



Ecumenical **Courier**

United States Conference

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World Council of Churches

US Conference Prepares for WCC 9th Assembly at October Annual Meeting in Chicago

As the momentum builds in Christian communities around the globe in anticipation of the 9th Assembly of the World Council of Churches which will be held in Porto Alegre, Brazil 14-23 February 2005, the US churches will gather for their pre-assembly event in Chicago, Illinois from 10-12 October, 2005. "Church leaders and ecumenists from around the country will spend two days engaged in theological reflection and bible study

on the theme of the 9th Assembly, *God, in your grace, transform the world*, and also worship together in the spirit of the Assembly," said the Reverend Deborah DeWinter, World Council of Churches Program Executive for the United States.

Brazilian theologians, Dr. Vitor Westhelle, Professor of Systematic Theology at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, and Dr. Marcelo Schneider of Porto Alegre,

Brazil, a systematic theologian specializing in the field of ecumenical social ethics who serves on the communications team of the local planning committee for the 9th Assembly will lead plenary sessions, together with Dr. David Radcliff, director of the New Community Project, a faith-based nonprofit organization focused on justice concerns and stewardship of the earth. The meeting will be

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US Conference for the WCC Welcomes Caroline Hennessy



US Director of Development
Caroline Hennessy

Caroline Hennessy has joined the US Conference for the World Council of Churches as Director of Development. Hennessy, a Roman Catholic, assumed her new position on July 1, 2005.

Hennessy comes to the WCC with a diverse fundraising background. Most recently, she raised funds and worked closely with the families of Port Authority police officers who died on 9/11/01 for the Port Authority Police World Trade Disaster Survivors Fund. Until 9/11/01 she was a consultant for Changing Our World. Her

many clients there included Catholic health foundations, some of the most prestigious secondary schools in the East and IMEC, an international medical equipment collaborative that recycled and refinished used medical equipment from American hospitals and sent them to hospitals and clinics in the developing world.

Her professional foundation is in religious fundraising. She was Executive Director of the Central City School Fund in Kansas City, Missouri, where for three years she

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“SHIFT YOUR SPACE— TRANSFORM THE WORLD” PROVIDES YOUNG ADULTS ECUMENICAL CONNECTIONS FOR PEACE AND JUSTICE.

“Shift Your Space—Transform the World: Young Adults Connecting Ecumenically for Peace and Justice,” October 8-10, 2005 in Chicago, IL, is an event for young adult leaders in peace and justice work that will provide opportunities to draw on the strength of the unity of the church by building ecumenical connections. Seminarians, students and youth delegates to the WCC’s 9th Assembly will find links between their peace and justice work and the World Council of Churches, and engage with the vision for peace promoted by the initiative, *Decade to Overcome Violence: Churches Seeking Reconciliation & Peace 2001-2010* (DOV).

The gathering takes place Saturday, October 8 beginning at noon through Monday, October 10 at noon in Hyde Park, Chicago, IL. Hyde Park is home to the University of Chicago Divinity School, the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, McCormick Theological Seminary and others. Activities will include participation in local peace and justice projects, including an action with the Chicago chapter of the National Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice. There will be time for sharing resources, and space for theological reflection with peace and justice leaders in the WCC and member communions. In addition, attendees will participate in a visioning process with members of the US Decade to Overcome Violence Committee to

determine how the committee can best support young adults in ecumenical peace and justice work.

“Shift Your Space—Transform the World” will overlap with the Annual Meeting of the US Conference for the World Council of Churches and the WCC 9th Assembly Pre-Event, co-hosted by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, which will be held October 10-12, 2005 at the O’Hare Crown Plaza Hotel in Chicago, IL. The morning of Monday, October 10 will be used to prepare a young adult presentation for the Annual Meeting plenary to be held that evening. Young adults are invited to stay and participate in the Annual Meeting for as long or as little as they like. “The 9th Assembly of the World Council of Churches has been deemed “the youth assembly” by General Secretary, Dr. Sam Kobia,” says Rev. Deborah DeWinter, Programme Executive for the United States. “We are excited for the wisdom and passion US young adults will bring to the US Annual Meeting and 9th Assembly Pre-Event.” Registration information is available at www.wcc-usa.org.

“Shift Your Space—Transform the World” will cost \$75 for the event, food and hostel-style lodging at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago Youth Center. For those who live in the area or prefer to secure other lodging, the event will cost \$35, including lunch and dinner on Saturday and Sunday.

Those adults attending the Annual Meeting of the US Conference for the World Council of Churches and the WCC 9th Assembly Pre-Event can register for “Shift Your Space—Transform the World” on the Annual Meeting registration form, available at www.wcc-usa.org.

Those who are not attending the Annual Meeting can register by emailing the following information to us-dov@wcc-coe.org:

- Name
- Address/City/State/Zip
- Phone
- Email
- Date of Birth
- Denomination
- Occupation
- Anything you would like to share about your interest/work for peace and justice.

The registration deadline is Friday, September 16, 2005.

If you have questions, or would like to receive information about future US DOV young adult events, email us-dov@





Annual Meeting
US Conference for
The World Council of Churches
9th Assembly Pre-Event



God, in your grace,
transform the world

World Council of Churches
9th Assembly
14-23 February 2006
Porto Alegre, Brazil

October 10-12, 2005

Crowne Plaza Hotel

Chicago O'Hare

Title	Last Name	First Name	Middle Name	
Address		City/Town	State/Country	Zip
Church/Denomination/Organization	Position	Email Address	Telephone No.	

REGISTRATION FEES

EARLY REGISTRATION DEADLINE = September 8, 2005

Please note: The Annual Meeting sessions formally begin at 12:00 Noon Monday, October 10th and end at 12:00 Noon on Wednesday, October 12, 2005. Board Members – meet after.

			Attending	Cost
Full Registration	\$250	Full registration includes all day and evening sessions, all meals and Denominational Banquet.		
After September 8, 2005 Late Registration	\$280			
Single Day Pre-Registration	\$125	Single Day registration includes all day and evening sessions and all meals.		
Late or on site Single Day Registration	\$150			
Denominational Banquet	\$50	October 11 – 7:00 P.M. Additional GUESTS		
Exhibit (only 15 tables available)	\$50	October 10 – October 12		
Young Adults and Stewards Registration	\$200	Full registration includes all day and evening sessions, all meals and Denominational Banquet.		
“SHIFT YOUR SPACE – TRANSFORM THE WORLD” YA Gathering Oct. 8-10, 2005	\$75	Includes meals and hostel-style lodging in Hyde Park. All young adult (18-35) delegates/participants are invited. More info at www.wcc-usa.org .		
Board Members Meeting	N/C	October 12, 2005 – 1PM to 4PM		
<i>Online Registration is not Available</i>		TOTAL		

- If you have any special needs or dietary preferences, please attach details so that we may best serve you.

Conference Hotel: The Crowne Plaza Hotel, Chicago O'Hare, 5440 North River Road, Rosemont, Illinois 60018.

World Council of Churches special group rate is **\$109 per night** (single, double, triple, quad).

You are responsible for making your own hotel reservations. Hotel parking available – cost: \$10.

Please call Hotel for Reservations: 1-888-642-7344 Reservations online: www.crowneplaza.com

Mail Registration Form together with check, payable to:

US Conference for the World Council of Churches

475 Riverside Drive, Suite 1371

New York, NY 10115

For information call: Toll Free 888-212-2920, 212-870-2533 Fax: 212-870-2528

Website: www.wcc-usa.org 9th Assembly Website: www.wcc-assembly.info Email: usintern3@wcc-coe.org

Shift Your Space – Transform the World:

Young Adults Connect Ecumenically for Peace and Justice

Oct. 8, 2005 at 12pm to Oct. 10, 2005 at 12pm in Hyde Park, Chicago, Illinois

Details at www.wcc-usa.org

Kobia Challenges US Churches to Reflect Global Perspective

“If it was the challenge to US churches in 1965 to reflect a global perspective rather than that of an ultra-patriotic ‘culture club’, this remains a principal challenge 40 years later,” World Council of Churches (WCC) general secretary Rev. Dr Samuel Kobia told a gathering of US Christians on 26 July.

Speaking at the general assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Portland, Oregon, Kobia was recalling a 40-year-old, but still relevant insight from a former WCC general secretary from the US, Eugene Carson Blake.

Commenting on today’s world-wide fears regarding US policies like the doctrine of pre-emptive war, and the current US administration’s reluctance to support international initiatives against global warming, or the Millennium Development Goals, Kobia said that the role of the churches is to “speak truth to power”, even if it is unwelcome in some quarters.

At the same time, he acknowledged the leading role of US Christians in the modern ecumenical movement, and stressed the role of US churches in providing an alternative voice and taking a leading role in fighting hunger, poverty, HIV/AIDS, racial discrimination and violence.

In the context of the southwards shift of the global center of gravity of the worldwide church, Kobia suggested that US churches “need to adjust to a new position within the wider church of Jesus Christ”.

And referring to a perceived spread of para-church organizations, mega-churches and a “so-called



Rev. Dr. Robert Welsh, Rev. Helen Enari, Rev. Dr. Samuel Kobia and Rev. Deborah DeWinter at Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) General Assembly Council on Christian Unity Dinner, Portland, OR.

‘prosperity gospel’, based on assumptions of free market economics”, from North America to other continents, he warned against “the confusing of preaching Christ with the proclamation of American cultural values”.

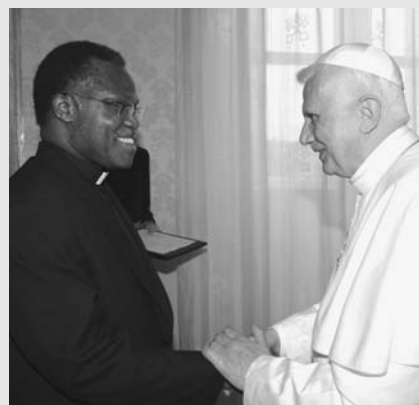
Dr. Kobia was accompanied to the General Assembly by the WCC’s Program Executive for the United

States, the Rev. Deborah DeWinter. The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), a North American mainline Protestant denomination, is one of a total of 23 WCC member churches in the USA.

(The full text of Kobia’s speech is available on the WCC website at: <http://www.wcc-usa.org/wcc-usa.nsf/index/kobia-disciples-05.html>)

WCC General Secretary Meets Pope Benedict XVI

On 16 June 2005 The Rev. Dr. Samuel Kobia had an audience with Pope Benedict XVI. This was Kobia’s first meeting with the head of the Roman Catholic Church since he became WCC general secretary in 2004. Earlier plans had to be postponed, and in April, Kobia travelled to Rome for the funeral of Pope John Paul II.



“Marks of Peacemaking” Theme for 2005 WCC Scholars Gathering

By Tara Tautari

It is always a joy to have the opportunity to meet with people and to share common concerns, to learn about each other's lives, to be in community together! In our busy lives, it's not always easy to find the time to do this, and yet amidst reports to write, essays that needed to be finished, and so forth, a group of WCC scholars based in the United States, gathered in St. Louis, Missouri, 8-10 April 2005, to attend their annual gathering. The ten students sponsored by the WCC Scholarships Programme came from Uganda, Romania, the Philippines, Kenya, India, Indonesia and the Solomon Islands.

It was such a wonderful experience to feel as one community journeying together in the ecumenical boat. I came. You came as well. Suddenly we realized that Ecumenism is me and you, as miracle children of God.'

*Renemsongla Ozukum,
(WCC Scholar; Nagaland- India)*

What are the marks of peacemaking in the life of the churches? This question was highlighted continually throughout our time together. Indeed, the theme of this gathering focussed on issues of peacemaking in the context of the ongoing Decade to Overcome Violence. The discussions included reflections on peacemaking in our home countries; peacemaking in the USA; and how our scholars' ideas and views are challenged and changed by their experiences in their host country. Being 'strangers' in a foreign land brings its own challenges where we must make sense of a different social and cultural world. Our meeting together allowed for a deeper reflection on the scholars' lives in the USA, and gave us a space to begin to unpack these experiences.

In the midst of my cultural, linguistic, spiritual and intellectual struggles I owe this (Union Theological Seminary, New York) community in the way they try to be constantly respectful, to let each member to



2005 WCC Scholars Gather at Eden Theological Seminary

unreservedly discern and articulate their own perspective...However, this process is, of course, not free from tensions which I consider constructive, to fortify my energy to walk through this cross-cultural odyssey.'

*Lidya K. Tandirerung,
(WCC Scholar; Indonesia)*

The gathering was also blessed with an abundance of gifts! We were treated to many gifts of hospitality, hosted as we were by Rev. Dr. Diane Windler and Eden Theological Seminary. Throughout the gathering we enjoyed the gift of worship, both at Eden and in local churches. The gathering was blessed also by gifts of the presence and resources of amazing people, including the WCC President for North America, the Rev. Dr. Bernice Powell Jackson, who preached at the opening worship, and the Rev. Dr. Michael Kinnamon who moderated the work sessions on the four areas of peacemaking: family, congregation, denomination and nation.

"Rev. Dr Diane and your team at Eden, thanks for your care. Eden Seminary, Thank you for your hospitality. We felt good and received...our two guest speakers on

Saturday we appreciate the skills you imparted to us on 'peace making.' God help us to implement them."

David Kataate (Uganda)

From the beginning of the meeting it was apparent that thoughts of home were never far from our minds. Of particular significance for us was remembering families and friends who had been, and who were now coping with, the effects of the Tsunami in Asia and parts of Africa. Our worship reflected our solidarity with churches involved in post-tsunami reconstruction and we shared stories of the suffering and hope found in such situations.

The sharing of stories was a powerful tool of communication, giving us glimpses into a scholar's life journey, their dreams and aspirations. From these stories, we were conscious of the sharp contrasts in the societies in which we live. While some churches live amidst abject poverty, pandemic diseases, corrupted states and economic disintegration, others battle against the 'devaluing of traditional values,' spiritual poverty, excessive affluence and

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Preparations Continue for WCC 9th Assembly

“God, In Your Grace, Transform The World.” 14-23 February 2005 • Porto Alegre, Brazil

Since its founding in 1948, the World Council of Churches has organized Assemblies every seven years in a different part of the world. The 9th Assembly of the World Council of Churches will be held in Porto Alegre, Brazil from 14–23 February 2006 under the theme “God, in your grace, transform the world”. Pre-Assembly events for youth and for women will be held from 11–13 February.

The Assembly is the highest governing body of the World Council of Churches. This is the first Assembly to be held in Latin America and hosted by the National Council of Christian Churches in Brazil (CONIC) on behalf of churches throughout the region. The Assembly will gather up to 3000 church leaders and ecumenical representatives from nearly every Christian tradition around the world. It is one of the broadest global gatherings of its kind.

Assembly Program

Common morning and evening prayers, as well as daily Bible study in small groups, will ground the Assembly in spiritual reflection.

Deliberation among the participants will be stimulated by major plenary presentations on church unity, economic justice, overcoming violence, Christian identity and religious plurality, Latin America, as well as the Assembly theme.

Delegates will join “ecumenical conversations” for sustained discussion on a variety of topics related to the life and witness of the church today. Conversations will focus on the



9th Assembly to be held in Porto Alegre, Brazil

changing religious, ecumenical, political, social and economic landscape in which churches and individual Christians are called to act.

Mutirão

The ecumenical movement will gather around the Assembly to make a *Mutirão*, which in Portuguese means coming together for a common purpose, coming together to celebrate and to reflect – coming together to make a difference. This part of the program will provide opportunities for churches, ecumenical organizations, congregations, student groups, and individuals to join the Assembly and to arrange exhibitions, workshops and cultural celebrations. The *Mutirão* not only encompasses the formal workshops component of the

Assembly, but also constitutes the 9th Assembly’s visitors program.

Committees will review the work of the World Council since the Harare Assembly (1998), propose future priorities, policy guidelines and statements on issues of public concern. They will present a slate of Central Committee candidates and propose an Assembly message to be shared with congregations throughout the world.

Planning for the Assembly is actively underway. With an emphasis on youth and diversity, the WCC hopes for the largest number of young adult participants ever to reenergize this important global movement for Christian unity and peace.

Facts about the 9th Assembly

Participants: Up to 3,000

Up to 1,200 core participants including 728 member church delegates, delegated representatives, observers, advisors, consultants, stewards and staff. Up to 1,800 additional participants, including ecumenists, partners, agencies, congregations, ecumenical formation groups, student groups, etc.

Venue: The Pontifical University at Porto Alegre, the capital of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil; Leading university in a modern city of 1.2 million residents; Joint hosts of the World Social Forum City guided by the vision that “another world is possible”

Assembly Program “Building Blocks”

Prayer Life: Opening and closing prayer celebrations, common morning and evening prayers outdoors, mid-day Eucharist services in the university chapel and Sunday worship with local congregations.

Bible Study: Core participants in “home groups” of 15 people following the Assembly Bible Study resource and sharing experiences; additional participants in larger language groups with presentations style bible study in Portuguese, Spanish and English.

Thematic Plenaries: creative and stimulating discussions on timely topics: economic justice, Christian identity, church unity, Latin America, overcoming violence and the Assembly theme of transforming the world

Ecumenical Conversations: sustained dialogue among core participants on over 20 topics including changing religious, cultural, ecumenical, international and political landscapes

Committees: committees focused on the business agenda of the Assembly will be meeting to determine policy and direction

Mutirão: From the Portuguese for “coming together to make a difference”, the Mutirão will incorporate programs for visitors and partners with a strong focus on youth and ecumenical formation. Offerings will be sought in equal parts from Brazil and Latin America, ecumenical partners and churches and be open to anyone.

They will include:

- ✓ Exhibitions by churches and agencies helping transform the world;
- ✓ Celebrations of cultural and artistic offerings from Latin America;
- ✓ Reflections during 10 to 15 daily workshops encouraging open dialogue and deeper reflection on major issues;

✓ Lectures on the history and vision of the ecumenical movement with home space for student and congregational groups.

Pre-Assembly Events: (February 11 – 13)

- ✓ Youth Event
- ✓ Women’s Gathering
- ✓ Ecumenical Disabilities Advocacy Network

Stewards Program:

150 young people working and learning together on behalf of the Assembly, one-third coming from Latin America and the remainder from all over the world.

Theological Congress and Café:

São Leopoldo Theological Seminary is hosting a congress of Latin American theological students and faculty that will run concurrently with the Assembly. A theological Café at the Assembly venue will provide a space for casual and spirited theological discussion.

Additional Details:

Visit the 9th Assembly website: www.wcc-assembly.info/

Assembly Bible Studies: This guide contains an introduction to the theme authored by the Theological commission of the CLAI and seven bible studies with prayer and questions for discussion authored from around the world.

From Harare to Porto Alegre: This magazine-style guide presents the work of the World Council Churches over the past 7 years from the most recent Assembly in 1995 in Harare up to the present.

Worship Resource Book: This collection of liturgies, prayers and songs in celebration of the Assembly will be published later this year.

How can you participate in the 9th Assembly?

There are many ways to become involved. Most importantly, we need all Christians to pray for the fellowship of churches around the world as they prepare to participate in this important event.

Church delegates, workshop leaders and stewards have already been selected for the 9th Assembly.

However, the WCC still warmly welcomes visitors to join the 9th Assembly through the *Mutirão Programme*.

To participate in the *Mutirão*, complete a registration form (http://www.wcc-assembly.info/Application_forms.860.0.html) and return it to the Assembly Office. The Office will arrange hotel accommodation for you and include you in all mailings about the Assembly. The registration fee for the Assembly ranges from \$100 to \$350. The cost of a shared hotel room is about \$30 per day, and 3 meals cost about \$15. The organizers are working to find lower-

cost alternative lodging, particularly for young people.

At Home:

If you are not able to travel to Porto Alegre, Brazil to participate in the 9th Assembly of the World Council of Churches, there are still many ways you can bring the spirit of the Assembly home to your local context. Here are just a few ideas:

✓ Visit the Assembly website: www.wcc-assembly.info/ and download the 9th Assembly logo and reflections on the theme: “God, in your grace, transform the world.” Post these in a public area of your congregation or local council of churches. Order free posters, power point presentations, postcards and other visual resources to build excitement at home.

✓ Visit the Assembly website and download Bible Studies, newly composed hymns and liturgies, reflections on the plenary subjects, and information on the life and context of the churches of Brazil and Latin America.

✓ Find out who in your area may be attending the 9th Assembly – as an official delegate, Mutirão workshop leader or Mutirão visitor. Invite them to speak on their preparations for participation in the Assembly, or to reflect on their experiences in Porto Alegre after returning home.

✓ Use the 9th Assembly as an impetus for connecting with neighbors and co-workers from Brazil or Latin America. Learn more about their lives, cultures, churches, environment and political contexts.

✓ Plan a special ecumenical worship service with neighboring congregations in the spirit of the 9th Assembly, using the resources available from the website.

✓ Plan a Bible Study series based on the studies prepared for the 9th Assembly, or lead an adult forum or Sunday school class based on the plenary subjects for the Assembly.

✓ Nurture the future of the ecumenical movement by supporting the participation of a young adult from your congregation to attend the 9th Assembly, which the General Secretary of the WCC has declared as *the youth assembly*.

✓ Raise funds to support the participation of a visitor from the south at the 9th Assembly – a global partner, representative of a sister congregation, denomination or Council of Churches overseas.

✓ Surround the 9th Assembly with your prayers! Pray for the fellowship of churches around the world and for representatives of the member churches at the Assembly.

ABC USA Honors Stromberg with Mowbray Ecumenical Award

The former Executive Director of the US Office of the World Council of Churches, Jean S. Stromberg, was honored with the Mowbray Ecumenical Award for "service and ministry that make a difference" at the Biennial Meeting of the American Baptist Churches USA which took place 1-3 July 2005 in Denver, Colorado.

An American Baptist layperson, Stromberg headed the WCC's US Office from 1992 until her retirement in 2003. Beginning her service with the WCC in 1977 when she was named an editor for the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, Stromberg also served as executive assistant to the general secretary from 1989 to 1992. Immediately following her retirement, Stromberg was named a Proctor Scholar at The Episcopal Divinity School in Boston. She is currently researching the history of the ecumenical movement in the United States and enjoying her new role as grandmother.

John Backer: 54 Years of Welcoming The Stranger

By Tricia Nolan

One morning in 1947 on the docks of New York harbor, an adventurous 14 year old boy who had traveled all by himself on an army transport ship from Germany, was met by a nice lady from Traveler's Aid with a friendly, "You're John Backer? Your father is outside; I'll take you to him." She was an angel who helped him through the maze of customs requirements until he was reunited with his father. That encounter convinced John that he wanted to be that friendly face for others as they entered this country; and for the past 54 years he has helped countless foreigners, from refugees to students, transition smoothly into life in the United States.

John, who was granted a master's degree from Columbia University Teacher's College in Guidance and Student Personnel Administration, has been the National Correspondent of the WCC Scholarship program for Church World Service for the past 31 years. He loves welcoming students from all over the world to study in US seminaries and universities. John understands that this program is just as important to the educational institutions as to the scholars themselves, since they bring international understanding to the colleges and seminaries that welcome them. For John, the WCC Scholars are wonderful to work with because they are all "enthusiastic and ready for something new and different."

For the WCC Scholars, the admiration is mutual. Lidya K. Tandirerung, a 2004-2005 scholar from Indonesia at Union Theological Seminary, says of



John Backer of Church World Service

John, "He is such an attentive person. He keeps checking on us, making sure we are comfortable." John's sense of calling is clear to the scholars, and they know that they are important to him. Not only does he help them navigate the bureaucratic challenges of visas and insurance, he provides them with human connection while they are here. John recently returned to New York after a visit to Lexington Theological Seminary for the graduation of two of this year's scholars. Upon his return, he spoke with the pride of a father on all of the wonderful things Lexington professors and students said about the scholars. It is abundantly clear that the scholarship program is more than a job to John Backer. Over half a century ago, through an unexpected welcome into a foreign country, God called John to this vocation, and he has been serving faithfully ever since.

(Ecumenical Formation Intern Tricia Nolan worked closely with John Backer and Lidya Tandirerung in facilitating the 2005 WCC Scholars Gathering at Eden Theological Seminary.)

Asia's Tsunami Aftermath: Reaffirming Ecumenical Family

By Rev. Lidya K. Tandirerung

For Cut Mita and Rev. Elisa Tambunan, survivors of the deadly tsunami that struck in the Indian Ocean in 2004, relief means finding hope for a better future. Each lost more than ten loved ones in the storm. While global attention has shifted away from tsunami-affected areas, ecumenical organizations, including the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA, Church World Service and Action by Churches Together, continue to deliver hope and help to devastated people like Mita and Tambunan.

Cut Mita is a Muslim woman in Meulaboh, the most devastated area in Aceh, Indonesia. She has witnessed the transformation of her yard into a mass burial ground, and yet tragically, her own mother's body is still missing. She now works through the United Nations World Food program, and is an interfaith activist, building partnerships between Christians and her Muslim community. In a recent interview, she noted her discomfort with the "hidden mission" of some Christian relief groups that seek not only to provide aid but also to evangelize.

Rev. Dr. Shanta Premawardhana, Associate General Secretary for Interfaith Relations of the National

Council of Churches of Christ in the USA, says that when non-Asian Christian groups evangelize while providing financial aid, they are sometimes charged with using unethical means of evangelism. In addition, some locals are accused of exchanging their faith and culture for the money of missionaries, creating deep tensions within multi-religious communities. Because of this, Premawardhana says evangelism is best left to local Christians. "Our task is to partner with them, both to help them be the best Christians they can be particularly in the context of this disaster and to learn for ourselves, a new way of being Christian."¹ He notes that a key priority of Asian church leaders is to rebuild community as a means of instilling resilience.

Rev. Elisa Tambunan, a pastor in Nias, Indonesia who lost 15 family members in the tsunami, struggles to understand why this disaster took so many lives. As he works through his grief, the encouragement and support of the global community gives him courage to survive.

Providing spiritual and emotional comfort to tsunami survivors is just as important as sharing financial support, according to Henry Pirade, a Church World Service Indonesia emergencies program

manager. Church World Service Indonesia has partnered with local groups to provide psychosocial activities for children in Aceh camps, as well as extensive aid in attending to the physical needs of the people there.

Action by Churches Together (ACT) is a worldwide network of churches and related agencies meeting human need through coordinated emergency response. This network is made up of member churches of the World Council of Churches and the Lutheran World Federation. Its ecumenical aid brings Asia the spirit of oikumene, the whole inhabited earth, sharing assurance of God's presence through works of solidarity by Christians worldwide. Visit www.act-intl.org for more information on how to support ongoing relief efforts.

(US Office summer intern Lidya Tandirerung, a 2004-2005 WCC scholar from Indonesia, was awarded the STM degree from Union Theological Seminary in New York this spring.)

¹ Rev. Dr. Shanta Premawardhana, *Listening to, Learning from and Living into Asia's Pain: Guidelines for US Churches Seeking to Engage in Tsunami Affected Areas* (National Council of Churches USA, cited August 23, 2005)

WCC Hosts Inter-religious Dialogue Conference

The World Council of Churches "Critical Moment in Inter-religious Dialogue" conference which took place 7-9 June 2005 in Geneva brought together religious scholars, human rights activists, humanitarian workers, journalists and people experienced in working

across religious traditions. They reviewed experiences of inter-religious collaboration and dialogue over recent decades and together envisaged the future. Among the more than 100 participants of diverse faiths were such prominent voices in interfaith dialogue as Swami Agnivesh, a Brahmin Hindu

leader and activist, Tariq Ramadan, who is reflecting on a new kind of European Islam that bridges Islamic values and Western culture, Dr. Wande Abimbola, a chief of African religion from Nigeria, and Naamah Kelman, the first woman to be ordained as a rabbi in Israel.



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co-hosted by the Department of Ecumenical Affairs of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

This Assembly will be known as *the* youth Assembly, according to the Rev. Dr. Samuel Kobia, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches. Thus a special ecumenical pre-event designed for young adult leaders in peace and justice work has been planned for 8-10 October in the Hyde Park area of Chicago. Entitled, Shift Your Space Transform The World, this gathering will give young adults opportunities to draw on the strength of the unity of the church by building ecumenical connections with peers as well as leaders of the World Council of Churches and member communions. Jenny Phillips, who staffs the WCC's United States Decade to Overcome Violence committee, explains that the gathering will enable "Seminarians, students and youth delegates to the WCC's 9th Assembly to share stories of peacemaking initiatives led by young adults around the United States and strategize new ways of engaging with the vision for peace promoted by the WCC's "Decade to Overcome Violence: Churches Seeking Reconciliation & Peace 2001-2010."

Scheduled in conjunction with the US Conference's annual meeting, the Pre-Assembly Event will also provide the context for recognizing individuals and organizations from the greater Chicago area that have provided creative leadership in the areas of peace and justice work in local congregations and communities through the presentation of "Blessed Are The Peacemaker Awards."

According to the WCC's President for North America, the Rev. Dr. Bernice Powell Jackson, "Assemblies of the World Council of Churches happen only once every seven years. So, we in North America are part of a tremendous wave of excitement and energy

building around the world. I believe that it is not coincidental that over 3000 church leaders and ecumenical representatives from nearly every Christian tradition around the world will be gathering in Porto Alegre, host to the World Social Forum and a city that has taken as its own theme, Another World is Possible. She added, "This is also the first time in the WCC's history that a WCC Assembly will be hosted by the churches of Latin America, and we very much look forward to learning more about the cultural and political contexts in which these churches minister."

For registration forms and details on the agenda of the Pre-9th Assembly Event and Annual Meeting of the US Conference for the World Council of Churches, please visit www.wcc-usa.org.

For more information on the World Council of Churches and 9th Assembly of the World Council of Churches, please visit: www.wcc-coe.org and www.wcc-assembly.info.

Media Contact for October meetings of the US Conference:

Deborah DeWinter 212-870-2522
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Media contact for the World Council of Churches and 9th Assembly in Porto Alegre, Brazil:

Juan Michel +41 22 791 6153 and +41 79 507 6363 media@wcc-coe.org



Young Adult Ecumenical Forum on Globalization

More than 50 young adults from across the country have been mobilized through the Young Adult Ecumenical Forum (YAEF) on Globalization, held at Eden Seminary in St. Louis, August 11-14. Participants critically examined issues connected to globalization, including the environment, poverty, agriculture, consumerism and water. Speakers, including Rev. Dr. Larry Bropleh, World Council of Churches Representative to the United Nations, and Rev. Dr. Michael Kinnamon, world-renowned ecumenist and Professor of Mission and Peace at Eden Theological Seminary, addressed the group and facilitated conversation on the ways in which young adults can engage with these issues. Then the young adults developed local projects in which to apply their learnings.

The Young Adult Ecumenical Forum program is a collaborative response by young ecumenists to the lack of



UN Representative Larry Bropleh speaking at YAEF 2005

programming for and involvement by young adults in issues of globalization and other contemporary phenomenon. Young adults who participated in the 2003 World Council of

Churches Stewards Program developed YAEF in 2004, and participants in the 2004 event planned and led the 2005 gathering. For more information, email yaef05@yahoo.com.

International Conference on Violence and Christian Spirituality

“Violence and Christian Spirituality: An Ecumenical Conversation” is an international conference to be held October 27-29, 2005 in Brookline, MA. The gathering will be hosted by Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology, in cooperation with the World Council of Churches and the Boston Theological Institute. Conference participants will explore the root causes of violence in the modern world, as well as the challenges and responsibility of

the Christian churches, from an interdisciplinary and critical perspective.

His Eminence, Archbishop Demetrios of America, is the keynote speaker. Other speakers will include Dr. Sam Kobia, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, Dr. Antonios Kireopoulos, Assistant General Secretary for International Affairs and Peace for the National Council of the Churches of Christ USA, Rev. Dr. Diane C. Kessler, Executive Director of the

Massachusetts Council of Churches, and Dr. Ioannis Petrou, Professor of Social Ethics at the University of Thessalonike’s School of Theology.

Registration and meals are \$80 before September 20 or \$100 after September 20. For more information, contact Rev. Dr. Emmanuel Clapsis at Holy Cross, who serves as a member of the International Reference Group for the Decade to Overcome Violence, at (617) 731-3500 or eclapsis@hchc.edu.

**“Marks of Peacemaking” Theme
for 2005 WCC Scholars Gathering
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unbridled militarism. Mission and witness amidst religious plurality, the role of women in culture and society, the importance of education and ecumenical formation – these were just a few of the issues discussed! And enhancing each conversation was the diversity in the makeup of the group of scholars. Men and women of different ages and different denominations, lay and clergy, married and single, some who had left families behind to come to the USA, some who had left their countries for the first time. Each had a story to tell, a song to share, a prayer to offer.

Kapayapaan

*K-apayapaan, shantipah, shanty, damai
A-madi, ngentichen, pyung-hwa, pengh-won,*

*P-ing-an, yim jung, santi and shalom,
A-all of these terms are equivalent to the
English term, ‘peace.’*

Y-et, it seems that despite our desire to

*have peace, peace is hard to attain.
A-round the world there are different
forms of violence;
P-lenty of people don’t experience a ‘pos-
itive’ or a ‘negative’ peace.
A-midst the prayers and efforts of peace-
makers and proponents of peace,
A-ggression, hostility, and different forms
of injustice are still prevalent.
N-evertheless, I’m still hoping that the
time will come that ‘humanity shall live
in peace.’*

*Rosalyn ‘Sally’ M. Laylo
(WCC Scholar, Philippines)*

What was particularly impressive in this meeting, was witnessing the ‘mindful listening’ of the group, giving each speaker due respect and careful consideration for what they were sharing. In this manner, a sense of community was quickly built. It also helped to have a number of students and WCC staff who had attended the previous year’s gathering. This continuity was instrumental to the success of the meeting.

The writer Goethe, once said that “We

must always change, renew, rejuvenate ourselves; otherwise, we harden.” One of the great gifts of being around the WCC scholars was seeing their openness to change, and their commitment to constant renewal in their own ecumenical journeys. The challenge remains how to translate experiences gained abroad, and bring them to bear once we return home, to take up our work in our churches once more.

*‘Creator God, may our discussions at
this gathering prove useful in your sight.
Inspire us in the ecumenical movement
to remain on the move, and keep us alert
to the ways in which we may be empow-
ered by your Grace, to be instruments of
peace and transformation in our fami-
lies, congregations, denominations and
nations.’*

*Closing Worship
(2005 WCC Scholars Gathering)*

*(Tara Tautari heads the Scholarships
Programme for the World Council of
Churches.)*

US Office Organizes Trip of Transformation Young Adult Outreach to Colleges, Seminaries

WCC Trip of Transformation outreach team organized by Tricia Nolan, Ecumenical Formation Intern at the US Office of the World Council of Churches and a member of the Presbyterian Church USA, will travel to colleges and seminaries in Iowa and Minnesota affiliated with WCC member churches 10-18 September 2005. The purpose of the trip is to build relationships with young adults as well as introduce students and faculty to the ecumenical movement and the global partnerships of the WCC.

Emphasis will be placed on linking students and faculty engaged in peace and justice work with the Decade to Overcome Violence and promoting interest in the upcoming 9th Assembly of the

World Council of Churches in Porto Alegre, Brazil in February 2006. The team will visit classes, deliver lectures, lead chapel services and Bible studies, meet with small groups, visit local congregations and offer workshops. In addition, team members will introduce internship and volunteer opportunities available with the World Council of Churches in the United States and abroad.

Stops on the trip include Dubuque, Iowa (10-13 September), Decorah, Iowa, (14) and the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota (15-18). Members of the Transformation Team from Geneva include Dr. Guillermo Kerber, the WCC’s Program Executive for Impunity, Justice and Reconciliation with responsibilities for Latin America & the Caribbean who is

a member of the WCC’s International Affairs, Peace and Human Security team; and Kent Yoder, Program Associate in the Decade to Overcome Violence unit of the General Secretariat. Team members from the US Office include Rev. Deborah DeWinter, WCC Program Executive for the United States; Ecumenical Formation Intern Tricia Nolan, who focuses on connecting young adults and international scholars with the greater ecumenical movement; and Jessica Ralph, a young adult delegate to the 9th Assembly representing The National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc., who is a former intern in the US Office and graduate of The Ailey/Fordham University Bachelor of Fine Arts Program. For more information on the Trip of Transformation, please visit: <http://www.wcc-usa.org/>.

UN Office Sets Priorities, Builds Capacity

By Dr. Laurence Bropleh

The various responsibilities of the United Nations Office reflect its high visibility representing the entire constituency of the World Council of Churches. The work at the UN Office has been divided into six priority areas that are consistent with the larger concerns of member churches and specialized agencies of the World Council of Churches. These areas are: working with The Security Council in response to conflict, Sustainable Development, Impunity and the International Criminal Court, Indigenous Peoples, Disarmament (nuclear and small arms), and Economic Justice.

The United Nations Office is headed by Rev. Dr. Laurence Konmla Bropleh who is the Permanent Representative of the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs of the World Council of Churches. As the Permanent Representative at the United Nations Office, Dr. Bropleh, a Methodist cleric and diplomat, interacts with UN Missions, the UN Secretariat and international Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and the global community, building and articulating advocacy on behalf of the World Council of Churches.

An additional executive staff member at the UN Office has been Dr. Hans Heijs who has been seconded from ICCO in the Netherlands. His responsibilities have been working with Indigenous Peoples, Economic Justice and Disarmament. His

recent efforts in working and building advocacy for the World Council of Churches around the 2005 Review Conference on the Non-Nuclear Proliferation Treaty in New York was an outstanding job. Dr. Heijs ended his assignment with the WCC on 15 August 2005.

Dr. Bropleh recently participated in a high-level panel discussion with Civil Society at the United Nations where he discussed Freedom from Fear. In August he addressed a Young Adults Ecumenical Forum on Globalization and Poverty, held at Eden Theological Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri. This was an outgrowth of the World Council of Churches' Stewards Program.

During the course of a year, the UN Office engages in some of the myriad conferences at the UN that affect the constituency and goals of the WCC. Since the office is small, it cannot possibly address every issue that is hosted by the UN. However, the WCC may have representatives from other global constituencies who contact the UN Office in order for the office to facilitate part of their arrangements in New York and exchange information regarding ongoing events.

Ms. Cynthia Goddard joined the staff of the World Council of Churches this spring. She has had academic background in Anthropology from Sarah Lawrence College and Columbia University, two decades of professional work as a medical technician

in the Department of Neurology at Harlem Hospital in New York City and is currently studying at The New York Theological Seminary.

In the summer, Ms. Andrea Crandall, an MIT graduate, became an intern at the UN Office, where she is able to apply her computer expertise to the complex array of data in the UN Office. She is fluent in Mandarin and has a background in economics. Both she and Ms. Goddard have strong interests in International affairs and have broad travel experience.

The work at the UN Office ultimately is to bring the World Council of Churches closer to the United Nations and for the member churches to feel closer to the United Nations.

The role of the UN Office is the pulse of the WCC at the United Nations. We can directly convey WCC expressions of concern, as witnessed by the London terrorist bombings, to Missions at the United Nations. In this way, the UN Office is a compact engine by which avenues of communication are established and maintained with Missions and other NGOs. As can be seen by Ms. Crandall's presence at the UN Office, the Office welcomes interns.

(Dr. Laurence Konmla Bropleh, who heads the UN Office in New York, serves as the Permanent Representative of the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs for the WCC.)

US Office Intern Profiles: 2005



Jenny Phillips

Jenny Phillips

As US Decade to Overcome Violence Program Assistant for the World Council of Churches from April through August 2005, Jenny Phillips equipped peace and justice activists with Decade to Overcome Violence resources and support, and worked to build a young adult network of peace advocates. She is a United Methodist who recently received her Master of Divinity from Union Theological Seminary in New York. Her background includes outdoor and environmental ministries, youth and young adult ministries, ecumenical work, fundraising, and film and video production. She has a Bachelor of Arts in Broadcast Journalism from the University of Washington in Seattle. We wish Jenny well as she takes up her new position as Coordinator of Continuing Education at Drew University Theological School effective September, 2005.



Tricia Nolan

Tricia is the Ecumenical Formation Intern at the US Office of the WCC in New York where she focuses on connecting young adults and international scholars with the greater ecumenical movement. A graduate of Whitworth College in Spokane, WA, Tricia worked for the Presbyterian Church USA as a volunteer in Argentina and an intern in Louisville, Kentucky. Recently she returned from India where she taught English, Philosophy and Spanish at an international school. Along with her WCC internship, she is currently studying for her master's degree in International Educational Development at Columbia Teacher's College. Tricia was responsible for organizing the WCC Scholars Gathering hosted by Eden Theological Seminary in April 2005 and the "Trip of Transformation" delegation of young adult leaders in the ecumenical movement accompanied by WCC staff to colleges and seminaries in the Midwest in September 2005.



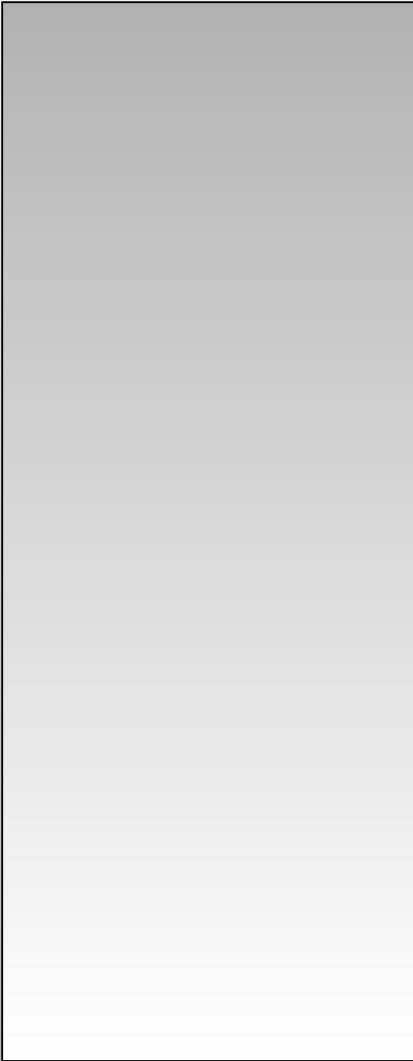
Tricia Nolan



Lidya Tandirerung

Lidya K. Tandirerung

Lidya K. Tandirerung, a 2004-2005 WCC Scholar, served as a summer intern in the US Office. Her work focused on updating the US Office library, assisting with office tasks, and providing warm hospitality to office guests. Lidya graduated from Union Theological Seminary in New York, NY in May 2005 with a Masters in Sacred Theology with a concentration on Ecumenical Studies. Prior to her time in the United States, she was an ordained pastor of the Toraja Church, a Reformed affiliated WCC member church in Indonesia. She has served as the National Youth Representative for the Communion of Churches in Indonesia, a member of the Youth Committee of the Christian Conference of Asia. Her Master of Arts degree is from Gadjah Mada University, a state university in Jogjakarta, Indonesia. Lidya recently returned to Indonesia, where she is serving in ministry for the Toraja Church. This work includes teaching Ecumenical Studies at Rantepao Theological Seminary in Tana Toraja, Sulawesi Selatan. Many thanks to Lidya for her gracious presence and her commitment to the work of the World Council of Churches!



Ecumenical Minister Program Enriches Michigan Church

Since 1971, the Grosse Pointe Memorial Church, a congregation of the Presbyterian Church USA in Grosse Pointe Farms, Michigan, has hosted ecumenical guests from over 30 different countries around the globe. Established by the Reverend Dr. Ray Kiely, Senior Minister from 1970-1983, the "Ecumenical Minister/Couple Program" welcomes Christian ministers, ministerial couples or dedicated lay Christian couples from other nations or cultures as a means of providing inspirational and educational opportunities for the promotion of world understanding and peace among the members of the congregation, the Presbytery of Detroit and the broader secular community. Based on the belief that "...the church is alive in one world and that all Christians must understand and participate in peacemaking as a mission of the Church..." the Grosse Pointe program helps members become more knowledgeable about Christian ministries rooted in diverse economic, political and social environments throughout the world.

To facilitate the visit of ecumenical guests, the congregation provides round trip transportation for the guest and spouse, furnishes a car or drivers for the guests during their visit of up to six weeks, provides housing in the home of a local parishioner who is away on vacation and willing to lend the use of their house for this purpose, and gives guests a modest stipend. The visiting ecumenical guests are expected to preach at least one Sunday, speak in various congregation and local contexts, meet with youth groups, and participate in an ethnic dinner and cultural celebration featuring food and music typical of the guest's home country. Visits to local schools and civic groups are also encouraged, as

well as providing interviews to the media. Care is taken by the members of Grosse Pointe Memorial to introduce the ecumenical guests as broadly as possible to neighboring churches, cultural activities and environment, while at the same time being intentional about learning more about the life and culture of the respective guests.

In the spring of 2005, Vivi Akapko and her husband, Roger Akapko from Lome, Togo, were ecumenical guests at Grosse Pointe Memorial through introductions made by the Diakonia & Solidarity Team of the World Council of Churches working in partnership with the US Office of the WCC. Vivi is the West Africa Regional Coordinator for the All Africa Conference of Churches, with specialization in refugee issues and ministry with uprooted people. It is our hope that the following personal reflections - first from the editor of the congregation's newsletter and wife of the Chair of the Ecumenical Minister Committee of Grosse Pointe Memorial Church, Louise Thomas, and second, from Vivi Akapko, the visiting ecumenical minister, will help to inspire other congregations to replicate this expression of God's gift of unity..."one body, many members...in Christ."

I Felt I Was Able To Touch the Congregation

By Vivi Akapko, Lome, Togo

The whole stay was a most positive experience for me and, I believe, also for the Grosse Pointe community. Roger and I feel so blessed to have met all the wonderful and great people at the Grosse Pointe Memorial Church. It is so good to know that I have many new and life-long friends in that community.

Our visit was an eye opener at different levels. They did not know much about ministry with uprooted people or refugees. They thought everything was bad in Africa, hence the willingness of Africans to come and stay in the States. They discovered from us that Sub-Saharan Africa



Ecumenical Minister Vivi Akapko

has a lot of potential and wealth, but because of wars, conflicts and bad governance, most of our people are on the move.

I gave a presentation on uprootedness in West Africa to a Black Baptist congregation outside of Grosse Pointe. I tried to explain what uprootedness meant using the example of a tree that can be uprooted and what we, as Church, could do. I shared with them stories about War Affected Women in Liberia and raped women in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The response was overwhelming. Women (once again, women) came to see me after the presentation to ask me what they could do to assist men and women suffering. They felt it is because they were not aware of what was happening that they have not been able to assist before. While the story of the Ogonis was shared, they wanted to know exactly the name of the multinationals concerned so that they don't buy petrol from them...One lady from Jamaica came to give me US \$30 and asked me to give it to somebody who will need it. I felt, at least, I was able to touch a congregation about the plea of uprooted people.

I now realize that Americans are not well informed about other parts of the world, but are really willing to learn more when they have the opportunity. In fact, our new friends were very eager to learn everything about our country and other countries in West Africa. Nothing was a hidden agenda or too personal. They wanted to know everything - about myself, my marriage, how I got to know my husband, my house, my work, the government in my country, and so forth.

The same was true for us; we understood more about our common humanity through this meaningful exchange.

While we were in Grosse Pointe, we were given a house to stay in. The family traveled to Florida and left everything opened. All the rooms, all the cupboards, everything was accessible to us – even the master bedroom. We could sleep there if we liked. I learnt from that experience that I could also do the same thing – just trust people and not hold on to material things. Though these people never saw us, they relied on us, leaving us their house and their car.

We Thank God For Sending Special People Into Our Lives

By Louise Thomas, Grosse Pointe Farms, Michigan

Our church has had Ecumenical Ministers from different countries visit us for many years. Each time a new couple comes, we fall in love with them. We never seem to be able to say, "Now these people were the best yet." Maybe we've just been lucky, or maybe God was directing the best people to our church.

Vivi and Roger Akapko were our first couple who were not ordained ministers, but that did not deter in any way the rich culture and education they brought to us. Many in our church had never heard of Togo, so right there we were learning things we didn't know. We learned about the history of Togo, the church customs there, the problems and what was being done about them.

But what made it so much more meaningful and special was that we got to know real people on a personal basis. We heard the story of how Vivi and Roger met. We learned what their work was like, what kind of a house they live in, what kind of music they listen to, how to play different native instruments, what their church services are like, how they help uprooted people in countries all over Africa. We found out that Vivi is an excellent cook. She created a typical Togo lunch, and taught several of us how to cook it.

Roger spoke French most of the time, but he understood English and spoke more English than most of us could speak French. We saw his fondness for our grandson, Jeffrey, and that warmed our hearts. We saw that language was no barrier to friendship.

We are very grateful for this friendship and hope someday, we will see Togo first hand. And we thank God for sending two very special people into our lives.

“Challenges Facing the Ecumenical Movement” WCC Moderator and General Secretary to Speak at Symposium

His Holiness Aram I, Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia and Moderator of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, will be visiting the United States in late October. In conjunction with the Moderator's visit, a special symposium has been organized on 22 October 2005 at The Interchurch Center, 475 Riverside Drive in New York under the theme, "Challenges Facing the Ecumenical Movement in the 21st Century. The seminar, which features the Rev. Dr. Samuel Kobia as the keynote speaker, will be jointly sponsored by the Armenian Apostolic Church of America, the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA, and the World Council of Churches.

Other speakers will include the Rev. Dr. Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, General Secretary of the Reformed Church of America; Rev. Dr. Diane Kessler, Executive Director of the Massachusetts Council of Churches; Bishop Thomas Hoyt, President of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA; Rev. Dr. Robert Edgar, General Secretary of the National Council of Churches, Dr. Anthony Kireopoulos, Deputy General Secretary of the National Council of Churches, Rev. Deborah DeWinter, Program Executive for the United States, World Council of Churches; Fr. Leonid Kishkovsky, Moderator of the US Conference for the World Council Churches and Ecumenical Officer, Orthodox Church in America and a representative from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. Archbishop Oshagan, Prelate for the Eastern United States of America of the Armenian Apostolic Church of America, will provide the welcome.



Rev. Dr. Samuel Kobia and His Holiness Aram I

On Sunday, 23 October there will also be a Pontifical Divine Liturgy celebrated by His Holiness at St. Bartholomew's Church at 1:30 p.m. followed by a banquet at the Pierre Hotel commemorating the 75th anniversary of the seminary in Antelias, Lebanon.

His Holiness was one of the founding members of the Middle East Council of Churches in 1974. As delegate of the World Council Churches, he attended the Assemblies in Nairobi, Vancouver, Canberra, and Harare. In 1975, he was elected to the Faith and Order Commission of the WCC and soon after as a member of the Central Committee. In 1991 at Canberra, he was elected Moderator of the WCC.

For more information on these events, please call the US Office of the World Council of Churches: 1-888-212-2920 or the Armenian Apostolic Church of America, Eastern Prelacy at: 212-689-7810.

God's Children

By Dr. Elizabeth Ferris



Refugee Child From Sudan

Fr. Cosimo sounded impatient. “It isn’t a question of the refugees needing the churches. We need them. We need their witness. If the churches open themselves to the refugees, it will be a richness for them.” And so they have, with little resources but faith and a belief that peace is possible. Fr. Cosimo, pastor of Sacred Heart Church in Cairo, Egypt leads one community that has opened itself to the refugees pouring in from Sudan.

The ongoing Sudanese civil war has displaced 4 million southerners. Two – four million are living in Egypt. Since independence in 1956, Sudan has known only 10 peaceful years. With so much destruction and deprivation, a lost generation with no education or basic health care relied on subsistence farming to survive. But the newest war uprooted these rural people, leaving them unable to grow food. With malnutrition and starvation looming, they walk hundreds of miles to neighboring countries.

They are greeted with hostility almost everywhere but the churches. Sacred

Heart Church is a gathering point for the Sudanese community. On a given day, six newly-arrived families are camped in the corner of the compound with no where else to go. The church can not, will not, turn them away, despite threats from the local population. In July, Sacred Heart Church was besieged by a group of 800 angry Egyptians over a bus accident. The riot continued for several hours with the police unable to control the crowds that threw stones, burned a car before the gates and beat several Sudanese.

Even in this environment of very real danger, the churches remain a force of healing and hope. Sacred Heart sponsors a school, St. Charles Lwanga, serving 950 Sudanese refugees. The teachers, themselves refugees, keep ten classrooms busy in two daily shifts, tailoring classes to the refugees’ needs: classes in Arabic and English, income-generating projects, computers, working with women and children, too. The skills acquired will enable these Sudanese refugees to provide for their children in a country where it is illegal for them to work.

These services are essential to their survival but it’s not the most important gift of and to the people of Sacred Heart. “By enabling Sudanese from different regions and different tribes to work together, we’re trying to contribute to peace in the country,” Fr. Cosimo explains. Christians and Moslems study together. For the people of Sacred Heart, refugees and natives alike, it’s about reconciliation. It’s about living peace. As the riot illustrates, it’s far from easy. They need our help.

Sacred Heart Church is just one of hundreds of Christian communities that receives help in its critical outreach by the World Council of Churches Diakonia and Solidarity team. This arm of the WCC works to strengthen local churches so that they can more effectively serve the needs

of their local communities. Experienced WCC consultants bring their global network of experience and resources to work on the grass roots level through training, capacity building, advocacy and communications. They work directly with churches and partners on specific issues and help them in their efforts to develop better ways to serve their neighbors. It’s more than providing relief aid. It’s a holistic approach, integrating relief, rehabilitation, development and reconciliation so that effective long-term solutions can be found.

Even in this environment of very real danger, the churches remain a force of healing and hope.

As Christians we are called to serve our brothers and sisters, both locally and globally. The WCC is a way for the global Christian community to exercise this calling, to provide for basic human needs while furthering the goal of unity and peace for all of God’s people. In communion with brothers and sisters in the global, Christian community, Christian congregations and individual donors support the work of the WCC Diakonia and Solidarity team with financial contributions that are essential to maintaining this critical outreach, saving lives and strengthening community through reconciliation. And it’s making a difference. On Sundays, church services at Sacred Heart overflow. As Fr. Cosimo says, “The refugees have much to teach us.”

“Happy are those who work for peace; God will call them his children.”

(Dr. Elizabeth Ferris heads the Diakonia & Solidarity team of the World Council of Churches.)

Caroline Hennessy
continued from page 1

coordinated fundraising and fund operations to provide scholarships and operating support for seven Catholic schools in the urban core of Kansas City and partnered in the creation of the Christian Urban Alliance, a million dollar scholarship fund for students opting out of the public school system for faith based education in local Christian schools. Previous to that, she directed the Cardinal's Annual Appeal for the Archdiocese of New York. She spent nearly six years there working with over 100,000 individual donors throughout the 413 parishes of the Archdiocese. Her foundation includes overseeing the entire Archdiocese on an institutional level and also working at the grassroots level with a wide variety of church communities and leadership, from rural, farming community parishes to St. Patrick's Cathedral.

Where Your Treasure Is, There Your Heart Will Be

As Hennessy notes, development is essential to the life of a nonprofit, now more than ever. The WCC can no longer depend solely on traditional funding partners as they are facing fiscal challenges of their own. The WCC has to branch out and broaden its base of support to ensure the continuation of its essential programs. Hennessy will set the foundation for a development program that will raise the awareness of the WCC and invite more individuals, foundations and corporations to join in support.

Hennessey finds inspiration for fundraising in Matthew 6:21, "where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." She believes that people are generous and truly want to help others. Giving brings

us joy. Fundraising gives people ways to do that. By participating in a faith based non-profit organization, people are empowered to make a real difference. With volunteer opportunities, consciousness-raising, advocacy and fund raising, countless individuals in every corner of our nation, organize to make a difference in the lives of others and in our society.

Appreciation Expressed for Loyal WCC Supporters

Individuals give the largest portion of philanthropic contributions by far so individuals are the basis of a strong development program. The WCC is fortunate to have a group of loyal supporters. Hennessy plans to get back in touch with them to acknowledge their support and invite them to continue partnering in our work. She will then reach out to others in the Christian communities across the country to join us. Via mailings, regional events and organized trips to see first hand the work of the WCC, individual donors will have plenty of opportunities to participate in the life of the WCC.

Diversified support is also essential. Institutional giving from corporations and foundations will also be a focus of Hennessy's plan. Working with the leadership of the WCC – US Conference, she will prospect, cultivate and solicit major gifts. With the wide range of programs executed by the WCC, there is no limit to its potential.

Launch of 'Friends of the WCC Program'

Though the mission of the WCC is simple, churches working together to make difference in the world, its constellation of programs can be overwhelming. This contributes to a lack of public awareness about the important work of the WCC. In order to enlist support, people have to find out about our good work.

Hennessy plans to spotlight individual programs and show how the mission of the WCC is accomplished on a very basic, grass roots level. For instance, at the Annual Meeting of the US Conference for the World Council of Churches in Chicago, the denominational banquet on the evening of October 11, 2005, will highlight a presentation on the *Focus on Africa*, a program seeking to eradicate poverty in Africa. (Visit: www.wcc-usa.org for more information on the Annual Meeting/Pre-9th Assembly Event.) Simultaneously, Hennessy will launch a new initiative – the Friends of the WCC Program. This program will enlist volunteers in different regions across the United States to raise awareness and extend the network of support across the country via small, local events, like presentations and hosting speakers.

One of her fundraising inspirations, Bishop Patrick Ahern, once prayed, "Asking for money on behalf of others is a holy thing. Bless us with joy as we do it." The WCC is a worldwide fellowship of individuals joyfully doing for others. Hennessy is certain that this joyful giving will continue and plans to make it easy for others to join in.



WCC “COMPASSION AND SOLIDARITY” WITH VICTIMS OF HURRICANE KATRINA

WCC general secretary Rev. Dr Samuel Kobia expressed today the compassion and solidarity of the member churches of the World Council of Churches with all the victims of Hurricane Katrina, which US officials fear has claimed thousands of lives in recent days.

“The whole fellowship of the World Council of Churches unites in prayer for the people, leaders and churches of the United States as you come to

grips with the tragedy brought to your shores by hurricane Katrina. We pray for those who mourn, who suffer, who search for meaning. We pray the time will come when even those who are now most troubled in spirit will rediscover the hope of resurrection. We pray for those who have perished and are already safe within God's eternal keeping. And we pledge our solidarity with those who have begun the task of rebuilding broken walls and restoring stricken lives. In particular, we hold in our prayers all the church relief agencies,

workers and volunteers who are struggling to assist those in need.

“May the God of peace, who brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, make you complete in everything good, that you may do his will, working among us that which is pleasing in his sight; through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.” (Hebrews 13:20-21).



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