

Joint Working Group 2019 Plenary Communique

The Joint Working Group (JWG) between the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) and the World Council of Churches (WCC) met in Lyon, France for its annual plenary session from 2-5 September 2019. The meeting was hosted at Centre Jean Bosco which is owned and run by the Order of Don Bosco (Salesians), a Catholic Order devoted to working with youth.

The two Co-moderators, Catholic Archbishop of Dublin and Primate of Ireland Diarmuid Martin and Metropolitan and Archbishop Nifon of Targoviste from the Romanian Orthodox Church, presided over the meeting which included sharing from the participants, the WCC and Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU), and from the Faith and Order Commission, and receiving the papers of the two writing groups. The sharing of the participants was connected to the JWG mandate and the two focus areas of peace building and migration. The moderators included acknowledgement of the ecumenical contributions and passing of Rev. Robina Winbush who served on the JWG for five years and enriched the group with her sharp analysis and loving spirit.

As a part of its work, the JWG spent time in Lyon visiting with ecumenical leaders and members of the community. A visit to the Cathedral showed the local history of Christianity which can be dated back to Saint Irenaeus. The JWG was encouraged to see how the international initiatives such as the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, which became wide-spread through the work of Abbe Paul Couturier, is a part of ecumenical life and observed annually. The ecumenical community spoke of its work with students and refugees, and of its connection with the Global Christian Forum which is realised locally as the Francophone Christian Forum. The JWG and local ministers engaged in prayer and fellowship.

The WCC and the RCC representatives provided exchange of experiences which related to the JWG mandate and the two focus areas of migration and peace building. The participants highlighted the political contexts in India, China, Uganda, USA, South and Central America and parts of Europe, framing the changing political situations which are affecting migration and ecumenical life as Christians attempt to respond to the challenges and opportunities presented by the two focus areas. Attention was also given to engaging young people in peace building and issues of migration.

Churches and communities continue to plan and implement peace building initiatives and migration programmes in response to the way these challenges are manifested in different parts of the world. There was a noticeable connection between migration and the socio-political climate in countries that traditionally welcomed and received migrants in Europe and North America.

The JWG mandate and the related transversal issues offers the opportunity for theological reflection and concrete recommendations for the ecumenical community for cooperation. Input was solicited from outside experts whose contributions are reflected in the documents. The JWG will offer these documents to the WCC and RCC for reception and action on these vital issues of our time. The work of the JWG will be reported to the WCC 11th Assembly in 2021 through the JWG tenth report under the title: *Walking, Praying and Working Together*.