

Norwegian picked to lead WCC: To succeed Samuel Kobia

News in the [September 22, 2009](#) issue

Lutheran theologian Olav Fykse Tveit, general secretary of the Church of Norway's ecumenical and international council, has been chosen as the top executive of the World Council of Churches. His election as general secretary was announced August 27 in Geneva during a meeting of the WCC Central Committee.

Tveit, 48, will succeed Samuel Kobia, a Methodist minister from Kenya, who leaves the post at the end of 2009. Kobia said early last year he would not seek a second term, citing "personal reasons."

Two candidates were proposed by a search committee. The other was Park Seong-won, an ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church of Korea and a professor of theology at Youngnam Theological University and Seminary in Kyeongsan, South Korea.

The World Council of Churches has 349 member denominations, principally Protestant, Anglican and Orthodox.

In an interview with a German newspaper before the election, Tveit said he would like to see increased contacts between the WCC and the world's fast-growing evangelical and Pentecostal churches, as well as greater cooperation between Protestants and Roman Catholics. The Catholic Church is not a WCC member but has members on some of its committees.

Tveit also said that the WCC needs to give greater attention to relations with Islam.

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