



# Global Christian Forum



## *In This Issue*

**Huibert VanBeek  
on the Core  
Vocation of the  
Forum**

**COVID-19, the  
Church, and the  
Challenge to  
Ecumenism**

**New Member  
Profile: Rev.  
Everton Jackson**

info@globalchristianforum.com  
Global Christian Forum Secretariat  
15616 Copper Beech Drive,  
Upper Marlboro, MD 20774, USA  
globalchristianforum.com

Newsletter for the GCF: December 2020



## God's Faithfulness in "In Between" Times

Every ministry that comes together to make up the Global Christian Forum has experienced significant change in the last year. It has forced everyone to adapt, and to wait for a "new normal" to emerge. But through it all, God has been faithful.

In this newsletter, we celebrate the many ways that God continues to inspire creativity, steadfast dedication to the work of Christian unity, and even grow participation in GCF's committees during this time when we await what will come next.

We pray God's richest blessings as you navigate this time in between.



copyright Albin Hillert/WCC

## The Core Vocation of the Global Christian Forum

A reflection from former GCF Secretary Huibert Van Beek was presented to the International Committee in September 2020, and subsequently published on the Forum's website.

It reflects on two basic questions facing the Forum:

1. In terms of unity, what is the specific role of the Forum, and what is the specific contribution it can make to the search for Christian unity in the wider ecumenical movement?
2. In the area of mission, or common witness, what can the Forum offer to the witness of the churches in the world without doing what is already being done by the many existing inter-church organizations (ecumenical, evangelical, confessional) to which the churches participating in the Forum belong?

To find the text in its entirety, visit

<https://globalchristianforum.org/core-vocation-of-the-forum/>

## COVID-19, the Church, and the Challenge to Ecumenism

The COVID-19 pandemic raises questions for the church. Not only how churches respond to an extraordinary situation, but also how we understand what church is all about and how to practice an ecclesial life together—including life across ecumenical lines. Dr. Jean Daniel Pluess, president of GCF's Swiss Foundation, reflects on how Christians in past centuries have faced pandemics, highlights current responses happening in the church, and describes the benefits and challenges faced by local churches across the globe during the coronavirus crisis. The article, first published in *Transformation*, can be found at <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0265378820961545>





## **New Committee Member: Rev. Everton Jackson**

Serving as the senior pastor of Calvary Baptist Church of Montego Bay, Jamaica, Everton Jackson is also the Director of Integral Mission for the Baptist World Alliance. This follows a career of service on the national and international level, including as Regional Secretary/Executive Secretary for the Baptist World Alliance, Treasurer for the Caribbean Baptist Fellowship, President of the Jamaica Baptist Union, JBU Vice President, and Director of the JBU Mission Agency. A strong advocate for ecumenism, Jackson has served on the Jamaica Council of Churches and numerous Ministers' Fraternal Bodies across Jamaica. He has also served as Chairman of the Western Peace Management Initiative, Jamaica and as a Commissioner on the Jamaican government's Commission on Violence Prevention. He is married to Cecelia and has one adult son.

## **NEW SECRETARY GENERAL / CEO OF THE WORLD EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE: Dr. Thomas Schirmmacher**

We are pleased that our friend and longtime member of the Forum's International Committee, Dr. Thomas Schirmmacher, has been appointed Secretary General / CEO of the World Evangelical Alliance. Bringing many years of experience serving in various roles in the WEA, Dr Schirmmacher was recommended by the Search Committee from among more than a dozen candidates, and unanimously affirmed by the International Council on a conference call on October 27. He will assume leadership of the WEA on March 1, 2021.



copyright Albin Hillert/WCC



## Conference of Secretaries of World Communions

The work of church leadership continues, even when travel is restricted across the globe. Dr. Essamuah was able to join an annual gathering of Secretaries of World Communions while he was working in Ghana during the month of October. A brief report of that meeting has been posted on the GCF blog, including a challenge posed to those pursuing ecumenism in the modern world: *We need to find a new hermeneutic of difference, and no longer use difference as a marker of our own identities.* You can read about the meeting at [www.globalchristianforum.org/conference-of-secretaries-of-world-communions-a-report-of-20-21-october-meetings/](http://www.globalchristianforum.org/conference-of-secretaries-of-world-communions-a-report-of-20-21-october-meetings/)

## In a Boat Without Oars

A long-time member of our International Committee, Rev. Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, recently published a new book, *Without Oars: Casting Off into a Life of Pilgrimage*. In it, he blends history, storytelling, biblical insights, personal reflections, and spiritual formation in an inviting call to discover pilgrimage as a way of life.

Rev. Ganoune Diop, a fellow member of the International Committee, offered his reflections on reading *Without Oars* on the GCF blog. You can find it at [globalchristianforum.org/in-a-boat-without-oars/](http://globalchristianforum.org/in-a-boat-without-oars/).

