

“Green” Moderator Riding the Rails



Canadian church leader, Mardi Tindal, prepares to board the Spirit Express on a month-long trip across the country talking with parishes about ecology (Photo: United Church of Canada)

When Mardi Tindal was elected Moderator of The United Church of Canada in August 2009, she vowed to do as much travel as possible using “green friendly” transportation.

She meant it. In October this year she travelled by train across Canada, stopping in parishes along the way to encourage church members to embrace new lifestyles where they would consume less of the earth’s natural resources. Her trip, dubbed the Spirit Express, has inspired people along the way to share their fears, hopes and successes in response to climate change.

Tindal’s trip is just one of a number of initiatives to protect earth’s natural resources being undertaken by member churches of the World Communion of Churches (WCRC). Education and awareness-raising projects such as this are happening in parishes around the world.

In the Pacific countries of Tuvalu and the Republic of Kiribati, church leaders are dealing with the reality of rising waters that may eventually claim their land. In India, an inspired educator is teaching a generation of children how to live life-

styles that reduce the consumption of non-renewable resources. Both these stories appear in this issue of *Reformed Communiqué*.

Initiatives such as these demonstrate rising awareness among WCRC member churches that it is now time to act as people of faith to protect God’s creation. It is this belief that is central to the work of the Oikotree movement that links parishes, individuals, and faith-based groups worldwide who share a com-

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mon concern for acting in faith in response to environmental and social justice concerns. A report of the recent Oikotree Global Forum in Germany appears on page 4.

Omega Bula, who heads the justice work of the United Church of Canada, says that the trip by the United Church Moderator on the Spirit Express is an example of the church responding in concrete ways to the call for justice in the economy and the earth.

“The Moderator raises up the need for the care of soul, community and creation; that ecological justice is central to the well-being of all of creation. We must remember our responsibility within the wider Earth community by making connections between wealth creation, poverty and ecological justice,” says Bula.

In Canada, the challenge for Tindal was how to manage her carbon footprint (the amount of fossil fuels consumed) during a three-year

term where she would be expected to travel extensively. To-date Tindal estimates her air travel as Moderator has burned approximately 11 tonnes of carbon. She has challenged the church to help her reduce the impact of that travel by taking actions that offset the carbon emissions she knows will accumulate as a result of fulfilling her role as Moderator.



Church people across Canada gathered for dialogue on climate change. (Photo: United Church of Canada)

One congregation in a small farming community reports that they have reduced their carbon emissions output by almost 34 tonnes per year, which more than offsets the Moderator's first year of air travel.

But Tindal wants to do more, so she has pledged to limit her air travel

by planning her meetings in a way that accommodates travelling primarily by train.

As she traveled the country in October, Tindal hosted a series of town hall meetings where she shared her message of how Canadians can find ways to live abundantly within the natural limits of God's creation.

“We must celebrate people's stories of hope – their ‘green achievements’ – as well as hear their stories of suffering and concern about climate and ocean change,” says Tindal.

The Moderator, a former television presenter converted to an ardent blogger, writes: “In the midwestern city of Winnipeg, I met Elliot, a university student who told me churches are in the best position to inspire hopeful action on climate and ocean change because we know how to build community. When people feel a strong sense of community, he pointed out, they take more responsible environmental action.”

With files from The United Church of Canada

Students work to restore creation

Their Spiritual Garden has transformed wasteland into productive fields. They raise fish in an eco-pond. They run bio-gas projects. Students at an award-winning school in the Indian state of Orissa are learning what it means to translate faith and values into action.

“We believe education is for liberation not just academic achievement,” says Rashmi Senapati, principal of New Stewart School in the Cuttack Diocese. “Our commitment is to restore God's creation.”

Senapati, who holds a masters degree in education and a doctorate, also serves as a master trainer with the District Environment Society

where she encourages other schools to adopt the New Stewart School model of academic excellence and character building through what she calls “multiple intelligence” – a concept that combines education for emotional, spiritual and intellectual development.

The 1400 boys and girls of New Stewart School range in age from 2.5 to 15 years. They and their 43 teachers all have a role to play in the multiple ecological projects run by the school as part of its compulsory environmental education curriculum. School leaders take seriously the national slogan “Education for all” and have formed a student commu-

nity that is inclusive of both genders and of disabled students.

“We encourage caring and sharing rather than selfishness,” says Senapati. “We want our students to understand that each of us is responsible for preventing environmental destruction. For this, practical knowledge is required.”

Students learn by doing. Through workshops, an Eco Club and work assignments, children learn to recycle water, run a greenhouse, develop bio-gas projects and work a composting pit.

“The question is,” says Senapati, “how can we sustain God's creation?”

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In an area of India that has been hit by communal strife, the school seeks to be a model of justice, peace and communal harmony.

“The value which underpins this approach to community-building is co-operation rather than competition. This is a community based on the values of reconciliation, reformation and re-structuring,” Senapati explains.

The model is catching attention. The school has won a string of

awards at the state level from “Best Eco-Friendly Project” awarded on World Environment Day 2008 for a project dubbed “Kick the Habit – CO₂ – Towards a low-carbon economy” to the 2009 award for “Friend of Nature School”. And the school’s students are tuning into the world beyond Orissa. To mark the UN Summit on Climate Change in Copenhagen in 2009, students joined a district-level rally and

arranged for other schools to attend as well.

Senapati says she is inspired in her work by the World Communion of Churches’ focus on transforming society and cites Isaiah 61: 1-2.

“We must take those verses seriously,” she says. “We must set at liberty that which needs to be freed from destruction.” The students of New Stewart School have taken that message to heart.

Help God. Build sea walls.

When church members in the Pacific nation of the Republic of Kiribati ask how building a wall to protect the shoreline is doing God’s work, Baranite Kirata explains they are not just building a sea wall.

“We are participating with God to sustain life,” the church pastor tells them. “We are stewards put in the Garden of Eden to protect it.”

The Republic of Kiribati is one of the Pacific island countries threatened by rising ocean levels that scientists attribute to the effects of global warming. Already church people from the region report local crops such as coconuts are being damaged by salt water.

Kirata is active with Oikotree, the church-based movement for environmental and social change. His appointment as head of Oikotree Pacific is to be confirmed the Pacific region of the Council for World Mission at meetings in March 2011. Meanwhile, Kirata is active raising awareness among churches of damage to the local environment to which they themselves sometimes contribute.

Kirata points to the use of stone and gravel to build churches in

Kirabati, stones he believes can be better used to defend against the encroaching ocean. Church buildings could instead be built with wood in the style of the *maneaba* or traditional meeting house, he says.



Baranite Kirata and Soama Tafia: Calling Pacific Island churches to save their land from rising waters for God. (Photo: Greenaway/WCRC)

The idea is not yet widely-accepted, Kirata acknowledges. “People reject it because the *maneaba* is seen as secular,” he explains. “But we must reorient ourselves to the sacredness of the local context and rediscover the sacredness of that building.”

Soama Tafia, a minister in Tuvula has worked with the Pacific Council of Churches on issues related to the environment, justice and peace. He is now

active in awareness-raising in Tuvalu about the impact of climate change. Tafia says his work is to prepare local churches for what is coming.

“Our country will be under water in 25 to 50 years,” he says. “My message to churches is to look at preparedness programmes.”

For now, Tafia resists talk of resettlement plans.

“We need to think of staying rather than think already of resettlement,” he says.

The pastor believes programmes must focus on adapting to new realities such as the high tides eroding beaches and salt water destroying crop land.

“We need to plant to counter erosion,” says Tafia. “We need mangroves along the seaside for example.”

Referring to the biblical story of God’s promise to Noah that there would be no more floods, Tafia says the promise of the rainbow is still there but people have destroyed their part of the promise through misusing knowledge and freedom.

It is not God who is responsible for the flood waters, he says. “It’s us.”

What is needed now, Tafia believes, is faith but faith in action.

Oikotree Global Forum

by Oikotree Global Forum Planning Team

“Resist life-destroying civilization, build life-enhancing communities, cultures and systems!” The participants of Oikotree Global Forum held in Arnoldshain, Germany, from 1 to 4 November 2010 called churches, congregations, individuals, community of faith, national and regional ecumenical organizations, networks, and social/people’s movements to promote life-sustaining alternatives to the prevailing death-dealing systems.

The Oikotree Movement, initiated by the Council for World Mission, World Communion of Reformed Churches and the World Council of Churches, brought sixteen faith based social movements from all over the world for strategizing common commitment and actions to transform the current Life-destroying civilization into Life-enhancing Community, Cultures and Systems.

“Looking back at the last five years or so, appraising our present global situation, we would have to say the churches who met at Accra in 2004 were right.” Allan Boesak, a South African theologian and former president of the then World Alliance of Reformed Churches said in keynote address to the Forum.

“In the work of the Globalisation Project, following the critical lead of the WCC’s Alternative Globalisation Addressing People and Earth (Agape) Project, we paid special attention to the role of financial markets. We foresaw the coming crisis precipitated by the global neo-liberal financial market policies. We have seen that crisis arrive, we are experiencing its devastation still and we have also seen how the empire has looked after its own. This unjust global economic system is defended and protected by political and military might, and for the poor, it has become a matter

of life and death.” Dr Boesak drew attention to the urgency of today’s destructive global economic system.

In its Accra Confession (2004), the then WARC, now the World Communion of Reformed Churches, called unbridled consumption “sin” and urged member churches to resist “neo-liberal” economics. The AGAPE process within the World Council of Churches (2006) urges churches to work for the eradication of poverty and inequality through



“We have joined hands in solidarity to build platforms of dialogue, critical reflection and activism for justice in the economy and the earth.”

the development of “economies of solidarity and sustainable communities.” CWM in its theology statement, *Mission in the Context of Empire* (2010), observes that in bringing the love of God to the world and witnessing to God’s promise of ‘fullness of life’ we are called “to follow the example of Jesus in his response to Empire.”

Recognizing the urgency of the current life-destroying human civilization, the participating movements committed themselves to seek to live faithfully amidst empire that has provoked unprecedented economic and ecological crises in recent times.

“We have joined hands in solidarity to build platforms of dialogue, critical reflection and activism for justice in the economy and the earth.” Participating movements under the Oikotree affirmed their common commitment to work toward a Solidarity Economy and Life-sustaining Oikos. The name of Oikotree is derived from the Tree of Life in Revelation 22 – “and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations” – and the spiritual traditions of many indigenous peoples and faith traditions.

Korean theologian and Moderator of the Oikotree Movement, Park, Seong-Won said “a unique role of the Oikotree Movement is to provide an ecumenical space where churches, individuals and social movements can come together, network and work for our common task of shaping our planet into a Life-enhancing Oikos.”

“Visiting the diaconal project with unemployed people and the Central Station Mission in Frankfurt, and hearing from the student network on liberation theology and other social initiatives I had the feeling that Oikotree spirit is largely shared among the churches,” said Antonella Visintin from the Waldensian Church.

The sixteen movements who came under the Oikotree identified areas of convergence, built synergies and linked global, regional and local agendas for fostering justice in all aspects of life.

The Oikotree Movement also challenged faith communities, in particular churches and ecumenical movements, to keep justice at the heart of faith.

The Forum planned common action at all levels for intensifying their united goal of building life-enhancing community, cultures and systems. The report on common action is available on request from wrcrc@wrcrc.ch

Pakistan church delivers flood aid

A letter received by the World Communion of Reformed Churches in October from the Executive Secretary of the Presbyterian

Church of Pakistan paints a vivid picture of efforts by church staff, volunteers and seminarians to provide relief to people affected by severe flooding in Pakistan.

In his message, Maqsood Kamil describes how aid has been delivered by the church to communities in the north-western district of Khyber Pakhtoon Khwa which sustained extensive flood damage.

The relief efforts were assisted by a grant from the Partnership Emergency Relief Fund of the World Communion of Reformed Churches. Money from this fund is sent to member churches for immediate use in the wake of a disaster.

On the advice of the Diocese of Peshawar which serves the district, the church gathered kitchenware

for families in Noshera, the second largest city in the region. In early October two seminarians from

church to assist in the distribution of the goods to Christian, Muslim and Hindu families. Although five hundred sets had seemed a lot when loading the truck, it seemed so little in face of the great need of the people jostling to get the much-needed supplies, Kamil reports.

Kamil writes that the need for assistance will increase in the coming weeks. "As winter sets in, people will be needing warm clothes, blankets and other winter related bedding."

WCRC's Partnership Fund provides grants to member churches for emergency relief as well as support to develop-

ment projects. For more information about how to apply for funding, please visit the WCRC website www.wcrc.ch or write to: WCRC Partnership Fund, PO Box 2100, 150 route de Ferney, 1211 Geneva 2, Switzerland



Staff, students and volunteers from the Presbyterian Church of Pakistan gathered kitchenware supplies urgently needed by flood victims. (Photo: Presbyterian Church of Pakistan)

Gujranwala Theological seminary made an overnight trip by truck to deliver five hundred sets of cooking pots, jugs and dishes to the campus of Christ Church where a large crowd was waiting. They were joined staff from the Christ Church school, Kamil, and other members of the

North American Endowment Fund created

by Stephens Lytch

At the meeting of the Uniting General Council in Grand Rapids this June, the Executive Committee of the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) appointed the North American Endowment Committee. Its mandate is to seek financial support in North America to undergird the financial stability of WCRC in light of decreasing membership fees from member churches and a growing need for the Communion's witness to unity and justice.

The North American Endowment Fund, which currently holds approximately \$25,000, was established by gifts from friends of

WCRC. Each year, the Endowment will pay out 5% of the fund's value to the core budget of WCRC.

Members of the Endowment Committee are the North American members of WCRC's Executive Committee plus the past presidents of WCRC's antecedent organizations who reside in North America. My role is to serve as President of the Endowment The Endowment Committee will develop the fund through an annual appeal to North American friends of WCRC. There will also be regional gatherings where supporters can meet leaders of WCRC and learn of its latest initiatives.

A grant from WCRC's regional group for North America and the

Caribbean, CANAAC, offers financial support for the work of the Endowment Committee.

Residents of the United States can make tax-deductible gifts to the Endowment Fund by sending a cheque to WCRC's North American office at 2850 Kalamazoo Ave., Grand Rapids, Michigan 49560, USA. Provisions will soon be in place for Canadian donors to make tax-deductible gifts.

The Endowment Committee is also receiving gifts to go directly to the WCRC core budget and to specific programs. Information about WCRC programmes is available at www.wcrc.ch

Latin America: Communion must work for justice

by Dafne Sabanes Plou

During the Uniting General Assembly (UGC) in June, the delegations from Reformed churches in Latin America worked to strengthen the bonds that enable them to continue their ecumenical efforts in support of dialogue and commitment in the region.

Carola Tron, who was elected member of the Executive Committee of the new ecumenical church body, considers that there are three main thematic issues that are high in Latin American Reformed churches' agendas: social, economic and environmental justice, gender justice and the global economic crisis.

"All these issues were highlighted by the assembly", says Tron, who is a minister of the Waldensian Church of the River Plate in Uruguay.

"These are all challenges we face in



"We need a renewed understanding of our theology," says WCRC Executive Committee member, Carola Tron. (Photo: Coll/WCRC)

our contexts, where we want to be part of God's mission. We also know

that these matters challenge our communion", she added.

"Communion and justice are two theological concepts that were well developed in discussions previous to the Uniting General Council and in the Council itself, says Tron.

"Now we need to create new types of actions and revise the usual practices in our communities. We also need to have a renewed understanding of our theology to be able to sustain all the tasks we are called to do."

Tron adds that the role of AIPRAL (Alliance of Presbyterian and Reformed Churches in Latin America) is "essential to communion building" in the region.

The first meeting of the new WCRC Executive Committee is scheduled for May 2011 in Geneva, Switzerland.

"We are family now": South African student

By Hans Pienaar

Many South Africans believe using the family as a model for relationships among members of the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) will serve them well says Janine Williams, a Cape Town post-graduate theology student who attended the launch of the WCRC at the Uniting General Council in Grand Rapids, United States this June.

Williams believes such a model is better than a definition that was taking root in some ecumenical circles of unity only being possible if it were based on a scriptural reading, from which a single set of behaviours was derived that ultimately would lead to one denomination.

"We are a family now, not together in hostility, but intimately, all in

acknowledgement of each other's differences. Family members are in communion, but still themselves, as brothers and sisters, parents and children," says Williams, a member of the United Reformed Church of South Africa (URCSA). "This is the focus that would help to spread the message of Grand Rapids."

Williams believes that after the Grand Rapids event, people in South African Reformed churches are generally committed to reach out to one another – but in celebration rather than as a matter of conformity.

"Grand Rapids has enabled us to come together in celebration, especially during communion which is meant to be across boundaries," says Williams.

The theology student knows however that there will be resistance among some church members who prefer to focus only on their congregations and will be against unity simply because they fear change and leaving their comfort zones.

Nico Koopman, head of theology at Stellenbosch University, who was a delegate at Grand Rapids, hopes that "the WCRC would be a true communion, (one) that builds on global social solidarity, global social cohesion, and global social capital".

"Secondly, one hopes that WCRC would be a community that pursues compassionate, healing justice, which is so central to the Reformed tradition, on global and local levels," says Koopman.

Scholars share “A Common Word”

It is one of the most pressing issues of our day. Success could mean peace. Failure certainly will result in more death and suffering. At issue is how to overcome misunderstanding, resentment and fear between peoples of different faiths. The challenge is learning how to nurture understanding and respect among the world's faith communities.

“Transforming Communities: Christians and Muslims Building a Common Future” was convened by the World Council of Churches, World Islamic Call Society, Royal Aal al Bayt Institute and the Consortium of A Common Word.

The consultation was called in response to an open letter issued by Muslim scholars in 2007 to

bin Muhammed bin Talal of Jordan said at the time. Bin Muhammed bin Talal, a keynote speaker at the Geneva consultation, is credited as the architect of the initiative. The letter sparked a series of dialogues and consultations worldwide among Christians and Muslims.

The event in Geneva was intended to explore how churches and Christian communities can best respond to new opportunities brought by the Muslim letter, says Rina Barsoum, WCC programme executive for Christian-Muslim relations.

Douwe Visser, Executive Secretary for Theology and Ecumenical Relations with the World Communion of Reformed Churches, attended the consultation along with Johnson Mbillah of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana. Mbillah participated in a panel discussion in which he drew on Reformed church experience with interfaith relations in Africa.

In 2009, Visser edited an issue of *Reformed World*, the theological journal published by WCRC, which focused on Reformed theology and Islam. Plans are for WCRC to continue active engagement in dialogue with other faith groups, says Visser.



Muslim and Christian leaders: Committed to dialogue for peace. (Photo: WCC)

Christian and Muslim scholars and leaders took up the challenge during a recent meeting at the Ecumenical Center in Geneva, Switzerland. The international consultation called

Christians around the world. The intent of the letter - called “A Common Word” – was “to try to make peace between Muslims and Christians globally”, Prince Ghazi

Farewell to Swiss ecumenist

The Swiss ecumenist and church leader, Thomas Wipf, has finished his term as president of the Council of the Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches (SEK-FEPS). To mark the occasion, national and international faith leaders and political dignitaries joined delegates to the FEPS Assembly in Bern, Switzerland on 9 November to celebrate Wipf's service to peoples of faith in Switzerland, Europe and abroad. Wipf served as president from 1999 to 2010.

During his farewell address, Wipf told guests and Assembly delegates



Farewell event for Thomas Wipf in Bern, Switzerland marked his contribution to ecumenism. (Photo: SEK/Thomas Flügel)

that many people want solid contributions from Protestant churches in response to urgent socio-political

questions. He noted in particular the challenge of coexistence among peoples of different origins and faiths.

“It is not simply a question of solving problems. It is also about taking advantage of opportunities for mutual enrichment. We cannot leave the theme of integration to political trouble makers,” he told the delegates and guests.

The general secretary of the World Communion of Reformed Churches, Setri Nyomi paid tribute to Wipf's contributions to the global church.

Can you hear the drum?

by Robert Faris

What follows from a confession or apology? What is the path which Canadian churches, including those that are members of the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC), should follow to give flesh and bone to words of apology and confession that have been written and spoken to Aboriginal people, particularly in relation to abuse in former Indian residential schools in Canada?

The churches played a central role in silencing traditional Aboriginal practices not only by their role in the residential schools but also by giving theological justification to these educational policies and in many cases demonizing Aboriginal spirituality.

The Churches' Council on Theological Education in Canada (CCTE), which includes in its membership WCRC members The United Church of Canada and The

of a CCTE-sponsored conference in Winnipeg, Canada in May 2011 with the theme *Can you hear the drum? Aboriginal spirituality and theological education*.

During the conference, we will ask where we can "hear the drum" in theological education in Canada today. Following the apologies and confessions offered by Canadian churches to the country's Aboriginal peoples, how do we move from

silence to embracing the gift of these teachings and practices, not as an addendum to the curriculum in theological schools, but as central to the meaning of understanding God's work and mission in this place? What could be the import of this wisdom for those preparing for ministry in churches and a society which are seeking reconciliation with Aboriginal people after so many years of violence against them? In "circles of learning" we will talk together and listen together for the drum in our midst.

This conference follows on CCTE's first conference in May 2010 on the theme *Doing theology in a*

fair country drawn from the work of Canadian philosopher, John Ralston Saul. Both conferences have been hosted by the Faculty of Theology at the University of Winnipeg.

Other members of CCTE include The Anglican Church of Canada, Canadian Baptist Ministries, The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops and The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada. Further information will be available soon at www.ccteconference.ca.

Robert Faris is an ordained minister of the Presbyterian Church in Canada serving as Executive Director of the Churches' Council on Theological Education in Canada.



North American Indigenous leaders like WCRC Executive Committee member, Mary Fontaine, are making drums sound again in Christian circles. (Photo: Coll/WCRC)

In residential schools for Aboriginal children run by the churches on behalf of the Canadian government until the late 20th century, there were abuses that resulted in highly-publicized court cases against the churches and the government. The four churches involved have all made apologies or confessions and Prime Minister Harper issued an apology on behalf of Canada's federal government in 2008.

In recent years, Canadian churches and the Canadian public have been made aware of attempts through assimilation policies of the federal government in the past to "silence the drum" and all that it represented in Aboriginal culture.

The churches played a central role in silencing traditional Aboriginal practices not only by their role in the residential schools but also by giving theological justification to these educational policies.

Presbyterian Church in Canada, is exploring ways in which theological education can support initiatives for repairing broken trust between Canada's Aboriginal peoples and its churches. This will be the focus

A new approach to mission is urgent: reality of life for Native people alarming

Representatives of Reformed churches in North America and the Caribbean have heard from a Native American pastor about how churches in the region might engage in new forms of mission with North America's Indigenous peoples.

Mike Peters, a pastor with the Odawa people in the northeastern United States, was addressing a meeting of the regional group known as CANAAC in Toronto, Canada in October.

Speaking during a conference call, Peters presented a model of how WCRC might support ministry with the region's Indigenous peoples.

Peters told the group that the reality of life for the majority of North America's Indigenous peoples makes it urgent that churches respond along with Native leaders to these challenges.

The statistics Peters presented paint a stark picture. Life expectancy for a Native American is 44 years. The national average is 74. One in three Native Americans lives below the poverty line. In Peter's home region of Michigan, the suicide rate for Indigenous youth in the period from 2000 to 2005 was 700% higher than for any other group.

The model Peters proposes for addressing the social crisis facing Native peoples is based on a four-step programme of evangelism, leadership training, a dialogue forum (called a "talking circle" in Indigenous North American traditions) and youth outreach.

Citing the missionary past, Peters told the group, "Even though many

missionary efforts were well intentioned, they failed because they attempted to impose their European culture and theological viewpoint as the only way to Christ."

The question for the church today is what the image of God is and how it can be expressed to Native peoples in 2010

Peters believes true cross-cultural ministry allows faith in Jesus Christ

Peters took a lead role in organizing the involvement of North American Native peoples at the Uniting General Council (UGC) which marked the founding of WCRC in Grand Rapids this June.

Stephen Kendall of the Presbyterian Church of Canada who worked with Peters on UGC preparations says he looks forward to building relationships and further reconciliation and healing initiatives between churches and Native peoples in North America and the Caribbean.

"We exchanged gifts symbolic of peace during ceremonies at the UGC. I pray that they will live into action in the life of the WCRC, its member churches and Indigenous peoples", says Kendall.



It is time for new models of training, dialogue, and youth outreach, say Aboriginal community leaders. (Photo: United Church Observer)

to be expressed by a cultural group without imposition of the missionary's worldview.

The question for the church today, says Peters, is what the image of God is and how it can be expressed to Native peoples in 2010.

CANAAC is now reviewing its programmatic emphases for the coming seven years leading up to the next WCRC General Council.

Caribbean church plans Haitian mission

The Presbyterian Church in Trinidad and Tobago is planning to launch a project in support of primary school education in Haïti. The church's Moderator, Elvis Elahie, proposed the idea following the earthquake in January of this year which flattened buildings, including schools, in large areas of the Caribbean country.

The project called "Mission to Haïti" focuses on identifying a group already working in Haïti with which to collaborate in the construction and operation of a primary school.

The need for education is pressing: 80 percent of the Haïtian population is illiterate, Elahie says. The school system is largely privately-run and many families cannot afford student fees.

"The idea is to make an arrangement with a school to allocate a certain percentage of the available spaces for students whose fees would

be paid by the church. The church would have input into the curriculum as well," Elahie explains.

The example of Canadian support for church-run schools in Trinidad and Tobago inspired the Caribbean church leader to propose a similar initiative in Haïti.

"The Presbyterian Church in Trinidad and Tobago, including all

us to move from being an object of mission to an agent of mission."

However, this is 21st century mission work. In an introduction to the project Elahie writes: "This mission I have suggested is not to Christianize anyone in Haïti." The idea is not to promote institutional Christianity but rather to live out Christianity through educational formation, Elahie says.

The project received Synod approval earlier this year and US\$60,000 has been raised to-date. However, plans are temporarily on hold due to the outbreak of cholera in Haïti. If all goes well, an exploratory team will travel to Haïti early in 2011 to identify project partners.

Elahie sees this as a long-term initiative; one that

he prays will be part of his church's missionary efforts for decades to come.



Church in Trinidad and Tobago plans to help build a school in Haïti. (Photo: ACT/Catianne Tijerina)

of our educational institutions, is the result of a missionary pursuit," Elahie notes. "The time is right for

calvin09 is now www.john-calvin.org

The international internet platform created to celebrate the 500th anniversary of the birth of John Calvin is being redeveloped as a worldwide platform of comprehensive knowledge and information about the Geneva Reformer.

www.john-calvin.org features information, documents, games and products about Calvin in four languages. International Calvin experts from Germany, Switzerland,



South America and the United States have been developing and expanding the web page, which first went online in 2007, into a worldwide central knowledge and information platform. The platform operates

under the auspices of the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) and the Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches.

WCRC President, Jerry Pillay, welcomes the site. "I am particularly happy about the fact that the Reformed Churches from Brazil, the Netherlands, Poland and Hungary have also announced their cooperation," Pillay adds.

Korean peace impossible without justice

The success of peace and reconciliation initiatives in the Korean peninsula is linked with justice issues such as the right to free association and access to food and education, the general secretary of the World Communion of Reformed Churches has told global peace advocates and academics at a seminar in Seoul in November.

“Providing charity alleviates some of the symptoms but we need much more than that. We need a clear commitment to justice for all,” Setri Nyomi said in a keynote speech delivered 3 November.

Nyomi was addressing more than 100 participants from 51 countries who were in Korea for a four-day seminar exploring the theme Building Communities of Peace.

honour its founding pastor, Kyung-Chik Han.

Originally from North Korea, Han dedicated his career to seeking reconciliation in the divided country. The Religious Studies Section at York St. John University in Great Britain was co-sponsor of the event that marked the tenth anniversary of Han’s death.

Participants in the seminar included representatives from South Africa, Croatia, Burundi and Sri Lanka.

In his presentation, Nyomi paid tribute to the efforts of WCRC member churches in Korea for their commitment to reconciliation between North and South Korea.

“There is a need to strengthen the contacts between the church

mon prayer give us a glimmer of hope.”

Christians represent 29.2 percent of the population in South Korea with 8.6 million Protestants and 5.1 million Catholics. Reliable statistics about North Korean Christians are not readily available. However, the state-controlled Korean Christian Federation, a Protestant organization, has 12,000 members.

The seminar opened with a trip to the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) which separates North and South. In a ceremony at the Songak Prayer House overlooking North Korea, international representatives offered prayers accompanied by traditional Korean music.

The gathering of Christians at the border came in the wake of state-organized meetings on 30 October where families from North and South Korea met for the first time since the country was separated in the 1950’s. An additional 80,000 people are said to be waiting their chance for a family reunion.

In a sermon on 31 October, Nyomi told worshippers at a parish in Seoul that they could set a good example for secular society and political authorities by working to overcome divisions among churches. By accepting those who are different from them, Nyomi says, “Christians will be in a strong position to challenge the powers that want to keep Korea divided and speak clearly on the fact that this is one people.”



Delegates to international seminar on peace and reconciliation in Korea visited the border between North and South for briefing and prayers. (Photo: Youngnak Presbyterian Church)

The event which ran from 31 October to 4 November was the third in a series of seminars on peace and reconciliation hosted by Youngnak Presbyterian Church to

in North Korea and the church in South Korea,” Nyomi said in speaking of his dreams for the region.

“Efforts at annual prayer meetings ... and the development of com-

Beyond Confessionalism: Essays on the Practice of Reformed Ecumenicity

by *Odair Pedroso Mateus*

“Ours is a time of ecumenical uncertainty,” Brazilian theologian, Odair Pedroso Mateus, writes in his recently-published book *Beyond Confessionalism: Essays on the Practice of Reformed Ecumenicity*.

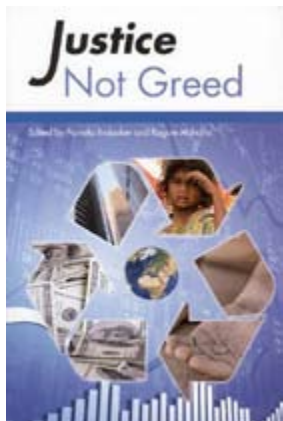
The former Executive Secretary for Theology and Ecumenism with the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) has gathered a

collection of his essays in which he questions the role of the ecumenical movement today in general and the role that the Reformed church movement and other Christian world communions might play in particular. Is it still important, Mateus asks, for denominations to work towards organic union or has that imperative disappeared in this post-modern era?

The question is timely. As the newly-created World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) seeks to define its role in global ecumenism, its member churches are asking what to expect of themselves and others in the Communion.

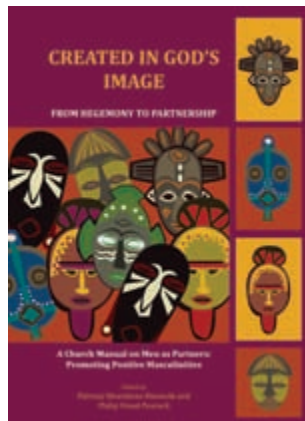
Copies of the book are available at wrcr@wrcr.ch

Greed underpins global economy



A new publication from the World Council of Churches (WCC) that draws on work by the World Communion of Reformed Churches on economic and social justice seeks “an economy based on need, not greed” says the WCC. The book *Justice Not Greed*, edited by Pamela Brubaker and Rogate Mshana, is a compilation of papers prepared by the WCC Advisory Group on Economic Matters. Fourteen Christian economists, theologians, ethicists and sociologists offer economic analysis and biblical and ethical reflection for individuals, students and groups. The book is available by contacting the World Council of Churches Publications office.

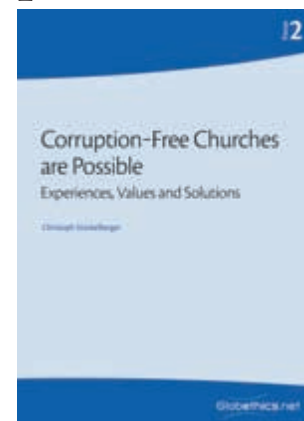
Church manual promotes “positive masculinities”



A new publication by the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) and the World Council of Churches (WCC) is a “church manual on men as partners for promoting positive masculinities”, says the book’s co-editor, Patricia Sheerattan-Bisnauth, who heads WCRC’s justice office.

Sheerattan-Bisnauth and Philip Vinod Peacock edited *Created in God’s Image: From Hegemony to Partnership*. The book aims to enable men “to become more conscious of gender as a social construct that affects their own lives as well as that of women”, Sheerattan-Bisnauth writes. Copies are available by contacting wrcr@wrcr.ch

Corruption-Free Churches possible



In a book published by Globethics.net, the organization’s general secretary, Christoph Stückelberger writes: “corruption exists not only in business, politics and NGOs but also in churches.” In *Corruption-Free Churches are Possible: Experiences, Values and Solutions*, Stückelberger gathers tried and tested guidelines and codes of conduct to prove that there are solutions to the problem. The book is available at www.globethics.net

Speak German? See the world.

His ability with languages has opened many doors for Hartmut Lucke. German is his birth language but Lucke also speaks fluent French and English. Those languages have been his passport to the world of ecumenical engagement.

Now retired, Lucke has an office at the Ecumenical Center in Geneva, Switzerland where he can be seen hard at work three days a week translating news releases, correspondence and reports for the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC).

"I can't imagine a passive retirement," says Lucke. "I like the broad horizon of WCRC. It is a real fellowship, a community."

Since he first began translating theological articles for the European publishing company *Labor et Fides* in 1967, Lucke has developed a vocation for languages. He has served as an interpreter for WARC (now WCRC) at every General Council since 1982 (Ottawa) and at every World Council of Churches assembly since 1983 (Vancouver). The Conference of European Churches and the Community of Protestant churches in Europe (CPCE) also call on him. His translations of theological and ecumenical texts to German and French appear in German and Swiss publications.

Lucke's call to ministry came out of the experience of being part of the generation of German youth traumatized by what their parents' generation had done or not done in the face of Nazism. He had had no contact with the organized church as a child though was encouraged by his mother to pray at home. It was as a teen-



Hartmut Lucke, seen here at the Uniting General Council in Grand Rapids, has been an interpreter at global church events since 1982. (Photo: Coll/WCRC)

ager at the end of WWII that Lucke found himself drawn to the church.

"It was the place where I met people who would talk about what had happened during the war," Lucke recalls. "I was part of that generation that was seeking reconciliation and forgiveness. We wanted to show we could be different. We wanted to make up for what had happened. We could do that through the church and the ecumenical movement."

Lucke's call to ministry came out of the experience of being part of the generation of German youth traumatized by what their parents' generation had done or not done in the face of Nazism.

Theology studies followed. Already Lucke was showing his gift for languages. It was his knowledge of French which allowed him to go to Paris to study. Later, he participated in Ecumenical Work Camps in France and French-speaking Switzerland. These first contacts

with international ecumenism set the course for his life.

It was in Geneva that he met his wife Alice and was ordained by the Protestant Church of Geneva. The young pastor and his wife shared a deep commitment to refugee work: Alice because of her origins as an Armenian born in Turkey and concerned about the situation of the Kurds; Hartmut because of his experience of the exodus of

refugees from eastern Germany.

Lucke's community organizing on behalf of a new church development in an international neighbourhood in Geneva led then-WARC general secretary, Marcel Pradervand, to endorse his application for a bursary to study at the Institute on the Church in Urban-Industrial Society of McCormick Theological Seminary in Chicago in the early 1970's. Those were heady days for the German theologian-advocate. The excitement of working with the ideas of community organizer, Saul Alinsky, and African-American pastor, Jesse Jackson, was in the air.

On his return to Geneva, Lucke saw his commitment to refugee work and ecumenism could best be realized in the Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches (SEK-FEPS). From 1987 until his retirement in 2002, he served as Secretary for International Relations. During that time he was seconded to work part-time as European Area Secretary to WARC.

Today, Lucke offers wisdom, words and perspective to the work of the World Communion of Reformed Churches.

"If I can be useful, it is gratifying," he says simply.

Zambian church appoints first woman as general secretary

The United Church of Zambia (UCZ) has appointed its first woman general secretary, Peggy Mulambya-Kabonde. The appointment was made in September at a synod extraordinary meeting.

Mulambya-Kabonde has been an ordained minister in the United Church of Zambia since 1987 and has served in various church positions at the congregation, consistory and Presbytery levels. She has also served as director of women's work at the national level.

The new general secretary was a part-time lecturer at the United Church of Zambia Theological College and in charge of a congregation before moving to the Council of Churches in Zambia where her duties included serving as a chaplain at the University of Zambia and theology and ecumenical engagement officer.



Peggy Mulambya-Kabonde becomes first woman to head United Church of Zambia.

Mulambya-Kabonde has been a member of the Circle of African Women Theologians since its inception in 1989 and helps with the coordination of gender justice issues

with the Council for World Mission (CWM) Africa region. She was an executive member of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) until June 2010.

The Zambian theologian did her undergraduate studies at UCZ Theological College in Kitwe and completed her post-graduate diploma in Ecumenical Church Ministries at Pan Africa Mindolo Ecumenical Foundation. She holds a Bachelor of Theology (Hons) and Masters in Gender and Theology from the University of Cape Town (UCT).

Mulambya-Kabonde has been writing her doctoral dissertation on the ordination of women as part of her doctoral programme at the University of KwaZulu Natal in South Africa. With her appointment, she has been recalled to Zambia to serve as interim general secretary.

Global ecumenical youth movement names new leader

The World Student Christian Federation (WSCF) has elected Christine Housel to be its next general secretary. The announcement was made in November by the WSCF Executive Committee at its meeting in Lebanon.

An Episcopalian with an ecumenical background, Housel is a native of the United States. She has spent 12 years living in Germany, China, France, and Switzerland.

Since 2008, Housel has served as Project Manager at the Federation's international office in Geneva. Prior to taking up her position with the Federation, she studied philosophy



American ecumenist heads global church youth organization. (Photo: Greenaway/WCRC)

at Wheaton College in the United States and completed a Masters of Divinity at Yale Divinity School.

In announcing her election, the Executive Committee pointed to Housel's role over the past few years in developing new initiatives to draw out the potential of the Federation's global community of 106 national student movements. The Executive noted in particular her work to establish a global Advocacy and Solidarity Committee which builds on the Federation's justice work and her support of leadership training and skills-building at all levels of the Federation.

Contributing to WCRC

The World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) created June 18, 2010 carries the hopes and expectations of 230 member churches in 108 countries, most of them in the Global South. In order to fulfill its mandate, WCRC needs your help. Please consider how you

or your church organization might contribute to global church ministry through support of WCRC.

For information about how to make a financial contribution, you can visit the WCRC website at www.wcrc.ch, contact wcrc@wcrc.ch, or write to:

World Communion of Reformed Churches
150 route de Ferney,
1211 Geneva 2, Switzerland
Phone: +41 (0) 22 791 6243
Fax: +41 (0) 22 791 6505

News in new packages!

The World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) has launched two new communications initiatives to mark the merger of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Reformed Ecumenical Council.

Newsletter

This issue of *Reformed Communiqué* is the second edition of the organization's new quarterly newsletter. Published in French and English, the newsletter is distributed in both print and electronic versions. It is available free of cost to members and to partner organizations.

In order to receive your free subscription, let us know which version of the newsletter you prefer and give us your contact information.

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Website

The new website www.wcrc.ch went live in the first week of September.

We invite you to visit the site and send us your comments.

Theology Journal

WCRC is continuing publication of *Reformed World*, the theology journal formerly produced by the World Alliance of Reformed Churches. The quarterly journal published in English is available by subscription. For information, contact the *Reformed World* editor by e-mail or post.

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FROM THE GENERAL SECRETARY



Setri Nyomi, General Secretary

 Reformed
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**World
 Communion
 of Reformed
 Churches**

Called to communion,
 committed to justice

The World Communion of Reformed Churches formally began its exciting journey in June 2010. Among other things, its leaders took a firm decision to embark on a strategic planning process which involves listening very closely to its member churches, taking stock of who we are and what we are called to be, focusing on some clear priority directions and positioning ourselves to make an impact on church and society.

For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not first sit down and estimate the cost, to see whether he has enough to complete it? (Luke 14:28)

Going through this process reminds us of our Lord's rhetorical question "For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not first sit down and estimate the cost, to see whether he has enough to complete it?" This question itself was set in a strange context in which Jesus was reported as saying that to follow him, one needs to take stock of himself/herself and be prepared to forgo family and friends and focus only on carrying the cross and following him, no matter the cost. This is commitment. The WCRC and its member churches are called to this kind of costly commitment in following our Lord Jesus, and we cannot simply follow programmes without counting the cost and taking difficult discussions to prioritize what we do.

Far too many organizations lose their focus and spread themselves too thin if they do not pause to think through what they are called to do and make plans to fulfill their calling effectively. In this, organizations are like builders who need to estimate the resources they have so that their buildings do not end up in states of incompleteness. The work of building the WCRC that we laid the foundation for in June 2010 has therefore begun on that sound footing of estimating our strengths and resources so that we can focus.

In the first stage of that planning process, we sent questionnaires to all

our member churches and received some insightful responses. Among other things our churches, area councils and partners told us that the WCRC constitutes the expression of the Reformed family's relatedness in the world and that the churches expect us to help live out that connectedness. The responses affirmed over and over again that the WCRC is needed to be a force for unity and for justice.

The Strategic Planning team is processing these responses alongside what the churches said through the Uniting General Council reports to keep us focused on what we are called to do.

Strategic planning also calls us to estimate our resources. While member churches say repeatedly that they value the WCRC, often the financial resources they offer tell a different story. The mission of the WCRC is exciting and the dedicated professionals serving the organization are efficiently and eagerly fulfilling their calling but financial resources are inadequate. Many people wonder how we have been able to achieve so much with so little.

But it is becoming more and more difficult to sustain the achievements we have made unless more resources are injected into the life of the WCRC. A donation from you or your congregation will go a long way to strengthen how we address the many challenges that face our world today. As you pray for the WCRC, visit www.wCRC.ch or write to us at wCRC@wCRC.ch.

We are doing everything possible to focus on the priorities which can be efficiently carried out to God's glory. Our strategic planning is working towards a stronger more effective WCRC that will be a major force for Christian unity and societal transformation. We count on your continuing prayers and on your financial contributions for the success of this work.