembly that set the stage for the WCC’s prophetic work for years to come.*



Photo: Paul Jeffrey/WCC



Photo: Albin Hillert/WCC



Photo: Paul Jeffrey/WCC



Photo: Mike DuBose/WCC



Photo: Gjermund Oystese/WCC



Photo: Mike DuBose/WCC



Photo: Albin Hillert/WCC



Photo: Gjermund Oystese/WCC



Photo: Gjermund Oystese/WCC



Photo: Sean Hawkey/WCC



Photo: Sean Hawkey/WCC



Photo: Sean Hawkey/WCC



## **Choose the power of love: Pre-Assemblies deliver powerful calls**

Pre-assemblies brought forward powerful calls to the WCC's 11th Assembly held in Karlsruhe, Germany, from 31 August to 8 September 2022.

A Specialized Ministries Pre-assembly in March shared a commitment to compassion, peace, and justice. Those gathered came away with a renewed sense of unity in their commitment to compassion, peace, and justice.

“The Pre-assembly recognized this moment as an opportunity for transformational change. It addressed three critical issues confronting humanity and creation: overcoming racism, discrimination, and xenophobia; the rise of populism; and the climate emergency. All three are framed by complex crises that manifest locally and globally,” reads the final message of the event.

An historic Inter-Orthodox Pre-assembly took place in Cyprus in May and affirmed “the utmost importance of love” and a “call for unity, reconciliation, justice, and peace,” according to a communique jointly released from the 50 participants, which included delegates from 20 Eastern and Oriental Orthodox churches.

Pre-assemblies for Indigenous Peoples, the Ecumenical Disability Advocates Network, the Just Community of Women and Men, and the Ecumenical Youth Gathering took place immediately before the assembly, offering opportunities for in-depth analysis and debates on issues challenging the global family of churches represented in the WCC.

The Ecumenical Youth Gathering voiced a series of laments “on the killing, violence, and brutality against human beings,” especially women, children, and girls. It identified specific situations of war and oppression, terrorism and genocide, unjust imprisonment, and extra-judicial killings in countries around the globe.

Participants from 40 different Indigenous nations acknowledged in their message that “the road to reconciliation leads through restoration of justice, because without justice, we cannot stand as equals.” Such reconciliation is not only needed in human relationships but also “in humanity's broken relationship with the creation.”

The Ecumenical Disability Advocates Network recognized the God-given gifts of people with disabilities and the importance of making available those gifts for the body of Christ to function fully. It called on churches to continue to develop and encourage more people with disabilities to be involved in church leadership at local and denominational levels, and for wider representation in WCC assemblies and activities, especially for non-speaking people; people who communicate through alternative and augmentative devices and people who are neurodivergent, have learning disabilities, or invisible disabilities.

The biblical-theological focus for the Just Community of Women and Men was Acts 8:26-39, the encounter between Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch. In their report, participants recognized they were challenged to reflect together on their “understanding of inclusion and transformation”, and how “injustice occurs on the basis of identity and particularity, including sexual and gender identity, class, ethnic, racial, and religious identity.”

The third global iteration of the Global Ecumenical Theological Institute (GETI 2022), held in parallel with the assembly, brought together around 100 young theologians from around the world, first on-line for four weeks and then in person for two weeks in Karlsruhe. Here, participants, alumni, facilitators, and guests explored the theme of ‘Christ's Love (re)Moves Borders,’ echoing the theme of the assembly.





Photo: Paul Jeffrey/WCC



Photo: Mike DuBose/WCC



Photo: Albin Hillert/WCC



## **“Christ’s love moves the world to reconciliation and unity”**

As thousands of Christians converged in Karlsruhe, Germany for the WCC’s 11th Assembly, they repeatedly affirmed—through plenary speakers, dialogue, and prayer—that the churches’ response to the hardships of our times must be rooted in urgently realizing that we need one another, we depend on one another, and we can advance only if we walk together, not separately.

The assembly was the first in Europe since Uppsala in 1968. The global body sent many messages to the world related to the theme “Christ’s love moves the world to reconciliation and unity.”

The moderator of the WCC central committee, Dr Agnes Abuom, a Kenyan Anglican, opened the gathering.

“Absolutely fundamental to the WCC and the ecumenical movement are relationships,” said Abuom. “That’s what makes experiences like the assembly so precious and formative. We encounter one another—in all our uniqueness—and recognize a neighbour in the stranger, unity in the midst of our diversity.”

Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca, WCC acting general secretary, shared a report that touched upon the climate crisis, COVID-19, the war in Ukraine, and many other challenges in the world.

“In responding to the hardships of our times, we need one another, we depend on one another, and we can advance only if we walk together, not in separation,” said the Romanian Orthodox.

German federal president Frank-Walter Steinmeier delivered a keynote speech and the minister-president of Baden-Württemberg Winfried Kretschmann offered remarks.

Steinmeier recalled with thankfulness that the German churches were permitted to attend the 1st WCC Assembly in Amsterdam in 1948 and were welcomed as members on an equal footing. “To this day, we are grateful for this!” he said.

The war in Ukraine was in thoughts, prayers, and words on several occasions at the assembly, Steinmeier calling it a “war of aggression.”

The opening prayer included a sermon by outgoing WCC president, Patriarch John X of the Greek Orthodox Church of Antioch and all the East (in Syria). He called on his listeners and their churches and nations “to choose to pass through the suffering Middle East, as Christ chose to pass through Samaria. Pass and look at Christ’s beloved ones there, as he looked at the Samaritans, without disregarding those who differ from you, without excluding the people of Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, and the Holy Land of Palestine, especially because their ancestors served the gospel of reconciliation and spread it to all nations.” In a youth testimony, the Rev. Ann Jacob of the Edmonds United Methodist Church, Washington, spoke of the congregation’s refugee resettlement ministry. “May we offer Christ to one another, overflowing with peace and reconciliation,” she said.

Local German host churches welcomed more than 4,000 people to the assembly—and to the city of Karlsruhe. Over 70 weekend excursions across Germany and into neighbouring France and Switzerland were organized. More than 200 cultural and information events took place in the host city itself. Following a reception hosted by Karlsruhe Mayor Frank Mentrup, assembly participants were invited to a special light show at the Karlsruhe palace.



Photo: Albin Hillert/WCC

### **Assembly message: “A Call to Act Together”**

All are called by Christ’s love to repentance, reconciliation, and justice in the face of war, inequality, and sins against creation, delegates at the assembly stated in a message issued on 8 September.

“We will find a strength to act from a unity founded in Christ’s love, for it enables us to learn the things that make for peace, to transform division into reconciliation, and to work for the healing of our living planet,” delegates stated.

### **Unity Statement**

The assembly received, adopted, and approved a Unity Statement, which addressed the distinctive call to Christian love in today’s world. Successive WCC assemblies have offered a statement or theme to inspire the churches to reflect on why they have chosen to journey together and the significance of the call to unity.

### **Addressing the world’s challenges**

Statements from the WCC’s 11th Assembly and

subsequently from the leadership of the WCC central committee, expressed concern and suggested ways to address some of the world’s major challenges.

The assembly statements were:

**Living Planet: seeking a just and sustainable global community.** This statement raised an increasingly urgent voice of concern and demand for action. “Christ’s love calls us to deep solidarity and a quest for justice for those who have contributed to this emergency the least, yet suffer the most, physically, existentially, and ecologically,” read the statement.

**The Things that Make for Peace; moving the world to reconciliation and unity.** This statement called for a renewed commitment to peace.

Recognizing the need for, “renewed dialogue within the ecumenical movement,” the statement strongly affirmed “the commitment of the WCC and its member churches to peace making through inter-religious dialogue and cooperation at all levels,” and called for a global ceasefire.





**War in Ukraine, Peace and Justice in the European Region.** The statement appealed “to all sides in the conflict to respect the principles of international humanitarian law...especially with regard to the protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure, and for the humane treatment of prisoners of war.”

It strongly affirmed that war is incompatible with God’s very nature.

“We urge all parties to withdraw and refrain from military action in the vicinity of the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant and other such locations that may risk unimaginable threats to current and future generations,” read the text.

**Seeking Justice and Peace for All in the Middle East.** The assembly heard the increasing pleas of the Holy Land heads of churches concerning mounting intimidation, violations, limiting access to places of worship, and attacks by radicals.

The WCC affirmed the rightful place of Israel in the community of nations, recognizing its legitimate security needs. “At the same time, we affirm the right of the Palestinians for self-determination and that the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories since 1967, as well as settlement construction and expansion in the occupied territories, is illegal under international law and must be ended.”





After the assembly, the WCC central committee leadership released the following statements discussed by the assembly's public issues committee.

**Indigenous Peoples.** The statement encourages continued advocacy, “with Indigenous Peoples and on their behalf in defence of their human rights, to protect the use of human rights language, to promote Indigenous Peoples’ right to self-determination and the right to participate in the decision making process within churches and in society.”

**Statement on Confronting Racism and Xenophobia, Overcoming Discrimination, Ensuring Belonging.**

Declaring that “there is no justification in either faith or science for the racism, xenophobia and discrimination that we are witnessing in the world,” the statement condemns these social forces.

In November 2022, the WCC executive committee approved the remaining assembly statements:

**Digital justice.** The statement urges that “technologies are placed at the service of people rather than governments or corporations,” and it addresses the ways in which new technologies are transforming our world and the multiple spaces in which we live, work, and witness.

**Christian witness.** The statement urges “Christian witness and action for human dignity and human rights,” and confesses “our unfulfilled responsibilities to protect and lift up those whose God-given dignity and worth is not respected.”

**Health.** The executive committee urges a commitment to global health-promoting churches. The “Global Health and Wellbeing” statement notes that the terrible



experience of COVID-19 awakened us all to the real and continuing threat of pandemics in our hyper-connected and over-exploited world.

“Other longstanding challenges to health and wellbeing have been masked—or in some cases exacerbated—by the pandemic,” the statement reads.

Also in November 2022, the WCC executive committee released a statement on COP 27 noting that there are communities and nations already facing catastrophic impacts of climate change but whose urgent appeals other members of the international community have failed to heed.

“COP 27 is a critical occasion for governments to together re-envision, develop, commit to and implement a roadmap towards a fossil fuel-free, post-growth, equitable and sustainable tomorrow, and to tackle the



Photo: Simon Chambers/WCC



Photo: Sean Hawkey/WCC

greatest existential challenge to life on the planet,” reads the statement.

**The assembly also released the following four minutes:**

**Minute on ending the war and building peace on the Korean Peninsula.** “... despite the signing of an armistice agreement on 27 July 1953, the Korean War still has not been formally ended,” the minute reads. The minute urged WCC member churches and partners to renew their solidarity and to actively support and accompany the Korean churches in their advocacy.

**Minute on the situation in West Papua.** The minute expressed grave concern over serious, systemic violations of security and human rights in West Papua. “The Indigenous Papuan people the vast majority of whom are Christians continue to suffer serious and systemic violations of their physical security and human rights,” it read.

**Minute on consequences of the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh war.** This minute reiterates its condemnation of the use of chemical weapons and cluster munitions, the targeting of civilians, hospitals and public infrastructure, and all other war crimes, beheadings, torture, and other atrocities witnessed during the conflict.

**Minute on Syriac-Aramaic genocide “SAYFO.”** The minute urged that this genocide must be named as a historical reality.

During the “Syriac genocide,” or “SAYFO,” in 1915, over half a million Syriac-Aramaic Christians lost their lives. “Though taking place in the same historical and political context, these events are understood as distinct and separate from the Armenian genocide,” the minute read.



Photo: Albin Hillert/WCC



Photo: Paul Jeffrey/WCC

### Increasing youth participation

The assembly recommended increasing youth participation in the global ecumenical fellowship. The assembly received, affirmed, and endorsed a Youth Statement signed by 38 youth members of the assembly, including 12 delegates and nine advisers. The assembly, referring it to the WCC central committee for action, noted “the need for full youth involvement in all commissions, committees, advisory groups, and reference groups of the WCC, but also the apparent reluctance of some member churches to nominate young people to the central committee and other committees.”



Photo: Albin Hillert/WCC



Photo: Albin Hillert/WCC



## Waterfall of Solidarity

The WCC declared sexual and gender-based violence a sin in 1998, reiterating its condemnation of such acts in 2018. Yet, violence against women and girls, men, and boys continue daily, as tragic statistics show. Thursdays in Black is a global movement to global movement resisting attitudes and practices that permit rape and violence.

Throughout 2022, the WCC received quilt patches that became part of a “Waterfall of Solidarity and Resistance” tapestry displayed at the WCC’s 11th Assembly in Karlsruhe.

Communities and individuals of all faiths and none were invited to make a powerful, international statement of their commitment to end rape and violence by contributing to the tapestry.

These visual utterances were the frontispiece for deeper stories, some told, and some never told, yet happening around the world. This powerful, international statement of a global commitment to end rape and violence was seen by many at the WCC’s 11th Assembly.



During the assembly, online and onsite press rooms were open nearly around the clock, working with more than 360 media representatives and sharing the story of the WCC with record numbers of journalists.

The WCC assembly communications team included 140 co-opted staff, with 24 team leaders. The team also included 50 young and 50 senior communicators, photographers, interpreters, translators, and stewards. Half of the team worked onsite in Karlsruhe onsite, and the rest in the online team from various parts of the world like New Zealand, Cameroun, and the United States. The young communicators had completed a 12-week online-course covering ecumenical and peace communication, organized by WCC Communication in collaboration with WACC, Globethics and local partners in Germany and with financial support from the German Foreign Office.



Photo: Albin Hillert/WCC



Photo: Albin Hillert/WCC



Photo: Albin Hillert/WCC

## From the message of the 11th Assembly

Amid all our diversity, we have relearned in our assembly that there is a pilgrimage of justice, reconciliation, and unity to be undertaken together.

Meeting together in Germany, we learn the cost of war and the possibility of reconciliation;

Hearing the word of God together, we recognize our common calling;

Listening and talking together, we become closer neighbours;

Lamenting together, we open ourselves to each other's pain and suffering;

Working together, we consent to common action;

Celebrating together, we delight in each other's joys and hopes;

Praying together, we discover the richness of our traditions and the pain of our divisions.

**More than 4520 participants attended the assembly,  
including 662 delegates from 286 member churches.**





## Publications and journals

WCC Communications coordinated 55 publications in 2022, with 51 completed and four still in process. Twenty-one of these were specifically for the WCC 11th Assembly.

WCC Journals—*The Ecumenical Review*, *International Review of Mission*, and *Current Dialogue*—continued to be available in more than 5,000 institutions through publisher agreements and to additional institutions in low and middle-income countries.

From August to November 2022, full-text downloads of articles from *The Ecumenical Review* (including *Current Dialogue*) increased by 32 percent, while downloads from *International Review of Mission* increased by 88 percent.

The archives and the library continued their digitization programme of historical sources, adding to the titles already available on the internet archive website, digitized issues of former WCC journals such as *Contact magazine*, *Risk*, and the Ecumenical Press Service, enabling researchers from all over the world to access freely these most significant resources for the history of the ecumenical movement.



## Financial challenges—and hope

The WCC executive committee, in its first online meeting in December 2022, reviewed and approved plans and a budget of CHF 21.7 million for 2023.

This was a time of financial turmoil. Like many other organizations, the WCC had been working to balance its budget for 2023 to plan work with contributions income at a level of CHF 20.6 million, about CHF 1.8 million lower than budgeted in 2022. This situation was mainly brought about by the strengthening of the Swiss franc against other currencies. In response, the executive committee in November approved a transfer of CHF 700,000 from general reserves to programme funds.

WCC moderator Bishop Dr Heinrich Bedford-Strohm reflected on how the WCC was meeting a time of financial challenge in order to pave the way for a sustainable future. “This situation is mainly brought about by the fluctuating currency rates,” he said. “WCC member churches and partners have remained faithful in their contributions for which we are profoundly grateful, and they are also ready to keep their financial commitments for 2023.”



## Looking to 2025

The year 2025 represents a significant milestone for the ecumenical fellowship. It marks the 1700th anniversary of the First Ecumenical Council at Nicaea in 325, which began to formulate the Nicene Creed, a fundamental bond of Christian unity.

It also marks the 100th anniversary of the Universal Christian Conference on Life and Work in Stockholm in 1925. This was the first large scale organized expression of the 20th-century ecumenical movement after the First World War and it fed into the creation of the WCC in 1948.

In recalling these two events in 2025, the WCC intends to draw upon their witness on issues of unity, reconciliation, and justice as matters of faith for Christians and churches.

Among the events scheduled for 2025 is a Sixth World Conference on Faith and Order, being planned by the WCC Commission on Faith and Order.

The conference will be a way to engage the many issues that challenge and excite churches today, with the goal of rekindling the desire to search for visible unity of the church in the midst of shifting realities in the church and the world, including ecological, technological, and economic concerns.

In the past, the Faith and Order movement has held “world conferences” at key moments in its life and work. The first such world conference was held in 1927 in Lausanne, Switzerland.

There has not been a World Conference on Faith and Order since that held at Santiago de Compostela, Spain, in 1993.



# WCC financial results 2022

With both the 11th Assembly, and sale of the land plot for the Kyoto building in 2022, the preliminary financial results present a substantially different profile from that of the prior year, 2021.

Contributions income increased by CHF 7.3 million to CHF 19.75 million (59%) in 2022. Contributions and grants for the assembly fund totaled CHF 7.8 million (2021: CHF 1 million), while programme contributions totaled CHF 11.9 million, increased by CHF 0.5 million compared with 2021. For programmes, the increase concerned principally the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI), which resumed activities fully in 2022 at the end of COVID restrictions.

Investment and currency losses of CHF 2.08 million were incurred in 2022, compared to the CHF 0.7 million gain in 2021, reflecting the impact of a global economic downturn, and at the same, time a strengthening of the Swiss franc against other currencies.

Proceeds of CHF 30.1 million from the land sale were

applied to reimburse a remaining loan of CHF 12 million which had refinanced the pension fund in 2012. After development costs and taxation, almost CHF 9 million is brought forward, for the renovation of the Ecumenical Centre and other investment planned in the real estate development, Green Village.

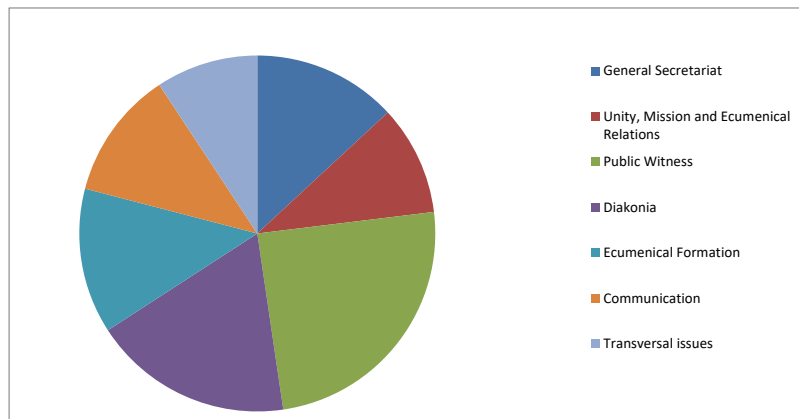
In summary, the council reports a net increase in funds of CHF 15 million with four main components: (i) an increase in funds of about CHF 20 million as a result of the land sale; (ii) a decrease in assembly and programme funds of CHF 3.2 million, mainly related to the event of the assembly, drawing on balances as budgeted; (iii) a decrease in the endowment fund of CHF 1.7 million because of investment results; and (iv) a small decrease of CHF 0.1 million on operating funds. The general reserves close at CHF 6.9 million, close to the target of CHF 7 million. It must be reiterated, however, that the increase of funds in 2022 is unusual largely because of the sale of property, and such funds are expected to be reused in the building project. ■



Photo: Ivar Kupcis/WCC

| <b>FINANCIAL RESULTS 2022 (Swiss francs 000's)*</b> | <b>Unrestricted and designated funds</b> | <b>Restricted funds</b> | <b>Total funds</b> | <b>Total funds</b> |
|---|--|-------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| *Unaudited  | 2022                                     | 2022                    | 2022               | 2021               |
| <b>Income</b>                                       |  |                         |                    |                    |
| Membership and other unrestricted contributions     | 3,565                                    | –                       | 3,565              | 3,696              |
| Programme contributions                             | –  | 19,752                  | 19,752             | 12,444             |
| Investment and currency (losses)/gains              | (529)                                    | (1,557)                 | (2,086)            | 699                |
| Rental income, sales and other income               | 6,265                                    | 1,709                   | 7,974              | 5,174              |
| Gain on sale of land                                | 30,122                                   |                         | 30,122             | –                  |
| Unrestricted income distribution                    | (3,467)                                  | 3,467                   | –                  | –                  |
| <b>Total income</b>                                 | <b>35,956</b>                            | <b>23,371</b>           | <b>59,327</b>      | <b>22,013</b>      |
| <b>Expenditure</b>                                  |  |                         |                    |                    |
| Programme and other operating costs                 | 10,802                                   | 16,501                  | 27,303             | 6,992              |
| Depreciation  | 1,875                                    | 157                     | 2,032              | 2,143              |
| Salaries  | 3,512                                    | 9,008                   | 12,520             | 11,534             |
| Taxation  | 2,462                                    | 6                       | 2,468              | (1,346)            |
| Redistribution of costs; internal (sales)/charges   | (2,809)                                  | 2,809                   | –                  | –                  |
| <b>Total costs</b>                                  | <b>15,842</b>                            | <b>28,481</b>           | <b>44,323</b>      | <b>19,323</b>      |
| Transfers between funds                             | (1,722)                                  | 1,722                   | –                  | –                  |
| Transfers to funds                                  |  |                         | –                  |                    |
| <b>Net surplus for the year</b>                     | <b>18,392</b>                            | <b>(3,388)</b>          | <b>15,004</b>      | <b>2,690</b>       |

| <b>Income trends (Swiss francs 000's)</b>     | 2015          | 2016          | 2017          | 2018          | 2019          | 2020          | 2021          | 2022          |
|---|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Membership & other unrestricted contributions | 3,877         | 3,928         | 3,916         | 4,040         | 3,947         | 3,563         | 3,696         | 3,565         |
| Programme contributions                       | 14,651        | 13,542        | 13,372        | 13,895        | 13,431        | 10,993        | 11,305        | 11,913        |
| Assembly                                      | 115           | 55            | 68            | 73            | 378           | 296           | 1,139         | 7,839         |
| Other income                                  | 6,948         | 7,483         | 8,074         | 6,765         | 8,415         | 6,170         | 5,873         | 5,888         |
| Gain on sale of land                          | –             | –             | –             | –             | 3,483         | 18,948        | –             | 30,122        |
| <b>Total</b>                                  | <b>25,591</b> | <b>25,008</b> | <b>25,430</b> | <b>24,773</b> | <b>29,654</b> | <b>39,970</b> | <b>22,013</b> | <b>59,327</b> |



| WCC expenditure by programme 2022       | CHF 000's     | %           |
|---|---------------|-------------|
| General Secretariat                     | 2,197         | 13%         |
| Unity, Mission and Ecumenical Relations | 1,671         | 10%         |
| Public Witness                          | 4,126         | 25%         |
| Diakonia                                | 3,049         | 18%         |
| Ecumenical Formation                    | 2,214         | 13%         |
| Communication                           | 1,957         | 12%         |
| Transversal issues                      | 1,556         | 9%          |
|   | <b>16,770</b> | <b>100%</b> |

In addition, in 2022 expenditure for the 11th Assembly totaled CHF 11.7 million. Expenditure included costs of participation at CHF 5.2 million (45%); venue, equipment, and related services CHF 2.9 million (25%); communication CHF 0.9 million (7%); and all other costs CHF 2.7 million (23%).

Transversal issues in 2022 included *Church and Ecumenical Relations*, *Youth engagement in the ecumenical movement*, *Just community of women and men*, *Inter-religious dialogue and co-operation*, *Spiritual life*, and *Overcoming racism*.

## FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTORS 2022

### Main contributors

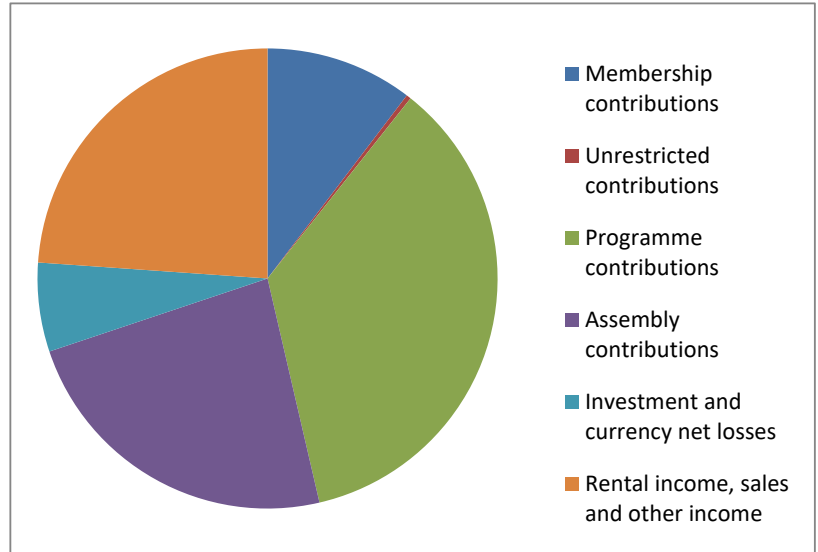
*Note: The list includes member churches, ecumenical partners, and other organizations that contributed more than CHF 20,000 to the WCC in 2022.*

Act for Peace, African Methodist Episcopal Church, American Baptist Churches USA, Anglican Church of Australia, Anglican Church of Canada, Bread for the World, Catholic Committee for Cultural Collaboration, Christian Aid, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States, Christian Council of Sweden, Church of England, Church of Norway, Church of Scotland, Church of Sweden, Council for World Mission, DanChurchAid, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit, Ecumenical Patriarchate, Eglise protestante unie de France, EKD - Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland, EKD - Evangelische Kirche in Hessen und Nassau, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, Evangelisches Missionswerk in Deutschland, European Commission, FELM, Finn Church Aid, Foundation for Theological Education in Southeast Asia, Fondation pour l'aide au protestantisme réformé, German Federal Foreign Office, Kerk in Actie, Lund Mission Society, Methodist Church, Norwegian Church Aid, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Oxford Policy Management Limited, Pax for Peace, Presbyterian Church (USA), Presbyterian Church in

Canada, Presbyterian Church of Korea, Protestant Church in Switzerland, Protestant Church in the Netherlands, Reformierte Kirchen Bern-Jura-Solothurn, Reformierte Landeskirche Aargau, Religious Society of Friends, Stichting Rotterdam, Swiss Church Aid (HEKS-EPER), Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, The Episcopal Church, UNAIDS, United Church of Canada, United Church of Christ, United Methodist Church, Uniting Church in Sweden, Waldensian Church.

**Other contributors (less than CHF 20,000)**

Member churches, ecumenical partners, other organizations, congregations, and individuals. ■



| WCC sources of income 2022            | CHF 000's     | %             |
|---------------------------------------|---------------|---------------|
| Membership contributions              | 3,455         | 11.8%         |
| Unrestricted contributions            | 110           | 0.4%          |
| Programme contributions               | 11,913        | 40.8%         |
| Assembly contributions                | 7,839         | 26.8%         |
| Investment and currency net losses    | -2,086        | -7.1%         |
| Rental income, sales and other income | 7,974         | 27.3%         |
|                                       | <u>29,205</u> | <u>100.0%</u> |

In addition, in 2022 the WCC sold the land plot for the Kyoto building, recognising a gain on sale of land of CHF 30.1 million, bringing total income in 2022 to CHF 59.3 million.



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