



World Conference of Associations of Theological Institutions
ΠΑΓΚΟΣΜΙΑ ΣΥΝΟΜΟΣΠΟΝΔΙΑ ΘΕΟΛΟΓΙΚΩΝ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΤΙΚΩΝ ΙΔΡΥΜΑΤΩΝ
www.wocati.org

The President

February 28, 2007

To all WOCATI member Associations

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Greetings from the Executive Committee of the World Conference of Associations of Theological Institutions (WOCATI). We regret that it has been some time since we communicated with you. Nevertheless we greet you warmly, and assure you that you have been in our thinking and planning. Also, we have been in touch, having had news of you from your Regional Representative on the Executive Committee. The list of its present members is appended at the end of the letter.

This letter is meant, amongst other things, to affirm our confidence in the relevance of WOCATI in our times. In the foundational statement of WOCATI it is affirmed that "Theological Education is carried out in a world which is increasingly being made aware of its interdependence and religious pluralism. Its context is both local and global... It is appropriate that a global network and organization be established to serve, support and enhance theological education in its constituent parts. To this end, the World Conference of Associations of Theological Institutions is established. The members constituting the Conference join themselves together for the purpose of advancing their shared vision..." To this end we can assure you that we consider you as a vital constituent of the WOCATI enterprise. We therefore invite your participation, by way of communication, in our preparation for the next Congress, scheduled to take place in Greece in May-June, 2008, for the reasons explained below. The suggested Theme is "Theological Education: A Radical Reappraisal".

Sisters and brothers, you share in this vision – the vision of a theological education which ensures not only the indigenization of Gospel, Church and Theology within individual cultures, but that theological institutions in their individual situations set out to discover anew, out of their own historico -religio-philosophical traditions, their unique perception of the theology or theologies implicit in the Gospel, relevant to the local situation, but at the same time, available to the world Church. The task of WOCATI at Congress and Executive levels is to facilitate the implementation of this vision globally. In our various Meetings we have sought to identify issues that confront theological education at global and local levels – issues that may necessitate a re-orientation of

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WOCATI's activities. Theological scholarship and research, Theological Education and the Mission the Church, Theological Education in a Global Society, Theological Education and Other Faiths, The Social Dimension of Theological, Women and Theological Education, The Prophetic Role of Theological Education, were some of the issues that occupied the current Executive Committee's energy.

Highlights of our Meetings (2002-2006)

It has been the privilege of the members of the Executive to have live encounters with theological educators and institutions in those places in which the Meetings were held, and we record our appreciation for the members of local committees who worked hard to ensure our comfort.

- In Chiang Mai, Thailand we encountered a predominantly Buddhist religious culture, and congratulate Salvador (Buddy) Martinez and his fellow educators for their courageous Christian theological witness. It was revealing and inspiring to observe how seriously Buddhist monks and worshippers take their religion.*
- In Melbourne Australia, Kathleen Williams arranged for us to be hosted in a Roman Catholic Hall of Residence. It was good to see the co-operation which existed amongst the various theological schools and congratulate the United Faculty of Theology for their collaborative efforts and the Uniting Church of Australia for its contribution to the objective of Church unity.*
- Suva, Fiji presented us with its own dynamic expression of Christianity which appeared to be stamped on the various facets of Fijian culture – political, commercial, and social. Here, Sunday is indeed a 'holy' Day – business places are closed, tourism seems to come to a halt, and one should not travel too great a distance on Sunday. SPATS appears to be the best organized of our regional Associations, and boasts a separated Secretary – the energetic Tevita Banavanua.*
- In Kingston, Jamaica, at the invitation of Dr. Hyacinth Boothe, we embarked upon our first Symposium, held at the United Theological College of the West Indies, and supported by our sister College- St. Michael's Theological College. Sir Howard Cook, KCMG, Governor General of Jamaica received us at his official residence, King's House and we had the opportunity of introducing him to WOCATI and its objectives.*
- In Thessaloniki, Greece, I myself, as WOCATI' President, ensured the Executives' exposure both to the world of New Testament times and to the Greek Orthodox Church. It was an inspiration in itself to have met in the University of Aristotle. We found the Bishops warm, welcoming, and gracious in their hospitality.*
- At Fort Worth, Texas we were guests of Brite Divinity School, where Nam Soon Kang, our Vice President is a Professor and made all arrangements for our meeting. The President, Dr. D. Newell Williams and Dean Nancy Ramsay were our gracious hosts. The Hooding Ceremony (Valedictory Service) was impressive in its simplicity, and refreshingly, more spiritual than academic. The Symposium*

with its theme Theological Education Today: Challenges and Promises brought us together with Faculty and Students of Brite Divinity School, and the resulting discussion proved to be very useful to our objectives

The Continuation of WOCATI

The future of WOCATI depends on two vital factors: Financial Viability and Regional Cooperation.

a) Financial Viability

- i) **Grants** – The effort to access funding has been challenging. ATS in North America has been extremely generous, but cannot on its own continue to finance WOCATI. It can only now continue to make its own annual contributions. We are grateful for the Organizations – especially Lilly, Luce and Pew from the USA and EMW from Germany – that have so far made generous contributions, but we can no longer depend only upon them. In the mean time the Executive is doing all that lies in its power to access further funding. This is the reason why we postponed the calling of our next Congress. Having accepted a generous and noble offer by the Diocese of Neapolis of Thessaloniki, Greece, to fully host the next Congress and publish all the Proceedings of the various official WOCATI meetings so far, we are now exploring the possibility of engaging in specific projects. This idea will further be discussed at the next Congress.*
- ii) **Payment of Dues** – Each member Association is committed to an annual contribution of \$ 100. In our planning for Congress 2008 we are depending on receiving from all our member Associations their outstanding dues. The list is displayed in our website (<http://www.wocati.org/members.html>). We would be also grateful if you could solicit from your Region extra donor contributions to ensure the travel expenses of your two (one male –one female) delegates, or at least for one. Where there is a will, there is a way.*

6) Regional Cooperation

The future of WOCATI depends to a very great extent upon the vibrancy of regional and local theological institutions. The contemporary state of our global society challenges the global Christian Community to redefine its mission with a view to fulfilling its evangelical mandate. In this regard the contribution of theological education is crucial. The Executive of WOCATI therefore implores you to let us rise to the occasion and make an all-out effort to ensure that Congress 2008 takes place. We are aware of the difficulty which some regions are experiencing in meeting with each other. We urge to do all that lies in your power to make contact with each other in your region as soon as possible, and to start the theological conversation going, which will

culminate at Congress 2008. Please communicate with me (pv@theo.auth.gr) as a matter of urgency.

Congress 2008

We move forward in faith that your determination this will become a reality. Concerning this and other relevant matters (call for papers etc.), you will subsequently be informed.

Looking forward to having your preliminary response, I greet you in Greek with our Lord's words

ΕΙΡΗΝΗ ΥΜΙΝ

PVassiliadis

APPENDIX THE CURRENT WOCATI EXECUTIVE

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PS. Latest information concerning the venue of the 2008 WOCATI assembly and the World Conference on Theological Education: It will be a week-long event, which will start in Thessaloniki (city of arrival) for the first two days. Then it will move on the footsteps of St. Paul to Philippi and Veroia, and after visiting Meteora will continue for another two days in Volos together with the local Theological Academy. Finally it will reach Corinth and Athens (and Areopagus, where St. Paul delivered his address to the ancient Athenians) for the closing two days Athens will be the city of departure,
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