



Review of the Pilgrimage for Justice and Peace (PJP) Series

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Keywords

Pilgrimage, justice, peace, World Council of Churches (WCC), PJP, Busan, WCC 10th Assembly

Abstract

This book review presents not only a book but a whole range of books. Since its 10th Assembly of Busan, 2013, the World Council of Churches started *a movement* that invites us to walk with them: a Pilgrimage for Justice and Peace (PJP), a project looking to foster a debate within its members, envisaging to mark the steps to walk towards the world we want. In collaboration with Globethics.net, the World Council of Churches is the main editor of the Pilgrimage for Justice and Peace (PJP) Series.

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1. Introduction

The WCC 10th assembly, held in Busan in 2013, invited Christians and people of good will everywhere to join in a pilgrimage of justice and peace in the following words.

“ We intend to move together. Challenged by our experiences in Busan, we challenge all people of good will to engage their God-given gifts in transforming actions. This Assembly calls you to join us in pilgrimage. May the churches be communities of healing and compassion, and may we see the Good News so that justice will grow and God’s deep peace rest on the world.”

– Message of the 10th Assembly

In the nine years since this call WCC called on churches everywhere to walk together, viewing their common life, their journey of faith, as a part of a Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace. The invitation was to join in celebrating life and in taking concrete steps toward transforming injustices and violence.

2. Pilgrim team visits

Part of this journey was Pilgrim Team Visits to express solidarity with churches and people who live in contexts of violence, injustice, and oppression, strengthening the ecumenical network among the churches, national councils of churches and related organizations. As a journey participating in God’s mission, Pilgrim Team Visits seek a mutual transformation of people – both visitors and hosts – walking together on the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace.

The pilgrimage, and particularly the Pilgrim Team Visits typically consisted of at least three different dimensions – not in a linear process but more in a dynamic, interdependent understanding:

Celebrating the Gifts (via positiva)

We do not journey with empty hands, nor do we walk alone. The “original blessing” of being created in the image of God and together – as a fellowship – we are a unique part of the wider web of life, which amazes us. Together we celebrate God’s great gift of life, the beauty of creation and the unity of a reconciled diversity. We feel empowered by this grace of participating in God’s movement of love, justice and peace. – We receive in prayer.

Visiting the Wounds (via negativa)

This pilgrimage will lead us to the locations of ugly violence and injustices. We intend to look for God’s incarnated presence in the midst of suffering, exclusion, and discrimination. The true encounter with real, contextual experiences of a broken creation and sinful behaviour against each other might inform us anew about the essence of life itself. It might lead us to repentance and – in a movement of purification – liberate us from obsession with power, possessions, ego, and violence, so that we become ever more Christ-like. – We listen in prayer.

Transforming the Injustices (via transformativa)

Being transformed ourselves, the pilgrimage may lead us to concrete actions of transformation. We may grow in our courage to live in true compassion with one another and with nature. This will include the strength to resist evil – injustice and violence, even if a church finds itself in a minority situation. Economic and ecological justice as well as the healing of the wounded and the striving for peaceful reconciliation is our call – in each and every context. The credibility of our actions might grow from the quality of the fellowship we share – a fellowship of justice and peace. – We are transformed through prayer and act in prayer.

As part of the harvesting of the pilgrimage over many years, several publications were published. The most recent is a series of publications on specific regions and thematic areas published with Globethics.

3. WCC Globethics.net publication series

The Africa We Pray For on a Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace. PJP Series 1

This first publication in the WCC and Globethics.net series on the WCC pilgrimage of justice and peace brings together the voices of 12 young people sharing their vision for Africa¹.

The collection features work selected during an essay competition for young people which was held in a collaboration of the All Africa Conference of Churches and the WCC. The competition was inspired by Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want. This is the African Union's blueprint and master plan for transforming Africa into the global powerhouse of the future. The essay competition provided a platform for youth to engage in research and write their aspirations of the Africa they want, an Africa they pray for, as they are the guardians of the future. The publication covers important thematic areas for African society, including truth, trauma, displacement, gender justice and racial justice, among others.

The contributions share the aspirations, hopes, and concerns of the youth in Africa, as they identify emerging issues from their contexts and suggest possible solutions to them. Of the thirteen essays, six reflected on the theme of land and displacement, four on gender justice, and two on truth and trauma. However, there is clear evidence of an intersectional approach to the themes of the pilgrimage in most of the essays. There is some concern about the low level of contributions from young women.

Transformative Spiritualities for the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace. PJP Series 2

Building peace with justice has been at the heart of the ecumenical movement since its beginnings. It reflects the call of the churches in a wounded world caused by systemic injustice—racism, sexism, xenophobia, economic exploitation, and violence among humans and against nature, our “Mother.” While political advocacy, theological reflections, and ethical

¹ Discover the PJP Series : <https://www.globethics.net/pjp-series>

orientation have been high on the agenda of the World Council of Churches, the spiritual dimension of a “just peace” has not always received the same attention.

In the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace, the WCC began to focus intentionally on “transformative spiritualities” in order to (re-)discover the strength of the many and diverse faith communities around the globe. What is the well of that distinct power to resist evil with good, to transform injustices into a life of dignity for all, to heal broken relations – including Mother nature? And what are some of the spiritual practices that inspire communities on that “sacred walk”?

This volume provides a selection of reflections on those transformative spiritualities, from Indigenous perspectives to women’s voices, from Black communities’ to Campesino/as’ struggles, and from specific Christian traditions to sister faiths. It is that common well we all drink from—inviting readers to participate in that promise that a life in peace and justice is, in fact, possible for all.

Towards an Ecumenical Theology of Companionship: PJP Series 3. A Study Document for the Ecumenical Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace

During the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace, four central themes emerged: Truth and Trauma; Land and Displacement; Gender Justice; and Racism. During the COVID-19 pandemic that revealed so much injustice in the world, a fifth theme was added; health and healing.

After listening carefully during the various Pilgrim Visits, the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace-Theological Study Group (PJP-TSG) and the Reference Group of the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace (PJP-RG)-revisited the themes and reflected on them theologically in light of an emerging Ecumenical Theology of companionship.

This publication -composed by the “pilgrims” in dialogue with the communities-presents these findings and reflections for broader sharing in the global ecumenical fellowship.

Viewing the Pilgrimage as a kenotic movement this publication is a call to transformative discipleship and companionship together on a sacred journey.

The thematic areas are addressed through the familiar “three vias,” and each is reflected on from the perspective of companionship.

In Truth and Trauma, the reflection focuses on holding together both pain and hope through a community that remembers. The section on Land and Displacement focuses on belonging to the earth, to water and land. The section on Gender Justice deals with bodily wounds and dignity, while in the section on Racism the focus is on constructed “other” and power.

The intersectionality of these themes is highlighted while churches are inspired to continue the sacred walk as churches and together as World Council of Churches.

Seek Peace and Pursue It: PJP Series 4. Reflections on the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace in Europe

The Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace is intended to be an expression of international solidarity with people, particularly those in difficult circumstances.

This publication looks at work done directly within the context of the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace in Europe, as well as justice and peace issues promoted by churches that complement the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace agenda.

In the first section, the publication provides an overview of Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace events in Europe, offering reflections on some of the ways in which churches and ecumenical organizations were challenged and inspired and sharing stories and insights about the pilgrimage in Europe.

Section 2 does not necessarily represent official parts of the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace but contains essays on issues of justice and peace in Europe from individuals working with churches and ecumenical partners across Europe, intended to stimulate debate, interest, and international comparison.

The Appendix includes additional resources, including statements from the WCC on the use of armed force to resolve disputes that could be resolved by dialogue.

Hate Speech and Whiteness: PJP Series 5. Theological Reflections on the Journey Toward Racial Justice

During the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace, the issue of racism has emerged as one of the pilgrimage’s four common themes. The chapters that make up this publication represent a selection of the papers presented at a series of webinars organized in late 2020 by the Theological Study Group of the Pilgrimage. Organized around three major themes—whiteness, including its relationship to slavery; racism; and hate speech—the contributions represent an invitation to the ecumenical fellowship to engage in self-critical examination of how practices, orders, configurations, methodologies, and structures of the church(es) have perpetuated the discrimination, xenophobia, and racism that counter unity in Christ. Several contributors reflect on how the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the racist way in which Black people and other people of colour have been targeted and their situations worsened.

The book highlights that the ecumenical fellowship faces the challenge of reflecting together theologically on these injustices experienced in specific contexts and emphasises the need to shift away from the approach of advocacy and accompaniment to self-critical companionship.

Our Feet into the Way of Peace: PJP Series 6. Holistic Approaches to Peace-building in the Context of the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace

Within the framework of the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace, this publication is a reflection on the lived experiences of the pilgrimage from the perspective of the people and churches from Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Nigeria, Korean Peninsula, Palestine and Israel, South Sudan, Syria, Ukraine, and Colombia.

It consists of an overview of the peace-building process in each country since the 10th Assembly and practical steps churches can take together toward the 12th Assembly.

4. Future publications

In addition to the co-publication series, there has also been a publication on the pilgrimage in Latin America, *Vamos Caminando - aportes latinoamericanos a la Peregrinación de Justicia y Paz*, in Canada, an online record on the pilgrimage in Canada, and a PDF highlighting the pilgrimage from women's perspective, *Her-Stories of Transformation, Justice, and Peace PJP Series Report on the Women of Faith Pilgrimages*.

Further publications are planned in the series, including a publication with perspectives from the Caribbean.

5. Bibliography

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6. Short biography

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