

WCRC joins calls for just treatment of migrants

POSTED BY **PHIL TANIS** · FRIDAY, APRIL 24TH, 2015

The World Communion of Reformed Churches joins other religious and humanitarian organizations in calling for a just response to the increasing number of people dying while attempting to cross the Mediterranean Sea to seek asylum in Europe.

Rt Rev John Chalmers, the moderator of the general assembly of the Church of Scotland, said migrants seeking to reach Europe from Africa and the Middle East are fleeing from man-made disasters including war, desperate poverty and persecution and deserve help. "These innocents are seeking sanctuary. As human beings, made in God's image, they have equal value as you or I, and so we must do all we can to offer love and practical support."

Rev Chris Ferguson, WCRC general secretary, has said, "God didn't create borders—we did." Both literal borders and borders of comfort are standing in the way of what Christ has called us to do. As Christ broke down barriers between people, inviting all to the feast, so should the church.

...."We are convinced that there is the need to find other ways to guarantee the life of those fleeing war and persecution," said Pastor Massimo Aquilante, president of the Federation of Protestant Churches in Italy. "We renew our proposal to open a humanitarian channel enabling refugees and asylum seekers to safely enter Italy and then continue to their destinations within the framework of a shared European reception program."

....**Please join** sisters and brothers around the world as we pray together:

God of the Way,

You have been walking with your people throughout history, accompanying them in their pilgrimage and quest for a land that allows them to live in harmony and in peace.

Today we cry, echoing the pain of those who are still on their way, for the ones forced to leave their homelands and become pilgrims again by the evil powers of war, scarcity, exploitation, economic injustice, pollution and climate change, among many other reasons.

We come to you confessing the many ways in which we are in complicity with those powers, searching now for forgiveness and wisdom for your church.

Empower us with your Spirit of Life and give us the courage to stand in solidarity with all your wandering children around the world, seeking in hope for a better life. Surround us with the power of your Love to transform your world into the land where "honey and milk will run like water."

In Christ's name we pray, Amen.

Churches in Tanah Papua seek justice, peace and stability

01 May 2015

Amidst intimidation, illegal arrests, disappearances, torture and killings in Tanah Papua resulting from tensions between the Indonesian authorities and the Papuan pro-liberation groups, churches seek justice, peace, dignity and security for the Papuans.

The conflict in Tanah Papua (West Papua) has cost the lives of thousands since the late 1960s. A former Dutch colony placed under the United Nations administration in 1962, the region was unilaterally annexed by Indonesia and since then has experienced pro-independence insurgency. In 1969 Tanah Papua was formally incorporated into Indonesia, becoming Irian Jaya province.

Jan Bastian Rumbrar, ecumenical relations officer at the Evangelical Christian Church in Tanah Papua (GKITP) ...said, "The GKITP formed in 1958 following over 101 years of mission work laid down by German and Dutch missionaries, was tested with political dispute between Indonesia and the Dutch over the territory called Dutch New Guinea."

...While human rights violations have continued in the region, Rumbrar explains that the churches have played a strong role of being the "salt and light" (Matthew 5: 13-16) in a true biblical sense....both Catholic and Protestant churches in Tanah Papua have voiced their cries, but little has been heard

.The Pacific Conference of Churches (PCC) has played a key role in demanding justice for the Papuan people. Supporting the struggle for justice and liberation from all forms of oppression, including from colonial legacies in the Pacific, have been longstanding mandates of the PCC...

Interfaith initiative at UN calls 191 governments to ban nuclear weapons

04 May 2015

"Nuclear weapons are incompatible with the values upheld by our respective faith traditions", representatives of some 50 Christian, Buddhist, Muslim and Jewish organizations said on 1 May. The inter-religious statement came in a joint call to the 191 governments participating in the world's largest disarmament treaty. The call, co-sponsored by the World Council of Churches, was made during civil society presentations to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference in New York City.

"We raise our voices in the name of the shared values of humanity. We reject the immorality of holding whole populations hostage", says the statement delivered at the United Nations by Dr Emily Welty, vice-moderator of the WCC Commission of the Churches on International Affairs. "There is no countervailing imperative that justifies the continued existence [of nuclear weapons], much less their use", Welty said.

The signatories, from Europe, Asia and North America, pledge to make their respective faith communities more aware of the inhumane nature of nuclear weapons. They urge governments to heed the voices of atomic bomb survivors and to begin negotiations to prohibit nuclear weapons "in a forum open to all states and blockable by none."

...Since the last NPT review in 2010, new evidence about the catastrophic humanitarian, environmental and other effects of nuclear weapons has deepened the divide between the few world powers with nuclear weapons and those 186 states that have pledged never to have them. Momentum is growing, with active support from civil society including churches, for the non-nuclear majority to promulgate a ban. WCC member churches and partners on six continents have asked their governments to demonstrate their support for such a ban at the current NPT conference.

New Zealand Anglicans raise indigenous issues at UN May 5, 2015

The last of a small delegation of Kiwi Anglicans who've been in New York speaking up for the concerns of indigenous people – both within the Communion and the world at large – are returning this week to Aotearoa New Zealand.

Bishop Kito Pikaahu led a delegation of seven from Te Pihopatanga to the biennial [Anglican Indigenous Network \(AIN\)](#) conference April 14-18. And on April 14, the eve of that conference, the Pihopatanga team met with former Prime Minister Helen Clark, who took time out from her tasks as

Head of the United Nations Development Programme to welcome them to the United Nations headquarters in New York. The delegation briefed Ms Clark on the purpose of the AIN conference – and spoke of its significance in strengthening people-to-people links among indigenous Anglicans throughout the Communion.

The Tangata Whenua of Manhattan

Following those UN calls, the delegation headed 45 minutes east of New York City to the Stony Point Centre, which was the venue for the AIN conference. They were joined there by delegations from Australia (comprising Aboriginal and separate Torres St representatives) as well as First Nation delegations from Canada, Hawaii and the USA, and they were welcomed by representatives of the Shinnecock-Sewanaka people, who are the tangata whenua of Manhattan.

...According to Brigitte Te Aweawe-Bevan, who was in the Aotearoa delegation, each of the delegations drew strength and solidarity from sharing “each other’s’ concerns, celebrations and ideas”. And that solidarity, says Brigitte, chimed with the theme of this year’s conference: ‘God, send your Spirit upon us: restore us, renew your Creation.’ Brigitte says the report that moved her most was hearing about the plight of remote indigenous communities in Western Australia.

Lifestyle choices?

Up to 150 such communities are threatened with “closure” after an announcement last November that federal funding for them would be cut. “What we can’t do,” said Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbot in March, “is endlessly subsidise *[lifestyle choices](#)*.” His suggestion that indigenous people living on their traditional lands is a ‘lifestyle choice’ caused “great distress” to the AIN conference – and that distress was recorded in the conference *[communiqué](#)* which will now be forwarded to the Anglican Consultative Council....

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

17 - 24 May 2015 Worldwide (southern hemisphere)

The theme for the week of prayer in 2015 comes from the gospel of John: "Jesus said to her: 'Give me to drink'". It was proposed by a group of Brazilian Christians called together by the National Council of Christian Churches of Brazil (CONIC). The biblical gesture of offering water to whomever arrives, as a way of welcoming and sharing, is something that is repeated in all regions of Brazil. The proposed study and meditation on the story of Jesus meeting a Samaritan woman at the well is to help people and communities to realize the dialogical dimension of the project of Jesus, which we call the Kingdom of God.