

JOINT WORKING GROUP BETWEEN THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH
AND THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES
Communiqué

PLENARY MEETING
Ecumenical Institute of Bossey (Switzerland)
3 – 5 September 2024

The first plenary of the 11th mandate of the Joint Working Group (JWG) between the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) was convened at the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey, between 3–5 September 2024, hosted by the WCC. The meeting was co-moderated by Archbishop Dr Vicken Aykazian from the USA (Armenian Apostolic Church, Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin) and the Most Reverend Thomas Dowd from Canada (Bishop of the Diocese of Sault Ste. Marie).

The meeting focused on the mandate of the JWG from 2024 to 2030. The primary objectives of the meeting were to foster relationships among participants, share the priorities of the Parent Bodies, provide a comprehensive understanding of the history and work of the JWG, and reflect on the priorities for the current mandate. Daily sessions were accompanied by common prayer, bible reading, reflection, and moments of fellowship.

Reflecting on the situation of the ecumenical movement and of Christians in the world, the JWG identified the following as possible areas of tension to address: the persecution and martyrdom of Christians, religious indifference, and moral diversity. The members suggested to explore these areas through the lens of salvation theology and to propose possible tools for collective reconciliation.

Methodologies will include the synodal method of listening deeply in the Spirit in order to walk together as companions, interacting with local realities in our plenary gatherings, in our study groups, and in intergenerational encounters. Biblical narratives, such as the Emmaus story and others, will inspire and inform the work of the JWG. Special attention will be given to harvesting the fruits of the 1700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea.

In their discussion, the JWG members noted the following intersecting areas of concern. Differing models of salvation can underlie differing visions of what the good life and wholeness entail, and when left unarticulated, can lead to tension and fragmentation within churches and within societies. They felt that it would be worthwhile to analyse these differences, studying the practical consequences of these differing models of salvation, and to propose to the churches tools for collective reconciliation that allow communities to move beyond recrimination.

The JWG decided to organise its work in three working groups: (1) to explore different understandings of salvation as described above, including how those understandings may contribute to religious indifference; (2) to study processes that have been implemented in different global contexts in order to offer practical tools of collective reconciliation to the parent bodies; and (3) to encourage the parent bodies to urgently increase efforts to counter all forms of violence and discrimination based on religious affiliation, given the widespread persecution of Christians and people of other faiths around the world.

The JWG visited St. Pierre Cathedral in the historic centre of Geneva, where John Calvin preached, and the Reformation Museum and the Reformation Wall, where the Reformed Christian heritage of the city is memorialised and celebrated.

During the meeting, the members of the JWG prayed for an end of the bloodshed in the many parts of the world where violence continues to unfold, and for a lasting peace.

[<http://www.christianunity.va/content/unitacristiani/en/dialoghi/sezione-occidentale/dialoghi-multilaterali/dialogo/gruppo-misto-di-lavoro/communiques/en11.html>]