



# Global Christian Forum

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## GCF Newsletter: September 2022

We are delighted to share updates from this busy season of the Global Christian Forum. Even as the Covid-19 pandemic continues to make travel and large gatherings uncertain, GCF is moving forward with its work of promoting Christian unity and dialogue. We continue to ask the question: "who is not at the table?" so we may more faithfully include all who follow Jesus Christ.

We thank God for your faithful commitment to the work of hope and Christian unity fostered by GCF, and we hold you in prayer always.

May the love of Jesus Christ surround and uphold you through every season of your journey.





## GCF Global Gathering 2024

It is with great joy and excitement that GCF announces the details of the next Global Gathering which will take place April 15-19, 2024 in Accra, Ghana. The theme of the gathering will be "That the World May Know..." from John 17:23b.



Fr Andrzej Choromański (far left), Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Saucă (center left), Rev. Dr. Casely Essamuah (center), Bishop Thomas Schirrmacher (center right), and Dr. William Wilson (far right) at the MoU signing

# GCF Signs Memorandum of Understanding with World Council of Churches

GCF Signs Memorandum of Understanding with World Council of Churches

On June 16th 2022, the Global Christian Forum celebrated joyous occasion through the signing of a memorandum of understanding with the World Council of Churches.

The WCC acting general secretary, Rev. Prof. Dr. Ion Sauca described the beginning of GCF as it emerged in response to significant changes in the global ecclesial landscape during the 20th century. Due to the emergence of new Christian traditions and movements, the WCC, the Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity, the World Evangelical Alliance, and the Pentecostal World Fellowship felt led to create a new space of Christian unity - the Global Christian Forum.

In his remarks, Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca stated:

“We rejoice in the existence and in the witness of the Global Christian Forum to our common calling to bear witness together to the reconciliation and unity of all things in Jesus Christ, God and Saviour. It is in this spirit that we rejoice in the signing of the memorandum of understanding that facilitates the cooperation between the two bodies - the WCC and the GCF - both called to work in synergy and complementarity. We pray that the Global Christian Forum will be blessed in its service to Christian unity.”

GCF Secretary, Rev. Dr. Casely Essamuah, also spoke with joy about signing the memorandum of understanding, stated that “it affirmed our status as a forum, not an institution, and the WCC’s status as one of the four cornerstones of our operation.” Dr. Essamuah continued by highlighting the GCF priority to intensify dialogue and continue engaging groups who have been missing from the table in the past, particularly women, young people, mega churches and migrant churches.

During the signing ceremony, each of the four pillars of GCF was represented and given a chance to speak.

Bishop Thomas Schirmacher, general secretary of the World Evangelical Alliance, said it was gracious of the WCC to host the signing ceremony. “As one of the pillars, we want to be involved, and we want to be part of giving this space,” he said.

Fr Andrzej Choromański, Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity, expressed appreciation for the way in which the Catholic Church continues to be involved. “There is a need to have this space which has been conceived,” he said. “This memorandum of understanding is the fruit of many discussions. We will continue to be a part of the Global Christian Forum and we see the future of this unifying platform.”

Dr Billy Wilson, Pentecostal World Federation, thanked those who helped forge the agreement. “I consider it a healthy place of dialogue, relationship-building, and love,” he said. “What I’ve found in the Global Christian Forum is a great place for dialogue—but an even better place to make friends and share the love of Jesus with one another.”






## Catholic and Pentecostal Ministry Practitioners Join for Dialogue in Cleveland, Tennessee

Over two days from May 12-13, forty-two ministry practitioners from the Roman Catholic and Pentecostal traditions gathered in Cleveland, Tennessee for a time of worship, conversation, and faith-sharing. GCF Secretary, Rev. Dr. Casely Essamuah, participated in the dialogue at the invitation of Dr. David Han, Dean of Faculty at the Pentecostal Theological Seminary and member of the GCF International Committee. The group was equally led by Nathan Smith of the Glenmary Home Missioners and Field Representative of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB).

During the gathering, worship was conducted by both traditions. Small group conversations were modeled on both the GCF methodology of sharing faith-stories and receptive ecumenism. Therefore, the major content for the gathering involved participants sharing their journey with Jesus and reflecting on two Bible Studies facilitated by Fr. Jim Loughran, S.A. and Prof Cheryl Bridges Johns.

Dr. Han introduced the GCF methodology by sharing that it is conducted as an act of worship and a way of collectively discerning where God is leading. The shared witness of those gathered becomes a pneumatological exercise centered on different interpretations of the Word of God. Together, we can hear the Spirit more clearly than when we are divided. Dr. Han shared his own testimony of attending his first GCF gathering more than 10 years ago. He arrived armed with arguments to defend his doctrinal convictions, but he was soon amazed that each individual shared their own journey with Jesus and all experiences were welcome.

As the gathering closed, many of the participants committed to pursuing similar engagements, particularly among local groups of ministry practitioners. Together they affirmed that the Spirit of God is not limited to any one tradition, and each of our stories is enriched by the hearing of other stories.








Catholic and Pentecostal Ministry Practitioners Join for Dialogue in Cleveland, Tennessee



GCF Secretary, Rev. Dr. Casely Essamuah (right) with Nathan Smith (left) and Dr. David Han (center) at the Pentecostal Theological Seminary in Tennessee




## Interview with Rev. Nicta Lubaale, General Secretary, Organization of African Instituted Churches

Rev. Nicta Lubaale first experienced the Global Christian Forum through the Global Gathering in Limuru in 2007. Later, in 2008, OAIC was invited to join the International Committee, and Rev. Lubaale has been involved with GCF since that time. He recalls the impact that the relationships formed in Limuru have had on his ministry, as he was able to engage with people from different regions and different Christian communions. He considers the most valuable part of GCF gatherings to be the conversations and sharing of faith stories, for it is through these that fellowship and relationship are able to emerge.

Rev. Lubaale emphasizes the importance of GCF as a space where different Christian communions can gather together, and he particularly emphasizes the importance for those communities who would rather not join other ecumenical bodies. Rev. Lubaale insists that maintaining GCF's position as a forum and an open table helps it remain relevant for creating a space of dialogue in today's world.

Rev. Nicta Lubaale grew up in the Pentecostal church in Uganda. However, while he was a child, the president of Uganda, Idi Amin, announced the closure of all religious organizations except for Islamic mosques, Catholic and Anglican churches. The Pentecostal churches moved underground, and Rev. Lubaale grew up in an underground church movement which shaped his young faith. He remembers being disturbed by the lack of communication or solidarity expressed by the mainline churches who ignored the burning of many independent and Pentecostal churches. Again, his perspective was broadened in 1977 when the Anglican archbishop of Uganda was assassinated by order of the same president. Rev. Lubaale realized that all of us are vulnerable and are called to support and encourage one another.

As conversation moved toward the 2024 Global Gathering in Accra, Rev. Lubaale noted that it is important for people to come to the Global Gatherings as participants, not delegates. They must be engaged in the process, the conversations, and the sharing of their own journey with Jesus. No matter where we come from, we all meet at the table as followers of Jesus Christ.








Rev. Nicta Lubaale (left) and Rev. Dr. Master Matlhaope (right), both GCF International Committee members, at the Association of Evangelicals in Africa offices



GCF Secretary, Rev. Dr. Casely Essamuah with WCC Secretary General-elect, Rev. Dr. Jerry Pillay



## The World Council of Churches elects Rev. Prof. Dr. Jerry Pillay as Ninth General Secretary


At its meeting on June 17, the World Council of Churches (WCC) central committee elected Rev. Prof. Dr. Jerry Pillay as the ninth general secretary. Dr. Pillay is currently the dean of the Faculty of Theology and Religion at the University of Pretoria and a clergy member of the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa.

In speaking about his election, Dr. Pillay said “Ecumenism has always been part of my ministry DNA, spanning some 35 years as an ordained minister in the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa. My service in the WCC is a calling to serve God, the church, and the world.”

Dr. Pillay expressed his vision for the WCC in this way: “A united, flourishing, sustainable, and contextually relevant WCC, praying, worshipping, witnessing and working together to impact and transform the world with God’s love, justice, peace, reconciliation and unity, participating in God’s reign on earth and the fullness of life for all creation.”

He also discussed the importance of strengthening the fellowship and visible unity of churches. In his remarks he said “visible Christian unity is absolutely necessary to witness to a broken and suffering world. A divided church is a weak and feeble witness to an already fragmented world.”

The Global Christian Forum celebrates with Dr. Pillay and wishes him God’s blessings as he takes up his new post in January 2023.







GCF Secretary, Rev. Dr. Casely Essamuah (left), meets with Rev. Dr. Fidon Mwombeki (right), General Secretary of the All Africa Conference of Churches to discuss plans for a GCF regional gathering of African church leaders

For I am longing to see you so that I may share with you some spiritual gift to strengthen you— or rather so that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine.

-Romans 1:11-12

