



**A Collection of Youth Contributions at the
International Ecumenical Peace Convocation
Kingston, Jamaica - May 18-25, 2011**



International Ecumenical Peace Convocation

Kingston | Jamaica | 2011

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A Message of Encouragement from the Five IEPC Youth Essay Winners:

Read at the Opening Plenary, May 18th 2011.

Francis Maberi, Uganda, Church of Uganda - Anglican

Chrisida Nithyakalyani, India, Tamil Evangelical Lutheran Church

Lena Schäfer, Germany, Evangelical Lutheran Church

Ariel Siagan, Philippines, Philippine Evangelical Methodist Church

Zisis Siskos, Greece, Ecumenical Patriarchate – Eastern Orthodox

Hearty Greetings of peace to all of you. It is a great privilege and honour for us to represent the voices of young people to give encouragement and affirm our commitment to build and establish peace in our world today. Our sincere thanks to all of you because you provide us a space and an avenue to articulate our views. We also thank our local churches who nurtured us. The theme "Glory to God and Peace on Earth" which has been selected for our International Ecumenical Peace Convocation portrays the importance of Peace on this earth but which is lacking in the present scenario. God created the earth and the human being to lead a harmonious life. But the earth has lost its essence of peace by the violence inflicted by some people. Only when violence is destroyed fully, can we live a peaceful life in this earth which will bring glory to God.

"Glory to God and Peace on Earth" (Luke 2:14) is a part of the Nativity of Jesus where God became human through Jesus' birth. A world where "peace" means that there are no conflicts is a utopia and a world where "peace" means that there are only non violent conflicts is Christian's divine service. But before having peace in the world there must be economic justice because the gap between the rich and the poor countries becomes bigger and bigger. For a peaceful life together there must also be peace among the major religions. First of all the youth must follow this way of living because they are the ones who will hold the important offices all over the world in a few years."

Even the Incarnation of the Logos of God signifies the love, justice and peace on earth, by the bankruptcy of God himself for the enrichment of the humankind, consequently it's the challenge and invitation for change. But just peace on earth can become a reality only by the change of the current liberal model of

the global finance, which requires the bankruptcy of the majority of the world's population, of the poor countries and also of the whole nature for the accumulation of wealth to the few.

Today, the message of the young minds emphasises on empowering the people to depart from the imperialistic state of mind to a Kingdom state of mind. As a Church, our identity is of non-violent resistance. Our missionary engagement has to be holistic in approach, concerned not only with personal salvation but the redemption of the *oikoumene*. In a special way the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation also provides an additional land mark for continuous dialogue, networking and realistic youth involvement in peacemaking as a foundation for a new "desired generation" that is equipped with wisdom, exposure and skills to overcome violence amidst the increasing challenge of change. This is the time to renew our holy commitment to glorify God through promotion of peace on earth.



From Left: Chrisida Nithyakalyani (India), Ariel Siagan (Philippines), Lena Schaefer (Germany), Zisis Siskos (Greece). Francis Maberu (Uganda) was unfortunately not able to attend the IEPC.



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Youth Statement at the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation

24 May 2011

Glory to God and Peace on Earth!

Two days before many of you arrived in Kingston, 95 youth met together for networking, community building, Bible study, prayer and reflection on the DOV and Convocation themes of peace in the community, with the earth, in the marketplace and among the peoples.

We have all come together and participated in the different elements of the IEPC. This reflection and our recommendations are expressions of the many discussions among youth throughout the week. We share this message with you, our fellow peacemakers, and we invite you to continue the conversation with the youth here and beyond - in your congregations and in your communities.

Youth participation and intergenerational dialogue

Just peace can be achieved only when we all work together. Here at the IEPC we have worked together across generations. We have thoroughly enjoyed the interactions with our brothers and sisters. In the future we would like to have even more opportunities to share our insights and interact with one another.

We rejoice that young people participated in this meeting in a wide variety of roles. Young people made up 12% of the participants. We thank those churches and organizations which have sent young people as their representatives and encourage all churches to meet the recommended 25% youth participation rate in the future. We also are looking forward to seeing young people as keynote speakers and panelists – sharing their experiences and expertise. We wish to journey towards Busan together, and greatly value the intergenerational dialogue which enables us to learn from each other and be creative.

Foundations

Churches provide a unique contribution to the work of just peace. We strive to follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ. We affirm that God's word speaks to us and challenges us on the journey of peacemaking. We wish for our work of peace and justice to be rooted solidly in the Scriptures and in theological reflection. We want to commit to a continued reflection on the concept of Shalom.

Partnership

Youth organizations within the ecumenical movement share the vision of Christian unity. Relationships and partnerships make up the foundation of our common work. Therefore, we believe that it is imperative for the WCC, member churches and ecumenical youth organizations to deepen their partnerships and co-operation. Not only do we want to continue such togetherness, but we also want to develop a strategic way to take action in our local and global contexts.

We need strong support from our churches.

We need each other.

We must pray and work together.

Personal recommitment

After our time together, we are deeply inspired by the many stories that have been shared, such as the moving testimony describing the situation of the Dalits given by Asha Kowtal. As this meeting is coming to an end, we find that we are deeply grateful for the sharing and learning that will equip us to face challenges ahead. We encourage one another to continue with concrete actions for peace back home.

God of Life, lead us to justice and peace!



Sanna Ericksson (Sweden), reading the Youth Statement.



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Glory to God and Peace on Earth

The Message of the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation

I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. (Ephesians 3: 16-17)

We understand peace and peacemaking as an indispensable part of our common faith. Peace is inextricably related to the love, justice and freedom that God has granted to all human beings through Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit as a gift and vocation. It constitutes a pattern of life that reflects human participation in God's love for the world. The dynamic nature of peace as gift and vocation does not deny the existence of tensions, which form an intrinsic element of human relationships, but can alleviate their destructive force by bringing justice and reconciliation.

God blesses the peacemakers. Member churches of the World Council of Churches (WCC) and other Christians are united, as never before, in seeking the means to address violence and to reject war in favor of “Just Peace” – the establishment of peace with justice through a common response to God’s calling. Just Peace invites us to join in a common journey and to commit ourselves to building a culture of peace.

We, nearly 1,000 participants from more than 100 nations, called together by the WCC, have shared the experience of the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation (IEPC), a gathering of Christian churches and inter-religious partners dedicated to the pursuit of Peace in the community, Peace with the Earth, Peace in the marketplace and Peace among the peoples. We met on the campus of the University of the West Indies (Mona) near Kingston, Jamaica from 17 through 25 May 2011. We are profoundly grateful to our hosts in Jamaica and throughout the Caribbean region who generously have provided a rich and spacious setting for fellowship and growth in God’s grace. By the very fact that we met on the site of a former sugar plantation, we were reminded of the injustice and violence of slavery and colonialism and of the forms of slavery that still plague the world today. We have been informed by the severe challenges of violence in this context as well as the brave involvement of churches in order to meet those challenges.

We brought the concerns of our churches and regions to Jamaica; we spoke with one another here; now, we have a word to share with the churches and the world. We have encountered one another through Bible study, spiritually enriching common prayer, inspiring expressions of the arts, visits to local ministries and other service agencies, plenaries, seminars, workshops, cultural events, lecture sessions, wide-ranging deliberations and deeply moving conversations with persons who have experienced violence, injustice and warfare. We have celebrated the achievements of the ecumenical Decade to Overcome Violence (2001-2010). Our engagements have inspired us in showing that overcoming violence is possible. The Decade to Overcome Violence has generated many beautiful examples of Christians who have made a difference.

As we gathered in Jamaica, we were keenly aware of events in the world around us. Stories from our churches remind us of local, pastoral and social responsibilities for people who must deal daily with each of the issues we discussed. The aftermath of earthquake and tsunami in Japan raises urgent questions concerning nuclear energy and threats to nature and humanity. Governmental and financial institutions face the necessity of taking responsibility for their failed policies and the devastating impact on vulnerable people. We witness with concern and compassion the struggle for freedom, justice and human rights of the people in many Arab countries and other contexts where brave people struggle without global attention. Our love for the peoples of Israel and Palestine convinces us that the continued occupation damages both peoples. We renew our solidarity with the people of divided countries such as the Korean peninsula and Cyprus, and people yearning for peace and an end to suffering in nations like Colombia, Iraq, Afghanistan and the Great Lakes region of Africa.

We realize that Christians have often been complicit in systems of violence, injustice, militarism, racism, casteism, intolerance and discrimination. We ask God to forgive us our sins, and to transform us as agents of righteousness and advocates of Just Peace. We appeal to governments and other groups to stop using religion as a pretext for the justification of violence.

With partners of other faiths, we have recognized that peace is a core value in all religions, and the promise of peace extends to all people regardless of their traditions and commitments. Through intensified inter-religious dialogue we seek common ground with all world religions.

We are unified in our aspiration that war should become illegal. Struggling for peace on earth we are confronted with our different contexts and histories. We realize that different churches and religions bring diverse perspectives to the path towards peace. Some among us begin from the standpoint of personal conversion and morality, the acceptance of God's peace in one's heart as the basis for peacemaking in family, community, economy, as well as in all the Earth and the world of nations. Some stress the need to focus first on mutual

support and correction within the body of Christ if peace is to be realized. Some encourage the churches' commitment to broad social movements and the public witness of the church. Each approach has merit; they are not mutually exclusive. In fact they belong inseparably together. Even in our diversity we can speak with one voice.

Peace in the community

Churches learn the complexities of Just Peace as we hear of the intersection of multiple injustices and oppressions that are simultaneously at work in the lives of many. Members of one family or community may be oppressed and also the oppressors of others. Churches must help in identifying the everyday choices that can end abuse and promote human rights, gender justice, climate justice, economic justice, unity and peace. The churches need to continue to confront racism and casteism as dehumanizing realities in today's world. Likewise, violence against women and children must be named as sin. Conscious efforts are required for the full integration of differently abled people. Issues of sexuality divide the churches, and therefore we ask the WCC to create safe spaces to address dividing issues of human sexuality. At every level churches play a role in supporting and protecting the right of conscientious objection, and in assuring asylum for those who oppose and resist militarism and armed conflicts. The churches must raise their common voice to protect our Christian brothers and sisters as well as all humans who are subjected to discrimination and persecution on the grounds of religious intolerance. Peace education must move to the centre of every curriculum in schools, seminaries and universities. We acknowledge the peacemaking capacity of youth and call on the churches to develop and strengthen networks of Just Peace ministries. The church is called to go public with its concerns, speaking the truth beyond the walls of its own sanctuary.

Peace with the Earth

The environmental crisis is profoundly an ethical and spiritual crisis of humanity. Recognizing the damage human activity has done to the Earth, we reaffirm our commitment to the integrity of creation and the daily lifestyle it demands. Our concern for the Earth and our concern for humanity go hand in hand. Natural resources and common goods such as water must be shared in a just and sustainable manner. We join global civil society in urging governments to reconstruct radically all our economic activities towards the goal of an ecologically sustainable economy. The extensive use of fossil fuels and CO₂ emissions must be reduced urgently to a level that keeps climate change limited. The ecological debt of the industrialized countries responsible for climate change must be considered when CO₂ emission shares and plans for adaptation costs are negotiated. The nuclear catastrophe of Fukushima has proved once again that we must no longer rely on nuclear power as a source of energy. We reject strategies such as an increased production of agro fuel which hurt the poor by competing with food production.

Peace in the marketplace

The global economy often provides many examples of structural violence that victimizes not through the direct use of weapons or physical force but by passive acceptance of widespread poverty, trade disparities and inequality among classes and nations. In contrast to unfettered economic growth as envisioned by the neoliberal system, the Bible signals a vision of life in abundance for all. The churches must learn to advocate more effectively for full implementation of economic, social and cultural rights as the foundation for “economies of life”.

It is a scandal that enormous amounts of money are spent on military budgets and toward providing weapons for allies and the arms trade while this money is urgently needed to eradicate poverty around the globe, and to fund an ecologically and socially responsible reorientation of the world economy. We urge the governments of this world to take immediate action to redirect their financial resources to programmes that foster life rather than death. We encourage the churches to adopt common strategies toward transforming economies. The churches must address more effectively irresponsible concentration of power and wealth as well as the disease of corruption. Steps toward just and sustainable economies include more effective rules for the financial market, the introduction of taxes on financial transactions and just trade relationships.

Peace among the peoples

History, especially in the witness of the historic peace churches, reminds us of the fact that violence is contrary to the will of God and can never resolve conflicts. It is for this reason that we are moving beyond the doctrine of just war towards a commitment to Just Peace. It requires moving from exclusive concepts of national security to safety for all. This includes a day-to-day responsibility to prevent, that is, to avoid violence at its root. Many practical aspects of the concept of Just Peace require discussion, discernment and elaboration. We continue to struggle with how innocent people can be protected from injustice, war and violence. In this light, we struggle with the concept of the “responsibility to protect” and its possible misuse. We urgently request that the WCC and related bodies further clarify their positions regarding this policy.

We advocate total nuclear disarmament and control of the proliferation of small arms.

We as churches are in a position to teach nonviolence to the powerful, if only we dare. For we are followers of one who came as a helpless infant, died on the Cross, told us to lay aside our swords, taught us to love our enemies and was resurrected from the dead.

In our journey towards Just Peace, a new international agenda is of the utmost urgency because of the scope of dangers surrounding us. We call on the ecumenical movement as

a whole, and particularly those planning the WCC Assembly of 2013 in Busan, Korea, with the theme “God of life, lead us to justice and peace”, to make Just Peace, in all its dimensions, a key priority. Resources such as [An Ecumenical Call to Just Peace](#) (ECJP) and the *Just Peace Companion* can support this journey to Busan.

All thanks and praise to you, O Triune God: Glory to you, and peace to your people on earth. God of life, lead us to justice and peace. Amen.





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ECHOS COMMISSIONERS AT THE IEPC



As the commission endeavours to promote youth participation at all levels from the local level, national, regional and international levels it also sends out a call to all those interested to be part of the movement to join in and make a difference in this world.

Youth can join follow events and share information via facebook, this is a tool that is widely used and is free. The youth facebook page is YOUTH IN THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT. Apart from that, there is a page on the WCC web page (www.oikoumene.org) where information can be obtained. Please feel free to join.

THANK YOU ALL AND GOD BLESS!

ECHOS COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT AT THE IEPC:

From left: Jec Dan Borlado (Philippines), Nikos Kosmidis (Greece), Chola Simwanza (Zambia), Sepiuta Hala'api'api (Fiji), Enoch Magala (Uganda), Lukasz Nazarko (Poland)

THOUGHTS AND REFLECTIONS FROM SOME STEWARDS OF IEPC KINGSTON JAMAICA 2011

Stewardship in Jamaica : Called to serve

By Eileen M. Lewis

Moravian Church Nicaragua

As the scriptures say *"And sitting down, He called the twelve and said to them, "If anyone wants to be first, he shall be last of all, and servant of all." Mark 9:35.* The same way we were called to serve in Jamaica, gathered to give the best of ourselves, to work hard and show the most beautiful expression of love, serving.

Our commitment as stewards consists in give not to receive. Since I arrived in Jamaica I could feel the warm vibe, the embrace of the people and the magic of their culture that surrounds you and grab you, but also, after a while you notice that it is a country with diverse needs, therefore after all the love they showed to us, we knew that we were there to give a hand at the IEPC, I felt blessed for helping them and being part of the process of overcoming violence.

At this young age, as youth leaders, as part of today's society, as members of our churches, it is our obligation to stand up and raise our voice so we can change all the things that limits us, making of our differences not a barrier but strengths, and making our similarities just the base of a world culture of peace. Dealing with stewards from all over the globe showed me that we have much more things in common than I thought before the IEPC, so I learned what is left to do is that we need to tolerate each other, respect our cultures and ideas, help each other expecting nothing more than the wellness of our brother and sisters in Jesus Christ, but most of all I learned that we need to find inner peace by lending our hands to others so we can make of this world a better place to live in.

The IEPC in Jamaica was an example that people from different nations and different tongues can be gathered to worship the name of the Lord in peace. I think if more than a thousand people could tolerate each other so can we as a worldwide community, members of the same divine creation. Walking together on the same path will make things easier to find solutions to overcome violence. Jamaica showed its two faces, the vibrant colorful culture and the dark side of violence but we don't have to see it like it is just a problem in Jamaica, we have to see it as a global issue that matters to every single person on earth because when your brother or your sister is in trouble is your Christian responsibility to help them out.

The previous preparation we had before the IEPC week was a process to get tools for us to use them at the event and to bring them back home, actually, to me it was a lesson of living for us as humans, not for us as Nicaraguans, Jamaican, Japanese, Uruguayan, Slovak, Canadian, south African, Australian , I would say it was a lesson for us as citizens of the world because we have to see it as one context, planet earth, one creation, the same concerns. We need, as stewards, expand the networks so we can reach to others, carrying the message to our regions, serving as instruments of god to make changes in our society, because when we are in the service of our fellow beings we are in the service of our lord.

All of us, are members of different social backgrounds, races, cultures and all of us are facing many deferent issues that should matter to all of us as one community, Stewardship showed me that together we are stronger, together we have each other, together we can face everything and it is up to us to continue with the ecumenical movement because as young leaders we are the present and the future.



Let Peace begin with Me
(Reflection on my participation in the WCC IEPC Convocation and
Stewards Programme)
By Derri-Ann Palmer

The University of the West Indies Mona campus was the home of the World Council of Churches (WCC) International Ecumenical Peace Convocation (IEPC) from May 17-25 2011. People from churches all over the world assembled in Jamaica to celebrate the efforts of the “WCC Decade to Overcome Violence 2001-2010” and to share views and best practices towards achieving justice and peace in our world. Youth participation was evident during IEPC as youth served as delegates and stewards. I was privileged to share as a steward at this event and was challenged to play my part in this call for “Just Peace”.

The idea of Just Peace recognizes an interdependent relationship between justice and peace. Peace cannot exist without justice and there can be no justice without peace. At the IEPC, the issue of Just Peace was explored under four themes: Peace in the Community, Peace with the Earth, Peace in the Marketplace and Peace Among the Peoples.

As a steward, I was assigned to the IEPC Youth Video Team and was afforded an opportunity to document some of the individual and informal reflections of the participants of the IEPC. During my work, I acquired new skills and learnt of the work of the World Student Christian Federation. However, much of what has spurred me to make a personal commitment to pursue Just Peace took place in the pre-convocation meetings of the WCC Stewards Programme.

The WCC Stewards Programme in which I participated brought 31 youth from across the globe not only to serve as workers for the IEPC but also to cultivate awareness of ecumenism and the work of the WCC. Through the programme we realized that, though we were from different denominations, Jesus Christ made us one body. During the programme, we not only debated issues but also, more importantly, built relationships. As we shared our stories, we could see where the absence of peace in community negatively affected our friends in Australia. The absence a peace with the earth affected our friends in the Pacific. Without peace in the marketplace and among the peoples, our friends in Greece and Syria suffer.

We could put a face to the pain caused by violence around the world. At one point, we were tempted to be and in some ways were consumed by the crisis before us. How could the situation get any better? The answer lies in our common faith in Jesus Christ. Christ’s lifestyle and teachings show us that it is possible to strive for Just Peace and with His help transform our world.

Just Peace is possible when we individually surrender our life to God and submit to God’s will for our life. Our individual acts of violence towards the earth, in the community, market place and among the peoples affect everyone. Likewise, our individual acts of peace have a positive effect on all. As members in Christ’s body, be the agent of peace wherever you are. Let peace begin with you.

Reflection on the IEPC Experience

By Delroy Burley (U.T.C.W.I) Student

As a planetary steward of the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation along with the direction from the World Council of churches, I myself have worked closely with the computer personnel's to which I assisted with putting up slides such as power point presentations; notices, video clips and documentaries. I also assisted with the arrangements of chairs, assisting visitors, distributing of programs, volunteering myself with those who play their part in acting for peace and justice from other groups and also help in keeping the surroundings clean for our visitors. In my judgment it was challenging at first, knowing what to put up on the slides, what next is on the program that should be up on the slide/s or a documentary or a video clip and having a clear mind of what it is the program entails for the day, only to allow a smooth operation. In some cases knowing this didn't allow me to operate smoothly with in a pressurize environment but as I continue I was confronted with a lot of technical problems with the computers beyond my expertise's that I had to be assisted by one of the computer personnel on numerous occasions.

In addition, after spending almost a whole day working, there was a time schedule for us to meet for debrief. This time was allocated for us as to expressed our personal opinion of how the day went for us and what could be done to allow an efficient work team to work smoothly under pressure, what to do in a given situation if it occurs and getting to know how others get along in there groups or place of assignment, it was not always smooth I can assure you but through it all we have worked through it ecumenically. Let me add by just saying that I get along just fine with everyone, no fuse, no cultural differences or social differences were involved.

The International Ecumenical Peace Convocation was a fulfilling experience for me as a Theological student within the Jamaican Province. Having said that to indicate this experience as my first International Ecumenical meeting besides that of the United Theological College of the West Indies to which I attend for my studies, to become a Minister of the gospel. This has giving me more potential to work along with people from different social context, from different ethical background and from different cultural perspective. This however would further my experience in widening my thoughts in the context in which I live and the potential for growth among us as people with different problems and circumstances that we face. The IEPC was an international event that

promotes peace, ecological peace, justice among all, and peace for the earth and so as to strengthen the bonds among us ecumenically. This forward movement is a way for us to be willing and able not only to bring a healthier ecumenical movement for the churches across the globe but also advocating a healthier environment for us to live; only if others are encouraged to come along in this ecumenical setting.



Acting out Violence; Acting out Peace

by Tamar Khositashvili

IEPC Steward

“Talents from God” –so described by one American Reggae critic—are the skills of the Jamaican People. During the IEPC gathering, half of the stewards program is comprised of Jamaican youth. They have shown their talent in every field of music – dancing, drumming, singing, but on Tuesday, we had the opportunity to see them on stage as actors.

The Jamaican stewards introduced us to issues of violence faced by the Jamaican people as they performed a situation of a Jamaican family wrestling with domestic violence, gang influence, and suicide. In their skit, a drunk man beat his wife and son. The son, 17 years old wrestles with his choices in life. Should he continue studying or succumb to the violence around him? Should he stick with the church or does he not believe in God anymore.

With their acting the stewards described how the music called Dancehall has become popular among youth and influenced a culture of violence. This musical revolution has made a large impact on the lives of the youth. The churches have tried to counter the violence by producing Dancehall music that is centered on the gospel rather than violence.

Despite the very long distance between my country of Georgia and Jamaica, during the steward performance I had the feeling that they were showing something that was very near my culture. I know a women back whom whose husband beats her every often, and when I tried to talk to her to find a solution I discovered that after each time he beats her, this man this man approaches and cries that he doesn't know what happened to him and that he loves his wife and promises that it will never happen again.

The social research in Georgia about domestic violence has showed that it occurs infrequently , but when it does occur it is mostly happening in villages. The psychologists have discovered that the main mistake is that the women are forgiving their husbands again and again. We have few support organization in Georgia who fight against violence, but the most popular is our Rugby national team. They are fighting against violence and they have a hotline you can call any time for help.

There are many countries around the world, all different that are all struggling with violence. The IEPC creates a space for many people from many different countries to come together and discuss the issues of violence and how we can work on solving them. For if there is one thing that unites us, it is the pursuit of peace.

Living Letters speak to the Youth

By Danique Williams

Secretary, Jamaica Baptist Union Youth Department, WCC Steward

Greetings from Jamaica!

Mek mi tell yuh about mi firs encounter klid living letters (Let me tell you about my first encounter with Living Letters). The session on Living Letters on the 1st day of the IEPC Pre-Event for Youth has, for me, been the most awe-inspiring and spark-igniting one yet. Living Letters is a program of delegations made up of seven delegates representing the seven regions of the world. We learnt that the Living Letters finds its genesis in 2Corinthians 2:1-2. As a result, the delegation strives to express solidarity with countries and groups of people who are grappling with crisis. We were blessed to hear the testimonies of two Living Letter delegates.

Georgia, one of the stewards from Australia, shared that a Living Letters delegation visited the Northern territories of Australia and were able to partner with the Church Council to provide a report detailing the injustices of government towards the indigenous people. It was moving to see that the delegation was able to beam a ray of hope into the lives of these people; hope that their dignity and identity will be restored. It was also touching to see 'outsiders' provide a level of support and compassion that these people were unable to receive from their own government.

Nikos, a Greek member of a Living Letters delegation to the tiny pacific island of Viwa, shared about his visit and the negative effects of Climate Change on these people. We learnt that the people of the Viwa will lose their homeland in a few years due to the melting of polar ice caps, the rising sea levels and the land disappearing under the sea.

Both stories challenged my apathy concerning Global issues and are helping to reshape the way I view the world. Before this session I had managed to tune out issues not directly affecting my country as I thought my country had its fair share of poverty and violence. However, Australia has shown me that if there is a 'good justification' and if opportunity presents itself—any group of people can be violated and stripped of their human rights. Even in these Post Modern times!

Viwa has also taught me that Global Warming is not just affecting land mass but actually people like you and me who base their identify and heritage on their land. Global Warming can and will affect all of us These stories have served as a power ful reminder of our responsibility as Christians to speak up on behalf of those who are unable to speak for themselves and not just in our local contexts.

As a Jamaican Youth Leader the sharing has made me grateful in my context and for the position I am in to inform and influence young people about various issues affecting other young people around the world. I wish the Living Letters God's richest blessings as they continue to pursue peace and justice on behalf of those in crisis. You have paved the way for others to walk in. May we as young people strive to do likewise.

The Theology of Stewardship

By Jean Rony Bataille

This session was done by Jec Dan Borlado (an Echos – Commission on Youth in the Ecumenical Movement) at the Wyndam hotel. In his exposee used the text from 2 Cor. 9: 6-15. He pointed out five pilots from the text to explain the basic theology of stewardship. These are stewardship is a gift of service v 15, a mutually enriching experience v 10, a form of thanksgiving v 12, an accompaniment and embodiment of the gospel v 13, and a willing and voluntary act v 7. Throughout the session the stewards were encouraged by these five elements of stewardship to embrace with love their call from God embedded in a spirit of sacrifice and fellowship with God and all the brothers and sisters that will come to participate in the IECP through love and service.

As a steward I felt strengthened and empowered by the session for it brought out some important meaning of stewardship and help to understand the reason why we are being stewards and the responsibilities that it entails. It is my belief that this session was and is not relevant only for the stewards that were present but for all human kind because we live in a world where everybody wants to be served, want to be given, and love to take, it is important to reaffirm the meaning of stewardship. My hope is that this understanding of stewardship will not only stay in IEPC but will spread across all nations and countries so that all of us will understand that life is not primarily about receiving or taking but it is service through love and humility as a response to God's love manifested through the Gospel.



Being a Peculiar People

By Rachel Stacy

Over the last two weeks I have worked as a steward for the World Council of Churches (WCC), International Ecumenical Peace Convocation (IEPC). With over 300 member faith communities, the WCC gathered close to 1,000 people, in Kingston Jamaica, to share, discuss, and dream of Just Peace. This event was the harvest event for the 10 year WCC project, the Decade to Overcome Violence (DOV). The theme of the gathering centered on a document known as the Ecumenical Call to Just Peace (ECJP) which will be adopted by the WCC at the 2013 General Assembly in Busan, Korea.

These are my reflections on the gathering. Please feel free to post your comments below and email me at rachel.e.stacy@gmail.com.

My experience with this international peace convocation began several days before the event. Thirty-six young adults from around the world gathered to learn, work, pray, and play. We were the stewards; a selected group that during the convocation worked long hours, helping the event run smoothly.

To place myself in a bit of context with the ecumenical movement, last November, I served as a steward for the National Council of Churches-USA meeting in New Orleans. This was my first experience working alongside young adults from various Christian backgrounds in such an ecumenical setting. Like in New Orleans, in Jamaica, working with other young adults was challenging and rewarding. Most of us were, and still are, seminary students. The differences between the Orthodox communities and my little peace church are staggering, yet we all worked side by side registering, directing, and serving the events.

During this event the cultural differences accentuated the religious differences. For the first few days, before other peace church members arrived, I found myself exhausted in my attempts to explain Quakerism. In contrast to the NCC-USA meeting where one of the other stewards was a Mennonite, I was the only peace church member present. Most of the other stewards did not know much about Quakerism. On top of that, explaining your faith to another seminary student is a bit different than explaining your faith to some person on the street; most people don't just come out and ask you about your eschatology.

Oh and the looks of people's faces when I started explaining this peculiar faith! Trying to be fair to the diversity among Friends, I attempted to describe our lack of hierarchy, our waiting worship and our mystical sacraments. I really couldn't get into my universalism at all—or even explain much about Jewish Quakers, Buddhist Quakers etc... so instead I tended towards listening to the questions posed and trying to slip in my passion for interfaith work where I could.

One day in particular, the peculiarity of Quakerism really got to me; being so different from everyone else is hard. I craved discussions with other peace church members where I wouldn't have to admit that I didn't believe in the Nicene Creed and I didn't recite the Lord's Prayer to display my loyalty to the church. It was draining to be different—having an appreciation and curiosity for other traditions but having no one know about you.

The tides turned quickly enough and soon I was joined not only by other peace church members but also by other North Americans. Is universalism a western phenomenon? It was sure easier to speak to Westerners about Quakerism... I'll address this in another post.

One young Mennonite woman I met spoke about attending Meeting for Worship in Spokane Washington. Later, for a seminary class, when asked to bring in pictures of the Eucharist from different traditions, she thought to bring in the picture of Christ in the midst. A simple story, but one that relieved my feelings of being 'weird.'

I spent much of my free time during the IEPC among peace church members, both historic and living. The more knowledgeable folks were of my tradition, the easier it was to spend time with them. Though, from this experience so many questions rise up in my mind: Can I appreciate other faiths when they are intolerant of mine? When do I stand up and say "I'm a Christian, but not a Trinitarian!" "Don't try to baptize me with water!" or more generally "You're not including me!" and when do I let the moment pass, let the dominant voices establish the norm and appreciate the small still moments when my voice is valued?

I think in the end, I found my place. I spoke clearly and boldly and respected others. My voice is being heard and with a beautiful group of diverse peers I am rising up in this exploration and development of ecumenicalism.

It's still hard to be of this peculiar faith. I wonder if I will ever have the opportunity to be the general secretary of the WCC since neither my faith nor my leadership as a woman are particularly recognized by patriarchal traditions. Without a title attached to my name such as

Dr. or Rev. will I ever find myself among ecumenical leadership? For starters, I feel called into this work and I have faith that regardless of the obstacles, other plans are at work.

