



An introduction to the
World Council of Churches



witness
unity service



The World Council of Churches (WCC) is a global fellowship of churches whose relationship with one another and activities together are an expression of their common faith in Jesus Christ and their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.



The WCC is the broadest and most inclusive among many organized expressions of the modern ecumenical movement, which seeks visible church unity. The fellowship includes most of the world's Orthodox churches, the Old Catholic and Mar Thoma churches, churches of the historic denominational traditions such as the Anglican, Baptist, Lutheran, Methodist and Reformed, many united and uniting churches as well as churches such as the Mennonite, Friends, Congregational and Disciples.

The Roman Catholic Church has a formal working relationship with the WCC but is not a member. There are emerging relationships with evangelical and Pentecostal churches not already in membership.

Churches in the fellowship of the WCC pursue a vision of ecumenism seeking visible unity in one faith and one eucharistic fellowship; promoting a common witness in work for mission and evangelism; engaging in Christian service by meeting human need through WCC partner agencies; breaking down barriers between people; and upholding justice, peace and the integrity of creation.

The WCC was officially formed in 1948 by representatives of 147 churches gathered at its 1st Assembly in Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

Today the WCC focuses its work in six programme areas.

- WCC and the Ecumenical Movement in the 21st Century
- Unity, Mission, Evangelism and Spirituality
- Public Witness: Addressing Power, Affirming Peace
- Justice, Diakonia and Responsibility for Creation
- Education and Ecumenical Formation
- Inter-Religious Dialogue and Cooperation

Each programme is rooted in a threefold vision for transformation of the church and world. This vision is to live out Christian unity more fully, live as churches being neighbours to all while addressing threats to the human community and encouraging churches to take greater care of creation through protection of the earth and its people.

*To learn more about the WCC go to:
www.oikoumene.org/en/who-are-we.html*



The WCC Fellowship of Churches

The World Council of Churches has 349 member churches representing a wide diversity of church traditions in more than 140 countries throughout the world.

Of the 349 WCC member churches, more than one-quarter are based in Africa (27%), nearly one-quarter are based in Europe (23%) and one-fifth are in Asia (21%).

The total membership represents more than 550 million people. Among these, Europe as a region and the Eastern Orthodox as a church tradition have the largest memberships of churches within the WCC.

By church tradition, 28% of the WCC member churches are from the Reformed tradition, 16% from the Lutheran tradition and 11% from the Methodist tradition.

Membership figures are based on those declared by churches for the 2006 WCC 9th Assembly.

To learn more about the WCC member churches go to: www.oikoumene.org/member-churches



NORTH AMERICA 31 churches 72,000,000 members

Anglican
Assyrian
Baptist
Disciples
Free
Lutheran
Mar Thoma
Methodist
Non-denominational
Old Catholic
Orthodox (Eastern)
Orthodox (Oriental)
Pentecostal
Reformed
United and Uniting

CARIBBEAN 13 churches 2,600,000 members

Anglican
Baptist
Free
Methodist
Orthodox (Oriental)
Reformed
United and Uniting

LATIN AMERICA 28 churches 4,500,000 members

Anglican
Baptist
Disciples
Free
Lutheran
Methodist
Orthodox (Eastern)
Orthodox (Oriental)
Pentecostal
Reformed



EUROPE

81 churches

287,000,000 members

Anglican
Assyrian
Baptist
Free
Hussite
Lutheran
Mar Thoma
Methodist
Old Catholic
Orthodox (Eastern)
Orthodox (Oriental)
Reformed
United and Uniting



ASIA

75 churches

62,600,000 members

Anglican
Assyrian
Baptist
Disciples
Free
Lutheran
Mar Thoma
Methodist
Non-denominational
Old Catholic
Orthodox (Eastern)
Orthodox (Oriental)
Reformed
United and Uniting

PACIFIC

17 churches

2,000,000 members

Anglican
Lutheran
Methodist
Reformed
United and Uniting

MIDDLE EAST

12 churches

9,700,000 members

Anglican
Assyrian
Mar Thoma
Orthodox (Eastern)
Orthodox (Oriental)
Reformed

AFRICA

92 churches

131,935,000 members

African-Instituted
Anglican
Baptist
Disciples
Free
Lutheran
Methodist
Orthodox (Eastern)
Orthodox (Oriental)
Pentecostal
Reformed
United and Uniting



WCC Programmes

WCC and the Ecumenical Movement in the 21st Century

The visible unity of the church remains a central goal of the ecumenical movement. Through the WCC, churches and other ecumenical partners find a platform to pray, reflect, plan and move together toward visible unity. This programme focuses on encouraging relationships with and among WCC member churches, Christian world communions, conciliar bodies and other ecumenical agencies in order to support ecumenical initiatives at regional, national and local levels.

Unity, Mission, Evangelism and Spirituality

Core to the work of the WCC is the calling of churches to work together for more faithful mission in the world and for the deepening of the spiritual dimensions of their lives in an integrated way. Through this programme, the WCC works to accomplish these goals through various ecumenical instruments such as the Faith and Order Commission, the Commission of World Mission and Evangelism (CWME) and the Ecumenical Disabilities Advocates Network (EDAN).

Public Witness: Addressing Power, Affirming Peace

Environmental disasters and climate change, the lack of food security, economic injustice, poverty, exclusion and many forms of violence are all part of our world today. Through this programme the WCC provides a common witness reflecting the churches' concerns on the international level by challenging the economic, social, political and cultural powers that exist while offering a prophetic voice for justice, peace and security.





Justice, Diakonia and Responsibility toward Creation

At the heart of the WCC's work is an ecumenical commitment to justice and enabling people to transform their own lives by meeting immediate human need, enabling churches to work together to address the structural roots of injustice and helping them to identify and combat threats to creation. This programme works to hold together in new and creative ways these different forms of ecumenical engagement with justice, diakonia and responsibility for God's creation.



Education and Ecumenical Formation

Ecumenical formation at community and academic levels, is vital for the renewal of the ecumenical movement. The Ecumenical Institute at Bossey provides ecumenical formation and supports churches, ecumenical bodies and theological institutions through developing capacity, contextualized curricula and educational methodologies. The Ecumenical Institute at Bossey is an international centre for encounter, dialogue and formation. Founded in 1946, the Institute brings together people from diverse churches, cultures and regional backgrounds for ecumenical learning, academic study and personal exchange.



Inter-Religious Dialogue and Cooperation

The first decade of the 21st century has seen an increase in the importance of the role of religion in bridging cultural differences. The key role religion can play in conflict resolution, seeking justice and peace-building has never been more evident than it is today. This programme promotes contact between Christians and neighbours of other faiths primarily through multi-lateral and bi-lateral encounters and dialogue aimed at building trust, meeting common challenges and addressing conflict and divisive issues through cooperation.

*To learn more about the WCC programmes go to:
www.oikoumene.org/en/programmes.html*



World Council of Churches

Postal address:
P.O. Box 2100
CH-1211 Geneva 2
Switzerland

Visiting address:
150 Route de Ferney
Grand-Saconnex (Geneva)
Switzerland

Tel: (+41 22) 791 6111
Fax: (+41 22) 791 0361

Visit the WCC online at oikoumene.org