



# Ecumenical Courier

United States Conference

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World Council of Churches

## We Can Still Believe in the Power and Promise of Peace

*The following excerpts are taken from the keynote address given by The Rev. Dr. Samuel Kobia, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches on October 5, 2004 at the Annual Meeting of the US Conference for the WCC, hosted by the ecumenical community in Atlanta, GA. The full text of Dr. Kobia's speech may be found at: [www.wcc-usa.org](http://www.wcc-usa.org).*

As I speak before you today in the city that was home to the pastor of the historic Ebenezer Baptist church and Nobel Peace Prize laureate the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., women, children and men all over the world are suffering from many forms of violence – terror, abuse, torture and extreme poverty. Peace today seems very far away. But as people of good will and people of faith we cannot close our eyes to this reality, nor should we despair: We can still believe in the power and the promise of peace as an alternative to vio-



Festive worship in Atlanta is enhanced by combined Glee Clubs of Spelman and Morehouse Colleges.

lence. We can envision that another world is possible. And we can act to change our societies. It is in our hands to pass the peace, to overcome violence, to build justice and to work for reconciliation.

We give thanks that our grounding as peacemakers and advocates for justice is not dependent upon our own reason or strength, but rooted in our faith in the God who is Love. This is why I resonate to your choice of theme texts for this meeting that highlights the WCC's Decade to Overcome Violence: Churches Seeking Reconciliation and Peace 2001-2010. In the first theme text taken from the Hebrew Scriptures, the call to engage in the righteous struggle for justice thunders from the lips of the prophet Amos: "Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever flowing stream." (Amos 5:24) In the second text, taken from St. Paul's letter to the Ephesians, Chapter 2 verse 14, we find the roots of 'beloved community' - the true source of power and the promise of peace: "For Christ is our peace, who has

made us both one, and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility."

Never before has the US carried such a significant responsibility in the world. US policies and actions have consequences for every country in the world. In the past eight months, I have traveled to most parts of the world, meeting with and listening to churches. And I can tell you that people around the world are afraid of the United States. They are afraid of US power and the way it is being used. Many of them are angry at the arrogant unilateral exercise of US power. While the US is now the world's only superpower, it has lost a great deal of respect and esteem in these past three years.

*continued on page 5*



Fr. Michael L. Pflieger, Pastor of The Community of Saint Sabina Church, Chicago, is guest preacher at closing worship in Atlanta.



Ecumenical Formation Intern Jessica Nycole Ralph (NBCUSA) performs liturgical dance at Ebenezer Baptist Church, Atlanta.



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# Four Atlanta Theologians Lead Bible Studies



Atlanta theologians, pastors facilitate group Bible Study discussions.

The morning Bible studies at the Atlanta meeting were based on the four-part study “Why Violence? Why Not Peace?” prepared for the Decade to Overcome Violence: Churches Seeking Reconciliation and Peace 2001-2010 by Rev. Simon Oxley, Coordinator of Education and Ecumenical Formation at the WCC together with Ms. Diana Mavunduse. Oxley served as presenter for these bible studies along with Dr. Rodger Nishioka, Associate Professor, Columbia Theological Seminary, Dr. Faith Hawkins, Director of the Youth Theological Initiative and Assistant Professor of Youth and Education at Candler School of Theology, Emory University; Dr. Margaret Aymer lecturer, Interdenominational Theological Center; and Dr. Alan Culpepper, Founding Dean McAfee School of Theology at Mercer University. These presenters represented the 4 ATS accredited theological institutions in Atlanta.

Following the morning’s Bible studies, conference attendees participated in table discussions facilitated by a broad spectrum of local, national and international church leaders. The Rev. Ann

Clay Adams, Vice Moderator, Atlanta Ecumenical Planning Committee and Director of Admissions, Columbia Theological Seminary observed that the variety in the panelists meant that folks connected deeply with at least one speaker and were led to new and challenging insights by the others.



International Theological Center professor the Rev. Dr. Margaret Aymer (PCUSA) leads opening Bible Study.

# Workshops Demonstrate Vast Global-Local Network of Peacemaking Resources

**W**e truly looked to the city of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. to provide challenging leadership in worship, theological reflection and Biblical study, administration and workshops on over 20 topics,” observed The Rev. Dr. Gilbert “Budd” Friend-Jones, Vice Moderator and Chair of the Workshops Planning Group for the Atlanta Ecumenical Planning Committee, and Senior Minister, Central Congregational UCC. “The Workshops Planning Group understood peace-making very broadly,” he explained, “so they included, for example, sessions on a diverse range of topics such as suicide prevention and recovery, non-violent approaches to terrorism, preaching on gender-based violence, Hip hop, the violence of video games, and community organizing.”

“The workshops revealed what the media often overlooks: there is a vast global-local network of resourceful and committed people who are responding to God’s call to be peacemakers,” commented Friend-Jones. The free workshops, which were held at Morehouse and Spelman Colleges were central to the design of the Annual Meeting of the US Conference for the World Council of Churches, as they enabled delegates from the United States and abroad to interact in depth with local Atlanta students and residents



The Rev. Graylan Scott Hagler, Sr. Minister of Plymouth Congregational United Church of Christ, Washington, DC (left) joins Rev. Dr. Bernice Powell Jackson for panel on “US Churches, Iraq and the War Against Terrorism,” hosted by Morehouse College.

around topics of great importance.

These workshops brought together people who have experience in the work of shalom locally, nationally and globally. According to Friend-Jones, participants reported that the workshops they attended were informative and stimulating and people exchanged contact information, thus allowing the dialogue begun at the workshops to continue in other ecumenical gatherings.

For those interested in communicating with the leaders of the workshops listed below, please contact the US Office for the WCC via email at: [US-DOV@wcc-coe.org](mailto:US-DOV@wcc-coe.org) or by calling the toll free telephone number: 1-888-212-2920.



Participants of “Breakthru: Moving from Isolated Congregations to the Beloved Community” meet in the King Chapel Library of Morehouse College.

## LIST OF WORKSHOPS

*Breakthru: Moving From Isolated Congregations To The “Beloved Community”*

*DOV 101: Nonviolence - What Is It & How Does It Transform Individuals, Communities, Nations And The World?*

*The Environment: Overcoming Violence in Creation*

*Envisioning the Future of the Ecumenical Movement*

*Every Church A Peace Church: Resources For The Transformation Of Local Churches By Faith-Based Grassroots Action*

*Fire Eyes: The Violence of Female Circumcision*

*From the Pews to the Pulpit: Preaching on Gender-Based Violence*

*God in Your Grace Transform the World: Local Ecumenical Engagement in the Lead-Up to the 9th WCC Assembly*

*Preaching the Power and Promise of Peace*

*Preventing Child Sexual Abuse Perpetration In Communities: Collaboration, Public Health and Social Justice*

*The Reconciling Mission of the Church in an Age of Violence*

*The Role of Politics and Prophecy in the Power and Promise of Peace*

*The Silent Violence of Suicide: Prevention, Intervention and Aftercare*

*US Churches, Iraq and the War Against Terrorism*

*The Violence of HIV-AIDS*

*“Virtual” Violence: Violent Video Games And Corporate Responsibility*

*The Violence of Omission*

*Welcoming the Stranger After 9/11: Refugees, Immigrants & Uprooted People*

*When God Meets Hip Hop: Redemption, Reconciliation, Revolution*

*Youth EmPOWERment in the Ecumenical Movement*

## Ambassador Andrew Young Speaks at Closing Worship for Annual Meeting



Ambassador Andrew Young, Chair, Faith And The City & Good Works International, greets WCC General Secretary Rev. Dr. Samuel Kobia at Ebenezer Baptist Church.

The Honorable Andrew Young, former United States Ambassador to the United Nations and Mayor of Atlanta, current Chair of GoodWorks International and Co-Chair of Atlanta's Faith And The City, and an ordained minister in the United Church of Christ, joined the procession and provided the welcoming comments at the closing worship service for the Annual Meeting of the US Conference for the World Council of Churches that was held at the historic Ebenezer Baptist Church on 6 October 2004.

The following are excerpts from Ambassador Young's opening remarks:

"The World Council of Churches has meant so much to me, as it was through the WCC that I was introduced to the world during our convention in 1960. When I went to the United Nations as ambassador to the United Nations, it was largely because of the contacts and the friendships that I had developed around the world largely through our churches. These contacts gave me a perspective that under President

Jimmy Carter's leadership the country was hungering for and we're hungering for again.

And one of the things that President Carter did was to ask many of us to go around the world and ask what they expected of the United States' new administration. We came back with an understanding that the world really just wanted to find a way to live together. Later, we were asked to be agents of reconciliation in Panama, the Middle East, and Southern Africa. This understanding came largely out of the intelligence that came through the churches and from our missionaries, and looking back, I think we can be proud of the steps that our country made in those days.

I was at a United Church Conference in 1957 in Omaha, Nebraska, where the theme was an Unfinished Revolution. And we had understood that we had gone around the world teaching people that they were children of God and inviting them to build and work for the fulfillment of the kingdom of God but we had left

them in this unfinished revolution. I think we're suffering now from some of the pains of our abandoning the world. When the world is abandoned and poverty is allowed to fester, it goes into grief and into meanness.

So, I hope you have thought of peace not only in terms of nations coming together but short people and tall people in Rwanda, Catholics and Protestants in Ireland, Arabs and Israelis in the Middle East, and all of the things that divide us. It's not just peace between nations but in Haiti right now, peace is simply a cup of water and a piece of bread. So peace is extending our passion, our concern, and our sensitivity. Right now, I'm most sensitive to places like Liberia and Sierra Leone. The poor rose up against the rich and the bloodshed there, which we call tribal that I think was the resentment of the many, many people who are still left hungry and thirsty and homeless.

Anywhere we go, peace is defined by different people in different ways but the peace that passes all understanding that keeps our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus can lead us to the fulfillment of all manner of peace however the evil whether it's racism or the war or poverty as Dr. King defined them or whether it's the more sophisticated or more ambiguous tensions that lead people to be suicide bombers. The mission, the message, and the power of God as revealed in God is sufficient. I thank you for bearing witness to that truth and for coming together in this sanctuary and in this city that has tried so hard to live out the meaning of that dream and that creed and make it a reality for all of our systems. We've come a long way but we still have a long, long way to go. Thank you and God bless you."

**We Can Still Believe in the Power and Promise of Peace**  
*continued from page 1*

In this world of US domination, it is difficult and risky to speak truth to power. This is precisely why churches worldwide are mobilized in support of communities in the US that uphold another power, the power of peace, in all places and at all times.

I want to affirm the vitality and creativity of peace and justice work in the United States. People everywhere have learned much from the experience of peace and justice advocates in the US. In many ways the civil rights movement and the churches in the USA have been an inspiration. And the diversity of people and of faiths in the US offers a model for many parts of the world. In a cultural context where people are easily categorized as 'left' or 'right,' 'democratic' or 'republican,' 'good' or 'evil,' the church can demonstrate that the Kingdom of God is truly inclusive, welcoming the stranger, uniting peoples of different colours, backgrounds and political opinions.

Your brothers and sisters around the world understand that working for peace and justice in the United States has never been easy – and perhaps never as difficult as, today. But they are hoping and praying that you will continue to advocate for a responsible use of power in this world. They expect much from you.

I firmly believe that the churches in the USA have a tremendous gift to make in public witness. And I commit myself to encouraging and supporting you in your witness at this critical juncture. I hope that you will not only work together in the US context, but that you will reach out and link your efforts to those Christians who are struggling in distant places and who are willing to support and accompany you and to pray for you and with you.

And I pray that the churches in the United States will continue to build



Press Conference with Atlanta Mayor Shirley Franklin, Martin Luther King III & The Rev. Dr. Samuel Kobia, WCC.

bridges of peace to people of other faiths who have come to this country seeking safety and freedom. Kofi Annan recently stated that in his opinion, "One of the great dangers of our time is that the politics of fear and anger and intolerance may force us into an artificial 'clash of civilizations,' in which people of different faiths and cultures perceive each other as enemies."

Brothers and sisters, pray for the power and promise of peace in our fragile world! Pray for each other!

Pull back from the temptation to work for justice and peace without grounding your work in spiritual discernment and prayer. And make time in your working and in your praying to listen. The young WCC scholar from the Solomon Islands who is studying this year at Eden Theological Seminary witnesses to all of us in his reflection that "Prayer is the loud voice of the churches for peace." Let us amplify this voice to be heard even more loudly during the Decade to Overcome Violence and beyond.

## CONGRATULATIONS

*On behalf of the people of Atlanta, I commend*

# *United States Conference World Council of Churches*

*on the occasion of your Annual Meeting. The United States Conference World Council of Churches (WCC) brings together like minds to spread the promise of peace. The recognition of Oct. 3<sup>rd</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> "A week of Peacemaking in Atlanta" makes a profound statement of reconciliation and eradication of violence and the welcoming of brotherly love, but not just in Atlanta but in every community.*

*The City of Atlanta salutes and welcomes the U.S. Conference World Council of Churches.*

October 3-10, 2004

*Shirley Franklin*  
Shirley Franklin  
Mayor of Atlanta

# Living Letters Delegation is Highlight of Atlanta Meeting

Expressions of solidarity and challenges to the US Churches were brought by a “Living Letters” delegation to the 2004 Annual Meeting of the US Conference for the WCC comprised of representatives from the WCC’s ecumenical partners in the host city of Atlanta, Bethlehem – West Bank, Canada, India, Indonesia, Norway, the Philippines, South Africa, and by a representative of the EAPPI project in Israel and Palestine.

The often poignant and consistently powerful presentations by the diverse members of this global delegation proved for most to be the highlight of the Atlanta meeting. Excerpts from the “Living Letter” presentations follow. (Complete transcripts may be found at: [www.wcc-usa.org](http://www.wcc-usa.org) along with information on how to order a newly produced DVD of the Atlanta “Living Letters” presentations).



Dr. Judowibowo Poerwowidagdo

**Living Letter from Indonesia**  
*The Rev. Dr. Judowibowo Poerwowidagdo, Director for Empowering Reconciliation and Peace, Jakarta, Indonesia*

In this age of violence, I do not believe that the way to abolish terrorism is through another form of terrorism. Violence breeds more violence, but acts of love and understanding will win the hearts of the peoples and enemies. I believe that the current global conflicts and violence are the result of the inability and unwillingness of the powerful and rich countries in the world to understand the needs and interests of the poor and marginalized countries and to share the resources of the world in a just and equitable manner.

In time of crisis, people usually say: “Don’t just stand there, do something.” But I want to say that in this time of violence, “Don’t just do something, stand there!” I believe that the power of peace lies in your ability and willingness to understand what it means to be in the shoes of your enemies. And the promise of peace lies in your faith in God and your ability and willingness to acknowledge that your God is the God of all creation, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of Hagar and Ishmael, the God of people of all religions. Also, the promise of peace is in your nation’s ability to accept and to treat other nations as children of God, as people of God and as God’s nations.



Renemsongla Ozukum

**Living Letter from India**  
*Renemsongla Ozukum, WCC Scholar from Baptist Church of India*

I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude to the WCC and Church World Service for enabling me to study at Lexington Theological Seminary. For those of us in Northeast India, coming to America was like getting a ticket to Heaven.

In my mother tongue Ao Naga the word, “Nukrangdong” means icon, model or focal point. America is like an icon for the Nagas and for much of the world as well. America represents a rich country in terms of wealth, diverse culture, theological ideas and schools, military strategy, and in influential ecumenical leaders. Since I’ve been in America, my Nukrangdong is an enlarged hope for a spirituality of love, peace, and forgiveness. In Christ there is security. We are in solidarity with you. Americans hold great promise for reclaiming that spirituality

which will allow them to be messengers of God’s peace and love-as Jesus was. I share that history and that hope with you.

I feel that peacemaking is a process where we are all called to be peacemakers. In a context where peace is all too often an abstract meaning, it is imperative to ask what the Bible says about the children of God. Are we to be peacekeepers or peacemakers? In order to animate “The Power and Promise of Peace,” we are reminded by the apostolic witness of Jesus who spoke against the imperialism of His time. My peace I give to you, not as the world gives. Not the peace of state religion, military power, or imperial power to dominate and uproot the creations. But the Peace I give you is the peace of justice and righteousness, Peace for the people who are subjugated, alienated, and who are caught in the conflict and violence, the power of peace is a promise to you. Let not your heart be troubled.



Prof. Maake Masango

**Living Letter from South Africa**  
*Prof. Maake Masango, WCC Executive Committee member from the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa*

I come to you from a country that was oppressed for 350 years. As a child I remember being forcibly removed from my own house. The white army demolished my home. They used harsh words, and I began growing with inner hatred to them. Bitterness and hatred became my only friend. The brokenness I experienced of Apartheid in South Africa, was strengthened by faith we had in

church and home, which sustained us and told us that we were also created in the image of God. The Church nurtured us and brought hope to the community of Atteridgeville.

I come to remind you that as Americans you are the most powerful country in the world. As an empire you are able to destroy other countries. Don't you have mercy upon the body of Christ that you are destroying? You sent your sons and daughters to kill other children, fathers and mothers in other parts of the world. Are your children not moved by tears of those you destroy, for surely they are also created in the image of God?

Those of us who come from the developing countries charge you to vote properly, so that your country may learn to live with other countries. I ask you to really think about the line in the Apostles Creed. "I believe in the Holy Catholic Church." If you oppress us, stop saying this part of the creed because you are oppressing part of the Catholic Church. Finally, keep passing this faith to your children, and they will see Muslims as children of God who created us all. I thank you.



Rosalyn "Sally" M. Laylo

**Living Letter  
from the  
Philippines**

*Ms. Rosalyn  
"Sally" M.  
Laylo, WCC  
Scholar from  
United Methodist  
Church of the  
Philippines*

As an international student and as one of the WCC scholars here in the United States, I was privileged and thankful to be a part of an ecumenical interfaith gathering that was held last September 11, 2003 in Lexington KY. Though September

11th reminds us of an overwhelming violence, on that day we gathered not to create violence but to promote peace. We prayed together, shared symbols of peace, and tried to encourage people to be peacemakers and to overcome violence. Likewise, I was also privileged to be a part of the historic Filipino gathering wherein the Filipino people were able to oust a dictatorial president and stop violence through non-violent revolution.

These two gatherings are two of the concrete examples of peace-making activities. These made me hopeful that despite the violence that we had experienced, still, there's the power and promise of peace. Like Dr Martin Luther King and other proponents of peace, I believe that we can have a dream - a dream that someday the promise of peace will be fulfilled. Despite the violence we do not lose hope, because God is the author of our hope.

In the pre-conference retreat before this conference, we used a bible passage from The Book of Corinthians II, Chapter 4, which says "Therefore, since it is through God's mercy that we have this ministry, we do not lose heart". I believe that the ministry of peace making is one of the ministries that God has entrusted us to do and that our powerful God will empower us to be able to perform this task. As Mother Teresa has said "Peace is not something you wish for, it's something you make, something you do, something you are, something you give away". Insofar as we want peace for the whole world, through God's mercy and help, God's Son Jesus Christ, and the power of the Holy Spirit, may peace begin with us. As living letters and ambassadors of God, through working with the ministers of peace making, we will be able to experience and celebrate the power

and promise of peace.

To God be the Glory! "Kapayapaan." (Filipino word that is equivalent to the English word for "peace")



Zoughbi Zoughbi

**Living Letter  
from  
Bethlehem,  
West Bank**

*Zoughbi  
Zoughbi,  
Director, WT'AM,  
Palestine Center  
for Conflict  
Resolution*

Let me express my appreciation to the work of the World Council of Churches and thank you for your prophetic voices and actions that alleviate the human suffering everywhere. Any injustice anywhere is a breach to justice everywhere. Sisters and Brothers, your voices of justice are needed now more than ever!

We are witnessing now the power of capitalists and multinational corporations and the power of the people who have prophetic voices, choices and actions. Let us not underestimate the power of the people. As a Palestinian Christian, I have great hope in you. We are endangered species, and we do not want to see our churches become museums. We invite you to visit and to stay to witness. Collective responsibility has been manifested and successful in bringing the Apartheid regime in South Africa to an end, and is enticing all of us to bring the Israeli occupation to an end. Who has ears, let them hear.

Please do come and visit the Holy stones, where you can meet with the living stones and let us help you in introducing to the rolling stones of the current socio-economic and political conditions.

*continued on page 8*

**Living Letters Delegation is Highlight of Atlanta Meeting**  
*continued from page 7*



Hermina Damons

**Living Letter from Ecumenical Accompanier: Hermina Damons from South Africa**  
*EAPPI Local Programme Coordinator in Israel and Palestine*

I am here today, speaking to yourselves very far from my family and home, because I am mad as hell. Mad because of the injustices that co-exist with us in the world. I am compelled to carry the gospel of freedom beyond my hometown, I must constantly respond to the desperate cries for aid, because I am a child of God, because I have a conscience.

I understand that Matthew 22:36: tells me to love even those that hate me and that we as humans do not have the God given right to humiliate, destroy, judge or ignore any human being sharing this earth with us. Yet from the day of my birth, right up to this moment and even long before that, the reality in this world has been just the opposite. In my own personal life I saw this role enacted by the white South African Christians in the days of Apartheid, where we as black South Africans had to suffer humiliation, torture, rape, murder, separation, oppression. In short, our basic human rights were made non-existent. The rest of the world's history also has many similar horror stories to tell.

My friends, I must say to you that we have not made a single gain in human rights without determined legal and non-violent pressure. History is the long and tragic story of the fact that privileged groups seldom give up their privileges voluntarily. Individuals may see the moral light and voluntarily give up their unjust posture, but as Reinhold Neibuhr has reminded us, 'groups are more immoral than individu-

als.' The time to act is now! Remember that justice too long delayed is justice denied. Can God Trust you?



Elizabeth Clement

**Living Letter from Atlanta**  
*The Rev. Elizabeth Clement, Director of the Faith And The City Leadership Institute*

As a member of First Congregational Church where many of you were last night for the Jazz vespers and the church I served as minister some years ago, I saw at one point a picture of that church with its public drinking fountain just outside the sidewalk. In the days of segregation, it was the only public drinking foundation that African-Americans downtown in Atlanta would have the privilege to use. It was a fountain in the city and that image has stayed with me forever, standing at the crossroads at the intersection of refreshment and transformation. This is our ministry. It is a ministry of faith in the city and in my mind, it is the ministry of the Christian church. And so pray for us even as we will pray for you.



Tale Hungnes

**Living Letter from Norway**  
*Ms. Tale Hungnes, a member of the WCC's International Reference Group for the Decade to Overcome Violence and past director of the Norwegian youth movement Changemaker*

I will go back with more hope and more enthusiasm than when I arrived because you have shown me that there are Americans working for peace and justice. We all know that worldwide peace and democracy is threatened by the war on

terror that moves power away from democracy and dialogue into violence and war. And you live in this superpower that is the driving force behind that development. So, I want to express my solidarity with you to say that in your struggle you aren't alone. We are lots of people around the world working for the same issues and the same goals as you are: for peace! It is possible to break down enemy lines and to remind each other that the so-called enemy has children and needs peace songs and needs lullabies. [Ms. Hungnes ended her presentation by playing a lullaby sung by a mother in Afghanistan from the recently released CD titled: "Lullabies From The Axis of Evil," produced by Valley Entertainment.]



Dr. Marion Best

**Living Letter from Canada, Endorsed by Canadian Member Churches of the WCC**  
*Dr. Marion Best, Vice Moderator, World Council of Churches & Past Moderator of the United Church of Canada*

To the Churches and Christians in the United States of America.

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

I come as a "living letter" from your northern neighbour Canada to accompany you and encourage you as you face extraordinary challenges in witnessing to peace with justice in a world overwhelmed by violence.

I come in unity, solidarity and peace through God's grace. Other living letters have come to you from all over the oikumene in the wake of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. This witness of hope comes as we all face new realities of power and insecurity.



The churches of Canada and the USA have experienced moments of lively and intense fellowship, solidarity and common witness. We yearn for continued and renewed vigour in our life together as churches of Jesus Christ called to witness in these difficult times.

As close neighbours we see the United States of America as the world's most powerful nation - economically, politically, culturally and militarily. As our church members filled the streets in Canadian cities, towns and villages to say no to war and to say no to global unilateralism, we knew that we were one with millions of U.S. Christians who were taking a strong prophetic stance for peace with justice. We give thanks to God for the courage of you who have struggled to witness to truth, justice and peace in a time when fear, insecurity and manipulated patriotism have paralysed so many.

We celebrate that we have stood together in common witness to the international community, and through the meeting with UN Secretary General Kofi Anan, lifted up a vision of what justice requires for Iraq post-invasion.

We celebrate the new energy and strong solidarity we shared when Canadian, U.S. and Mexican church leaders met together in January 2004 to affirm a common call for Just Trade.

We recognize the cost born by church leaders, religious organizations and individuals in the USA who have challenged abuse of power and unilateralism cloaked in the veil of democracy, freedom, security and patriotism. Along with you we deplore discrimination and unjust treatment of others particularly our Arab and Muslim brothers and sisters. In our Canadian context

we have also struggled to overcome the barriers of inter-religious division and forge new and stronger inter-faith solidarity. We together have a task to tell the truth in love and refuse to have domination, injustice and hatred justified in God's name.

In Canada, our churches and indeed our whole society continue to live out the horrendous effects of colonialism and the domination of one nation over others. The legacy of injustice against Canada's First Nation peoples is especially sharp for those Christians churches who were accomplices in the processes of colonization, cultural oppression, abuse of power and genocide, through a policy of assimilation that removed children from their communities. This is the violence for which we seek repentance.

The gifts that First Nations had to offer were suppressed in the colonization of Canada. The newcomers to the land did not respect their justice system, rich culture and languages that had existed since time immemorial. The removal of children from families and communities to residential schools, the punishment exacted for speaking their own languages there and the disruption of Aboriginal spirituality and tradition, are wrongs that cannot be excused. Churches have committed themselves to listening to truth telling about the effects of these wrongs on First Nations communities. Lamentation and repentance for what may have been carried out with good intentions but has had disastrous consequences in the lives of the people has been a painful and yet spiritual experience for the churches. Through listening to the stories, through apologies and the establishment of healing funds to help restore language and culture the churches are taking steps towards rebuilding relationships that have been severely strained and in many cases broken. There is recognition that we all need healing as we engage in the long slow journey towards reconciliation.

We are committed to seeking new ways of walking with respect and honour for the language, spirituality and culture of First Nations Peoples.

Our own bitter experience leads us to question the claims of those who impose solutions for the supposed "good" of others, when it is the powerful who end up with the land, the resources and the political control and those who are being "helped" are humiliated and dispossessed.

John 10:10 is especially telling for us - Jesus who not only proclaims that he has come "so that all may have life in all its fullness" but also that we must clearly acknowledge that there are others that come as thieves "who come to steal, kill and destroy."

We come as neighbours who in our own context struggle to "choose life" in times of unbridled power, militarized hegemony and economic domination.

We hope that together we can break through barriers of isolation, and form bonds of unshakeable unity in justice and peace, so that as you make witness for the world God wants and has promised you will know that you are not alone.

"We are one body...  
When one suffers all suffer."

We have heard and been told by U.S. brothers and sisters that the struggles for global justice and peace go far beyond partisan politics or the policies of any specific administration - at stake is the very self-identity of the U.S.A. The voice and prophetic witness of the churches is fundamental as you our mighty neighbour struggles to harness its power in response to God's call:

"To do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with our God"

## Ecumenical Formation Interns and Area Youth Enhance Atlanta Annual Meeting

“The theme of the Annual Meeting of the US Conference, The Power and Promise of Peace, was most visible in the presence of youth and young adults at the meeting as the torch was passed to the next generation,” commented the Rev. Dr. Angelique Walker Smith, Vice Moderator of the Black Church Liaison Committee, Executive Director of the Church Federation of Greater Indianapolis, and Chair of the US Board’s planning committee for the Atlanta meeting. Members of the Board commended local planners for scheduling workshops and panel discussions on the campuses of Spelman and Morehouse Colleges to allow for greater participation of area college students, faculty and local residents.

Young adults served as stewards for the meeting, joined General Secretary Rev. Dr. Samuel Kobia and WCC North American President Dr. Bernice Powell Jackson for a youth breakfast, attended a pre-Annual Meeting retreat designed to promote spiritual reflection on the themes and goals of the Decade to Overcome Violence, and participated as leaders in the youth empowerment workshop. In addition they contributed their talents as singers, poets and dancers during the culminating worship service at Ebenezer Baptist Church.

“Nothing could have prepared me for the powerful spiritual ‘high’ of the 200-voice combined Glee Clubs of Spelman and Morehouse Colleges at the closing worship when these remarkable young adults performed ‘Lift Every Voice And Sing,’” exclaimed the Rev. Deborah DeWinter, WCC’s Program Executive for the United States who facilitated planning activities in preparation for the Atlanta meeting.



Rev. Dr. Angelique Walker-Smith honors young adult stewards Manikka LaShon, Faith And The City; Ms. Jeannie Hunter, Candler School of Theology; and Ms. Emily Nesheim, ELCA volunteer.

“After working side by side with Jessica Ralph, our Ecumenical Formation Intern at the US Office for all those demanding weeks in the lead-up to Atlanta, it was hard to keep the tears of joy from flowing as I watched her perform her remarkable liturgical dance at The Ebenezer Baptist Church that last evening,” DeWinter continued.

Taking the suggestion of longtime senior volunteer Edna Palmer, Jessica Ralph worked closely with The Rev. S. LaTrell Harrison, Vice Moderator for Youth Involvement of the Atlanta Ecumenical Planning Committee and Associate Minister of Saint Philip AME Church in Smyrna, Georgia in facilitating the introduction of an innovative Hip-hop workshop. Jessica Ralph, who shared the podium with Kurtis Blow, also known as “The King of Rap” along with other Hip-hop leaders, moderated the enthusiastically received session entitled, When Hip-hop Meets God.

“If the church is to have an important impact on the lives of youth and young adults, Hip-hop must be a part of the church’s context,” Rev. Harrison explained, adding that

because Hip-hop speaks to the culture of American youth and young adults she felt it was important to find ways to contextualize the Hip-hop style into the spiritual lives of Christian youth.

The 2003 WCC and NCCCUSA Decade to Overcome Violence (DOV) Intern, Jennifer Morazes, accompanied a group of young people from the Youth Global Experiential Learning Initiative (YGELI) to the Annual Meeting in



The Rev. S. LaTrell Harrison, Vice Moderator for Youth Involvement, Atlanta Ecumenical Planning Committee & Associate Minister, Saint Philip AME led stewards retreat.

Atlanta. Formed by three Washington, DC and Baltimore area churches (Little River United Church of Christ, Christ Congregational, and Heritage Church), the YGELI group responded to the call of the DOV by providing a network for young people from different cultural and economic backgrounds to form cross-cultural and global partnerships as a way of seeing themselves as agents for overcoming violence and promoting peacemaking in their own communities.

The presence of so many talented youth and young adults from around the country and the local Atlanta area challenged church leaders to ensure that ecumenical structures continue to include meaningful youth participation in the planning and implementation of future ecumenical gatherings.



Ecumenical Formation Intern Ms. Jessica Ralph (NBCUSA) prepares to perform liturgical dance at closing worship in Atlanta.

## Being Able To Minister Doing What I Love: A First Person Reflection By Jessica Ralph

*[Since the summer of 2004, Jessica Ralph, currently a senior in the Alvin Ailey/Fordham University BEA program with concentration in dance, has served as an Ecumenical Formation Intern in the US Office of the World Council of Churches at The Interchurch Center in New York City. She is a member of Ebenezer Baptist Church in Sandusky, Ohio, a congregation of the National Baptist Convention USA, Inc. In recognition of her leadership, Ralph was recently selected as a delegate of the NBCUSA to attend the World Council of Churches 9th Assembly in Porto Alegre, Brazil in February, 2006.]*

**A**s young adults, we were given significant opportunities to make our voices heard at the Annual Meeting of the US Conference that took place in Atlanta, GA, 5-6 October 2004. Pre-conference activities included a youth spiritual retreat, which enabled us to experience different spiritual practices and viewpoints.

A highlight of the annual meeting for many of us was the introduction of holy Hip-hop. Kurtis Blow, "King of Rap;" Jeannine Otis, Rap Hall of Famer; Fr. Timothy Holder, founder of HipHopEMass.org; the Rev. Otis Moss, Pastor of Tabernacle Baptist Church, Augusta, GA; were all panelists for a workshop I moderated, entitled, "When Hip-hop Meets God: Redemption, Reconciliation, Revolution." This workshop had one of the biggest turnouts, and the panel's knowledge and insight coupled with the audience's interest and passion about the subject incited a very fervent, open, and frank dialogue between the audience and the panelists. Other Hip-hop events in connection with the Annual Meeting included a showing of

the movie Tupac: Resurrection, followed by an audience dialogue with Kurtis Blow. There was also a performance by phenomenal local holy hip-hop artists and conscious spoken word artists.

The goal of these Hip-hop activities was to demonstrate how Hip-hop, a musical genre often associated with violence, can be used as a tool to overcome violence. Hip-hop can be an effective tool for promoting peace and inspiring social consciousness and spiritual activism. These Hip-hop artists who were applying the principles of the Gospel to life situations in a way that effectively communicated their concerns and thoughts, inspired and rallied a very receptive audience.

Another highlight of the Annual Meeting for me was the Youth Breakfast with the General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, Rev. Dr. Samuel Kobia, and the WCC President for North America, Dr. Bernice Powell Jackson. As a youth intern and WCC steward, I enjoyed the breakfast because I was able to see where experiences as stewards influenced the choice of current ministries for these inspiring leaders in the churches and ecumenical movement, today. During the breakfast, some of the youth expressed the joy they had experience so far, along with some concerns they felt needed to be addressed by the WCC, most notably the WCC's relationship to young people.

The Youth Empowerment in the Ecumenical Movement workshop pro-

*continued on page 14*

# Nonviolence & Reconciliation Retreat Provides Rest & Renewal

For those who chose to participate in the pre-Annual Meeting Spirituality, Nonviolence & Reconciliation Retreat held at the Simpsonwood Conference and Retreat Center in Norcross, GA from October 2-4, 2004, "...it was a time of rest, theological reflection and renewal," commented the Rev. Hansulrich Gerber, the WCC's Decade to Overcome Violence (DOV) Coordinator. It was also an opportunity for international guests to feel welcomed in a more intimate setting by their counterparts from the churches of the United States before joining the larger, more intense sessions at the Annual Meeting of the US Conference. A special retreat track was also designed for youth and young adult participants introducing them to the themes and objectives of the Decade To Overcome Violence (DOV) and preparing them for the practical tasks of serving as Stewards at the Annual Meeting.

The retreat was skillfully planned and facilitated by the Rev. Ashley Seaman, Associate minister for spiritual formation of Wiltshire Presbyterian Church, Denver, member of the World Council of Churches Central Committee, and Vice Moderator, US Conference for the World Council of Churches; Rev. Hansulrich Gerber, World Council of Churches Coordinator for the Decade to Overcome Violence; Rev. Dr. Julie Johnson, Director, Spirituality programs, Columbia Theological Seminary, Decatur, GA and a minister of the Presbyterian Church (USA); and Rev. Simon Oxley, staff member of the World Council of Churches and coordinator of the team on Education and Ecumenical Formation.

Participants commented how the tranquility and natural beauty of the setting at Simpsonwood contributed to the sense of rest and spiritual renewal. Gerber noted that the international guests, who partici-

pated as retreat leaders, spoke on how their involvement in the retreat affected them personally. "They expressed gratitude for the time to be heard and to hear from others involved in justice and peace struggles," Gerber stated. "Also, the smaller size of the group made participation in the larger public program that followed easier as international guests saw familiar, supportive faces and didn't have to meet new people constantly."

During the retreat The Rev. S. LaTrell Harrison, Vice Moderator, Atlanta Ecumenical Planning Committee and Associate Minister, Saint Philip AME Church, led a special ecumenical forma-

tion track for youth and young adults, who later served as WCC Stewards for the Annual Meeting.

Anne Glynn Mackoul, Member of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, representing the Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and Board of the US Conference for the WCC, who also serves on the US DOV Committee, prepared and introduced a key resource for the retreat, entitled: Witnesses for Peace, An Ecumenical Guide to Witnesses for Peace Throughout the Ages. A copy of this resource is available upon request by email from the US Office for the WCC at: [US-DOV@wcc-coe.org](mailto:US-DOV@wcc-coe.org).

## Decade To Overcome Violence (DOV) Joint Internship



**US Conference  
for the World Council of Churches  
&  
National Council for the  
Churches of Christ in the USA**



**Do you have a passion for Ecumenism?  
Would you like to devote a year of your life to  
Direct support of initiatives and programs designed to  
Overcome violence and promote reconciliation?**

**This is an extraordinary opportunity to work side by side with WCC member communion leaders of justice and peacemaking programs around the United States who serve on the United States Decade to Overcome Violence Committee**

**For more information on  
The Decade to Overcome Violence:  
Churches Seeking Reconciliation & Peace (2001-2010)  
visit: [www.overcomingviolence.org](http://www.overcomingviolence.org)**

**To download US DOV Internship Description and  
Application form, please visit:  
[www.wcc-usa.org](http://www.wcc-usa.org)**

## Music Reflects Diversity of Atlanta's Ecumenical Community

The local Ecumenical Planning Committee pulled out all stops in providing a diverse and spirited representation of musical talent in the Atlanta Community to welcome participants from around the country and around the globe attending the 2004 Annual Meeting of the US Conference for the World Council of Churches in Atlanta. "We are particularly indebted to Dr. Melva Costen of the Interdenominational Theological Center, The Rev. Dr. Dwight Andrews, Pastor of First Congregational Church, and Dr. Joyce Johnson, Spelman College Organist for their extraordinary leadership in planning the musical offerings at our meeting," noted Rev. Deborah DeWinter of the WCC's US Office.

In every venue special music enriched the proceedings, ranging from an exalted organ prelude at the Ebenezer Baptist Church to a hand-clapping, foot-tapping jazz vespers at First Congregational Church, an opening worship sing-along with the lively Gospel Choir of the Interdenominational Theological Center and the pure delight of songs sung and simultaneously signed in American Sign Language by Harmony: Atlanta's International Youth Choir. "And no one present at the culminating worship service will ever forget the tight harmonies and spine-tingling crescendos of the two-hundred voice combined Glee Clubs of Morehouse and Spelman Colleges, performing "Lift Every Voice And Sing," Rev. DeWinter remarked.

"Song For Peace," the 2004 Decade To Overcome Violence theme song was introduced for congregational singing at the opening service by The Interdenominational Theological Center Chorus, led by Dr. Melva W. Costen. Later that evening Rev. Dr. Dwight Andrews, Pastor at First

Congregational Church, Director of Atlanta's famed Community Jazz Chorus and musical director for several of August Wilson's Broadway productions in New York City, conducted a festive jazz vespers service. Andrews said that he felt honored to be part of this US conference, noting that as jazz has been embraced all around the world, it was a perfect fit to have members of different denominations and international guests come together to experience the international language of jazz.

At the closing worship service, Dr. Joyce Johnson, college organist and Professor of Music at Spelman College accompanied the Morehouse and Spelman College Glee Clubs and Harmony: Atlanta's International Youth Chorus. "The music for the processional led by the Children of Sudan and the organ prelude reflected the dissonance that depicts the pains of agony of violence around world, she stated. The prelude ends on a confident note that reflects hope and faith that conflicts will hopefully be resolved."



Harmony: Atlanta's International Youth Chorus performs under the direction of Ms. Joyce Ketchie Carr McDonald.

Bette and David Rod, composers of "Song for Peace" who attended the Atlanta meeting with their son, Charles, commented that "It was a treat for us to hear "Song for Peace" sung in so many different ways and in such a meaningful setting. The performances were wonderful. We had hoped our music could help peacemakers from all over the world lift up the 'power and promise of peace' and in Atlanta, our hopes were certainly realized."



Rev. Dr. Dwight Andrews, Sr. Minister of First Congregational United Church of Christ and Associate Professor of Music Theory, Emory University, leads Jazz Vespers.

## Vibrant Exhibits Enhance Atlanta Meeting

During the Annual Meeting of the US Conference for the World Council of Churches, organizations representing the diversity of the ecumenical movement offered exhibits in a special area that was available to conference participants, as well as visitors to the Renaissance Concourse Hotel and the general public. One of the highlights of the US Conference was the Gandhi, King, Ikeda: A Legacy of Building Peace exhibit which provided a holistic look at Gandhi, King and Ikeda's respective non-violence movements and their contributions to world peace. Edward Carter, Sr., Dean of the Martin Luther King, Jr.

International Chapel at Morehouse College commissioned this exhibit in 1997. Another exhibit on display was Ten Thousand Villages, a non-profit organization that provides vital, fair income to people living in countries in the South by marketing their handicrafts and telling their stories. Other exhibitors included: The Christian Church (DOC), Columbia Theological Seminary, Eden Theological Seminary, the Friends General Conference, Global Health Action, Lexington Theological Seminary, Oikocredit, PCUSA, Regional Council of Churches (Atlanta), the United Methodist Church and the WCC Display and Book Shop.



The Rev. Dr. Lawrence Edwards Carter, Sr., Dean, Martin Luther King Jr. International Chapel of Morehouse College, introduces Gandhi, King, Ikeda: A Legacy of Building Peace exhibit.

**Being Able To Minister Doing What I Love: A First Person Reflection**  
*continued from page 11*

vided us with an opportunity to gather and share ideas about how young people can apply ecumenism in our lives and communities, as well as how we can become more involved as a respected and viable force within the ecumenical movement. I am grateful to the World Council of Churches for opening my eyes to a new worldview and illustrating how one person can make a difference.

The WCC Stewards Program was a way of bringing youth with an interest in the Ecumenical Movement to the Annual Meeting and spirituality retreat who otherwise might not have been able to attend. Stewards helped run the youth workshop, worked behind the scenes with staff and Board members, and also were able to experience most of the activities, workshops, and meetings that took place. Overall, the Stewards experience motivated me to utilize my strengths and talents in ways that will foster further participation in the ecumenical mission to overcome violence. I am excited to see how youth will grow to become an even stronger entity within the World Council of Churches. I have faith that the WCC will continue to work on strengthening their relationship with youth. For me, being able to minister to such a distinguished group of local, national and international church leaders through the liturgical dance that I performed at the culminating worship service was truly a special blessing.

**For more information on Ecumenical Formation Internships at the US Conference for the World Council of Churches or to apply to be a Steward at the 10-12 October 2005 Annual Meeting of the US Conference in Chicago, please contact: Rev. Deborah DeWinter, as follows: via email: [dhd@wcc-coe.org](mailto:dhd@wcc-coe.org) or toll free telephone: 1-888-212-2920.**

## **Jazz Vespers at First Congregational Church (UCC) With The Rev. Dr. Dwight Andrews, Senior Pastor & Director & Interdenominational Theological Center Chorus With Dr. Melva W. Costen, Director**



Opening Worship with Interdenominational Center Chorus, directed by Dr. Melva W. Costen.



Rev. Joan R. Harrell, Womanist Scholars Program, Office of Black Women in Church & Society, ITC.



Ms. Kathleen Jackson Bertrand, soloist at Jazz Vespers.



The Atlanta Community Jazz Chorus.



Rev. Dr. Bernice Powell Jackson, WCC President with the Dwight Andrews Quintet.



Rev. Dr. Dwight Andrews (UCC).



Ms. Martha Gardner, US DOV Committee (ECUSA).



Jazz Vespers Service at First Congregational United Church of Christ, Atlanta.



Rev. Dr. T. DeWitt Smith, (PNBC) Rev. Dr. Samuel Kobia, (WCC) Rev. Dr. Angelique Walker Smith (NBCUSA) provide opening remarks at Jazz Vespers.

# “The Power & Pr Annual Meeting of the US Conference 5-6 Octo Atlanta,



Rev. Lisa Rhodes, Dean of the Chapel, Spelman College.



Rev. Dr. Joseph L. Roberts, Sr. Pastor, Ebenezer Baptist Church & Rick Ufford-Chase, Moderator 216th General Assembly (PCUSA).



Fr. George Alexson, Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church, Atlanta



Ms. Lois Dauway, Women's Division, UMC & WCC Central Committee.



Rev. Richard Flippin; Rev. Dr. T. DeWitt Smith, Moderator, Atlanta Ecumenical Planning Committee (PNBC); Rev. Dr. Angelique Walker Smith (NBCUSA); Rev. Deborah DeWinter, US Office, WCC; Rev. Dr. Samuel Kobia, General Secretary, WCC; Mr. Martin Luther King III, Honorary Chair & President/CEO, The King Center; Rev. Dr. Bernice Powell Jackson, President, WCC & General Minister, Justice & Witness Ministries (UCC).



Dr. Elizabeth Ferris, Diakonia & Solidarity Team Leader, (WCC).



Mr. Roy Craft, Executive Director, Regional Council of Churches of Atlanta.



Rev. Hansulrich Gerber, DOV Coordinator, WCC; Bishop L. Bevel Jones (UMC); Roy Craft; Rev. Dr. T. DeWitt Smith (PNBC); Rev. Dr. Samuel Kobia.



Rev. Dr. Vinton Anderson (AME) greeted by Dr. Samuel Kobia (WCC).



# Promise of Peace” ce for the World Council of Churches ber 2004 Georgia



The Very Rev. Leonid Kishkovsky, Moderator, US Conference (OCA).



Rev. Dr. Angelique Walker-Smith (NBCUSA) welcomes Annual Meeting participants at Jazz Vespers Service accompanied by Rev. Dr. T. DeWitt Smith and Rev. Dr. Samuel Kobia, General Secretary, WCC.



Ms. Erika Iverson & Ms. Hodan Osman (RRIS).



WCC honors Ms. Margaret Koehler, Church Women United, Georgia.



Ambassador Andrew Young at Closing Worship.



Ms. Jennifer Nagel, WCC Central Committee (ELCA).



Rev. Dr. Robert Welsh (CCDC) & Rev. Dr. Dan Martensen (ELCA) with Dr. Kobia.



Rev. Dr. T. DeWitt Smith, Sr. Pastor, Trinity Baptist of Metro Atlanta.



Mr. Brian McQuinn, Conflict Resolution Program, The Carter Center.



The Rev. Dr. Gilbert Friend Jones, Vice Moderator for Workshops & Sr. Minister, Central Congregational Church (UCC).



Ms. Gloria Feliciano, Office Administrator US Office, WCC with Ms. Emily Nesheim, Volunteer (ELCA).



Mr. Douglas W. Gatlin, Executive Director, Faith And The City with Rev. Ashley Seaman, Retreat Coordinator (PCUSA) & Rev. Dr. Kobia (WCC).

**“The Power & Promise of Peace” 2004 Annual Meeting of the US Conference for the World Council of Churches Continued**



The Rev. Dr. Fahed Abu-Akel, Executive Director, Atlanta Ministry with International Students, Inc. and Moderator, 214 General Assembly PCUSA, greets Mr. Dwight R. Harris (ELCA) and son James Harris (ELCA) at Bossey Reception.



Laura E. Everett, young adult intern at the Massachusetts Council of Churches, greets Bossey reception speaker.



The Rev. Dr. Robert Welsh, Moderator, Bossey Board of Directors & Ecumenical Officer, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), joins Rev. Dr. Samuel Kobia in welcoming speakers at Alumni & Friends of Bossey Reception.



Dr. Marion Best, past moderator of the United Church of Canada and member of the WCC's Central & Executive Committees, joins table discussion with Ms. Carolyn Good (UMC).



Rev. Deborah DeWinter, the WCC's Program Executive for the US with Ms. Thadela Tutu-Gxashe, Emory University & daughter of Archbishop Desmond Tutu.



The Rev. Simon Oxley, WCC team coordinator for Education and Ecumenical Formation, facilitates Bible Studies in Atlanta.



Tom Crick, Senior Political Analyst, Conflict Resolution Program at The Carter Center, speaks on Working for Peace in the Sudan: Challenge to the Churches panel.



The Rev. Dr. Tyrone Pitts, General Secretary, PNBC.



Dr. Antonio Kireopoulos, Associate General Secretary for International Affairs, NCCCUA joins Rev. Graylan Scott Hagler, Sr. on Iraq panel.



*Why Violence, Why Not Peace* Bible Study leader Dr. Faith Kirkham Hawkins of Candler School of Theology, Emory University.



The Rev. Dr. Ann Clay Adams, Director of Admissions, Columbia Theological Seminary, serves as Vice Moderator for Bible Studies of the Atlanta Ecumenical Planning Committee.



Dr. Rodger Nishioka of Columbia Theological Seminary, Decatur, GA leads *Why Violence, Why Not Peace* Bible Study.

## WCC President for North America Speaks Out Against Video Game Violence

On November 23, 2004, Dr. Bernice Powell Jackson, President, North American Region of the World Council of Churches and Executive Minister and Officer, Justice and Witness Ministries of the United Church of Christ represented the US Decade To Overcome Violence (DOV) Committee at a press conference that urged retailers to stop selling the inappropriate games directly to children and called on the industry to come up with an improved and more widely promoted game rating system that parents can understand. Combating video game violence has been one of the key issues tackled by the US DOV committee, and was the topic of a workshop held during the 2004 Annual Meeting of the US Conference, entitled: "Virtual" Violence: Violent Video Games and Corporate Responsibility.

Powell Jackson joined forces with the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility (ICCR), the National Committee on Women's Organizations,

Mothers Against Violence in America, Center for Advancement of Public Policy, and New York City Council Member Eric Gioia in issuing a "10 worst violent video game" list. This group's mission was to alert unwary parents and grandparents to the blood-soaked and anti-social content of the games that might otherwise be purchased as holiday gifts for children. As Powell Jackson noted, "Our concern about these violent video games is not guesswork. For example, there is ample evidence today that playing violent video games leads to increased aggressive thought, feelings and actions. We also have considerable anecdotal evidence of the fact that parents don't understand the industry rating system." As the US DOV Committee explored this issue, they learned that many parents are not aware that an increasing number of these games become progressively violent as the child's skill level increases and they move on to more advanced levels within these games.



WCC President for N. America, Rev. Dr. Bernice Powell Jackson, speaks out against video violence.

## Eden Theological Seminary to Host WCC Scholars

Building on the momentum of the 2004 WCC International Scholars Gathering hosted by the Presbyterian Church USA in Louisville, KY, an invitation has been extended by Eden Theological Seminary in St. Louis, MO to host the 2005 gathering of WCC scholars currently studying in the United States.

Scheduled for 8-10 April and facilitated by the Rev. Dr. Diane Windler, Dean of Admissions, and Dr. Michael Kinnamon, Allen and Dottie Miller Chair for Mission, Peace and Ecumenics at Eden Seminary, the 2005 gathering will again explore the themes and objec-

tives of the Decade to Overcome Violence: Churches Seeking Reconciliation and Peace. The Rev. Dr. Bernice Powell Jackson, WCC President for North America and Executive Minister for Peace and Justice Ministries of the United Church of Christ will also participate together with members of the staff of the US Office of the World Council of Churches.

Structured around theme: "Marks of Peacemaking," this gathering will enable Eden Seminary students, faculty and members of the wider community to dialogue with the international scholars on three aspects of peacemaking from the

perspectives of their own theological and cultural contexts, namely: "What are the marks of a peacemaking family? What are the marks of a peacemaking congregation? What are the marks of a peacemaking denomination?" Ten students currently studying in the United States under the WCC scholarship program come from 8 different countries, including: Uganda, Romania, Philippines, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kenya, India, Indonesia and the Solomon Islands.

For more information on the WCC Scholarship Program, please visit: <http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/education/scholarships-e.html>.

## 2004 US Focus Lends Momentum for Balance of WCC Decade to Overcome Violence (2001-2010)

The 2004 Focus on the United States of the Decade to Overcome Violence (DOV): Churches Seeking Reconciliation and Peace 2001-2010 provided a welcome and timely opportunity to highlight efforts among U.S. churches to resist and overcome violence in the context of the ongoing war in Iraq. Guided by the theme "The Power and Promise of Peace," actions undertaken by the US DOV Committee included posting relevant events on the DOV calendar, providing recognition to local individuals and organizations involved in peacemaking initiatives through the Blessed are the Peacemakers Awards, promoting and sponsoring events with WCC member churches, engaging in visible ways with the UN, promoting ecumenical formation in the context of the DOV, offering theological reflections, encouraging young adult participation in the WCC through the DOV intern program and youth involvement at the annual meeting in Atlanta, welcoming the WCC team of "living letters," inviting and receiving Pentecost letters from leaders of communions connecting Pentecost and peacemaking, releasing a statement "On Conscientious Objection and Military Conscription," and issuing a letter in support of Human Rights Day.

The U.S. Conference for the World Council of Churches appealed to the legacy of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in initiating the 2004 United States Focus of the Decade to Overcome Violence at an ecumenical service on January 12, 2004 held at the Interchurch Center in New York City. Almost ten months later the culminating worship service in the U.S. Conference's part of the Decade to Overcome Violence in 2004 was held October 6 at historic Ebenezer Baptist

Church in Atlanta, Georgia formerly pastored by Dr. King and his father. During the year partnerships were strengthened with the historic Black churches and they took the lead in hosting the Annual Meeting of the US Conference for the WCC, which highlighted the 2004 Focus of the DOV on the United States.

Dr. Jean Martensen, Co-Chair of the U.S. Decade to Overcome Violence Committee noted that observing the International Day of Peace was an historic new venture for the WCC. The WCC invited international church leaders to offer brief videotaped reflections on the International Day of Peace, after UN Secretary General Kofi Annan assured WCC General Secretary The Rev. Samuel Kobia that invitations to member churches to pray for peace on September 21st would be most welcome.

Earlier, on March 8-9, 2004, over thirty women leaders from eight denominations in the United States gathered near United Nations in New York to explore both UN Resolution 1325 which calls for women's full participation in peace building -and the Decade to Overcome Violence 2001-2010, a ten year emphasis of the World Council of Churches. The two-day consultation, designed to overlap the annual two-week meetings of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) was sponsored by the US Committee on the Decade to Overcome Violence, the National Council of Churches' Justice for Women Working Group, and Peace X.

According to Dr. Tom Paxson, Co-Chair of the U.S. Decade to Overcome Violence Committee, the US focus for the DOV was strengthened greatly by the attention and support offered by



Dr. Thomas Paxson (FGC) & Dr. Jean Martensen (ELCA), co-chairs of the US DOV Committee, present Peacemaker Awards at Ebenezer Baptist Church, Atlanta.

the Rev. Hansulrich Gerber, WCC's DOV Coordinator in Geneva and his staff. "The Decade to Overcome Violence is being energized through the annual focus on the USA," noted Gerber. "The vision has expanded, the ownership broadened, the commitment deepened. We all have seen how much churches in the US have to offer to the worldwide body of Christ. We are grateful and pray for traveling mercies on the road of peace and justice," he added.

Members from the US Committee for the DOV prepared Lenten Fast from Violence resource guides highlighting responses of people of faith to overcoming violence with non-violence means. These guides have been organized into six weeks corresponding with the weeks of Lenten starting Sunday, February 13, 2005 through Sunday, March 20, 2005. For more information about the Lenten Fast, as well as ongoing peacemaking activities planned by the members of the US DOV Committee in 2005 and for the balance of the Decade, please regularly visit [www.overcomingviolence.org](http://www.overcomingviolence.org).

## “Blessed Are The Peacemakers” Awards Gain Momentum; Atlanta’s Ecumenical Community Honors Local Peacemakers

During the first planning meeting for the 2004 US Focus on the Decade to Overcome Violence (DOV) in October of 2003, Bob Edgar, General Secretary of the NCCCUSA, suggested that it would be exciting if we could use the DOV Focus to shine a spotlight on the ministries of local peacemakers and congregations engaged in projects to overcome violence,” explained Deborah DeWinter, the WCC’s Program Executive for the United States. The US DOV Committee quickly responded by initiating the “Blessed Are the Peacemaker” Awards designed to motivate local churches and organizations to nominate individuals or groups who have made a real difference in building bridges of understanding in their local contexts.

“The idea behind the awards is to encourage local communities to share the stories of their own peacemakers more broadly, and by doing so, expose other churches and groups to the ideas and models that have been successful,” DeWinter explained. Although signed by Dr. Samuel Kobia, General Secretary of the WCC, the awards are entirely managed by people in the local communities who not only nominate, but also propose a suitable date and local venue for the presentation of the awards. “In this way, the WCC is able to express solidarity with peacemakers throughout the country, not only during the 2004 US Focus year,” DeWinter noted, “but for the balance of the Decade which runs through 2010.”

DeWinter explained that the US DOV Committee was delighted that the Atlanta Ecumenical Planning Committee chose to present ten “Blessed Are The Peacemaker” awards in the context of the culminating worship service for the Annual Meeting of the US Conference for the WCC.

“These presentations provided a diverse cross-section of groups and individuals

active as peacemakers in Atlanta’s past, as well as the present,” noted DeWinter. “For example, one award marked an important occasion which took place on November 3, 1957, when eighty white Christian clergy signed The Ministers’ Manifesto, a document concerning race relations and desegregation of Atlanta’s public schools. By the next year, some 315 clergy had signed this historical document, which was published by The Atlanta Constitution,” DeWinter related. “Another award recognized the work, over the course of the past five years, of the Atlanta Chapter of Adopt-a-Minefield which has helped save lives by raising funds to clear six minefields in Mozambique. Still another paid tribute to a young refugee from Somalia, Ms. Hodan Osman, who has been helping the Refugee Resettlement and Immigration Services of Atlanta build bridges of understanding between children of different faiths and cultures in Atlanta,” DeWinter shared.

Dr. Samuel Kobia, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, presented

the following recipients the “Blessed Are The Peacemaker” awards on 6 October 2004 at the Ebenezer Baptist Church, once served by the late Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.:

Adopt-a-Minefield, UNA-USA, Atlanta Chapter American Friends Service Committee, Atlanta Concerned Black Clergy of Greater Atlanta First Congregational Church (UCC Atlanta) Hagar House (Decatur Cooperative Ministry), Decatur, GA

Harmony: Atlanta’s International Youth Chorus Rev. Dr. Henry Jee, Pastor, Korean Baptist Church, Atlanta (Posthumously)

The Manifesto (Regional Council of Churches, Atlanta)

Hodan Osman, Refugee Resettlement and Immigration Services of Atlanta

The Open Door Community, Atlanta

For further information about these recipients, to learn about other award recipients around the country, or to nominate a local peacemaker in your community, please log on to [www.overcomingviolence.org](http://www.overcomingviolence.org).



Ms. Hodan Osman, nominated by Refugee Resettlement & Immigration Services of Atlanta, receives Peacemaker award from Rev. Dr. Samuel Kobia at closing worship.

# Mutirão

## Coming Together To Make A Difference

### What is the WCC Assembly?

The WCC assembly, held every eight years, is the highest governing body of the World Council of Churches. The 9th assembly will be held in Porto Alegre, Brazil from 14-23 February 2006, around the theme "God in your grace, transform the world." Delegates from each of WCC's 342 member churches will come together to evaluate the Council's past work, to reflect together on the theme and to provide guidance and leadership for the Council's future work.

But just as the ecumenical movement is much broader than the WCC, so too the assembly is an opportunity for the larger ecumenical family to come together. Representatives of related organizations, of other churches and other faiths, advisors, and guests will be present as well as a large number of people from all regions who are interested in supporting and learning more about the ecumenical movement. In addition, many Brazilians and Latin Americans will come to the assembly.

While the number of official delegates will be relatively small (less than 800), the Mutirão will enable much broader participation in the life of the ecumenical movement. As an integral part of the assembly, the Mutirão will provide a space for workshops, celebrations, seminars and exhibits for the whole assembly community.

### What is the Mutirão?

The word Mutirão comes from a Brazilian word meaning a meeting place and an opportunity to work together for a common purpose. In Brazil, for example, people in poor communities sometimes "make a mutirão" to build a house together. They ensure that there is the needed expertise on how to build a house and

then the community works together to realize a concrete objective.

The Mutirão at the assembly will provide a space for reflection, celebration, and exhibits. A full programme will provide a rich array of offerings on many different issues, organized by churches and related organizations in all parts of the world. The Mutirão will have a particular Latin American and Caribbean focus with many participants from the region and will have a special focus on youth.

### Who will participate in the Mutirão?

The Mutirão is open to any person, congregation or organization that wishes to accompany the assembly in a spirit of ecumenical sharing, celebration and formation.

### What will the Mutirão offer to the Assembly?

The Mutirão will offer workshops and seminars, cultural events and exhibits to all participants in the assembly. It will provide a space for home groups to meet. The Mutirão will provide an opportunity to deepen substantive reflections on the theme of the assembly and the plenaries presented in the first half of the assembly. Delegates are encouraged to participate in the Mutirão offerings and to bring these reflections into the decision-making process.

As an integral part of the assembly, the workshop offerings in the Mutirão are intended to supplement and accompany the assembly deliberations. Assembly insights and deliberations are expected to help guide the work of the many churches and ecumenical organizations that will participate in the Mutirão.

### What will participants in the Mutirão do?

- Pray together with all assembly participants in morning and evening prayers as part of the assembly community and participate in worship services at midday

- Engage in daily Bible studies around the assembly theme
- Participate in some of the 15 workshops organized from 12.30-15h every day
- Attend seminars on ecumenical formation for those who are new – and not-so-new – to ecumenism
- Celebrate being together in Latin America by participating in programmes of music, dance and drama and by joining Brazilian youth in the Youth Space
- Participate in the Women's Space being organized by Brazilian women
- Follow the assembly plenaries on economic justice, unity, religious pluralism, the Decade to Overcome Violence, Latin America and the theme: "God in your grace, transform the world" as well as business sessions
- Worship in Brazilian churches and participate in the Latin American celebration on Sunday
- Browse exhibits prepared by churches, networks, ecumenical organizations, seminaries, and many other organizations
- Have the opportunity to meet well-known theologians, grassroots Christian activists and many others from all over the world

### What can you offer to the Mutirão?

You can come to the Mutirão to participate in the many diverse offerings. You can bring a group from your congregation, your agency, your school or your organization. If you would like, we will try to provide a room at the Mutirão for your group, to serve as "home space" throughout the assembly.

You can propose to facilitate a workshop or seminar or cultural offering or exhibit. These will be organized by people coming to the Mutirão and offer an opportunity for reflection, discussion and celebration. Forms are available to propose a workshop or an exhibit. While the deadline for workshop proposals is 1 July 2005, you are encouraged to submit these as soon as possible. Decisions will be communicated by 1 September at the latest.

In deciding on workshops, attention will be given to ensuring a diversity of offerings as well as to regional and gender balance. Proposals from traditionally mar-

ginalized groups are particularly encouraged. If there are several proposals on a given issue, the proposers will be encouraged to work together in putting together a single workshop or to offer an alternative proposal.

#### Workshops for the Mutirão should:

- encourage open exchange of experiences and ideas. Participatory and creative methodologies are encouraged.
- be proposed or endorsed by a WCC member church, church-related organization, a recognized ecumenical partner, or by WCC.
- address key issues facing the churches and the ecumenical movement in today's world and should
- relate to the theme of the assembly: "God in your grace, transform the world." There is particular interest in workshops which explore alternatives to the present world order and/or which are action-oriented.
- include youth perspectives to the extent possible. Priority will be given to workshops initiated by youth.

#### How can you participate in the Mutirão?

To participate in the Mutirão, complete a registration form and return it to the assembly office. The assembly office will arrange hotel accommodation for you and include you in all mailings about the assembly. While WCC is able to provide subsidies for only a very few participants in the Mutirão, participants are encouraged to be creative in seeking funds to enable their participation.

The registration fee for the assembly ranges from USD100 to USD350. The cost of a shared hotel room is about USD30 per day and 3 meals cost about USD15. The organizers are working to find lower-cost alternative lodging, particularly for young people.

#### How can you learn more about the Mutirão?

To propose a workshop or exhibit or to request more information about the Mutirão, contact [mutirao@wcc-coe.org](mailto:mutirao@wcc-coe.org). Workshop proposals from Latin America will be forwarded to the appropriate bodies in the region.

## Stirring Video Messages Mark International Day of Prayer for Peace

More than a dozen well-known Christian leaders and peacemakers from all over the world responded to the invitation by WCC General Secretary Rev. Dr. Samuel Kobia to help mark the first time Christians worldwide were invited to observe The UN's 21 September International Day of Peace as an International Day of Prayer for Peace. They did so by preparing and sending inspiring two-minute video messages intended as an affirmation of the churches' and faith communities' work for peace and justice.

This invitation to the churches, representing over 550 million Christians worldwide, to mark 21 September as an International Day of Prayer for Peace was extended by UN Secretary General Kofi Annan following the suggestion of Dr. Kobia at a special meeting that took place in May, 2003 with Mr. Annan.

The stirring video messages by global church leaders were made available on the WCC's Decade To Overcome Violence (DOV) website along with prayers, litanies and a bulletin insert prepared by the US DOV Committee for use in churches on September 21st. Approximately 245,000 visitors to that website during the month of September indicated the deep desire of churches in all parts of the world to take part in this significant ecumenical day of prayer for peace. (This compares to the 40,000 "hits" the DOV website normally receives per month.)

Many of these same video messages were featured during the plenary sessions of the Annual Meeting of the US Conference in Atlanta as expressions of solidarity with the peacemaking ministries of the US Churches during the 2004 Focus year for the Decade to Overcome Violence: Churches Seeking

Reconciliation and Peace 2001-2010.

Ms. Thadela Tutu-Gxashe, daughter of Archbishop Desmond Tutu and a special guest at the Atlanta meeting, introduced her father's video message with these words, "My father likes to say that when you meet another person, you should not just shake their hand, but you should actually bow, because you are now in the presence of a God carrier. That must be the mantle of the new world leadership that you don today. You must live in the world in a way that shows that you see every person as a brother or sister, whose life is truly connected to yours. You are a child of God and so are they. Take up the mantle of leadership that the world needs today, secure that you are bathed in the image of God and you can lead the struggle to wipe out centuries of racism, violence and hate in the world."

These video messages are available on the DOV website at: [www.overcomingviolence.org/peace2004](http://www.overcomingviolence.org/peace2004).



Ms. Thadela Tutu-Gxashe, School of Public Health, Emory University, introduces video message of her father, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate.

## “God, In Your Grace, Transform the World” WCC 9th Assembly To Meet in Brazil, 2006

The 9th Assembly of the World Council of Churches will meet in Porto Alegre, Brazil, 14 - 23 February 2006, addressing the theme “God, in your grace, transform the world”. The Assembly will be a time of encounter, prayer, celebration and deliberation for thousands of Christians from around the world.

The Assembly has been invited to Brazil by the WCC’s Brazilian member churches and the Brazilian National Council of Christian Churches (CONIC). The Assembly is the “supreme legislative body” of the WCC, and meets every seven years. The formal purpose of the Assembly is to review programmes and determine the overall policies of the WCC, as well as to elect presidents and appoint a Central Committee which serves as the chief governing body of the WCC until the next assembly. Over 700 delegates and their advisors, representing over 340 member churches of the WCC, will carry out their work in a programme that will include prayer, Bible study, thematic plenary sessions, hearings and committee work.

A central element of the Assembly for all participants will be the worship life, where the community will gather for prayer and meditation, drawing on the diverse spiritual experience of the churches around the world. Bible studies will encourage participants to discuss issues in the light of theology and spirituality. Each day following morning prayer, participants will gather in small “home groups” of around fifteen persons for the Bible studies. They will consider selected Bible passages and a commentary, and discuss an aspect of the assembly’s theme. The Bible studies will be related both to the morning worship and to the particular plenary theme of the day.

During the programme there will be

several plenary sessions dedicated to key themes chosen because of their central importance to the WCC fellowship. A series of ecumenical conversations will allow participants to engage in a sustained way on issues of concern.

Issues to be examined in plenary at the 9th Assembly include:

- Economic injustice, with a focus on viable alternatives;
- Christian witness in the context of secularism and religious plurality
- Church unity and the future of ecumenism;
- Latin America, combining celebratory and deliberative aspects;
- Overcoming violence: churches for reconciliation and peace with a focus on mid-decade celebration and renewal;
- God, in your grace, transform the world”, with a panel discussion on the assembly theme.

Alongside the committee work and business sessions for the delegates, the Assembly is also a time of celebration and sharing for the many thousands of other visitors expected at the event. A highlight of the 9th Assembly will be the ecumenical partnership programme or “Mutirão” - a Portuguese word which means coming together, celebrating together, reflecting together. The daily programme of the “Mutirão” will include a range of presentations, exhibitions and discussions open to all Assembly participants. A special letter of invitation (available in this issue of the Ecumenical Courier) from the Rev. Dr. Samuel Kobia, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, encourages member communions and ecumenical partners of the World Council of Churches in the United States to participate in the “Mutirão.”

For further information on the WCC’s 9th Assembly and how you can get involved, please visit the Assembly website at: [www.wcc-assembly.info](http://www.wcc-assembly.info).



Ms. Lois Dauway of the UMC’s Women’s Division, who serves on the WCC’s 9th Assembly Planning Committee, is pictured with Assembly Coordinator, Mr. Doug Chial (PCUSA).





## World Council of Churches

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24 February 2005

Dear Friends,

The WCC Assembly will be held in Porto Alegre from 14-23 February 2006 with the theme "God in your grace, transform the world." The Assembly, held every eight years, is an important moment in the life of the World Council of Churches. But just as the ecumenical movement is much broader than the WCC, so too the Assembly is an opportunity for the larger ecumenical family to gather together around the Assembly in order to reflect on the burning issues of the day and to celebrate the joy of coming together in Christ.

We invite you to participate in the Assembly through the *Mutirão* – a Brazilian word meaning a meeting place and an opportunity to build something new together. The *Mutirão* will be an integral part of the WCC Assembly in Porto Alegre. Building a *Mutirão* is a collective process and your participation is needed.

We invite you to come to the *Mutirão*. We invite you to propose a workshop or a seminar or a musical performance or an exhibit for the Assembly. We invite you to bring a group from your congregation or your seminary or your agency or your organization to the *Mutirão*. While our ability to offer financial support is limited, we encourage you to be creative in finding ways to support your participation – and the participation of others.

We hope that you will join us at the WCC Assembly in Porto Alegre next February by participating in the *Mutirão*. I am attaching to this letter a short description of the *Mutirão* and registration forms to participate in or propose a workshop or an exhibit in the *Mutirão*. If you want to register to come to the *Mutirão*, contact the WCC Assembly Office ([assembly@wcc-coe.org](mailto:assembly@wcc-coe.org)). If you want to propose a workshop or exhibition or need further information on the *Mutirão*, write to [mutirao@wcc-coe.org](mailto:mutirao@wcc-coe.org).

Come join us in Porto Alegre! Come participate with churches from every corner of the world in making the *Mutirão*! Come pray with us: "God in your grace, transform the world."

Bemvindos,

Rev. Dr. Samuel Kobia  
General Secretary

**HOLD THE DATE!**

**2005 Annual Meeting of the US Conference**

**The Annual Meeting of the US Conference for the World Council of Churches will be hosted by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) in Chicago, 10-12 October 2005. This "Pre-Assembly Event" will feature an orientation for delegates of WCC member communions who will be attending the WCC's Ninth Assembly in Porto Alegre, Brazil, which takes place 14-23 February 2006. For further information, please monitor the US Conference website: [www.wcc-usa.org](http://www.wcc-usa.org).**



JIMMY CARTER

September 29, 2004

To General Secretary Samuel Kobia

It is my pleasure to welcome you and the delegates of the World Council of Churches to Atlanta. It is fitting that your conference is committed to exploring the "Power and Promise of Peace."

Throughout my spiritual and professional life, and through my travels as chairman of The Carter Center which, is dedicated to waging peace, fighting disease, and building hope, I have come to appreciate the paramount necessity for an inclusive vision of peace. Too often, our leaders look inward to secure their positions, rather than using their talents and position to build bridges to those whose beliefs, views or stations differ from their own. I share your conviction that efforts to overcome violence must embrace "local communities, secular movements, and people of other living faiths."

Within this broader view of a common humanity dedicated to narrowing the divisions that exist between us, we will find the power and promise of peace. I wish you well in your meeting and in this important work.

Sincerely

*The WCC's 9th Assembly logo was created to promote recognition of the Assembly theme and event. It represents both the hand of God and a praying hand; creation and the cross; the spirit of peace in the form of a dove; and the covenant rainbow in the background. It is designed to be in harmony with the WCC logo, which represents a boat and a cross.*

*The logo designed for the 9th Assembly of the World Council of Churches is inspired by the traditional Christian symbols of the cross and the boat, and incorporates elements of the Assembly theme and context, contained in a circle of life and of the world.*

*The open hand uses an iconographic style to imply the hand of God, carrying and caring for His creation. The hand also represents supplication and prayer, echoing the Assembly theme. The hand is red, a symbol of martyrdom, and a reminder that God's redemption is costly.*

*On the right-hand side are three arched lines representing a rainbow - symbol of God's covenant, grace, as well as transformation and new life. The rainbow's colours discreetly suggest the Brazilian national colours and the stripes also recall the wings of a dove - an appropriate symbol for an assembly which marks the mid-term of the Decade to Overcome Violence.*

*Similarly, the olive branch evokes covenant and creation, and suggests transformation, breaking out of the circle and leaning forward to the future. It contains the shape of the cross, echoing the 'oikoumene' symbol, transfigured and hopeful.*



*Designed by Edwin Hassink, a Dutch designer based in Geneva.*

# We're In This Ecumenical Boat Together

## Opportunities for Local Ecumenical Organizations as Churches Approach the 9th WCC Assembly

By Rev. Dr. Diane C. Kessler, Executive Director  
Massachusetts Council of Churches

**M**y first direct encounter with a WCC Assembly occurred prior to the Sixth Assembly of the World Council of Churches. A delegation of "living letters"—Christian leaders from "the whole inhabited earth"—came to Massachusetts. They met with civic leaders, including then Lieutenant Governor John Kerry. (A photograph of that meeting now hangs in my office. Hair styles have changed since then!) They met with a wide variety of clergy and laity. They talked with local media representatives. The US Office of the World Council of Churches had collaborated with the Massachusetts Council of Churches (MCC) to make the arrangements. It involved considerable extra work for our small staffs, but those remarkable people put a "human face" on the ecumenical movement. They heightened awareness of the forthcoming Vancouver Assembly. They stimulated interest in the ecumenical movement in its local and global expressions. I'll never forget it.

That is why I am interested in exploring ways to maximize opportunities to make connections between the 9th Assembly of the World Council of Churches, local ecumenical bodies, and congregations around the world. Here are some of the ideas we are exploring in the Massachusetts Council of Churches:

- We have asked the US Office of the World Council of Churches to provide names of all persons from our region who have registered to attend the WCC Assembly, either as delegates, co-opted staff, stewards, or accredited visitors, as soon as the information is available. As we did prior to the 8th Assembly in Harare, we will gather these folks together prior to the meeting, so they can meet each other; so we can meet them; and so we can explore ways to make use of their experi-



WCC Living Letters delegation visits Massachusetts churches and civic leaders just prior to the Sixth Assembly at Vancouver in 1983, including Lieutenant Governor John Kerry (seated, center) & Rev. Dr. Diane Kessler (standing, center) Executive Director of the Massachusetts Council of Churches.

ences after they return. We will invite those from our region who have attended a prior Assembly, so the 9th Assembly attendees can learn from experiences of their predecessors. We also will include them in the annual meeting of the MA Council of Churches scheduled during the 2006 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. We will offer our prayers for their journey, as a way to honor them and put a local human face on this event.

- With escalating expenses and diminishing budgets, it may no longer be possible to send a delegation of "living letters" to the U.S. in anticipation of the Assembly. If it is, we will echo what happened before Vancouver. If it is not, we will find ways to include Christians living in this region whose home country is elsewhere, to talk with us about their faith and their life. They can be a visual sign that the ecumenical movement is for the "whole church in the whole world."

- Prior to the Assembly, we will publicize any written resources that are available for

general consumption. Before the Harare Assembly, the MCC encouraged ecumenical Bible study on the Assembly theme, using WCC resources; and we publicized their availability through our newsletter *Intersect*.

- We have made it a point to involve a Brazilian Christian on the MCC Board of Directors for 2005 (Dr. Ruy Costa, Executive Director of Episcopal City Mission, who is a member of the Presbyterian Church [U.S.A.], with the location of the Assembly in mind. We hope to use the occasion of the WCC Assembly as an opportunity to enhance connections with Brazilian congregations in this region.

We will do this because the ecumenical movement is one. It is whole. Churches that will be represented at the Assembly in Porto Alegre, Brazil are our churches. What may happen there could have ripple effects for the whole ecumenical movement. And so together we pray, "God, in your grace, transform the world."

## Tsunami Aftermath: Solidarity, Concern & Unity Replace Intolerance, Mistrust, Hatred & Violence

Just two months ago, a tremendous earthquake off the coast of Sumatra caused powerful tsunamis to hit coastal stretches of South East Asia and East Africa. The trail of devastation left over 200,000 people dead and more than half a million injured, and governments and organizations around the world provided emergency relief almost immediately. But some of the first to arrive at the scenes of devastation were representatives of the churches who not only provided practical support by distributing clothing and financial donations but also by burying the dead and providing spiritual accompaniment for traumatized survivors.

Being so far away from her homeland of Indonesia in the aftermath of the Tsunami was excruciatingly painful for Lidya Tandirerung, a WCC scholar studying this academic year at Union Theological Seminary in New York and interning with the US Office of the WCC. Although members of her immediate family were safe, a close friend lost her widowed mother, three sisters, one brother, and all of her nieces and nephews in the Tsunami. "There is no one left to carry on the family name," Tandirerung related. "I did what I could to support my friend long-distance and kept in close touch with the churches back home by email," she said.

Tandirerung added that she was particularly moved by the remarkable outreach of the churches in Indonesia in their expressions of deep solidarity with the survivors in Aceh, who are primarily Muslim. While she commented on how impressed she was by the quick response of the US churches to initiate various forms of aid, Tandirerung also expressed her hope that US churches would continue their mission to provide resources in

collaboration with the local churches and interfaith communities after the tsunami news fades from the headlines.

Dr. Elizabeth Ferris, the WCC's Diakonia & Solidarity Team Leader and the World Council of Churches' representative on the Executive Committee of Actions by Churches Together (ACT) expressed how quickly local churches mobilized to provide immediate relief and support on the ground. "Within a couple of hours the local churches were responding," Ferris reported, also noting that ACT members throughout the region quickly mobilized relief assistance teams and supplies through their local partner networks from the beginning of the disaster. Assessment missions are continuously underway and coordination is taking place with local governments and NGOs.

Following his 12-19 January 2005 trip to Sri Lanka and India to attend a meeting on Asia Tsunami Disaster Relief and Rehabilitation Coordination convened by ACT, Mathews George, the World Council of Churches' Asia Secretary provided the following reflections:

"In spite of the tragic situations, the hopeful and precious signs of human compassion and love have touched the hearts of many victims. The tragedy has brought together people whose relations were often in conflict and violent. All the time, they felt moments of compassion, empathy and mutual help. Someone cooked food and gave it to those who had nothing to eat. Others provided medical care, clothing, and spiritual comfort. All these are precious when death and destruction surround and a sense of loss in life is felt. In such a difficult moment in life the hand of God has brought Christians, Buddhists,



A woman whose home was destroyed by the December 26 tsunami sits in despair amidst the wreckage. photo credit: Paul Jeffrey/ACT International

Muslims and Hindus together in a common embrace. An important thing is the closeness of people of different faiths; all of them have been lending a helping hand to all those in need in tsunami-affected areas. Where there once were the signs of intolerance, mistrust, hatred and violence, now there is mutual solidarity, concern and unity. This is an obvious sign of God!"

ACT, which represents a global alliance of 195 Protestant and Orthodox churches and related aid agencies from the membership of the World Council of Churches and Lutheran World Federation strives to reach those in need across front lines, national borders and other ethnic, political or religious divides. (Visit: [www.act-intl.org](http://www.act-intl.org) for the latest updates on ACT's rapid response to tsunami relief in South East Asia and East Africa as well as ACT's continuing responses in Southern and Western Darfur and in Iraq.)

## 2005 Marks Oikocredit Anniversary

Rev. Terry Provance, Executive Director of Oikocredit updated the Board of the US Conference for the World Council of Churches at their 7 October 2004 meeting in conjunction with the Annual Meeting in Atlanta. Founded by the WCC in 1975, Oikocredit today is the world's largest provider of microcredit and makes low interest loans in over 67 countries.

Rev. Provance related to the members of the Board "Several studies have shown that microcredit has proven to be a successful strategy for reducing global poverty. Individuals and families in Asia, Africa and Latin America have benefited from small loans used to

develop business endeavors and create jobs. Oikocredit receives the capital to make loans through investments from denominations, congregations, individual church members and others."

"One way churches can become involved in poverty reduction," Rev. Provance noted, "is to join Oikocredit on Sunday, October 23, 2005, when churches around the world will celebrate the International Year for Microcredit and Oikocredit's 30th Anniversary." For more information contact: Oikocredit at 202-265-0607, email: [usa.sa@oikocredit.org](mailto:usa.sa@oikocredit.org), or log on to [www.oikocredit.org](http://www.oikocredit.org).

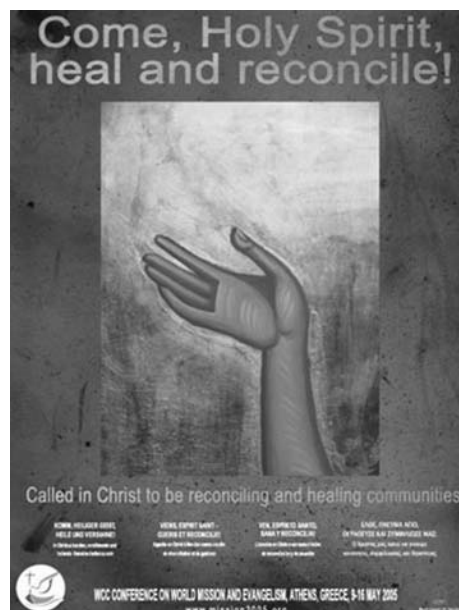
## Athens is Site of 2005 World Mission & Evangelism Conference

What is The Conference on World Mission and Evangelism? It is a space for encounter and dialogue offered by the World Council of Churches (WCC). In this space, around 500 people - young people, women and men involved in frontiers of Christian witness, church and mission leaders, theologians and missiologists from all continents and all major Christian denominations - gather to exchange their experiences and think together about priorities in mission and the future of Christian witness. There have been 13 such conferences to date.

Gathering under the theme, "Come, Holy Spirit, heal and reconcile!" the next world mission conference will take place in Athens, Greece from 9-16 May 2005 at the invitation of the Church of Greece. The conference is also designed to be a contribution from the WCC's mission networks to the Decade to Overcome Violence: Churches Seeking

Reconciliation and Peace (2001-2010).

For more information and CWME-related resources, please visit: [www.cwme-wcc-coe.org](http://www.cwme-wcc-coe.org).



## UN Advocacy Week Promotes Strategic Discussions

US church leaders were among the invited guests to the second annual World Council of Church's UN Advocacy Week, held November 14-19, 2004 at the Church Center and the United Nations Building in New York City. Sponsored by the Churches Commission for International Affairs (CCIA), this week brought together renowned church leaders responsible for international affairs and advocacy in member churches, specialized ministries and ecumenical organizations. It also featured joint worship and strategic discussions focusing on UN reform, economic justice, the crisis in Sudan and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. In addition, working sessions covered the following topics: Southeast Europe, Columbia, The Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI), Eminent Persons' response to conflicts in Africa, advocacy in conflicts and crisis, International Criminal Court, and the war in Iraq.

Currently, the WCC UN office is staffed by the Rev. Dr. Laurence Konmla Bropleh, the WCC Representative to the UN and Dr. Hans Heijs, seconded from the Netherlands, who will be with the WCC UN office for one year concentrating on the areas of economic justice, disarmament and indigenous people. For photos and further information go to [www.wcc-un.org](http://www.wcc-un.org).

*“We give you thanks, O God, for all who have fought the good fight, finished their race, and kept their faith, and for those dear to us who are at rest with You. Grant us grace to follow them as they followed Christ.”*

**Bishop Decatur Ward Nichols**, the 59th bishop of the African Methodist Church AME Church, passed away on Monday January 24, 2005 at the age of 104. He was born in Georgetown, SC, on October 15, 1900 to Reverend Ruffin and Anna Nichols, and received an AB degree from Howard University, Washington, DC and a BD degree from Drew University, Madison, NJ. In 1936, Nichols was ordained a deacon and made an elder in 1927. He pastored a number of churches and was elected a bishop in 1940 at the General Conference in Detroit, MI, where he served the 1st, 7th, 9th, 11th, and 12th, Episcopal districts until his retirement in 1976 at the General Conference in Atlanta, GA. Bishop Nichols also represented the AME church at the World Council of Churches’ constituting assembly held in Amsterdam in August 1948, and served for many years on the Executive Committee of the World Methodist Organization.

**William Richey Hogg** passed away on January 29, 2005 at the age of 83. He received his BA from Duke and a PhD from Yale and was ordained as an elder in the Western Pennsylvania Conference of the United Methodist Church. Richey and his wife were missionaries in India where he taught at Leonard Theological Seminary from 1952-

55. Also, he was Professor of World Christianity at Perkins School of Theology from 1955 until his retirement in 1987. In lieu of flowers the family requested that donations be sent to the US office for the World Council of Churches or UMCOR.

**Richard Butler**, a member of the United Church of Christ, who served the church and the world in many capacities during his 74 years, died at his home in New York on January 25, 2005. In 1960, he took a Middle East assignment on behalf of Church World Service (CWS). From 1962 to 1970 he was executive secretary of the Near East Council of Churches Committee on Refugee Work, coordinating ecumenical refugee programs in six countries, and in 1967, Butler helped coordinate the World Council of Church’s Middle East Emergency Appeal.

During his long tenure at CWS, he assumed a number of key positions including Middle East Director, Associate Executive Director and Executive Director. As chief administrator for CWS, he directed a global humanitarian agency with a staff of more than 200 and work in more than 80 countries, including the United States. In recognition of his work in the Middle East, the Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem installed Butler as a knight of the

Orthodox Order of the Holy Sepulcher in 1970. He received a number of other honors, including a medal from Jordan's King Hussein for his work with Palestinian refugees.

At the time of his death, Mr. Butler served as Senior Executive Assistant to Joseph C. Hough, Jr., President of Union Theological Seminary in New York City. He is survived by his wife, Barbara Henshaw Butler, three children, Mark, Ann and Martha, and five grandchildren.



The General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, Rev. Dr. Samuel Kobia, presented special recognition awards to Jean and Bill Schmidt (above right) and Edna Palmer (above left) who between them bring over 100 years of ecumenical experience to their volunteer activities at the US Office of the World Council of Churches. Presented in the context of the denominational dinner On 6 October 2004 at the Annual Meeting of the US Conference in Atlanta, the recipients received a standing ovation from fellow ecumenists gathered for the surprise occasion.

## Lenten Fast from Violence: Biblical and Educational Resource Guides Available

Lent provides an important opportunity to focus on the challenges of working together to overcome the violence in our culture. The US Committee for the Decade to Overcome Violence (DOV) invites Christians to enter into the Lenten season with a focus on the growing violence in our world and the need for peace and reconciliation.

Members from the US Committee for the DOV prepared 'Lenten Fast from Violence' resource guides highlighting responses of people of faith to overcoming violence with non-violent means. These guides have been organized into six weeks corresponding with the weeks of Lent starting Sunday, February 13, 2005 through Sunday, March 20, 2005.

The topics for the foci are as follows:

- Week One: Violent Video Games
- Week Two: Violence in Creation
- Week Three: Violence Against Women [includes trafficking]
- Week Four: Militarism
- Week Five: Iraq
- Week Six: Partial Lenten fast focused on local violence caused in individual communities by poverty (or structural violence)

Each weekly resource guide offers biblical reflections, prayer, educational resources, advocacy tools and non-violent responses to the particular theme highlighted for that given week.

The weekly Lenten Fast resource guides are available from the DOV website at: <http://www.overcomingviolence.org>.

### HOLD THE DATE!

#### *US Visit by WCC Moderator Features Ecumenism in the 21st Century*

**His Holiness, Aram I, Moderator of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, will be convening a seminar, entitled: "Challenges Facing the Ecumenical Movement in the 21st Century" on 22 October 2005 at The Interchurch Center, 475 Riverside Drive, New York, NY. The seminar will be co-hosted by the Armenian Apostolic Church of America, the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA, and the US Office of the World Council of Churches.**

## Your Gifts Support the Work of the World Council of Churches

- My gift is to support the work of the **Decade to Overcome Violence** by the US DOV Committee of the US Conference for the World Council of Churches.
- My gift is to support **Ecumenical Formation of youth and young adults** through the US Conference for the World Council of Churches & their travel to the 9th Assembly in Porto Alegre, Brazil.
- My gift should be **designated** for the following program of the World Council of Churches:  
\_\_\_\_\_
- My gift is to **support the work of the World Council of Churches** wherever it is most needed.

Enclosed please find my gift for the amount of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**MAKE CHECK TO:** US Conference for the World Council of Churches

**MAIL TO:** US Conference for the World Council of Churches  
475 Riverside Drive, Room 1371, New York, NY 10115 USA

*(Remember to indicate on the memo line of your check if you wish to designate your gift for a particular program of the WCC)*

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- Yes, sign me up for Email updates!
- No, please do not send me email updates from the US Office & US Conference for the WCC.



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