

Global Christian Forum News

2019 Edition 02



Hearing From Youth Voices

The Global Christian Forum Facilitation Group met, with the addition of extra youth voices from Christian confessions, in Christiansfeld, Denmark, October 11th and 12th, 2019, at the invitation of the Moravian Church, with a focus on exploring one of the directives that came out of the Bogota Gathering in 2018, to enhance youth participation in the life of the Forum. This was done in celebration of the richness of Christian diversity and using the methodology of the Global Christian Forum of sharing faith stories in an atmosphere of openness.

The meeting started by sharing some of the history of the Global Christian Forum to lay the groundwork for a multipart discussion on youth participation in the life of the Forum as a whole. After conversation in smaller groups, everyone came together to share the fruits of their discussions. The importance of discipleship, spiritual friendship (a kind of two-way mentorship), intergenerational leadership, and the importance of the Global Christian Forum methodology were common themes in all the small group discussions. As a way forward, the group discussed the possibility of a youth focused event as a precursor to the next Global Gathering, to be tested at the upcoming regional gatherings. This would be a multi faceted event, or retreat, potentially featuring spiritual experiences and/or intergenerational learning, as well as building a comfort with the history and methodology of the Forum.

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Latin American Regional Consultation



Latin American church leaders, joined by Global Christian Forum Secretary Revd Dr Casely Essamah, met in Bogotá, Colombia, in late October to explore the possibility of a 3rd Latin American Regional Consultation in 2021. After 2 days of fruitful discussion and deliberation they issued the following Communiqué.

We thank God for the opportunity of meeting to build on the Global Christian Forum experiences in Latin America (Santiago, Chile, 2007 and San José, Costa Rica, 2010) and the call of the Latin American participants in the Third Global Gathering (Bogotá, April 2018). In a spirit of prayer, we share our journey of faith and explore how to strengthen our united Christian witness in Latin America.

Even when we identify signs of hope, such as expressions of solidarity and mutual support, when analyzing our context, we recognize that our continent is going through a critical moment (violence, demonstrations, extreme polarization, climate change, migrations). In the ecclesial context we appreciate the dialogue between Mennonites and Lutherans, the recognition of the leadership of the present Pope, the celebration of the 500 years of the Protestant Reformation, the development of social pastorals in relation to indigenous peoples, and the very important role of women in faith communities.

As a church in Latin America we face challenges both in terms of our identity and our public witness. Although churches have a very meaningful missional commitment, our credibility is threatened by great religious fragmentation. Insufficient theological and pastoral formation weakens our social, political and ecological impact. We are concerned about the spread of religious fundamentalisms, escapist theologies and the detrimental influence of sexual abuse scandals in churches.

We appreciate the gifts our Latin American church offers to the global family. Among them are the appreciation of the poor as a theological category, the theological and pedagogical process of seeing, judging and acting, the celebration of our faith with music and liturgy and our passion for the mission that is articulated in all areas of the life of our peoples. We pray that the Spirit of life will inspire us to read the signs of the times, to strengthen our following of Jesus, to replace the values of consumption with those of the Gospel, to overcome our ecclesial prejudices and to link up for service in the common house.

Being aware that we cannot face these challenges independently, and that it is necessary to work together on behalf of our region and the rest of the world, we reaffirm our desire to hold a continental Forum and to encourage inter-ecclesial gatherings at local and national levels.

For the organization of the Forum, we appointed a Continuation Committee made up of people belonging to the four

Our Continuing Work



Secretary Essamuah attended Jesus Global Youth Day in Manila, Philippines, in August. This event, put on by the World Evangelical Alliance, demonstrates one way in which youth can be actively engaged by the global church. For more information on how the Global Christian Forum is looking at engaging youth see the story on page 1 of this newsletter.



The 18th Plenary Assembly and Golden Jubilee of the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM), took place in Kampala, Uganda, in July. The event, included approximately 300 participants, including representatives from the Vatican, Cardinals, Archbishops and bishops, priest representatives of Religious congregations, the lay faithful and other dignitaries from the length and breadth of the World, Africa and the surrounding islands. The Global Christian Forum was represented by approximately 10 former participants and Secretary the Revd Dr Essamuah. Attendees deliberated on how far the church has come and what the way forward should be for the next fifty years.

New Committee Member



Revd Christo Greyling,
Senior Director for Faith and
External Engagement, World
Vision International,
Netherlands

God has been on a unique journey with Christo. He grew up in South Africa within a missionary family in the high times of apartheid. Inspired by his father's commitment to stand up for justice, he completed his theological studies at the University of Stellenbosch. During his final years in seminary, Christo, a haemophiliac, tested positive for HIV. In 1992 he publicly disclosed his HIV status to his congregation in Windhoek, Namibia. His vision was to be a witness for Christ in the midst of his situation, while helping the church and others to respond to HIV with compassion and constructive action, which led to the initiation of the Christian AIDS Bureau of Southern Africa. After he completed his Masters in Public Health, he joined World Vision and led the development of the Channels of Hope methodology. In his current role Christo works towards meaningful partnerships and collaborations with Churches and faith actors to meaningfully contribute towards to God's calling to ensure all children have life in all its fullness and can live in communities without violence.

"It is an honour to be part of the Global Christian Forum who demonstrates the unity of the Body of Christ. Together we can bring healing and hope in our broken world."

Hearing the Spirit Now

The 25th Pentecostal World Conference took place in Calgary, Canada, in August, under the theme Spirit Now, with many sub-themes identified over the week as important to the Global Pentecostal Movement. Of note to those involved in the Global Christian Forum, including staff, Committee members, including Archbishop Michael Chamoun and Dr Jean-Daniel Plüss, and former participants, was the place given to the importance in having many people at the table in conversation and the increased stated desire for Christian unity.

This desire for unity was highlighted in the opening session which featured presentations from Global Christian Forum Committee member the Revd Dr Prince Guneratnam, then Chair of the Pentecostal World Fellowship and senior pastor at Calvary Church, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, and the Revd Dr William (Billy) Wilson President of Oral Roberts University in the United States. Wilson, who was announced as the next Chair of the Pentecostal World Fellowship during the closing session, spoke of the importance of Christian unity

to upcoming leaders. He also highlighted the importance Christian unity seems to be playing in what could be a 4th phase of the Charismatic Movement.



The theme of unity also presented itself in many other plenary sessions, perhaps most powerfully though in the second evening's session which focused on unity at the table, and featured Global Christian Forum Committee Member, and General Superintendent of The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada the Revd Dr David Wells and the President of the Apostolic Church of Pentecost of Canada the Revd Wesley Mills outlining a process of reconciliation between the two denominations in Canada.

When the Conference split into breakout Affinity Groups on two of the days, participants had the opportunity each day to attend a session on Unity which was well received. Each session featured a panel of people exploring different aspects of Christian unity and the various roles that churches in the

global Pentecostal movement have had in the search for visible Christian unity. Panellists included Global Christian Forum Secretary the Revd Dr Casely Essamuah and committee members Revd Dr David Han and Commissioner Elizabeth Matear the first day and the General Secretary of the World Council of Churches the Revd Dr Olav Fykse Tveit and Global Christian Forum Committee member Prof Dr C. Mel Robeck the second.



In the closing session the theme of unity was once again present as speaker Danielle Strickland reminded those gathered that "it doesn't matter who's to blame, it matters what we do now". Strickland's message was followed with a presentation of the message from the 25th Pentecostal World Conference. Among the many aspects of the message, was a "call for a new season of collaboration and partnership within Pentecostal churches and ministries worldwide."

More Continuing Work



Bishop Efraim Tendaro speaks during the opening ceremony of the World Evangelical Alliance's 2019 General Assembly in Jakarta, Indonesia (Photo: WEA)

The World Evangelical Alliance experienced rejuvenation and revitalization at their Global Assembly in November in Jakarta, Indonesia. The Global Christian Forum had many representatives and past participants at the Assembly including Secretary the Revd Dr Casely B. Essamuah.



Revd Dr Essamuah attended the celebration of the Full Communion Agreement, in Winnipeg, Canada, between the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in North America and the United Church of Canada. Both denominations are also in Full Communion with the United Church of Christ (USA).

New Committee Member



Dr Ruth Padilla DeBorst, Resonate Global Mission, Costa Rica

A narrative theologian and missiologist, Dr Ruth Padilla DeBorst works in leadership development with Resonate Global Mission (Christian Reformed Church of North America), the Comunidad de Estudios Teológicos Interdisciplinarios, and INFEMIT (International Fellowship for Mission as Transformation – www.infemit.org). She served on the steering committee for GCF – Latin America in San José, Costa Rica (2010) and spoke at the GCF gathering in Bogotá (2018).



The Global Christian Forum was represented at the Asia Leaders' Summit in Tokyo, Japan, in September by Secretary Essamuah and Committee Member the Revd Dr David Sang-Ehil Han. The conference of senior pastors of megachurches in Asia, expressed interest in working with the Global Christian Forum and in supporting an Asia Regional Consultation.

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To end the meeting discussions took place on current global trends to inform the planning of the 4th Global Gathering. Many of the trends named highlighted the continued importance of the work done at the Global Consultation that took place in Tirana, Albania, 2-4 November 2015, and its report titled *Discrimination, Persecution, Martyrdom*. Other trends, including migration, xenophobia, the state of spirituality in the world, and the current climate crisis, were also named. Discussion also included what the nature of common Christian witness might be, and how the Global Christian Forum might engage, or encourage Christian witness. All the items discussed will be taken to the next meeting of the Global Christian Forum Committee which will take place in April 2020 in Seoul, South Korea.



As this was the last meeting for long-time participant Dr Richard Howell of India, the meeting closed with a time of special thanks for his incredibly meaningful contributions to the Global Christian Forum.

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pillars of the Global Christian Forum. Generally speaking, we anticipate a meeting of about 100 participants, of whom at least 10% should be young leaders and at least 30% women.

We will also take care of ethnic diversity, so that the meeting reflects a church of all. The city of Lima is proposed as the venue and Bogotá as the second option. The approximate date will be April 2021. We call on the churches to adopt this opportunity as their own, including their contribution of human and financial resources. The participants in this meeting commit ourselves to promote processes at the local and national levels in our respective countries. We entrust ourselves to the Triune God so that His will may be done in our lands and in heaven.

From Bogotá: Revd Samuel Murillo

A reflection on the 3rd Global Gathering's continued place in a participant's life



Latin America could be the region in the world with the highest inequalities. This has been more evident lately through strong social protests and movements clamouring for justice in the region; Colombia, Bolivia, Chile, Honduras, etc. The demand is for better and equal opportunities for everyone while the region experiences forced displacement and migration. All this is part of the concern of the public agenda which include ministries among churches according to our common call.

The Global Christian Forum gathering in Bogotá and the statement for mutual recognition and witnessing are part of the huge needs for Christianity in the region. To give ourselves the opportunity to engage in deep listening and commitment for the common good.

The invitation to share our stories of life and faith, with our own light and darkness, is a good opportunity for us to engage in the long journey of discovering our common humanity, while recognizing how much we need and can help each other. Experiencing that who Christ is for me is the same for others, while they experience the same.

Let mutual love continue, the motto for the 2018 Global Christian Forum gathering in Bogotá, should still engage our churches widely to continue exploring our common challenges and to move together towards mutual discernment of recognition, witnessing and unity as an answer to the call from God to discipleship.