

Repent the kingdom is near ... (Matt. 3:2)
Preparing the way for Counter-creating mission

CWME Director's Report July 2024

Warm greetings to the first in-person gathering of the WCC Commission for World Mission and Evangelism meeting in Nairobi. I am delighted to share this report as one of the materials to resource and inform our gathering. The meeting is, however, largely focused on the wisdom, witness, and stirring you as Commissioners bring as we meet.

We meet acknowledging the Traditional Owners, *Olosho le Maa*, the Maasai Nation, who were the traditional owners of Nairobi. We pay respect to their ancestors *Naiteru kop*, founder of this Land on which we meet today. We pay our respect to their Ancestors and Elders, past and present, and celebrate the diversity of Indigenous peoples and their ongoing cultures and connections to the lands and waters. We also acknowledge and pay our respects to our Indigenous people/colleagues joining us today.

We come hopefully and humbly into this land, mindful of the richness and pride of this land and its peoples, ready and prepared to receive from their witness to God's Spirit ceaselessly at work to renew and transform. Our gathering in Africa is intentional as we root ourselves in the commissioning CWME received, also on Maasai land, in Arusha, Tanzania at the Conference on World Mission in 2018, to be transforming disciples.

Repent! Empire is still here ...

The Arusha call offers us a vision and a praxis for discipleship which is a "Christ-connected way of life in a world where many face despair, rejection, loneliness, and worthlessness." This is because we live under "a global financial system, which enriches few and impoverishes many" which is at the root of many of today's wars, conflicts, ecological devastation, and suffering. "This global imperial system has ... strengthened cultures of domination and discrimination that continue to marginalize and exclude millions, forcing some among us into conditions of vulnerability and exploitation."

The need, demand, and embodiment of this transforming discipleship has been very clear in Kenya in these recent days as has its unmasking of imperial power, at the cost of at least 37 lives. The following statement comes from the Gen-Z movement which has confronted the Kenyan state and reveals the global system of empire overarching it:

Dear Ambassadors and High Commissioners

Excuse our emotions. During a time when leaders enjoyed opulence funded by tax payers' money, your silence was notable. You invited our outgoing President multiple times to your countries for discussions you could hold online and for loans we did not approve. When a voice was needed, you did not rise to the occasion. Now you position yourselves as friends and partners. We know you. You are the main reason we are in problems. As we speak 400 of our men have gone to Haiti to die. You charge exorbitant fees for visa applications for Africans,

whether successful or not. No African country charges you for Language tests. Our senior leaders who we refer to as puppets have entertained you for long. Well, say 'Hello to Gen-Z'.

You say you are shocked by the violence, yet you take sides at the same time. The challenges we face today stem from your collective and various historical decisions, such as the division of Africa and the creation of senseless African borders, for which we are yet to see any public acknowledgement or remorse. Current leaders have continued the legacy left by colonization, adhering to its modernized framework. Did you practice civic engagement during colonial times? No. Did you call for restraint to encourage peaceful solutions. No.

Please excuse as we reorganise our house.

Kenyans

This brief message which speaks truth to power gives a fresh edge to the Arusha call. Like Arusha, it names the neo-colonial system and exposes the historic and contemporary interests that drive it and which prey on the people. Its bold call to transformation is all the more powerful because of the call it makes for repentance. A call missing from Arusha. They make clear that the former colonial nations and the structures, systems, profits, and allies they have nurtured must confess and change. These centres of wealth and power must be turned inside out by the realities of those living through the marginalisation, oppression, and death they cause. We are praying that the decisions of the president to address the calls of the Gen-Z movement are part of a shift which brings pressure, not on the Kenyan system, but the global system and its chief architects and recipients.

This then speaks to us, who are Ambassadors for Christ, (2 Cor. 5:20), who make up a commission situated asymmetrically in this global system but still making claims for unity and transformation. The power and danger of "Unity" language is its capacity to conceal the inequities with which we live and from which many die. Unity could be seen as the partner and product of the 20th century decolonisation movements, or its counterpart. Some Christian communities have thought to cheaply heal the colonial wounds by announcing the transformation God intends is that we are one in Christ. But in practice, Unity language silences certain voices, disrupts justice struggles, and "smooths" out the asymmetries on which empire thrives. The ecumenical movement has, at times, been faithful to exposing these asymmetries and yet nothing has changed—perhaps because our churches have not been converted to seek to be a counter to them.

The gross inequalities of wealth, health provision, education, all the so-called benefits of historic empire continue to mean in our body as a people, we leave unconfessed and unchallenged the sins empire continues to visit to the seventh generation. Climate change, one of the most profound colonial wounds, continues to demand of us a transformation, especially those "us" whose nations, systems and lifestyles drive its worst impacts on those least responsible. In such circumstances Gen-Z are posing to use what it would look like if the transformation God intends is that the first were last ... (Matt 20:16, Mark 9:35)

Please excuse us as we repent (reorganise) our house ...

This conclusion sends us to the self-transformation that is intended in the Arusha vision of transforming disciples. Christ's disciples are also recipients of transformation; we are drawn into the mission of God as agents with others, but we are also its subjects. We also need to receive John's message of repenting and discovering the kingdom is near, Matt. 3:2. As such the discipleship model for churches is not to claim to be Christlike, but to be John-like, Mary-like, Zacchaeus-like. The mission call for metanoia, repentance, is aimed at empire, but also at ourselves. Mission praxis, thinking, institutions are also included in the system change of metanoia. The WCC 11th Assembly has asked

us, with others, to seek mission system change: *To fully seek the unity and mission of the church, colonisation and systemic injustices must be addressed and our models of mission and unity framed to bring reparation and reconciliation.* We will reach this as we seek to nurture the conditions from which God's counter creation breaks out.

The ecumenical movement is an attempt to reorganise the Church's house as a place and people of common witness and visible unity who seek through our walking and witnessing together to prompt a wider Pilgrimage of Justice, Reconciliation, and Unity. John is sent on this pilgrimage by the Holy Spirit, announced and discerned by these words of his father ...

And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High;
for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him,
⁷⁷ to give his people the knowledge of salvation
through the forgiveness of their sins,
⁷⁸ because of the tender mercy of our God,
by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven
⁷⁹ to shine on those living in darkness
and in the shadow of death,
to guide our feet into the path of peace.

Zechariah speaks of a witness and a discipleship which is powerful and tender, which is visibly merciful and moves with a common vision of salvation as liberation. This prepares the way for One who comes from the margins of light and dark to counter (and unmask) empire's shadow with a quality of being that shines.

For many of us in CWME the term pilgrimage is problematic as it is rooted in the colonial journeys of European Christians and Armies to trespass on territories they declared empty and steal from inhabitants they declared were not human and needed the civilisation of White European Christian culture. So, the feet of those who trespassed (and trespass still) need to take particular directions now if they are to be guided into the path of peace. The EIP Network is then going to be vital in leading the way ahead for CWME, especially in terms of the routes and methods we need to take towards healing colonial wounds.

Repent! The Kingdom (Counter creation) is near!

The Spirit of counter-creation is upon us. Luke conceives of Jesus and the community of Jesus as Spirit led. This echoes again the creation – counter-creation perspective. Luke 4: 16 – 21 has Jesus call on the Spirit's power to announce the new world and new community of justice and peace. His rather useless disciple Peter claims the same Spirit for the post-resurrection community in Acts 2: 17 – 21 building on the prophesy of Joel 2: 28 – 32. A prophesy Mary had so fully embodied (Luke 1: 46-56) and the Ethiopian Eunuch immediately intuited (Acts 8: 26 – 40). These texts, which seem to be the voices of individuals, are narrating the call of communities, Counter-creative communities. These are the narratives of communities living literally *below* the Imperial edifice, in the catacombs, bakehouses and washrooms of the Empire. They stem from the *Deus extra machina*, who does not hold the whole thing together in a pyramid of perfection but brings it all tumbling down like the Second Temple.

Mission is rooted in Counter-creative communities who are *in* Empire but not *of* Empire. CWME has been reaching for a vision of this in terms of transforming discipleship. But, surely it is dishonest to assume or assert that the Church is by definition counter-creative, self-evidently *in* Empire but not *of* Empire. Our mission histories show just one element of how Church and Empire have been in alliance.

It is also clear that what has been counter-creative and counter-Imperial in the colonial mission period has not been the (white) missionary coming from the centre but the ways the texts and Spirit of Jesus shared in making "the natives" restless at the margins.

This is uncovering a notion of Evangelism from the Margins. This is to restore and "re-story" evangelism as an act of advocacy, the announcement of change and transformation by those who refuse to accept they should be excluded and marginalised. We have seen this in Gen-Z here in Kenya. The church thinks of itself as centre and this always skews and compromises its relationship to Religion, Power, and Empire. This vision of evangelism is to invite a *Deus extra Machina*, a *Deus extra Ecclesia*. Evangelism from the margins begins with looking to marginalised communities with hope as the locations in which Jesus speaks. Evangelism from the margins is asking "What visions and messages of Good News are marginalised communities inviting?" Evangelism from the margins is asking "What alternative worlds are marginalised communities inviting?" Evangelism from the margins is asking "What and to whom are we being converted and out of where are we being called?" Evangelism from the margins is asking "What will a Church led by the poor do and be?" This would prompt a Reformation, not of the church, which is the least important outcome to imagine, but of all our systems of epistemology, politics, and public life. In the company of such evangelists, it becomes clear that the counter-creation has begun and it is all around us and longs for the subversion, conversion, and inclusion of empire's many centres. It is also clear that these first fruits of new creation are tender and easily trampled, and do not grow through the mechanisms and strategies empire employs to colonise and take territory.

Being new creations, living the counter new creation now

The first stage in our work as a commission is growing in the Arusha Spirit, to respond to the challenges of the WCC 11th Assembly, and frame Transforming Discipleship as decolonial discipleship. This is to make more explicit the transformational action of God's Spirit at work amongst us in Mission. This mission pneumatology will become a key area of our work to discern and articulate. If we need a biblical shorthand to the work of decolonisation it is to live out the new creation now, to counter the disorder of empire today with the counter creativity of God's new creation.

The vision of a new creation offers us a means for decolonising the present and the future, for disputing the claims of empire that this is how things must be. We find it encoded in Paul's vision of Christian discipleship which was rooted not in empire, but in the new creation: So, if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! (2 Cor 5:17). And that discipleship was a manifestation of a counter citizenship which was selectively offered by Rome, (Philippians 3:20). The early Church found that this counter citizenship was best embodied amongst those empire despised and denied, amongst the washer women, bakers, enslaved people and foreigners.

Celsus, the Roman philosopher and scourge of Christians wrote:

the following are the rules laid down by the Christians: Let no one come to us who has been instructed, or who is wise or prudent (for such qualifications are deemed evil by us); but if there be any ignorant, or unintelligent, or uninstructed, or foolish persons, let them come with confidence. By which words, acknowledging that such individuals are worthy of their God, they manifestly show that they desire and are able to gain over only the silly, and the mean, and the stupid, with women and children."...

We see, indeed, in private houses workers in wool and leather, and fullers, and persons of the most uninstructed and rustic character, not venturing to utter a word in the presence of their

elders and wiser masters; but when they get hold of the children privately, and certain women as ignorant as themselves, they pour forth wonderful statements only foolish and low individuals, and persons devoid of perception, and slaves, and women, and children, of whom the teachers of the divine word wish to make converts.

Raimundo C. Barreto Jr reminds us amongst whom the new creation is coming when he comments in a 2021 WCC seminar on the future of ecumenism:

The meaning of unity, reconciliation, and mission nowadays cannot be discerned apart from the recentring of those voices and realities. It is not merely a matter of including previously excluded subjects but an imperative to dislodge the Christendom mentality prevalent in the early modern ecumenical movement and recentre those voices that were once silenced. In other words, it means that we must rethink ecumenism in decolonial terms. As we revisit the idea of unity and reconciliation from an ecumenical perspective in the 21st century, it is important to take into account the pluriversal nature of the contemporary world – a “world of many worlds.”¹

EDAN, like EIP is key to this for CWME. EDAN 25 is being marked as the ecumenical movement revisits its calling to be decolonising and counter-imperial. If you read the forthcoming May 2024 edition of International Review of Mission you will find Rev. Kendrick Kemp’s article: Liberating the Colonized Body and Mind, where he writes from a perspective of a Black Liberation Theology of Disability. There he writes that there is no racism/ableism without colonialism, without the means of hierarchical ordering that keeps the “undesirable” bodies in their place at the bottom of society. EDAN is sending us all again to dismantle the forces which keep people with disabilities at the bottom of society and the church. The ecumenical movement is challenged to honour the gift of people with disabilities, to commit the resources, platform, and energy which can bring forward the next generation of church leaders with disabilities and to cast out the disabling spirits and systems of empire in our midst.

Decolonial directions: discerning our tasks

Gen-Z reveals how empire stills preys on those countries that won political freedom through the 20th century. So, CWME should consider locating decoloniality as fundamentally our work of creating counter communities and realities to those of empire through witness and faith which disrupts empire systems outside and within us. The impact of climate catastrophe, the sweep of xenophobic nationalisms, the ever-increasing wealth inequities, the inability to see a dawn of God’s tender love all are rooted in global and local powers, histories, systems, and interests which God calls out to repent. The biblical witness gives many parables of decoloniality, especially because it is framed in the ancient empires of Rome, Egypt and Israel’s partial complicities in them. These parables, be they first last, new creation etc all have implications for all Christian churches, especially for our practices of power.

Nevertheless, there has been understandable suspicion of the reappearance of this term. Churches from decolonised contexts see this as a re-colonial agenda when raised by Western agencies, seeing it as a further manifestation of the imposition of White superiority and progressive “agendas” on human rights. Some churches in the former colonial contexts see it as a one-way ticket to guilt trips and reparation. Some churches don’t accept they are situated in the colonial matrix. And yet there are a range of churches and mission agencies using this term to describe their work, which they are tending to do in isolation.

¹ Raimundo C. Barreto Jr The Challenge for Christian Unity and Reconciliation Today from a Decolonial Perspective IRM Volume 111 • Number 1 • May 2022

In my view the focus is not on being de-colonial, but on being counter-colonial. Many of you are at the forefront of this because of the issues you face and the historic injustices and current harms which entangle your communities. Thus, the task is not about working from social theory but working for system change. Our best way to frame such system change is to centre ourselves in the biblical tradition, which is itself deeply counter-colonial. Also, it is to situate ourselves as those who rise up and with those who rise up against the marginalising forces which deny the unity of God's counter-creative Spirit.

Insofar as this is being raised in the global North, it is coming from those diaspora communities who need the solidarities of their root and their home communities. For example, I am pretty sure no White institution is seeking this work without having been converted by Black experience and leadership in their context. So, counter-colonisation is first good news for the former current colonial bodies and peoples. This is salvation as liberation knocking at the door, a further sign of Mission from the margins decentring and recentring the colonial centres.

So, our eyes are set on action first from some key locations across the global North as the counter-colonial act of putting the first last takes shape. This has implications for churches and mission agencies, some of whom are engaging on their historic sins. Yet the heart of this empire lies in systems beyond churches and so it can only be accomplished as these conversions send transforming disciples to stand against the logic, interests, and profits of nation states and international financial organisations, who as Gen-Z points out are the real recipients of God's message of metanoia.

However, if counter-colonial work is to happen in the global North, how can it not be accompanied by those in the global South? This will be key to the conviviality of the Spirit's new creative power at work in us. This would be common witness indeed. The task is enormous and can only be risked in the heart of the new creation/community we believe the Spirit stirs. Empire's occupation of the human community has only prospered hatred and division, and this calls for new forms of human self-understanding, community, and cooperation and for situating unity and mission clearly amongst and for all those who are excluded and dehumanised.

Empire's occupation of the earth has triggered an almost irredeemable climate catastrophe which the new creation will not magically undo. Mission that does not salve the colonial wound of climate change is sinful. Putting the first last implies a new set of belongings which interrupt the colonial modes and hierarchies of belonging, like race, class, gender, caste, sexuality, ability. It challenges us to "un-belong" to the roles and locations empire has given us and to the logics they impose. This is to know to which Spirit we belong and to signify it through our life and witness. (Luke 9: 55)

The epistemicide of coloniality needs to be addressed. The alienation from concepts, practices, and wisdom through which God is known is a form of spiritual violence still being perpetuated. Addressing this takes tangible, real form beyond the conceptual, and that is, not least, in terms of land return. Those who pray to the Lord, "Forgive us our trespasses" must also address and retrace our trespassing, and pilgrimaging. This is to centre Mission not on colonial models of church growth, nor on interculturality, but on reparative justice. While Belhar has made a confession of racism as a sin, racism is itself a product of the deeper systemic sin of colonialism, which the ecumenical movement has not confessed. Yet.

Witness to Christ's counter creation in word and deed by collaborating in communities of change

Our initial online discussions of this theme as a Commission all pointed to a weariness with words and a desire that our work should be about taking action. We are about mission after all. Thus, we are meeting in person with this as our aim. The working groups will offer us a space to deepen this further

and we have our hosts to inspire us with the witness and leadership AACC offers on confronting empire's powers with its confident assertion of Africa's voice. We are at the beginning of our work on this and have many opportunities to consider and create, not least the World Mission Conference we are slating for 2028. So, let's continue to honour and build on the profound work of Arusha continuing to be expectant of and intentional in what God's people can be part of when we gather in common witness in the face of empire.

Final remarks

Seeking Collaborations

We are seeking critical partners for the work and Commissioners are vital to this. We are experiencing many financial and relational challenges to our work and so we will be seeking the individual and corporate advocacy of Commissioners. We have begun conversations with the Vatican, the WEA and PWF to see how we can deepen our partnership by inviting joint mission action together in local communities. In addition to the contribution you are making individually into the work of the Commission, please consider how organizationally the church or organization you represent can partner the work and take the agenda further than our individual resources allow.

Financial concerns

Unfortunately, financial issues continue to pose organizational and operational challenges to the WCC. We need your wisdom and creativity as we try to discover what methods and outputs we should be seeking when we can no longer afford to bring people to the round of meetings all round the world. It is not clear that the working groups will be able to meet in person as we have in the past so we have to continue to develop better ways to be creative together online. We also need Commissioners to be proactive with their member churches to meet the cost of our in person gathering in 2026. Our event this year has outstripped our budget considerably, so, where your church has not supported us, please do consider how you might encourage them to contribute to this cost more fully.

Deep thanks

The report bears witness to the many collaborations at the heart of the work we are doing. The CWME team continue to lead our ways forward and to adjust to the quirks of a new director. WCC colleagues have warmly embraced the opportunity to collaborate and tie our work together in common witness. My thanks of course to you as Commissioners who give an inspiring community amongst whom to develop and deepen this work and especially to the members of the planning group, and our moderator, Michael, who encourages, guides, and inspires as well as embodies so much of what we are seeking to do together.

Rev Dr Peter Cruchley
03/07/2024

Programme Reports 2023-2024:

Decolonial Mission Project

Staff lead: Peter

This first year of the work has focused on two key ideas, that we frame Transforming Discipleship as decolonial disciples and mission as an act of reparative justice. Two seminars were held in 2023 in partnership with Dr Masiwa Gunda Programme Executive for Overcoming Racism, Xenophobia and related discriminations. The first was in Lisbon in June addressing mission and decolonisation and the second in December in London on reparation. Papers given in Lisbon were carried in the Nov 2023 edition of International Review of Mission.

These meetings pointed to some follow up areas of work:

Create and convene a network, and deepen input especially: Africa, Asia, Latin America and Pacific, mission society partners and invite WCC GS to speak out and into this work

(Conversations have begun with the mission societies and affiliated bodies that will be the seeds of this. Also conversations have begun with Latin American partners and global communions to develop Latin American perspectives on Mission and evangelism)

Decolonising churches gathering

Gathering those who are working on this agenda and connect those who could be challenged to address this work so mutual learning and accompaniment can help take the work further.

(Approaches have been made to a small group to develop this)

Engage in UN processes

Participate in the November 2024 UN meeting on reparations in Jamaica.

Identify additional UN mechanisms for engagement (such as the Business and Human Rights Group) noting what countries are coming up around the UN Universal Periodic Review; UN Special Rapporteur on Truth, Justice, and Reparations and working directly with member churches to leverage the WCC member church's impact with the UN Strengthen the UN Reparations Declaration

Develop principles of mission as reparatory justice. Naming principles of apology and reparation, recognising that churches act of repair may inspire national reparations, but that acts or reparation must fit to specific events and actions, properly researched and named. Highlight key issue of land within reparation settlements

Revisit Bible and decolonisation with the United Bible Societies and others.

(A seminar is planned later this year to map this out)

Nicaea: Living the Apostolic Faith today. The commemoration of Nicaea 2025 offers an opportunity to explore Apostolic faith from the perspectives and traditions of the Ancestors as well as offer decolonial perspectives on the creed and the making of creeds.

(IRM will address this in November 2024 and May 2025 and collaboration with F&O has led to the global conference also having a mission focus and plenary)

Consider what it means to be 'Human being after empire'. The intersectionality of the issues we are addressing speak to the ways colonisation continues to indwell human identities and systems. A conversation needs to be developed on Decolonial human identity which can address these dimensions of human identity as well as the alienation from creation and the issues of AI.

(I have been invited to participate in member church conversations on sexual identities as a dimension of mission from the margins and IRM in May 2025 will bring gender perspectives on Nicaea. Work is also beginning on intergenerational trauma with colleagues in the Health and Healing team and member church partners)

Highlight and critique Missionary Christian Whiteness

Address mission spirituality which addresses:

The Spirit(uality) which sustains and empowers us for the work

The Spirit(uality) which converts and convicts

What is the Spirit(uality) that leads to repentance and brings those who owe to repair?

The Spirit(uality) which Casts out Colonial Spirit of the shitstem

Address spiritual violence

Consider how this connects into the economic and ecological justice work of the ecumenical movement and Zacchaeus Tax proposals

Consider the opportunities for Theological Education engagement, especially including the Bossey Ecumenical Institute and the opportunities it gives to invest in the vital theological work of EDAN and EIP.

Transforming Disciples: Young Black European perspectives.

A group of young Black European Christians gathered in Nov 2023 young people, from Belgium, Germany, Italy, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland and UK, met in person to begin to explore the issues they want to raise with European churches, ecumenical and mission institutions. Their discussions covered issues of identity, belonging, racial injustice, colonisation and decolonisation as the group reflected on their experience as 'Transforming discipleship'. The group came from diverse Church backgrounds passionate about their faith and their identity wanting to explore and express their vision of common witness informed by the realities and gifts of being young Black European Christians. They have hopes and challenges for the WCC:

'I hope WCC can help Christian Europeans with African descent to come together for exchanging experiences, knowledge and resources that can help us grow in our faith and in our social action. I hope we can mobilize to transform our churches and society towards battling colonialism, neo-colonialism, racism and minority stress that affect our lives and well-being. I also want to contextualize liberation theology from a black European perspective in the 21st Century, and explore how it can inspire us to do our common witness as Christians better in a changing world'.

Transforming Discipleship Podcasts

Member churches are asking for mission resources and seek further insight into the post Arusha model of ecumenical mission. Following a trial run conversation with the Sankofa Collective in UK, we are planning a series of videos and podcasts based on conversations with groups engaged in transforming discipleship and the insights this can bring to our concepts of decoloniality, evangelism and mission from the margins. Following Commission input plans will develop with colleagues in Communications to deliver a number of these resources.

ECUMENICAL INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' NETWORK (EIPN)

ACTIVITY REPORT: MARCH 2023-JULY 2024

Staff lead: Lori

Reference Group

Seventeen people were recruited to form the EIPN Reference Group. It has had two on line meetings for orientation and community building. Members will gather in person in Geneva in October 2024. This meeting will include a presentation from staff of the Churches' Commission on International Affairs on how the WCC engages in advocacy through the UN system.

UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII)

Even before the reference group began meeting, five of its members participated in a hybrid online/in person meeting in December with the Indigenous programme consultant and WCC United Nations staff in New York to begin developing a strategy for engagement with the UNPFII. Members of partner churches participated. This led to a three-person delegation of reference group Moderator Mari Valjakka, member Juan Chavez, and Lori Ransom attending the UNPFII meeting in April 2024. Supported by WCC UN staff, the team led a worship service at the Church Centre in New York with US church partners. The service was simulcast over Facebook to some 40 people who got up very early in Hawaii to watch. The [delegation spent a week in New York](#) attending the Forum and various side events. The delegation also participated in a two-day consultation organized by the World Communion of Reformed Churches for Indigenous peoples from North and South America. EIPN plans to return to the Permanent Forum in April 2025 and hopes to be able to offer a side event, perhaps in collaboration with ecumenical partners. The value of attending UNPFII every year is an open question as participation is expensive. The delegation proposes to develop a WCC statement supporting Indigenous spirituality which could be made at the Forum to coincide with the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in 2027.

Seminar and Publication on Indigenous spirituality, Land Rights, and Climate Change

Immediately following the reference group meeting in October, EIPN will hold a seminar on the above noted topic. The seminar is a collaborative initiative with the German Foreign Ministry which is funding it and an associated publication. Members of the reference group were invited to submit proposals for content. Eleven of twelve proposals ranging from academic papers, to poetry, and video were selected for the publication. The latter will be web-based and must be completed by the end of 2024.

Commission on Climate Change and Sustainable Development (CCCSD)

EIPN and CCCSD staff have collaborated closely since a joint meeting in Taiwan in 2019. This included staff participation in the CCCSD's inaugural meeting in March 2024; attendance at a seminar on spiritual approaches to climate justice in Sri Lanka in October 2023; and ongoing support to the WCC's Indigenous COP and climate network.

Activities and Plans on Evangelism

Fall 2023 to end of 2024

Staff lead: Kiki

1. Evangelism in Theological Education

A consultation was organized on Evangelism in Theological Education and Missiological Formation In Latin America in Lima, Peru 11-16 October 2023. Co-organizer and local host was the Centro Evangélico de Misiología Andino Amazónica (CEMAA). The consultation brought together about 20

academics, young theologians and practitioners engaging on evangelism across Latin America. The consultation provided the space for constructive dialogue on the challenges, new possibilities and the potential cooperation among faculties and networks in different Latin American contexts with regard to evangelism in theological education and training. That objective was met, as by the end of the consultation, participants were considering and planning on concrete channels for interdenominational cooperation for the promotion of Christian witness in Latin America.

2. Contribution to relations between the WCC and Pentecostals

The Joint Consultative Group between the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the Pentecostal World Fellowship (PWF) – following the deliberations of Karlsruhe Assembly in 2022 the JCG embarks on its fourth round of work (2023-2030). This round we will build on the previous theme: “Transforming Discipleship and the Work of the Holy Spirit” with the focus on: “Believing Together and Doing Together.”

The Executive Group of JCG met 28-30 November 2023, at the Ecumenical Institute of Bossey.

3. Youth and Transforming Discipleship

Youth as agents of Transforming Discipleship, is a direction we are building on, as we are looking towards the end of the year. The activity will be jointly organized with the program executive of WCC on Youth, estimating to have an initial (or more) meeting online hoping for an in-person event as well in the next period of time.

4. Evangelism in Praxis

Evangelism in Praxis, as a series of hands-on engagement of evangelism work focusing on specific contexts. Hosted by, and co-organizing the event with the Methodist Church of New Zealand coming Autumn, the theme of this event is about the transformation of the Love of God into Justice for humanity and Creation alike.

5. Evangelism and Migration

Given the urgency for most churches to respond to migration on a local inasmuch as global scale, and in partnership with CCME we have initiated a dialogue, unpacking the multiple layers of this global reality. Committed to your common call to welcome the stranger, the plan is to have an in-person meeting that will be organized in the European context in the first half of 2025.

EDAN Report to CWME meeting in 2024

Staff lead: Anjeline

The activities of EDAN since June 2023 when the Commission was set up have been through disability inclusion as a contribution to deepening the ecumenical missiology's calls for justice, healing, and unity thus further contributing to moving churches towards visible unity as transforming disciples around a broadening, intergenerational table. This involves accompanying the member churches we work with towards inclusion.

1. Theological Consultations

All the trainings for church leaders in Africa and Asia used *The Gift of Being: Called to be a Church of All and for All Study Material* during the bible study sessions..

- **A study on enhancing Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Church Life**

The study established practices within churches that have demonstrated true inclusion in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. The practices established formed the basis of developing impactful advocacy strategies and messages to promote inclusion of persons with disabilities in church life.

- **Capacity building and empowerment workshop for youth with disabilities in Africa**

This was planned under Advocacy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities project. The workshop was intended to introduce young people with disabilities to the ecumenical movement as well as equip them with advocacy skills to engage other young people as well as their churches in matters liturgy and in the development work of the churches. This workshop took place alongside the All-Africa Conference of Churches 12th Assembly in Abuja, Nigeria from 19th - 22nd November. This was the first regional ecumenical gathering to open doors for youth with disabilities to participate as official delegates and first joined the youth pre-assembly and facilitated a side event organised by EDAN on People with Disability in Church and Society. The side event was attended by more than 60 people.

- **Advocacy workshops on creating just and disability inclusive church communities**

Three initiatives (workshops, trainings and seminars) on creating just and disability inclusive church communities were held in South Africa, Indonesia and India. This involves facilitating the creation of networks in our churches to talk/think about disability by supporting individuals and communities through integrating contextual bible study, interpretation and application of scriptures, spiritual beliefs and practices and the quest for a just and inclusive community while establishing inclusive sacred spaces in these churches. In India, the workshop focused on disability and peace.

2. Promoting and protecting the rights of persons with disabilities.

- **Advocacy seminars with organisations of persons with disabilities to promote implementation of the CRPD in the Caribbean.** These were conducted to introduce them to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the EDAN document "The Gift Being: becoming a church of all and for all." A training of church leaders and organisations of persons with disabilities was held in Trinidad and Tobago which brought participants from 11 Caribbean Churches. The training exposed church leaders to the convention on the rights of persons with disabilities and explored ways in which the church can promote the implementation of the convention in the Caribbean region.

- **Creation of a centre of excellence on disability inclusive Sexual Reproductive Health services at Selian Lutheran Mission Hospital in Tanzania.**

- **Wealth of Care Wealth of Knowledge** aimed at Faith leaders, researchers and development partners joined by women with disabilities and Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania for peer-to-peer learning on human rights of women and girls on ensuring faith actors play their role in ensuring access to services for women especially women and girls with disabilities.

- **National Dialogues on Disability inclusion in climate change policies and programmes in Burundi and Rwanda.**

- **Improved realisation and access of the SRHR of girls and women with disabilities in a safe environment .**

3. Position papers on key themes

- Two policy briefs were prepared by churches and organisations of persons with disabilities on disability inclusion in climate change policies and programmes in Rwanda. These policies were used to inform the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning process on 2 National Transformation Strategy (NST2).
- National Council of Churches India affiliated churches together with disability-affirming movements developed guidelines aimed at assisting churches and institutions in effectively addressing the needs of persons with disabilities during periods of conflict and disaster. These were recommended to the affiliated member churches to use the guidelines to mainstream disability in their response to disaster and conflict.
- In Indonesia, a pre-survey undertaken revealed that there was need to first sensitize clergy on disability and disability inclusion before guidelines could be developed. The best practices from these churches formed the basis for developing disability inclusive guidelines in Indonesia.
- Anglican Church of Southern Africa, Church of Christ in Africa – Presbyterian Community of Kinshasa and Nigerian Baptist Convention developed and resolved to use guidelines on mainstreaming disability to facilitate inclusion and acceptance of persons with disabilities in the church and communities. Anglican Church of South Africa has made a recommendation to the highest decision-making body to adopt the guidelines as a policy when it meets later in 2024.
- Anglican Church in Burundi (Green Anglicans), Friends Church in Burundi, Presbyterian Church in Rwanda committed to including persons with disabilities in their climate change programmes. Their work has also influenced Caritas and Lillianne Fonts to start mainstreaming disability in climate change programmes.
- One of Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT) hospital namely Selian Lutheran has mainstreamed disability in sexual and reproductive health services offered at the hospital. It has become a centre of learning for other hospitals in Tanzania on how to offer disability inclusive SRH services.
- Disabled People International Caribbean intensified advocacy on ratification, implementation, and monitoring of CRPD in the Caribbean. It is currently developing a reporting mechanism to consistently track the progress (or otherwise) of national governments in meeting their commitments under UN CRPD.