



Youth Essay Competition

The African Regional Publication on the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace The Africa We Pray for on a Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace

The World Council of Churches (WCC) and the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) cordially invite young Africans from the continent and the diaspora (up to 35 years of age) to participate in an essay contest for the African regional publication on the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace with the provisional title: *The Africa We Pray For on a Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace*.

Background

The World Council of Churches assembly held in Busan in 2013 called on churches everywhere to walk together and view their common life and journey of faith as part of the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace, and to join together with others in celebrating life and taking concrete steps toward transforming injustice and violence.¹ The theme of the jubilee assembly marking the AACC's 50th anniversary held in Kampala, Uganda in June 2013, was related to the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace. Commenting on the theme of the AACC's 10th Assembly, WCC general secretary Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit said:

Both the AACC and WCC themes assume a common journey, a pilgrimage that is not done alone but in community. Our common pilgrimage is determined more by what we bring and what we seek than the journey's end. Justice and peace are conditions for a life together in dignity. Unity requires justice and peace; but, the work for justice and peace also requires that the churches are united. The ecumenical movement has taught us that no church is church alone. We belong to a community, the body of Christ, where nobody can say to the other, "I do not need you." Thus, we pray that the God of Life does not just "lead me" but "leads us."

You even say in your theme: Lead Africa. Church unity is not only about the church but also the church's unity in life as a whole. To be one in Christ is not to be one

¹ See <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/central-committee/geneva-2014/an-invitation-to-the-pilgrimage-of-justice-and-peace>.

against the others but for the other, for the justice and peace for all, so that the world may believe.²

In his speech to the AACC's 11th Assembly in Kigali, Rwanda in July 2018, the WCC general secretary continued to call on the churches in Africa to be on a pilgrimage of justice and peace. He observed:

There is a stronger momentum for moving together, as pilgrims, walking together, serving and praying for justice and peace as signs of God's reign to come. The WCC has embarked on a pilgrimage of justice and peace, deepening unity on the way as disciples of Christ and strengthening cooperation in service and advocacy for justice, peace and human rights. The vision of the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace speaks to the churches on their way together. It speaks to us as National and Regional Councils of Churches together with the WCC. It has implications for our relationships with ACT-Alliance, Mission bodies and other partners at different levels and in different contextual realities. Are we the prophetic sign and foretaste of one humanity and the unity of all creation that we are meant to be?

Your assembly offers another unique opportunity to affirm our common witness and advocacy in the continent of Africa. Focusing on the dignity of human beings created in the image of God, requires that we are advocates for justice and peace for the African people not only at national and regional levels, but also internationally through and in cooperation with all of the member churches of the WCC.³

In his speech to the AACC's 11th Assembly, AACC general secretary Rev. Dr Fidon Mwombeki underscored:

AACC is an instrument of the churches in Africa. It is a strong ecumenical organization, with a continental presence and reach. It is an organization which grows and transforms itself to adapt to new needs of the churches in Africa. I look forward to continue with the successful programs of AACC e.g. Campaign for African dignity, Advocacy at the African Union, Agenda 2063, ecumenical theological education in Africa, gender justice and so forth. We will pursue new emerging themes which the 2018 General Assembly has identified, particularly the challenge of migration and population explosion as well as special focus on the youth. Emphasis will also be on thematic relevance, theological development, growth and deepening of AACC.⁴

Harvesting the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace

² <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/general-secretary/speeches/greetings-to-the-aacc-jubilee-assembly-kampala-uganda-8-june-2013>

³ <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/general-secretary/the-oneness-of-the-ecumenical-movement>.

⁴ <http://www.aacc-ceta.org/en/news/25-rev-dr-fidon-mwombeki-acceptance-speech-after-induction>

The WCC general secretary created a Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace Reference Group (PJP RG) and Theological Study Group (PJP TSG), which has observed the following during its common journey (2014-2019):

- the basic theme of the pilgrimage, with its three dimensions of celebrating life together, visiting wounds and engaging in transformative action, communicates very well;
- people have no difficulties in using these three dimensions for articulating their own experience from their faith perspective and building a relationship of solidarity with others who are ready to accompany them;
- Pilgrim Team Visits (PTV) are being further developed as methodology for mutual support and pastoral presence in volatile situations where it is important to be with others in solidarity, praying together, listening to their stories and making use of all appropriate media to share them.⁵

In all places that were visited – from Israel and Palestine to Nigeria, South Sudan, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Colombia, Pakistan, Myanmar, India and Thailand, common concerns emerged that are rooted in the everyday experiences of many people. The PJP TSG, together with the PJP RG, is preparing to harvest these experiences and stories, exploring the following four themes which are closely interrelated and have also grown in importance in the ongoing programmatic work of the WCC:

- Truth and trauma
- Land and displacement
- Gender justice
- Racial justice

Reflection on these four themes will be helpful for harvesting the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace.

The essay competition

The WCC and AACC are calling for essays that reflect on any of these four closely interrelated themes:

- Truth and trauma (peacebuilding)
- Land and displacement (economic, ecological justice and migration)
- Gender justice

⁵ Report of the joint meeting of the Reference Group on the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace and Theological Study Group to the Executive Committee, Bossey, Switzerland
22-28 May 2019, Doc. No. 27.2 page 1.

- Racial justice

The essays should reflect your church's traditions, contexts and perspectives.

Submissions will be reviewed by African staff of the WCC and the AACC. Up to twelve papers will be published in the Africa regional publication on the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace, which will form part of the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace regional harvests that will be displayed at the WCC 11th Assembly in Karlsruhe, Germany in September 2021. In addition, the authors of four selected submissions (one for each theme) will be invited to participate in ecumenical conversations addressing the four themes at the WCC 11th Assembly.

Guidelines for submissions

Essays should be written in English, French or Portuguese, and will be considered for their contribution to the discussion on the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace in the African context. They should examine the themes of the pilgrimage, with its three dimensions of celebrating life together, visiting wounds and engaging in transformative action. They should be about 5,000 words long including notes and bibliography, and should not have been published before or be under consideration for publication elsewhere. Authors should submit an electronic copy. The essay should be accompanied by an abstract of no more than 100 words and by a brief description of the author (name, titles, church affiliation, present position, biographical information, publication credits and contact details). Authors should also send proof of their age, for example a copy of their birth certificate or passport. The deadline for submissions is 15th October 2019.

See the WCC website – www.oikoumene.org – for the following related background documents:

- Invitation to the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace
- Greetings of the WCC general secretary to the AACC Jubilee Assembly, Kampala, Uganda, 8 June 2013
- WCC general secretary's speech on the one ecumenical movement at the AACC's 11th General Assembly in Kigali, Rwanda in 2018
- The AACC general secretary's inauguration speech at the AACC's 11th General Assembly in Kigali, Rwanda in 2018 (<http://www.aacc-ceta.org/en/news/25-rev-dr-fidon-mwombeki-acceptance-speech-after-induction>)

Please also consult:

Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want

<https://www.un.org/en/africa/osaa/pdf/au/agenda2063.pdf>

Submissions may be sent to:

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Timeline:

- Invitations sent out in July 2019
- Deadline for notification of intention to submit an essay: 30 August 2019
- Essay submission deadline: 30 September 2019
- Announcement of winners – 12 selected essays and 4 participants to the WCC assembly: 30 October 2019
- Deadline for sending manuscript to the publishers: 30 November 2019
- Book publication: March 2020