

# An Ecumenical Journey

A timeline of the World Council of Churches



The Netherlands 1948



USA 1954



India 1961



Sweden 1968



Kenya 1975



Canada 1983



Australia 1991



Zimbabwe 1998



Brazil 2006

## General Secretaries of WCC



**W. A. Visser 't Hooft** (1900-1985)  
Term: 1938-1966

A brilliant and visionary Christian leader from the Netherlands, Willem Visser 't Hooft was named WCC general secretary at the 1938 meeting in which the WCC's process of formation began. A Reformed minister, he emphasized the importance of linking the ecumenical movement to enduring manifestations of the church through the ages. In 1968 he was elected honorary president of the WCC by the fourth assembly.



**Eugene Carson Blake** (1906-1985)  
Term: 1966-1972

A talented administrator and ecumenical leader in the USA, Blake previously served as stated clerk of the United Presbyterian Church in the USA and as president of the National Council of Churches in the USA. An ardent advocate of the civil rights movement, he helped launch the WCC's Programme to Combat Racism.



**Philip Potter** (1921-)  
Term: 1972-1985

A Methodist pastor, missionary and youth leader from Dominica in the West Indies, Potter was called to several positions in the WCC. During his mandate as general secretary, he insisted on the fundamental unity of Christian witness and Christian service and the correlation of faith and action.



**Emilio Castro** (1927-)  
Term: 1985-1992

A native of Uruguay and a missiologist, Castro served as director of the WCC's Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, then as general secretary. A Methodist pastor and theologian, he was noted for his eloquent preaching and progressive views on Christianity and the social order, and achieved prominence in Latin America.



**Konrad Raiser** (1938-)  
Term: 1993-2003

A German theologian who served on the WCC staff under Philip Potter, Raiser once described his ecumenical calling as "a second conversion." During a sometimes turbulent period for the ecumenical movement, he led the Council as general secretary in a redefinition of its "Common Understanding and Vision" and in a fundamental review of the participation of Orthodox member churches.



**Samuel Kobia** (1947-)  
Term: 2004-2009

An ordained minister of the Methodist Church in Kenya, Kobia was the first African to hold the position of WCC general secretary. Kobia brought his lifelong concern for Africa to the world-wide ecumenical movement. Following his election, he called on the churches to "work tirelessly toward the healing of the world and the restoration of human dignity."



**Olav Fykse Tveit** (1960-)  
Term: 2010-

A pastor from the Lutheran communion, Tveit began his term of office in January 2010 following seven years as leader of the Church of Norway's council on ecumenical and international relations. Bringing wide experience in inter-religious dialogue, Tveit had also served as co-chair of the Palestine Israel Ecumenical Forum core group and as a member of the WCC's Faith and Order Plenary Commission. He began his term by preaching on "the ecumenical movement of the cross."

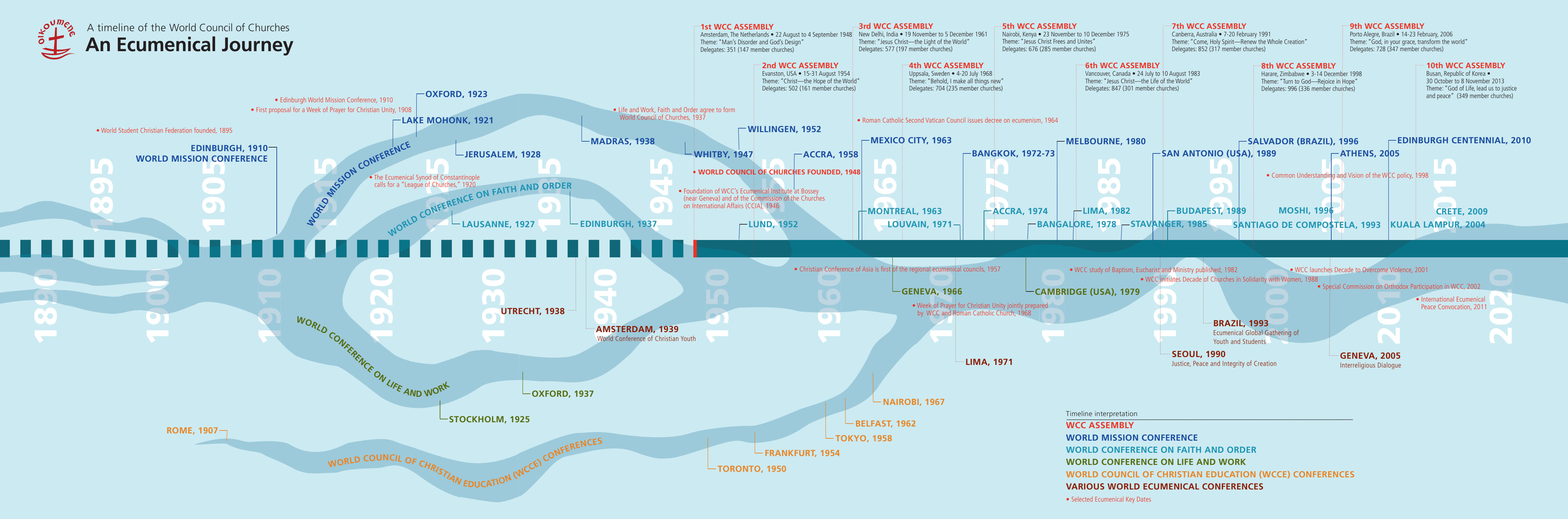


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A timeline of the World Council of Churches  
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• World Student Christian Federation founded, 1895

**EDINBURGH, 1910**  
 WORLD MISSION CONFERENCE

• Edinburgh World Mission Conference, 1910  
 • First proposal for a Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, 1908

**LAKE MOHONK, 1921**  
 WORLD MISSION CONFERENCE

• The Ecumenical Synod of Constantinople calls for a "League of Churches," 1920

**WORLD CONFERENCE ON FAITH AND ORDER**

**LAUSANNE, 1927**

**UTRECHT, 1938**

**WORLD CONFERENCE ON LIFE AND WORK**

**STOCKHOLM, 1925**

**OXFORD, 1937**

**ROME, 1907**

**WORLD COUNCIL OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION (WCCE) CONFERENCES**

**AMSTERDAM, 1939**  
 World Conference of Christian Youth

**MADRAS, 1938**

• Life and Work, Faith and Order agree to form World Council of Churches, 1937

**EDINBURGH, 1937**

• Foundation of WCC's Ecumenical Institute at Bossey (near Geneva) and of the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs (CCIA), 1946

**WHITBY, 1947**

• **WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES FOUNDED, 1948**

**LUND, 1952**

**WILLINGEN, 1952**

**2nd WCC ASSEMBLY**  
 Evanston, USA • 15-31 August 1948  
 Theme: "Christ—the Hope of the World"  
 Delegates: 502 (161 member churches)

**1st WCC ASSEMBLY**  
 Amsterdam, The Netherlands • 22 August to 4 September 1948  
 Theme: "Man's Disorder and God's Design"  
 Delegates: 351 (147 member churches)

**TORONTO, 1950**

**FRANKFURT, 1954**

**BELFAST, 1962**

**NAIROBI, 1967**

**LIMA, 1971**

• Week of Prayer for Christian Unity jointly prepared by WCC and Roman Catholic Church, 1968

**GENEVA, 1966**

• Christian Conference of Asia is first of the regional ecumenical councils, 1957

**MONTREAL, 1963**

**MEXICO CITY, 1963**

**3rd WCC ASSEMBLY**  
 New Delhi, India • 19 November to 5 December 1961  
 Theme: "Jesus Christ—the Light of the World"  
 Delegates: 577 (197 member churches)

**4th WCC ASSEMBLY**  
 Uppsala, Sweden • 4-20 July 1968  
 Theme: "Behold, I make all things new"  
 Delegates: 704 (235 member churches)

**ACCRA, 1958**

• Roman Catholic Second Vatican Council issues decree on ecumenism, 1964

**LOUVAIN, 1971**

**LIMA, 1971**

**BANGKOK, 1972-73**

**5th WCC ASSEMBLY**  
 Nairobi, Kenya • 23 November to 10 December 1975  
 Theme: "Jesus Christ Frees and Unites"  
 Delegates: 676 (285 member churches)

**ACCRA, 1974**

**CAMBRIDGE (USA), 1979**

• WCC study of Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry published, 1982  
 • WCC initiates Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women, 1988

**BANGALORE, 1978**

**MELBOURNE, 1980**

**6th WCC ASSEMBLY**  
 Vancouver, Canada • 24 July to 10 August 1983  
 Theme: "Jesus Christ—the Life of the World"  
 Delegates: 847 (301 member churches)

**LIMA, 1982**

**SEOUL, 1990**  
 Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation

**BRAZIL, 1993**  
 Ecumenical Global Gathering of Youth and Students

**SAN ANTONIO (USA), 1989**

**7th WCC ASSEMBLY**  
 Canberra, Australia • 7-20 February 1991  
 Theme: "Come, Holy Spirit—Renew the Whole Creation"  
 Delegates: 852 (317 member churches)

**BUDAPEST, 1989**

**GENEVA, 2005**  
 Interreligious Dialogue

**STAVANGER, 1985**

**SALVADOR (BRAZIL), 1996**

**8th WCC ASSEMBLY**  
 Harare, Zimbabwe • 3-14 December 1998  
 Theme: "Turn to God—Rejoice in Hope"  
 Delegates: 996 (336 member churches)

**MOSHI, 1996**

• WCC launches Decade to Overcome Violence, 2001  
 • Special Commission on Orthodox Participation in WCC, 2002

**ATHENS, 2005**

• Common Understanding and Vision of the WCC policy, 1998

**SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA, 1993**

**EDINBURGH CENTENNIAL, 2010**

**9th WCC ASSEMBLY**  
 Porto Alegre, Brazil • 14-23 February, 2006  
 Theme: "God, in your grace, transform the world"  
 Delegates: 728 (347 member churches)

**KUALA LAMPUR, 2004**

• International Ecumenical Peace Convocation, 2011

**CRETE, 2009**

**10th WCC ASSEMBLY**  
 Busan, Republic of Korea • 30 October to 8 November 2013  
 Theme: "God of Life, lead us to justice and peace" (349 member churches)

Timeline interpretation

- WCC ASSEMBLY**
- WORLD MISSION CONFERENCE**
- WORLD CONFERENCE ON FAITH AND ORDER**
- WORLD CONFERENCE ON LIFE AND WORK**
- WORLD COUNCIL OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION (WCCE) CONFERENCES**
- VARIOUS WORLD ECUMENICAL CONFERENCES**

• Selected Ecumenical Key Dates