

Global Christian Forum News

2013 Edition 02

Introduction

Welcome to the second GCF News for 2013. This big edition carries important articles about a wide spectrum of issues of interest to those connected with the GCF. We report on a massive Celebration of Unity across the churches in Indonesia in a first ever event for Asia, maybe even

for the world. We share news of 'Popes, Archbishops and Patriarchs'. We tell of the global Christian response and continuing concern for the kidnapping of two Archbishops in Syria. And there have been two significant regional GCF consultations... and much more!

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A NEW WEBSITE is upon us. After a long wait the new, updated GCF website will be on line at the end of July.



60,000 celebrate Christian unity

by Kim Cain

Sixty thousand strong crowd rallies to celebrate Christian unity in Jakarta.

In a first for Indonesia, the nation with the world's largest Muslim population, about 60,000 Christians from all major church traditions have gathered in a 'celebration of unity' in the national sports stadium in the capital city, Jakarta.

In a mass demonstration of Christian unity believed to be unique in Asia – and perhaps the world – the rally brought together people from seven different families of church traditions including Catholic, Evangelical, Orthodox, Pentecostal, Protestant, Baptist and Salvation Army for the sole purpose of expressing Christian solidarity.

The Jakarta event, which took place on the eve of Pentecost (18 May), was instigated also as a way of welcoming the World Council of Churches to Asia ahead of its 10th Assembly to be held in South Korea later this year.



One senior Asian church leader said prior to this event most other church gatherings were based on denominational celebrations and anniversaries, and often were mostly attended by church leaders. The excited and at times spirited crowd included as invited guests leaders of the South Korean WCC general assembly organizing committee, led by Dr Kim Samhwan, the general secretary of the WCC, Olav Fykse Tveit and the secretary of the Global Christian Forum, Larry Miller.

Miller said the Indonesian churches were offering an example to the world, showing how church unity could be expressed in new, expanded and more public ways.

Miller noted that the Indonesian Christian Forum, which organized the event, was itself inspired by and formed during the GCF's

Something to celebrate: part of the unity crowd at Jakarta's national stadium.

second global gathering in the Indonesia city of Manado 21 months ago.

"Now the Indonesian Christian Forum is welcoming the WCC to Asia, with a combination of churches whose constituency is much wider than WCC membership in Indonesia," he said. "This is a creative and memorable moment in the story of Christian unity."

Adding to the matrix, Miller said it was former WCC general secretary, Konrad Raiser who gave impetus to the formation of the Global Christian Forum when fifteen years ago, at the Eighth WCC Assembly in Harare, Zimbabwe, he called for the establishment of a new 'open space' where all churches – especially including those who were not members of the WCC – would be welcomed.

"So in some ways, with this Indonesian event we have witnessed the completion of a circle of mutual welcoming



60,000 CELEBRATE CHRISTIAN UNITY *continued...*

and hospitality, one that includes the development of complimentary and cooperative roles for the GCF and the WCC in the journey of Christian unity –

each one with gifts to share and ready to share them,” Miller said.

A highlight of the Jakarta celebration



was the lighting of a series of torches, somewhat reminiscent of an Olympic torch relay.

The torches, lit from torch to torch by leaders of the seven different church traditions culminated in a flame of unity extending up into the night sky.

The seven church families involved in the Indonesian Christian Forum, made a five point declaration of commitment when the ICF was formed on the closing day of the GCF gathering in Manado, 7 October

2011. It was again pledged publically at the rally.

Speaking at a 3,000 strong ‘Celebration of Unity’ seminar prior to the mass rally, WCC leader Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit said, “Christian unity is a way of living together... It is not about being united by defining ourselves against something, but we live in a unity of faith that calls us to serve the whole world.”

Rev Dr Andreas Yewangoe, chairperson of the Communion of Churches in



Top: Rev Dr Larry Miller speaking at Celebration of Unity seminar. Above: A flame - Church leaders spread the light. Above Right: On the big screen - music and light for unity celebration. Right: Traditional dress and smiling faces in the crowd for unity celebration.

Indonesia, reminded the crowd that “the unity of the churches is not because we declare it!

“No, the unity of the churches is only possible because Christians are called to love one another,” he said.

GCF concern at Syrian Church leaders kidnapping

At the time of publishing the GCF continues to express its concerns for the health and safety of two Archbishops kidnapped in Syria late April.

Archbishop Mar Gregorius Yohanna Ibrahim of the Syrian Orthodox Archdiocese of Aleppo and his travelling companion Archbishop Boulos Yazaji of the Greek Orthodox of Aleppo were taken by unknown assailants as they returned from the northern areas of Syria close to the Turkish border where they had undertaken humanitarian work.

Metropolitan Mar Gregorius is a valued member of the international committee of the GCF.

On the day of the kidnapping the GCF called for their release and prayers for their safety. In a media statement Larry Miller, GCF secretary asked that global participants in the Forum join in prayers for the safe release of the two bishops and a cessation of violence in the region.

Ironically, the incident happened on the same day the GCF released an Appeal by leaders of Middle East churches and Christian organisations calling for the rejection of “all forms of extremism and enmity, and to return to our shared human and spiritual values.”

See separate story, ‘GCF Middle East Consultation and Appeal, page 5.

The GCF’s invitation to prayer and support was added to across the globe by individuals, churches and Christian groups that reflected the array of Christian traditions and families that participate in the GCF.

In a special interview on Vatican Radio, Bishop Brian Farrell of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity expressed his concern for the Archbishops, and acknowledged the work of the GCF.

See separate story, United in prayer and concern for an account of responses to the kidnapping of the two Archbishops, p.4.

'Urgent ecumenical witness needed' says new book by GCF leader

A soon to be launched book on the implications of the wave of change that is currently re-shaping world Christianity calls for an "urgent ecumenical witness" in response to deep and fundamental developments that has seen the 'gravitational centre of Christianity' go from Europe to somewhere near Timbuktu in northern Africa.

Titled, *From Times Square to Timbuktu: The Post-Christian West Meet the Non-western Church*, the book by Wesley Granberg-Michaelson goes beyond describing the global trends of Christianity to explore the consequences of the two way exchange of Christian followers between the global North (predominately Europe and North America) and the global South (primarily Africa, Asia and Latin America).

Author Granberg-Michaelson is closely associated with the Global Christian Forum, currently serving on its international committee. He says the book reflects his 25 years of engagement in the ecumenical movement.

The distinctive aspect of this book, says Granberg-Michaelson, is that "while various authors have described in compelling ways the numbers and shape of Christianity's shift to the global South, no other book thus far has explored what this means for our call to Christian unity, and how ecumenical work must be re-evaluated and renewed."

He says, "The most serious ecumenical challenge of today is to discover ways to build bridges between churches with roots in the Tradition of the faith – which are largely centered in the global North – with the fast-growing, highly contextualized, spiritually exuberant churches found largely in the global South.

"Presently these function mostly in two separate ecclesiological and institutional worlds, but both need one another's gifts."

It is the "mustard seed-like work" of the Global Christian Forum, however, that "shows a promising potential for serving as a bridge, bringing many into

ecumenical fellowship that previously have been separate", he says.

Granberg-Michaelson told *GCF NEWS* that from a Global Christian Forum perspective, the book "places the vision and growth of the GCF within the context of the overall trends shaping world Christianity, with the decisive shift to the global South.

"[But] further, it reflects on the new kinds of divisions which confront Christianity on a global scale (geographical, institutional, theological, generational), and suggests creative ways forward, including what the GCF is doing. At the same time, it recognizes the continuing contribution of historic ecumenical vehicles such as the WCC."

Granberg-Michaelson, a minister with the Reformed Church of America, has spent a lifetime's work in the area of Christian unity. He has been with the National Council of Churches USA, Christian Churches Together in the USA, the World Communion of Reformed Churches, the World Council of Churches (as staff member and Central Committee member), and the Global Christian Forum.

He says, "An ecumenical witness is urgently needed today that responds to the changes in world Christianity and is fully inclusive of all the main expressions of Christian faith – historic Protestant, Pentecostal/Evangelical, Roman Catholic, and Orthodox.

"That's been my passion, and I've discovered that the patterns of global migration now create new possibilities to meet this challenge right at the doorstep of many congregations, if we can only be alert to what is happening in our midst.

There is also a 'flip-side' to the international migration of Christians: "the international has now become local".

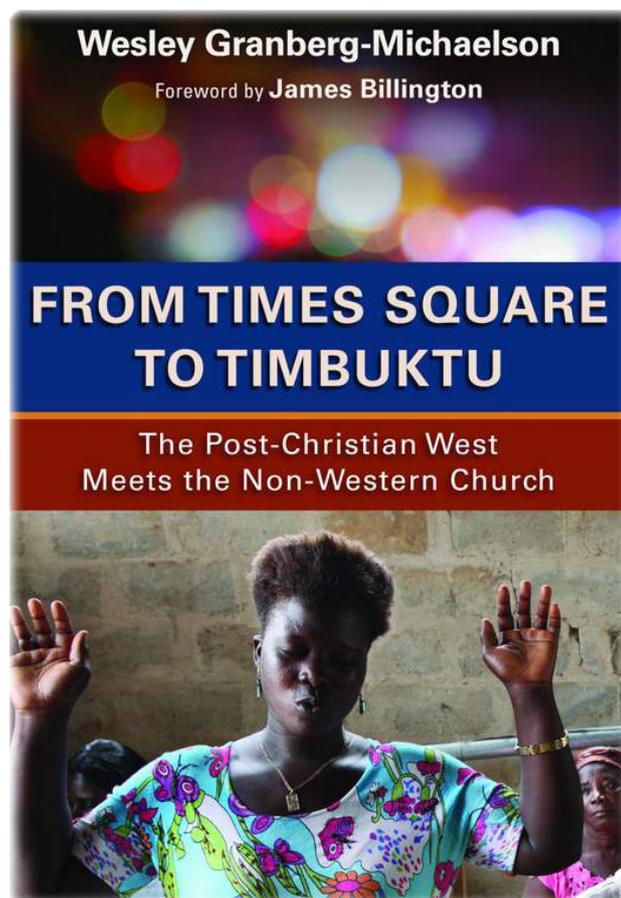
By this Granberg-Michaelson means there has been the rediscovery of "Christianity as primarily a non-Western religion" in our own neighborhoods, with migration from the global South to North.

"In many large metropolitan areas, the voices of world Christianity now are present in remarkable fullness" in ways similar to the global South.

This he says, creates "radically new challenges of hospitality for congregations, and requires a new vision for ecumenical work within such local settings."

From Times Square to Timbuktu: The Post-Christian West Meets the Non-Western Church, Published by Wm.B.Erdemans, 30 July, 2013.

Electronic version already available, <http://www.eerdmans.com/Products/6968/from-times-square-to-timbuktu.aspx>



United in prayer and concern

by Kim Cain

When news broke of the kidnapping of the two Archbishops earlier this year on 22 April, the international Christian community joined in spiritual unity of prayer and concern for the two abducted leaders – Archbishop Mar Gregorius Yohanna Ibrahim of the Syrian Orthodox Archdiocese of Aleppo and Archbishop Boulos Yazaji of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Aleppo.

The Global Christian Forum immediately distributed word of the event to its wider Christian contacts – being especially concerned as His Eminence Mar Gregorius is a valued member of its international committee.

What flowed out of that international sharing was an immediate spirit of goodwill and a call to prayer which spanned the full range of Christianity.

The response received by the GCF's secretary, Larry Miller, tells the story. While many expressed a willingness to act together in some way, all wanted to join in prayer.

Most also saw the need to pray for a 'wider peace' and for the violence to cease, but all were very focussed on the personal fears for both men.

Bishop Brian Farrell, of the Vatican's Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity did an interview on Vatican radio saying, "Our Pontifical Council has been saddened by the news of the kidnapping of the two Metropolitans that we know very well...it's almost a symbol of what is happening to all of the Christian communities in the Middle East.

He also mentioned the unique work of the GCF bringing together "a much wider spectrum of Christian churches and communities than normally happens." At about the same time Pope Francis said he had mentioned both bishops in his prayers and called for the "bloodshed to cease".

The World Council of Church's Secretary General, Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit immediately sent his concerns and support via iPad as he travelled between Cairo and Khartoum. Similarly, Rev Dr. Setri Nyomi

of the World Communion of Reformed Churches quickly offered to "circulate the information for prayers" and to pray for their release and safety.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, and the Bishop of Westminster, Vincent Nichols, issued a joint statement, saying "We both continue to pray for a political solution to this tragic conflict that would stem the terrible violence."



The World Evangelical Alliance through its General Secretary Dr Geoff Tunnicliffe expressed "deep concern" and said it would "mobilize prayer across the world".

Bishop James Leggett, past president of the World Pentecostal Fellowship and present GCF international committee member said, "I have just concluded a church board meeting, and we opened with prayer for them... We will trust together that the Lord will protect them and deliver them."

He was supported by the Dr Prince Guneratnam, current World Pentecostal Fellowship president who wrote from

Malaysia, "Just to let you know that the Calvary Prayer Tower Intercessors in Kuala Lumpur will certainly make this a serious matter of prayer and I will also request prayers from the Pentecostal fellowship" worldwide.

Other gatherings around the world remembered the situation: The Seventh Day Adventists prayed at their world headquarters in Washington, D.C.; American participants of a planning meeting in Chicago for the forthcoming World Council of Churches assembly

included the situation in their daily prayers; and a note from Kitchener, Ontario, Canada said "We will pray about it with our staff and others in a meeting we have this evening in Kitchener." The note was from César García, General Secretary, Mennonite World Conference.

In Africa, the General Secretary of the Association of Evangelicals in Africa, Rev. Aiah Foday Khabenje issued a call to prayer for the Middle East, and Rev. Nicta M. Lubaale, General Secretary, Organization of African Instituted Churches, said "we will continue to pray for H.E Mar Gregorius, Mgr Yazgi and all the people caught up in the conflict in Syria."

Meanwhile people of holiness traditions – the Salvation Army and Quakers – added their concerns: "This is deeply disturbing," said Gretchen Castle, General Secretary,

Society of Friends, World Committee. "We are grateful for our world network and our ability to offer pray across our communions. I will likewise send the request for prayer to Quakers worldwide. Prayer is powerful."

In Australia Rev Dr Robert Gribben, of the World Methodist Council (WMC) and the Uniting Church in Australia contacted both his local Orthodox leaders as support, and also initiated concern internationally. The WMC has posted a call to prayer notice on its website... as did many Christian websites around the world.

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In India, Prof. Emeritus K.M. George of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church, Kerala, India, noted his 30 year friendship with Metropolitan Mar Gregorius, writing that he and his church were “deeply grieved” by the news. He said the church would also convey their “deep and urgent concern to top government circles in India for necessary diplomatic action.”

Some in international Christian institutions also expressed their concern. Rev Pirjo-Liisa Penttinen of the International YWCA and a fellow GCF Committee member said it was “shocking

news” to receive. “Just two weeks ago we had good press and media coverage in two nationwide newspapers and magazines, up-dating the situation in Syria. They included the situation of Christians, helped though contacts with Metropolitan Mar Gregorius.”

The range of personal and institutional responses was not lost on long term observer and participant in inter-church matters, Dr Odair Pedroso Mateus, member of the Secretariat of the WCC Faith and Order Commission and Lecturer in Ecumenical Theology at the

Ecumenical Institute, Bossey, Switzerland.

In a note to Larry Miller, he said, “One of the most important insights of the early ecumenical movement was that despite and across our church divisions, we are one in Christ. This is precisely what this incident has made evident since Monday evening when you sent the... message.”

Two months after the abduction, the Greek and Syrian Orthodox churches held a ‘Cry for prayer and sit in’ outside St. Elias Greek Orthodox Church, Aleppo, in solidarity for the two captured church leaders.

GCF Middle East Consultation and Appeal

A significant Middle East GCF consultation in the first week of April 2013, brought together a wide variety of church and Christian organisations and issued an Appeal to churches, governments, international organisations and “fellow citizens” of the Middle East “to reject all forms of extremism and enmity, and to return to our shared human and spiritual values.”

Although the prime aim of the gathering, held in Amman, Jordan, was to discuss the issue of inter-church relationships and to build bridges of understanding, the current crisis of violence in the Middle East and the place of Christians in the region were very much in the minds of participants.

Within the concrete situation in the region, the participants said that they “exchanged perspectives on the situations of our churches... (and) discussed promoting inter-Christian relationships as well as relationships with the co-citizens of our countries with whom we share the present, the future, and the same fate.”

In the Appeal the participants said they were “appalled by the horrific and bloody violence in Syria”, and “also deeply concerned about the recent events in Egypt, with all their repugnant sectarian tensions and undesirable consequences.”

Sadly, the very day the Appeal was to be made public news came through of the

kidnapping of two Archbishops in Syria. *See accompanying stories, pages 2 and 4.*

In the Appeal the participants called on “the Global Christian Forum to show solidarity with Middle Eastern people in this critical period, by supporting their just causes, sounding the call to defend the victims and the oppressed, and contributing with all spiritual, moral, and financial means to help them remain in their own lands.

“We urge the churches and Christian communities participating in the Global Christian Forum to implore their societies, governments, institutions, and international assemblies to support

Christian presence in the Middle East in partnership with other religions.”

The consultation is the third Middle East encounter for the GCF, with a Team Visit taking place in 2009 and GCF consultant Hubert van Beek attending a meeting of the Fellowship of the Middle East Evangelical Churches (FMEEC) in February, 2012.

Present at the consultation were 21 representatives from churches and groups including from Anglican, Catholic, Protestant, Evangelical, Pentecostal, and Orthodox faith traditions.

See page 8 for the full text of the Appeal.

Below: Time to share: Consultation participants in Amman, Jordan.



Robeck recognized

Dr Cecil M. (Mel) Robeck, a member of the GCF international committee, pioneer and assiduous supporter of the life and work of the 'Forum' was recognized for his thirty year commitment to Christian unity and ecumenism when he was named as the recipient of the Washington Theological Consortium's Ecumenical Award last February.

The award honors "those who have made a significant contribution to ecumenism through work in ecumenical organizations and dialogue, scholarship in ecumenical theology, or through contributions to ecumenical ministries in worship, education, or social justice ministries."

Dr. Robeck is Professor of Church History and Ecumenics and Director of the David J. DuPlessis Centre for Christian Spirituality at Fuller Theological Seminary in California, USA.

He has been involved as a Pentecostal leader in ecumenical dialogues with a wider variety of Christian denominations



Dr Robeck recognized for his thirty-year commitment to Christian unity.

and groups, including the World Council of Churches, the Vatican, the World Communion of Reformed Churches, the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, and the Global Christian Forum.

As part of his acceptance, Dr Robeck delivered the annual Figel Address under the title, "Creative Imagination and

Ecumenism: Implications of Changing Demographics."

In it he noted the need for imagination in making way for new realities, and that such creative force was necessary in Christian thinking and action. He noted the great demographic shifts in global Christianity including the impact of Pentecostals within and beyond current church structures.

He urged Christians to imagine how world Christianity might look in 300 years time.

Given the passing of an existing way the church has functioned, he said "I don't posit a new Christendom to replace the older one, but it seems clear to me that something new is in the process of emerging.

"It will not look like what we see in our past. It will include new and vital ways of being Church. And it will include a greater place for the realities of 'life in the Spirit' to which Pentecostals have borne witness for a century, even as the Church struggles with its various forms to keep from fracturing further."

A Patriarch, a Pope and an Archbishop welcomed

Three significant Christian leadership transitions took place in the space of a few weeks in the opening months of this year, with all three, both individually and together, having an impact on the shape of world Christianity over the next decade.

Leaders of the Global Christian Forum have either been guests at the enthronement of and/or have sent greetings to the new spiritual leaders: His Beatitude Youhanna X, Patriarch of Antioch and All the East; Pope Francis of the Catholic Church; and Archbishop Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury.

Reflecting following the installations of Pope Francis and Archbishop Justin at the time of change GCF Secretary, Larry Miller said, "the Spirit has been blowing afresh this week, I believe, as we have seen two men of God installed in places where their inclination towards highest leadership serving in humility can make a decisive difference in both Church and world.

"The Global Christian Forum was invited to witness these moments. After consultation with Facilitation Group members, Prince Guneratnam and I represented the GCF at the inauguration of Pope Francis and at the audience for religious leaders the next morning. On Thursday, I attended the enthronement of the Archbishop of Canterbury and the 'courtesy visit' (audience) with him the next morning."

Prior to this activity, in January His Beatitude Youhanna X became Patriarch of the Greek Orthodox Church of Antioch and All the East. The Global Christian Forum sent a letter of greeting and congratulation.

The GCF letter made reference to the Patriarch's moving sermon at the time of his enthronement, which included the declaration that, "Jesus cries when he witnesses the divisions in the Christian world and the distance amongst its members, as well as the recent weakening

of ecumenical work". The letter also noted that Beatitude Yohannas was, "taking up his new ministry at a time of trial for the faithful in Syria, the Middle East and around the world." He was assured of the abiding prayers of the GCF.

Just a month later Pope Francis was enthroned as the Bishop of Rome at St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. Miller and GCF committee member, Dr Prince Guneratnam, president of the Pentecostal World Fellowship, represented the GCF at the service. In a message which they handed to Pope Francis, Mr Miller and Dr Guneratnam noted that the Catholic Church "has been a 'pillar' for the GCF from the beginning, more than a decade ago."

The letter said that Pope Francis had "given witness these days to Jesus Christ as the centre of the faith and the foundation of the Church. No witness is more important for Peter's successors. ...You have reached out your hand to all who

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Caribbean Consultation success *by Hubert van Beek*

A GCF consultation in the Caribbean has long been on the list of activities to be implemented. For various reasons it did not materialize in the period preceding the second global gathering in Indonesia of October 2011.

But finally it did take place on 20 – 23 May 2013, in Tunapuna, on the island of Trinidad. Organized in consultation and cooperation with the Caribbean Conference of Churches and the Evangelical Association of the Caribbean, the meeting brought together some thirty participants.

They represented denominations, councils of churches or Christian councils, and evangelical associations or fellowships from

Below: Caribbean consultation participants.



various parts of the region, member bodies of the two regional organizations, as well as two theological associations and one confessional regional fellowship (Baptist).

The venue was St. John Vianney Seminary, beautifully located on Mount St. Benedict, the site also of a Monastery and a Catholic church. The Episcopal Conference of the Antilles is a founding member of the Caribbean Conference of Churches.

This was an 'old style' Forum event, on the model of the early

Photos on this page courtesy Rev. Pirjo-Liisa Penttinen

regional consultations in Asia, Africa etc. It was also the very first time that the 'ecumenical' and the 'evangelical - pentecostal' components of the Christian presence in the Caribbean met at the regional level.

Consultation participants hard at work.



Highlights of the meeting were the sharing of faith stories and the daily devotions. It was striking to see how much the participants had in common, as they expressed and celebrated their faith in the Caribbean way. That sense of unity was also evident as the issues facing the churches were being identified and discussed.

Although there were differences in sensitivity and approach, the understanding of Christian witness regarding the social as well as the moral questions in the Caribbean societies today, was common to all to a remarkable extent (see the "Tunapuna Declaration", p.9)

The meeting was a first step. Not all who were invited came. Some of the evangelical and pentecostal groupings in the Caribbean are still very hesitant to join. But a beginning has been made, and it is now up to the two regional bodies to carry on with the process.

Patriarch, Pope and Archbishop cont...

believe in Jesus Christ and seek to follow him in life daily. We receive your hand with joy and in anticipation of continuing together the journey towards unity as expressed in Paul's letter to the Ephesians."

Just days later, Bishop Justin Welby was enthroned as the Archbishop of Canterbury thereby becoming the spiritual leader of the worlds Anglican common and the Primate of the Church

of England. The GCF was represented at the installation with Larry Miller being an invited guest. In a letter of congratulations and appreciation to Archbishop Welby, Mr Miller said the "Anglican Communion was an essential participant and energetic supporter of the Global Christian Forum" and had been so "from the very first days".

Mr Miller said this was especially reflected in the participation of Reverend Canon

Dr Sarah Rowland Jones, who serves as a representative of the Anglican Communion on the Forum's international committee and who recently updated the narrative history of the Forum.

Archbishop Welby and his family were assured of the GCF's continuing prayers, "as you take the stretching responsibilities to which God has called you".

Middle East Consultation Appeal

As participants in the Global Christian Forum meeting held in Amman (8-9 April 2013) – bishops, priests, pastors, and lay people from all traditions of the Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant, and Evangelical churches in the Middle East – we have exchanged perspectives on the situations of our churches. We have discussed promoting inter-Christian relationships as well as relationships with the co-citizens of our countries with whom we share the present, the future, and the same fate. We have considered at length the current critical situation in our region, with the imminent dangers that are threatening our people. We were particularly appalled by the horrific and bloody violence in Syria, the destruction, the displacement, and the dire circumstances of the victims of such violence. We were also deeply concerned about the recent events in Egypt, with all their repugnant sectarian tensions and undesirable consequences.

- We raise our voice and call upon our churches, church leaders and lay people to demonstrate the highest degree of wisdom and awareness during this difficult time, to remain rooted in faith, steadfast in

hope, and established in love in order to overcome this critical period.

- We proclaim our solidarity with every human being who has suffered and suffers from political and social instability caused by violence, regardless of their religious, ethnic, social, and political identity.

We call upon our brothers, sisters, and co-citizens to reject all forms of extremism and enmity, and to return to our shared human and spiritual values. We promise to strive firmly and to the limits of our capacity to lessen the agony of victims, to provide the aid needed for refugees inside and outside their homeland, as well as to support those in need, in cooperation with all components of society, particularly specialized governmental and non-governmental organizations.

- We urge those in charge to provide more efforts to insure the continuity of Christian presence in the Middle East by helping and encouraging people to remain in their own lands.

- We call upon the Global Christian Forum to show solidarity with Middle Eastern people in this critical period, by supporting their just causes, sounding

the call to defend the victims and the oppressed, and contributing with all spiritual, moral, and financial means to help them remain in their own lands.

- We urge the churches and Christian communities participating in the Global Christian Forum to implore their societies, governments, institutions, and international assemblies to support Christian presence in the Middle East in partnership with other religions, to work to achieve full citizenship with equal rights and duties among all people, in accordance with international treaties and agreements, and within the framework of fair laws and truly modern democratic systems.

- Finally, we call upon the Christians of the Middle East to stand together as witnesses of the one Gospel – despite the plurality and variety of churches – and to fulfill their calling in this Middle East.

Unity in plurality must be a distinctive mark of our Christian life and purpose.

We plead to God for peace, justice, and stability in our world, especially in the Middle East, and we pray that Christians will remain in it as a living testimony for Christ, the One who is victorious over death.

When a torn scrap of newspaper tells a big story

We are all familiar with the story of a message in a bottle found washed up on a far flung beach miles from where it was first cast adrift.

But what about a similar kind of astounding story: how amazed would you be if a discarded scrap of newspaper originally printed in a tiny Pacific country turned up in your home in Switzerland, complete with a headline and report about an event you had organised years earlier in Asia?

That's what happened earlier this year (2013) for GCF consultant, Hubert van Beek, when a friend gave him a piece of newspaper torn from the *Fiji Times*, published in October 2011 and all about the GCF's second global gathering in

Manado, Indonesia, at that time.

Hubert's friend had brought a small trinket whilst on vacation in the Pacific recently, and had the item wrapped in some torn up pieces of discarded newspaper so he could safely bring it back home to Europe.

It was only in un-wrapping the item that he was intrigued by a headline in the paper. Reading further, he discovered it was an article all about the Global Christian Forum's second global gathering in Manado, Indonesia over two years earlier.

That piece of paper, which had already made its way to the other side of the world, was quickly sent on to Hubert, inviting him to read all about the conference which he had overseen in his role as GCF secretary.

The little newspaper article was a report written by an Indian Christian from the Fijian Methodist Church, who had been at the Manado event.

Adding another level of complexity to the story is the fact that the author was of Indian decent – and yet a Methodist. This is remarkable as most Methodists in that country are ethnically Fijian, and the few Indian Christians in Fiji are usually Anglican.

Thus this one small, coincidental event captures so much of the Global Christian Forum itself: it is providing an open space for all kinds of Christians in churches and organisations to come together, reflecting the global variety of God's Church. Moreover it reflects the breadth of the GCF, in that its work goes on remarkably reaching into, and connecting unknown pockets of world Christianity.

The Tunapuna Declaration

**GLOBAL CHRISTIAN FORUM
CARIBBEAN CONSULTATION
Tunapuna, Trinidad
May 20 – 23, 2013**

Preamble

The first Caribbean gathering of the Global Christian Forum (GCF) met in Tunapuna, Trinidad, from May 20 – 23, 2013.

The Caribbean Conference of Churches (CCC) and the Evangelical Association of the Caribbean (EAC) brought together 28 participants who came from 12 countries and 12 Christian denominations, Churches, Traditions and Expressions.

The Consultation, which met around the theme 'Our Journey with Jesus Christ in the Caribbean', saw both the CCC and EAC interfacing with each other in search of ways and means of fostering dialogue and building bridges among Christians in the Caribbean.

Mr. Hubert van Beek, the representative of the Global Christian Forum, made a presentation on the history and purpose of Global Christian Forum. Mr. Gerard Granado (General Secretary, CCC) and Rev. Emerson L. Boyce (Secretary General, EAC) gave welcoming remarks. The participants at the consultation then shared their faith journeys and examined some of the issues facing the churches in the region.

Rev. Dr. John O. Smith (Chair, EAC) and Mr. Gerard Granado (General Secretary, CCC) each made a presentation on 'Christian Witness in the Caribbean Today'. The substance of the presentations encouraged participants to reflection and enabled discussion on the concerns, which were centered on 1) unity; 2) issues on which we can work together; and 3) building relationships.

Affirmations

1. We affirm our faith in Jesus Christ as God and Saviour.
2. We affirm that the unity of the Christian Church is in Jesus Christ who prayed that the Church be one.

3. We affirm that the Holy Spirit is the source of unity within the Body of Christ.
4. We affirm that in unity there is diversity which ought to be embraced and celebrated.
5. We affirm that unity needs diversity so that it will not become uniformity and diversity needs unity so that it will not become division.
6. We affirm that the Caribbean is a multi-cultural, multi-religious and multi-lingual region, given its history.
7. We affirm that the family is the cradle of civilization, the bedrock of society and the strength of the region.
8. We affirm that marriage is a relationship between a man and a woman. We further affirm that marriage was ordained and blessed by God according to Scripture.

Commitments

We commit to:

1. be open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit in our every action.
2. offer moral direction to life within community
3. use every means to promote and protect the God given dignity of the human person, such as:
 - working for the holistic development of people; demonstrating God's preferential option for the poor and the marginalized.
 - opposing racism, sexism and classism; human- drug- and gun trafficking; abortion and euthanasia.
 - opposing stigma and discrimination of people living with or affected by HIV and Aids.
 - denouncing violence against persons and especially violence against women and children.
4. promote healthy family life.
5. become more engaged in the education of our people.
6. continue building bridges through on-going cooperation, dialogue and

agreed programmes between the Caribbean Conference of Churches and the Evangelical Association of the Caribbean, between national councils of churches and national evangelical associations, etc.

We further commit to:

- seeking to work where possible with Governments and other agencies to achieve this mission.
- sharing this document with our constituencies while seeking their endorsement and commitment.

On behalf of the participants,

*Rev. Emerson L. Boyce, Secretary General,
Evangelical Association of the Caribbean
Mr. Gerard Granado, General Secretary,
Caribbean Conference of Churches.*

Churches and Organizations represented at the Consultation:

Antilles Episcopal Conference
Church in the Province of the West Indies (Anglican)
Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church
Methodist Church in the Caribbean & Americas
Moravian Church Eastern West Indies Province
Open Bible Standard Churches
Pentecostal Assemblies West Indies
Presbyterian Church of Trinidad & Tobago
Salvation Army Caribbean Territory
United Church of Jamaica & Caiman Islands
Antigua Christian Council
Barbados Christian Council
Curaçao Council of Churches
Curaçao Evangelical Association
Guyana Evangelical Fellowship
Guyana Council of Churches
Haiti Protestant Federation
Jamaica Association of Evangelicals
Jamaica Council of Churches
St. Kitts Christian Council
Caribbean Conference of Churches
Evangelical Association of the Caribbean
Caribbean Baptist Fellowship
Caribbean Evangelical Theological Association
Caribbean Association of Theological Schools