

EEF - NET

News • Information • Discussions on Ecumenical Learning

Edited by the Education and Ecumenical Formation Staff of the World Council of Churches

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*Christian
education
belongs ...
to the
whole church*

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The internal configurations of the WCC may change but the work on education and ecumenical formation continues! As a token of this, we offer this issue of EFF-NET. We are grateful for the many expressions of concern for our individual and collective futures throughout and following the process of reorganisation at the end of last year.

It is not a distraction to be reflecting on education and ecumenical formation while the war in Iraq is tragically played before the eyes of a global television audience. At the time of writing, we do not know how near the end is and what the end will be. In a world where less well-publicised but equally destructive conflicts are always happening somewhere, we should be challenged to consider how our attitudes, relationships and behaviour are shaped. At its best, religious education and nurture enables us to be people who are open to the other and able to live at peace with our neighbour. At its worst, attitudes shaped by religion fuel the flames of conflict if not actually producing conflict in the first place.

The articles in this issue reflect on what we are about as religious educators within the congregation, school and college. All too often, the role of the churches in education in these areas is experienced as the protection (or even expansion) of the interests of Christianity against competing claims. These articles suggest more creative approaches where we can contribute rather than simply defend our position.

We include a shortened version of the Annual Report we produce for the Commission on Education and Ecumenical Formation and our donor partners. This tries to indicate

the range and purpose of our work. This is not only the activity of a group of people based in Geneva but represents a collective engagement by churches, networks and individuals. We are always interested to hear your reaction to our approaches and activities in relation to your own work and concerns.

Everyone now recognises the importance of education yet no one gets excited by it. We record the death of Ivan Illich, who like the late Paulo Freire, aroused passionate interest in education some years ago. His provocative thinking on 'deschooling society' still challenges some of our conventional wisdom on education. It is a long way away from the current situation where the only time when passions are aroused about education is when it 'fails to deliver'. We need educational visionaries who will excite us as well as pragmatic methodologists who will help us be effective.

We want EFF-NET to be as informative and engaging as possible. We welcome information and articles about your work in or theological reflection on education and ecumenical formation. Rather than commission general articles we prefer to use material, like the main articles in this issue, which has been prepared for and out of a real context. We do not only want to stand in solidarity with your work in education and ecumenical formation, we want to be able to share it with others!

The education and ecumenical formation staff of the WCC

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Neighbours and Strangers: Thoughts about Christian Presence and Service Learning

Rita M. Pullium

Extract from an address given at Southern Christian College, Mindanao, Philippines

Christian presence is not something you inherit and keep forever. To keep Christian presence alive, the college must continually find new and relevant ways to express its Christian identity and calling. Furthermore the college must have such a reputation of quality that it becomes a credible source of influence to its neighbours, a beacon to the community. In short, it must be unmistakably Christian and it must be academically excellent.

Christian presence is not about arrogance or about special treatment for Christians on this campus. Christian presence begins when we deliberately place our allegiance to Christ in the forefront of our collective consciousness. Christian presence is evident when the symbols we display, the activities we perform, the priorities we choose, are consistent with the faith we profess. Christian presence imparts a respect for truth and beauty in all their manifestations, and a belief that human potential is a gift from God to be nurtured and not squandered. In the context of Mindanao, Christian presence should enhance our respect for Islam and our willingness to learn from our Muslim brothers and sisters. Christian presence prevails when we see our education as more than a ticket to a comfortable job, but a means to improve life for others. Ultimately, Christian presence is experiencing the love of God, and obeying His commandment to love the Lord our God with all our hearts, and to love our neighbours as ourselves.

And who is my neighbour, you may ask. In the gospel of St. Luke a lawyer put the exact same question to Jesus. Jesus replied by telling the story of the Good Samaritan, a story I am sure is familiar to all of you. A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves who attacked him and left him naked, wounded, and half dead. If ever a person needed help, this man was it. A priest

passed by, a Levite passed by; these were religious Jews whom you would expect to help another Jew; but it took the Samaritan, a stranger from a group disliked by the Jews, to show compassion to the wounded man. Christ then asked a rhetorical question, "Who was neighbour to him that fell among the thieves? The lawyer said, "He that showed mercy to him." Then Jesus said, "Go, and do thou likewise." Notice that being a neighbour is defined by what we do, not where we live or whether we know each other. The neighbour in this case was an absolute stranger.

It is tempting to think of neighbours as people who look like us, think like us, and live similar lifestyles as we do. I invite you to rethink the concept of neighbour, both in terms of the geopolitical realities of today and in terms of Christ's response to the question "who is my neighbour." If you come right down to it, the physical and psychological distance implied by the term "neighbour" really varies according to context. A neighbour may be a person who lives next door, or next street, but in a national or international setting, people who live in the same town or even in the same continent consider themselves neighbours. In a global community what happens to the economy or to the environment in one part of the world can have consequences for others. We need to be concerned about what and how our global neighbours are doing. On the other hand, Christ teaches us to do more than that. He teaches us to love our neighbour, even if our neighbour is a stranger.

The tragic event of September 11 highlighted the fact that we live in a global community. Individuals of many nationalities were among the casualties of September 11, many of them strangers to each other. September 11 also showed us that Americans are very good at dealing with friends and

allies, but woefully lacking when it comes to dealing with strangers. Oftentimes we seem to want them to become like us, to become americanised or shed off their strangeness in some way, before we would begin to understand and engage them.

As Christians, we are called to transcend the human tendency to love and serve only our family, friends, and allies. In Matthew Chapter 25 Christ describes how He will separate the righteous from the unrighteous in the last judgement. He will ask whether we fed the hungry, gave drink to the thirsty, took in the stranger, clothed the naked, visited the sick and imprisoned. And he follows on to say "Whatsoever you do to one of the least of these — you did it unto me." Why the stranger? Why do you think Christ lumps the stranger with the hungry, the thirsty, the naked, the sick, and the imprisoned?"

In his book, *The Company of Strangers*, Parker J. Palmer points out that what the stranger has in common with all the others mentioned is that all of these are outcasts, ignored by the comfortable and well-to-do. The stranger is central to the Christian conception of life. Yes, the stranger needs our welcome and help, but we need the stranger even more. We need the stranger to bring us incredible news, to challenge our assumptions, and to bring God's promise. God sent a stranger to Abraham and Sarah to announce the shocking news they would have as many descendants as the stars, at a time when they were old and barren. The risen Christ appeared to the women and the disciples in both instances as a stranger. To ignore the stranger in these cases would have meant missing very important messages from God.

What has this got to do with our common pursuit for truth in academe? To put it simply, we often do not know where to look for truth. Truth is not just the common denominator of what we inside the academe believe; truth also lies at the edges, and we need to be willing to get to these edges, to engage the stranger. The term ivory tower aptly describes an academic institution that pursues truth as if it were something abstract and lofty, while ignoring the relevant and often messy conditions in which truth may be found. Instead of clinging to our comfortable academic circle, we need to venture out to find truth as seen by strangers, not only strangers who are school-learned, but also those who have been learned from the school of hard knocks.

Service learning is a good way to do this. Service learning is a natural outcome of Christian presence

in higher education. While the idea of service is not uniquely Christian, Christians cannot truly live out their Christian faith without committing themselves to service. We are asked to not only love our neighbours as ourselves, but to see Christ in those who need help, whether they are friends or strangers.

Service learning combines service and learning, not in a way that compromises both service and learning, but in such a way that service enhances learning and learning enhances service. It is easy to imagine what learning without service is like; many traditional classes have grappled with theories that have little relevance to real life, much less to serving real people. On the other hand, if all you do is go to the field and do service, without bringing something valuable you have learned to test and apply, or without bringing back something to the classroom to expand or modify what you have learned before, then that is service without learning.

Service learning brings to life what one only learns in the abstract in books and classrooms and shows the unexpected subtlety and complexity in real life situations. An accounting major may find out that illiteracy and corruption make real world accounting a lot more difficult. A psychology major may discover that behaviour is much more multivariate in origin than she ever imagined. A social work student learns to cope with the bureaucracy that is part and parcel of service organisations. In all these cases service learning provides students with knowledge that has external validity, thus preparing them for the true problems that are typical in a work context.

Finally, service learning brings to focus the purpose of education. Education typically leads to improved economic and social status for the educated, but should it not benefit more than just the self? Without the experience that service learning provides, it is natural to focus on oneself, on one's grades, on one's success. Service learning puts us in touch with the people we serve, and with the context in which their problems and their needs evolve. More than getting a good grade, we are bound to ask ourselves whether our service really benefited those we serve, whether the system that rendered them needy and vulnerable can be corrected. This becomes not just education of the head, but education of the heart.

Rita M. Pullium is Vice President of the United Board for Christian Higher Education in Asia - website: www.unitedboard.org

Religious Education in Church and School

In October 2002, a new ecumenical organisation for religious education in church and school, *Christian Education*, was launched in England. It represents the merger of the National Christian Education Council (NCEC) and the Christian Education Movement (CEM) both of which have contributed much to the understanding and practice of religious learning and have developed many creative resources. The NCEC, formerly the National Sunday School Union, came out of the Sunday School movement of the eighteenth century. It was also involved in spreading Sunday Schools around the world with the encouragement of national interdenominational associations and the formation of the World Sunday School Association (which later became the World Council for Christian Education and then merged with the WCC). CEM was founded in 1964 from an amalgamation of the Student Christian Movement in School and the Institute of Christian Education. It has supported the teaching of religions (not exclusively Christianity) in schools. *Christian Education* will provide advice, resources and opportunities for teaching and learning in the school, the church and the family.

website: www.christianeducation.org.uk

The launch event featured two addresses by prominent educators which raise important issues beyond that context about religious education in all churches and schools – *The Future Development of Christian Education* by Professor John Hull of Birmingham University and *Values, Religious Education, Schools and Churches* by John Keast of the UK Qualifications and Curriculum Authority.

The Future Development of Christian Education

John Hull

Summary

In considering the future characteristics of Christian education four points will be mentioned. First, the Christian education of children, young people and adults must be *theological*. Second, it must develop skills of *critical thinking*. Third, it must seek *partnership with other faiths*, and fourth, it must recognise the *ambiguity of faith*.

Introduction

John Keast and I have agreed, like Peter and Paul, to divide the mission of Christian Education into two spheres. Just as Peter was to be Home Secretary and to deal with Jewish affairs, and Paul was to be the Foreign Secretary, dealing with Gentile affairs, so I am to speak about the mission of Christian education within the churches while John Keast is to speak about the role of the new organisation in education and religious education in the school system

(see next article). Thus it is my role, as the former President of the National Christian Education Council, the stream of church education, to offer some reflections about educational work in the context of faith.

Theology

Much of our in-house education has lacked theological depth. The emphasis upon experiential Christian education, which was to be centred upon the actual lives of children, was very significant when it became popular forty years ago. It was protest against the failure of the older Bible-centred approach to grasp the imaginations of young people, and in this sense it was a timely corrective, creating a much more relevant strategy. However, I fear that with the passage of time and with the rapid development of a post-modern culture in Britain, with its emphasis upon the multiplicity of lifestyles, the life-centred approach has too frequently lacked theo-

logical content. Too many of those responsible for the Christian education of children and young people in our churches have lacked theological knowledge and pedagogical skills and have not had the confidence to engage the minds of young people with the specific contents of the faith tradition. This continues to be a common situation in spite of the excellent work which has been done by the Christian education departments of the churches and not least by the professional staff of the former NCEC and their publications.

We need to have richer theological kinds of education in our churches, and this comment is not confined to the work done with children. I have studied the syllabuses of several diocesan training programmes for pastoral workers in the church and find that sometimes there is little, if any, attention given to pastoral theology, and too much attention given to the development of generic skills such as empathy. There are, of course, many exceptions to this and these excellent, more theological models should become more widely prevalent. The broad Christian tradition in which we stand affirms God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and confesses Jesus Christ as the Incarnate Word, whose life, teaching, ministry, death and resurrection have revealed the purposes of God for the cosmos and for our species on this planet. Our tradition is a broad one, incorporating both conservative and more liberal interpretations of this rule of faith, and embracing contributions as diverse as those coming from the Quakers and from Roman Catholics. There is room for the sacramental, the biblical and for the individual guidance of the Spirit but if the energies of our tradition are to be revitalised and communicated, then we must not forget that as teachers our responsibility is to communicate the teachings of the church.

Thinking skills

However, this task cannot be conceived of as a matter of transmission only. Not only would this be implausible as a pedagogical strategy but also it would misrepresent the character of the Christian faith as it is understood and lived today. This is partly because any internal homogeneity, which the Christian faith may have possessed in past ages, has given way to an incredible diversity. The variety of the New Testament documents bears witness to the authenticity of diversity as a mark of Christian faith. It is not a simple matter of reckoning with the

ecclesiastical diversity represented by the divisions between Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant or the variety of traditions within Protestantism, because for most practising Christians today distinctions of this kind are little more than the scars of former wounds, or (to change the metaphor), the fault lines of old upheavals long forgotten. The diversity to which I refer is not institutional but subjective. There is an enormous and increasing variety of subjectivities within the Christian faith. By subjectivities I mean the way that Christian identity is conceived, the way religious experience is mediated and the way that ecclesial affiliation functions. Thus there is a variety, perhaps a continuum, running right across denominational lines and indeed thinning the borders between the religious traditions themselves. We can no longer have dialogue between Christianity and Islam but only between Christians and Muslims.

We could respond to this differentiation by trying to emphasise a common core of belief but speaking as an educator myself I think it is much more useful to respond pedagogically. In other words, we should help learners in the churches to engage with the tradition not by privileging certain normative aspects but by dealing in a direct and forthright manner with the intellectual and emotional content of the Christian phenomenon. Whatever it is, whatever you feel or believe, or take for granted, or deny or reject, let us make it explicit through direct theological education. Let the unconscious faith become conscious. That does not mean that there are no norms of theological orthodoxy – I referred to the Trinity and the Incarnation in my opening remarks – but in our educational work we can no longer assume the authority of the theological core (as was the case in the period before about 1960), nor can we avoid theology (as was often the case during the experiential period), but we must help learners in the church to think, and present them with something worth thinking about.

To what extent are thinking skills, increasingly popular in professional education, being used in church education? Very little, I suspect, and this is partly because too many of our teachers lack the theological knowledge and the personal confidence, to say nothing about the specific skills in the promotion of thinking, to carry on this task. Meanwhile, the hungry sheep look on and are not fed, or more likely, they decide that it is all pretty boring and they go off to play elsewhere.

Inter-faith learning

The third dimension, which we should emphasise, has to do with inter-faith dialogue. This is to recognise the plurality of the religious traditions in Britain, just as the second point I made emphasised the diversity within the church itself. At this point our educational programmes encounter what often look like theological obstacles. I say 'look like' because in my opinion the theological objections which are thought to inhibit inter-faith education are more apparent than real. They include an emphasis upon the exclusive character of Christian salvation and the unique nature of Jesus Christ. These views are apparently supported by elements within the scriptures, and certain key texts such as John 14:6 are quoted again and again. However, the perception of biblical exclusivity is very largely the product of five hundred years of ideological competition between Christianity and other religions, or the lingering after-shadow of the military relations, which preceded and often accompanied the ideological conflict. In other words, we have tended to read the Bible from our point of view, from where we are located in the geography and history of Europe and the economy of the rich world.

The period of competition is now passing away. The crises of the world today are not created by religious differences but by economic differences. Certainly, the latter often conceal themselves behind apparent religious differences but if we wish to be faithful to the spirit of Jesus today, we must not be deceived by the pressure of these vested interests.

To put it bluntly, Christian education must no longer be self-assertive. The function of Christian education is not to promote Christian distinctiveness as such, but to fulfil the historical mission of Christian faith in relation to the destiny of the human species. We shall do this best not through wasting our energies on a pointless competition but through seeking to co-operate with other religions, forming common projects in partnership which will focus upon the actual forces of death in the world today.

The ambiguity of faith

Finally, our Christian education programmes need to reckon with the ambiguity of religion. This has never been perceived more keenly than it is by our contemporaries. Increasingly, thoughtful people are asking whether religion is not part of the problem

rather than part of the answer. We cannot carry on in naïve indifference toward this complexity, nor in all honesty should we offer Christian faith as a haven from the storm and a refuge from life's problems. The Christian calling is not to take refuge but to face difficulties. This is why when Jesus asked Peter if he had any love for him, his next comment was not 'Go on loving me', but 'Follow me' (John 21:15-19). We acknowledge ambiguity by facing it both in the tradition and in ourselves. Better religious education in the various religious traditions is one of the keys in the war against terror. Congregations more richly aware of the emphasis in their traditions upon ideals of peace, compassion and reconciliation will be less vulnerable to the wrong kind of extremism. There is a kind of extremism implicit in the Christian faith: it is the extremism of the one who forsook the divine status which was his by right and emptied himself, taking on humanity and facing death as a slave (Phil 2:1-8). This model of vulnerability, of power through the renunciation of power is the heart of Christian education.

Conclusion

This, then, is how I hope the new organisation will develop in its policy toward the churches. It will be richly theological but not dogmatic nor authoritarian. It will acknowledge diversity both inside and outside Christian faith and will seek through skilful methods to help Christians both young and old to think clearly and passionately about their commitments. It will contribute toward human reconciliation by strengthening Christians in the peaceful resources of faith. In ways such as these the new organisation will fulfil its mission. We launch it today with hearts full of hope, a hope which springs not from our human resources or our limited insight but a hope which is grounded in faith in the Holy Spirit of God, the Lord and Giver of Life, who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified.

© John M Hull 2002 John M Hull is Emeritus Professor of Religious Education in the University of Birmingham. As well as writing extensively on religious education, John Hull has also produced theological reflection out his personal experience of blindness. For more information, visit his website: www.johnmhull.biz

Values, Religious Education, Schools and Churches

John Keast

Religion and religions are an indisputable and permanent feature of human life and history. Religion is a powerful force, being about beliefs, origins, destiny, meaning and purpose. Such fundamental features of religions shape human values, assumptions and behaviour, individually and in society.

Other forms of power are similarly value laden, e.g. politics, education. The school as an institution is value laden – about purposes, relationships, learning. Curriculum is value laden because it is about the nature, and use, of truth and knowledge (question of wisdom). This realisation, among other things, led to the shaping and inclusion of the statement of the Values Aims and Purposes of the School Curriculum found in the English National Curriculum. It also helped articulate the emphasis given to social and moral responsibility in the new citizenship curriculum. Citizenship education is an obvious example of a curriculum subject that is value laden because it is about the exercise of power – personal and community activity, social pressure and responsibility, and political processes.

The concept of 'values' connects these forms of power. Deeming something to be worthy or unworthy is making a value judgement. Value judgements originate in beliefs, ideals, aspirations, and meanings and purposes. The ability to make good value judgements therefore requires knowledge and understanding of belief and beliefs, authority and authorities, experience, claims to meaning and truth – theoretical and practical. Education and religion are therefore inextricably connected by the importance they give to beliefs as sources of values and action.

Such a connection brings into focus the role of religious education within the curriculum of all schools, though today I am thinking of the so-called common school. (I should explain this is a phrase I dislike but it is simpler than listing all the varieties of school we now have. By 'common school' I mean schools that are not foundations of any particular religious tradition, though I believe much of what I say to be applicable in terms of religious education to all schools.)

Learning about religions is an essential requirement for identifying, exploring, and understanding what

people believe and why, what they do and why, what makes people tick. It helps explain people's motives, sense of purpose and destiny, personal behaviour and social activity. Reflecting on, responding to, sharing and evaluating such knowledge and understanding, and coming to own, adopt and apply values thus learnt about, in the school, home and community and in other forms of power found in human life, is what is called learning from religion.

Religious education is a process that links the sources, authorities, traditions and articulations of beliefs and values with responses to questions of identity, community, authority, meaning, values and commitments in life. Citizenship is using the product of that education in engaging in community life, making a difference, taking responsibility for decisions and steering the future.

Like all forms of power religion can be used for good or ill. Features of religions themselves (e.g. beliefs and practices, and their effects) are also value laden, i.e. deemed to be "worthy" or "unworthy". The antidote to the abuse of religion (bad or pathological religion) is not no religion. 'No religion' is an impossible state of affairs because of the fundamental role and power of beliefs and values for all people in all societies. The antidote to bad religion is good religion. Curbing the abuse of religious power is not a quantitative issue of removing religion but a qualitative one of asking what kind of religion should be encouraged.

What constitutes the abuse of religious power - what we mean by good and bad religion - is of course itself a value judgement, partly subjective but partly objective, with tests, e.g. killing in the name of religion. The media are particularly adept at making such subjective judgements. They are very ambiguous and inconsistent in their treatment of religion, describing it sometimes as comforting or wholesome (positive) and at other times as regressive or extreme (negative). Now caricaturing it, then in awe of it (often in terms of inspiring arts and culture); now castigating it (e.g. creationism), then extolling its selflessness (usually centring on some personal or spiritual crisis or tragedy) with some objective information in between times. This may be the media's job in a free society, and controlling them is

certainly not without difficulty and danger. We ignore them at our peril because of their incredible influence, even when it goes against the grain to give them further influence by reacting to their almost insatiable demand for sensation.

Such media portraits are profoundly influential on religious education in schools because they condition the attitudes of parents, teachers and pupils to the subject. These portraits are often a large element of conflicting sets of assumptions about religious education in the classroom, where, in practice, the teacher may be more or less favourably disposed to religion whilst pupils may be, in practice, more or less unfavourably disposed to religion. This tension often occurs in a context of staff scepticism, ambivalence of senior management and parental apathy.

Whatever the judgement about religion or forms of it, however, whether it is felt to be good or bad, sane or silly, docile or dangerous, the study of religion cannot be avoided in a credible education system. Even the French are finding that out! The antidote to bad religious education is not no religious education, but good religious education.

Such a statement presupposes some rationale for religious education in the curriculum of the common school. Religious education is neither to be the servant of faith communities nor their enemy. Religious education, like religion, should always have a prophetic edge, but it must also have an empathetic dimension. Some would call it the promotion of religious literacy. Religious education must not sanitise nor castigate religion. The good purpose of good religious education is to serve our essential humanity - our spirituality and wisdom; truth and goodness; in other words our people, young and old, in school, in the workplace and in the community.

Thus teachers of religious education play a very important role not just in the quality of their teaching and learning but in the way they contribute to promoting values across the curriculum, across the school and its community. As religion can be social capital for communities and society, so religious education can be educational capital for schools and their ethos. Religious education teachers are not just about values – they are valuable!

To do all this, religious education needs both its arms (or legs) - learning about religions and learning from religion – and it is to this end that I strive in my professional life.

Organisations like Christian Education are therefore incredibly important. They bridge the spaces between school and home and community. Thus Christian Education helps the distinctive emphases of religious education in each sphere to be clear but within a concept of religious education as a whole, where the complementarity of the different spheres is able to be coherent. Because this coherence is itself set in a positive view of human beings, it respects the diversity of views and the importance of the quest to articulate ultimate truth.

Christian Education is about promoting an approach to Christian education that fulfils and builds human personality and society, not stunts and destroys it. It does so in church and school through its two arms (or legs) of activity. These aims are not incompatible. Indeed, they can be mutually supportive and lead to raising standards of religious education at home, community and school.

Public religious education is owned by a coalition (solidarity I think John Hull might call it) of faith communities (with their historic traditions and insights, and their contemporary practices and commitments), community representatives of the people and society at large, and professionals with their expertise and experience. Such a coalition exists across a spectrum of local and national community (and increasingly European and global community). Religious education in schools does not just serve local interests but national and global ones too. Local religious education needs a national face and national support; national religious education needs local articulation and involvement. All this is quite proper, for religious education is a joint enterprise, of family, community, society and school, where distinctive, valid but complementary forms of provision take place, as I hope our two addresses have shown.

John Keast is a staff member of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority of the UK - a 'guardian of standards in education and training' in schools, colleges and at work - website: www.qca.org.uk

Ivan Illich 1926-2002

Ivan Illich is best known to educators for his book *Deschooling Society* (1973) and subsequent writing in this area. However, Ivan Illich can more generally be considered one of the most radical political and social thinkers in the second half of the twentieth century.

To give a flavour of his writing to those unfamiliar with it, this is an extract from *Deschooling Society*:

Many students, especially those who are poor, intuitively know what the schools do for them. They school them to confuse process and substance. Once these become blurred, a new logic is assumed: the more treatment there is, the better are the results; or, escalation leads to success. The pupil is thereby "schooled" to confuse teaching with learning, grade advancement with education, a diploma with competence, and fluency with the ability to say something new. His imagination is "schooled" to accept service in place of value. Medical treatment is mistaken for health care, social work for the improvement of community life, police protection for safety, military poise for national security, the rat race for productive work. Health, learning, dignity, independence, and creative endeavour are defined as little more than the performance of the institutions which claim to serve these ends, and their improvement is made to depend on allocating more resources to the management of hospitals, schools, and other agencies in question.

Illich questioned the schooling approach to learning and is not simply iconoclastic towards schools. The title of *Deschooling Society* in French - *Une société sans école* - rather misses the point as many have done. "Schooling" is found throughout society in all its institutions. As an alternative, Illich advocated the development of learning webs.

Ivan Illich was born in Vienna in 1926 of a Russian Jewish background. He studied theology, philoso-

phy and history in Rome and Salzburg. Illich served as a Roman Catholic priest in New York and from 1956 to 1960 he served as vice-rector to the Catholic university of Puerto Rico, where he organised an intensive training centre for American priests in Latin American culture. Illich was co-founder of the widely known Center for Intercultural Documentation (CIDOC) in Cuernavaca, Mexico. Ivan Illich was eventually ordered by the Vatican to leave CIDOC, but he managed to hold out - eventually resigning all offices and church salaries, and then leaving the priesthood in 1969. The Centre became known for explorations of the many the themes that have been identified with Illich. In later years, Illich divided his time between Mexico, the United States, and Germany. He taught at the University of Bremen and was a Visiting Professor of Philosophy and of Science, Technology, and Society at Penn State.

Illich's writing gives an indication of the breadth of his concerns in addition to education, for example:

Disabling professions (1976); *Energy and equity* (1974); *Limits to medicine : medical nemesis: the expropriation of health* (1974); *Tools for conviviality* (1975) [a critique of technological economic development]; *Toward a history of needs* (1978).

In the end Illich, rather like Paulo Freire, was ill-served by his supporters who tended to regard his work as an object of intellectual enquiry rather than an agenda for actual radical change. The churches and the ecumenical movement are still in need of deschooling if we are to be true to the radical demands of the gospel.

Education and Ecumenical Formation 2002 Report

Ecumenical Formation remains a necessity

In a world where difference is seen as a danger rather than enrichment and a Church, which proclaims its unity but practices the perpetuation of division, ecumenical formation which transforms attitudes, relationships and actions remains a necessity.

The re-assertion of denominational identity referred to in previous annual reports continues to undermine ecumenical initiatives. The viability of some ecumenical educational institutions is being threatened by the establishment of denominational counterparts with the consequent competition for resources and students. Sometimes the establishment of these new denominational educational institutions and courses is funded by churches, which are prominent in the ecumenical movement.

Educational philosophies and practices, which control rather than liberate increase in their domination of education systems. There is a preoccupation with education, which produces compliant and economically productive individuals for society and is measured by quantifiable outcomes. This trend is also seen in those churches for which educational processes are designed only to produce people in their own image.

We have tried to promote, encourage and support learning activities, which are ecumenical. Our involvement has always carried the price tag of "ecumenical" and of learning, which is open and participatory. We are not ashamed of using our resources as leverage towards those ends. This has occasionally been to the disappointment of WCC member churches and related organisations that have hoped for our support in promoting denominational programmes and activities.

The Year 2002

This was a difficult year for the whole WCC and its staff. Financial problems meant those immediate and long term plans had to be continually adjusted

throughout the year. Individual staff faced uncertainty about their own future. Until the end of the year it was not clear which programmatic activities would be able to be continued into the future. In spite of this discouraging context, it is possible to report real achievement in the area of education and ecumenical formation.

Integration

The integration of our activities relating to education and ecumenical formation is necessary because we are dealing with whole human beings in community. People do not come as minds or spirits and are never a-contextual. Integration is also desirable because our partners do not always operate with the same divisions of responsibility as us.

We have worked to become more than a collection of "desks" or activities grouped together for administrative convenience. This has meant making creative links between the different aspects of our work and on drawing on each other's strengths. We have collaborated in planning and evaluating all our activities. This has enabled everyone to contribute and learn from all that has been done.

For further integration, we also work closely with the Bossey Ecumenical Institute, other WCC staff teams and with corresponding colleagues in Regional Ecumenical Organisations, National Councils of Churches and other networks. Some of our activities are intentionally designed to bring people together from across our different networks.

The most significant example of the integration of our work in 2002 was the 'Journey of Hope Continued' conference held in Johannesburg in September with around 100 participants. It brought together African educators, resource producers, ecumenical bodies and churches to see how theological education and ecumenical formation can be renewed in the continent for the mission of the church and the benefit of society. The purpose was "to cultivate a spirit of working together and unity in theological education and ecumenical formation, for

the renewal of the church and Christianity, and to produce theologies, ethics and spiritualities that are life-affirming and life-giving in Africa". The conference affirmed appropriate ways of doing theology and education in the African context, especially in the face of poverty and HIV/AIDS. It also related to the concerns of the Decade to Overcome Violence. The conference participants recognised the need to direct their conclusions and commitments to themselves and so produced a very specific Plan of Action. The planning and preparation of this conference drew on the expertise and resources of the whole Education and Ecumenical Formation team with the other colleagues involved on the Focus on Africa and the Africa Desk of Regional Resources and Ecumenical Sharing team.

Activities

For the sake of convenience, we will record activities under three broad headings. This report is not the place for a full description and reflection on each individual activity. What follows is representative and indicative.

Ecumenical Learning

- ∅ The WCC Round Table set up a Working Group on the Ecumenical Formation of Staff of Partners in Solidarity. Work is also being done on the ecumenical formation of WCC staff.
- ∅ "Creative Ecumenical Education" was published in the WCC Risk Book series.
- ∅ OIKOSNET is the primary global network for laity centres, academies and movements of social concern. Support of various kinds was given directly and through OIKOSNET to the constituent regional networks - Association of Christian Lay Centres in Africa (ACLCA), Association of Christian Institutes in Asia (ACISCA), Ecumenical Association of Academies and Laity Centres in Europe (EAALCE), Collaboration for Ecumenical Planning and Action in the Caribbean and South America (CEPACASA), Southern Cone Network of Centres (CONOSUR), Ecumenical Christian Association of Retreat and Renewal Centres and Leaders in North America (NARDA), Middle East Association of Training and Retreat Centres (MEATRC).
- ∅ One of the most significant instruments of ecumenical learning in the ecumenical movement has been the Courses on Lay Leadership Training (CCLT). These are courses, which demand a significant time commit-

ment as they include exposure visits and a reflection/learning programme. A Global CLLT was held in the Middle East in June with the theme "To be Instruments of Peace". Participants spend time visiting communities in Lebanon, Syria, Upper and Lower Egypt before coming together in Cyprus. 21 nations were represented and participants will be facilitating CLLTs in their own regions in 2003.

- ∅ Work is progressing on the Resource Book on Holistic Education to be published by the Comenius Institute, Germany in 2003.
- ∅ Papers on ecumenical learning were made available on Espace.net
- ∅ Involvement continued on inter-religious education through participation in consultations of religious educators in Europe and North America.
- ∅ Two issues of EEF-NET were published.

Ecumenical Theological Education (ETE)

- ∅ ETE works in partnership with regional ecumenical associations of theological schools and seminaries. The strategy of appointing regional consultants for ETE was completed with the appointment of a full time consultant for Central and Eastern Europe – Fr Vladimir Fedorov of the Russian Orthodox Church..
- ∅ The ETE Working Group met in Geneva. The experience of the consultants and members enabled a discussion on the status of ecumenical theological education globally. The Working Group considered the relevance of the Decade to Overcome Violence for theological education. Grants, principally for faculty development, library development and association meetings were approved.
- ∅ One of the emphases of ETE is the participation of women in theological education. One of the means of doing this is the Sarah Chakko Theological Endowment Fund. Another instrument is the Feminist D Ministry course based in San Francisco.
- ∅ The ETE journal, Ministerial Formation, was published four times in the year to enable the sharing of the theory, experience and practice of ecumenical theological education.

Scholarships

- ∅ The Scholarships Working Group meet twice a year in Geneva to approve awards and to discuss policy. 93 awards were made – 75 for individual study and 18 for group training.

- ∅ There has been regular communication with National Correspondents to ensure that we only receive applications that reflect the needs of the churches and related organisations rather than the wishes of individuals. This is reinforced in the information on the WCC website. Changes have been made in the administration to ensure that the programme functions efficiently. This has resulted in a reduction in staffing level.
- ∅ A regional consultation on Scholarships was held for Latin America in conjunction with CLAI in Quito. The meeting helped identify issues specific to the region.
- ∅ Visits were paid to receiving institutions in the Cameroon following concerns expressed by scholarship holders. A visit was also made to Mindolo Ecumenical Foundation, Zambia and a new relationship has been established with this longstanding partner.
- ∅ The level of funding for theology continues to give concern – most funding agencies regard this as being outside their development mandate and churches seem unwilling to share their resources.

Almost as much work goes on between the specific events as in them. Although we are pleased to be able to report on the workshops, consultations and meetings, these do not represent all we do. Within our programme areas we are often called on by email, phone call and letter or perhaps by a visitor to Geneva to accompany those reflecting on their work, seeking different approaches or seeking human and financial resources. We are called on by colleagues to help them think through the educational process of programmes or learning resources. Visitors to the Ecumenical Centre often request inputs on education and ecumenical formation in their programme. This is an opportunity not only to describe our work but also to have some interaction with these representatives of the constituency. We are also sometimes called upon to represent WCC at events or to be a member of a team visiting a member church or a partner organisation.

The Decade to Overcome Violence involves all aspects of the work of the WCC. Seminaries, theological schools, laity centres and church-related schools have been encouraged to include peace building in their curriculum. A study guide for use in congregations – “Why Violence? Why not Peace?” was prepared in collaboration with WCC Communications.

Staffing

Our most important resource is people. We are grateful for each other and have been to finding the most fulfilling and productive ways of using the knowledge, skills, abilities and wisdom which lies amongst us. The good functioning of the team and the effective delivery of our activities depends on our administrative efficiency. Although colleagues involved in administration are not as publicly high profile as programme staff they provide the structural strength of the team.

In 2002, we welcomed Fr Vladimir Fedorov as Consultant for ETE for Central and Eastern Europe, based in St Petersburg.

We said farewell to the following colleagues in 2002:

Diana Chabloz A Ecumenical Learning
Magali Roussel A ETE
Gert Ruppell P Ecumenical Learning
Pam Schopfer A Scholarships
Elis Widen I ETE

The following colleagues were informed that they would be leaving in 2003:

Evelyn Appiah P Laity/OIKSNET
Valerie Medri A Laity/OIKOSNET

The following colleagues transferred to the new Mission and Ecumenical Formation team:

Gérald Arci A Scholarships and Team Finance
Anna Eisenhoffer A Scholarships and Health
Françoise Faure A ETE
Judith Kocher A Ecumenical Learning and Commission
Nyambura Njoroge P ETE
Simon Oxley P Ecumenical Learning
Brigitte Schneider A Scholarships
Tara Tautari P Scholarship and Ecumenical Learning

José Duque C ETE Latin America/Caribbean – Costa Rica
Vladimir Fedorov C ETE Central and Eastern Europe - Russia
Wati Longchar C ETE Asia/Pacific – India

[A = Administrative Assistant; C = Consultant;
I = Intern; P = Programme Executive]

Looking to the Future

Decisions taken at the end of the year to enable the WCC to operate effectively within a much reduced overall budget led to significant changes throughout the organisation. Two particular decisions affected our work – (a) to merge the Education and Ecumenical Formation team with the Mission and Evangelism team to form a new Mission and Ecumenical Formation team; (b) to discontinue the administration and distribution of funding for the activities and regional associations of OIKOSNET. The latter implied the departure of two colleagues, as mentioned above.

It is important, though, to recognise what has not changed. Our basic profile and mandate continues in promoting, encouraging and supporting ecumenical formation through the ETE, Scholarships and ecumenical learning activities. In ending the administrative/funding relationship with OIKOSNET, we do not lose the necessity of maintaining creative relationship with a significant set of partners and with the effective practice of CLLTs in ecumenical formation. The WCC Commission on Education and Ecumenical Formation will continue to be a place whether our thinking about and practice of ecumenical formation can be developed and earthed in the experience of its members.

As well as learning to live within a new organisational structure, the challenge that we will continue to face is how to work creatively and effectively within very constricted budgets. For instance, we will have to use the methodology of ad hoc consultations more sparingly and look to using other opportunities of meeting, interaction and communication.

To end where this report began, ecumenical formation is needed as much as ever if the ecumenical movement is to be a movement and not merely a set of functional and institutional relationships. Speaking about the emerging WCC in 1938, the ecumenical pioneer J H Oldham said that he was not interested in the Council as such but in what it could do to equip the churches for their struggle to be the church in the modern world. Looking to the future, we must be more concerned about what we can do together to equip the churches to be the church than with what particular structure the WCC from time to time adopts.

RESOURCES

Religious Education in Context

Religious Education in Context: Of Plurality and Pluralism by Hope S Antone

All too often both theology and education are dominated by Western concepts. It is good to be able to welcome a book, which comes out of and is for the Asian context. Readers in other parts of the world will benefit, too, from engaging with Hope Antone's research and reflection.

The Asian context is one of plurality, a plurality of pluralities. For the author, *plurality* represents the reality of the diversity, *pluralism* is the active engagement with it. She sees education in religion, therefore, as having a double task: "equipping learners in their own faith traditions and enabling them to be open to others".

There is a need to ground theology and education in Asian contexts – the cultural and religious contexts as well as the socio-economic and political. Currently, Christian education often relies on resource materials from the outside and an educational model brought by the missionaries. We could add that even in the places from which these materials and models come, they may be representative of a different world and age. Christian education resources often relate to the small, tidy world of a Christian sub-culture rather than to the wide, messy and diverse world which learners inhabit most of the time. They equally often use schooling models of learning, which many of us would now question from both a theological and an educational perspective. This is why those of us from the north need to listen to voices from the south like that of the author.

The book traces the development of Christian education from Jewish roots through to ecumenical education and multicultural religious education. It

would also have been interesting to have set alongside that an account of indigenous educational practices in Asia and the development of religious education in the other faiths. Although some use the terms Christian education and religious education interchangeably, it is the wider concept we should relate to. Religious education in Asia is essential because religious plurality has been the cause of conflicts and problems in the region. Three factors are identified – (1) ignorance of other religions which feeds attitudes of intolerance and superiority; (2) seeing people of other faiths only as potential converts; (3) the prevalence of fundamentalism across all faiths.

Not all Christian approaches to plurality are supportive of religious education. The author draws attention to five main lines of approach: (1) *exclusivist* where Christianity alone is true; (2) *developmentalist* where all religions are preparations for accepting Christ; (3) *transcendentalist* where God's grace is for all even if they do not acknowledge Christ; (4) *dialogical* where in taking our own faith community seriously we enter into dialogue with others; (5) *relativistic* where beneath religious particularities can be found a common theocentric core. The Asian churches have inherited from the teaching of missionaries' strong fears about syncretism and relativism. For all of us, not just in Asia, there needs to be renewal of our theology of mission in relation to plurality. The author suggests that, as well as the context, we need an inclusive understanding of mission focussed on the salvation of the world (rather than individuals within it) which sees minority status as positive and places an emphasis on the spiritual.

The author suggests that in Christianity, a context gives rise to a particular theology which in turn shapes religious education. Whilst this is not untrue, the reality is probably more complex. It could equally be argued that learning from and in a particular context produces new or changed theological thinking. This learning is as much about action and reflection as it is about traditional study. Should we see religious education not just as engagement with what already is in or across religious traditions but also creating the new from the context and the traditions?

If we do see it in this way, we will have to change traditional thinking about religious education as the

transmission of truth and its correct interpretation. More than that, we will have to move away from the parochialism which limits the vision even of our own tradition and from a process of affirming our own identity by denying identity to others.

The author identifies Biblical support for religious pluralism. There is specific content. There is also the experience of reading the Bible in different ways – traditional Western readings of texts and contextual readings of texts, for instance from other cultural or feminist perspectives.

From the analysis, we come to the 'big idea' of the book – the metaphor of meal table sharing. Those who have not enjoyed the open, generous and joyful hospitality of the meal table in Asia may not fully appreciate the power of this image. In situations of real plurality, dialogue is insufficient because the conversation, as round the table, includes many different participants. The meal table symbolises inclusive community where the hospitality is offered to all. As well as the warm and open hospitality, the author suggests that the meal table is a place of: sharing and communion; reconciliation and peace-making; celebration and hope. It is also the place where you can be yourself. The author compares this with Biblical and Christian meal table practices.

Just as the meal table is inviting because it offers sustenance and conviviality, religious education is inviting because it addresses "the most human need for understanding, reconciliation, healing and peace". Religious education, like the meal table, should build community and offer nourishment. Its invitational quality should not just be in the form of the words but in the very attractiveness of the experience offered. The preparation should be done by religious educators collaborating across their different faiths. The sharing is of stories, individual and communal.

Like any metaphor, the meal table has its limitations. The author recognises some of the objections, which could be made. How can the powerless sit down with the powerful? How do we include those who would not want to be included e.g. fundamentalists? How do we include those who have been made the enemy because of their religious or ethnic difference or those who have been dehumanised

because of their status or gender? These are difficulties of engagement whichever metaphor for religious education we might choose to use.

The author concludes by reflecting on what might help us move towards new theories of religious education. We have not just to be able to describe the context but to understand it. This includes the aspirations of people as well the present reality. We have to be clear why we want religious education. For the author, this would have to include the vision of fullness of life for all. We have to work collaboratively, drawing in insight from other faiths and other disciplines. Religious education should be holistic, not just one subject area among others. We should discover or create new practices. We need to practice compassion, a value shared by many faiths, which enables companionship, communion and community.

Whether or not we work in Asia, *Religious Education in Context* is a valuable resource for our own contextual practice of religious education.

Published, 2003, jointly by New Day Publishers, Philippines and Christian Conference of Asia, Hong Kong. email: newdayorders@edsamail.com.ph

TEE On-line Resource for Africa

One of the outcomes of the "Journey of Hope Continued" conference on theological education and ecumenical formation in Africa (see EEF-NET no 11) held in September 2002 is a new website for Theological Education by Extension (TEE). The website contains information about TEE courses in Africa, resources and tools for learning and training and links, including to the global TEENET.

website: www.teeafrica.co.za

On-line Faith Formation

There is an increasing number of initiatives being taken by the churches in offering learning opportunities through the internet. The complexities of life in many parts of the world mean that it is difficult for people to participate in traditional courses, even when resources exist to offer them. In spite of fears often expressed about the 'dumbing-down' of faith and of cultural life in general, there are many people who want to learn in the belief and practice of their faith. They need appropriate opportunity – content, style and timing. One of the most frequent objections to internet based education is the potential absence of a learning community. In a previous issue of EEF-NET (No 11), we described the opportunities for developing on-line community. Visit www.onlineleaders.org if you haven't already done so.

One such initiative is the Virtual Learning Community for Faith Formation (VLCFF), sponsored by the Institute for Pastoral Initiatives of the University of Dayton (Roman Catholic). The VLCFF grew out of a pilot project begun in 1997. It enables many dioceses to be partners in the same resource with possibilities being explored of extending this beyond the US to dioceses in Asia. A visit to the VLCFF website enables you to learn more about the courses on offer and, more importantly, sample the approach taken to the learning process with its possibilities for interaction. Those interested in developing on-line learning can learn much from the description of their experience.

They have found it most effective to limit the duration of courses to five-six weeks and the number of participants to 12. Human rather than technological resources limit how many presentations of courses will be happening at any one time. Start dates can vary and participants do not have all to be on-line at the same time. The most popular times for logging on are between 4 and 6 am and 9.30 pm to 2 am.

To give one quote from the website: Harry Dudley, associate executive director for faith formation for the Archdiocese of Indianapolis says "People share

more in this format than when they are sitting in front of you in a classroom. They share at a deeper level and build a community of learners. You can't be an anonymous learner. Participants can get to know one another and engage one another." "We're always thinking of how to get young adults involved, and this format is one they are very familiar with," he adds "It can be a way of evangelising and educating young adults in religious education."

website: www.udayton.edu/~vlc

Youth Ecumenical Formation Video

Facing the Future - Ecumenical Youth Encounter, WCC Video

Addressing the theme "Facing the Future", more than 30 young people from churches and student Christian movements (SCMs) in many nations gather in Cuba for a 3-week leadership programme co-sponsored by the World Council of Churches and the World Student Christian Federation. Through an intensive series of encounters, participants come to see themselves and their cultures from new perspectives. Returning home, they embark on local ministry projects with a sense of belonging to one, worldwide Christian movement.

This video follows the diverse youth leaders as they engage in Bible study, worship, dance and song, role-playing exercises and acts of fellowship, as well as frank exchanges on such topics as economic globalisation, relations between women and men, challenges presented by HIV/AIDS, and other issues concerning faith and practice. Their experience provides a wealth of possibilities for further discussion. The philosophy behind this multicultural interaction is summed up by one youth:

"Tell me about it, and I'll forget.

Show me, and I'll remember.

Involve me, and I'll understand."

website: www.ecumenicalyouth.org



News from WCC

Education and Ecumenical Formation staff

People

Tara Tautari gave birth to her daughter Puspa in December and returned to work in April following her maternity leave.

Valerie Medri moved within the Ecumenical Centre to work for Ecumenical News International in February. Valerie was a valued member of the former EEF team in supporting the work on laity. She also helped to produce EEF-NET.

Evelyn Appiah will be remaining working with us for longer than we first thought. Although her permanent contract will end in May, she will remain as a consultant until the end of 2003 to accompany the evaluation process of OIKOSNET.

The new Mission and Ecumenical Formation (MEF) Team

The new MEF team came into existence in January. The Team Coordinator is Carlos Ham who carries responsibility for Evangelism. The team has two distinct Core Programmes – one representing EEF and the other the work of the former Mission & Evangelism team. This means that EEF staff still continue to work together to promoting ecumenical formation through our various activities. Reduced staffing will mean that we have to change some of our ways of working but we still retain the same basic mandate for our work.

Recent Activities

Evelyn Appiah has been involved in working through changes in the funding of OIKOSNET and its regional associations whereby financial support will be channelled directly rather than via the WCC.

Discussions have been taking place with other colleagues in the WCC about how we accompany the participants in the “Journey of Hope Continued Conference” held in Johannesburg last year in fulfilling the Action Plan they made for theological education and ecumenical formation in Africa.

In our work on inter-religious education, Simon Oxley contributed to an NGO consultation on Interfaith, Spiritual and Values Education held in Geneva in February.

The work on producing the Resource Book on Holistic Education continues in spite of illness meaning the cancellation of an editorial group meeting.

Nyambura Njoroge attended a meeting with the staff of the Christian Conference for Asia in Hong Kong in March in relation to the joint WCC-CCA appointment of the ETE Consultant for the Asia/Pacific region. This affirmed the collaboration and the work being done by Wati Longchar.

A staff team, including Simon Oxley, paid a two-week visit to the China Christian Council, a member church of WCC, in March. The church in China is experiencing an amazing rate of growth, which offers a challenge to theological educators for the growth in faith of large numbers of new believers and the development of training for pastors and lay workers. It began in Shanghai and ended in Beijing, taking in Hangzhou, Wuxi and Nanjing. Visits were paid to urban and rural churches, metropolitan and regional Christian Councils, social projects, the Amity Foundation and its printing press and to theological education institutions. The latter were East China Theological Seminary, Zhejiang Theological Seminary, Jiangsu Bible School, Nanjing Union Theological Seminary and YanJing Theological Seminary. Conversations relating to theological education also took place with church leaders and pastors.

The annual meeting of the Ecumenical Theological Education Working Group of the WCC Commission on EEF took place in April in Geneva. The Working Group brings together representatives of theological education from around the world together with the three regional consultants and Geneva based staff. The regional reports received represent both the vitality of and the problems faced by theological educators. Particular attention was given to the new work being undertaken by Fr Vladimir Fedorov as Consultant for Central and Eastern Europe.

Bringing together the experience of the regions helps develop our strategy for ETE and the prioritising of project funding.

It will not be possible to hold a full meeting of the Commission on Education and Ecumenical Formation this year. However, a Core Group of the Commission will be meeting in June to take forward the reflection on education and ecumenical formation and to review the reports and plans of the staff.

News from the Networks

RE-Network

RE-Network came into being as one of the ecumenical responses to the new possibilities for Religious Education in Eastern Europe. It continues to organise seminars and workshops such as these:

Aims and Methods in Sunday Schools and RE Classes which will take place in Moldova 20-26 September 2003. It is designed for Sunday School teachers and teachers of religion in church and state schools.

An International Congress for the Pedagogy of Religion is being held in Sofia, Bulgaria, 5-11 October 2003. This will bring together participants from Eastern and Western Europe. The Congress will have two interacting streams of reflection – one relating to the practice of religious education, the other to its conceptual basis.

For further information about these events and the work of RE-Network, they can be contacted by email: renetwork@bluewin.ch

Ecu-Learn

Ecu-Learn was established in 2002 as a Consultancy for Ecumenical Formation. The committee overseeing this project consists of representatives of its German funding agencies and other partners - Theological Education, EMW, Hamburg; Diakonische Werk, Stuttgart; Comenius Institute, Münster; the World Council of Churches.

The Consultancy plans to:

- Deal with ecumenical awareness building among staff of Regional Ecumenical Organisations as well as in their programmes with local partners.
- Support methodological accompaniment of ecumenical awareness building programs of church organisations.

Offer:

- Introductions into the “why” and “what for” of ecumenical relations and co-operation
- Training programmes in ecumenical / inter-cultural communication.

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- Introduction into the ecumenical history the ecumenical structures and into central programmes of the WCC and their relevance for the work of the staff of ecumenical organisations.
- The production of a Reader for and documentation of the respective courses.
- Develop, in cooperation with local and regional organisers, modules for ecumenical leadership and staff development as well as respective learning material.
- Publish books and material reflecting ecumenical learning and its relation to other forms of education, as well as training resources.

Ecu-Learn aims to help Christians and their churches grow together as an ecumenical community of learning and understanding and to promote growing understanding among the various religious communities, supporting better understanding and common action for the well being of all.

For further information about Ecu-Learn, they can be contacted by email: ecu.learn@comenius.de



OIKOSNET

A Global Ecumenical Network of Christian Laity Centres, Academies and Movements for Social Concern working for an inclusive, just, participatory and sustainable community and society. website: <http://www.eaalce.de/extranet/oikosnet>

ACLCA :	Association of Christian Lay Centres in Africa
ACISCA :	Association of Christian Institutes for Social Concern in Asia
CEPACASA :	Collaboration for Ecumenical Planning and Action in the Caribbean and South America
CONOSUR :	Southern Cone Network of Centres
EAALCE :	Ecumenical Association of Academies and Laity Centres in Europe
MEATRC :	Middle East Association of Training and Retreat Centres
NARDA :	An Ecumenical Christian Association of Retreat and Renewal Centres and Leaders in North America

Calendar of Events

2003

April/May	MEATRC sub-regional training programme, Palestine/Jordan Topic: Effective Recruiting of Volunteers
May	MEATRC sub-regional training programme, Egypt. Topic: Effective Recruiting of Volunteers
2-5 May	NARDA Annual Gathering, Tatamagouche Centre, Nova Scotia, Canada
12-14 May	EAALCE German Association of Academies meeting in Tutzing, Germany
28 May-2 June	Ecumenical Kirchentag, Berlin, Germany
16-19 June	MEATRC Executive Committee meeting, Cyprus
June/July	MEATRC sub-regional training programme, Lebanon/Syria Topic: Successful Management between Theory and Practice
21 July-2 August	CONOSUR regional CLLT, theme: Overcoming violence, Buenos Aires, Argentina
1-4 August	CEPACASA Annual Gathering, Cuba
13-15 September	EAALCE Executive Committee meeting and
15-21 September	EAALCE Annual Conference, Boldern Haus, Switzerland
August/September	ACISCA CLLT, Sri Lanka
14-19 October	CONOSUR 10 TH Annual Meeting, theme: Construction of Peace, daily life and globalisation, Montevideo, Uruguay
3-6 November	MEATRC Regional Meeting and General Assembly and
5-7 November	MEATRC Executive Committee Meeting, Egypt
7-10 November	OIKOSNET meeting, Egypt

2004

22-29 May	ACLCA 12 th Assembly, theme: "Called to be one in Christ" Limuru Conference Centre, Kenya Reconciliation in the America – Joint event of CEPACASA, CONOSUR and NARDA
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2005

OIKOSNET CONVENTION

➡ **O I K O S N E T**

OBITUARY

Rev. Rose Akua Ampofo, 55 years from Ghana, Women and Gender Desk, Mission 21, Basel and her predecessor Ms. Johanna Eggimann, 63 years from Switzerland, were killed in a car accident on 13th March, 2003 during a visit to Peru. 3 Peruvians accompanying them also perished. May their souls rest in peace!



Rose was former director of Presbyterian Women's Centre, Abokobi from 1992-2002.

We remember their families, organisations in Peru, Mission 21, Basle, and Presbyterian Church in Ghana and ACLCA during this difficult time.

AFRICA

New dates for ACLCA Assembly

The ACLCA 12th Assembly, which was to be held from 13-20 September 2003, has been postponed to 22-29 May 2004. The theme and venue remain unchanged.

Presbyterian Women's Centre, Abokobi, Ghana

We congratulate Rev. Felicia Adu-Kumi, the new director of the centre, and wish her the very best in this ministry.

ASIA

ACISCA appoints a new treasurer

Rev. Kenichi Otsu, former General Secretary of National Council of Churches, Japan and the new

Director of Nippon Christian Academy, Today is now ACISCA's treasurer. He worked previously with the Christian Conference of Asia and Kansai Seminar House. We wish him all the best in his new tasks locally and regionally.

EUROPE

Evangelische Akademie Loccum, Germany

Global Solar Industry – a Chance for Africa?

International Conference 26-28 May 2003

The International Energy Agency (IAE) forecasts an increase of 57% in the demand for energy over the next twenty years to be met largely by combustion of fossil fuels. In contrast, usable solar radiation on some 10% of North Africa's deserts would alone suffice to meet the world's entire demand for energy. The international meeting is intended to iden-

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tify the economic, environmental and socio-political opportunities gained by Africa if energy policy is strategically reoriented towards the use of renewable sources of energy.

Conference languages: German and English.

website <http://www.loccum.de/english/conferences.html>

Evangelische Akademie, Hofgeismar, Germany

Armenia – Land of Noah's Heirs

1-3 May 2003

Armenia has been an independent state since 1991. The extended history of the oldest Christian people at the foot of mount Ararat was almost forgotten by the West. The different phases of the Armenian experience since the acceptance of Christian faith in the year 301 are characterised by troubles, persecutions and evictions. The Ottoman Empire, as well as the young Turkish national state, together with the allied German Empire has written one of the darkest chapters of genocide through the abominable massacres. The conference will present a programme including the impressive cultural, theological and ecclesiastical tradition of the Armenian people, as well as the actual situation of the country and the worldwide Armenian Diaspora. In September 2003, the Academy will provide a study trip to Armenia.

email: Haupt.akademie.hofgeismar@ekkw.de

How to Continue, Ecumene?

There is unrest in the World Council: Bishop Margot Kässemann takes leave from the Central Committee. The worshipping life within the council will be reduced due to respect towards Orthodox members. The financial development is in danger. Programmes like the Decade to Overcome Violence

don't reach groups and parishes as impulses anymore. Is the World Council in Geneva not only a victim of a crisis in the world economy, but also hit by a tremendously increasing meaninglessness? Do the regional ecumenical cooperations and councils still need the head office? Which role do the German churches play in the ongoing arguments? Together with representatives of the World Council in Geneva the conference wants to clarify the current questions and the new developments.

email: Haupt.akademie.hofgeismar@ekkw.de

NORTHAMERICA

NARDA

Dr. Scott Haasarud, Narda's Chairperson has a new e-mail address:

Shaasarud@cox.net

NARDA Annual Gathering:

Overcoming Violence – Promoting Peace and Reconciliation in our Communities

Tatamagouche Centre, Nova Scotia, Canada - 2-5 May 2003

This gathering will feature:

1. Workshops and presentations from education and retreat centres throughout North America and the world which are involved in peace and reconciliation work, the promotion of a culture of peace, violence reduction, and international solidarity.
2. Theological reflection on the promotion of peace.
3. Presentations on peace and reconciliation by guests from the International Centre in Bethlehem, the Corrymeela Community and Centre in Northern Ireland, and the UNESCO Guatemala Culture of Peace Project.
4. Field trips to local programmes in Eastern Nova Scotia dealing with violence, peace and reconciliation – men's programmes, poverty, aboriginal treaty rights, globalisation, etc.

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5. Networking and socialising with North American colleagues and international guests associated with education and retreat centres.

Prophetic Servanthood: A Challenge to Centres

***Jim Palm, Retired General Secretary,
NARDA***

Some weeks ago, I was visiting with a friend who currently is volunteering on a centre staff. It was his first time to get acquainted with the “inner workings” of a centre. In the course of our conversation, he said that he felt a centre could be a great training ground for servant ministry. He pointed out that a centre is about the business of serving people – making them feel welcome, providing for their meals, making their beds, keeping their rooms clean, seeing to it that they have meeting places conducive for their gathering, etc. etc. He suggested that perhaps centres could provide a learning module for seminary students on “Servant Ministry”.

Somehow that thought – and its possibilities – caught my imagination and I have been playing with it ever since. More recently, however, another dimension has been added to this thought, particularly as I have been re-reading the “Suffering Servant” passages in Isaiah. The Gospel writers and perhaps Jesus himself felt that he was as the fulfilment of this prophetic vision. Indeed, when Jesus entered the Temple and drove out moneychangers he quoted directly from Isaiah 56:7: “Is it not written that my house shall be called a house of prayer from all the nations?” (Mk 11:17)

My tendency had been to place the emphasis of the Gospel passage on the driving out of the moneychangers. Curiously, however the focus of the Isaiah passage seems to be on welcoming “foreigners” and their families and making them “joyful in my house of prayer”. In other words, the passage seems to have much more to do with the fact that the Temple “shall be a house of prayer for ALL peoples” than it does with buying and selling. Perhaps that was the root cause of Jesus’ anger –

the Temple no longer was a house of prayer for ALL peoples. It had become exclusive and nationalistic – and corrupt. Greed had replaced prayer, exclusivity had replaced inclusiveness.

Jesus, the “Suffering Servant” addressed that issue in a dramatic way, indeed a prophetic way. In no uncertain terms he challenged what was taking place. Maybe those actions have to be factored in as well when we think of “servant ministry”.

And maybe the role of centres isn’t just to be passive servants (or slaves!) of all but to exercise “prophetic servanthood” in challenging some to the prevailing assumptions and actions of our society and religious institutions.

Pendle Hill – A Quaker Center for Study and contemplation

***338 Plush Mill Road, Wallingford,
PA 19086, USA.***

How might a term at Pendle Hill enrich your life?

At Pendle Hill, education is envisioned as the transforming of people and society. Our programs offer the resources and time for integrated spiritual, intellectual and personal learning. Pendle Hill was founded in 1930 by members of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) and is open to people of all faiths. Our educational philosophy is rooted in four social testimonies of Friends:

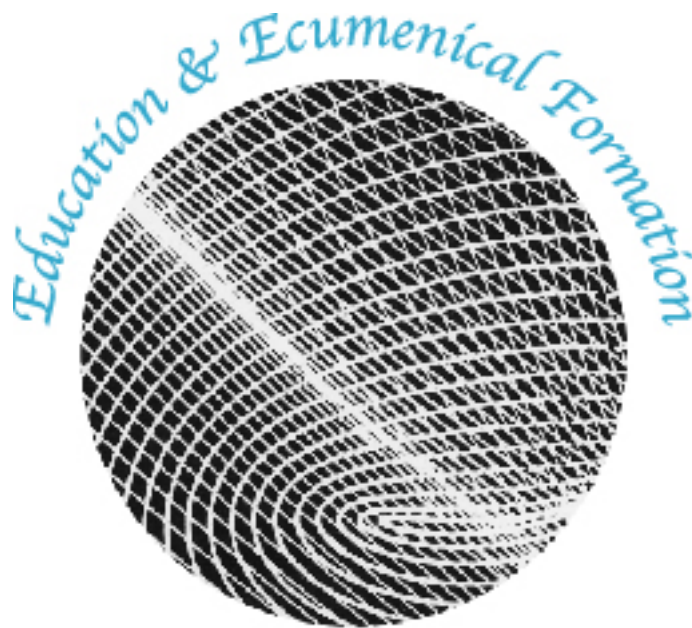
- Equality of opportunity and respect for individuals;
- Simplicity of the educational and material environment;
- Harmony of inward and outward actions;
- Community in daily life and in the seeking of the Spirit.

Religion and Social Forum: Racial Justice as Economic Justice, 2-4 May 2003.

website: <http://www.pendlehill.org/>

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