

## WCC general secretary on pilgrimage of unity, justice and peace to churches in Australia



*Canberra with beatific biblical garden with pilgrimage paths of aboriginal and christian symbols.*

*Photo: Anna Bjorvatten Tveit/WCC*

**17 October 2016**

World Council of Churches general secretary Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit completed his visit to Australia this week, where he offered a sermon at St Stephens Uniting Church in Sydney.

In Australia, Tveit visited Brisbane, Sydney, Canberra, Melbourne and Adelaide, meeting with church leaders, ecumenical councils, political leaders, federal government representatives and others to discuss what the ecumenical movement is and can be in Australia, as well as in the global society in our time. The pilgrimage of justice and peace was seen by many as a refreshing and challenging new perspective.

The theme of the worship in Sydney was the way to Emmaus (Luke 24). In his sermon, Tveit explored both the rich definition and the inherent wonder of the ecumenical movement. The ecumenical movement is not something for some specialists and professionals, or for those with some special interests, he said. "It is by its very nature the people of faith, or even of doubt, that get together, walking, talking, working, eating together – experiencing that God has something more for us to understand, to see, and to love – so our hearts might be burning."

It is a movement we make together as followers of Jesus Christ, as churches, to show that we are given something new and something so costly and important, that we have to share it with one another, and with those who live in this world with us, added Tveit. "We are in this movement sharing the joy, the justice, and the peace of God."

We often need the presence of the other, also the unknown other, to see the truth, he continued. "And we are called to share the truth. The truth is something we owe each other, the truth about ourselves and about God."

Tveit shared his sermon at an ecumenical, multicultural service, where the Auburn Uniting Church Youth Choir sang along with Fijian, Korean and Tongan choirs.

Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress Pastor Ray Minniecon offered a welcome in his language, saying, "Let us all sit down together."

Stuart McMillan, president of the Uniting Church in Australia, said Tveit encouraged those gathered to understand ecumenism as a journey, together where we carry the cross with those who suffer, in our pilgrimage of justice and peace. "In this, he said there will be moments of insight and our hearts will burn in the presence of Christ," said MacMillan. "Indeed our hearts did burn as we raised our voices in song and the word was proclaimed."

The WCC visit to Australia and New Zealand was prepared by Dr Katalina Tahaafe-Williams, WCC programme executive for migration, indigenous, and

multicultural ministry programmes. Prior to moving to Geneva 2015, she worked as a Consultant for Multicultural Ministry with the Uniting Church in Australia.

[Sermon by Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit in Sydney 16 October 2016](#)

[Link to web streaming from the ecumenical worship in Sydney](#)

[2016 Bishop Michael Putney Memorial Lecture Live Stream by Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit 10 October, 2016](#)