



## Together Online

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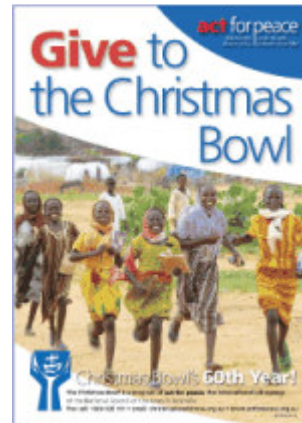
10 December, 2008

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### CHRISTMAS BOWL'S 60TH YEAR - The Gift that Keeps on Giving

After the end of World War 2, the Christmas Bowl began as a unique way for churches to work together, uniting and inspiring others to bring hope in a volatile and unstable world. This year marks the 60th year of Australians giving and sharing through the Christmas Bowl. Over the past 60 years, it has delivered critical assistance to people around the world affected by poverty and ongoing conflict. The Christmas Bowl has become an important symbol of people helping people. If you would like to find out more about the 2008 Christmas Bowl Appeal and its work, go to <http://www.ncca.org.au> – full resources available.

"The Gift of Christmas" a celebration of the music of Christmas with Pamela Jansson and the Ashley Arbuckle Quartet  
Penrhos College Chapel Morrison St Como  
Sunday December 14th at 5 pm  
Tickets are available from the Council of Churches office on 9274 38888  
Proceeds to Christmas Bowl



### CALL FOR PRAYERS AND WISHES FOR ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS IN BETHLEHEM 2008

“For the 9th consecutive year, Christmas celebrations will take place in a difficult climate for people in the Holy Land. As we prepare to celebrate Advent and Christmas in the security of our homes and communities, let us not forget to pray for justice, peace and security for Palestine and Israel. Bethlehem, the birthplace of Jesus Christ, is still first and foremost a city of peace. And even in these trying times, many individuals and groups refuse to give up hope. They continue to search for non-violent ways to voice their rights and work for a peaceful and just future for both peoples.

Since December 2000, we have begun a new Christmas tradition of sending peace messages to our friends in Bethlehem. Once again, we would like to invite individuals, communities, churches and congregations, organisations and partners from across the world to email Advent and Christmas 2008 wishes and prayers for justice and peace to our partners in Bethlehem. This year, the project is being carried out in collaboration with the World Council of Churches and its Palestine Israel Ecumenical Forum (PIEF).”

Please e-mail your Christmas messages and prayers for peace before the 25th of December 2008 (Western Christmas) and/or the 7th of January 2009 (Eastern Christmas). Messages can be E-mailed to the Arab Educational Institute at the following address: [aei@p-ol.com](mailto:aei@p-ol.com) For more information, visit the World Council of Churches website.



2009 COMMUNITY CALENDARS FOR EAST TIMOR — Have you got yours yet?

## Immigration Media Releases

MEDIA RELEASE (9 DEC) - Human Rights Commissioner, Graeme Innes, today urged the Australian Government to refrain from using the massive new detention centre on Christmas Island to hold people in immigration detention.

The Minister for Immigration has said that the new centre will be used when numbers require it.

Responding to a media report today that recent arrivals could lead to the new detention centre being used, Mr Innes reiterated concerns he raised after his visit to the centre in August.

"The new immigration detention centre on Christmas Island is completely inappropriate for detaining asylum seekers - not only is it the most isolated facility on an extremely remote island, but it looks and feels like a high-security prison," Commissioner Innes said. "I am deeply concerned at the prospect of people being detained there for any period of time."

With the nearest capital city, Perth, 2600 km away, Mr Innes said Christmas Island was possibly the most remote part of Australia the government could use to put people who are seeking asylum from persecution.

"That distance limits access to basic services," the Commissioner said.



"Moreover, the small size of the local community and the very limited infrastructure also make it difficult for immigration detainees to get adequate access to services like health care, mental health care, legal assistance, and cultural and religious support."

"These people include men, women and even unaccompanied children, who are seeking Australia's protection," he said.

"Realistically, in such a remote and inaccessible location, how can Australia expect to properly meet its international obligations to them?"

The Commissioner said that all unauthorised arrivals who make claims for asylum should be assessed through the refugee status determination process on the Australian mainland.

"People should not be held in immigration detention on Christmas Island," Mr Innes said.

The 2008 report of the Human Rights Commissioner's annual inspection of immigration detention facilities around Australia, including those on Christmas Island, will be released in January 2009.

Media contact: Brinsley Marlay 02 9284 9656 or 0430 366 529

MEDIA RELEASE (2 DEC) - Detention report falls short of Government's own standards

From the WA Uniting Church website:

The Uniting Church has today expressed its disappointment with some of the recommendations handed down from the recent parliamentary inquiry into immigration detention in Australia.

"The Uniting Church has been advocating for many years for policy which upholds the human rights of asylum seekers and treats these already traumatised people with care, dignity and respect," said Rev Elenie Poulos, national director of UnitingJustice Australia.

"Whilst we welcome the report's recommendation to waive existing detention debts for all current and former detainees and cease charging people for their time in detention, we believe that the report's recommendations do not go far enough in many respects," Elenie said.

"In July of this year the Church congratulated the Immigration Minister on his announcement of a new direction for detention policy. The parliamentary committee had a crucial opportunity to make recommendations that would put these principles into practice but they have fallen short.

"In its submission to the inquiry, the Uniting Church outlined its commitment to a policy which fulfils our obligations under relevant international human rights treaties and accords asylum seekers full legal rights and protection. The Church does not believe that the recommendations in this report will ensure such a policy."

Elenie welcomed the dissenting report from Petro Georgiou MP and Senators Dr Alan Eggleston and Sarah Hanson-Young, which highlights the significant deficit in the report's recommendations on time limits and review mechanisms.

"The possibility that asylum seekers will be held in detention for 12 months is frightening. Numerous studies have shown the

irreversible physiological damage detention can cause on already traumatised people, and that it occurs in a time frame far less than 12 months.

“Allowing public servants to detain a person for up to 12 months without allowing them access to an independent review of the merits of their detention is a violation of Australia’s international obligation not to arbitrarily detain people.”

“We urge the Minister to carefully consider this report and the need to go beyond its recommendations in order to develop a truly fair and just detention policy.”

MEDIA RELEASE (1 DEC) - Migrants, too, have human rights  
From the WCC Website:

The myth according to which host countries are "victims" of migration needs to be challenged, as in fact their economies benefit from the exploitation of the migrants' work.

This was one of the points made at a meeting convened mid-November by the World Council of Churches (WCC) in New York City, in which speakers condemned the trend to treat migrants as commodities and stressed that migrants are human beings, created in the image of God.

Migration was the primary theme of the WCC's 16-21 November United Nations Advocacy Week, during which some 120 representatives of churches, ecumenical organizations and networks from all over the world discussed priorities and strategies for church advocacy at the UN and in their own countries.

Participants discussed the threats to the human rights of migrants, the theological imperative to welcome strangers and practical measures which churches can take.

While today's global economy is characterized by a growing mobility of goods and capital, many states put heavy restrictions on workers, particularly low-skilled labour coming into their territory. At the same time, poor living conditions oblige many people to leave their countries of origin.

Dr Theodor Rathgeber of the German Forum for Human Rights, who identified "asymmetrical economic conditions" and policies putting the global South at a disadvantage as main causes for this form of migration, challenged participants to fight the myth that host countries were "victims" of migration. Rather, their economies were benefiting from the exploitation of migrants, he explained.

Theology of diversity

Theologically, the need to care for the strangers was founded in the parable of the Good Samaritan. With this story about a foreigner rescuing a man forsaken by his countrymen and fellow believers, Christ rules out xenophobia, "as the unexpected help comes from the culturally and religiously other", summarized Niki Papageorgiou, who teaches Sociology of Religion at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece.

She added that the church has a "dynamic and radical" discourse on unconditionally welcoming the culturally and religiously other. However that discourse did not necessarily reach the believers. Churches needed to support their theology

of diversity with actions at the local level, such as social services and dialogues between natives and migrants, Papageorgiou said.

John Nduna, director of the alliance of Christian aid agencies ACT International, voiced concern that refugees should not be confounded with economic migrants: "Refugees are forced to flee from their homes in order to save their lives. In most situations returning to their homeland is not an option."

Looking to a future in which climate change will unfold more and more, participants anticipated a sharp rise in displacement and ensuing conflicts as large areas for example in Bangladesh, the Nile delta and around the Sahara will become uninhabitable and millions of people will be pushed into areas traditionally occupied by other populations.

Rev. Baranite Kirata from Kiribati explained that people of this island nation in the Pacific had looked for work abroad already in the past, but always with a longing to come back home one day. With the atolls bound to disappear as the climate changes ever more significantly, his people experienced a feeling of spiritual loss, too, he said.

**International Convention on Migrants' Rights**

The rights of migrants were also the centre of visits which the participants of the advocacy week paid to missions of nine United Nations member states in order to promote the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.

Of 39 countries that have ratified the convention so far, none is a host country in the developed world. "No other international convention shows such a split between developed and developing countries," said William Gois, regional coordinator of the Migrant Forum Asia.

None of the 27 missions representing European Union member states agreed to a meeting on the topic of the convention. Other missions reacted more positively to the ecumenical commitment to have the convention signed, ratified and implemented. For example the representative of the Philippines told his visitors he would like to cooperate with the WCC in finding more countries that are willing to put the convention on their agenda.

Seta Hadesian, director of Diakonia and Social Justice at the Middle East Council of Churches, explained that the convention, which in the Middle East has been ratified only by Egypt, Libya, Morocco, and Turkey, was "the only available international instrument able to protect domestic workers" in the region.

The rights of millions of migrant female workers were therefore unprotected, she added, while abuse and violence against them were rampant, leading for example in Lebanon to numerous suicides and accidental deaths of women trying to flee from the house of their employer.

Challenging Christians to recognize the image of God in each stranger, Papageorgiou reminded them that "all people [are included] in the body of Christ."

## Uppsala Manifesto demands action on climate issues

Extensive and quick reduction of carbon dioxide emissions in the wealthy parts of the world is one of the demands in the Uppsala Manifesto, which has been signed at a 27-30 November Interfaith Climate Summit in Uppsala, Sweden.

The manifesto targets the political and religious leaders of the world and has been signed by 26 opinion makers from different faith traditions. It calls on political leaders to reach agreement during the preparations of the new global Climate Protocol 2009 on a strategy that is sufficiently responsible and ambitious for the earth to be saved for future generations.

Signatories include two members of the World Council of Churches (WCC) central committee: Bishop Sofie Petersen, from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark (Greenland) and Father Leonid Kishkovsky, ecumenical officer of the Orthodox Church in America (USA). Prof. Jesse Mugambi, from the Anglican Church of Kenya and a member of the WCC Working Group on Climate Change, is among the signatories, too.

The head of the Church of Sweden Archbishop Anders Wejryd, who convened the Uppsala Interfaith Climate Summit, will present the manifesto to the Swedish government and to the Conference of Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), which is meeting in Poznan, Poland this week.



### Major changes needed

The religious leaders who have signed the manifesto want to see major changes particularly in the wealthy countries. An extensive and quick reduction of greenhouse gas emissions was essential, they said. The introduction of a mandatory international fee-payment system for emissions was suggested, where payment would be in proportion to the quantity of greenhouse gases emitted by each country and its ability to pay. Since religious leaders see the climate question as a deep spiritual issue, they questioned that responsibility for attempting to reverse current developments should be placed in the hands of politicians alone.

The signatories of the manifesto therefore committed themselves to inform and inspire people to take responsibility for effective measures to combat climate change within their respective cultural and religious contexts. They also promised to challenge both political and business leaders in their home countries to develop comprehensive strategies and actions.

"The voices of the churches should join other religious voices to firmly request that state parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and the international community move towards a much needed principle-based approach for reaching an effective and equitable global climate policy regime built on the ethical imperatives of justice, responsibility and solidarity," said Dr Guillermo Kerber, WCC programme

executive on climate change and water, speaking at the Uppsala summit.

After the meeting in Poznan, Poland this week, the next crucial step will be the Conference of Parties to the UNFCCC in Copenhagen, Denmark in December 2009. At that meeting the parties to the UNFCCC will meet for the last time on government level before the Kyoto Protocol, an agreement aimed at preventing climate change and global warming, expires in 2012.

## Seoul Statement

### Seoul International Consultation on Revitalizing Ecumenical Movement

November 13~15, 2008, Seoul, Korea

*The Earth belongs to God and all of its abundance,  
And so too the World and all of its inhabitants. (Ps.24:1)*

Dear Friends and Co-workers in God's Oikoumene,  
Greetings in the name of our Saviour Jesus Christ!

We are a group of ecumenical leaders who have come together in Seoul, Korea, for a three day consultation to consider the revitalization of the ecumenical movement and of the World Council of Churches in particular at this time of crisis. We meet with the understanding that the earth with all of its abundance and the world (oikumene) with all of its inhabitants belong to God and that as co-workers in God's oikumene we are accountable to God.

We meet in the context of the ongoing global financial crisis, which bears directly upon our attempts to read the signs of the time. We ask whether the flawed nature of the neo-liberal ideology of globalization is not now obvious to everybody, when the only remedy to a crippling cessation of credit is sought in further borrowing by governments to shore up faltering financial institutions. At this critical time we ask whether our churches and our ecumenical institutions have imbibed too deeply from the culture of the free market in financial and administrative matters and made uncritical accommodations with the ideology of unlimited and exponential economic growth.

We note as a most ominous feature of the US government and its allies the development of the theory as well as the practice of world domination by military means, with explicit disregard for international law and with preparations for the use of nuclear weapons. In this situation, we ask whether our churches and our ecumenical bodies are ready to respond saying that war in all its forms as a means of settling disputes is totally unacceptable, taking into account the fact that it is civilians, especially women and children, who are most at risk. We also ask how we can all respond with appropriate urgency to the looming catastrophe brought on by global warming and the ecological crisis.

At this time, we note with dismay the crisis in the World Council of Churches. We also feel the need for a fresh vision and a new



sense of direction for the WCC. The main purpose of this consultation, however, is not to enter into a debate on the present state of an institution we have all served and continue to love, but to seek a refreshed vision together for the revitalizing of the ecumenical movement and to set meaningful goals.

With this concern in mind we make the following affirmations:

1. We affirm the prophetic ministry of the WCC.  
The WCC has defined itself as a fellowship of churches and a frontier movement. As such, at critical times, it has been called upon to make appropriate statements and take decisive actions to lead the churches. In exercising its prophetic ministry, we ask whether the consensus method for making decisions, as currently exercised, is the most appropriate. Has it not blunted the prophetic ministry of the WCC?
2. We affirm the AGAPE (Alternative Globalization addressing people & earth) document and its call to prophetic resistance.  
We regret that the Porto Alegre Assembly of WCC did not make room in its programme for a serious debate of this document and heed its call to resistance to totalizing systems, particularly neoliberal globalization and empire. The process has gone on to include the challenge of ecological debt. The whole issue needs to be linked to the work of the Decade to Overcome Violence (DOV) so that the economic, ecological and military violence of empire is at the heart of DOV.
3. We affirm the WCC as a fellowship of churches.  
Intrinsic to this fellowship is clear communication between the WCC and its member churches. This requires transparency and reciprocity. We have often been confused by the interpretative accounts of the WCC that have appeared in the Ecumenical News International (ENI) and other third party publications and fail to hear what the WCC itself is saying and how it is receiving communications from churches about their concerns.
4. We affirm the financial integrity of the WCC.  
Market forces and the demands of donor agencies seem to vitiate the financial integrity of the WCC, making it sway to market forces and the desires of funding agencies so that it is not permitted to act independently. Previous experiences with the Programme to Combat Racism (PCR) and the Commission of the Churches Participation in Development (CCPD) have shown that timely and controversial action rather than diminishing financial support has in fact brought in fresh financial resources. To cite recent examples we have the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI) and the 'living letters' solidarity visits. Our consultation is also a case in point in that we have received from local congregations and individual

- Christians all the financial resources needed.
5. We affirm the need for renewed ecumenical formation. Ecumenism as a perspective at local, national, regional and global levels needs to be strengthened. At this time, ecumenism is more than the narrow concern of churches and Christians. There is a wider ecumenism emerging with inter-religious conversations and joint actions for justice, peace and the integrity of creation. Ecumenical formation with this wider consciousness is required at all levels.
  6. We affirm local ecumenical organizations and actions. Global ecumenism needs the support of local ecumenical bodies and ventures. It is these that translate global concerns such as globalization, market forces and the reality of Empire to the people who are most affected. Global bodies such as the WCC need their support in a common prophetic ministry and to draw the churches to affirm this ministry.

We offer these affirmations with the prayer that they may contribute to a refreshing of the ecumenical vision for our time.

## Events for the Heart and Mind

In this issue: Voices in Praise present 'Joyous Christmas'; Protestant Chaplaincy Vacancy at Royal Perth Hospital; 16 Days of Activism; Just Music 2008 Concert for Social Justice; Fair Trade Christian Goods; Jewish and Christian Liturgical Calendar.

### VOICES IN PRAISE present 'JOYOUS CHRISTMAS' — A FUNDRAISING CONCERT FOR WEST PAPUA

Come along and join Voices in Praise again this Christmas for a wonderful, joyous evening of music plus a rousing community carol sing. The choir will be singing The Magnificat, (attributed to Dietrich Buxtehude) together with a selection of joyous of Christmas music, Vivaldi, Bach and much more accompanied by a small orchestra – with guest solo soprano.

WHEN: Saturday, December 20

TIME: 7.30PM (Please note concert starts at 7.30PM - not 7.00 as previously advertised.)

WHERE: Mt Pleasant Uniting Church, Cnr Coomoora & Reynolds Rds

COST: \$12.00 - \$7.00 concession – Pay at the Door

Funds raised from the concert will go to support the Sara Diaconal Clinic, a non-profit health service operating near the GKI Theological College in Abepura, West Papua. The Sara Clinic aims to provide treatment for minor health problems and provide assistance in childbirth and follow-up for women, children and the community. The Sara clinic also runs programs providing training, education and medical treatment in villages. These programs are conducted in partnership with the Papuan



Health Department and partner churches.

The Voices in Praise Choir has approximately \$18,000 for various worthy causes. It's a great way to contribute to a worthwhile cause. We would love to have some new voices in 2009 – all ages very welcome.

Contact Marg Staffa on 9260 9800 for more information. Please send to your networks.

**POSITION VACANT — Royal Perth Hospital (Shenton Park Campus)**

The Council of Churches of WA is looking for a protestant chaplain for Royal Perth Hospital (Shenton Park Campus). For more info contact Rev John Hewitson on (08) 9274 3888 or [fieldofficer@churcheswa.com.au](mailto:fieldofficer@churcheswa.com.au).

Other Events and News for your information and interest

**CALENDAR OF EVENTS — 16 Days of Activism**

If you would like to see the events that have been planned right through to 10 December, please go to Women's Council for domestic and Family Violence Services (WA) website at:

[www.womenscouncil.com.au](http://www.womenscouncil.com.au)

Check out the website <http://wa.amnesty.org.au/artillery> or find us on facebook and MySpace

**JUST MUSIC 2008 — Concert for Social Justice**

The Edmund Rice Institute presents the 2008 Concert for Social Justice - celebrating the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Hear Archie Roach and Ruby Hunter, Kavish Mazella, Bernard Carnley, The Working Voices and the YABU Band perform!

**WHEN:** Friday, 12 December

**WHERE:** Samson Courtyard, Fremantle Arts Centre

**TIME:** 6.00pm – 10.00pm

**COST:** Adults \$30 – Students/Concession \$20 – Children under 6 FREE – Family Pass (2 + 2) \$70

For tickets: go to [www.heatseeker.com.au](http://www.heatseeker.com.au)

**BUYING CHRISTIAN GOODS? Make sure you buy fair trade!**

Looking for fair-trade Christmas presents or fair-trade Christian goods (such as crosses or clerical shirts)? Then check out this new catalogue, offering ethical alternatives, produced by Evans, Project Officer in Vic/Tas Synod. For more information about the fair trade movement visit: <http://www.fairtrade.com.au/> or more information about fair trade Christian goods, visit: [www.justholyhardware.org.au](http://www.justholyhardware.org.au).

Etz Hayim—"Tree of Life" would like to introduce you to The Jewish and Christian Liturgical Calendar.

Etz Hayim—"Tree of Life," is an entity whose purpose is to promote and facilitate dialogue and biblical studies between Christians and Jews. The Jewish and Christian Liturgical Calendar contributes to the development of Christian and Jewish dialogue and understanding through liturgy, biblical

studies and prayer.

"To improve Jewish-Christian relations, it is important to take cognizance of those common elements of the liturgical life (formulas, feasts, rites, etc.) in which the Bible holds an essential place."

—Guidelines and Suggestions for Implementing the Conciliar Declaration *Nostra Aetate*, No. 4, Vatican, 1975

The Jewish and Christian Liturgical Calendar raises interfaith awareness and promotes biblical studies as Christians and Jews "accompany" one another throughout their yearly liturgical cycles. The Calendar features:

- Liturgical readings for each Sunday and Sabbath are clearly notated for each week.
- Major Festivals with liturgical readings, Holy Days and Feasts and Fast days in each tradition are indicated.
- A comprehensive glossary of terms and explanation of liturgical celebrations for both Jews and Christians.
- A full colour, glossy format, pictorial calendar.
- All the convenience of a regular "hang on the wall" daily calendar with extra "value added" for Christians and Jews.

Endorsement:

The Jewish and Christian Liturgical Calendar is endorsed by The International Council of Christians and Jews (ICCJ).

[The ICCJ serves as the umbrella organisation of 38 national Jewish-Christian dialogue organisations world-wide.]

Order now for immediate delivery.

Orders can be placed through the Etz Hayim—"Tree of Life" website or by return email. [Bulk shipments of calendars are available.]

Please help us to spread the word about The Jewish and Christian Liturgical Calendar and forward this email to other interested persons, associates, institutions or groups with whom you are in contact. A poster is available for display on noticeboards wherever you may be. ...Contact us and we will email it to you.

With a blessing,

Elizabeth Young

Etz Hayim—"Tree of Life" - <http://www.etz-hayim.com>

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