

A Celebration of Service: Honouring Geoff Tunnicliffe's 10 years of leadership in the WEA



Dr Tunnicliffe with Dr Schirrmacher

The Rev Dr Geoff Tunnicliffe's tenure as Secretary General and CEO of the World Evangelical Alliance came to its conclusion on 30th December 2014. After 10 years of service to the WEA Geoff discerned that it was time to step down, to make room for new leadership, and to pursue other interests to which God has called him. As a tribute to his years as our colleague and friend, we look back at the last decade of his leadership and are grateful to God for Geoff's life and for all he has given the WEA family.

At least two things have to be mentioned:

First, though he always called himself a 'generalist,' and as CEO he was responsible for everything: projects, networks, staff and an assortment of joys and challenges, he stated again and again that Evangelicals and the WEA must always be 'theology driven.' Thus good and sound Biblical theology was not something extra for him, but he expected us, as the Theological Commission, to be in the middle of all activities of the WEA, grounding the work and service in the Bible and in good Evangelical theology. This kept us very busy, but also allowed for our theological work to be very practical and down to earth. A secondary but fundamental result of Geoff's vision of theology is that it allowed the Bible to 'read us, as WEA' and to be guided by its words in our decision-making process, rather than an over-emphasis on pragmatism or even budgets. Geoff never let tensions grow between pragmatism and discussing theology.

That we are theology-driven became especially true in the WEA's ecumenical relations. Under Geoff's leadership, the WEA established and made official many formal relations with other Christian traditions and with the United Nations. This catapulted the WEA onto the world scene of official dialogues, joint ventures and collaborations for peace and justice. But all these were not achieved by doing less theology, but with more theology. Rather than set aside our Evangelical theology in order to converse with people of other confessions or traditions, we were challenged to think even harder and to offer an even more Evangelical theology that could address the issues at hand and be of service to our constituency and to the church worldwide. An example of this is the cooperation with the Catholic Church, which is built on years of solid work between Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU) and the TC examining both what we have in common and where we differ. Geoff's speech at the Vatican Synod in 2012 was a unique, bold, and thoroughly biblical call to evangelism – that we witness in everything we are and do to the salvation we have in Jesus Christ.

Second, Geoff embodied the right mix between a self-confident CEO willing to lead and take over responsibility, with the humility to rely on experts and to listen to others as he prepared speeches or drew plans for a new project. For us in the TC it was joyful and great fun to work with Geoff and to know that in the end, his speeches always carried with them sound Evangelical theology and a good dose of biblical exposition while still mirroring his passion and personality.

One of the most important points of connection between Geoff and the TC was the project that led to the writing of *Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World*. As early as 2006 Geoff allowed Thomas Schirrmacher to negotiate with the Vatican and the World Council of Churches how the WEA would be involved in the process for this document. This was a great risk because no one knew where the process would lead or what its outcome might be. During the last years of the project the TC played a major role in the drafting group, working with others to ensure that the text was both biblically-based and mission-focused. At the official launch of the document in 2011 it became clear that by God's grace, not only had we achieved a major document, but that for Geoff, this document echoed some of the profound beatings of his own heart – that we as WEA and as TC are committed to God's call to mission and to the way of Christ as we follow this call in obedience and grace.

Geoff, we thank you for your years of service and for being an inspiration to us all.

By Thomas Schirrmacher & C. Rosalee Velloso Ewell

Radical Adjustments for African Theological Institution

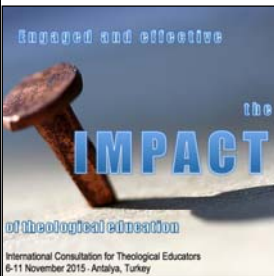


The premier evangelical theological institution of francophone Africa, the Faculté de Théologie Évangélique de Bangui (FATEB), is in process of radical adjustments and complex reorganisation owing to the severe disruptions that continue to plague the Central African Republic. FATEB was founded by the Association of Evangelicals in Africa (AEA) in 1974, under the impetus of Dr Byang Kato, AEA's first African director, and the first chair of the World Evangelical Alliance's Theological Commission.

Located in Bangui, at the centre of the continent, FATEB has for many years served as the principal venue for advanced-level leadership formation for evangelical francophone Africa. Originally founded as a graduate-level theological school, it has since developed programmes at first-degree level, at masters level, and more recently at doctoral level. Responding to local needs, it also operates a school for wives of students, a kindergarten, and the first 10 years of primary and secondary school. Facilities include student and faculty residences, classroom and administration buildings, a 500-seat theatre, and one of the best equipped theological libraries in francophone Africa. Since 2007, it has been led by Dr Nupanga Weanzana, a Congolese with a doctorate in biblical studies from the University of Pretoria, South Africa, who is a graduate of FATEB.

In October 2013 Dr Nupanga convened a meeting in Cameroon, attended by representatives of FATEB's board, faculty and staff, together with overseas partners, to address pressing challenges. The Bangui campus has sheltered refugees, and classes were suspended with many students from other countries returning to their homes. FATEB has arranged for its doctoral students to resume their studies in rented facilities in the Cameroon capital, Yaoundé, along with masters-level students and some others. Earlier this year, some classes and the schools have been able to reopen at Bangui.

FATEB intends to continue programmes now operating at Bangui, especially to assist local citizens whose educational needs are significant. At the same time FATEB will reposition its advanced-level programmes in Yaoundé, Cameroon, and it will seek to establish branch campuses in other strategic urban centres of francophone Africa. Because of these changes, the seminary will be renamed so that 'FATEB' will be a single word, not an acronym, and the term 'Université' will be added to reflect the diverse locations and programmes covered by the institution. Under these new arrangements, FATEB continue to pursue its vision for 'a strong African church, rooted in the Word, committed to the mission, and to the transformation of society through well-trained leaders.' For more information, contact: Dr. Nupanga Weanzana, nupangaw@fateb.net (pictured)

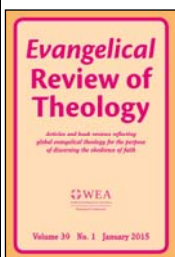


ICETE Triennial Consultation New Date and Venue

A new date and venue have been announced for triennial consultation of ICETE (International Council for Evangelical Theological Education). A statement from International Director of the WEA-related organisation, Dr Riad Kassis, says, 'Due to ongoing tensions in the region, the 2015 ICETE Triennial has been moved from Kiev, Ukraine, to Antalya, Turkey. This change in venue also necessitated a change in dates. The dates are now set for 6-11 November 2015.' Dr Kassis added, 'We hope you will plan to join us! Please share this information with any who might want to attend.'

The theme of the consultation will be 'Engaged and Effective: the impact of theological education'. The statement explains, "'Rooted in the Word, Engaged in the World" was the theme of the ICETE 2012 International Consultation in Nairobi, Kenya, but though rooted and engaged, how do we know that we are effective in what we do? Is it possible to measure the impact of theological education on Church and Society?' Registration will be online in early 2015. A promotional video is available for viewing at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j_K40PbleRU&feature=youtu.be.

ICETE is a global community, sponsored by nine regional associations of theological schools, to enable international interaction and collaboration among all those concerned for the enhancement of evangelical theological education worldwide. For more information, visit <http://icete-edu.org/>



Call for Papers and Reports

Contributions are invited for the Theological Commissions' two quarterly publications—*Evangelical Review of Theology* and this paper, *Theological News*. ERT uses academic articles in any area of theology of about 8000 words and book reviews of around 700 words. This newsletter uses current reports of developments in theology, seminaries, publications, conferences etc of up to 500 words with illustrations. A Style Guide is available for down-loading at <http://www.worldevangelicals.org/tc/publications/> Also contact the editors (see page 4).

‘Margins, Mission & Diversity’ Mission Studies in Australia

The fourth triennial conference for the Australian Association for Mission Studies was held at Tabor Adelaide, South Australia from 2 to 5 October 2014 with the theme ‘Margins, Mission and Diversity’.

The conference theme emanated from the colonial history of South Australia where the local Kurna language was recorded by German missionaries and the colony beginnings had a strong focus welcoming on the non-conforming churches which lead to the state being nicknamed the ‘Paradise of Dissent’.

The engagement of the margins through mission to and mission from is also strong in the WCC’s Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME) new affirmation on Mission and Evangelism entitled ‘Together towards life: mission and evangelism in changing landscapes’.

This conference aimed to explore the implications for the broad Christian community arising from mission to and from the margins, knowing that the diversity of cultural engagement that results makes it challenging for Christian missions community and that the history of managing diversity in Christian mission in the margins has been patchy.

Emeritus Professor Anthony Gittins, the keynote speaker, presented three lectures, ‘Standing Fast and Breaking Through: Challenges and Possibilities for Marginal Ministry’, ‘Finding the Centre at the Margins: Renewing the Call to Mission’ and ‘Mission In Diversity: Christians As Problem Or Solution? Diversity – Or What?’ In exploring the missional challenges and opportunities the margins offer, God’s people must recognize mission can be from, to and with the margins.

Jesus, who was marginal by choice and an outsider participant, provides the God’s people with an example. Mission at the centre of the margins involves encounter, table fellowship, foot washing and boundary crossing. Diversity in mission arises in the encounter and as a consequence, and a healthy response is required.

There were 44 papers explored the theme in five streams - Church and Aboriginal Australians, Congregation and Particular Communities, Church and Society, Church and Multiethnic communities and Engaging the Margins. They came from all traditions and addressed the theme through looking back (historical), evaluating the contemporary, and considering futuristic responses. A book based on the conference will soon be available.

Report by David Turnbull, Senior Lecturer in Intercultural Studies Tabor Adelaide, South Australia

Groundwork for Consultation on Evangelism

Evangelism in new contexts was the focus of a meeting held at the end of September 2014 in Atlanta, Georgia, USA of which the primary objective was to set the agenda for a larger consultation on evangelism in North America, due in 2015. The meeting titled ‘Joint Ecumenical Reflection on Evangelism in North America’ was organized by the evangelism program of the WCC in cooperation with the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA (NCCUSA) and in consultation with the Canadian Council of Churches (CCC).

Organisers said that the question of understanding evangelism anew in light of rapidly changing cultural contexts is keenly felt by the churches in North America. Rev. Dr Hielke Wolters, WCC’s associate general secretary for Mission and Unity, said that ‘it was a great moment of grace to discover in this meeting the commitment of churches in the US and Canada and their national councils to start together an ecumenical process of reflection on evangelism.’

The planned consultation will aim at a comprehensive assessment with North American churches and ecumenical partners of the contemporary context for evangelism, especially within secular multi-cultural and multi-religious settings. Along with this context, the consultation will analyze the new expressions of Christian witness and their implications of new models of evangelism for theological education and missiological formation. ‘Christians are called to speak and act the Good News of Jesus Christ in the world,’ said Rev. Dr Karen Hamilton, general secretary of the CCC. She asked, ‘What are the crucial issues for Canadian and American denominations to reflect, strategize and act on in terms of evangelism in our current context?’

Rev. Dr Jooseop Keum, secretary of the WCC’s Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME), saw the effort as an opening of vistas for other churches as well. ‘The changing landscape of church and society in North America provides an opportunity for fresh thinking and practice of evangelism,’ he said. Kyriaki Avtzi, WCC programme executive for evangelism commented, ‘This joint ecumenical reflection has set the promising foundation for a meaningful and fruitful gathering of North American churches in the coming year.’

Participants discussed in-depth the place that evangelism holds both in the US as well as in the Canadian contexts and affirmed the importance of addressing major aspects of evangelism through an ecumenical gathering in 2015. A preparatory working group has been formed and is about to begin its deliberations on the future event.

Adapted from [World Council of Churches Press release](#) 07 October 2014

Revival

By Stuart Piggin, Macquarie University, NSW

'Tis not unlikely that this work of God's Spirit, that is so extraordinary and wonderful, is the dawning, or at least a prelude, of that glorious work of God, so often foretold in Scripture, which in the progress and issue of it, shall renew the world of mankind.

So wrote Jonathan Edwards, the Christian Church's greatest theologian of revival, in 1742 in the midst of the Great Awakening in America. Here he tells us that revival is the work of God's Spirit, that it is an extraordinary work, and that it is foretold often in Scripture, and he prophesies that it would renew, not only the church, but the whole 'world of mankind'.

Let us begin with the prophecy first. For if he was wrong about that and revivals do not do their work of renewing humankind, there is not much point in studying the role of the Holy Spirit in revival or the places where revival is foretold in Scripture. Most modern historians would argue that Edwards got it wrong, and the world since the Great Awakening in the 1740s has not been renewed by religious revivals. Rather the history of the world since the French Revolution has been one of the inexorable progress of secularism, of the triumph of reason over faith, and the eclipse of Biblical 'truth' by the real truth which comes from science. Most Western Christians, even theologians, would tend to side with the secular historians here. They are not particularly interested in revivals which are too episodic to be relied on, too dependent on the sovereignty of God to evoke any human effort, and too divisive within the church, unleashing either an unhealthy fanaticism or cold-hearted rejection.

Yes, revivals are episodic. They do not last. But some Christian historians since Edwards have argued that this is the way history works. There have been many revivals and national and even international awakenings since the 1740s. Through them the church is reformed and refreshed, and the world challenged and renewed. Then the world (and the church!) seeks to go its own way again, and there is a fresh need for a new revival movement and a new challenge to the 'world of mankind'.

Furthermore, these same historians observe, the new revival movements typically originate among the marginalised, the poor and the weak. They invigorate the periphery while the heartlands of faith atrophy in their pride and independence of the Spirit and the law of Christ. But it is through such passing movements of the Spirit that God is building His kingdom within 'the world of mankind'. For do notice in Edwards's words above that revival is for the world. True revival spills over from the church into the world.

Revival works for the renewal of the world through a number of means. It is typically a movement of God's Spirit grasped by a new leader who takes the old truths of the gospel and applies them to new situations and people who had not before appropriated those truths. Leaders of revivals are men who proclaim the gospel with anointed passion, but who are neither reactionaries who condemn all that is new in the church nor radicals who argue that only the new is true. The leaders of the Great Awakening were known as 'new lights', and it has been recently suggested that every revival movement has leaders who, in their fresh understanding of the truth of the gospel and the power of the Spirit, are all 'new lights'.

Jesus was the archetypal new light leader who translates Old Testament truth into teaching which liberates and gives hope and who transfers the power to lead from priests to apostles. In many of the awakenings of the 20th century, through which Christianity expanded numerically more exponentially than in any other century, power was transferred to these new light leaders away from the leaders formally appointed within traditional denominations.

If all new light leaders have one gift in common, it is the gift of anointed preaching. They believe, with Edwards, that preaching is a union of truth and fire, and this union is found in all revivals. Preaching for revival requires the fusion of the affectional and the rational, of heart and head. The preacher, in love with the love of God, is more motivated to lure people into heaven, which Edwards understood as 'a world of love', than to frighten them out of hell. Edwards certainly preached on hell, but the fire of anointed preaching is the fire of love, more than the fires of hell. The effect of the union of truth and fire is to take the hearer through truth into reality. New light preachers dare to believe that the purpose of preaching is not so much to teach people the truth about God, but to awaken people to see the reality of God.

Revival is when people see reality, which is the world as it is perceived by God. It is when hearers see themselves and their world and the Lord Himself from God's perspective. The apprehension of reality comes as such a shock to hearers that they are said to have experienced an 'awakening'. A great awakening such as Edwards' hearers experienced in the 1740s is when many experience the same shock. Edwards's understanding of revival was so constituted out of Scripture that it is feasible to argue that the whole of the New Testament is a revival manual. But the whole is sometimes encapsulated in the parts. In Acts 2.44-47, for example, Luke deftly characterises a revival fellowship. It was forged out of Peter's Spirit-anointed preaching at Pentecost.

It was preaching which made them *behold* reality: they came to see that they had crucified the Lord's anointed. They repented of their distorted view of reality and *believed* the gospel. They formed a fellowship in which they *belonged* to the Lord and to each other. And they *behaved* according to the requirements of a missional lifestyle of outreach and service.

Membership of a revival fellowship, then, involves beholding, believing, belonging and behaving.

*Article used by permission of author who also wrote *Firestorm of the Lord* (2000) and *Spirit of a Nation* (2011)*

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