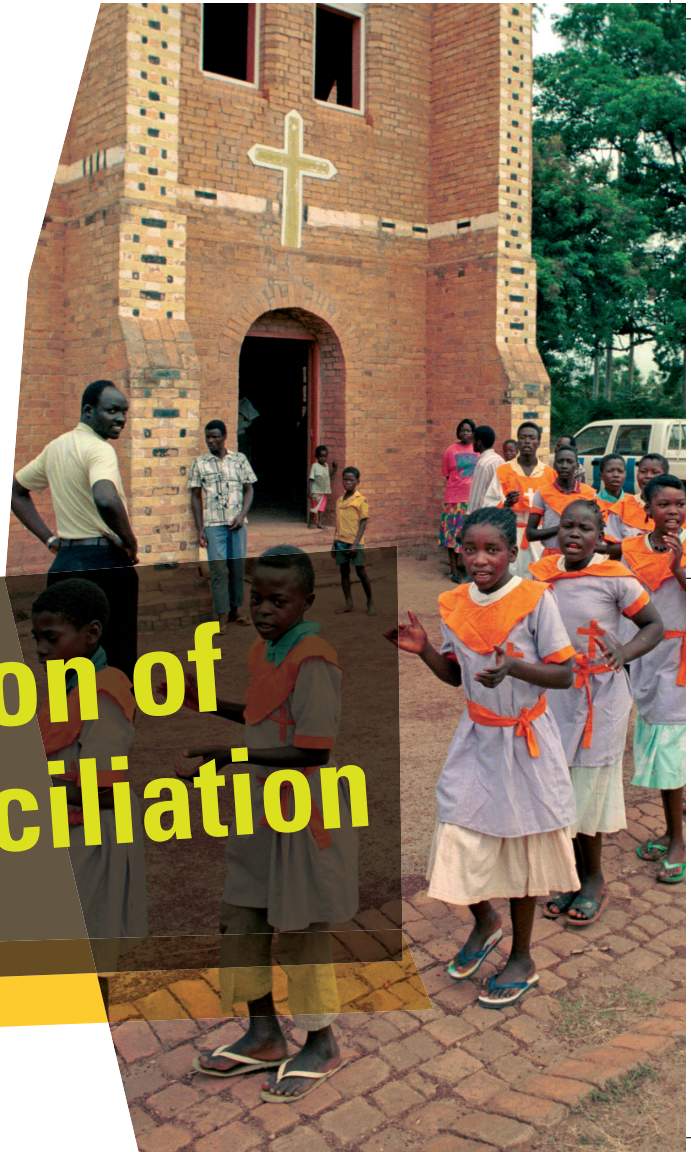


## MISSION AND EVANGELISM

Oikoumene

# Common Mission of Healing and Reconciliation

World Council of Churches



The WCC's Mission and Evangelism team works to empower churches to study and share experiences on core issues of their common mission:

- How the gospel can be proclaimed meaningfully in all contexts
- How a reconciling ministry is key for overcoming conflicts
- How healing results from medical, relational and spiritual approaches
- How solidarity with the poor relates to the proclamation of the gospel
- How partnership in mission can be renewed under globalized conditions
- How mission must aim at common witness and contribute to unity

## What do we mean by mission and evangelism?

'Mission' carries a holistic understanding: the proclamation and sharing of the good news of the gospel by word (*kerygma*), deed (*diakonia*),

prayer and worship (*leiturgia*) and the everyday witness of the Christian life (*martyria*); teaching as building up and strengthening people in their relationship with God and each other; and healing as wholeness and reconciliation into *koinonia* – communion with God, communion with people, and communion with creation as a whole.

'Evangelism', while not excluding the different dimensions of mission, focuses on explicit and intentional voicing of the gospel, including the invitation to personal conversion to a new life in Christ and to discipleship.

*Mission and Evangelism in Unity Today, WCC, 2000, §7*

## Highlights: world mission conferences

The work of the WCC on mission stems from the integration of the International Missionary Council with the WCC in 1961. The con-



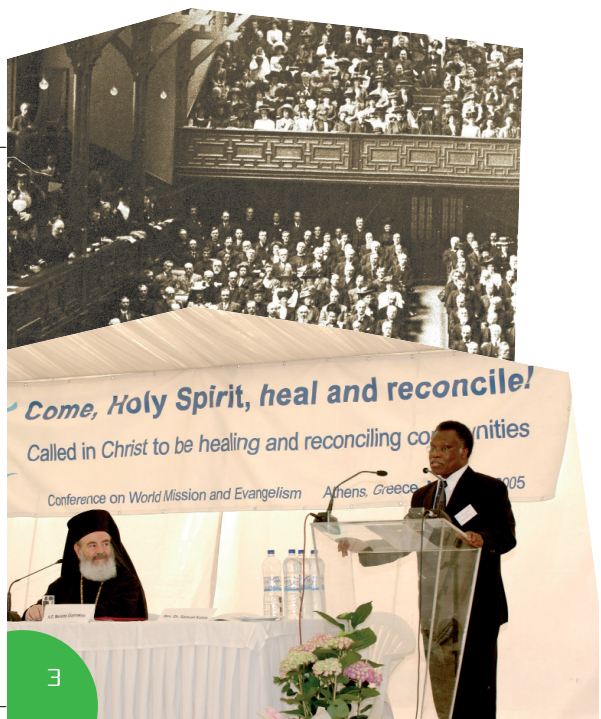
*Good Friday  
liturgy in the  
Cathedral in Echmiadzin,  
Armenia,  
April 2001*

temporary missionary movement had been one of the major streams fostering ecumenism since the world mission conference in Edinburgh in 1910. One of the highlights of its work are the Conferences on World Mission and Evangelism, which take place every seven to eight years, now organized by the WCC and offering the most representative gatherings for a debate on mission. The last such conference took place in Athens in

2005, focusing on healing and reconciliation and the role and work of the Holy Spirit in mission. It offered a space for personal encounter and dialogue between

*Above: World mission conference, Edinburgh, 1910*

*Below: Conference on World Mission and Evangelism, Athens, Greece, 2005*



delegates of the WCC member churches, the Roman Catholic Church, and Pentecostal and evangelical churches. Held for the first time in a majority Orthodox setting, it was an attempt at overcoming boundaries, a step towards reconciliation between conflicting mission movements.

Now, together with other organizations, the WCC is involved in a worldwide and interdenominational study process on mission, which will lead to the centennial of the 1910 Edinburgh conference – considered the starting point of the contemporary ecumenical movement.

### Evangelism in unity: sharing the good news

At the core of an ecumenical understanding of mission lies the proclamation of the gospel, the good news offered by God through Christ in the power of the Spirit. The invita-

tion to receive Jesus Christ as lord and saviour implies that one's life be shaped by his way of the cross and resurrection and the vision of God's kingdom he embodied. The special task of the WCC is to remind churches of their responsibility in the evangelistic ministry, locally and worldwide, and to insist on the urgency of *common* witness. The present disunity – if not competition – between churches in evangelism, leading to proselytism, is a scandal and damages the credibility of the biblical message. Due to cultural influences linked to globalization, competition in religious matters is however increasing. The WCC's task to call churches to unity thus has a renewed urgency.

The Mission and Evangelism (M&E) staff of the WCC work by connecting people, by means of publications and by organizing 'evangelism schools' – training sessions for multipliers – in different



*Conference on World Mission and Evangelism,  
Athens, Greece, 2005*

regions of the world, in cooperation with a local church or church council. In recent years such training sessions have taken place in Cuba, Syria, Poland and Fiji.

## Mission in solidarity with the poor

There is no evangelism without solidarity; there is no Christian solidarity that does not involve sharing the knowledge of the kingdom, which is God's promise to the poor of the earth. There is here a double credibility test. *Ecumenical Affirmation on Mission, 1982, §54*

The Urban Rural Mission network aims to embody the intimate link between an ecumenical understanding of the church's mission and the struggle for justice. Representatives of base communities, landless peasants, urban poor, and Christians, as well as people of other religions, are brought together regionally to share experiences, conduct training sessions for community leaders, assist and protect victims of political harassment or persecution, and network with people's movements involved in similar struggles. They also meet regularly at world level, and their work is coordinated by the M&E staff as an integral part of the WCC's mission mandate.

URM has continually challenged churches to join the poor in their struggle for fullness of life and not only speak on behalf of or send help for the victims of injustice and globalization. Understandably, such an emphasis in mission has created tensions and conflicts, which in

recent years the WCC has attempted to overcome by insisting on the importance of creating or recreating links and communication platforms between people's movements



*The Ecumenical Institute of Bossey,  
Switzerland, 1995*

and churches. In preparation for the Athens conference, URM emphasized strongly that no reconciliation could be reached unless justice is obtained by the victims of international and local oppressive systems and politics.

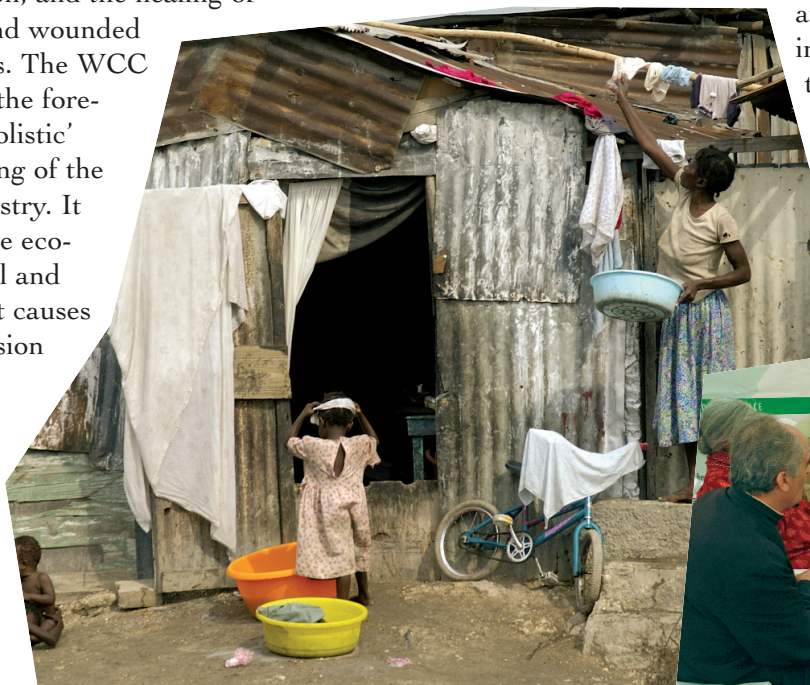
## The healing mission of the church

Everywhere in the world people are in need of healing. In the North and South, women, men and children yearn for release from physical sickness, the treatment of wounds, the restoration of communion, the overcoming of exclusion and stigmatization, and the healing of memories and wounded relationships. The WCC has been at the forefront of a 'holistic' understanding of the healing ministry. It addresses the economic, social and political root causes of the explosion of the HIV and AIDS pandemic,

the unjust distribution of resources (drugs, medical services), and also the spiritual, theological and cultural reasons for human and community behaviour. New challenges have arisen, in particular due to the worldwide increase in mental health problems (depression, drug addiction, suicide, family violence, etc.), for which the competence of

churches, the WCC and religious organizations is particularly sought.

In addition to facilitating contacts and networking between Christian health associations, advocacy at the level of the World Health Organization and training, M&E staff are also engaged in theological reflection on the meaning of health and healing in relation to salvation and forgiveness. Contacts have increased with churches that practise charismatic 'divine healing', so as to enable a dialogue with churches as bearers of a rich liturgical tradition. At stake are



*A woman and her family  
in Port-au-Prince, Haiti,  
April 2004*

*Conference on World Mission and  
Evangelism, Athens, Greece, 2005*





*Kamwokya Christian Caring Community Health Centre offers HIV and AIDS tests at a very reasonable fee. Kampala, Uganda, April 2004*



*A man in a West Bank village gets his blood pressure checked by a nurse. August 2005.*

the relations between faith and healing, person and community, medical competence and spiritual accompaniment, spirituality and coping with illness or suffering. Recent M&E work, together with deliberations at the Athens conference, point to the intimate link between mission and healing.

## Relationships in mission

Every local church is primarily called to witness in its own context, but also to participate in the worldwide mission of the church. This happens mainly through the exchange of fraternal workers, partnership with other local churches, the sharing of resources, information and spiritual treasures, through ecumenical contacts and intercessory prayers. The WCC

offers support through the work of its Commission and Conference on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME) and its related staff team. As a result of longstanding contacts with the Roman Catholic Church, Catholic mission organizations have become full members of

the CWME conference, and a Catholic staff member works in the WCC in Geneva on mission matters, seconded by the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. Relationships in mission have also been extended now to evangelical and Pentecostal churches and mission bodies. In mission, the WCC is already experiencing a form of 'wider ecumenism'.

## Studies and publications on mission as reconciliation and healing

The WCC's study process on mission grounds and contributes to all this work. A special emphasis is placed on the link between missiology and healing, on a renewed approach to the role of the Holy Spirit in empowering churches and persons for witness (e.g. through

charisms), and on increased dialogue with Pentecostal and charismatic missiologists.

Related to the theme of the Athens conference, further emphasis is placed on a biblical-theological understanding of the reconciling ministry. Reconciliation is first to be understood as a renewed relationship with the Trinitarian God, offered in Christ. As the core of the gospel, this must be made known and celebrated in evangelism and liturgy. Christ's death and resurrection also makes a new humanity possible, where boundaries of race, gender, culture, age and poverty are overcome. Reconciliation thus also implies a 'horizontal' community and social understanding of mission (healing of memories, struggle for justice and peace). The horizon of God's reconciling work is a renewed creation, which the churches can celebrate in liturgy and to which they can contribute.

A contemporary reflection on mission and evangelism must address the issue of religious plurality. The WCC is thus engaged in a cooperative study process between staff and scholars related to Faith and Order, Interreligious Relations and Mission and Evangelism.

Publications in mission include three periodicals: the quarterly and academic *International Review of Mission*, the *Ecumenical Letter on Evangelism* and *Contact* (Web publication on health and healing).

Recent books document the impressive church work done on HIV and AIDS and the healing and reconciling ministry. The relevant mission statements of the WCC since 1982 are now also available in book form.

*To find out more about our work, please contact us at the address below.*

*Conference on World Mission and Evangelism,  
Athens, Greece, 2005*



## The World Council of Churches

The WCC is the broadest and most inclusive among the many organized expressions of the modern ecumenical movement, a movement whose goal is Christian unity. The WCC brings together more than 340 churches, denominations and church fellowships in over 100 countries and territories throughout the world, representing some 560 million Christians and including most of the world's Orthodox churches, scores of denominations from such historic traditions of the Protestant Reformation as Anglican, Baptist, Lutheran, Methodist and Reformed, as well as many united and independent churches.

For its member churches, the WCC is a unique space: one in which they can reflect, speak, act, worship and work together, challenge and support each other, share and debate with each other. As members of this fellowship, WCC member churches:

- are called to the goal of *visible unity* in one faith and one eucharistic fellowship;
- promote their *common witness* in work for mission and evangelism;

- engage in *Christian service* by meeting human need, breaking down barriers between people, seeking justice and peace, and upholding the integrity of creation;
- foster renewal in unity, worship, mission and service.

The WCC's work is financed by contributions from its member churches and funds received from church-related organizations, foundations and individuals.

*Gedächtniskirche, Berlin, Germany*



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