



Original

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English

FOR ACTION

Membership Matters

1. New member churches

At its meeting in September 2006, the Central Committee accepted the membership applications of the Independent Presbyterian Church in Brazil and of the Lao Evangelical Church. Both applications were accepted after a long process of dialogue.

In accordance with the WCC rules, the appropriate confessional, national and regional bodies have been consulted. Both applicant churches have maintained their involvement in the WCC and the ecumenical movement. In addition, the General Secretary has consulted in the interim with the fellowship of member churches concerning the applications. The process of consultation indicates that both applicant churches may be welcomed into the fellowship of WCC member churches.

Actions:

The Executive Committee recommends that the Central Committee, in the light of a favourable consensus among member churches, welcomes into the fellowship of WCC member churches the Independent Presbyterian Church in Brazil.

The Executive Committee recommends that the Central Committee, in the light of a favourable consensus among member churches, welcomes into the fellowship of WCC member churches the Lao Evangelical Church.

Note: Both applicant churches are sending a representative to the meeting of the Central Committee. Accepting two new members, the WCC fellowship will be 349 member churches representing over 550 million Christians throughout every region of the world in over 100 countries.

2. Applications for membership

The majority of churches expressing interest in membership have less than 50,000 members. These churches are encouraged to join national and regional councils of churches or to consider joint membership in cooperation with another church in their country.

The revision of the Constitution and Rules addressing membership issues, coupled with a changing Christian landscape, pose some challenges in processing letters of interest and applications. The Permanent Committee on Consensus and Collaboration has expressed the strong interest and willingness to be part of the consultation process concerning applications for membership.

Action:

The Executive Committee recommends that the Central Committee, as a matter of policy, instructs the General Secretary to consult regularly with the Permanent Committee on Consensus

and Collaboration concerning applications for membership in the WCC and to involve the members of the Permanent Committee on visits to potential members.

3. Inactive members

At its meeting in 2003, the Central Committee set as policy the conditions for inactive membership in the WCC. The policy stipulates that members are considered inactive if they have not maintained a membership contribution and /or contact with the WCC for more than three consecutive years. An inactive member church “is not eligible to send representatives or delegates to WCC governing body meetings, committees and the Assembly, and is not eligible to receive subsidies for other WCC meetings or events” (CC minutes 2003 p. 131).

As of 31 January 2008, there are 46 inactive churches. The possible reasons for being inactive are varied. Many of these churches are very small, some have been affected by natural disaster or conflict and others may no longer exist or may have merged with other churches. Each situation is different and requires careful follow-up.

The Executive Committee has expressed deep concern and the General Secretary has made repeated efforts to establish contact with members considered inactive, regardless of financial ability, but expressing pastoral concern for the fellowship of member churches. In addition, the new reality of inactive members may require amendments to the WCC Rules.

Though considerable progress was made since the policy was implemented, the number of inactive members remains a significant concern for the health of the entire fellowship of WCC member churches.