

Global church leaders hold historic meeting

by [World Council of Churches](#) and [Christian Century staff](#)

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Bolstering efforts to overcome divisions among Christians, high-level officials for global Catholic, Orthodox, Pentecostal, evangelical, and mainline Protestant organizations met together for the first time.

The leaders who gathered “together represent in some sense nearly all of world Christianity,” said Larry Miller, secretary of the Global Christian Forum. That they “are now ready to work hand-in-hand in a common forum is reason for profound gratitude for the past and high hope for the future.”

The historic meeting in late May in Bossey, Switzerland, gathered the top leaders of the World Council of Churches, the Pentecostal World Fellowship, the World Evangelical Alliance, and the Vatican’s Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity.

The meeting was organized by the WCC, an ecumenical association that includes many Orthodox and Protestant denominations, and the GCF, which includes Pentecostal groups and additional Catholic leaders along with those of the WCC. While the Catholic Church is not a member of the WCC, it is a full member of the WCC Commission on Faith and Order, and it cooperates with the WCC in many programs.

The 25 participants considered the following questions: Where are we on the path of Christian unity in the world church today, two decades after the WCC called for a new forum for encounter and conversation between churches? What does the answer to that question suggest about next steps on the journey of churches toward greater oneness in Christ and the complementary role of each participating church and organization?

“The meeting at the WCC’s Bossey Ecumenical Institute has been hoped for by many for years,” said Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, former general secretary of the

Reformed Church in America, who serves on the GCF's leadership team. "The power and credibility of global church's witness and service to the world is strengthened immeasurably by healing our tragic divisions. In my decades of ecumenical work, this time together is a hallmark."

The meeting provided a consultative body preparing for the next meeting of the GCF international committee in Taizé, France, in February and the next GCF global gathering in Bogotá, Colombia, in April. Discussion included the role and identity of the global forum, method for theological reflection, and communication strategies. Participants also explored how to include megachurches and migrant churches in the work of the GCF.

"We have been reflecting on developments in world Christianity and, in this context, the question of how the different instruments in the search for Christian unity can complement each other," said Olav Fykse Tveit, WCC general secretary. "We have also articulated the role of and responsibility for the GCF as a shared instrument of unity if the GCF is faithful to its identity as a forum."