

## Tveit offers inaugural address at Church of North India synod



Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit. © Detlev Knoche/CNI Synod Delhi

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**On 30 September, World Council of Churches (WCC) general secretary Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit offered an inaugural address during the 16th Synod Meeting of the Church of North India (CNI) which focussed on the theme 'The Harvest is Plentiful but the Labourers are Few'.**

Speaking in New Delhi, Tveit spoke of the challenge of taking new steps for ecumenical unity in witness and service for justice and peace.

“Since its beginnings in 1970, the CNI has seen the abundance of the fruits of its labour – the harvest has truly been plentiful,” he said. “Be it the grassroots ecumenism lived out in the life of your churches, the resilient witness of your churches, most of whom are made up of the most marginalized communities, or your reputed educational and healthcare institutions which have touched the lives of several of the most marginalized, the fruits of the labours of our missionaries both local and foreign are worthy of thanksgiving.”

The call to come and serve, to work, to witness together is urgent, Tveit continued. “There are so many forces in the world that are polarizing and dividing us as human beings,” he said “Some of them also do it in the name of religion, some even in the name of Jesus.”

This call to go and serve together is not always easy, but we are still called out to do it, Tveit added. “There is a willingness in the WCC constituencies and beyond, to seek a united witness and a common service, to unite our agendas and resources for those who need our joint attention and support the most.”

We are created to be a fellowship of life-giving diversity, respecting one another and finding ways towards justice and peace for all, for all, continued Tveit. “The WCC is supporting our member churches in many places around the world to be the signs of love and peace so urgently needed,” he said. “We are called to pray and preach and show that the kingdom of God with its values is coming near.”

The call to unity is the basis for all that we do, and we have to remind ourselves again and again what that calling implies in terms of commitment to really overcome our historical divisions, and to work for a unity that represents both justice and peace, Tveit reflected: “This is not an exercise at the surface of the matters; it goes deep into our lives and priorities,” he said. “It has a price; it is costly—if we are serious.”

We have to continue to work and pray that faith in one God will bring another type of relations of justice and peace one day, Tveit said. “This day should come soon, before it is too late,” he said. “God is calling us to show in new ways in different contexts how the unity as church and as humanity is connected.”

The unity we seek is a unity in joy and celebration, where all can participate, not only something we make statements about or have as a theme for our discussions, Tveit concluded.

“We are called to give witness to this revelation of the love of God in this world, so that the world may believe in God’s future, Tveit added: “The ecumenical endeavours cannot be successful without a deep understanding of what it means to live together in the body of Christ, in the love of Christ,” he said. “This gives us a dimension to fellowship and unity that might appear as obvious, but from experience we also know that this is the key to all efforts to overcome divisions and conflicts.”

Tveit reflected on the WCC’s Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace: “Very often the paths of this pilgrimage will be hard - leading us to places of uncertainty, vulnerability and threat,” he said. “Even as we wonder how we will proceed on this pilgrim path we need to take confidence in the fact that we are not alone in this pilgrimage. We are surrounded by the great cloud of witnesses who have journeyed before us in the struggle for unity in justice and peace.”

[Full speech by Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit](#)

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