

Churches to mark 100th anniversary of ecumenical movement

by [Bruce Nolan](#)

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NEW ORLEANS (RNS) Leaders of the nation's largest coalition of Christian churches will gather here this week (Nov. 9-11) to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the ecumenical movement.

Members of the National Council of Churches, representing 100,000 congregations and 45 million people in 35 Protestant, Anglican and Orthodox denominations, will also discuss and how to fight poverty, war and environmental degradation -- while trying to bring down barriers dividing denominations.

The group will hold its annual General Assembly alongside its global humanitarian arm, Church World Service.

The event comes 100 years after a meeting in Edinburgh, Scotland, of the World Missionary Conference, considered the beginning of the modern ecumenical movement.

NCC spokesman Philip Jenks said much of the meeting will be devoted to five strategic papers discussing the future of ecumenism, especially in light of the challenges of war, poverty and economic degradation. About 400 people are expected.

The Rev. Dan Krutz, an Episcopal priest and executive director of the Louisiana Interchurch Conference, said the ultimate goal of the participants remains what it was a century ago -- breaking down doctrinal walls that divide Christendom.

"That's certainly part of it -- overcoming differences, being able to be at the table together around the Eucharist. If we were all teaching the same thing, that would assist the missionary enterprise,"

he said.

"There's an old saying, `Doctrine divides; service unites.' We would love to overcome that, so that doctrine unites as well."