

THE GLOBAL CHRISTIAN FORUM

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Follow-up of November 2009 Africa Regional Meeting in Accra, Ghana South Africa's National Church Leaders' Consultation calls for a broader and more inclusive ecumenical vision and a united Christian witness in South Africa.

At the fourth consultation of the National Church Leaders' Consultation of South Africa, on 18 – 19 January 2010 in Stellenbosch, the Revd. Sarah Rowland Jones, member of the GCF Committee, reported on the Africa Regional Meeting. Several other participants from South Africa who attended the Africa Regional Meeting were also present. The feedback from the Ghana meeting contributed to a discussion on the current fragmentation among Christians in South Africa and the need for a credible and united ecumenical face in the country, as an example of reconciliation and working together. As a result, the consultation in the statement it issued at the close of the deliberations, called for *a broader and more inclusive ecumenical vision in South Africa which encompasses all identified ecumenical bodies who confess the Triune God and Jesus Christ as perfect in His humanity and divinity* (this reflects the language of the GCF Guiding Purpose Statement). The consultation asked all ecumenical bodies in South Africa to appoint and mandate three members from their respective executives to represent them in talks to explore the possibilities of establishing a united Christian witness in South Africa. The Most Revd. Dr. Thabo Makgoba, the Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town was mandated to facilitate this process (Archbishop Makgoba was one of the South African participants at the Africa Regional Meeting).

Follow-up June 2009 Team Visit to the Middle East Plans for a small meeting are taking shape.

The Secretary of the GCF Mr. Hubert van Beek together with the two local organizers of last year's team visit, Revd. Fr. Gabriel Hachem and Mr. Razek Siriani, visited Lebanon and Syria last month. One of the purposes of the trip was to discuss with the Church leaders the possibilities of a conversation between the "traditional" churches (Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant) and the "new" churches (Evangelical and Pentecostal). Based on the encouraging responses of most of the leaders, a proposal to hold a small meeting to facilitate such a conversation is taking shape. This follow-up meeting will most likely take place towards the end of 2010 and will bring together about twenty to thirty participants.

Upcoming Activities

No less than three Regional Meetings are scheduled to take place in the second half of 2010. A Team Visit to North America is also part of the planned activities.

Nordic – Baltic Meeting

The Europe Consultation which was held in June 2006 recommended strongly that follow-up on the Global Christian Forum in Europe be done in sub-regional settings rather than at the regional level only. On 28 – 30 September a first sub-regional meeting will be held, for the Nordic and Baltic countries. It will take place in Finland and bring together some fifty to sixty participants from all the various Christian traditions. In some Nordic countries the relationships between the "historic" churches

and churches belonging to the Evangelical and Pentecostal movements have improved remarkably in recent years. One of the purposes of the Nordic-Baltic meeting will be to exchange and learn from these experiences.

Latin America Meeting

An ad-hoc committee made up of representatives of the main Christian "families" in Latin America, coordinated by Mr. Alfredo Mora of the Forum for Ibero-American Dialogue of Evangelicals (FIDE) is preparing a regional meeting in follow-up of the Limuru Global Forum gathering of November 2007 and the first Latin America consultation in Santiago de Chile (June 2007). The intention is to broaden and deepen the impact of the Forum in the region, with a focus on regional issues. The meeting will take place in Costa Rica. The dates will be announced soon.

Asia Regional Meeting

This event will happen on 12 – 16 November in Seoul, Korea. It will be hosted by the Yoido Full Gospel Church, the largest single congregation in the world (Pentecostal). It will be the third Forum meeting in Asia, after the first consultation in 2004 in Hong Kong and the follow-up meeting in 2006 in Bangkok. More than sixty National Councils of Churches, Evangelical Alliances/Fellowships and Catholic Bishops' Conferences, Churches and regional bodies have been invited. The meeting will center on the implementation of the vision of the Forum in national contexts and at the regional level, exchange of experiences and deepening of relationships.

All three meetings, and indeed all GCF activities in 2010 will be invited to reflect on and provide input for the second Global Forum gathering of 4 – 7 October 2011.

Pentecostal Support

The financial support base of the Global Christian Forum is slowly being broadened by contributions from a widening range of church traditions.

It has been noticed that grants for GCF activities have until now come mainly from churches and organizations that are related to the ecumenical movement. There are some encouraging signs that the scope of support is expanding. Calvary Church, a large congregation of the Assemblies of God in Malaysia has made a grant of US\$ 10,000 for 2010; it did the same in 2008. The commitment of Yoido Full Gospel Church to host the Asia Regional Meeting represents a sizeable in-kind contribution to this year's budget. Some smaller grants are also being received from several other Pentecostal and Evangelical churches participating in the Global Christian Forum.

Publications

Copies of the book ***Revisioning Christian Unity – The Global Christian Forum*** can be ordered from Regnum Books at a discount price of £ 20.19 with free shipping worldwide! (US\$ 31.10 and € 23.10 at current rates). Follow the link to www.ocms.ac.uk/regnum/detail.php?book_id=60

Theological institutions and libraries in the global South can order copies at the cost of US\$ 22.00 (postage included) from the GCF Secretariat (gcforum@sunrise.ch) (Limited number of copies available).

TRANSFORMATION, the theological journal of the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies, has published a ***Special Issue on the Global Christian Forum*** with articles from Catholic, Orthodox, Pentecostal and Reformed perspectives and from the African context. Copies can be ordered free of charge from the GCF Secretariat (Limited number of copies available).

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