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Dear members of the Sub Executive;

Bruce Gregersen has asked that I offer an assessment of the employment of Chris Ferguson as Overseas Personnel for The United Church of Canada. I do so recognizing that only a few within the church will have kept up to date with Chris's accomplishments and the roles he has played in the global ecumenical community.

The United Church of Canada, through the Justice, Global and Ecumenical Relations Unit, seconded Chris and Susan Ferguson to the World Council of Churches in 2004 in response to a request for mission personnel to support the ecumenical life and public witness of the churches in Jerusalem. For the United Church, Chris embodied our commitment to ecumenical support and accompaniment to churches in Palestine and Israel, to strengthening ecumenical advocacy for an end to the occupation and to the realisation of a just and lasting peace in the region.

Chris was assigned to be Associate Executive Secretary with the Jerusalem Ecumenical Centre (now called the Jerusalem Inter-church Centre, or JIC). In this role, Chris laid the groundwork for a new and significant ecumenical presence in Jerusalem. During the two years Chris served the JIC the position of JIC Executive Secretary – meant to be held by a Palestinian Christian -- remained vacant. Chris was given the task of physically establishing the JIC, but much more challenging was that of earning the confidence of local church and civil society leaders. He did this by listening, providing appropriate advice to the ecumenical movement, and building a solid network of ecumenical and advocacy actors in solidarity with Palestinian Christians. Chris brought his considerable experience, knowledge and insights to the work of interpreting the WCC, the Middle East Council of Churches and other ecumenical bodies to government, relating to media, and monitoring and analyzing developments and trends in the region. In policy formation and communication, Chris ensured that Palestinian Christian voices were heard, rooting the international advocacy firmly in the reality and experience of those most directly affected. The WCC has reported to us that

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many in churches and specialised ministries around the world benefited from his presence in Jerusalem and the support, information, analysis and reporting he provided. The United Church was privileged to contribute to the ecumenical prophetic voice on a number of critical issues, due in large part to Chris' contextual articulation of the gospel imperative to speak truth to power.

In September 2006, in consultation with the United Church-JGER Unit, the WCC re-assigned Chris to be the WCC United Nations Representative at the WCC Office at the United Nations headquarters in New York. As the Fergusons were preparing to leave Jerusalem, the United Church received from the WCC's general secretariat words of "personal gratitude to the Fergusons for their ministry in partnership with the churches in Jerusalem and in the service of the WCC. [They engaged] in the daily struggle for an open, shared Jerusalem and a just, lasting peace for Israelis, Palestinians and the region of the Middle East. Many local people and many visitors have come to know and appreciate them for their dedication, competence and compassion. The international ecumenical fellowship is stronger and more aware as a result of their work."

Since September 2006, Chris has continued to embody the United Church of Canada's commitment to live out its understanding of "Whole World" Ecumenism" and to 'live faithfully in the context of Empire' by playing an active role in global and global ecumenical bodies. He has given exemplary and tireless leadership in his assignment to deepen and strengthen the WCC's profile and work at the United Nations, and to assist the member organizations of the WCC to engage in advocacy efforts there.

I wish to offer my strong endorsement of Chris for the role of General Secretary of the WCC.



Omega Bula  
Executive Minister  
Justice, Global and Ecumenical Relations Unit