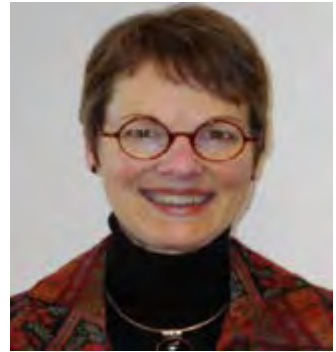


Letters from Overseas Kristine Greenaway Writes an Advent Letter from Switzerland

December 2011

Christmas greetings from the Communication Office of the World Communion of Reformed Churches



As we move into winter in the northern hemisphere, we are conscious of darkening days. As we hear the news of Canada's decision to withdraw from the Kyoto Protocol following the climate conference in Durban, as we hear of violence against women in refugee camps and war zones, as we hear of famine in Africa, we wonder if the days will ever grow brighter.

From where I sit in the offices of the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) in Geneva, I am blessed to see glimmers of light flickering in the faces and in the reports of those who gather here and in other countries to seek ways to roll back the dark.

In September, WCRC member churches from the Caribbean and North America met in the Dominican Republic to plan joint initiatives in response to regional issues. A shared concern for the human rights and spiritual needs of Caribbean migrant workers emerged as a priority and plans are now taking shape to build on models such as the one between The United Church of Canada and the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands. Together these two WCRC member churches provide spiritual support and rights advocacy for migrant workers in the Simcoe and Niagara regions of southern Ontario. A flicker of light for people often pushed to the edges!

Last week, ecumenical, non-governmental, and Swiss government officials gathered at the Ecumenical Centre to hear church representatives from Syria report on the impact of the unrest in the country. When WCRC's general secretary Setri Nyomi spoke in a panel discussion, he was holding WCRC member churches in Syria in his prayers. The ecumenical movement is uniquely placed to bring together people from faith communities and secular society to share insights into the Syrian situation. A flicker of light in a troubled region!

Next month, a Cuban theologian and parish minister will join the WCRC staff team to coordinate programs for Justice and Partnership. Dora Arce-Valentin grew up as the only child in her Sunday school. Today the number of Cuban Christians has grown to the point that the church faces the challenge of training enough clergy and lay leaders to meet the need. A flicker of light in a changing society!

And so we see light in these actions of WCRC member churches working together to push back the dark.

The story of the hope in the birth of a baby in Bethlehem so long ago continues to light the darkness. Celebrating that story in our families and congregations brings great joy and renews us each year to face the challenges ahead.

As I prepare to spend Christmas with my family in Montreal, I thank you for the support of the Mission and Service Fund for WCRC's ministry of communication.

On behalf of WCRC, I wish you a happy Christmas and a blessed New Year!

Kristine Greenaway

To learn more, visit www.wcrc.ch for an introduction to the World Communion of Reformed Churches.

Kristine is a United Church of Canada global mission personnel associate serving with WARC in Switzerland. The work of this global partner and the work of overseas personnel is made possible through your gifts to the Mission and Service Fund of The United Church of Canada.

