

September 29th, 1952

World Council of Churches

(in association with the International Missionary Council)

C2270

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STUDY DEPARTMENT

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Vice-Chairmen:
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In reply refer to:

Your ref.:

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INVITATION

Dear Dr. Matthews,

The World Council of Churches will hold its second Assembly at Evanston, Ill., U.S.A., in August 1954. In preparation for this event the Council has launched an extensive programme of study and consultation on the following subjects:

The Main Theme: The Christian Hope
(final formulation to be decided by the Central Committee in January 1953)

Subsidiary Themes:

1. Faith and Order - Our Oneness in Christ and our Disunity as Churches
2. Evangelism - The Mission of the Church to Those outside her Life
3. Social Questions - The Responsible Society in a World Perspective
4. International Affairs - Christians in the Struggle for World Community
5. Inter-group Relations - The Church amid Racial and Ethnic Tensions
6. The Laity - The Christian in his Vocation

For each of these subjects a Commission of competent persons drawn from the various churches throughout the world will be formed. The Study Department Committee, which is in charge of general planning and coordination, and the Executive Committee of the Council have authorized me to extend to you a cordial invitation to be a member of the Preparatory Commission on:

INTER-GROUP RELATIONS THE CHURCH AMID RACIAL AND ETHNIC TENSIONS.

Its officers are:

Chairman: Dr. Roswell P. Barnes, 297 Fourth Avenue,
New York 10, N.Y., U.S.A.

Vice-chairman: (designated)

Secretary: The Rev. Robert S. Bilheimer, 156 Fifth Avenue,
New York 10, N.Y., U.S.A.

Each Commission is expected to assume responsibility for the following tasks:

- (a) To select and define the main issues which need to be studied in its area.
- (b) To prepare a Factual Survey on "what the churches are thinking and doing" in this field today; to be issued before the Assembly.
- (c) To produce a Working Paper which will be submitted to the appropriate Assembly section as a basis for its own deliberations and report.

Most of the work of the Commissions will be done through correspondence and exchange of documents. There are probably not a few among the prospective members, who are already so burdened with other commitments during the next two years, that in any case they may only be able to collaborate in this manner. Plans have been made, however, for personal consultation on two occasions: a joint conference of the Commissions, August 11-19, 1953, at the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey, near Geneva; and a further conference at Evanston, immediately prior to the Assembly itself, composed of those Commission members who will be attending the Assembly as delegates of their churches or as consultants.

With regard to the projected conference in August 1953, it must be pointed out that the available financial resources are not sufficient to cover the expenses of all Commission members from all parts of the world. The available funds must be used to secure a representative group, with special regard to participants from Churches with small resources. I should therefore be grateful if you, in case you accept membership on the Commission, would at the same time indicate

- (a) whether you would be able to attend the conference August 11-19, 1953;
- (b) whether the expenses for travel and accommodation can be met (in full or in part) from funds of your own Church or national ecumenical Council, or from some other source; and if not, what contribution would be required from the World Council budget. The accommodation at the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey will amount to approximately Swiss francs 10.-- per person per day.

We should be most grateful if you would consent to assist in this endeavour to prepare the World Council Assembly by a careful study of some of the outstanding issues which confront the Christian Church in our time. The value of the Assembly will obviously depend to no small degree on the quality of the preparatory work, which in turn will depend on the readiness

of Christian leaders in many parts of the world to give their minds and prayers to this effort.

If there is anything more you would like to know before making your decision, please do not hesitate to write. We shall send you further details regarding the preparations when we have your acceptance.

If you accept membership, please return the attached questionnaire.

Hoping to receive a favourable reply, if possible by October 31st, I am,

Yours sincerely

N. Ehrenström
Director of the Study Department

P.S. The second report of the Commission on the Main Theme, which was set up already last year, will appear in the October issue of the Ecumenical Review. A series of introductory leaflets on the Evanston subjects, designed for wide use in study circles etc., are now being prepared by the officers of the Commissions and will appear soon in different languages.

Encl.: Questionnaire