



Global Christian Forum

Task Forces Meeting **Narrative Report** **28–30th June 2023**

The Global Christian Forum (GCF) held a meeting for two of its task forces on June 28–30, 2023. The two groups met together in Helsinki, Finland, where they gathered to continue planning the upcoming Fourth Global Gathering (GG4) in 2024 in Accra, Ghana.

The meeting began and ended each day with prayers and a devotion. The first day was dedicated to members sharing brief Bible studies focused on their understandings of the GG4's theme, "That the World May Know." Each day featured times for participants to share faith stories as a way to introduce members of the Committee and orient its new members to the method of the GCF. The meeting also welcomed the GCF's newly appointed Director of Operations and Research, Josiah Baker.

The Task Forces were hosted by communities in Finland, which was an opportunity to connect with local ecumenical work being undertaken in the country. Participants were welcomed with generous hospitality as they broke bread together with Archbishop Tapio Luoma of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, the Finnish Ecumenical Council, and Bishop Kaisamari Hintikka of the Diocese of Espoo.

Meeting in Helsinki were the Recruitment and Program Task Forces. The Recruitment Task Force reviewed the nominations received thus far from ecclesiastical and parachurch bodies, giving attention to the demographics of nominations to ensure as diverse and equitable of a gathering as possible. The decision was made to enhance youth participation in the ecumenical movement by holding dedicated times for their interaction at the GG4. Invitations will be sent soon, after the Committee has received the final nominations from remaining churches.

The Program Task Force drafted the schedule of the GG4 based on the discussions from the Bible studies and on feedback received from previous Global Gatherings. Attention was given to crafting a gathering that would not feel like an academic conference or business meeting but rather as a spiritual space for relationship building. The GG4 will commemorate the 25th anniversary of the GCF since its initiation in 1998, honoring the leaders and events that shaped the movement's history. In light of the location of the GG4 in Accra, the Task Force also decided to integrate into the schedule a visit to the slave castles along the Ghanaian coast in recognition of the impact of the Transatlantic slave trade on the contemporary church and its mission.

The meeting ended by identifying the future work of the Committee as it works towards the GG4 next year. Decisions made in Helsinki will determine the choice of accommodations and the schedule of the event. Collaboration with on-site partners will also enhance the ability of GG4 to incorporate the faith and life of churches in Ghana. A subcommittee was formed to oversee the planning of times for corporate prayer at GG4, working closely with local communities in Accra.

The Global Christian Forum (GCF) is a unique gathering of global Christian churches and organisations bringing together all the major streams of world Christianity. It is an open space where all Christians can meet to nurture unity by fostering mutual respect and understanding as well as by addressing together common challenges. Represented in the GCF are many Christian World Communions and world Christian organisations, including the Pontifical Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity, the Pentecostal World Fellowship, the World Evangelical Alliance, and the World Council of Churches. The GCF secretary is Rev. Dr. Casely Essamuah.