



# An invitation to the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace



World Council  
of Churches



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## Why a pilgrimage of justice and peace?

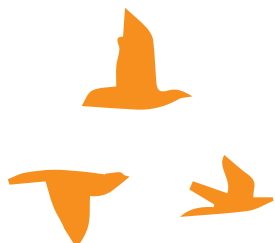
Christians and their communities around the world are aware today, as never before, that life itself is in peril. So many dangers—climate change, certainly: but also poverty and economic injustice, threats to health and well-being, violence and war—endanger humanity and can drain our hope. Yet precisely for that reason, the shared faith and commitment of Christians everywhere are necessary, affirming the God of life and the resilient hope offered to us in the life, the cross, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Christians are called to affirm, sustain, and protect life.

This is an ecumenical calling. One God of life, one creation, one humanity call the one church of Jesus Christ to commitment and engagement where peace and justice are threatened or destroyed.

That is why the World Council of Churches, an expression of the worldwide Christian fellowship, calls on churches everywhere to walk together, to view their common life, their journey of faith, as a part of the pilgrimage of justice and peace, and to join together with others in celebrating life and in concrete steps toward transforming injustices and violence.

Together we continue to pray: “God of life, lead us to justice and peace,” the prayer of the WCC assembly in Busan, 2013.





## Christian pilgrimage: a journey of faith

From the time of Abram and Sarai (Gen. 12:1-3) and from the calling of Christ's disciples (Mark 1:17-18), the people of God have engaged in pilgrimage.

Reflecting on God's liberation of the children of Israel in the Exodus and their yearly journey to Jerusalem at Passover, we recognize Jesus himself as a pilgrim who went up to Jerusalem to embrace his people and offer himself in love for the sake of the world. We are his followers.

As disciples of Jesus the itinerant healer, we Christians in every age and region have journeyed, not just in an individual quest for enlightenment or forgiveness but together, supporting and learning from each other, encountering strangers and surmounting dangers, allowing our hearts to be opened ever more to the promptings of the Spirit and the new horizons of the gospel's proclamation of the reign of God.

Pilgrimage is about leaving one's comfortable and habitual domain to seek God and God's reign in new ways, new contexts, and new places. Christian pilgrimage has always facilitated a stronger identification with Jesus himself and with our fellow sojourners.

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## Churches united for justice and peace

Christians and churches have always engaged in work for justice and peace, from the caring fellowship of congregational life to the programmatic and institutional benevolence that leavens society, to the global advocacy that lends voice to conscience in the halls of international bodies. What is distinctive in this pilgrimage of justice and peace is the call to take on such witness together, in unity, to see our churches as one global fellowship seeking reconciliation among ourselves and transformation of the world.

Seeking peace with justice – a “just peace” – extends the historic ecumenical quest for Christian unity. “The unity of the church in its *koinonia* may have something to offer to a world that is rapidly disintegrating... It should never have been a question of *either* unity *or* justice. It should have been a case of ‘both...and.’ It was God who indeed loved the world [and] set the agenda for the church....” (Desmond Tutu).

Biblically grounded, just peace envisions a state of authentic and sustainable relationships with God and in the world: just peace in communities, among nations and peoples, in economic relations, and with nature itself. “Just peace is a journey into God’s purpose for humanity and all creation, trusting that God will ‘guide our feet into the way of peace’ (Luke 1:79)” (“Ecumenical Call to Just Peace”).



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## A pilgrim spirituality of justice and peace

But we ourselves need transformation as well. As individuals and churches, we too are changed, renewed, transformed by engaging with and learning from those among us who live in poverty, the disenfranchised, people and communities on the margins, and from others whose lives we share and whose work we join. In their faces we encounter Jesus. In such needs we discover the possibility of creative new ways to participate in the coming reign of God on earth. In new partnerships with other church communities and confessions, as well as with people of other faiths and with civil society organizations, we experience the life-giving and life-sustaining Spirit at work in the world.

The invitation to pilgrimage is therefore also a summons to a way of life and a transformative spirituality of justice and peace. The gift of justice and peace inaugurates a way of life that reflects human participation in God's love for the world. It is not simply wanting peace nor "assenting to a set of ideas about God's design for the world. To be agents of God's peace requires putting on the mind that was in Christ Jesus (cf. Phil. 2:5)" by "entering regularly and deeply into communion with the Triune God, along the ways that Christ has set out for us. It is that presence in God that makes it possible for us to come to discern God's working in our world" ("Ecumenical Call to Just Peace").

To encounter the vulnerable, and to find oneself in a vulnerable place and becoming vulnerable to others, is to be purged of one's own prejudices, preoccupations, and priorities—stripped down to face God and God's own aim for the world. It is a transformative journey, a conversion to the needs of others and the vision of God.

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## How to participate in this pilgrimage of justice and peace?

As individuals and in congregations, we are in positions to practise this spirituality and to study our immediate contexts to discern where and how best to engage its deepest or most pressing needs. We look around us, and what do we see? Where is the human need that calls for our attention, engagement, and love? That is where the pilgrimage begins.

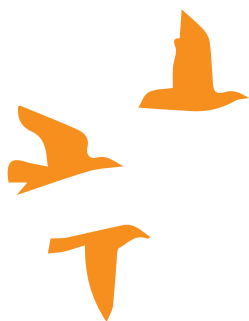
As national or regional churches, too, we are empowered to renew, refocus, and resource our ecumenical commitments—energizing congregations, seeking new programmatic partners, and aligning our work with that of others in a coordinated attempt to be transformed and to transform our action and advocacy.

And at the international, interconfessional, and interfaith level, we can harvest the insights and commitment of the grassroots to improve and transform our international systems of justice, economy, and health.

Churches and organizations are encouraged to join the pilgrimage of the many WCC programmes, too, addressing such issues as water, gender justice, climate, food security, conflict resolution and peace-making, nuclear disarmament, global health, human rights, children's welfare, education, justice systems and incarceration, and racism.

We believe that closely linking spirituality, ecumenical solidarity, and openness to new partnerships with concrete service and advocacy will deepen our understanding of God's work in the world and revitalize our faith.

We believe that Christ calls us to live and walk united in reconciled unity, so that the world may see and believe that justice and peace are possible because they are God's gifts to the world. The one God, the holy and undivided Trinity, calls us to witness together as Christian pilgrims to that holy and just peace.





## Join the pilgrimage!

Walking together!

Praying together!

Working together!

Churches and their partners are called to fulfil the biblical vision of justice and peace. For “what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with our God?” (Micah 6:8)

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