

WCC Faith and Order Commission enjoys an encounter with Patriarch Daniel of Romania



Left to right: Odair Mateus, Faith and Order director; Fr Viorel Ionita, member of the commission; Patriarch Daniel; Susan Durber, Faith and Order moderator; Fr Daniel Buda, WCC staff member at Caraiman Monastery, Romania. © Romanian Orthodox Church

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Patriarch Daniel of the Romanian Orthodox Church, an ecumenical theologian and activist since he was a member of the laity, interacted with the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches (WCC) on 22 June during their week-long meeting at the Caraiman Monastery in the southern Carpathian Mountains of Romania.

Faith and Order moderator Rev. Dr Susan Durber noted in her introduction of the patriarch that he exercised primary responsibility in inviting the commission to Romania and arranging for the generous hospitality shown to its members.

Durber reminded commissioners that, early in his career, the future patriarch was a professor at the WCC's Ecumenical Institute in Bossey, Switzerland where one of his young students was the Brazilian theologian appointed by the WCC this month as its new director of Faith and Order, Rev. Dr Odair Pedroso Mateus.

Patriarch Daniel has been active in theological dialogues and discussions related to the Faith and Order agenda, often through the inter-church relations department of the Conference of European Churches. He is the author of such books as *Confessing the Truth in Love: Orthodox Perceptions of Life, Mission and Unity* and *Travelling with God: The Meaning and Usefulness of Pilgrimage*.

The patriarch thanked the Faith and Order Commission for a document it has prepared for formal review by Christian bodies, titled [*The Church: Towards a Common Vision*](#). He reported that the text is used as a resource in many of Romania's 14 Orthodox theological faculties, and he indicated it will be discussed carefully within the Romanian Orthodox Church so that an official response to questions raised in the document may be sent to the Faith and Order office in Geneva.

Patriarch Daniel reported that the Romanian Orthodox Church is turning again to the search for Christian unity following a period of national re-building. After the fall of the Ceausescu regime in December 1989, he explained, the immediate focus for the national church was on confirming confessional identity in Romania and the surrounding region.

"Now," he continued, "we again discover the importance of unity under the cross." This need for unity applies within the nation itself and, at the same time, "We try, with the Holy Spirit, to have a theology that is more connected with the life of the churches East and West".

The church, he said, appreciates "the ecumenical connections we need in order to be more sensitive to social changes." Education, he adds, is the main preoccupation for any Romanian concerned with the health of the nation.

He described the mutual respect and cooperation shown by religious bodies and the state. The Romanian government lends financial support to 18 Christian, Muslim and Jewish bodies. All teachers of religious education in the school system, regardless of their affiliation, are paid by the state and have an obligation to teach within the context of the nation and world as a whole.

"We combine freedom and unity," the patriarch concluded. "It is a great responsibility to work for the society and not just for our own religious identity."

In expressing gratitude to Patriarch Daniel, Faith and Order moderator Susan Durber told him: "You have done so much to engage the church with the culture of your country, to show what the church can do."

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WCC member churches in Romania

The World Council of Churches promotes Christian unity in faith, witness and service for a just and peaceful world. An ecumenical fellowship of churches founded in 1948, today the WCC brings together 345 Protestant, Orthodox, Anglican and other churches representing more than 550 million Christians in over 120 countries, and works cooperatively with the Roman Catholic Church. The WCC general secretary is the Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit, from the [Lutheran] Church of Norway.

Media contact: [+41 79 507 6363](tel:+41795076363); www.oikoumene.org/press
Visiting address: 150 route de Ferney, 1211 Geneva 2, Switzerland