

EEF - NET

News • Information • Discussions on Ecumenical Learning

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

No 13 / November 2003

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

EEF - NET 13 - November 2003

Newsletter for Education and Ecumenical Formation • World Council of Churches

EEF-NET is produced twice a year by the Education and Ecumenical Formation staff of the Mission and Ecumenical Formation team of World Council of Churches. Contributions of articles or use of material (quoting the source) are most welcome. Editorial board: Evelyn Appiah, Nyambura Njoroge, Simon Oxley, Tara Tautari. Editor: Simon Oxley. Editorial assistant: Judith Kocher. Spanish translation: Suecia & Oneida Méndez. Printed by: Imprimerie Arduino. Address: Education & Ecumenical Formation, World Council of Churches, P.O. Box 2100, 1211 Geneva 2, Switzerland. Tel: +41 22 791 6115 Fax: +42 22 710 2444 E-mail: simon.oxley@wcc-coe.org or judith.kocher@wcc-coe.org Web: <http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/education/index-e.html>

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In some parts of the world, people have started campaigns for 'real education'. Before we get too excited about fresh support for the kinds of approaches we have advocated in EEF-NET we should recognise what they mean by 'real education'.

In 'real education', according to their understanding, learners should be accurate recorders of what they hear, see and read who, at the touch of a button, can play back that self-same information. Such campaigns are a reaction against styles of education which involve the learner in creating, rather than just receiving; knowledge and understanding.

Religious communities, including Christian, are particularly prone to adopting narrowly instructional forms of education. At the heart of their life are traditions or sets of stories handed on from generation to generation. However, without the right kinds of learning, those traditions and stories become dead legalisms which take life out of religious faith rather than animate it.

We have featured the WCC Scholarships programme in this issue in order to assert that this is not only a tool for meeting identified needs for particular skills and knowledge. That is a very important task but there are many agencies supporting human resource development. WCC Scholarships offer an opportunity for a broader exposure and ecumenical formation. We want to assist the transformation of individuals and, thereby, communities.

Faith schools could be characterised as an opportunity to indoctrinate a captive audience. In a recent address,

Dr Rowan Williams talked instead about developing a "critical mindset". Faith schools should be an antidote to the trend towards functionalism in education. As can be seen from the article, he suggests that both the faith community and the wider community are served by taking a different approach.

The significance of critical thinking is not just a 'western' preoccupation on the part of those who want to have alternative approaches to education. The recent Asia Religious Educators Forum also emphasised the importance of developing critical thinking in that regional context.

Critical thinking is essential when we reflect on and engage in inter-religious learning. To give one instance. We may contrast the ideals of our own faith with the our perception of the faith practised by others, to their detriment. Critical thinking enables us to engage with our own weaknesses and with the strengths of others. Critical thinking also helps us to understand what we are doing when we learn with one another within the Christian faith and when we learn with one another in the wider circle of faith and of all humanity.

This editorial would not be complete without recognising the great service Evelyn Appiah has given to the WCC and the ecumenical movement. The tribute paid to her as she leaves WCC is well deserved.

The education and ecumenical formation staff of the WCC

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Ecumenical Formation Through WCC Scholarships

There is much to celebrate in the effect of WCC Scholarships in the ecumenical movement. Yet many still regard our work as simply a mechanism for financing their individual educational aspirations. In this article, Tara Tautari outlines the vision and purpose as well as the practical procedures.

The World Council of Churches Scholarships for Graduate Study and Group Training:

- **is a global ecumenical formation programme** that exists to help churches and related organisations equip people to fulfil their mission. It is a means of supporting and developing the ecumenical movement. It offers scholarships (individual and group training) to increase the human resource capacity of churches and related organisations for the benefit of the community through the further education/ training of their personnel.
- **is an exciting and dynamic way** for the churches to give support to the ecumenical movement and its educational ministry. The programme's strength lies in its ability to provide a global outreach that is ecumenical in nature and that can readily respond to the regional diversity of its member churches and church related organisations.

The programme has been a stable feature of the ecumenical work of the WCC. Established in 1945, the programme has expanded and developed according to the changing needs of the member churches and this is reflected in its policies and processes. A further strength of the programme is seen in the results of its work. A significant number of ecumenical leaders from all over the world have

been the recipients of WCC Scholarships and have often credited their study experience to their overall ecumenical formation.

The aims of the Scholarships Programme are:

- to empower individuals and groups through education and training
- to build purposeful commitment to the worldwide ecumenical movement through study abroad in an intercultural context
- to enhance the work of the churches and communities on a local level

Scholarships are normally granted for individual graduate study courses lasting from 3 months to 2 years, and for group training courses lasting from 1 month to 1 year.

What areas of study and training are given priority?

For the years 2004-2006, the WCC Scholarships Programme has identified four thematic areas of priority for study and training:

- 1. Interfaith Relations:** engaging in dialogue and co-operative work across the religious divide;

2. **Globalisation:** addressing issues of economic and environmental concern, and promoting alternative just and sustainable communities;
3. **Overcoming Violence:** furthering initiatives in peace building, reconciliation and conflict transformation;
4. **HIV/AIDS:** raising awareness of HIV/AIDS issues and working towards care and prevention.

In addition to church-related initiatives, the Programme continues to award scholarships covering a range of subjects, mostly involving some specialisation – e.g. theology, education, agriculture, nutrition, administration & finance, health studies, languages, and many others.

Who can apply for a scholarship?

Requests have to be made by churches or related organisations for:

Individual candidates: women and men, lay and ordained, normally under the age of forty-five whose further education and training is required for future service in their church or church-related organisation.

Groups: members of a group, who fulfil the same criteria as those applying individually for a scholarship, and who are multipliers operating in a context where the acquired knowledge and skills can be transmitted.

The policy of the WCC Scholarships Programme is to achieve gender balance in the award of scholarships. Churches and church-related organisations are advised to ensure that applications from women are encouraged and given equal opportunity.

Refugees are not able to fulfil the criteria for the Scholarships programme and are advised to contact the National Council of Churches or a Refugee Office in their country of asylum for advice on alternative sources of financial support.

What are the criteria for a successful application?

In reviewing applications, a balanced representation of church tradition, nationality and gender, and the local and regional priorities of the national Council of Churches are taken into consideration. Only a limited number of scholarships are awarded for study or training in the North. The Scholarships Programme favours practice-oriented, short-term intra-regional programmes in the South. Priority is given to churches and church-related organisations with limited access to further education and training opportunities.

Successful applications will show ample evidence that:

- the proposed study or training will strengthen the human resource capacity of the requesting church or church-related organisation;
- the context of the proposed study or training will provide an opportunity for ecumenical learning;
- the applicant has completed secondary education, basic training and several years work experience in the proposed field of study or training;
- the applicant is committed to return to the home country after the training or period of study abroad to take up the task or employment for which the request was made.

Funding and budgeting

A WCC scholarship aims to provide a reasonable contribution towards the approved programme of study or training and basic living expenses. The requesting body is expected to make a significant contribution for travel to and from the country of study.

In order for the WCC to be able to award a scholarship, a detailed budget must be submitted together with the application. This must include:

Expenses

- Tuition or training fees
- Accommodation and meals
- Pocket money
- Travel (where this is not covered by the requesting body)

Income

- All expected sources of income other than the requested WCC scholarship (e.g. other funding agencies, support from the requesting organisation, family, etc.)

The budget must be substantiated by relevant documentation from the proposed institute or organisation where the study or training will take place. Total funding for the proposed course of study must be assured before a scholarship is awarded.

After the budget has been formally agreed between the scholarship recipient and the WCC Scholarship Programme, no additional payments can be requested. The scholarship is paid up to one year at a time. Subsequent payments will depend on evidence of satisfactory progress in the course.

What are the restrictions?

- Only applications from churches and church-related organisations are accepted. Individuals or groups cannot apply for support for their personal programmes of study or training.
- Family scholarships are not available. No support can be provided for any children accompanying a parent.
- Applications for scholarships for courses of study which have already begun are not accepted.

- Scholarships for theological studies are granted only for courses of up to two years (e.g. up to the level of a Masters degree), and not for undergraduate or doctoral studies.
- Scholarships are not awarded for graduate study in the home country.
- Applicants living abroad can only be considered for scholarship if the application is made by a church or church-organisation in the home country.

How and when to submit an application?

The WCC Scholarships Programme is coordinated through a network of National Correspondents, normally working with the Council of Churches and a National Scholarships Committee. An important aspect of the programme is that initial endorsement and prioritisation of applications takes place locally.

- Applications for a group training programme are made by the requesting body. The requesting body is also responsible for selecting the individual members of the group for the training.
- Applications for individual candidates are made by the requesting church or church-related organisation.

Application forms for the WCC Scholarships Programme are available from the National Correspondent of each country, and downloadable from the Scholarships Programme website <http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/education/scholarships-e.html> where further details, including the contact information of the National Correspondents, can also be found.

Procedures for dealing with applications vary from country to country and the process can take up to twelve months. Applications should therefore be submitted well in advance of the projected starting date.

The WCC Scholarships Working Group meets twice a year in April and November. In order for applications to be checked and any additional information obtained, applications must reach Geneva by **31 January** for the April meeting, and by **31 August** for the November meeting.

What happens next?

Completed application forms, a detailed budget and accompanying documentation should be returned to the National Correspondent for review at the national level. This is an essential step. Applications sent directly to Geneva will not be considered.

The National Correspondent forwards the applications of selected candidates to Geneva for consideration by the WCC Scholarships Working Group.

Carefully completed application forms, accompanied by all the required documentation, enable the Scholarships Programme to give a fair assessment of each application.

And finally, the award of a Scholarship...

The award of a scholarship is final only when a definite offer has been made in writing by the WCC Scholarships Programme, and when the requesting body and candidate have formally accepted the terms of the award.

Two Scholarships Stories

The first story reflects on the experiences of a Group Training scholarship that was awarded in 2003 in Colombia, to enable local church families to complete training in peace building and conflict resolution.

“La Nohora is a settlement for displaced persons who have fled from the internal violence in Colombia. It is located in the municipality of Villavicencio, 122 kilometres to the South-East of Bogota. It contains five hundred families, living in extreme poverty, who have come from various regions in the country, especially the southern zone, and who have had to leave everything behind to flee from the cross fire between guerrillas and paramilitaries (groups outside the law), who have been at war for many years.

It is not easy to travel to such a place to speak of violence and alternative ways of conflict resolution with people who have suffered the hardships of war, but we believed that speaking with them from the perspective of the Christian hope of living in community, and positive conflict resolution was a mission on which we could not turn our backs. That is how we saw it. We are the three members of the Conciliadores (‘Conciliators’) Group of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Colombia who have shared in the training programme ‘Communication and Conflict Resolution: an Ecumenical School for Peace’, thanks to the support of the World Council of Churches.

This educational process, in which we have shared with our brothers and sisters from four other churches (Roman Catholic, Anglican, Mennonite and Presbyterian), continues to enrich us as persons and the extension work in La Nohora is part of the commitment that beneficiaries of the programme have taken on. We arranged two extension workshops in Villavicencio: the first in the premises of La Victoria Evangelical Lutheran Mission in the Ceiba district of that city, and the second in La Nohora itself, where the displaced families are living. The first extension workshop was so successful that for the second, the participants, twenty in number, insisted that we visit them in the actual locality where they are daily suffering the hardships of being displaced by the armed conflict.

It has been a considerable personal challenge to work with people from different regions of the country who are in such a desperate situation and as needful of affection as they are of basic needs. In a practical way and always attempting to use their own experience and wisdom, we have together built up

a body of knowledge around concepts such as conflict as an inevitable feature of everyday life, which can be turned to good effect and become an engine for change and development in the family and society. Examining the causes and consequences of violence at a family, community and national level has enabled us to learn much from these people.

It has also been enriching to be able to examine the full range of alternative possibilities for conflict resolution available to us, such as conciliation and mediation as practised between them and their leaders; to be able to suggest to them other possible procedures in Colombia to deal with disputes; and finally to reflect with them on the concept of non-violence from the perspective of Jesus Christ and the example of Gandhi and Martin Luther King.

We gradually unravelled the issues with the active participation of young people and adults in the community, and even some children, who ventured to suggest that things could definitely be improved by talking rather than shooting at one another! It should be emphasised that it has never been an obstacle that participants are not necessarily members of the Lutheran Church, because, when we speak of overcoming confrontation, it is precisely respect for diversity that is paramount, and in Colombia diversity is the principal feature of ethnic, social, economic and cultural life. This has been fundamental, both in our extension work and in the training process itself in the workshop seminars that we had with our brothers and sisters from the other churches.

In the seminars we were visited by and received training support from institutions such as the Ministry of Justice and the Interior, among others. We also wished, for the extension work with the community of displaced persons, to involve the Peace Adviser for the region, who visited La Nohora with us to learn at first hand of the situation of the displaced persons and the difficulties they are experiencing. This visit, which was judged a positive one by the participants, played a key part in building contact with the local authorities, who often classify them contemptuously as illegal

squatters, whereas they are in fact victims struggling to survive.

Our satisfaction at sharing with people who most need it and their interest in strengthening community development with this training programme commit us to the programme so as to continue working for citizen empowerment and strengthening their determination with Christ's support. For that reason we are sharing our experience and we express our thanks to the brothers and sisters of the World Council of Churches for their support of our endeavours."

Fabio Alonso Meza Ramirez
Executive Coordinator
"Communication and Conflict Resolution -
An ecumenical school for peace,"

Billian Njodzeka comes from the Cameroon and was offered a WCC Scholarship in 2002 to enable her to attend the Asian Rural Institute training programme in Japan. Billian has a wealth of experience in rural development, however she had never attended any formal practical training. The following is a personal account of her time at ARI

"With my old way of thinking, leadership simply meant that authority is coming from the top-level management to the low level management. The low levels are considered as the most deprived because they are not involved in any decision-making. These deprived people work for the boss, yet their work is not recognised and no one tends to appreciate them for a job well done.

In my communities most development projects failed because the community did not participate. For any project to be successful, the local community should be actively involved at all levels of management.

ARI is a typical example where leadership is in both ways: top to bottom and bottom to top. All the community members are given equal rights and everyone participates in the decision-making. During the morning and evening farm work all the staff, including the director, join for farm work.

My goal is to increase self-sufficiency by reclaiming 300 hectares of land that had been consumed by planting of Eucalyptus trees and to create a permanent training centre for organic and integrated farming. SHUMAS, by sending body, will be the legal holder. This project is located in Kumbo, the North-west province of Cameroon.

Through this I would like to create arable farming land of 60 hectares every year for the duration of 5 years. I would also like to solve the problem of generalised water shortages as a result of Eucalyptus planted in water sources and catchments.

My hope is that this land will be closer to the community. This will solve the problem of children becoming drug addicts and committing crimes, as the parents will be closer to their homes and assuming their parental responsibilities.”

This story and others can be accessed on the Scholarships website:

<http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/education/scholarships-e.html>



This year's rice harvest not only required the corporation of the participants, but the volunteers, staff, and TAs and GIs as well. While binding the fresh rice together, Billian, from Cameroon, takes a brief moment to observe the work being done by her fellow community members.

A Culture of Hope in Church Schools

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams, addressed a gathering of headteachers of Anglican secondary schools in September 2003. What he had to say in a talk entitled “A Culture of Hope? Priorities and Vision in Church Schools” is of relevance to all faith schools and all education systems.

When the leader of a world communion speaks about education, we should take note. When such an address contains a clearly articulated and positive challenge, we should try to engage with what is said. Dr Williams has a positive vision of faith schools that is not about protecting the interests of particular traditions but enabling them to contribute to the development of open and cohesive society.

In his address, Dr Williams challenged a narrow functional approach to learning:

“There is a real tension in educational thinking between those whose concern is primarily, almost exclusively, with imparting skills to individuals and those who understand education as something that forms the habits of living in a group, identifying common aspirations and making possible co-operation and conversation.”

That the whole culture of a school shapes students as people is widely recognised, in spite of the increasing emphasis on measurable learning. However, Dr Williams argued that, “Educational institutions in fact can’t be neutral about this. If you think you are being neutral about the moral or spiritual ethos of a school, you are in fact generating an ethos of individualism, functionalism and ultimately fragmentation.”

This could be said about schools in general, so he went on say that:

“... the faith-based school goes rather further in taking for granted that the culture that needs developing has to include what many would call the single most definitive factor in all human cultural history up to and even including modernity: the

beliefs and practices that express human relation to something more than the individual and more than the sum of contemporary individual experience, relation to what is holy, creative and unsurpassable.”

Faith based schools should nurture a sense of loyalty and openness. By loyalty, Dr Williams does not mean a blind adherence but sees it as “a principle that allows everyone to question their purely individual aims”. For many tolerance is the supreme virtue but in reality it can degenerate into an ‘anything goes’ attitude that has no values of its own. Dr Williams prefers to talk about openness that is:

“a willingness to be curious, to argue, even, yes, to judge, in the sense of trying to assess another’s experience in the light of your own values and decide how deeply it challenges you and how deeply you want to challenge it. It has everything to do with truthfulness at many levels.....

The rationale of this kind of educational society is, for the church school, the image of the Body of Christ (as, for the Muslim school, it would be the umma, the egalitarian community of true believers).”

This implies the development of a “constructively critical mindset” in an environment that includes everyone in the discourse.

Dr Williams does not claim that it is only faith schools that can nurture loyalty and openness understood in this way. However, “the faith school has a sharply significant role – not least in reminding the educational establishment of unfinished business when it drifts towards the narrowest kinds of functionalism.”

The teaching and common life of a faith-based school is grounded in “a religious conviction about

human nature, about the 'end of man', in the old and politically incorrect phrase. Furthermore it assumes that its common life will be visibly marked by signs of this commitment and by the willingness to explain and defend it." What is offered is "not a programme of theological brainwashing but the possibility of asking deeper and harder questions of self and society."

For many students and their families, the church school may be their only experience of a religious worshipping community, i.e. of church. The church school "can provide a crucial experience of what the Body of Christ means, for those, adults and young people, who would not otherwise see it".

So we should be clear how Dr Williams sees church:

"Church is a phenomenon where people come to view each other differently, to have a new understanding of what they can do for each other (forgiveness, for example). But of course it is above all an environment where there is deliberate effort to become more open not just to each other but to God, in worship and in silence."

Dr Williams has high expectations of the Christian community whether it is expressed in a congregation or a school.

Spiritual education should not be reduced to "little more than the cultivating of empathy and a loose sense of the mysteriousness of the world". He argues that "the pace of life reflected in a school timetable, the diet in the canteen and the priority given to arts and sport will tell you more about the

'spirituality' of a school than many curricular accounts of spiritual education."

In a key passage, Dr Williams takes us to the heart of his understanding of the church school:

"So the fully-functioning church school is not only a place that identifies and uses the 'social capital' of the local religious communities with which it is linked. That is important, important for students and for families, as opening their horizons and their possible cross-generational relationships, but it is not everything. This school is also itself a religious community, one in which different sorts of behaviour are followed and nurtured: where, above all, it is assumed that what is of consuming and urgent interest is not just a set of individual goals for teacher or student, nor the meeting of targets imposed by management, significant as these may be, but a range of concerns about common humanity, expressed in actions and relations and worship; where the culture takes it for granted that there should be argument and involvement – in the most 'inclusive' way – about the needs of neighbours and of strangers, and space for stillness and thought and growth."

The development of this kind of school is not only an educational or management issue but deeply theological. We should be grateful to Dr Williams for reminding us of this.

For a full text of Dr Williams address, see: www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/sermons_speeches/030911.html

United Nations Literacy Decade 2003-12

The ecumenical movement has always had a deep commitment to literacy. The former WCC programme on Adult Popular Education encouraged and supported activities in many places. These were designed not just for people to be able to read books but also to 'read' the world in which they live. Within the churches we need to develop this wider understanding of literacy for all – it is not enough for us to be able to read the words on the pages of the Bible or works of devotion. The following statement from UNESCO ought to challenge us as much as governments.

While societies enter into the information and knowledge society, and modern technologies develop and spread at rapid speed, 860 million adults are illiterate, over 100 million children have no access to school, and countless children, youth and adults who attend school or other education programmes fall short of the required level to be considered literate in today's complex world.

Literacy is about more than reading and writing - it is about how we communicate in society. It is about social practices and relationships, about knowledge, language and culture. Literacy - the use of written communication - finds its place in our lives along-

side other ways of communicating. Indeed, literacy itself takes many forms: on paper, on the computer screen, on TV, on posters and signs. Those who use literacy take it for granted - but those who cannot use it are excluded from much communication in today's world. Indeed, it is the excluded who can best appreciate the notion of 'literacy as freedom'.

However, if current trends continue, and if we fail to introduce major changes in the school system, "Literacy as Freedom" will continue to be an unreachable dream for millions of people. Renewed, co-ordinated and sustained efforts must be taken in the next few years to reverse these trends and ensure that we are on the right track towards Literacy for All and thus Education for All.

This is the reason why the General Assembly of the United Nations proclaimed the UNITED NATIONS LITERACY DECADE for the period 2003-2012. Together, we can make a difference in this world so that everyone has access to literacy in ways that are relevant and meaningful.

For more information about the UN Literacy Decade: <http://www.unesco.org/>

RESOURCES

SHARED LEARNING IN A PLURAL WORLD

Ecumenical Approaches to Inter-Religious Education

Gert Rüppell, Peter Schreiner (eds.)

There is no need here to underline the importance or urgency of developing both our understanding and practice of inter-religious education. The remarks of the Moderator of the WCC Central Committee earlier in this edition do that. As has been reported in previous issues of EEF-NET, the WCC has organised three Consultations in the area of inter-religious education. – The Value and Concepts of Learning in Religion (2000); Concepts of Teaching and Learning in Religion (2000); Education in Religion for Community (2001). These have involved representatives of other world faiths in addition to Christian religious educators.

Shared Learning in a Plural World has been produced by the Comenius Institute, Germany and brings together papers, presentations and reflections from the three Consultations together with other relevant documents. These are grouped together in five sections – Reflections on Pluralism; Concepts of Learning in World Religions; Teaching Christianity in Dialogue; Education and Community; Documents.

In the Introduction, the editors identify four questions which run through the contributions:

- How can education in religion help us develop a sympathetic attitude towards, as well as knowledge about, those who differ from us?
- How can education in religion help develop a faith identity which stands alongside others rather than against them?

- How can religious education contribute to good, creative relationships in community and avoid 'sectarianism'?
- How can religious education be a tool for building integrated communities in strange and complex environments?

These are questions which we must all answer in our own contexts. The contributions give us both the background and the stimulus to involve ourselves.

To quote the editors further:

"What we present here aims at sharing reflections and inviting people to make use of those reflections for the process of developing peace and integration oriented education in multi-faith contexts.... We are of the opinion that learning in community with other faiths need not weaken one's own identity but, through encounter, the chance is given to get to know oneself better. Learning from the different perspectives gives the chance to discover oneself in a new and previously unknown way."

The contributions in *Shared Learning in a Plural World* illustrate the potential for inter-religious education to benefit both the individual learner and their community

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www.comenius.de



THEOVIE
FRENCH LANGUAGE
ON-LINE FAITH FORMATION

Théovie is a French language distance learning opportunity offered by the Eglise Réformée de France on a dedicated website. Théovie aims to accompany each participant in their spiritual journey and to equip them to practice their faith. The learning is Biblically based.

The resources on the website are designed for individual distance learning. However, Théovie also offers opportunities for group learning, engagement with staff members of Théovie and the service of a local tutor.

The modules of Théovie are grouped in four areas – Reading and interpreting the Bible; Connecting the past and the present; Believing and understanding today; Living and acting in faith.

website: www.theovie.org

DECADE TO OVERCOME
VIOLENCE

The new dedicated website for the Decade to Overcome Violence, Churches Seeking Reconciliation and Peace is available in English, French, German and Spanish. It contains plenty of new information and resources for the Decade. It also encourages you to post your own information.

The Study Guide *Why Violence? Why not Peace?* can be downloaded in any of the four languages. Printed copies are also available in all these languages.

website: <http://www2.wcc-coe.org/dov.nsf>

WINDOWS TO ENCOUNTER

The India Sunday School Union (ISSU) has developed a new curriculum - *Windows to Encounter*. This title comes from an emphasis in the Christian Scriptures on seeing through and beyond expressions of God's love and presence in the world to the God who creates and sustains them. The series, divided into six age groups, aims to facilitate encounter with the living God through Bible study.

As encounters with God change individuals, societies and cultures, *Windows to Encounter* is described as:

“a transformational curriculum project, not a formational one. Formation implies that teachers and curriculum writers know how students and communities are to be shaped. Transformation implies that teachers and students share knowledge in the expectation that they will be made new through the power of the Holy Spirit. Thus instead of trying to mould students into an existing socio-cultural understanding of what it means to be Christian, these curriculum materials work to help participants confront life's conflicts, contradictions and problems in the hope that they will experience personal, social and cultural lifestyle transformation ...”

Further information from: India Sunday School Union, Keswick, Orange Grove Road, Coonoor 643 101, Tamilnadu, India.



GOOD PRACTICE GUIDES IN ECUMENICAL LEARNING

*Ideas to help us learn together
more effectively*

The *Good Practice Guides in Ecumenical Learning* are designed to offer simple, accessible advice on effective ecumenical learning.

They are being written out of the experience of various educators in the ecumenical movement. At present we are testing them by making them available on Ecuspace.net for comment.

We will be adding to the series over the coming years and refining the content of existing guides. We hope that you will give us the necessary feedback so that the guides can become increasingly useful in developing good practice.

The format of the *Good Practice Guides* is intentionally simple so they can be downloaded from the internet. We recognise that many who do have access to the internet find that downloading and printing items that contain logos, pictures and complex layouts is almost impossible.

Initially, the *Good Practice Guides* fall into two categories:

General Principles

1. Beginning where we are
2. Fully involved
3. Speaking for ourselves
4. Creating the right environment
5. High expectations

Specific Methodologies

21. Faith based debates
22. Brainstorming
23. Simulations and role plays

Please do give us feedback on the initial offerings out of your experience and ideas for future *Good Practice Guides*.

You will find them on :

www.ecuspace.net in the public area.

Open the [ecuspace](http://www.ecuspace.net) home page at :

www.ecuspace.net.

Click on : 'Contributions' and then on : 'by issue'.

Click on the blue triangle by :

'Ecumenical Formation' and then on :

"Practical tool".



News from the WCC

New General Secretary

The WCC Central Committee has appointed Rev Dr Samuel Kobia as the new General Secretary, succeeding Rev Dr Konrad Raiser who retires at the end of 2003. Sam Kobia is a Methodist from Kenya who has held several positions in the WCC. More recently he was Director of Unit III JPC and then Director of the Cluster on Issues and Themes in which the former EEF team was located. At present he is Director and Special Representative for Africa in the General Secretariat. He takes up his responsibility at a critical time for the WCC and the ecumenical movement. Sam will value the prayerful encouragement and support of EEF-NET readers.

WCC Commission on Education and Ecumenical Formation

Core Group meeting, 20-22 June 2003, Le Cénacle, Geneva

Seven members of the Core Group of the Commission attended. The meeting began by members describing and reflecting on the context and activities of ecumenical formation in their work and in their region. This was supplemented by written inputs from Commission members not present. The Core Group then reviewed the work done in 2002 and up to May 2003 and that planned for 2003, 2004 and beyond. At each stage the Core Group identified the issues emerging from the written and verbal inputs and the consequent discussion. What follows is the agreed outcome of further reflection on these issues.

The continued increase in denominationalism and the fact that ecumenism is no longer a passionate concern of people in the churches means that ecumenical formation becomes increasing impor-

tant. The Core Group re-asserts the current and historic significance of education for the ecumenical movement and encourages eef staff to promote this recognition.

The Core Group commends the "Journey of Hope in Africa Continued" conference as a good model of a regional approach to the critical evaluation of theological education and ecumenical formation and of collaboration across education and ecumenical formation (eef) and other WCC staff. The Core Group will follow progress on the Plan of Action committed to by the participants.

The Core Group shared the dismay of OIKOSNET and its constituent associations at the apparent implication that the WCC's ending of the administrative and financial responsibility and the termination of the contract of the responsible Programme Executive also meant the ending of the total relationship. OIKOSNET represents a significant contribution to ecumenical formation through its regional associations and their member institutions which needs to be recognised. Participants in the Courses of Lay Leadership Training over the years have gone on to make significant contributions to the ecumenical movement. The Core Group encourages eef staff to pursue their proposal for maintaining communication and involvement with OIKOSNET and its regional associations. It is hoped that the Programme Committee will recognise the significance of this continued relationship, albeit in a new style. The Core Group also hopes that WCC programmes, not only the work on education and ecumenical formation, will continue to find common concerns and develop joint projects with OIKOSNET.

The Core Group draws attention to the ending of specific programmatic activity relating to the Laity, which had been in decline in recent years, with the departure of the Programme Executive. Whilst recognising that it would not be appropriate at this time to propose new work on the Laity, the Core Group calls on Programme Committee to ensure that the dimension of the Laity continues in all WCC's work.

The Core Group notes the progress in preparing the Holistic Education Resource Book and intends to use the next Commission meeting to examine ways of promoting holistic approaches to education across all sectors of education and ecumenical formation.

Inter-religious education, as distinct from but done in collaboration with the work on inter-religious dialogue, should remain one of the priorities for EEF staff.

The success of the DOV Study Guide illustrates the need for ecumenical learning resources at the local congregation/parish level. Local learning initiatives from elsewhere in the ecumenical movement include work on the popular reading of the Bible, on faith and the economy and on building congregations as ethic communities. The Core Group encourages EEF staff to give conceptual and writing support to the production by the WCC of other processes and material for local congregations.

In particular, the Core Group notes that different initiatives for preparing the churches for the WCC Assembly are being proposed. The Core Group commends the proposal put forward jointly by the eef staff and the Ecu-Learn consultancy, whilst insisting on the necessity of co-ordinated working with the churches in Brazil and the different educational networks and institutions to enable local congregations to engage in ecumenical formation and with the Assembly theme.

The Core Group recognises the priority of faculty development (for both Ecumenical Theological Education (ETE) and Scholarships) as the key to ecumenical, contextual and effective theological education. Faculty members need to develop their educational skills as well as deepen their knowledge.

The Core Group commends the model of regional consultants adopted by ETE. It also recognises that not all regions benefit from this kind of relationship.

The Core Group endorse the four thematic priority areas adopted by the Scholarships Working Group – Globalisation, HIV/AIDS, Interfaith Relations, Overcoming Violence – as promoting ecumenical formation in crucial areas. Applications for Group

Training in the use of the internet should also be encouraged.

The Core Group encourages the further use of stories of award holders to promote the Scholarships programme, the use of ecumenical hospitality (where institutions offer accommodation and remit fees), the continued exploration of alternatives to the National Correspondent system in providing local validation of Scholarships applications and the use of Commission members in disseminating information about Scholarships.

The Core Group also recommends that the following be explored by eef staff within the context of existing activities – liturgy/worship as educating/nurturing; the disconnection for many of religion and spirituality; learning as a conversion experience; using mentoring in networks; employing Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for learning; regional approaches which take seriously both the specificity and the diversity of each region; engaging with the outcomes of the Special Commission.

In the light of the successful development of the HIV/AIDS theological curriculum, the Core Group encourages the Mission & Ecumenical Formation (MEF) team to undertake further reflection and action on HIV/AIDS education.

Recognising the commonality of many concerns between education and mission, the Core Group welcomes the possibility of further collaboration with the 2005 Conference on World Mission and Evangelism. However, the Core Group requests a more specific identification of the appropriate educational contribution of eef staff by the CWME.

Whilst recognising the necessity for action in 2002, the Core Group believes that there is a need for a more thorough strategic review of all WCC's activities and of the way it uses its staff.

Education concerns at the WCC Central Committee

The recent meeting of the Central Committee included some important reflections on the significance of education from the Moderator, His Holiness, Aram I. The affirmation of a significant aspect of our work is very welcome.

In the Report of the Moderator, he began by speaking about religion as both a transforming and destabilising force and as a source of fear and hope. He emphasised Inter-Religious dialogue as a continuing ecumenical concern and the significance of a holistic and inclusive theology with Christological, pneumatological, missiological and eschatological dimensions. He spoke about living together with our differences and then went on to express the need for exploring new opportunities.

His first point in this section was about a transforming and integrated religious education:

“In multi-religious societies, religious education is crucial. It may both encourage and hinder the ability to live and witness together. Plurality is a challenge and an opportunity for inter-religious learning. It calls for a non-parochial religious education, one that is critically open to its environment. To attain this sort of education, the existing educational systems must be revised and religious education must become more relevant and contextual. Different religions have different perceptions of education; yet they agree on its basic aim, to provide spiritual growth and moral formation. The following perspectives may help religions re-organise religious education in pluralistic societies.

a) The primary goal of education is to provide accurate, objective and comprehensive knowledge about religions, the way they are and not the way we perceive them. Knowing each other helps removing mutual fear, approaches and considerations that encourage fanatic and insensitive attitudes towards each other. Ignorance leads to prejudice and misconception, while mutual knowledge generates mutual confidence. Religious education could become an effective

instrument for nurturing relationships, cultivating friendship and developing shared responsibility.

- b) Religious education must promote a culture of diversity by combating exclusivism and extremism. Such a process becomes possible by discovering and affirming common values and identifying common concerns, on the one hand, and by rediscovering and reaffirming one's own particularity, on the other hand. We must aim at an educational system and policy where particularity and plurality are in creative interplay.
- c) Religious education must be geared towards community building. Within this context, respecting the otherness of other, avoiding absolute claims that question the legitimacy of the other, creating safe space for communication and learning are crucial. Such an open and dynamic process of education will significantly contribute towards deepening the sense of community.
- d) Religions must strive to create a holistic educational system and vision. While respecting the particularity of each religion, this approach must aim at a formation and learning process that is inclusive and interactive. Religion is a liberating, renewing and transforming factor; it may also become an oppressive force. Education is a strong tool that may be used for both ends. Religions are urged to make religious education a transforming and integrating process.”

A little later in his Report, the Moderator stated:

“Christian education in multi-religious societies must remain a high priority for the Council. The rich experiences that the Council has gained during the last decade should help the churches to raise awareness among Christians on how a Christian should affirm his or her identity in openness to others, and how the churches should identify new models and methodologies of effective teaching in pluralistic contexts. Particular attention should be given to the inter-religious dimension in the churches' continuing attempt to redefine the nature and role of theological education and ministerial formation in the midst of pluralistic societies.”

In the course of the Central Committee meeting other education concerns were addressed. The Programme Committee produced two reports to be considered. In the first, they highlighted:

- the work on interfaith learning;
- the importance of Oikosnet;
- the use of regional consultants for ecumenical theological education;
- the challenge of offering opportunities for educational formation to church leaders and agencies;
- providing resources to local congregations to help them become ecumenically-minded;
- the specific contributions and needs of women in theological education, particularly as it relates to being church.

In the second report, the Programme Committee:

- recognised that ecumenical formation is distinct from interfaith learning and affirmed that both of these activities are important and are clearly related;
- affirmed the ecumenical theological efforts being carried out in Central/Eastern Europe, the work of the three regional consultants, and the plan of action for the "Journey of Hope in Africa Continued.";
- expressed a wish for more resources for scholarships for theological education as the majority of resources come designated for development education;
- noted that almost 50% of the budget for the whole programme is designated for grants and bursaries and not available for other work on ecumenical formation;

- encouraged staff to emphasise awareness-building on disabilities at the annual meeting of the Ecumenical Theological Education Working Group;
- asked that the programme accompany ecumenical formation within the churches in Brazil in preparation for the Assembly.

A full text of the Report of the Moderator and of the Programme Committee Reports can be found on the WCC website:

<http://www2.wcc-coe.org/ccdocuments2003.nsf>

WCC Ninth Assembly theme chosen

The Central Committee agreed a theme for the Ninth Assembly to be held in Porto Alegre, Brazil in February 2006 - **God, in your grace, transform the world**. The exact wording may be subject to change.



News from WCC

Education and Ecumenical Formation staff

People

We say farewell to Evelyn Appiah at the end of the year. Her contribution to WCC over many years is recognised elsewhere in this issue.

Françoise Faure, who has worked for Ecumenical Theological Education for 14 years, is moving to the administration of the Caribbean desk in the WCC's Diaconia and Solidarity team. She has made an enormous contribution to the work of ETE and has been a good colleague to the rest of us.

Recent Activities

Tara Tautari is working on our behalf to develop a new form of relationship with OIKOSNET following the moving of financial and administrative responsibility from Geneva. In her original appointment it was always envisaged that she work devote part of her time to other education and ecumenical formation issues in addition to her primary responsibility for Scholarships. The Programme Committee of WCC Central Committee affirmed the importance of OIKOSNET – see the report. We will review progress on this in the light of the outcomes of the evaluation process of OIKOSNET and their meeting in Cairo in November.

The Scholarships Working Group met in May. As well as making awards and a general reflection on the activity, it was decided to adopt four thematic priority areas – Globalisation, HIV/AIDS, Interfaith Relations, Overcoming Violence. See the article on Scholarships.

The Core Group of the WCC Commission on Education and Ecumenical Formation met in Geneva in June. See the separate report.

In June, Nyambura Njoroge attended a Theological Consultation at St. Paul's College in Kenya to celebrate its centenary. She was the first woman to enrol as a student and first to graduate. In July, she

participated in the Seminar on Poverty and Religion in Africa which was held in Jamaica. This is an on-going study which began in Ghana in 2000 and continued in Kenya in 2001 and South Africa in 2002.

A small group was convened in July to think through a strategy for future work in the area of inter-religious education. The members of the group each had participated in one or more of the Consultations previously organised by education and ecumenical formation and inter-religious dialogue staff. In expressing the priority of inter-religious education, they proposed that we should:

- Make the question of religious plurality itself an issue in RE
- Promote a dynamic understanding of identity concerning religion which is adequate to a situation of religious plurality
- Provide an adequate theological basis for RE in a situation of religious plurality and include experiences of inter-religious dialogue and movements towards justice
- Promote curricula for Christian education that take into account the existing internal and external plurality
- Connect with other existing projects and initiatives on inter-religious education in the different regions
- Aim at a “path making initiative”, that goes “where the churches don't want to go”

The full proposal has been shared with the Commission on Education and Ecumenical Formation.

Nyambura Njoroge participated in a seminar for African women theologians (francophone) in Benin in August and in a Women's Theologians (Principals) Workshop on “Equipping Women for Transformation Leadership” in Myanmar in September as keynote speaker.

Simon Oxley was one of the Resource Persons for the Asia Religious Educators Forum held in Taiwan at the end of September. See News from the Networks.

News from the Networks

Asia Religious Educators Forum

The second meeting of the Asia Religious Educators Forum (AREF) was held in Taiwan, 29 September-5 October 2003. The theme was "Living in Oikoumene: Ecumenism as Lens for Our Life and Work". It brought together 31 participants who are practising educators in Asia and 5 resource persons. AREF was organised by the Christian Conference of Asia and hosted by the Presbyterian Church of Taiwan.

The programme was built around the life, experience and work of the participants. We hope to be able to feature the process of the meeting in a future issue of EEF-NET as it stands as an excellent example of good practice. The programme included opportunities for exposure and encounter in the Taiwan context in the areas of Christian unity, HIV/AIDS, migrant workers, ecology and interfaith relations.

Among the reflections of the listeners was the summary that Christian education should:

1. Inspire critical thinking to help build communities of just peace
 - a. reading the Bible in new ways;
 - b. breaking down walls of exclusivism;
 - c. confronting and naming evil economic systems and practices;
 - d. being holistic in a mission of transformation;
 - e. dealing creatively and positively with painful memories and experiences;
 - f. retelling the history of the marginalised to confront the narrative of the dominant.

2. Identify and celebrate the signs and stories of hope
 - a. looking for small victories - planting seeds;
 - b. celebrating stories of healing that come from communities where suffering and oppression are severe;
 - c. knowing that justice comes before peace.

A collection of texts from the first meeting of AREF in 2001 has already been published. This will be complemented by a resource book based on AREF 2003.

IFACHE Research Programme

The International Forum of Associations of Christian Higher Education (IFACHE) is an international ecumenical organisation recognised as being in working relationship with the WCC. It brings together networks of church-related institutions of higher education in different countries or regions of the world.

IFACHE has begun a programme for **Research on Christian Higher Education Worldwide**. It aims to:

- collect information about the 2000 plus church-related institutions of higher education
- focus on innovations and best practices in Christian emphasis, academic excellence, community service, international education, interfaith dialogue
- facilitate the exchange of students and teachers
- publish the findings of the programme

IFACHE website: www.ifache.org

Interfaith Education Initiative of the Episcopal Church, USA

This is an example of one initiative taken by a WCC member church to respond to the need for interfaith education.

The Interfaith Education Initiative was established as a response to the tragedy of September 11, 2001, and the fear, anger, and suspicion that followed in its wake. Events during the following weeks revealed how misinformed many Americans are about the beliefs and practices of—and relationships and distinctions between—their neighbours' religions. The Interfaith Education Initiative was created to help Episcopalians replace misunderstanding with information and unease with eagerness to offer hospitality.

The mandate of the Initiative is:

- To focus on education and dialogue between representatives of the Abrahamic faiths (Christianity, Islam and Judaism) in the United States.
- To make available to the Episcopal Church experts and facilitators to work at interfaith dialogue at the local level.
- To strengthen networks working in interfaith education and relations so that the Episcopal Church has strong and effective channels through which to conduct interfaith work.
- To make the Episcopal Church aware of the resources available to engage in effective interfaith dialogue.
- To work with other communions, the National Council of Churches in Christ, and the World Council of Churches to share best practice for doing interfaith dialogue.
- To provide a “resource bag” of interfaith materials for individuals and networks within the Episcopal Church.

- To raise awareness of interfaith issues at the seminaries of the Episcopal Church.

An Interfaith Education Conference will be held at Washington National Cathedral, 30 September-2 October 2004.

Interfaith Education Initiative website: www.interfaitheducationinitiative.org

Intereuropean Commission on Church and School - ICCS

ICCS Conference - Building Bridges in Europe

Budapest, a European city between east and west, dominated by its many bridges crossing the Danube connecting Buda and Pest, was the venue for the ICCS triennial conference in 2003. The theme BUILDING BRIDGES IN EUROPE. THE ROLE OF EDUCATION AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION FOR RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING emphasised the importance of bridges as symbols for educational activities. Existing cultural and religious plurality in Europe needs constructive approaches to education, without trying to harmonise differences and experiences. Education and Religious Education play a significant role because their contribution to a European knowledge society is always oriented on a holistic understanding of education and critical of any dominance of political and economic interests in educational aims. The programme was structured around three main themes:

- Building Bridges between East and West in Europe
- Building Bridges between Confessions and religions in Europe
- Building Bridges between different pedagogical approaches.

Encounter, encouraging dialogue and working together on these themes happened among the 75 participants from 20 different European countries. Papers were delivered about the current religious and political culture in Hungary (Prof. Miklos Tomka), the started dialogue of the Council of Europe about a new approach to intercultural education which includes the religious dimension (John Keast) or an information about dispositions of the Conference of European Churches concerning future activities in education (Dr. Sturla Sagberg). Simon Oxley, WCC staff for Education and Ecumenical Formation argued in his contribution strongly that the view on Europe shall not be too narrow. Ecumenical co-operation is always crossing boundaries and therefore a global perspective is needed as a complementary view. He encouraged also a critical, sometimes prophetic contribution when it comes to dialogue with political bodies. Educational activities of the churches should facilitate a faith based perspective which can contribute to any kind of education where dealing with differences, healing and reconciliation is at stake.

During the conference projects from different countries were presented e.g. in teaching material promoting a new relationship between science & religion, pastoral care in schools, church lobby activities towards national parliaments and governments or co-operation between Protestant schools in Germany (Bavaria) and Hungary.

Round tables dealt with a more intense dialogue between confessions and religions as well as between different approaches to religious education. The conference encouraged ICCS to strengthen co-operation especially with partners in east and south of Europe and with Roman Catholic and Orthodox constituencies.

The president of ICCS and also a long term partner of WCC, Hans Spinder from the Netherlands ended his work for ICCS with this conference. Hans, who represented also WCC at various meetings, will start to work as a theological staff member at the ecumenical seminary in Matanzas, Cuba in 2004.

New ICCS Working Group on Theology and Religious Education

ICCS, together with the Comenius-Institut in Germany, has started a new working group. Theologians and Pedagogues from seven different European countries are invited to work on the relationship between theological concepts and approaches to religious education. A first meeting was held in May 2003 in Järvenpää, Finland at the Seurkuntaopisto training centre of the Lutheran Church. In a two-years-process the group will deal with new developments in this area that can be found in different countries.

The orientation on the situation of teaching staff and learners has led to a changed perspective for developing concepts for RE. Increasingly there is a debate on "theological competence" and the role of students and the role of teachers in a common teaching-learning process. How can teaching support the development of theological competence?

The group will deal also with concepts in which children and young adults are seen as theologians themselves, being able to reflect from their own view and capacity about concepts of God, ultimate questions about life and death, sorrow and pain and developing their own theological concepts. This view is crossing boundaries beyond traditional theology. It takes into account that even in Systematic Theology nowadays more emphasis is given to existing forms of 'daily life theology.' Another issue is the question of a theological competence of the teacher – albeit the role of theology is valued differently in RE in the different countries.

That a theology of children can change the traditional view about theology and Religious Education was also discussed at the first meeting. The working group agreed to concentrate on three areas:

- Empirical theological similarities / what is theological competence / What is theologising / Functioning of theology in different context / Theology of religion
- Clarifying how the term "theology" is used on different levels

How do teachers understand their role with regard to theology? What are they engaged with? Do they see this as a theological activity? Theology on the academic level, current issues RE and lived religion/theology: Pupils and teachers

Different views of knowledge; preparing an overview about research in "lived religion of teachers and pupils" in the context of RE; Self understanding of teachers and lived religion of pupils.

- Religious Studies / Applied Christian Theology of Religions / Are we being honest about the purposes of RE?

The next meeting of the group is planned for February 2004 in Denmark.

Comments and reactions are welcomed via ICCS@comenius.de

ICCS Discussion Report Available

A working group of ICCS has dealt with issues of Christian education in schools with emphasis to areas of concern of the European discussion on education. Their report starts with an introduction of the debate on European Citizenship and explores areas and tasks of school and local communities.

The implications for schools are presented in the next chapter where examples of existing models and teaching activities illustrate already existing contributions e.g. in the field of social education, spiritual education, education on global issues of intercultural education.

Support for teachers from Christians and the churches is demanded.

Other chapters deal with examples where churches undertake education on different levels and also about how churches act on the European level.

A number of recommendations to the civil organisations at the European level as well as for the

churches and faith communities summarise the outcome of the working group. The discussion report is presented to politicians and church leaders to contribute to a necessary debate about Christian vision for education.

"Giving Europe a Heart and Soul." A Christian Vision for education in Europe's schools, ICCS, Muenster 2003, price: 8€ plus mailing.

Order: ICCS@comenius.de

New Director at the Comenius-Institut

The Comenius-Institut, a long standing partner of the WCC education activities has appointed Volker Elsenbast, theologian and psychologist, as the new Director. He follows Prof. Christoph Scheilke who served in this post for 8 years. The Comenius-Institut is a centre for research and development in education, sponsored mainly by the Protestant churches in Germany.

European Conferences in 2004

The European Forum for Teachers of Religious Education – EFTRE – is planning its next conference in Järvenpää, Finland, 26-29 August 2004. The theme is "RE: educating the whole person". More information is available through

www.eftre.org.

The European Conference for Christian Education – ECCE – will have its next conference in Brussels, Belgium, 7-13 June 2004. The theme is: "Roots and Wings ... exploring Christian Identity in a Diverse Europe". More information is available through the chairperson Rosemarie Chopard:

rchopard@protestant.ch

Farewell to Evelyn Appiah

As Evelyn Appiah leaves us at the end of the year, she will have given an outstanding 33 years of service to the ecumenical movement through the WCC. She joined the staff of the WCC on 17 August 1970 in an administrative capacity. In these times of multiple personal careers and frequent organisational changes, her story of lengthy commitment to and personal development within one institution is remarkable.

For most of her time, Evelyn has been involved in work for and with the laity through the various structural changes within the WCC. From 1976 she worked, first as Administrative Assistant and then as Programme Assistant, in the area of Renewal and Congregational Life and subsequently in Unity and Renewal where she became Programme Secretary for Lay Participation towards Inclusive Community. In 1999 Evelyn was part of the group of staff which formed the Education and Ecumenical Formation team.

The Core Group of the Commission on Education and Ecumenical Formation wrote the following in a letter to Evelyn:

We acknowledge your long and distinguished service at the World Council of Churches. We appreciate and value the tremendous contribution you have made in many ways, notably in the empowerment of the laity in different regions of the world, OIKOSNET (Global Network for Lay Centres) and Ecumenical Disabilities Advocacy Network (EDAN). Your work as co-ordinator of the Christian Lay Leadership Training (CLLT) encouraged the young people of our churches to go further in their ecumenical commitment.

We also note that you have committedly and faithfully represented the African region. Your participation in the WCC 8th Assembly in Harare and your role as Moderator of the Africa Staff Task Force cannot go unmentioned.

Your input as a woman has also no doubt been exemplary.

We acknowledge that in all these activities you carried yourself with a rare degree of humility which in no way compromised your great sense of service and excellence.

We assure you of our prayers and solidarity for the future. We wish you God's blessings as God opens new doors and other opportunities for service.

This letter is representative of many such tributes paid to Evelyn and her work since it became known that her contract would be terminated as part of the most recent WCC restructuring exercise.

Members of the former EEF team would also pay tribute to her qualities as a colleague, her commitment to ensure the development of OIKOSNET and her hard work in ensuring the success of CLLTs. In our reflection, planning and activity together, Evelyn's involvement has been invaluable. We will miss her presence among us.

We received the following piece from Germàn Zijlstra, one of the Commission members who is involved in OIKOSNET, which sums up what many want to say:

The sun in the South is very warm and comfortable now,

in spite of the cold winter that is coming to renew the creation.

The sky in the South is intensive blue now,

in spite of the clouds that will come next days to refresh our lands.

Our hearts in the South, the East, the West and the North,

are full of gratitude to the Lord of Life,

for all your skills, gifts, dynamics, visions,

you give with generosity and humility.

So many years to empower laity, youths, women,

to share in an inclusive and ecumenical community

all around our global net!

The Lord will guide and strength your and our paths.

God bless you and all, with Grace and Peace, challenges and opportunities, to serve all his creation.

OIKOSNET

*A Global Ecumenical network of
Christian Laity Centres, Academies,
and Movements of Social Concern
working for just, participatory,
sustainable, and inclusive
communities.*



Evelyn Appiah

Oikosnet supports and enhances the work of this global network - through activities conducted globally and regional associations - by:

Providing resources to bring global perspectives to the work of the regional associations and the Centres,

Academies, and Movements of Social Concern,

Facilitating and promoting training programs for global and regional ecumenical leadership,

Providing opportunities for inter-disciplinary and multi-cultural dialogue in safe spaces

Promoting ecumenical solidarity thorough communication and actions on issues and themes of social concern.

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

The constituent associations are:

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

➡ OIKOSNET

GLOBAL

The OIKOSNET annual meeting will be held in Cairo, Egypt, 3-11 November 2003. At that meeting the Evaluation Report on OIKOSNET will be presented. The evaluation process is an opportunity not only to look back at what has been done through OIKOSNET but also to look forward.

AFRICA

The ACLCA 12th Assembly will be held 22-29 May 2004 on the theme "Called to be One in Christ" at the Limuru Conference Centre, Kenya.

ASIA

NETWORK 21 Training

The Vesper Society, USA - a member of NARDA and OIKOSNET conducted a NETWORK 21 Training in the Christian University, Thailand from June 25 - July 2, 2003 under the able guidance of Mr. Rich Watson. There were twelve participants from different centres of ACISCA and six Directors of ACISCA Centre and the Executive Secretary and the Chairperson of ACISCA. The entire cost of the Training, including air travel, the hiring of computers and other electronic equipment, food, accommodation and local transportation were met fully by the Vesper Society. ACISCA hopes that all the Directors will make use of the staff persons well trained in NETWORK 21 to make their Centres work efficiently and effectively.

Christian Lay Leadership Training, Colombo, 14-30 September 2003

One of the important events of ACISCA has been the CLLT emphasising the three Ls - namely Lay Training, Leadership Formation and Ecumenical Learning. The venue was the Ecumenical Institute for Study and Dialogue, Colombo. More than twenty six young women and men enrolled from all over Asia.

ACISCA Strategic Planning Workshop

Directors will meet to consider the role of ACISCA in the period 2004-2008 in March 2004 in Manila, Philippines.

Hong Kong Christian Institute Newsletter

The latest issue of this newsletter (no 181) contains two interesting articles on a matter of sharp debate - "Same-Sex Marriage and Religious Tolerance" and "The Challenge of Homosexuality for the Christian Community". The articles can be found on the Institute's website:

http://www.hkci.org.hk/index_e.htm

EUROPE

Norwegian Church Academies

The annual meeting of The Norwegian church academies (NKA) was held at Granavolden (about one hour north of Oslo) from March 7th to 9th, 2003. 75 representatives from the member academies of NKA met to exchange experiences and ideas, and to discuss strategies for our work in the future. The main theme of the meeting this year was "Aesthetics and Ethics". The seminar programme included lectures, an exhibition, a concert and a slide presentation. There were also prayers and a service in the two medieval churches located at Granavolden called "the sister churches".

III➔ O I K O S N E T

Five new academies were accepted as members in the association. So at present there are 50 member groups in Norwegian church academies.

Eastern Consultation

The Eastern Consultation of EAALCE met from March 12th to 16th in Brasov, Kronstadt and in Sibiu, Hermannstadt, Romania with a good participation of 14 persons. Besides reviewing the situation of the centres in the Eastern region the consultation experienced the work of the Home of Hope (Brasov, Kronstadt) and of the Evangelische Akademie Siebenbürgen (Sibiu, Hermannstadt), where the group also had the chance to experience the situation and the work with the Roma minority.

Orthodox Academy Vilemov has its own wind turbine and extends its environmental programme

The wind turbine with the nominal output of 100kW was erected as one part of the Centre for Application of Renewable Energy Resources established by the Czech Orthodox Academy. The Centre now presents also functioning middle-size photovoltaic, solar thermal and biomass installations.

The wind turbine is the first wind turbine built after seven years in the Czech republic. The installation will probably open a new period of development for wind energy in the country and hopefully in all Eastern and Central Europe. The wind turbine has a rotor diameter of 21m and is placed on a tubular tower 33m high. It is expected to produce about 190.000 kWh per year . The energy production is taken by the Czech Southern Moravian Energy Company and the income would support the Orthodox Academy, and its Centre for Application of Renewable Energy. The wind turbine has already

provided the first kilowatts of clean energy into the grid and the official inauguration and blessing was on 3 May 2003. H. E. Archbishop of Prague Christoph as well as the Czech minister of Environment Mr. Libor Ambrozek and other personalities of ecumenical and public life participated in the event.

The Orthodox Academy Vilemov and its Centre for Application of Renewable Energy has organised many educational courses, seminars and conferences on environmental issues. Now the Centre hopes to extend its work and to provide practice-based consultancy on environmental issues and renewable energy applications for Churches, NGO's, local administrations and other interested organisations and individuals from the Czech Republic and from all Central and Eastern Europe.

MIDDLE EAST

International Center, Bethlehem

This September was a month we regarded with mixed feelings. On the one hand it was a month of great celebrations because of the openings of our new ad-Dar Cultural and Conference Center and Dar al-Kalima Health and Wellness Center; while on the other hand, we had experienced deep worries about an escalating conflict and tensions. We were inaugurating state of the art facilities with an enormous potential for Bethlehem and Palestine; while being haunted by a history of conflict, revenge and apartheid. We were worried that tensions might escalate at any minute and we might be forced to again postpone the opening of our new facilities. It happened to us twice before. We know what it means. It is like sitting on the top of an active volcano, not knowing when it will erupt again.

Living in this part of the world taught us to never take life for granted. Every day is a new gift. But it is exactly because of this that we insist on investing in a better future.

➡ *O I K O S N E T*

At a time when a wall of separation and apartheid is being built around Bethlehem we are here investing in people who dare to cross boundaries...

At a time when the Holy Land is suffering under the culture of violence we are here to proclaim that the power of culture is what is needed to transform a society and to empower a community...

At a time of destruction we invest in beauty...

At time of bombing and shelling we set new tunes, play new songs of freedom, justice, reconciliation and compassion...

And at time of great tribulations we create room for wellness and space for hope...

We appreciated the visit of many friends who came from far and near to be with us, to see the wall of apartheid encircling Bethlehem, but also to celebrate with us these grand openings. For our partners,

especially the Ministry of foreign Affairs in Finland and Wheat Ridge Ministries, and for many people here in Bethlehem, these two projects were a great dream come true, in a context where people are getting more and more exposed to nightmares. Yet we are not at our goal: One of the goals set for the coming two years is to work on the Wellness Center Part II, planting half a million plants and roses thus creating the biggest natural park in the Bethlehem region. All this aims for brighter and greener Bethlehem. Our biggest goals remain Justice, Peace and Reconciliation; these are just steps and stations on this road. People here are tired of hearing about a road map leading to no where. These small stations and celebrations give them space to breath on what it seems to be still a very long journey.

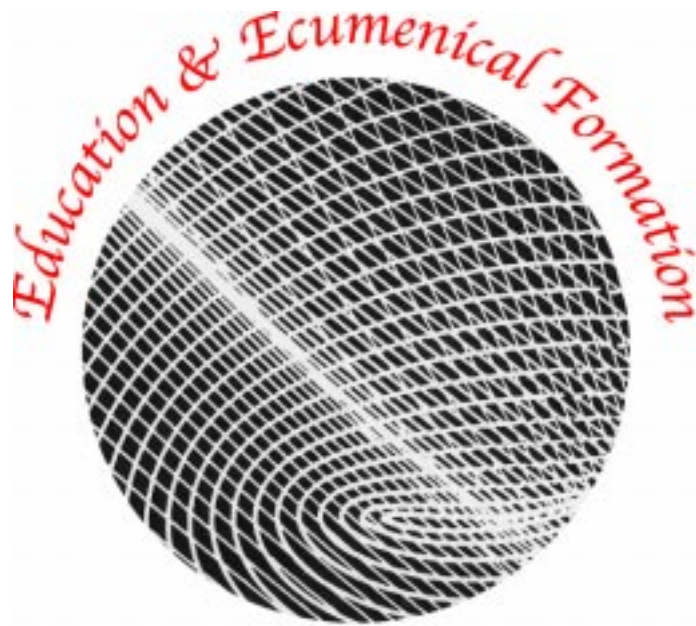
We invite you to visit our website and to experience for yourself the context, the facilities and ministries:

www.annadwa.org



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