

From Evangelical Unity to Ecumenical Unity. The Latest tumble of WEA

Praying at a meeting presided over by the Roman Catholic Pope in St. Peter's square recognizing his spiritual leadership. Praying together with liberal Protestant and Orthodox dignitaries visibly displaying that we are all "united". Praying in front of a Marian portrait. Praying at an ecumenical vigil on the eve of and for the Roman Catholic synod. This is what happened on 30th September 2023. The video of the event is [here](#). The program of the event is [here](#). "Unity" (among Christians of all stripes and among all peoples) was the event's main message.

Sadly, the World Evangelical Alliance was fully part of it. Its General Secretary was among the ecclesiastical leaders actively and publicly participating in it. What was the message of the "ecumenical vigil of prayer"? Here it is: WEA now belongs to the "ecumenical family" and is fully integrated into the ecumenical movement formed by the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) and the World Council of Churches (WCC).

Historically, WEA was founded to give visible expression to evangelical unity grounded in the gospel, in distinction to the ecumenical unity of WCC and RCC, and even in opposition to it. Then, the oppositional edge was set aside when WEA assumed a cooperative attitude on issues like religious freedom and socio-political themes, maintaining its distinction about unity. In recent years, clear signs emerged of an increased attraction of the WEA leadership towards becoming an integrated part of the ecumenical movement, no longer distinct from it.

With the "ecumenical vigil" in which WEA's top representative participated, we now have crossed the line. WEA is now spiritually part of the ecumenical movement. Once you pray publicly with the Pope, in St. Peter's square, in front of a Marian portrait, embracing the message of spiritual unity with liberals and orthodox leaders, your alleged distinction becomes secondary. Evangelical identity is absorbed into the ecumenical unity with RCC and WCC.

In 2017, with an "[Open Letter to the WEA Leadership](#)", the Evangelical Alliances of Italy, Spain, and Malta expressed concerns over the ecumenical agenda that WEA's leadership was pursuing, away from the historic positions of evangelical unity being distinct if not opposed to ecumenical unity. Assurances were given that the concerns were unwarranted. It is instead evident that they were entirely legitimate: the WEA participation at the "ecumenical vigil of prayer" shows that they were right to the point and that the situation is now further compromised. We are confused and

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disappointed by what has happened. We think it was the lowest point that WEA experienced in its history with a significant loss of evangelical credibility.

We call on WEA's leadership not to breach the evangelical historic position on unity and to replace it with an ecumenical one without involving the whole of WEA's constituency in a public discussion leading to a decision. These are not matters to be handled behind the scenes among a few people, and the rest of the constituency taking notice of their decisions.

We are committed to the cause of evangelical unity grounded in the gospel. Let the gospel of Jesus Christ, not the ecumenical agenda, be our guide.

The Federal Executive Council of the Italian Evangelical Alliance (Rome, 3 October 2023)

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