

How do you say “peace?”



WCC Language Service coordinator Pamela Valdés.

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Rauha. Paix. Friede. Paghidait.

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In observation of International Mother Language Day on 21 February, the World Council of Churches (WCC) is inviting staff and visitors to the Ecumenical Centre in Geneva to share words of peace in their mother tongues.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization organizes this special day each year to promote global citizenship education. This year, the theme is “Towards Sustainable Futures through Multilingual Education.”

This is an opportunity for WCC staff, visitors and the entire WCC fellowship to focus on language as a bridge building tool for peace, said Marianne Ejdersten, WCC director of Communication, and WCC is uniquely posed to celebrate the spiritual aspects of International Mother Language Day.

“We at the WCC are writing words of peace on a dove,” Ejdersten explained. “The dove was sent out by Noah to look for a place where human beings and fellow creatures could have a sustainable future. The olive branch with which it came back has become the symbol of peace.”

The dove is also a symbol for the Holy Spirit who at Pentecost gifted the disciples with the talent to speak in tongues that touched the hearts of strangers beyond language boundaries.

The WCC will share the diverse expressions of peace with people worldwide via social media. On 28 February, the dove will travel on for a session on peace communication with the students at the WCC's Ecumenical Institute at Bossey.

An inclusive pilgrimage

Honouring local languages and cultures, particularly among indigenous people, is integral to WCC's pilgrimage of justice and peace. Preservation of diverse languages, and deeper understanding of their contexts, is key to the future of peace and reconciliation envisioned by many in the WCC fellowship.

Pamela Valdés, WCC Language Service coordinator, reflected that WCC is keenly aware of the gift and indispensability of native languages, even in an era of globalization in which the generalized use of English prevails.

“Our work is more relevant than ever, because of the many cross-cultural challenges the world is facing,” she said. “By providing translations in their mother tongues, we enable our members to participate fully in the ecumenical movement and its quest for justice and peace.”

Among the WCC's 348 member churches, representing more than 560 million persons of Christian faith, and partners, there are many languages and dialects. The WCC produces most of its resources in four languages: English, Spanish, French and German, plus other languages when needed.

Share words of peace in your own mother tongue [via Facebook](#), [via Instagram](#), or [via Twitter](#)!

[Watch a video of Bossey students teaching each other songs in their various languages](#)