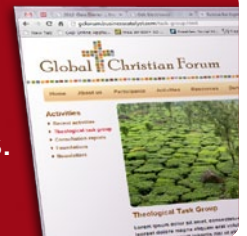


# Global Christian Forum News

2013 Edition 01

## Welcome to the *new look* Global Christian Forum Newsletter

The first edition of the Global Christian Forum Newsletter for 2013 heralds an efficient new format that can be distributed in both online and printed versions. The fresh new look will also grace the pages of the soon to be launched website...



## Introduction

### Welcome to the first GCF News for 2013

This edition comes after the GCF Committee met at the Akrofi-Christaller Institute just outside Accra, Ghana, in November last year and so reflects and

reports on that gathering. We also look forward with an outline on the year ahead from Larry Miller, Secretary of the GCF.

Also in this edition you will find much more including a spiritual reflection on the Beatitudes, which was shared during

one of the worship events at the meeting.

There is also a Photo Gallery from the Ghana meeting which tries to capture, not only the sense of place as God's place for that coming together, but also the human and the spiritual life of the gathering.

## The Year Ahead...

Larry Miller, Secretary of the Global Christian Forum, offers the following reflection on the journey ahead in 2013 for Forum activity. Readers will note some questions at the end of some sections.

Please send responses to:

[LarryMiller@globalchristianforum.org](mailto:LarryMiller@globalchristianforum.org)

After a year characterised by transition and consolidation, we will see the Global Christian Forum moving forward in multiple ways in the year ahead. Meeting in Ghana, 27-29 November 2012, the GCF Committee projected activities for 2013 within the wider framework of plans for the next three years.

As you read the following summary, you will notice a number of questions for your consideration and response. I would welcome hearing from you, preferably by April 15.

### Addressing Global Challenges

Broad consultation with GCF participants in 2012 pointed to three common global challenges Christian churches should deal with together: the call to mission and the perception of proselytism; responding to the situation of persecuted or suffering churches; and the future of Christian communion worldwide in light of the



dramatic demographic and confessional shifts of recent decades.

Given the complexity and sometimes sensitiveness of these challenges, the committee considered at length the appropriate role of the GCF in dealing with them and called for further conversation with GCF participant bodies in order to determine how best to move forward. At its September meeting, the committee will make a decision on next steps leading to a global consultation or process of conversation on one or several of these challenges.

#### Question:

*Which of these challenges would you like to see taken up in the Global Christian Forum, and how best might that be done?*

**Working:** GCF Committee members Dr Rolf Hille (World Evangelical Alliance) centre left and Rev Anne-Cathy Grabe, centre right, (Mennonite World Conference) in discussion as other committee members read, consider and reflect.

### Engaging World Assemblies

The primary service of the Global Christian Forum is to provide a place where the widest possible range of Christian churches can meet.

One way of extending this ministry beyond GCF events is by sending small GCF delegations — reflecting in their composition the full spectrum of churches engaged in the Forum — to participate in the world assemblies of these churches. In 2013, GCF delegations will participate in the 23rd Pentecostal World Conference (Malaysia, 27-30 August) and the

THE YEAR AHEAD *continued...*

10th Assembly of the World Council of Churches (South Korea, 30 October – 8 November). And in 2014, a GCF delegation will join in the World Evangelical Alliance assembly (South Korea, 18-28 October).

**Question:**

*Can you think of other global gatherings where GCF delegations should be present?*

**Enabling Regional Consultations**

A Caribbean Consultation is set to take place in Trinidad in May, organized cooperatively by the Caribbean Conference of Churches, including the Episcopal Conference of the Antilles, the Evangelical Association of the Caribbean, and the Global Christian Forum.

Sixty church representatives are expected to participate, half from Evangelical and Pentecostal churches and the other half from historic Protestant and Anglican churches, the Catholic Church and the Orthodox churches.

The GCF is assisting the Latin America and Caribbean Pentecostal Forum (FPLC) to organise two gatherings in 2013, one in the Central America region and the other in the Andean region; dates and places have not yet been set.

Part of the mission of the FPLC is 'to promote relations and dialogue with other Christian confessions', thus helping to prepare Pentecostal participation in a Latin American regional Global Christian Forum consultation in several years.

GCF representatives plan to visit the Middle East in April 2013 to meet with Middle East participants in the second GCF global gathering (Manado) and other church leaders.

The primary purpose is to explore further the call for a Middle East Global Christian Forum Consultation.

**Question:**

*Can you think of other regions where Forum-like consultations should be considered?*

**Encouraging National Initiatives**

Visits by GCF representatives to specific countries are a significant means to encourage development of the broadest possible Christian unity at the national level. In May a GCF team will lend its presence and support to the Indonesia Christian Forum (ICF) — created by Indonesia church

leaders during the GCF global gathering in Manado — for the ICF's 'Celebration of Unity' (May 18) in the national stadium. More than 100,000 Christians are expected to participate in this event, which will be preceded by a day of seminars for 3,000 pastors and church workers.

May this remarkable endeavour inspire similar initiatives in other countries around the world! [See related article on page 3 of this newsletter.]

**Question:**

*Do you have counsel in regard to countries where GCF team visits may be useful?*

**Thinking Theologically About The GCF**

*Sharing insights:*  
GCF Secretary, Larry Miller discerning the year ahead at Accra committee meeting.



**'Journey with Jesus Christ'**

Responding to the call from GCF participant bodies to contribute to discussions on how to live out and witness to unity in Jesus Christ, the Forum has convened a task force to articulate theologically the history, experience and significance of the GCF. This "Theological Working Group" (TWG) met for the first time in Ghana in November. The thirteen participants came from African Instituted churches, Anglican and Protestant churches, the Catholic Church, Orthodox churches (Eastern and Oriental), Pentecostal churches, the World Council of Church's Faith and Order Commission, the World Evangelical Alliance, and GCF staff. Further information of the TWG will be in the next GCF News.

**Providing Tools to Forum Participants**

Many people who have an experience of GCF activities — such as participating in a consultation — would like to share the 'Forum's experience and insight' with others on their return to their own communities. We are therefore preparing a set of 'tools' (such as guidelines,

activities, suggestions) that Forum participants could use when they return home.

**Question:**

*What specific 'tools' (electronic or printed) would you find most useful?*

**Nurturing Forum Relationships**

Tending to relationships with participant bodies and partners — including receiving counsel and direction from them — is vital if the GCF is to be of service to the global church.

Doing this often happens best through personal encounters and face-to-face conversations. Among the appointments of this sort thus far on the 2013 staff calendar:

- January – participation in and presentation to the Fédération Protestante de France (FPF) General Assembly
- February – meet with leaders of the Evangelical World Alliance; meet with the Exec. Director of Christian Churches Together (USA); participation in and presentation to the FPF consultation on 'The World Council of Churches 10th Assembly: What's At Stake for Christian Unity?'
- March – attend the enthronement of the Archbishop of Canterbury
- April – meet with Middle East church leaders
- July – attend the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar
- September – meet with Orthodox leaders; participate in the annual St. Egidio Meeting for Peace
- October – visit the Church of Sweden; participate in the Conference of Secretaries of Christian World Communions
- December – participation in and presentation to a consultation in Suva, Fiji, organized by the Pacific Theological College in cooperation with the Pacific Conference of Churches in order to initiate a dialogue between the mainline churches and the new churches in the Pacific.

**Question:**

*Do you have additional visits by GCF staff to suggest?*

The last point in the GCF Activities Plan Outline for 2012-2015 says that we intend to 'remain alert for possible new initiatives' inspired by the Spirit.

Receiving your answers to the above questions will help us do precisely that.



## Indonesian Christian Forum to celebrate with 100,000 people event in Jakarta

A highlight of the conclusion of the second global gathering of the GCF, in Manado, Indonesia in October 2011 was the formation of the Indonesian Christian Forum.

Inspired by the GCF the Indonesian churches launched their own 'Indonesian Christian Forum' (ICF) on the last day of the gathering.

Now, just over 15 months after that event ICF leaders are preparing for a national celebration with over 100,000 people expected to fill Jakarta's national stadium on 18 May 2013. The celebratory event will be preceded by a day of workshops, prayers and meetings, attracting some 3000 participants.

According to Indonesian Christian Forum leadership, "this is the first time in history that all churches in Indonesia will hold a celebration of unity in worship — and publicly."

The Global Christian Forum will send a small delegation, including the Secretary Rev Dr Larry Miller, to share in the celebrations and meet with Indonesia church leaders. It is understood that the General Secretary of the World Council of Churches will also be in attendance.

Eight Christian groups signed a joint



Launched: Rev Yerry Tawalujaun surrounded by church leaders announces the launch of the Indonesian Christian Forum at the Manado gathering of the GCF in October 2011.

declaration in October 2011, forming the Indonesian Christian Forum.

They included the Communion of Churches in Indonesia, the Catholic Bishops Conference, the Fellowship of Indonesian Evangelical Churches and Institutions, the Salvation Army, the Indonesian Pentecostal Churches Fellowship, the Orthodox Church and the Seventh-Day Adventist Church.

In the declaration the churches said they would "robustly" strive for Christian unity all over the region, "so that they could play their vital role for a better future life for the nation".

This they said this would be in significant arenas such as "justice, human rights advocacy for marginalised groups, poverty and education, democratisation, witnessing to the spread of the Good News in a diverse society, and in the area of the environment."

The declaration said the Christian organisations would establish the forum as a "network amongst Christian organisations and institutions that gather in the name of Jesus Christ."

It would be a forum - not a structural organisation, but an open, flexible gathering space welcome to all.

## Bangladesh team visit

*A GCF team visit to Bangladesh last October coincided with a time of significant forging of relationships between various parts of the Church in one of the most densely populated nations on earth, but where the Christianity is a minority religion.*

A GCF team of four – H.G. Archbishop Felix Machado (Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity representative, Bishop of Vassai, India), Dr Dimitra Koukoura (World Council of Churches representative on the GCF Committee, Professor at University of Thessaloniki, Greece), Rev. Dr Richard Howell (World Evangelical Alliance representative on the GCF Committee, General Secretary of Asia Evangelical Alliance and Evangelical Fellowship of India) and Hubert van Beek (GCF consultant) – visited the country

between 5 – 9 October last year.

Between the time when the initial idea for the visit was raised in 2010 and when the visit took place a significant development with regard to Christian unity had taken place in Bangladesh through the establishment of the United Forum of Churches in Bangladesh (UFCB) in August 2011.

The UFCB is made up of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Bangladesh (CBCB), the National Council of Churches in Bangladesh (NCCB, ecumenical) and the National Christian Fellowship (NCFB, evangelical).

But far from making the GCF visit irrelevant the new developments provided a situation of mutual benefit for both the GCF in understanding the situation in Bangladesh and for the Bangladeshi church to be informed by the experience

of the GCF in carrying forward their vision of unity.

In speaking with Bangladeshi church leaders from across the spectrum of denominations and reflecting various theological approaches and experiences, the GCF team heard of the full breadth of relationships between the churches.

The GCF team met with The National Council of Churches of Bangladesh, the National Christian Fellowship of Bangladesh (the equivalent of the evangelical alliance of Bangladesh) and the Catholic Bishops Conference of Bangladesh. There was also a particular meeting with the UFCB core group.

The GCF team discovered that in many areas there were exciting forms of sharing amongst the churches: for instance the Catholic Bishops Conference reported

## BANGLADESH TEAM VISIT CONTINUED...

good co-operation “at grass roots” (village) level.

They highlighted stories of ecumenical prayer meetings (e.g. Week of Prayer for Christian Unity celebrated at Pentecost, also some other occasions), mutual invitations to church festivals (e.g. Christmas), joint retreats for priests and pastors, joint meetings to discuss national and/or local issues, cooperation in youth programs, celebration of inter-religious harmony day, monthly prayer meetings, and other examples.

For instance, a Catholic priest who was asked to help solve a problem in a Baptist church, another who was invited to speak at a retreat of the Church of Bangladesh.

However, the team also discovered various difficulties. Honest discussion regarding a range of issues including the rapid growth of independent churches,

aggressive evangelism that sometimes lead to ‘sheep stealing’, inter-marriage issues and concerns about inter-church Holy Communion provided a full picture of the situation.

It was widely agreed that the many points of division between the churches meant that much work was needed in building relationships between the churches. As one person said, “we are one in Christ but we have a lot of differences – we need some guidelines” (for cooperation).

Yet, even against this backdrop of difficulties the reality of new efforts in Christian unity with the formation of the UCFB was a great joy.

The team heard that there is a growing sense of trust between churches while at the same time acknowledgement of more needing to be done.

The GCF itself – and the idea of a ‘forum’ – had provided a model to help bring the

UCFB to fruition.

Church leaders said the formation of the UCFB gave the churches an opportunity to “to speak to the government with one voice.” This was a great benefit, they said.

The leaders said the UCFB was also planning to provide some theological seminars, firstly to discuss common issues and then to deal with differences as a next step.

At a national level the GCF team learnt that Christians made up less than 0.5% of the Bangladesh population. (Bangladesh has about 158.5 million people.)

There had been an increase in the number of denominations since independence (1971) and the number of Christians is growing, although the growth rate of the Christian community is not keeping up with the national average of 1.57 percent growth.

## Southern Cone Pentecostal churches meet on unity issues

*An important meeting geared toward exploring issues of unity and relationships amongst Pentecostal churches in Latin America took place in Chile, last November.*

The Southern Cone meeting of the Pentecostal Forum of Latin America and the Caribbean (FPLC) involved invitations to Pentecostal churches from Chile, Paraguay, Uruguay and Argentina.

Those who attended included several participants from smaller, independent or autonomous churches and representatives from some of the larger denominations including the Methodist Pentecostal Church and the Pentecostal Church of Chile, and the Church of God from the four countries.

Also present were four members of the FPLC Committee (Bishop Richar Mendoza from Ecuador, Bernardo Campos from Peru, Oscar Corvalan and Luis Orellana from Chile). A professor of Missiology with the Assembly of God, from Brazil also provided input in the discussions.

Mr. Hubert van Beek, GCF consultant represented the GCF at the meeting.

The meeting was hosted by the Pentecostal Church of Chile in Isla de Maipo, a charming vineyard area not far from Santiago. Participants stayed with families in the small town and meals were served at a local restaurant.

Although overall participation was low at some points, reflecting the reality of the diverse and fragmented nature of the Pentecostal movement in Latin America (in Chile alone there are over two thousand different Pentecostal churches and groups), the discussion amongst those present was deep and meaningful.

The program of the meeting was made up of presentations on the FPLC and the GCF, on Pentecostal unity in Latin America, Pentecostalism and Society, Relations with other Christian traditions, the role of women in the Pentecostal churches, popular Pentecostalism and the challenges of neo-Pentecostalism, information on the Pentecostal movement in the four countries, and group discussions.

FPLC leader, Bernardo Campos presented an important contribution on unity and neo-pentecostalism. [The text is available in English. Please contact

communications@globalchristianforum.org for a copy.] He also shared a biblical reflection on “unity on the road”, or “pilgrim unity” with the tabernacle as the symbol, over against “established unity” symbolically represented by the temple.

The GCF provided supportive encouragement for the Pentecostal Forum of Latin America and the Caribbean when it was formed in Lima, Peru in August 2011.

It is the vision of FPLC to create a space for encounter, dialogue and reflection between Pentecostal churches, leaders and theologians, as well as social scientists engaged in the study of the movement in the continent. It also seeks to promote relationships with the other Christian families in the region and in the world.

The Southern Cone meeting is the first of a series of sub-regional meetings planned to cover the continent. Meetings in the Andino Region and Central America are scheduled in 2013.

The GCF Committee meeting in Ghana in November last year agreed to keep a major focus on the issues of Pentecostal unity in Latin America and relations with other Christian traditions.



## Beatitudes in prayer from Ghana meeting

When the GCF Committee gathers praying and worshipping together are vital to the spiritual life of the committee members.

During the Ghana gathering, Dr Ganoune Diop, who represents the Seventh Day Adventist Church, offered the following reflection:

### Reflections and Meditations on the Words of Jesus As Recorded in the Beatitudes of Matthew 5

Blessed are those who affirm their dependence on God

Those not addicted to materialism

**God is our sufficiency**

Blessed are those who come to God for comfort.

Those not addicted to substitutes or substances to fill the longing of their inner beings

They do not by all means, and at all cost, Shun the pain and suffering of the world

They wait on the Lord

**God is our comforter**

Blessed are the meek

Those not addicted to violence

They do not violate others' integrity or dignity

To gain advantage of any kind

**God is our supreme good**

Blessed are those who seek righteousness

Those not addicted to injustice

They give to others their due

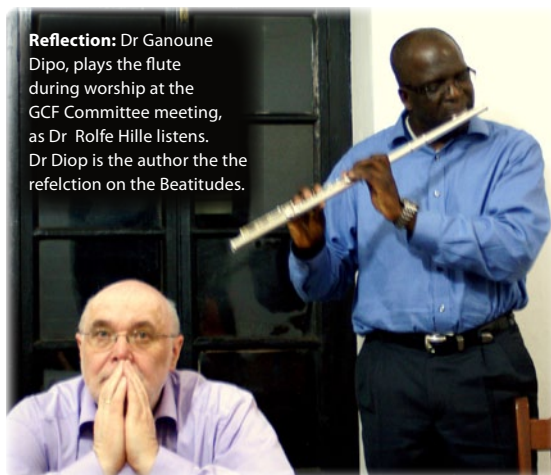
**God is our righteousness**

Blessed are the merciful

Those who open their hearts and hands

Those not addicted to revenge and

grudge



**Reflection:** Dr Ganoune Dipo, plays the flute during worship at the GCF Committee meeting, as Dr Rolfe Hille listens. Dr Diop is the author of the reflection on the Beatitudes.

**God is our righteous judge and intercessor**

Blessed are the pure in heart

Those not addicted to defilement and dirt – their eyes are fixed on the Lord Jesus

**God is our holiness**

Blessed are the peacemakers, agents of reconciliation

They are not addicted to division, to hostility or war

They bring people together

**God is our peace**

Blessed are those persecuted because they chose Jesus, and His cross, His resurrection, His ascension, His session as High priest, and coming as King of kings and Lord of lords, the center of their faith, hope and love.

They are not addicted to fame, They who would rather be shamed than defame the character of the Savior

They who would rather lose their lives than betray the Lord of their lives

**God is our Supreme Value, the desire of our hearts and minds.**

In essence,

Blessed are those whose sufficiency is God Those whose supreme value is God Himself

Those so fond of God, they dare live for Him

*By Dr Ganoune Diop.*

*Representative of SDA at GCF*

*Director UN Relations*

*Associate Director Public Affairs and*

*Religious Liberty*

*General Conference of SDA World HQ*

## New GCF Committee member brings Latin American presence

The Global Christian Forum Committee has welcomed a new member to its life with the nomination of Fr Calixto Salvatierra Moreno, 39, as the second representative from the Catholic Church's Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU).



Fr Calixto is a Franciscan Conventual priest and hails from Bolivia where he is currently rector of the Major Seminary 'Beato Juan Duns Escoto' in Sacaba - Cochabamba, which is capital of the central Bolivian province of Chapare.

Fr Calixto is the only person from Latin America on the GCF Committee and his presence is especially significant addition to the 'global' aspect of the committee's life.

The PCPCU has two seats on the GCF Committee and Fr Calixto joins Fr Luis Melo as the second member.

Fr Calixto has studied Catholic and Pentecostal evangelisation in Latin America and was a member of the Catholic Church's delegation to the 2010 Centennial Celebration of the First World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh, Scotland. He has also been teaching 'Ecumenism

and New Religious Movements', and 'Theology of Ecumenism', at the Latin American Institute of Missiology, Bolivian Catholic University St. Paul.

In 2010 Fr Calixto was invited by the Andean Ecumenical Higher Institute of Theology to be part of the speaker's panel and workshop leader on ecumenism.

When asked to comment on his nomination and acceptance as a member of the GCF Committee, Fr Calixto said, 'I wish to express my deep gratitude to God and to all members of the GCF for this wonderful opportunity to share and enrich my faith in Christ Jesus our Lord and Saviour'.

Fr Calixto had his first taste of GCF involvement at the committee meeting in Ghana last November.

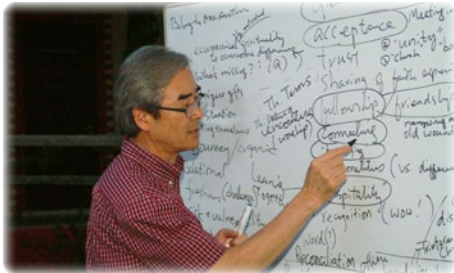


# Ghana Gallery

## People and Place



## Theological Working Group



## Committee

