

**CEC 12th Assembly  
Trondheim (Norway), 25 June – 2 July 2003  
Partners' Programme  
Hearings in the Core Programme  
Information about the Hearings**

**Hearing 3:**

- Title:** The Churches and HIV/AIDS: Challenges and Responses
- Responsible Organization/s:** Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) and the World Council of Churches (WCC)
- Date and Time of the Hearing:** Thursday 26 June 2003, 1500hrs-1630hrs
- Languages Used:** English, with interpretation to Russian and German
- Main Speakers / Presenters:** Dr Manoj Kurian (WCC); Stu Flavell (Global Network of People living with AIDS); Margarita Neliubova (The Russian Orthodox Church); Guests from Belarus.
- Description:** HIV/AIDS is recognised as the greatest development and humanitarian disaster in modern history. 42 million people are now infected with HIV and every day, 8000 people die from AIDS related diseases. Leaving spouses, children and parents behind. The churches are living with HIV/AIDS. Even though churches in the South are more affected than the European churches, HIV is spreading fast also in some parts of the developed world. As we are all part of the same body – the body of Christ – we should all share the pain and take part in the healing process. Accompanying the 42 million HIV positive people, there are millions of relatives and friends who also experience grave human suffering due to the epidemic. The churches are called to respond to the epidemic and become welcoming and healing communities for all of those affected. Churches can also play a constructive part in curbing the epidemic, by offering guidance and information on how to avoid HIV infection.

Unfortunately, we know that churches and people of faith have not always been capable of responding constructively to the epidemic and its consequences. Many of the issues that we need to deal with are intuitively connected to things that traditionally have been difficult for churches to relate to. But in light of the enormous human suffering and social traumas that are caused by HIV/AIDS, churches are obliged to find a way to overcome these difficulties and respond to the needs of people affected by the epidemic. HIV/AIDS hence poses specific challenges to us and the hearing will present concrete examples of possible responses to these.