



World Council of Churches

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His All-Holiness Bartholomew I
Archbishop of Constantinople-
New Rome and Ecumenical Patriarch

Geneva, 21 October 2026

Message of Congratulations from the World Council of Churches (WCC)

Your All-Holiness,

With deep joy and gratitude to the Triune God, the World Council of Churches extends its warmest congratulations to Your All-Holiness on the 35th anniversary of your enthronement as Archbishop of Constantinople – New Rome and Ecumenical Patriarch, on 2 November 1991.

For thirty-five years, Your All-Holiness has guided the First Throne Church of Constantinople with wisdom, courage and pastoral love, often in difficult circumstances. Throughout this ministry, you have borne faithful witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to the treasures of the Orthodox tradition, while opening that witness generously to the whole oikoumene.

The fellowship of the World Council of Churches holds a special debt of gratitude to the Ecumenical Patriarchate. Its historic 1920 Encyclical, “Unto the Churches of Christ Everywhere,” was among the first calls for a “fellowship of churches” and helped inspire the founding of our Council. As a founding member church, the Ecumenical Patriarchate has accompanied and enriched our common journey ever since. We recall with particular affection your own personal bonds with the ecumenical movement: your years of study at the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey, your long service on the Faith and Order Commission, and your steadfast encouragement of the churches to seek together the visible unity to which Christ calls us.

We give thanks, too, for the love and care with which Your All-Holiness has served the unity of the whole Orthodox Church. This loving concern found historic expression in the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church, convened in Crete at Pentecost 2016 after decades of patient preparation. Ten years on, the Council stands as a testimony to your conviction that the Orthodox Churches are called to speak and witness together, in conciliarity and mutual love, for the life of the world. Its affirmation of the Orthodox Church’s engagement in the ecumenical movement and in the World Council of Churches remains a precious encouragement to our fellowship.

Your All-Holiness has also given the Christian world a prophetic voice for the care of God's creation. Long before many others, you named the abuse of the natural world as a sin against God and neighbour, and you have called the churches to repentance, conversion and responsible stewardship. In this, you have inspired and strengthened the WCC's own commitment to climate justice and to the integrity of creation.

We also give thanks for your tireless witness to peace, reconciliation and religious freedom, your solidarity with refugees and with all who suffer, and your commitment to dialogue among Christians and with people of other faiths. The commemoration of the 1700th anniversary of the First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea in 2025, so deeply marked by your hospitality and vision, reminded all Christians of the common faith that unites us and of the unfinished task of reconciliation before us.

In this spirit of thanksgiving, we pray that our gracious and loving God will continue to grant Your All-Holiness good health, spiritual strength, and wisdom. May the Holy Spirit sustain and guide you as you continue to shepherd the faithful, strengthen the bonds of Christian fellowship, and offer a prophetic witness of hope to our troubled world.

May this joyful anniversary be not only an occasion to celebrate the rich legacy of your thirty-five years of patriarchal service, but also a renewed affirmation of our shared calling to walk, pray, and work together for the unity of the Church, the healing of creation, and the reconciliation of all humanity.

With the assurance of our continued prayers and solidarity, we join the faithful throughout the world in proclaiming:

Εἰς πολλὰ ἔτη, Δέσποτα!

May God grant Your All-Holiness many blessed years!

In Christ's love and fellowship,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jerry Pillay', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Rev. Prof. Dr Jerry Pillay
General Secretary
World Council of Churches