

THE GLOBAL CHRISTIAN FORUM

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Revisioning Christian Unity – The Global Christian Forum

is the title of the book that has come out on the global Forum gathering of November 2007 at Limuru, Kenya. Prefaced by the Rev. Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, member of the GCF Committee, the book offers a comprehensive introduction to the Forum and the Limuru event by the Secretary Hubert van Beek and a narrative on the origin of this new initiative and the process from 1998 onwards by the Rev. Sarah Rowland Jones, also a Committee member. It has summaries of the group discussions and plenary presentations at the gathering, some examples of the stories of faith journeys that were shared, the papers that were presented by Dr Wonsuk Ma and Dr Cheryl Bridges Johns, the Message issued by the gathering and the Proposals for the Future of the Forum, the Bible studies and conference material. Also included in the book are the reports of the three evaluations of the Global Christian Forum that were carried out in 2008.

Meant to preserve the record of the Limuru gathering, this book is also a resource for all who are interested in the Global Christian Forum. It is published by Regnum Books, Oxford Center for Mission Studies, UK. Price £ 29.99.- Copies can be ordered at www.ocms.ac.uk/regnum A reprint for North America is in process by Wipf and Stock Publishers, Eugene, Oregon, USA, website <http://wipfandstock.com>

Team Visit to the Middle East

From June 20th - 30th a team of the Global Christian Forum visited Egypt, Lebanon and Syria. The team met with leaders of the Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant and Anglican member churches of the Middle East Council of Churches in the three countries and with several Evangelical / Pentecostal churches that do not participate in the ecumenical movement in the region. Meetings were also held with the Middle East Council of Churches, the Fellowship of Middle East Evangelical Churches, the Near East School of Theology and the Supreme Council of the Evangelical Community in Syria and Lebanon. In over twenty conversations the team was able to learn much about the life and witness of the churches and the relationships between them, to explain the purpose, the background and the working methods of the Global Christian Forum and to address questions and concerns that were raised. Some of the issues that emerged repeatedly were the relationship between the GCF and the World Council of Churches and other global and regional church bodies, whether the GCF was competing or seeking to replace some of these organisations, what was new in the approaches of the GCF to Christian unity, what could be the meaning of the GCF for the Middle East, etc. While some of the church leaders knew about it, for most with whom the team spoke the Global Christian Forum was new. The team was able to clarify the unique role of the GCF, which complements and does not compete with existing ecumenical bodies (WCC, MECC). Many saw the Forum as a promising initiative and welcomed especially the emphasis on the sharing of faith stories and spirituality. Some probed further. One of the most pressing questions the team became sharply aware of is that of the differing views on evangelism between the 'traditional' churches (Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant / Anglican) and the 'new'

Evangelical and Pentecostal churches and groups, not only with regard to Muslims but also among members of existing churches. There is hardly any communication between these two groups of churches and relationships are difficult.

The team decided to share the report of the visit with all those visited in the three countries and to ask for their comments and suggestions for possible follow-up. Decisions on follow-up will be taken by the GCF Committee in consultation with all concerned.

The members of the team were: H.E. Archbishop Makarios of Kenya, Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria and All Africa, Rev. Dr. Prince Guneratnam, Assemblies of God Malaysia, Rev. Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, Reformed Church of America (USA), Rev. Pirjo-Liisa Penttinen, World Young Women's Christian Association (Finland), Engineer Fouad Youssef, Evangelical Fellowship of Egypt, Rev. Fr. Gabriel Hachem, Greek Catholic Melkite Church (Lebanon) and Mr. Hubert van Beek, GCF Secretary.

National United Christian Forum

The National United Christian Forum is a body in India that groups the Catholic Bishops' Conference, the National Council of Churches and the Evangelical Fellowship of India. The formation of this national forum was inspired by the Global Christian Forum. The leaders of the three groups have drafted and signed a Memorandum of Understanding spelling out the basis and the aims and objectives of the NUCF. The Preamble says: *The ... Forum invites us to a journey of faith and confidence in the guidance of the Spirit to lead us into new relationships of trust and cooperation. We are committed to celebrate, enter into dialogue and act together to the glory of the One God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We seek to broaden and deepen encounters to foster mutual respect, to explore and address together common challenges. We share common goals and establish a cooperative arrangement to strengthen the Church in India and the church's engagement with the poor and oppressed.*

The Aims and Objectives focus in particular on the improvement of relationships between the communities in India, the engagement of the church in the socio-political and economic life of the nation, human rights in particular of minority communities, children, women, the poor and the marginalised, community education, response to atrocities against the Christian and other minority communities, issues concerning Christians of Dalit origin, communication, research, advocacy etc., with the inspiration and motivation from the Lord Jesus Christ and His teaching.

New General Secretary of the World Council of Churches

On August 27 the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches elected the Rev. Dr. Olav Fykse Tveit as its new General Secretary. Rev. Tveit is from Norway and a member of the Church of Norway (Lutheran). He will take over from the current General Secretary Rev. Dr. Samuel Kobia as of January 1st, 2010.

Dr. Olav Fykse Tveit has attended two Global Christian Forum meetings, the Europe Consultation in 2006 in Warburg, Germany, and the Global Forum Gathering of November 2007 at Limuru, Kenya. He has followed the developments of the GCF very closely.

Atlas of Global Christianity

As part of the centenary celebrations of the 1910 Edinburgh World Missionary Conference an Atlas of Global Christianity will come out next November. The editors are Todd M. Johnson of the Center for the Study of Global Christianity at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Boston, USA and Kenneth R. Ross of the Edinburgh University School of Divinity. The 400-page atlas offers a comprehensive visual and documented reference of the extraordinary changes in the status of global Christianity over the past one hundred years.

The atlas will be published by Edinburgh University Press. A 60% discount on the price of £ 150 is offered on pre-publication offers. A flyer and order form can be obtained from the GCF Secretariat at [**gcforum@sunrise.ch**](mailto:gcforum@sunrise.ch)

If you wish to have any more information on the Global Christian Forum, please visit the website [**www.globalchristianforum.org**](http://www.globalchristianforum.org) or contact the Secretariat at [**gcforum@sunrise.ch**](mailto:gcforum@sunrise.ch)

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