

Ecumenical leader Metropolitan Gennadios of Sassima dies

by [Dawn Araujo-Hawkins](#) in the [June 29, 2022](#) issue



(World Council of Churches photo by Albin Hillert)

Metropolitan Gennadios of Sassima, a leader of the Greek Orthodox Church in Turkey, a noted scholar, and a popular ecumenist, died June 1.

In a statement, Agnes Abuom, moderator of the World Council of Churches Central Committee, praised Gennadios's dedication to the ecumenical movement.

"He led a principled life devoted to [promoting] ecumenism, unity, and ecumenical leadership development," she said. "When we needed him, he was there, ready to serve the ecumenical movement."

Dirk Lange, assistant general secretary for ecumenical relations in the Lutheran World Federation, remembered Gennadios similarly, calling him a "faithful witness of

the rich Orthodox theological tradition who kept the vision of Christian unity at all times,” in a separate statement.

Gennadios was born in the Greek port city of Thessaloniki in 1951. According to Orthodox Times, he graduated from the Theological Institute of Saint Sergius in Paris in 1978 and then taught Orthodox canon law at the theological school of the University of Strasbourg from 1984 to 1992. From 1990 to 1997, he also taught Orthodox and ecumenical theology at the Institute of Ecumenical studies in Italy.

He was ordained metropolitan of Sassima in 1997.

Gennadios began his ecumenical work with the WCC in 1968, ultimately serving in a variety of roles, including co-president of the Joint International Theological Dialogue between the Orthodox and Lutheran churches, cochair of the Orthodox and Methodist and Baptist preparatory committees, and vice-moderator of the central committee. Most recently, he served as vice-moderator of the faith and order commission.

He is credited with writing more than 400 books, articles, and theological studies, and he received several honorary doctorate degrees from both the University of Athens in Greece and the Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology in Brookline, Massachusetts.

M. A. Daniel, a bishop in the Methodist Church in India and a member of the WCC’s Central Committee, said in a statement that Gennadios’s death will create a “big vacuum” in the WCC.

“In him, the WCC has lost a great leader, an ambassador, mediator to bring churches together, and an eminent scholar and theologian of sound thinking.”