

Global Christian Forum News

2014 Edition 01

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GCF on the stage

It just may have been one of the most unexpected events in a crowded and sometimes highly charged program at the Pentecostal World Fellowship (PWF) conference in August.

But there they were at this 5,000 strong global Pentecostal event: a Finnish Lutheran woman, an Orthodox priest from India, an African Instituted Church leader, a Seventh-Day Adventist and an American Reformed minister all lined up across the stage, side-by-side with

the president of the PWF, Rev Dr Prince Guneratnam, and fellow Pentecostals from the Swiss Pentecostal church and an American Assemblies of God pastor. Collectively they were showing they belong together, to the same group, in friendship and mutual recognition as part of the unity and diversity of the church.

They were introduced by Larry Miller, a Mennonite minister who is also the GCF secretary. It was the presentation of the GCF delegation to the 23rd PWF global conference, in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

They were received with spontaneous and

Introduction

This latest edition of GCF News highlights recent major events in the life of the Global Christian Forum:

- Attendance at the 23rd Pentecostal World Fellowship global gathering in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- Important news from the recent meeting of the GCF international committee in Geneva
- The signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the GCF and the World Council of Churches
- Launch of the Netherlands Christian Forum in mid-year
- The World Council of Churches, General Assembly, in Busan, South Korea.

GCF secretary, Rev Dr Larry Miller (center) introduces the GCF delegation to the Pentecostal World Fellowship convention.



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warm applause, and even gasps of ‘disbelief’ when Fr. K.M.George, of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church (India), a professor Emeritus, said he taught a number of Pentecostal students in his classes!

It was inspiring to witness the breadth of global Christianity present in one place, in Christian peace and unity.

The empty chair

When the GCF international committee met in Geneva in October, something disturbed the usual air of comfort and expectation that usually fills the space. It was the empty chair.

It was a poignant reminder that one of our number was absent against his will.

Archbishop Mar Gregorius Yohanna Ibrahim of the Syrian Orthodox Archdiocese of Aleppo, Syria was kidnapped at gunpoint on April 22, 2013, along with Archbishop Boulos Yazaji of the Greek Orthodox.

Neither man has been seen since.

They are victims of a war that has cut a

swath of violence across Syria.

Mar Gregorius should be in attendance. He is a member of the GCF committee. He could not take his place. But his chair, place name and a cup of water were set for him: a visible prayer and a reminder of the cost of discipleship.

The GCF led morning devotions at the Ecumenical Centre in Geneva, the day the committee meeting started. His friend and colleague Fr. K.M.George of the Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church, India, said in his reflection, “Mar Gregorius should be here but we have no clue as to where these two bishops are... (yet)...We can believe that they are in the caring and loving hands of our heavenly Father.

Members of the CGF committee gather and a vacant chair is a reminder of Mar Gregorius' absence.



(c) KimCain-Global Christian Forum

“They pass through this passage of pain hidden to us, because of their faith, because they are Christians.

“Let us remember them with great love and a deep prayer to the Lord of peace to bring peace to Syria, Egypt and the whole region of the Middle East, the cradle of our Christian tradition.”

Approved: Theological document that reflects on GCF journey

An important document, which is a theological reflection on the experience and life of the Global Christian Forum, has been approved by the GCF committee.

Titled, *Our Unfolding Journey with Jesus Christ: Reflections on the Global Christian Forum Experience*, the document is the work of a group of theologians drawn from across the church traditions and families that make up the GCF.

Forum experience so that churches and groups, and the GCF itself, could have a statement that would address its learning and experience.

What has evolved – through the TWG’s reflection — is a document that is described as a “first attempt to articulate theological (and especially ecclesiological) insights which have emerged from the experiences of the Forum’s distinctive life.”



TWG convener, Rev Dr Wonsuk Ma leads a sub-group into the evening in Ghana as part of the working group’s process.

Rev Dr Wonsuk Ma, executive director of the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies, headed a panel of nine theologians, known as the Theological Working Group (TWG), who produced the document. [Full membership of TWG is listed elsewhere.]

The work, initiated by the GCF committee when in met in Rome in 2012, was received and approved by the committee at its recent meeting in Geneva in September.

The decision to undertake the task came after the second GCF global gathering at Manado, Indonesia, where it was felt that it was important to put down some theological markers so the wider Christian community could understand the story, practice and on-going life of the GCF.

A narrative history of the life of the GCF through the first global gathering in 2007 had been written and more recently revised to include GCF events into 2012. That history was to be extended recently, but it was felt that there needed to be deeper theological thinking about the

The TWG makes clear in the introduction that the paper “is written in the recognition of the many different understandings, and uses of language, among Forum participants.”

It is not the primary purpose of the Forum to engage in theological dialogue to produce agreed texts, but mirroring the Forum’s own practices, this account is “doxological and testimonial, narrative and descriptive, rather than theoretical and analytical,” the text says.

The document is available on the GCF website, www.globalchristianforum.org

Theological Task Group Members:

- Wonsuk MA**, Chair (Pentecostal, Korea & United Kingdom);
- Kathryn JOHNSON**, Secretary (Lutheran, USA);
- K. M. GEORGE** (Oriental Orthodox, India);
- Rolf HILLE** (Evangelical, Germany);
- Leonid KISHKOVSKY** (Eastern Orthodox, USA);
- Luis MELO** (Catholic, Canada and Vatican City);
- Thomas ODURO** (African Instituted, Ghana);
- Sarah ROWLAND JONES** (Anglican, South Africa); and
- Calixto SALVATIERRI MORENO** (Catholic, Bolivia).

Also joining in the work in addition to John GIBAUT (Anglican, Canada and Switzerland), as consultant, were GCF staff Kim CAIN (Australia); Hubert VAN BEEK (France), and Larry MILLER (France).



Wonsuk Ma, Wes Granberg-Michaelsen and Thomas Oduro working on the 'Unfolding Journey' document.



Kathryn Johnson, Secretary to the TWG in deep conversation with Leonid Kishkovsky in Ghana.

Pentecostal World Fellowship: 23rd Pentecostal World Conference

Leaders say Pentecostal agenda is traditional yet expanding - *By Kim Cain*

A string of internationally known preachers from the Pentecostal world has urged an emerging generation of leaders to push forward into new concerns for compassion, justice and 'grounded ministry' as they take charge of the 100 year-old Pentecostal movement that accounts for 600 million Christians worldwide.

Speaking at public rallies and seminars at the 23rd Pentecostal World Fellowship global congress in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, in August, leaders from North America, Asia and Africa peppered their traditional preaching with wider insights on issues facing Pentecostals at the global level.

The gathering recognised the need to look ahead with the theme of the conference being “IN ONE ACCORD... rallying, reaching & releasing the next generation.”

As well as the usual signs of Pentecostal style worship — praise, prayer, speaking in tongues and people coming forward for blessings and healing to the beat of syncopated music — highly respected preachers within the movement directly addressed challenges of justice, the error of the ‘prosperity Gospel’ and the importance of the church as a community.

Given the chance to pray and seek an affirming ‘Hallelujah’ the 4,000 crowd never buckled. But, neither did they turn from facing wider issues.

From observation, this was not a renunciation of traditional Pentecostal activity such as worship in the Holy Spirit or evangelism – that was prominent – but there was a broadening of the Pentecostal agenda.

Dr William (Billy) Wilson urged the delegates to go deeper in Acts chapter 2 than the first few verses – the foundational Biblical passage of Pentecostalism, where the Holy Spirit comes upon the disciples.

Wilson, who is president of Oral Roberts University (Oklahoma, USA), called on Pentecostals to “fully embrace all of Acts chapter 2 “with each church given the miracle of the Holy Spirit and a ministry to the poor, compassion with the suffering and generous sharing with the needy.”

He said that young people in particular were aware of the ethical significance of this time in history: “God has downloaded a generous gift in our young men and women; it is a grace for justice and righteousness. It is in the secular world and Christians have it also,” he said.

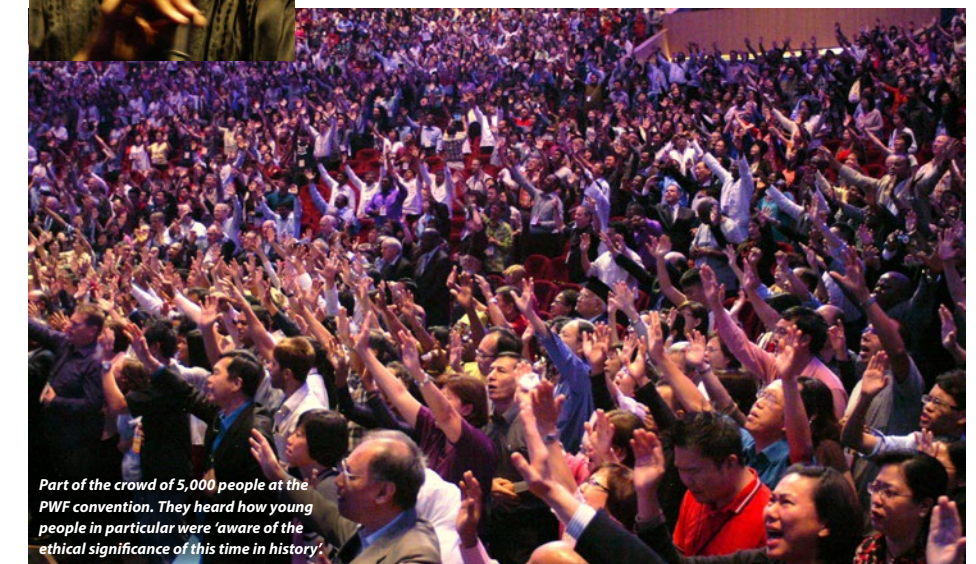
Wilson used the example of his own daughter who was living and working in the slum areas of Paraguay as part of her commitment to people in need as an expression of the Gospel.

In a moment of pure honesty, Wilson said he did not always understand it, “but I know it is what is happening amongst our young people today: this new generation is Christian and perceptive and if we (older people) don’t live what we talk about, they know it.”

Another well respected preacher and teacher from the USA, Dr Mark Rutland of Global Servants, in expounding a passage from the Book of Revelation redolent with images of the final consummation, did not focus on the eschatological message of the last day, but saw in it messages of this day, for young



Dr Dag Heward-Mills, preaching and teaching at the PWF gathering in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.



Part of the crowd of 5,000 people at the PWF convention. They heard how young people in particular were 'aware of the ethical significance of this time in history'.

stars” held in the hands of the resurrected Jesus (Rev 1:16), he reminded them that Pentecostal churches needed pastors who were grounded in congregational ministry.

It concerned him that so many potential pastors said they loved God and the Holy Spirit and not the church.

This not acceptable, he said, as the church was fundamental to the life of the Christian and a sign of the presence of the Holy Spirit.

“The ministry and the Holy Spirit are as important in a poor village in Uzbekistan where the pastor daily risks his life as in any large congregation on the face of the earth, anywhere,” Rutland said.

Meanwhile, Ghana-based Pentecostal teacher and evangelist, Dr Dag Heward-Mills, Bishop of Lighthouse International, said he was worried that the Christian message was being presented as a message of how to live the good life and get what you want — a gospel of comfort — and “not so much about the cross”.

He openly challenged the ‘prosperity Gospel’, by paraphrasing the well-known Bible passage of John 3:16, saying it does not say, “For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that all those who believe may have two houses and three cars!”

Heward-Mills also warned of the range of evil ways the devil could ruin the church from within.

Launch of Netherlands Christian Forum

The first meeting of the Netherlands Christian Forum (NCF) took place on 25 - 26 June 2013 at the Emmaus Retreat Centre in Helvoirt, Netherlands.

About forty participants representing a wide range of churches and denominations were present to launch the first meeting of the Netherlands Christian Forum. They included the Protestant Church in the Netherlands, the Catholic Church, the Old-Catholic Church, the United Pentecostal and Evangelical Churches (Assemblies of God), the Baptist Union, Moravians, Mennonites, Evangelical Free Churches, Salvation Army, Church of the Nazarene, National Pentecostal Platform, Syrian Orthodox Church, and several immigrant churches. Not all the churches that were invited were present. Of the group of conservative Calvinist churches, a particularity of the Dutch ecclesial landscape, only one attended, the Netherlands Reformed Churches.

The Council of Churches and the Evangelical Alliance, the two broadest national umbrella organizations, are the parent bodies of the Netherlands Christian Forum. The General Secretaries were both present at the meeting. Also involved was Together Church in the Netherlands, SKIN, the umbrella body of the churches of

immigration. The NCF is led by a broadly based Working Group. A small Steering Group of four persons (Protestant, Old-Catholic, Pentecostal and Moravian) acts as the executive body.

Two earlier initiatives towards new forms of Christian unity, the group "We Opt for Unity" and the "National Synod", have merged into the NCF. The first was a group formed at the initiative of some Evangelical and Pentecostal leaders in which leaders of the established churches participated. The second was a Protestant process aiming at bringing the wide variety of Protestantism in the Netherlands into a national synod in commemoration of the first National Synod of the Reformation held in 1618 in Dordrecht. In several ways these two movements were instrumental in bringing the Netherlands Christian Forum into existence.

The NCF was largely inspired by the GCF, which is frequently referred to. The decisive impulse came from the Manado global gathering; all of the members of the Steering Group were in Manado.

This first NCF meeting had the character of a retreat. Two essential elements of the event were prayer and the sharing of faith stories. The sharing was done in small groups of six and in two sessions. This made it possible not only to listen to one another's story but also to engage in an exchange on how each one lives out his/her faith in a highly secularized society. The sharing had an enormous impact on the participants, for most of whom this was an entirely new experience.

It should be added here that the National Synod movement, which brought together close to a thousand people at a one-day gathering in December 2011, practiced the sharing of faith stories on that occasion, and since then is promoting it in local settings, in already over forty places in the country. They have a website with guidelines and all the necessary explanations.

In another part of the meeting, participants were asked to say where they saw the Spirit at work today, in or outside their faith communities. The outcome was [Cont. p.5]

Facing the challenge of 'Christian witness in a world of many Christian families'

The Global Christian Forum committee has agreed to begin a process to help the global church face the traumatic and difficult issue of 'Proselytism'.

While there is debate as to the precise meaning of proselytism, it is commonly understood as the activity of one part of the Church trying to gain members or 'convert' Christians from another part of the Church. This can lead to tension and bitterness across church traditions and in some cases communal violence.

Taking seriously the instruction of the second global GCF gathering in Manado, Indonesia 2011 "to move forward together in addressing common challenges" the GCF committee has carefully looked at a number of areas of high importance that fall into the 'facing common challenges' criteria.

The issue of 'Christian witness in a world of many Christian families' was seen as one important area to be considered.

Some leaders have counselled against getting involved fearing that it may in fact set off more tension and division.

But it was agreed that a process may be discovered that allows the global church to address the issues, acknowledge the pain and suffering and its damage to the unity of the church without stirring extra damage but begin to heal wounds and find ways forward that enable the message of Christ to be proclaimed in love.

Prior to the GCF Committee gathering in September, the GCF brought together a broadly based group of Christian leaders to, "have honest and open conversation on whether or not a new global initiative on this issue is needed and, if so, who is in

the best position to lead."

Included in their discussions was reference to a somewhat similar experience when the Catholic Church, World Council of Churches and the World Evangelical Alliance developed a statement on "Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World" to deal with issues of inter-religious conversion and evangelism in June, 2011.

As a result of the September exploratory discussion the GCF committee has agreed to initiate further conversations with global interchurch bodies and Christian World Communions on the issue.



Facing tough issues: participants in the September exploratory discussion

Launch of Netherlands Christian Forum (continued).

summarized by Joris Vercammen, Old-Catholic Archbishop of Utrecht, in six areas:

- decline and crisis, yet God is definitely present in all seasons, also in winter;
- being Christian, without inhibition, the "do-alogue" before the di-alogue;
- urgency, pain, wounds of division, forgiveness;
- coming closer to one another, faith stories, taking diversity seriously, saying 'no' to new divisions, acknowledging the limits of one's own truth;
- serious theological dialogue (the example of the Protestant Church and the United Evangelical and Pentecostal Churches); and
- ecumenism of life, the society, the Spirit

at work outside the churches.

A final exercise of looking towards the future concluded the meeting. Three proposals for next steps were noted:

- a much larger meeting than this one, aiming at national, regional and local leaders of churches, church-related organizations, para-church bodies, respecting the principle of 50% "established" and 50% "new";
- spreading out to regional and local, especially the sharing of faith stories, with particular attention to breaking down the walls between the Dutch churches and the immigrant churches;
- visibility: a national event.
- One other major issue that surfaced in many of the discussions was unity

for the sake of mission, new initiatives of being together in mission in The Netherlands.

The presence and active participation of the immigrant churches was a breakthrough.

Finally, occasionally the question of the relationship between the "old" oikoumene and the "new", the Forum, came up.

The representatives of the established churches affirmed their loyalty to the "old", some going as far as saying that the purpose of the "new" was to serve the "old". The others would say, well, that's your story, not necessarily mine... That discussion definitely has to continue, and there is room for it.

Hubert van Beek

GCF and World Council of Churches sign MoU

Reflecting the relationship between the World Council of Churches and the GCF, the two entities signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) last September during the international Committee meeting in Geneva.

The MoU which, according to the signed document is an affirmation of the "their distinct and complementary roles in the quest for Christian unity" is the result of a 18 month discussion between the GCF and WCC, including consideration at the Ghana GCF meeting last November.

The World Council of Churches is a foundational pillar of the GCF, as it was former WCC General Secretary, Dr Konrad Raiser who initiated the vision of a wider space for discussion across the Christian spectrum at the 8th Assembly in Harare in 1998.

GCF Secretary, Larry Miller said, "The relationship with the WCC is a fundamental reality for the GCF. We welcome this memorandum as the sign of a strong mutual commitment to our future cooperation."

At the signing of the MoU, Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit, Secretary General of the WCC said, the moment was one of significant importance for both groups and reflected that it was a sign of "the good spirit" between them.



He mused that the MoU model was a possible forerunner for the WCC in other relationships with other bodies.

The MoU says, the document, "is a timely marker of the evolution of the relationship between the World Council of Churches and the Global Christian Forum.

"The GCF acknowledges with gratitude the WCC's role in bringing forward the concept of such a Forum, in promoting its development, and its continuing support. Without these, the GCF would not have come into being. Its continuing life is enriched by its on-going relationship with the WCC."

Likewise, "the WCC acknowledges with gratitude the work done by the GCF. It celebrates the effects of its work already visible, and the growing clarity of self-direction and breadth of support achieved by the GCF"

The MoU recognizes that GCF has "developed a flexible, and distinctive, process for catalyzing contacts and nurturing relationships between churches and inter-church organizations from traditions which had little, if any, encounter or current likelihood of encounter with one another.

The goal of these encounters is to deepen a commitment both to unity, and to shared participation in mission."

The MoU notes that the work of the WCC and GCF "are in no way mutually exclusive."

"They have distinct and yet complementary roles in and in relation to the ecumenical movement, responding as Christ's followers to his prayer that they "may be one... So that the world may believe", the MoU states.

Suffering Church: GCF plans to convene international consultation on discrimination, persecution and martyrdom

Everyday someone, somewhere in the world, from every Christian tradition is suffering for their faith in Christ. It can take the form of discrimination, or persecution; it can include torture and in some instances murder.

Facing this abrupt reality and given the extended reach of the GCF across all streams of world Christianity, the GCF committee has agreed to work towards convening an international consultation on the issue of discrimination of Christians and churches. The date has not yet need set, but it is hoped for late 2014 or 2015.

Because the GCF is exposed to the breadth and depth of the world Christianity, it in turn is exposed to the story of the suffering church.

Thus, the GCF itself has experienced the cost of Christian discipleship in its own life through the disappearance of its committee member, Archbishop Mar Gregorius of Aleppo in Syria earlier this year.

In a report to the committee, Larry Miller, GCF secretary said, "there is an impression of the intensifying of experiences of pressure, discrimination, suffering and 'persecution' in a number of parts in of the church."

He mentioned the Middle East, including

Egypt and Syria, but noted reports had come in from such diverse countries as Nigeria, Pakistan, Afghanistan and India.

Miller also said major church leaders, including Pope Francis, Justin Welby the Archbishop of Canterbury, and Evangelical and Pentecostal leaders had made public comment on the situation.

At one point, he said, the Pope had used the phrase 'ecumenism of suffering' in relation to the situation in the Middle East.

It is envisaged that GCF would work with a wide range of world communions of churches and Christian bodies with an interest in the area to bring the consultation to fruition.

In his report Miller noted that there were a range of views on persecution, from people not wanting to support a kind of 'victimisation complex', to another church leader from Latin America who suggested that when someone becomes a Christian, "we accept the probability of suffering for our work of peace and justice."

Nevertheless, Miller said, that in his discussion with GCF participant bodies, "I found broad and growing support for... some kind of common initiative on this issue, including on the part of some who had previously expressed hesitation."

Persecution sharing:

St. Paul in writing to the church at Corinth, said when one part of the body suffers all parts of the body suffer along with it (1 Corinth12:26).

So it was that GCF committee members again became aware of the reality of the suffering church just days after their meeting, with the bombing of All Saint's Church in Peshawar, Pakistan. Over 100 lives were lost.

Former GCF secretary Hubert van Beek, who had been in Pakistan last year on behalf of the GCF, immediately contacted Bishop Samuel Azariah, the Moderator of the Church of Pakistan. Just two days after the attack, the bishop wrote back,

"Hubert thank you for your prayers. It is our Church in the Diocese of Peshawar. I am on my way to Peshawar. The pain is too big but the hope and the strength of our Lord Jesus is with us. May we continue to love and forgive. Bp. Sammy"

In addition to the joint concern expressed by Christian leaders across the spectrum of traditions, the Assembly of God churches in Pakistan joined in ecumenical care by offering relief efforts for affected families and AG World Missions joined in by sending assistance through its Suffering Church Fund.

Contact: Seminars and introductions for GCF committee

A Global Christian Forum and World Council of Churches seminar deals with the 'distinctive and complimentary roles' of their life in the service of Christian unity

A joint World Council of Churches (WCC) and Global Christians Forum (GCF) seminar has marked the affirmation of the relationship between the WCC and the Global Christian Forum (GCF), confirming their 'distinctive and complementary roles' in the quest for Christian unity.

The seminar, held on 11 October in Geneva, brought together representatives of the WCC and GCF, along with members of other international ecumenical organizations.

At the seminar, the Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit, general secretary of the WCC, spoke about "conciliar ecumenism and the role of councils in rapidly changing ecclesial landscapes". The term "conciliar" refers to formal councils and conferences of churches at national, regional and international levels.

Tveit added that "to seek Christian unity we have to recognize the importance of mutual accountability, which is the pulse of conciliar ecumenism. With this spirit, we can turn the challenges of division into opportunities and work together towards justice and peace."

Rev. Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, member of the GCF committee, in his presentation on the new developments in world Christianity, said: "We are living



Breaking walls of prejudice: Rev Dr Richard Howell saying 'there are examples where GCF faith sharing has helped.'

(c) KimCan-Global Christian Forum

in the most significant times of change in Christian history, depicting a shift in the presence of the world's Christians."

"On our way to Busan, [the location of the 10th WCC Assembly held in October and November] we need to ask ourselves what is the scope of these changes and what does this mean for our common search for Christian unity," added Granberg-Michaelson.

Rev. Dr Richard Howell, member of the GCF committee and general secretary of the Asia Evangelical Alliance, also addressed the seminar.

"There are several examples of the GCF initiatives where the concept of 'sharing of faith and

journeying together with Christ' has helped to break the walls of prejudice among Christian traditions, including Catholic, Pentecostal and Charismatic traditions," said Howell.



Times of change: Rev Wesley Granberg-Michaelson speaks at the GCF-WCC seminar



Price: a young girls weeps and prays after the bombing of a church in Peshawar, Pakistan.

Website extra

A sermon, a reflection and a paper are three interesting new items to be posted on the GCF website, to coincide with this newsletter. Check them out at www.globalchristianforum.org

- A sermon delivered by Dr (Cecil) Mel Robeck, GCF committee member, Assemblies of God pastor, and Professor of Church History (Fuller Theological Seminary, USA), prior to a discussion on 'proselytism' in the opening worship of the exploratory conversation at Bossey, Switzerland, September 2013.
- A reflection by Fr Dr K.M. George, Emeritus professor and priest of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church (Kerala, India), at morning prayers in the Ecumenical Centre (Geneva, Switzerland), September 2013, on the first morning of the GCF committee meeting at the same location.
- A paper, 'God on Our Side - Religious Terrorism' presented at the St. Egidio International Meeting for Peace, Rome, October 2013, by Rev Dr Larry Miller, Secretary of the GCF.

Pentecostal Forum of Latin America and the Caribbean

By Hubert Van Beek

• Andino Sub-regional Meeting

The second sub-regional meeting of the Latin American and Caribbean Pentecostal Forum took place on 15 – 17 October 2013 in Bogotá, Colombia.

The meeting brought together participants from four countries of the Andino region: Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru.

They represented so-called “classical” Pentecostal denominations (Assemblies of God, Church of God, etc.) as well as a few independent churches and a mega church belonging to what is known as the “third wave” or neo-pentecostal movement. The meeting was held at the Seminary of the Assemblies of God in Colombia.

The group that gathered in Bogotá was small in number, due in particular to budgetary limitations and somewhat lesser participation from the host country than expected. However the level of involvement of the participants and the depth of the discussions was remarkable and compensated for the limited size of the gathering.

As in all meetings of the Pentecostal Forum, the focus of the presentations, discussions and reflection was the unity and identity of the Pentecostal churches in Latin America, in this case the Andino region, and the relationships with other Christian traditions, in particular the Roman Catholic Church. A Roman Catholic scholar from Chile and researcher in Roman Catholic – Pentecostal relationships, currently working in Colombia, attended part of the meeting.

In terms of Pentecostal unity, one of the prominent issues in the discussions was the relationship between classical pentecostalism and neo-pentecostalism.

Some of the characteristics of the latter are the preaching of the prosperity gospel and the quest for power, the role of liturgy in

worship, and spiritual warfare. The growth and ‘attractivty’ of neo-pentecostalism tends to be perceived as a threat in the classical denominations and there is a sense of competition.

It was said that it was not a matter of one side - i.e. classical pentecostalism - preserving the pure doctrine, and the other - neo-pentecostalism or “neo-classic” - being a negative diversion. Classical pentecostalism has also negative aspects, e.g. the place of women, theological isolation etc. Another comment was that the differences are not only theological but also sociological.

Neo-pentecostalism was described as a radicalized response to post modernity that appeals to the middle and upper class, in contrast with the classical movement that historically developed among the popular sectors of the society.

It was stated that the relationship was more a question of pentecostal identity, which is increasingly becoming a core issue because of the extraordinary diversity of Pentecostalism.

Other manifestations of this growing diversity include the apostolic prophecy movement and the non-institutional emerging church. What is it to be pentecostal? While the classical answer remains: the experience of baptism in the Holy Spirit, there was some agreement in the meeting that pentecostalism is primarily identified by its capacity to adapt itself to new situations. Stated in those terms, the emergence of neo-pentecostalism could be understood as an expression of the reformation principle *ecclesia semper reformanda*.

Part of the diversity of Pentecostalism is the existence of Pentecostal groups that are Unitarian (e.g. the “Jesus Only” churches such as the Apostolic Church of the Faith in Jesus Christ). The question was asked whether these churches should be invited to the Pentecostal Forum.

Another central issue in the discussions was the question of gender and the role of women in the Pentecostal churches. Although there was no controversy and

participants agreed that women should have equal access to ministry, ordination and leadership, the matter would probably have received less attention if the women participants had not forcefully put it on the table, through their presentations and interventions.

There was a self-critical awareness in the meeting that Pentecostals do not have a history of unity but rather of division and schism. They have turned that into a means of multiplying the number of churches and numerical growth of which they are proud and which they see as a blessing of God. But division is not God’s will.

Another interesting theological self-criticism was the discrepancy in Trinitarian pentecostalism between doctrine and worship, which is almost entirely focused on giving praise and glory to Jesus.

The centrality of pentecostal Christology: Christ saves, heals, sanctifies and comes soon, the “foursquare” gospel, leaves little space for God the Father.

Bernardo Campos, a Pentecostal theologian from Peru and theological animator of the Forum, presented a paper on unity in which he suggested three stages:

- minimal unity, i.e. Christian unity
- medium unity, i.e. dialogue with other world religions (and in Latin America with indigenous religions)
- maximum unity, i.e. the unity of humankind when all will be gathered up in Christ according to the design of God the Father.

The open and critical character of the discussion was challenged several times by one of the participants who warned against the danger of a liberal theology that would water down the core of the Pentecostal message.

His was a genuine voice in a genuine intra-pentecostal dialogue. One of the answers given was that what used to be specifically pentecostal is more and more becoming common good across confessional boundaries.

In group discussions, participants addressed two questions: 1) elements in Pentecostal theology that would allow to open a dialogue between pentecostal churches, and 2) how to initiate a process towards pentecostal unity in Latin America.

Elements that were lifted up by the groups were:

- worship and fasting
- experience of the Spirit
- theology of the Kingdom
- social service
- challenges of the society and public witness (lifting up the pentecostal voice)
- integral mission

In response to the second question three points were mentioned:

- awareness building
- inviting denominations rather than individuals
- creating spaces of communication between high level institutional entities.

The participants also met in country groups in order to consider opportunities of follow-up in their context back home.

Plans were presented for small-scale meetings to be held in the four countries in the coming months, around the theme

WCC Assembly: More than greetings - discussion, encounter and sharing

When the WCC met for its 10th Assembly in Busan, South Korea from 30 October to 8 November last year, the Global Christian Forum was energetically present, from offering greetings and goodwill, to promoting discussion and ‘more’.

The ‘more’ included being a ‘friendly, entwining’ presence as other observers and visitors, who are also participants in the GCF, added their voice of greeting to the WCC both in their own right but also as connected friends through the work of the GCF.

So it was that the Pentecostal World

of unity and other issues of common interest, and to make the Pentecostal Forum known among church leadership and pastors. Each group also appointed a person who would act as the contact person of the Pentecostal Forum in the country.

On the last morning of the meeting, the participants were joined by a large group of students of the Seminary of the Assemblies of God, for an exchange on the issue of unity. It was striking how neo-pentecostalism emerged in the interventions of the students as one of their major concerns. It was refreshing to hear several of them speak about the need for Pentecostal churches to address the socio-economic and political issues of society, e.g. violence and peace in Colombia.

In a final round, suggestions were made for the Pentecostal Forum and the programs of future meetings:

- more time for worship and Bible study
- include more women and young people, organize encounters for women and for youth
- sessions with Catholic and Protestant speakers
- invite experts in sociology, political science, economy

Fellowship and the World Evangelical Alliance offered greetings, mentioning their joint participation in the GCF alongside the WCC.

The GCF also conducted two important events for WCC participants: a workshop on ‘World Christianity and our Ecumenical Future’ and a side event on ‘What is the Global Christian Forum?’

- The workshop was full to overflowing with over 100 people attending.
- The side event was also well attended, with former WCC Secretary General, Dr Konrad Raiser, sharing the motivational impulses that caused him to call for a new open space, ‘a forum’, for the wider expression of the search for Christian unity at the 8th WCC Assembly in Zimbabwe, 1998.

- help classical denominations to emancipate from their “mother churches” in the North
- sharpen the particular focus of the Pentecostal Forum, learn from earlier processes towards Pentecostal unity in Latin America (e.g. CEPLA) and avoid repeating mistakes
- coordinate with RELEP, the Latin American network of Pentecostal studies.

This second sub-regional meeting was part of the process of the Pentecostal Forum of Latin America and the Caribbean that began in 2011, in Lima, Peru.

The first sub-regional meeting was held in November 2012 in Chile, for the countries of the Southern Cone (Argentina, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay).

Two more are planned, in 2014, for Central America and the Spanish-speaking Caribbean, and Brazil.

It is hoped that these meetings will culminate in a continent-wide Pentecostal Forum meeting in 2015, possibly in conjunction with a third regional meeting of the Global Christian Forum in Latin America, and in the perspective of the third global gathering of the GCF which might convene in Latin America in 2016.

- The GCF also hosted a booth in the ‘Madang’ (community space) constantly handing out literature, engaging in discussion and answering many question about the GCF’s life.
- In his official greeting to the Assembly Dr Larry Miller, said “We are living at an opportune time in the history of the Church, when God is at work in fresh ways for Christian unity.” He noted that world Christianity had three new leaders with a new Catholic Pope, a new leader of the Anglican Communion and several new patriarchs in the Orthodox family. The Global Christian Forum, he said, “is a sign of this movement of the Spirit — and it is this Forum that brings the WCC fraternal greetings and heartfelt thanks.”

Snapshots: three moments

The GCF committee meeting in Geneva last September created moments for special engagement

- The GCF delegation had a special afternoon tea with staff of the YWCA international office in Geneva, learning about their work with women across the world which included campaigns against domestic violence, educational opportunities for young women and concerns about 'child brides'.
- A session of the GCF schedule allowed committee members to meet with national and local church leaders.

Hubert van Beek, who is both a member of a local congregation and the founding Secretary of the GCF (and who remains engaged as a consultant) gave an overview of the history and vision of the GCF, followed by questions and discussion.

- Bringing Christian people and groups together at a common table for discussion is a key aim of the GCF, and it happened during time at the recent committee meeting when leaders of two international Christian youth organisations came together.

GCF committee member, Dr Femi Adeleye, who represents the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students (IFES), met with Ms Christine Housel of the World Student Christian Fellowship (WSCF).

Ms Housel addressed the GCF committee explaining the need for students and young people to be able to engage across confessional and denominational boundaries. She said an 'open space'-type vision for engagement was timely, having personally experienced how young people from across the Christian spectrum come together so easily at the 2nd global CGF gathering in Manado, Indonesia in 2011.

The Global Christian Forum web site 'Photo Gallery' has fresh images of GCF activities, including the meeting of the International Committee, the Theological Working Group and GCF-related activities at the World Council of Churches General Assembly, Busan South Korea.

Go to: www.globalchristianforum.org

Right: Christine Housel (WSCF) and Femi Adeleye (IFES) agree about getting young Christians talking together.

Below & Centre: Tea and talk at the YWCA

Bottom: H.E. Metropolitan Jérémie, of the Archdiocese of Switzerland of the Ecumenical Patriarchate (left) and Hubert van Beek (right) in animated discussion, while Protopresbyter Basile Kotrotsios, Rector of St. Paul's Church at the Orthodox Centre of the Archdiocese near Geneva (centre) looks on.

