

## **Words of Greeting to E2010 by Rev. Dr. Geoff Tunnicliffe**

It gives me great pleasure today to speak to the Edinburgh 2010 conference on behalf of the World Evangelical Alliance and our close friends in the Lausanne Movement.

The WEA brings together some 128 national evangelical alliances, linking together churches of many denominations, and 100 international organisations, 13 major global networks, 1000 Bible colleges and seminaries, representing around 420 million evangelicals worldwide. We are culturally and ecclesiastically quite diverse, and celebrate that with joy as a little foretaste of the worship drawn from every tribe and tongue and nation described in Revelation 5:9. But, as that scripture also tells us, at the heart of heaven is the crucified and risen Lamb of God, and it is he who unites us, in time and in eternity.

Today we are celebrating the centenary of the World Missionary Conference held in Edinburgh in 1910. Many of those who participated in the research for the eight commissions, and many of those who came to this delightful city as delegates, were evangelicals. They were serving missionaries, or home staff of mission boards, or leaders of churches from which so many went out to take the gospel around the world. They gathered around the conference theme, 'The evangelisation of the world in this generation', because this was their prayer, their action and their passionate commitment.

They did not do everything right, and with hindsight we can see many things that perhaps should have been done differently. They were flawed human beings, and children of their age and culture, just as we are. But their commitment and devotion is beyond question. And as today we rejoice that the church is now global in a way that they saw only by faith and not by sight, we notice that many of those churches in Asia and Africa and Latin America, unrepresented by national believers in 1910, but now so wonderfully vibrant and growing, are the fruit of their labours and lives. That is God's gracious doing, and we praise him.

I hope that in these few days we will not lose sight of the fact that we are celebrating the centenary of a missionary conference. This conference's theme is 'Witnessing to Christ today'. We are not talking about some vaguely theistic or humanist agenda, but bearing glad witness to Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity. This is the Christ to whom the Scriptures bear witness, and central in person and work to the good news of the gospel. There is no

authentic Christian mission that does not bear witness to him in word and deed and character, both individually and corporately. And there is no authentic church that does not have a passionate commitment to mission, reflecting the heart of Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

There is no corner of the world where the mission of the church is complete. God's calling to the whole church is to take the whole gospel to the whole world, and that call comes anew to us in every generation. There are still communities and people groups who have never yet had anyone bear witness to Christ among them. There are others, especially here in Europe, where a fresh re-evangelisation is desperately needed. I hope that in these few days we will ponder that, with humility and repentance, and with renewed commitment to bear witness to Christ, with the love of the Father and in the power of the Holy Spirit, in every corner of our globe.

Historically, there have been many things that have divided the different streams of the church. We would be foolish to think that in these few days all those often deeply-held and painfully fought over differences could be resolved. But I hope that we can listen to one another with love and respect, build bridges rather than create chasms, pray together, learn together, establish new friendships. In WEA we have had fruitful long-term discussions in recent years with many of the constituencies you represent: the Pontifical Council of the Roman Catholic Church, the WCC, the Orthodox Churches, and others. We are committed to continue these conversations, to further mutual understanding, and to find ways of standing alongside one another wherever possible. We will look for ways to continue the theological discussions begun through the study themes. We remain, like our 1910 forebears, passionate about world mission in our broken and hurting world. We recognise with sorrow that the disunity of the church makes it harder for the world to believe in Christ.

And we pray that God may visit us all in grace and power, renewing our faith and vision, our hope and our resolve, so that we can indeed bear witness to Christ in this generation and throughout his world.