



Do you know about GETI '17?

C. Rosalee Velloso Ewell, PhD Executive Director, WEA Theological Commission

Over the next 12 months many Christians around the world will be participating in events and services to mark the 500 years of the Protestant Reformation, which was led by German theologian Martin Luther in the early part of the 16th century. One of the distinguishing characteristics of the Reformation movement was a return to deep and thoughtful engagement with the Scriptures – an examination of how the Bible speaks to Christians of all ages, challenging the church with prophetic words and guiding all Christians to be better witnesses in the world and to participate in God's revolutionary kingdom.

In Germany next year, members of the Theological Commission will serve as teachers and tutors in GETI '17 – the Global Ecumenical Theological Institute (19 May – 01 June 2017). Dr Rosalee Velloso Ewell, Executive Director of the TC is part of the executive planning committee for GETI '17 and has recently participated in meetings with other committee members in Hamburg and Berlin. She is hopeful that GETI '17 will also include one or two members of the WEA's Mission Commission. Theological reflection on mission is fundamental to the growth of the church and a church without mission leads to poor theology. GETI '17 aims to bring faculty and students who are passionate about both mission and theology.

GETI '17 is an ecumenical-theological initiative for education and encounter for advanced theology students from all over the world who are studying in Europe. It is the hope of the organisers that the concrete encounter and joint studies will contribute to a growing network of young theologians and will strengthen better understanding between Christians in Europe and people from all over the world. Participants will study and experience horizons of an ecumenical theology and ecclesiology that will challenge their preconceptions and encourage them to reflect about what it means to be part of the body of Christ. The academic focus for GETI '17 encompasses three main areas: Reforming Theology, Migrating Church, and Transforming Society

These three areas are themes of common concern for churches around the world, but have had more media attention in the past few years due to the large number of refugees trying to reach Europe from the Middle East and North Africa. GETI '17 includes in its faculty lecturers who have vast experience and knowledge about migration and minority ecclesial communities. It also includes students from countries where persecution and violence is most acute.

The dates for GETI '17 are set to coincide with the German Kirchentag, a lay movement for renewal of the church and service in society. Kirchentag gathers hundreds of thousands of people for events all over the country, with a focus on the cities of Berlin and Wittenberg. GETI '17 students and faculty will participate in the Kirchentag and will also host events during the whole of the Kirchentag commemorations.

There are only a few spaces left for evangelical theological students. If you are a professor or lecturer who has students that would benefit from the unique experience that GETI '17 offers, please refer them to the registration form on the website (<http://www.geti-17.de/>). This is an important moment for Evangelicals in theological education to learn from and to speak into a program for the renewal of the church and transformation of society.



Wilf Gasser to leave WEA

Dr Wilf Gasser, a medical doctor with wide experience in a number of fields, including pastoral leadership, who was appointed as Associate Secretary General of the World Evangelical Alliance, in 2012, is leaving the organisation. Dr Gasser has also worked as a business consultant and was a member of the Berne, Switzerland, Regional Parliament for five years.

His role in WEA, alongside Gordon Showell-Rogers, the other Associate Secretary, focused on assisting the ministry of networks and service arms of the WEA. His decision to resign follows recent changes to the personnel, structure and operation of the WEA. He said, 'My heart will continue to be with the WEA, and through my role as Chairman of the Swiss Evangelical Alliance I will stay connected in some way.'



WEA Theological Commission at 5th Anniversary of 'Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World' Document



At the invitation of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (PCID), on the occasion of the fifth anniversary of the document 'Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World: Recommendations for Conduct,' officials from the Roman Curia and the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Italy, representatives of the World Council of Churches (WCC) and World Evangelical Alliance (WEA), as well as scholars from African Traditional Religions, Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, Sikhism, Taoism and Tenrikyo met in Rome on Tuesday, 21 June, 2016. This document, published on 28 June, 2011, was a joint venture by the PCID,

the WCC and the WEA.

The three bodies were represented by their representatives for interreligious dialogue, H. Em. Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran (PCID), Dr. Clare Amos (WCC) and Prof. Dr. Thomas Schirrmacher (WEA). The keynote address was presented by H. Em. Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran, President of the PCID, as well as reports on the implementation of the document.

Speaking for the WEA, Dr Thomas K. Johnson said, 'Codes for conduct, or codes of ethics, generally arise in response to a need. The need to which this 2011 code of ethics for religious persuasion—for propagating and promoting the faith—responded is the extent to which religious faith has been entangled with human conflicts since the dawn of history . . . Religion has long been associated with the mistreatment of people who do not have the same religion or the same religious experience. In an astonishingly unified manner, the representatives of almost all Christians joined to address this ancient problem which has been amplified in our time by globalization. We could not say that we will not talk about our faith or invite other people to come to our faith, because the message that God is reconciling the world to himself in Jesus Christ is the most important news we have received; rather, what we have said is that there are recognizably good and evil ways of treating people when we talk about and promote our faith.'

Johnson concluded, 'In our age marked by extreme levels of religious persecution, religious violence, and religious terrorism, it is time to articulate the universal standards by which people of all religions can clearly distinguish the honest practitioners of their faith . . . Within Christendom we have done our homework and have written a code of ethics for Christian proclamation. All the people represented here today should continue on toward another history-making code of ethics related to the protection, proclamation, promotion, and propagation of all religious, philosophical, or ideological messages.'

Adapted from <http://www.bucer.de/ressource/details/bonner-querschnitte-252016-ausgabe-420.html>

WEA Business Coalition Gears Up



In January 2016, Timo Plutschinski (Director of the WEA's Business Coalition) formed the Council for Business & Theology (CBT). The CBT is one of three councils created to address issues identified at the 2015 WEA Strategic Business Consultation (the other councils cover Business & Ministry Finance, and Business & Global Strategies).

The CBT exists to give a platform for the best global theological voices on business, finance, and economics, with the aim of equipping the worldwide evangelical church to apply Christian theology to these areas in its life and public voice.

The founding members of the Council are drawn from around the world, and cover a range of theological and business backgrounds.

The Council is working on an initial set of projects, all based on being a platform. The first project to be completed is a special edition of the WEA's journal, the *Evangelical Review of Theology*. The edition, to be published in January 2017, brings together a number of articles and reviews on issues around business and economics, and will form the basis of an eventual edited book, all aimed at a broad scholarly audience.

Broader plans include a repository of contacts, reviews, and recommendations on the CBT's upcoming website, commentary and press releases on current global issues, a survey, and facilitating the development of online resources.

A key event which the CBT is involved in is the upcoming Global Workplace Forum, being held in Manila in 2018. The Forum will be jointly hosted by the Lausanne Movement and the WEA. Timo Plutschinski and Lyndon Drake are both in the working group planning the Forum.

Death of Influential Missions Leader



Robertson McQuilkin, an author and missions leader who was formerly president of Columbia International University (CIU), died June 2 aged, 88. He was president of CIU, an independent Christian college in Columbia, S.C., for 22 years, helping to double enrolment and found two radio stations before announcing unexpectedly that he was stepping down to care for his first wife Muriel, who was in the advanced stages of Alzheimer's, according to a CIU news release. She died in 2003. In announcing his resignation from CIU, McQuilkin told faculty and students according to an audio recording posted online by Christianity Today, 'I promised "in sickness and in health, til death do us part," and I'm a man of my word.'

During McQuilkin's presidency, the school was known as Columbia Bible College and then Columbia Bible College and Seminary, taking the name CIU in 1994.

McQuilkin also was remembered as a zealous proponent of worldwide evangelism and the patriarch of a family that helped pioneer the concepts of researching and reaching unreached people groups. Before assuming the presidency of CIU in 1968, McQuilkin served 12 years as a missionary in Japan. His father Robert C. McQuilkin was the school's first president and also possessed a noted missionary zeal. The elder McQuilkin decided not to go to Africa as a missionary only after the ship scheduled to carry him and his wife across the Atlantic burned and sunk the day before its scheduled departure.

Chip McDaniel, an Old Testament professor at Southeastern who formerly taught at CIU and knew McQuilkin, told Baptist Press, 'In multi-denominational, broadly evangelical missions circles on the east coast, people would look to the McQuilkin family as kind of the gold standard of the missionary thrust.'

McQuilkin is survived by his second wife Deborah Jones, five children, and their families.

Adapted from <http://www.baptistpress.com/46981/cius-robertson-mcquilkin-a-hero-indeed-dies>

WEA Discusses Future Cooperation with WCC

By Peter Kenny



The leadership and representatives of the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) and the World Council of Churches (WCC) met in the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey, Switzerland to explore and discuss possible areas of future cooperation on May 20, 2016. The gathering featured introductions to the work of the WEA and the WCC, and participants reflected together on current developments in society and churches, and in evangelical and ecumenical movements. The two organizations shared current plans and discussed possibilities for closer collaboration on thematic areas such as 'public witness and peace-building in inter-religious contexts' and 'theological reflection, education and formation'.

This was the second meeting with the leadership and representatives, although it was the first meeting with both heads of organizations present and where perceptions about both the WEA and WCC were discussed.

Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit, general secretary of the WCC said, 'Christians and their communities around the world are aware today, as never before, that life itself is in peril. So many dangers – climate change, certainly: but also poverty and economic injustice, threats to health and well-being, violence and war – endanger humanity and can drain our hope.'

Tveit also noted, 'The ecumenical work and collaboration on advocacy – raising a voice together with those needing accompaniment for justice and peace – is a genuine task for a fellowship of churches who together express faith in the triune God of life. This faith dimension of advocacy for justice and peace should convey hope. In my view, a commitment to convey hope should also be considered as a criterion for the critique of religion.'

The role of religion and violence was discussed at the meeting. 'All religions can generate extremists,' the WEA general secretary Bishop Efraim Tendero observed, 'but Christian teaching about salvation through Christ rejects all kinds of religious violence. A religion becomes extremist when it uses force or violence to impose truth claims on other people or to apply those truth claims to its own members. As religious leaders, it is our duty and call to promote, to teach, to foster the peace in our traditions.'

The meeting between the WCC and WEA leadership proved to be an important step forward in the growing relation and cooperation between the Council and the Alliance. There was a strong feeling that the vulnerable situations today in many parts of the world need a united voice from Christians supporting all efforts to build justice and peace.

Adapted from <http://www.bucer.de/ressource/details/bonner-querschnitte-212016-ausgabe-416-eng.html>

Good Business

By Dr Lyndon Drake

Executive Chair of the Council for Business & Theology, World Evangelical Alliance



One Sunday a few years back I had an unusual experience, and not one that was obviously theological. My boss called me in to the office to help plan for how we would trade through the Lehman bankruptcy the next morning. I was working as a government bond and interest-rate derivatives trader, and that Sunday morning marked the beginning of the gravest week of the financial crisis.

The hours and days that followed were intense, to say the least, and left me with a vivid and abiding emotional connection to the crisis. I was also left with a desire to apply the gospel to systemic issues of business, and particularly to the financial system.

You see, in contrast to my wealthy workplace during market hours, my wife and I lived in one of the poorest areas of London. We saw first-hand the effects of a crisis that for me peaked during that week and mostly affected my emotional state, but which for others destroyed their livelihoods and left them destitute in the months and years that followed.

Alongside that destruction and destitution, we saw the good that financial markets and business could bring. I lent billions of pounds to the British government, and some of that money transformed the rather grim hospital in which our eldest son was born into a state-of-the-art facility by the time our second son arrived. One of the largest derivatives traders I priced enabled a sports facility and affordable housing development to transform a central London suburb.

But, in an experience that many Christians with a business background can sympathise with, I felt as if I was working and reflecting in a theological vacuum.

In the years since, I've realised that there are already wonderful resources for helping Christians understand the workplace. But I've also become convinced that considerable work remains to be done, particularly in two areas.

The first concerns economics and the structure of society. All too often, public engagement by churches on economic issues has been marked by ignorance, or by theologians co-opted to a political agenda (left-wing and right-wing, in different places and times). In these conversations we need to include both economists with their systemic and technical expertise, and biblical scholars with their exegetical skill. There is a reasonable consensus about the theology of personal wealth ethics (even if Christians are sometimes disinclined to follow that consensus). A similar consensus simply does not exist for a theology of economics, finance, and business at a systemic rather than personal level.

The second key area is around the meaning of work, which is closely tied to the less-studied issue of the place of business in society. Within the global evangelical church, the innate value of work is widely acknowledged—but often only nominally. Business (and hence work) is often regarded as having a contingent value: we might set up a business as a platform or enabler for mission, or encourage workers to see their workplace as primarily a forum for personal evangelism. Until there is an evangelical consensus on the theological meaning of work, it is likely to be difficult to shift this deep-seated contingent understanding of work. Is work primarily a calling or a charism? What is the place of Christology in understanding work—surely a vital part of a genuinely 'Christian' theology of work?

We need to work towards a common, theologically-driven understanding on these issues, so that the evangelical church around the world can have a prophetic voice to society. That prophetic voice can help to transform society, especially by bringing justice and righteousness for the poor. Transformation in turn has the capacity to open doors for the proclamation of the gospel: people will see that the church's message has the power to bring real change, and that it is relevant to the work individuals carry out.

I'm very encouraged to see the development of the platform that the Council for Business and Theology brings together around these issues. An extraordinary group of people are involved with the CBT, and I for one am eager to see what they produce in the coming months and years.

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