

Global church leaders credits U.S. churches for ecumenical change in last century

by [Chris Herlinger](#)

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New York, November 11 (ENInews)--The head of the World Council of Churches has affirmed its ties with the U.S. National Council of Churches, praising churches in the United States for "bringing change and reformation in this sinful world".

"The 'old world' of Europe brought the teaching of Martin Luther; you had the Baptist leader and visionary dreamer of a new future, Martin Luther King," WCC general secretary the Rev. Olav Fykse Tveit said on 11 November at the NCC's centennial ecumenical gathering in New Orleans, Louisiana.

The WCC leader noted that the rest of the world has often criticised U.S. dominance in the 20th century, a period sometimes called the "American century". But the Norwegian Lutheran cleric said the century would also be noted for the role of the U.S. churches in the development of the international ecumenical movement.

"This needs to be recalled at a time when you and also many others in the world are aware of less beneficial effects of the American century on others in the world," said Tveit.

The New Orleans gathering marks the centenary of the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh, Scotland, a 1910 event often referred to as the launch of the international ecumenical movement for church unity that led to the founding of the WCC in 1948.

The Geneva-headquartered WCC now groups 349 churches, mainly Anglican, Orthodox and Protestant. The Roman Catholic Church is not a member but works with the WCC on some issues.

The global ecumenical movement needs to be open to "relevant critique", Tveit said in his speech.

"The ecumenical movement was and must be something very different from a movement of the glory of an empire, for it is a movement which shares both an openness to the presence of Christ in the other and a willingness to bear the weight of the cross together," he said.

"The time for crusades is over. We know we cannot fight for our faith through the power of domination or oppression. We have learned from the mistakes of the past, linking mission and colonialism, or claiming to promote values of the Gospel such as democracy and peace in the clothes of imperialism and military intervention," he stated.

On 10 November, the NCC's governing board adopted a resolution calling for an end to U.S. military involvement in Afghanistan. The resolution asks that the United States, under the leadership of President Barack Obama, negotiate the withdrawal of U.S. and NATO military forces "to be completed as soon as possible without further endangerment to the lives and welfare of U.S. and NATO troops, Afghan troops and Afghan civilians".

- Tveit speech: <http://bit.ly/9OLwns>