

NCC event marks 100 years of ecumenism

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More than 400 people of faith met in New Orleans November 9–11 to celebrate a century of ecumenical involvement and to consider how the churches might effectively work together. Called the Centennial Gathering and sponsored by the National Council of Churches and its humanitarian arm, Church World Service, the three-day meeting marked the 100th anniversary of the 1910 World Mission Conference in Edinburgh, Scotland—an event generally regarded as the beginning of the modern ecumenical movement.

Delegates to the gathering—from Orthodox, evangelical, mainline Protestant, historic African-American and peace churches—adopted resolutions calling for ratification of the Start II nuclear disarmament treaty, immediate and comprehensive immigration reform, an end to the violence against Christians and civilians in Iraq, and a U.S.-led investigation of human rights abuses in Myanmar (Burma).

In a brief meeting prior to the gathering, the NCC's Governing Board issued "A Call to End the War in Afghanistan." The statement urged the president "to negotiate a withdrawal of U.S. and NATO forces from Afghanistan to be completed as soon as possible without further endangerment to the lives and welfare" of troops and civilians. At that board meeting, Michael Kinnamon was unanimously reelected as NCC general secretary.

Honored at the gathering with the Joseph Cardinal Bernardin Award for Christian Unity was Lois Wilson, former moderator of the United Church of Canada, president of the Canadian Council of Churches, one of seven presidents of the World Council of Churches—and for several years, until her retirement in 2002, a member of the senate of Canada. Challenging the delegates not to hang back in fear when strong action is necessary, she brought them to their feet when she said: "Never apologize, never explain, never regret. Just do it—and let them howl."