



# Global Christian Forum

## **GCF Newsletter:** **March 2023**

Welcome to this exciting edition of the Global Christian Forum newsletter!

We are delighted to share with you a special focus on GCF's work with young people. As a forum, GCF has recognized the centrality of incorporating young people into the ministry of Christian unity. The GCF International Committee consistently asks the question: "who is missing from the table?" and we have acknowledged the need to include more young voices in the forum.

Therefore, GCF seeks to enter into the ministry of mentorship for the next generation of Christian leaders, men and women who will take the message of Christian unity to their communities with passion and creativity, men and women who will lead us forward in new forms of connection and fellowship.

In this issue, you will encounter reflections from three of the youth delegates supported by GCF - in partnership with their home churches and the WCC - to attend the Ecumenical Youth Gathering held in Karlsruhe, Germany in preparation for the 11th WCC General Assembly.

We thank God for your faithful commitment to the work of hope and Christian unity fostered by GCF, and we hold you in prayer always.



*GCF Secretary, Rev. Dr. Casely Baiden Essamuah, spent time with the delegates at the Ecumenical Youth Gathering in Karlsruhe.*

### **The Ecumenical Youth Gathering in Karlsruhe**

The Ecumenical Youth Gathering was held August 27-30, 2022 as one of the pre-assemblies in preparation for the 11th WCC Assembly. It brought together young people from WCC member churches and ecumenical partners to provide a youth-focused open space for worship, dialogue and consultation.

With the intent to build solidarity among young people around the world, the Ecumenical Youth Gathering convened under the theme “Christ’s love reconciles and restores young people in the church and the society.”

The Global Christian Forum had the opportunity to support eight young people to participate in the EYG. Three of the delegates kindly share their reflections with us.

## Reflection from Berto Kado

*The Diversity of Worship shocked me! I have learned how different people groups express their reverence to God and that sometimes it's in ways that challenge my traditional ideas of what worship should look like. It's so beautiful how God called different people to serve alongside Him and never expects the execution to be in the same manner. This is what I want to share and impart to everyone I know. That it's okay to be different, God loves our uniqueness and calls us to 'perform' only for an audience of one.*



*Leaders for EYG Spiritual Life, including Rev. Stacey Duensing Pearce who is also part of the GCF International Committee.*

## **Reflection from Obed Ayim**

*“As expected, I was exposed to a variety of practises and traditions during the Ecumenical Youth Gathering. Some were similar to my home and others were quite distinct. Unlike in our part of the world, female involvement in key parts of the conference, from participants to organizers and presenters, was vast and awe-inspiring. I realised that if given the chance and the right support, our females might accomplish a lot for the church as well.”*



## **Reflection from Rishe Awe**

*The Ecumenical Youth Gathering 2022 is one I would tag as adventurous, from my arrival till my departure each day was an endless box of adventure and lessons and also getting to understand the differences in cultures and tradition from all churches and countries. Celebrating Our gifts and understanding that even though we all have different gifts we are all in the body of Christ for his glory and that our gift even though different unite us as a church solely on Christ's love and that through prayer and communion together we bring God's Glory down and his Holy Spirit moves amongst us for the development of the kingdom of God.*

## **Reflection from Rev. Stacey Duensing Pearce**

Participating in the Ecumenical Youth Gathering (EYG) of the World Council of Churches is an experience I will treasure for a lifetime. In the two years leading up to the gathering I worked with a “Design Team” of 20 other young people to plan and implement the event, serving this team specifically on behalf of the Global Christian Forum. My role on this team was to work with a committee for “Spiritual Life” who planned all moments of bible study and prayer for the Ecumenical Youth Gathering. Perhaps you can imagine my joy during the first prayer service of EYG; to finally see gathered almost 400 young people from all over the world to pray to and praise God. In my context of the North American Church, 20–30 year-olds are often the missing demographic from local churches. To suddenly be gathered with a diverse and dynamic group of these young spiritual leaders was a gift that left me feeling intellectually stimulated, spiritually filled, and significantly supported by the fellowship and friendship I found there.

Each day of the Ecumenical Youth Gathering had a different theme: Celebrating Gifts, Visiting Wounds, Transforming Injustice, and Closing Celebration. In planning for the event, I anticipated the day with the most energy would be “Transforming Injustice”. After all, young leaders are often some of the most passionate seekers of justice in a world in need of God’s transformation. What surprised me, however, was the need for “Visiting Wounds” at our gathering. During bible study on the second day, Joeeun Kim of the Presbyterian Church in South Korea led a prayer of lament based on Psalm 42. In between dramatic readings of the psalm and singing, Joeeun asked EYG participants to write on a piece of paper a wound they have experienced in their own lives or in the world. Everyone was then invited to place their written wound in a basket and to take a different person’s written wound and pray for them. The moment was powerful. Sobs could be heard as people held each other’s wounds in their hands and prayed for the wounds of the church. At the end of our time of prayer, a participant approached me and said this: “We came to this place as strangers. We leave today as a community”. This powerful experience from the Ecumenical Youth Gathering continues to make me to ponder: How can holding one another’s wounds before God and praying for one another in our diversity of need lead to greater Christian Unity? This prayer of ‘Visiting Wounds’ shaped the whole experience of the Ecumenical Youth Gathering. If you read the official message from the Ecumenical Youth Gathering, you will notice it begins with lament for the brokenness and pain in the world. Only after naming these wounds do the young people from EYG then call upon the church into action for seeking justice and peace with the guidance of God.



*GCF International Committee member, Rev. Stacey Duensing Pearce, also participated in the Ecumenical Youth Gathering as a part of the Design Team.*

*And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another.*

**-Hebrews 10:24-25**

