

THE GLOBAL CHRISTIAN FORUM

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Meeting of the GCF Committee

The Committee on the Global Christian Forum met on 9 – 10 November for its second meeting of this year. One of the concerns the committee addressed was the strengthening and the funding of the GCF Secretariat.

Faced with the fact that the efforts made since its last meeting to raise the necessary funds for the employment of a full-time Secretary and Assistant had not yet yielded the hoped-for results, the committee took several interim measures to ensure the implementation of the activities planned for 2010. It approved the appointment of a half-time administrative assistant and agreed on the allocation of a number of tasks to committee members. In the same spirit three sub-committees were set up to work on communication, fundraising and the global Forum event that will conclude the current Three – Year Programme. The dates for this event were set: 4 – 7 October 2011. The committee discussed also its content, shape and size. It was proposed to focus on the changing face of world Christianity and on the discernment of what the Spirit is saying to the churches. This could take form through the sharing of "community stories" in a way similar to the methodology of sharing individual faith itineraries. The next global Forum event is intended to bring together some 250 participants including senior church leaders as well as women and youth. Three possible venues were considered. A final decision will be taken at the next meeting of the committee in June 2010 after a survey of the sites.

The committee reassessed and approved the activities for 2010: a regional meeting in Latin America and one in Asia, a team visit to North America, a sub-regional meeting for the Nordic and Baltic countries in Europe and possibly one more in another European sub-region. It also agreed on the issue of the changes in world Christianity as an appropriate theme for a thematic consultation. This meeting should come after the Edinburgh 2010 World Mission Conference (June) and the Third International Congress on World Evangelization of the Lausanne Movement (October 2010).

Encouraged by the positive outcome of the June 2009 team visit to the Middle East, the committee discussed possible follow-up of the visit in 2010. Decisions will be finalized after responses to the report have been received from the region.

Other important items on the agenda of the meeting included the involvement of non-denominational and mega-churches in the GCF and a review of the recommendations of the evaluations carried out in 2008, particularly those pertaining to the objectives of the Forum. The committee engaged in a discussion on the meaning of an "open space" for encounter and dialogue and affirmed the need for on-going theological reflection and study on the vision and purpose of the Forum.

The meeting took place at Sunbury Court, an International Conference Centre of the Salvation Army in Sunbury-on-Thames, Middlesex, UK.

Africa Regional Meeting

About seventy participants from a broad range of Christian traditions representing continental organizations and churches and church-related bodies from Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa met from 16 to 20 November in Peduase, near Accra, Ghana.

The meeting followed an earlier Africa Consultation in Lusaka, Zambia in August 2005 and the global Forum gathering in Limuru, Kenya of November 2007. Participants were

drawn from a limited number of countries and from the continent-wide Ecumenical, Evangelical, African Instituted and Catholic organizations with the intention to foster follow-up of the vision and objectives of the Forum within these particular contexts. Each of the four countries was represented by a group reflecting a wide spectrum of churches ranging from Anglican, Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant to African Instituted, Evangelical and Pentecostal. Each country group included representatives of the national Ecumenical, Evangelical, Pentecostal, Catholic and African Instituted bodies. After an introduction to the Global Christian Forum the participants engaged in the experience of sharing their personal faith stories, which was new for more than two thirds of them for whom this was the first Forum meeting they attended. This was followed by reports of the participants on relationships between the different churches and Christian traditions at the level of the African continent and in the four countries, and a keynote address on *Christianity and the Unity of the Church in Africa* by Revd. Prof. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu of Trinity Theological College in Accra. In the second part of the meeting the participants met in mixed groups to discuss what they could learn from each other and what their hopes for the future were. They continued the reflection in confessional and in national and continental groups, with the purpose of formulating proposals to promote and implement the objectives of the Global Christian Forum. In their reports the national groups affirm clearly that the vision of the Forum speaks to their situation and propose concrete steps and commitments to carry it forward. For example, in Ghana and South Africa meetings to this effect will be held in the first half of 2010. In Kenya it is proposed to form a National Christian Forum as an expression of the GCF. In Nigeria where there is already the Christian Association of Nigeria the group will use the Forum to create better understanding among the churches and further their unity and common witness. The report of the continental group confirms equally the relevance of the GCF for Africa, while at the same time underlining the need to clarify the process at the regional level. It highlights the leadership role of the continental bodies and proposes that each organization appoint a contact person as coordinator. In their final document, which was adopted at the end of the meeting, the participants express the hope that the leadership of Africa's continental ecclesial bodies might meet on a regular basis for prayer, fellowship and sharing (see www.globalchristianforum.org for the full text of the final document).

A Special Issue on the Global Christian Forum

The January 2010 issue of TRANSFORMATION, the theological journal of the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies will be devoted to the Global Christian Forum.

The special issue will contain articles on the theme of Christian unity and the role of the Global Christian Forum from a Catholic viewpoint (by Mgr. John Radano), a Reformed perspective (by the Rev. Joy Evelyn Abdul-Mogan), an Orthodox vantage point (by the Very Revd. Leonid Kishkovsky) and seen from an African context (by the Revd. Prof. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu). It will also reproduce the papers presented at the global Forum event in Limuru in November 2007 by Pentecostal scholars Dr. Cheryl Bridges Johns and Revd. Dr. Wonsuk Ma. Copies of the special issue can be ordered at the GCF Secretariat (email gcforum@sunrise.ch). Information will also be posted on the GCF website www.globalchristianforum.org .

If you wish to have more information on the Global Christian Forum please visit the website or contact the Secretariat at gcforum@sunrise.ch

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