

Called to communion,
committed to justice



World Communion
of Reformed Churches
ANNUAL REPORT 2014





ANNUAL REPORT CONTENTS

About WCRC	2
Introduction	3
Vision and Commitments	4
Communion	5
Justice	6-7
Theology	8
Leadership Development	9
Mission/Partnership Fund	10
Member Relations	11
Finances	12
Governance	13
Staff	14
Resources	15

Cover photo: TBD. (Photo: Credit TBD)



About the World Communion of Reformed Churches

The World Communion of Reformed Churches is comprised of 80 million Christians in Congregational, Presbyterian, Reformed, United, Uniting and Waldensian churches. The WCRC, working with its 225+ member churches, is active in supporting theology, justice, church unity and mission in over 105 countries.

United in Christ and rooted in the historic Reformed traditions, the WCRC with its member churches believe that God calls Christians to be part of the transformation of the world through the love of Jesus Christ by meeting spiritual needs and fostering justice for all.

Member churches pay annual dues that support the core costs of the communion: governance, communication, travel and staff.

INTRODUCTION

“Calling us to radical love”

The World Communion of Reformed Churches is privileged to have a vision which is focused on uniting its member churches in common witness to the Lord Jesus Christ, working for justice and participating in God’s project for fullness of life for all.

As a diverse organization straddling six continents we see the vast discrepancies and inequalities that prevail in our world. We must confront these challenges as we build our fellowship and also so that, in Christ’s name, we can transform this world of sin, suffering and struggle.

This was underlined in 2014 through a series of consultations marking the tenth anniversary of the Accra Confession, a prophetic statement on economic and environmental justice. Dario Barolin summed feelings up well when he said, “We still believe that another world is possible. Because at its centre is Jesus Christ, we believe the Accra Confession is calling us to a radical love.”

You’ll see more on the Accra Confession and justice in this report. You’ll also read about many of our other activities, including continuing work on building our Communion, supporting leadership development for women and youth, formally dialoguing with other Christian faith traditions and supporting our member churches through our Partnership Fund, solidarity visits and prayer.

We thank God for all who contributed to the work of the WCRC and ask that you continue to do so. In addition to contributing to the ongoing operations and programmes of the WCRC, we would also like to remind you of the opportunity to contribute to the endowment fund that is aimed at the long-term sustainability of the WCRC.

We are grateful to all who journey with us as the WCRC continues to make a difference in the lives of its member churches and in the lives of many who suffer in the world today.



Jerry Pillay, *President*



Chris Ferguson, *General Secretary*



VISION AND COMMITMENTS

Called to communion, committed to justice

We are the World Communion of Reformed Churches called to be a communion of churches joined together in Christ, to promote the renewal and the unity of the church and to participate in God's transformation of the world.

What we do

The WCRC coordinates joint church initiatives for communion, church unity, renewal, contemporary mission and economic, ecological and gender justice based on the member churches' common theology and beliefs. Our objectives are to foster unity among our member churches and promote economic, social and environmental justice.

Why

United in Christ and drawing from the historic Reformed creeds and confessions, the WCRC and its member churches believe that Christian faith is responding to God's calling to meet spiritual needs, foster justice for all and cultivate the responsible use of the earth's God-given resources.

How

The WCRC is committed to collaborating with other church movements on issues of common concern such as climate change, gender justice and theological dialogue. The WCRC is supported principally by membership contributions of financial and human resources. It also seeks funding for specific projects.



COMMUNION



Consultation assesses state of the communion

The Consultation on Communion, drawing together 50 church leaders from around the world in wintry West Michigan in February, produced a report on the state of the communion that was presented to the WCRC executive committee at its annual meeting in May.

Bridget Ben-Naimah summed up the consultation's work in her message at the event's closing worship service: *"Sisters and brothers in Christ, halfway through the first phase of the life journey of the WCRC, we have gathered here in Grand Rapids trying to identify the various dimensions of our understanding of communion and assessing how we have fared on this journey both collectively and as individual churches."*

"As we engaged in discussions together, quite a number of revelations were received," she continued. "I believe that these findings are not to discourage us or to divide us but rather to remind us that in spite of the fact that communion is a gift from God to us, we who are called to participate in the communion have a responsibility to work at it."

Communion as a *"gift from God"* was a recurring theme throughout the consultation.

"The unity for which we yearn is always unity in Christ. And there is no stronger way in which we can be united. It is given to us as a gift; it is not a thing we can achieve for ourselves," said Iain Torrance during open discussion.

"Christian unity is already given to us as a gift by God," agreed Setri Nyomi. *"Ours is to make every effort to maintain it."*

How to maintain the communion, and how the communion should act both within and outside of itself, were other subjects discussed.

"The real task of the communion is to be a forum, a family, a body that holds together a variety of different perceptions and views—so that we can all talk together as members of the Reformed family," said Jerry Pillay, WCRC president.





JUSTICE



WCRC recommits to the Accra Confession

A global consultation marking the 10th anniversary of the Accra Confession recommended that the World Communion of Reformed Churches, its member churches and ecumenical partners should work to address economic and environmental injustices *“in a more integrated manner that analyzes and responds to these unjust social, political and economic realities.”*

The Accra Confession, a prophetic statement on economic and environmental justice, was created in 2004 by the then World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC). The WARC has since become a part of the WCRC, and the Confession was re-affirmed at the 2010 Uniting General Council.

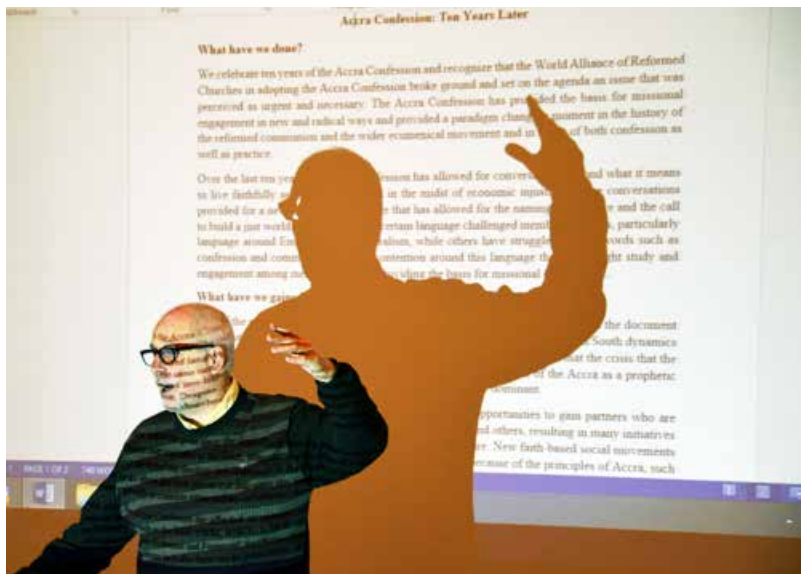
“The Accra Confession is saying that the world today is not how God intended it to be,” said Chris Ferguson, general secretary of the WCRC.

“If anything, the Accra Confession is more needed now than it was 10 years ago,” said Jerry Pillay, president of the WCRC. *“We need to reclaim the vision of the Accra Confession and ask ourselves what we are doing to address issues of economic injustice and environmental injustice.”*

“We still believe that another world is possible,” said Dario Barolin, presenting the perspective of Latin America. *“Because at its centre*

is Jesus Christ, we believe the Accra Confession is calling us to a radical love.”

“All over the world people are rising up against this scandalous world, and they are giving their lives in seeking to challenge and change it,” said Allan Boesak. *“They are working for a world where dignity and justice will become a reality.”*





Award recognizes women leaders

Two women from two generations have been recognized for their work both as leaders and for developing leaders in their church.

Yvette Rabemila and Brigitte Rabarijaona, both ordained ministers in the Church of Jesus Christ in Madagascar, were awarded the 2014 Sylvia Michel Prize.

The recognition comes with 5000 Swiss francs, which will be used to fund their *“Empowering Women Ministers”* project. The prize is given every two years by the current presidents of the Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches, in collaboration with the World Communion of the Reformed Churches.

“Women should be better equipped to fulfill their responsibilities as ministers and to show that they can do as good as the men, if not better,” said Rabemila. *“And we really would like more women ministers in the hierarchy of the church. At the local level they are well accepted, but at the higher level of the church, there are fewer women.”*

The project will provide a series of training seminars for women throughout the church’s 37 regions and will focus on three themes: leadership, theological reflection and self-esteem.

“As a worldwide organization we are engaged to empower women from around the world,” said Dora Arce-Valentin, the WCRC’s executive secretary for justice. *“For us this issue of empowering women is a matter of justice, and we are a communion committed to justice.”*

“The purpose of the Sylvia Michel award is to honour people and projects devoted to the promotion of women as church leaders,” said Regula Wegmann, vice president of the Council of the National Reformed Church of the Canton of Aargau. *“As half of the Swiss churches are being or have been led by women, they would like to pass on this significant concern to the member churches of the World Communion of Reformed churches, and they would like to encourage the promotion of women to leading positions in the churches.”*



THEOLOGY



Justice, Mission and Communion enhanced by dialogues

The WCRC engages in purposeful and directed dialogues with other Christian ecumenical bodies because God wants the church to be one, despite historical splits and varying traditions. Formal dialogues open up new possibilities for not only understanding other Christian sisters and brothers better but for understanding ourselves and our faith and commitment to God better.

Three dialogues have focused on different aspects of our faith journeys:

“Mission” was the theme of the first meeting in a new dialogue between Reformed and Pentecostal theologians held in November. Participants looked at how both Reformed and Pentecostals have defined *“mission”*—and how both have put mission into practice.

“Theologically we do not differ on the principles, but the way we live as churches is different,” said Douwe Visser. *“For we Reformed, Pentecostals challenge us to rethink our way of being church.”*

“Communion: On Being the Church,” a report written after six years of dialogue between the Lutheran and Reformed branches of the church endeavours to counter both historical and on-going schisms and instead stir ecclesial imaginations to consider new expressions of unity. This includes shared experiences and challenges and also points to the direction taken by the joint Lutheran-Reformed

commission and its acquisition of fresh expressions of being the church and being in communion.

Theologians from the WCRC and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity met together in April to continue discussions on the theme of *“Justification and Sacramentality: The Christian Community as an Agent for Justice.”*



LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Institute builds global community

Question: What do you get when you put over 30 students, faculty and staff from more than a dozen countries on a seminary campus in Central America for three weeks of classes, worship and immersion experiences?

Answer: A global Christian community of future ecumenical leaders.

Gathering under the theme “Transforming Mission, Community and Church” the WCRC’s fourth Global Institute of Theology (GIT) took place this July on the campus of the Universidad Bíblica Latinoamericana in San José, Costa Rica.

“The GIT is one of the most effective gatherings for young Reformed theologians with a longing to meet other open and committed Reformed students,” said Bas Plaisier, president of the GIT and a faculty member. *“This mixture of worship, study, lectures and exposure in a particular culture and church is unique and extremely meaningful. Each GIT ‘delivers’ a lot of new committed ecumenical theologians and a new network of young Christians all over the world.”*

“It’s very earth-changing because the students’ horizons are broadened so much. They learn a lot about world Christianity listening to so many people from different contexts. I think it helps to understand your life more when you encounter other peoples’ lives,” said Aruna Gnanadason, GIT dean of students.





MISSION/PARTNERSHIP FUND

Making dreams a reality

The indigenous, marginalized people of Sibü, Sarawak, Malaysia, often can only dream of improving their lives. Thanks to the Gereja Grace Batu Pahat (Church of Grace) and with a grant from the WCRC's Partnership Fund, they now have a centre in which to chase those dreams.

The Pusat Bimbingan Kalvari—literally “*the Guidance Centre of Calvary*” but known as “*The Dream Centre*”—was created to support and empower the local indigenous church to reach out

to their own people. The centre provides education for all ages, especially children and women.

Members of the Gereja Grace Batu Pahat have worked for the last two decades among the indigenous people of the Iban tribe in the interior of Sarawak. In recent years people from this rural tribe have migrated to the city of Sibü. They cannot afford to send their children to the local kindergartens because of the high fees associated with the schools. Therefore the children are unable to start school as early as other children, and because of the delay in their education become discouraged and eventually drop out. Compounding this problem, the children's mothers often lack knowledge or self-confidence to know what to do to help.

The project is vital to the region because the Dream Centre assists the indigenous people where they are, while teaching them core Christian values. Although the focus is on children, attention is also given to teenagers and adults, especially women. Along with a kindergarten, classes for illiterate adults are provided, teaching them to read and write.

“It is our belief that the success of this centre will result in the setting up of more centres catering for the indigenous people in other parts of Sibü in the future,” said Tan Kok Eng. *“Gereja Grace Batu Pahat will always be at the forefront to ensure that Pusat Bimbingan Kalvari will continue serving the indigenous community.”*



MEMBER RELATIONS

Thanks given for the witnesses of churches in Lebanon and Syria

On a three-day pastoral visit to Lebanon Setri Nyomi learned firsthand of the challenges currently facing Christians in both Lebanon and Syria—and how they are responding.

“I give thanks to God for the witness of the churches in Lebanon and Syria,” said Nyomi. *“It is very clear that in the midst of the challenges that face our churches in these two countries, our member churches are sacrificially making a difference.”*



The conflict in Syria has accelerated Christian emigration, decreasing the number of Christians in the lands of its origin. Thousands of these Christians are refugees from Syria. The churches in Lebanon provide them care, even as some of them seek to continue their emigration westward.

“It is not enough to meet the immediate needs of the refugees,” said Najla Kassab Abousawan, a Lebanese member of the WCRC’s executive committee. *“We must make every effort to break the cycle of violence and suffering.”*

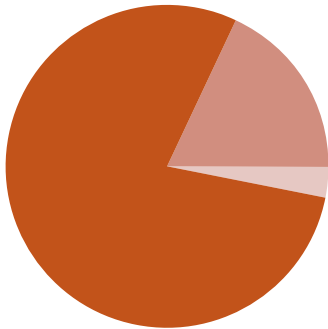
“It is remarkable that as the churches in Lebanon engage in addressing the needs arising from the situation in Syria, they are at the same time effectively engaged in ministry in congregations and in many other actions which they have carried for many years,” said Nyomi.

“As we thank God for what the churches are doing in effectively witnessing under such challenging circumstances, we need to strengthen our journey with them,” said Nyomi. *“It is important for all in the communion to be praying for our sisters and brothers in this region and to engage with them in practical actions that will make a difference.”*



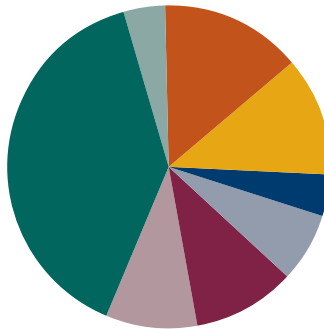
FINANCES

2014 Income



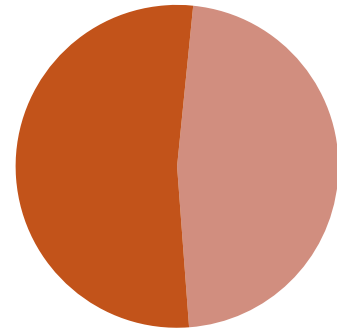
- Membership Fees 79%
- Donations 18%
- Other Income 3%

2014 Programme Expenses



- Global Institute of Theology (GIT): 39%
- Theological Dialogues 4%
- Covenanting for Justice 14%
- Gender Justice 12%
- New Economic and Financial Architecture 4%
- Missions 7%
- WCRC Regional Support 10%
- Global Internship Programme 9%

2014 Partnership Fund Disbursements



- Development 53%
- Mission 47%

WCRC GOVERNANCE

OFFICERS 2010-2017



Jerry Pillay,
President
Uniting Presbyterian Church
in Southern Africa
South Africa



Yvette Noble Bloomfield,
Vice-President
United Church of Jamaica
and the Cayman Islands
Jamaica



Yueh-Wen Lu,
Vice-President
Presbyterian Church
in Taiwan
Taiwan



Bas Plaisier,
Vice-President
Protestant Church in
the Netherlands
The Netherlands



Helis Barraza Diaz,
Vice-President
Presbyterian Church
of Colombia
Colombia



Johann Weusmann,
General Treasurer
Evangelical
Reformed Church
Germany



Chris Ferguson,
General Secretary
United Church of Canada,
Canada

Executive Committee Members 2010 – 2017

Lydia Aku Adajawah, Africa/
President of the African Communion
of Reformed Churches (ACRC) of the
WCRC/Ghana

Peter Borgdorff, North America/
Christian Reformed Church/USA

Allan Buckingham, North America/
United Church of Canada/Canada

Peter Bukowski, Europe/Reformed
Alliance /Germany

Mary Fontaine, North America/
Presbyterian Church in Canada/Canada

Kobus Gerber, Africa/Dutch
Reformed Church/South Africa

Yael Eka Hadiputeri, Asia/
Indonesian Christian Church/Indonesia

Jan-Gerd Heetderks, Europe/
President of WCRC Europe/
The Netherlands

Kang Kyeoung Shin, Asia/
Moderator of North East Asia Area
Council of the WCRC/Korea

Najla Kassab Abousawan, Middle
East/National Evangelical Synod of
Syria and Lebanon/Lebanon

Clifton Kirkpatrick, North America/
Presbyterian Church (USA)/USA

Clayton Leal da Silva, Latin
America/Independent Presbyterian
Church of Brazil/Brazil

Subha Singh Majaw, Asia/
Presbyterian Church of India/India

Cheryl Meban, Europe/Presbyterian
Church in Ireland/UK

Cheh Liang Mok, Asia/Presbyterian
Church in Malaysia/Malaysia

Veronica Njoki Muchiri, Africa/
Presbyterian Church of East Africa/
Kenya

Gabriela Mulder, Latin America/
President of the Alliance of Presbyterian
and Reformed Churches in Latin
America (AIPRAL) of the WCRC/
Argentina

Elisée Musemakweli, Africa/
Presbyterian Church in Rwanda/
Rwanda

Allen Nafuki, Pacific/Presbyterian
Church of Vanuatu/Vanuatu

Gradye Parsons, North America/
Presbyterian Church (USA)/USA

Carola Tron Urban, Latin America/
Waldensian Evangelical Church of the
River Plate/Uruguay

Salome Twum, Africa/Presbyterian
Church of Ghana/Ghana

Lisa Vander Wal, North America/
Convener of the Caribbean and North
America Area Council (CANAAC) of
the WCRC/USA



WCRC STAFF



Chris Ferguson
General Secretary
Canada



Douwe Visser
Executive Secretary,
Theology, Mission
and Communion
The Netherlands



Dora Arce-Valentín
Executive Secretary,
Justice and Partnership
Cuba



Philip Tanis
Executive Secretary,
Communications
United States



Gerhard Plenter
Finance Coordinator
Germany



Setri Nyomi
Former General Secretary
Ghana



Anna Krüger
Assistant for Finance
and Communication
Germany



Claudia Duval
Administrative Assistant
to the General Secretary
Germany



Paul Oppenheim
Volunteer Assistant
Germany



SELECTED INFORMATION AND STUDY RESOURCES



wcrc.ch

WCRC website

Visit our website for worship resources, prayer requests, reports, publications, news releases and messages from churches. While visiting the site, you can make an online donation!



facebook.com



Facebook

www.facebook.com/worldcommunion



Twitter

[@reformedcomunio](https://twitter.com/reformedcomunio)



Instagram

[instagram.com/reformed_communion](https://www.instagram.com/reformed_communion)



instagram.com

Reformed Communiqué

Quarterly newsletter in English and French. Choice of print or e-edition. Available free of charge. Ask for it at the WCRC website.



Email us for info on any publication

Reformed World

Published three times per year in English. Available by paid subscription through the website.

Monthly e-news summary

Sign up at the WCRC website

The World Communion of Reformed Churches is comprised of 80 million Christians in Congregational, Presbyterian, Reformed, United, Uniting and Waldensian churches. The WCRC, working with its 225+ member churches, is active in supporting theology, justice, church unity and mission in over 105 countries.



World Communion of Reformed Churches

Global Office
Calvin Centre
Knochenhauerstrasse 42
30159 Hannover, Germany
tel. +49 511 8973 8310; fax +49 511 8973 8311
wrcr@wrcr.eu

United States Office
1700 28th St. SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49508, USA
tel. +1 616 560 2092; fax +1 616 719 1175
pborgdorff@crcna.org

