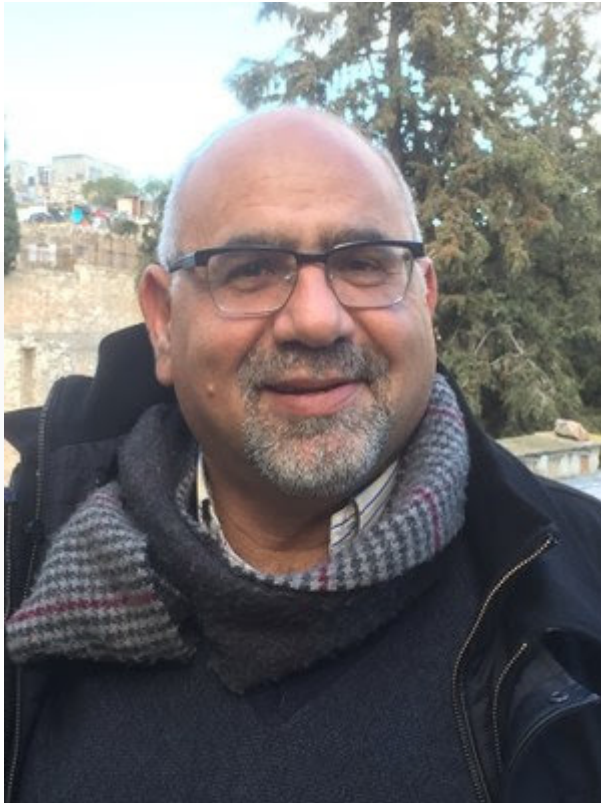


Hope can create miracles, reflects WCC-EAPPI coordinator in Holy Land



WCC-EAPPI programme coordinator Zoughbi Zoughbi. © Claus Grue/WCC

Apr 18, 2017

*By Claus Grue**

"You can use either name," he jokes when introducing himself. A cheerful man with a strong passion for dialogue, peace and reconciliation, Zoughbi Zoughbi sees his job as a "way of living - or a commitment, rather than a task", as he puts it.

That's the way it has been ever since his volunteer days at a grassroots level.

"I easily fall in love with my responsibilities and I've always been committed to the ecumenical movement", he explains.

For a long time, Zoughbi has been a household name in interfaith- and cross-cultural activities and dialogue, and over the years he has founded many forums where such dialogues have flourished.

Contextualization has been - and still is - the driving force behind his commitment to ecumenism. It is the incentive to go down this "less travelled road", as he describes it.

"God is among us and Jesus has incarnated among humanity to be one of us. He has helped me to believe, not only in the spiritual gospel, but also in the social gospel. Jesus talked about spiritual needs long before Maslow did. The spiritual gospel enhances my faith and hope, while the social gospel empowers my work, enforces my commitment, strengthens my perseverance and asserts my resilience," Zoughbi explains

He took on his current assignment as a local programme coordinator for the World Council of Churches' Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (WCC-EAPPI) in October last year after 22 years at the Palestinian Transformation Conflict Centre, which is also a church-related ecumenical organization. The involvement in WCC-EAPPI isn't new to him. For the past eight years he's been part of the Local Reference Group for the programme and been more or less involved in it ever since the programme was established.

"The EAs are renewable sources of hope", he says, which leads him into elaborating on a core ingredient in his beliefs, alongside his Christian faith.

"I cannot live without hope or faith, they represent two faces of my belief, where my faith baptizes my hope", he explains.

He also sees hope as a form of non-violent struggle that helps him to be creative and innovative and to adopt and work for transformation.

"There are many sources of my hope; the gospel of course, but the WCC-EAPPI programme is also my hope. When I see committed people from different backgrounds come here and put themselves in our shoes and walk many miles in them, it gives me hope and sends an important message; that we are not left alone. They think of us around the globe. That enhances our hope, deepens our experience and gives meaning to our existences, Zoughbi concludes.

Being cautiously hopeful is a way for him of opting for - and celebrating - life.

In spite of continuous backlashes for a lasting peace in the Holy Land - and a currently rather bleak outlook, Zoughbi remains hopeful about the future: "This is the land of miracles and you cannot know what the future holds. Miracles have happened in Northern Ireland, in Berlin when the wall came down, and elsewhere. But it has required the commitment of good-natured people who have kept their hopes alive. Miracles do not happen by themselves, they are created by people with hope", says Zoughbi.

The World Council of Churches' Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (WCC-EAPPI) was created in 2002 by the World Council of Churches based on a letter and an appeal from local church leaders to create an international presence in the country. Since then, 1,800 ecumenical accompaniers (EAs) have worked to create conditions for a just peace.

Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace

WCC-EAPPI

**Claus Grue is a communication consultant for the World Council of Churches.*