



APRIL 2011

Together in Jesus Christ



Reception: Ecumenical Patriarch, His Holiness Bartholomew I receives members of the Global Christian Forum committee and discussion panel members at the recent GCF seminar held in Istanbul, Turkey.

theme, and out of it, a third plenary will intentionally, be Listening to What the Spirit is Saying to the Churches. As well as discussing changing trends, participants will listen to the experiences of the churches from across the world and will seek discern the further vision for the Global Christian Forum.

The invitations include representation from Christian World Communions, Ecumenical organizations, Evangelical/Pentecostal/Charismatic organizations, Orthodox Patriarchates, the Catholic Church, Regional Councils, Conferences, Alliances or Associations, and Churches, covering all geographic areas and all traditions, mega churches and migrant churches. Participants will include both women and men, both young people and more experienced leaders.

SECOND GLOBAL GATHERING TAKES SHAPE

At an important meeting in Istanbul, Turkey the GCF committee put into place final plans for the Second Global gathering to take place from the 4 – 7 of October, at Manado on the Indonesian island of Sulawesi. The central theme of the gathering is: Life Together in Jesus Christ, Empowered by the Holy Spirit. Some three hundred church leaders and representatives, comprising a 50-50 split between what could be conveniently called ‘Evangelical’ and ‘Traditional’ churches, have been invited. The makeup of the conference follows a set of principles used to ensure balance in representing the variety of world Christianity.

Two plenary sessions will work directly under the main

WORLD CHRISTIANITY IS CHANGING



In two days of fascinating discussion on the current profile of world Christianity, members of the GCF committee heard from no less than seven presenters on trends in Church life around the world. What emerged was a picture of the profound changes in the life of the church on a global scale. The most obvious change is the rising surge of new Christians in the southern hemisphere which is moving Christianity's centre of gravity to the south.

Statistics from the Atlas of Global Christianity told the story: “While 66 per-cent of all Christians lived in Europe in 1910, by 2010 only 25.6 per-cent lived there. By contrast, less than 2 per-cent of all Christians lived in Africa in 1910 skyrocketing to almost 22 per-cent by 2010. The Global North (defined as Europe and Northern America) contained over 80 per-cent of all Christians in 1910 falling to under 40 per-cent by 2010.”

Professor, Lamin Sanneh of Yale Divinity School said, “the crush of new converts is exposing painful shortcomings and inadequacies in the organizational strength of the Churches “.In spite of this stunning change “surviving mental habits still locate Christianity's intellectual and political gravity in Europe and North America”. He called for a new 'mental map' that recognised where the strength of the church now resides.

However, James F. Puglisi, SA looking at trends in the Roman Catholic Church, said, despite the North- South shift, on latest figures, the “ratio of Catholics in the global population has remained at about 16 per-cent, but includes a very slight element of growth.”He said, interestingly, one of the highest centres of growth for the Catholic Church is in French speaking Africa.He noted that the Catholic population in the US has kept pace with the South, but is due mainly to the large immigrant population from the South and the East.

A Protestant participant noted, that global shifts will mean big changes for Western orientated Protestant and reformed churches. Because North American and European cultures have increasingly become both ethnically and religiously diverse, their “local” mission is increasingly “global,” multicultural, and inter-religious in nature. He said, due to increasing secularisation of western and Latin cultures Europe, U.S., Latin America and Canada have become the new mission field.



Breadth: His Holiness Bartholomew 1 with General Secretary of the Asia Evangelical Alliance Richard Howell (left) and the representative of the World Evangelical Alliance Rolf Hille.

of the Bible. He said, although relations with the Government varies from friendly to hostile, “there is a working relationship.” Autonomous Christian communities (House Churches) are also growing rapidly - especially in rural China. Moreover, the whole church in China is largely a lay led movement.

Widening and continuing this discussion on the changes and implications of the church worldwide, will be a key feature of the forthcoming Second Global Gathering in Indonesia in October.



GCF SECRETARIAT AND COMMITTEE

At its meeting on 27 – 28 January in Istanbul, Turkey, the GCF Committee took several decisions concerning the Secretariat and the Committee .

The Committee received with gratitude a proposal from the Rev. Kim Cain, in Australia, to help the GCF free of charge in the area of communication, and appointed him as Communication Assistant. Cain is a former Director of Communication for the Uniting Church in Australia, his denomination. The Committee also appointed Ms. Joy Lee from Grand Rapids, USA as part-time Administrative Secretary, especially for the gathering in Indonesia.

The Revd. Aiah Foday-Khabenje, General Secretary of the Association of Evangelicals in Africa was appointed as member of the committee, replacing the Revd. Judy Mbugua who resigned last year. A proposal to appoint a woman from Latin America was also accepted, in order to strengthen the regional and gender representation of the committee. It is hoped that a decision can be taken soon.

In another action, the committee decided to form a leadership team of three committee members. The team is comprised of Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, Kathryn Johnson and Nicta Lubaale. Its main task will be to help with key aspects of the organization of the second global gathering in Indonesia. The mandate of the team runs until the meeting of the committee scheduled for 26 – 28 January 2012, when decisions about the appointment of officers will be taken.



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