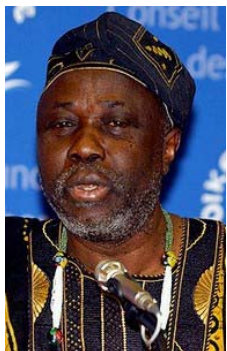
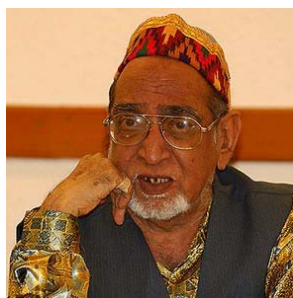


Dialogue with People of Living Faiths



This collection includes:

- Christian-Muslim Dialogue
- Jewish-Christian Dialogue
- Christian-Hindu Dialogue
- Christian-Buddhist Dialogue



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Dialogue with People of Living Faiths

The desire of the World Council of Churches to open a dialogue with Hindus, Buddhists, Jews and Muslims resulted in the 1971 Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies (DFI) program. This program supports interreligious multi-lateral and bi-lateral dialogue with partners of different faiths. This collection details the various meetings at which such dialogues were organized, such as the Christian-Muslim dialogue, the Christian-Hindu dialogue and the Christian-Buddhist dialogue.

Not monologue, but dialogue

An important instrument in the ecumenical movement, the WCC's initiation of a dialogue with people belonging to other religions signaled a willingness to make sense of the fact that "Christians today live out their lives in actual community with people who may be committed to faiths and ideologies other than their own".¹ It also implies that dialogue "be recognized as a welcome way of obedience to the commandment of the Decalogue: 'You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor' ... not to disfigure the image of our neighbors of different faiths".²

People of Living Faiths

Recognizing that those committed to other religious traditions are people of living faiths is an invitation to Christians to reflect afresh on "what God may be doing in the lives of hundreds of millions of men and women who live in and seek community together with Christians, but along different ways".³ "Ideologies", once part of the program, was dismantled following the collapse of state Socialism in eastern Europe. One could question the decision but from the beginning we responded to the need for good relations between Christians in countries dominated by Marxist ideologies.

An 'adventure of the churches'

The 1971 Central Committee understood "the engagement of the World Council in dialogue ... as a common adventure of the churches". The word adventure takes on several meanings at once. It may mean a hazardous or even questionable undertaking, but it may also signify an unusual or exciting experience. The issue of interreligious relations and dialogue in the history of the World Council of Churches resonates with both meanings of the word 'adventure'. Interreligious dialogue has always been and will continue to be closely scrutinized. Some Christians fear that such dialogue is equivalent to

syncretism or a fusion of religions, but there have also always been Christians for whom dialogue is a way to constructively acknowledge religious plurality and look for ways to take today's context seriously. "More than ever, we sense a growing need not just for dialogue with people of other faiths but for genuine relationships with them. Increased awareness of religious plurality, the potential role of religion in conflict, and the growing place of religion in public life present urgent challenges that require greater understanding and cooperation among people of diverse faiths."⁴ What was considered an adventure almost 35 years ago is a necessity in today's world of rapid change and globalization.

Different ways of dialogue

If dialogue thirty years ago was mainly associated with formal conversation between two groups, dialogue today is manifest in many different ways. Most common is the dialogue of life that goes on in all pluralistic communities. People of many different faiths - Christians, Muslims, Jews, Hindus, Buddhists - live and work together sharing a common life. Although these dialogues go unnoticed and are not consciously religious, these encounters help establish solid human relationships. A similar dialogue also takes place where people of different traditions come together to struggle for justice, peace, human rights and other issues that concern society at large.

There are three types of organized dialogue. In the most common forms, multi-lateral and bi-lateral dialogues, representatives come together to explore a subject relevant to the communities concerned such as the relationship of religion to the family, to education, to the state, etc.. In addition to clarifying differences, such dialogues facilitate the building up of trust and openness between religious groups.

A second type of organized dialogue could be called 'academic dialogue'; exponents of different religious faiths

meet and discuss the theological or philosophical bases of their traditions. Genuine attempts are made to arrive at a common appreciation of the way in which each religious tradition has sought to explain and approach reality. Such dialogues help break down century-old prejudices and misconceptions. They enrich, deepen, challenge and correct the way some religions have understood and approached the religious life of other traditions.

Another form of dialogue could be described as 'spiritual dialogue.'; believers attempt to meet each other, as it were, in the "cave of the heart". They become familiar with each other's spiritual and worship life. Often such dialogues take the form of participating in prayer or mediation. This type of dialogue remains controversial because Christians are not agreed on whether it is possible to participate in the spiritual life of their neighbors without compromising their own faith.

The Office on Interreligious Relations and Dialogue serves the WCC constituency

- in relations and dialogue with communities of people of other faiths
- in promoting sustainable relations between Christians and neighbors of other faiths primarily through multi-lateral and bi-lateral dialogue
- in drawing ecumenical attention to issues of religious plurality and the role of religion in the world today
- in fostering dialogue among churches and the ecumenical movement on Christian self-understanding in a world of religious plurality
- in monitoring major trends in religion and in relations between faith communities
- in providing advice and assistance regarding the interfaith dimension of WCC priorities

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¹ WCC Guidelines on Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies, 1979

² *ibid.*

³ *ibid.*

⁴ Ecumenical Considerations for Dialogue and Relations with People of Other Religions, WCC 2002

This collection

This collection contains papers presented at the Ajaltoun Consultation in 1970, correspondence written by Stanley J. Samartha and S.W. Ariarajah and various documents and papers related to Samartha's study on "The Word of God and the Living Faiths of Men". Also included are various preparatory documents and press releases that describe the World Conference of Religions for peace and documents that provide information on the various Multifaith consultations, including the Christian-Hindu dialogue, the Christian-Muslim dialogue and the Christian-Buddhist dialogue.

EAD Finding Aid

In order to describe archival collections accurately and on a detailed level, IDC Publishers has adopted Describing Archives: A Content Standard (DACS).

The finding aids that are created in accordance with this standard are tagged in EAD (Encoded Archival Description), a format that has been rapidly, widely and internationally embraced, particularly by university archives and special collections departments within academic libraries.

The EAD finding aid for *World Student Christian Federation Archives* is available at www.idc.nl. For the EAD guide, click, MARC/EAD in the upper bar of the home page.

General information

| | |
|-----------------------|---|
| Scope | 95 boxes |
| Number of reels | 83 |
| Size of reels | 35 mm. |
| Film type | Positive silver halide |
| Reduction ratio | Varies depending on the size of the original |
| External finding aids | EAD Finding Aid at www.idc.nl |

Funding

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| Series | Number of reels* |
|---|------------------|
| 1. Word of God and the living faiths of men | 3 |
| 2. Documents and Correspondence | 17 |
| 3. Ajaltoun (1970) | 2 |
| 4. Christian-Muslim dialogue | 2 |
| 5. S. Samartha | 9 |
| 6. Chiang Mai 1977 | 2 |
| 7. World conference on religion and peace | 3 |
| 8. Roman Catholic Church | 3 |
| 9. Christian-Muslim dialogue | 16 |
| 10. Christian-Hindu dialogue | 3 |
| 11. Multifaith consultation | 2 |
| 12. Christian-Buddhist dialogue | 3 |
| 13. S.W. Ariarajah | 21 |

* The number of reels per series has been rounded off upwards, as some of the series have been filmed on e.g. 2.5 reels

Related projects

free brochures available

WORLD STUDENT CHRISTIAN FEDERATION ARCHIVES, YALE 1895-1925

IDC Publishers also offers the *World Student Christian Federation Archives 1895-1925* – a selection from the archives at Yale Divinity School Library. This collection represents the Correspondence and History sections of the Archive including letters from John R. Mott, William Temple and W.A. Visser 't Hooft.

The reports and letters included in this collection provide insight into the contexts and issues that informed the development of the Church in North and South America, continental Europe, Great Britain, Ireland, Asia, Australia, South Africa, and other areas.

- 2,138 microfiche (subdivided by geographical areas)
- Including EAD guide at www.idc.nl

WORLD STUDENT CHRISTIAN FEDERATION ARCHIVES, GENEVA 1919-1956

This collection complements the previously filmed *World Student Christian Federation Archives 1895-1925*, a selection from the WSCF archives at Yale Divinity School Library. An effort was made to select materials from the Geneva archives that would complement and extend the documentation in the earlier archives. The reports and letters included in this collection provide insight into the contexts and issues that informed the development of the Church in North and South America, continental Europe, Great Britain, Ireland, Asia, Australia, South Africa, and other areas. The structure and activities of the WSCF provide a unique opportunity for focused study of student religious life throughout the world.

- 208 reels
- Including EAD guide at www.idc.nl

PROGRAMME TO COMBAT RACISM

The creation of the Programme to Combat Racism (PCR) marked a turning point in the World Council of Churches' (WCC) longstanding opposition to racism. Since its inception, the PCR has been one of the most controversial of the WCC's initiatives. The initial five-year programme concentrated on white racism in South Africa. With the end of apartheid in South Africa, the PCR shifted its attention to the struggle of indigenous peoples and the problem of land rights, as well as to the plight of racially and ethnically oppressed minorities around the world.

- 254 reels
- Including EAD guide at www.idc.nl

