



World Communion
of Reformed Churches

**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
MINUTES 2015**

**God of Life,
Lead us on your Path
of Justice, Peace
and Reconciliation**

**World Communion of Reformed Churches
Executive Committee
9-15 May 2015
Dhour Choueir, Lebanon**

Theme: God of Life, Lead us on your Path of Justice, Peace and Reconciliation

"...you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to dwell in." Isaiah 58: 6-12

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RECORDER'S NOTE

Thanks go to all the recorders of the various committee and group meetings, as well as to Claudia Duval and Phil Tanis for their extraordinary and expert assistance.

PARTICIPANT LIST

President

Jerry Pillay (Uniting Presbyterian Church in South Africa)

Vice-presidents

Helis Hernán Barraza Díaz (Presbyterian Church of Colombia)

Yueh-Wen Lu (Presbyterian Church in Taiwan)

Bastiaan Plaisier (Protestant Church in the Netherlands)

Treasurer

Johann Weusmann (Evangelical Church in the Rhineland)

General Secretary

Chris Ferguson (United Church of Canada)

Executive Committee Members

Lydia Adajawah (Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Ghana; ACRC)

Peter Borgdorff (Christian Reformed Church in North America)

Allan Buckingham (United Church of Canada)

Peter Bukowski (Reformed Alliance, Germany)

Mary Fontaine (Presbyterian Church in Canada)

Kobus Gerber (Dutch Reformed Church)

Yael Hadiputeri (Indonesian Christian Church)

Jan-Gerd Heetderks (Protestant Church in the Netherlands, WCRC Europe)

Najla Kassab (National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon)

Clifton Kirkpatrick (Presbyterian Church (USA))

Clayton Leal da Silva (Independent Presbyterian Church of Brazil)

Cheryl Meban (Presbyterian Church in Ireland)

Cheh Liang Mok (Gereja Presbyterian Malaysia)

Veronica Njoki Muchiri (Presbyterian Church of East Africa)

Gabriela Lucía Mulder (Reformed Churches in Argentina, AIPRAL)

Elisée Musemakweli (Presbyterian Church of Rwanda)

Allen Nafuki (Presbyterian Church of Vanuatu)

Gradye Parsons (Presbyterian Church (USA))

Carola Tron Urban (Waldensian Church of the River Plate)

Salome Twum (Presbyterian Church of Ghana)

Lisa Vander Wal (Reformed Church in America, CANAAC)

Advisors

Yong-Kyu Kang (Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea)

William T. Koopmans (Christian Reformed Church of North America)

Consultants

Stephen Lytch (Presbyterian Church (USA))

Ecumenical guests and partners

Bassem Boushra (Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Egypt, Synod of the Nile)

Susanne Erlecke (Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland)

Gregory Fairbanks (Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity)

Haitham Jazrawi (Evangelical Church in Kirkuk)

Martin Junge (Lutheran World Federation)

Lavinia Mohr (World Association for Christian Communication)

Andreas Zaki Stephanous (Protestant Churches of Egypt)

Karen Georgia Thompson (United Church of Christ)

Elsy Waki (World Student Christian Federation)

Rosangela Jarjour (Fellowship of Middle East Evangelical Churches)

Representatives of host churches

Habib Badr (National Evangelical Union of Lebanon)

Fadi Dagher (National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon)

Raffi Messerlian (Union of Evangelical Churches in the Near East)

Salim Sahiouny (Supreme Council of Evangelical Churches in Syria and Lebanon)

Staff

Chris Ferguson, general secretary

Dora Arce Valentín, executive secretary for justice and partnership

Phil Tanis, executive secretary for communications

Douwe Visser, executive secretary for theology, mission and communion

Claudia Duval, administrative assistant: general secretary's office

Joanna Hipp, intern

Werner Joecker, administrative assistant: Partnership Fund

Anna-Lena Krüger, administrative assistant: finance and communications

Interpreter

Adriana Santos

Stewards

Lougrin Saad

Paul Kahkajian

Ribih Taleb

Nadja Tanios

Recorder

Joel Hanisek

Absent with apologies

Yvette Bloomfield (United Church in Jamaica & the Cayman Islands)

Kyeong-Shin Kang (Presbyterian Church of the Republic of Korea,

NEAAC)

Subha Singh Majaw (Presbyterian Church of India)

Robyn Goodwin (Uniting Church in Australia)

Stephen Kendall (Presbyterian Church in Canada)

CORE GROUPS AND COMMITTEES

THEOLOGY, MISSION AND COMMUNION

Moderator: Bas Plaisier

Peter Bukowski

Kobus Gerber

Yael Eka Hadiputeri

Najla Kassab

William T Koopmans

Elisée Musemakweli (absent)

Carola Tron Urban

Lisa Vander Wal

Staff: Douwe Visser

JUSTICE AND PARTNERSHIP

Co-moderators: Helis Hernán Barraza Díaz and Yueh-Wen Lu

Lydia Adajawah

Mary Fontaine

Jan-Gerd Heetderks

Clifton Kirkpatrick

Clayton Leal Da Silva

Veronica Njoki Muchiri

Subha Singh Majaw (absent)

Gabriela Lucía Mulder

Johann Weusmann

Staff: Dora Arce-Valentín

COMMUNICATION

Moderator: Yvette Noble Bloomfield (absent)

Substitute Moderator: Cheryl Meban

Peter Borgdorff

Allan Buckingham

Kyeong-Shin Kang

Yong-Kyu Kang

Stephens Lytch

Cheh Liang Mok

Allen Nafuki

Salome Twum

Staff: Philip Tanis, Anna Kruger

FINANCE COMMITTEE

Moderator: Johann Weusmann

Stephen Kendall
Clifton Kirkpatrick
Yueh-Wen Lu
Stephens Lytch
Cheh Liang Mok
Veronica Njoki Muchiri
President
General Secretary
Staff: Anna Kruger

CONSTITUTION AND MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

Substitute Moderator: Peter Borgdorff
Cheryl Meban
Lydia Adajawah
Yael Eka Hadiputeri
Allen Nafuki
Carola Tron Urban
President
General Secretary

PARTNERSHIP FUND COMMITTEE

Moderator: Kobus Gerber
Yvette Noble Bloomfield
Najla Kassab
Clayton Leal da Silva
Subha Singh Majaw (absent)
Bas Plaisier
Salome Twum
Staff: Werner Joecker, Douwe Visser

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

Moderator: Jerry Pillay
Helis Hernán Barraza Díaz
Yvette Noble Bloomfield (absent)
Yueh-Wen Lu
Bas Plaisier
Johann Weusmann
General Secretary

WCRC ENDOWMENT FUND TRUSTEES

Co-moderators: Peter Borgdorff and Clifton Kirkpatrick
Allan Buckingham
Brenda Bullock
Jane Dempsey Douglass (absent)
Mary Fontaine
Stephen Kendall
William T Koopmans

Stephens Lytch (president)
Staff: Philip Tanis

The president and general secretary may attend any core group and are *ex-officio* members of all committees.

TIMETABLE

Friday, May 8, 2015

All day

Arrival of officers and some participants

Saturday, May 9, 2015

All day

09:00

10:30

13:00

14:30

16:00

18:30

Arrival of all other executive committee members

Officer's Meeting

Coffee Break

Lunch

Transfer to church

Opening Worship

Dinner / Cultural Night with host church

Sunday, May 10, 2015

09:00

14:30

16:00

16:30

18:00

19:00

Visit Lebanese churches

Convene Meeting:

Opening actions, fraternal greetings, President's report

Coffee Break

General Secretary's report

Dinner

Mission Context Session: Lebanon and Middle East

Monday, May 11, 2015

08:00

09:00

09:30

10:00

11:00

11:30

13:00

14:30

15:00

16:30

17:00

18:30

Breakfast

Morning Worship

Fraternal Greetings

GS report follow up including General Council planning proposals

Coffee Break

Regional Council reports, UN Office

Lunch

Strategic Plan Review Introduction

Regional Groups

Coffee Break

Core Groups

Dinner

Tuesday, May 12, 2015

08:00

09:00

Breakfast

Morning Worship

09:20	Core Groups
11:00	Coffee Break
13:00	Lunch
14:30	Committee Meetings
16:00	Coffee Break
16:30	Committee Meetings
18:30	Dinner
19:30	Personnel Committee / N.A. Trustees

Wednesday, May 13, 2015

08:00	Breakfast
09:00	Morning Worship
09:20	Core Groups
10:30	Coffee break
11:00	Order of the Day: Plenary of the Middle East Crisis
13:00	Lunch
14:30	Committee Meeting
16:00	Coffee Break
16:30	Core Groups
18:30	Dinner
19:00	Trip to Byblos

Thursday, May 14, 2015

07:00	Officer's Meeting
08:00	Breakfast
09:00	Morning Worship
09:20	Final Core Group Meeting
11:00	Coffee Break
11:30	Final Committee Meeting
13:00	Lunch
14:30	Plenary: Reports and Decisions
16:00	Coffee Break
16:30	Plenary: Reports and Decisions
18:30	Dinner

Friday, May 15, 2015

07:00	Officer's Meeting
08:00	Breakfast
09:00	Morning Worship
09:20	Plenary: Reports and Decisions
11:00	Coffee Break
11:30	Plenary: Reports and Decisions
13:00	Lunch
14:30	Plenary: Any Remaining Reports and Meeting of the Michigan Corporation
16:00	Coffee Break

16:30
18:30
19:00

Closing Worship (with Communion)
Dinner
Officer's meeting

Saturday, May 16, 2015

All day

Departures

ACTIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 2015

Opening

1. The president will appoint a listening team to draft a statement on the Middle East.
2. The report of the president was received.
3. The report of the general secretary was received.
4. The 2014 executive committee minutes were received and approved.
5. The venue for the 2017 General Council will be Leipzig, Germany, and the dates will be 27 June to 7 July.
6. The reports from ACRC, AIPRAL, CANAAC, NEAAC and WCRC Europe were received.
7. The UN Ministry report was received.
8. The report of the Global Christian Forum was received.

Finance Committee

9. The 2014 financial statement was received.
10. The 2015 financial plan was approved.
11. The general secretary is the one responsible to ensure that expenses stay within the approved budget.
12. Documentation of the Miscellaneous Switzerland line items will be presented by the finance office to the finance committee by the end of September 2015.
13. The first draft of the 2016 budget will be presented to the finance committee at the end of September/beginning of October 2015. It will then be submitted for approval electronically by the officers and subsequently by the executive committee members no later than the beginning of November.
14. The budget for 2016 will provide for the possibility of a substantially reduced subsidy for funding the work of the executive secretary for justice and partnership.
15. The general secretariat (including the finance office) will begin immediately to raise funds for the 2017 General Council and the general secretary will follow up with the request to member churches to make a special contribution equivalent to one year's membership dues.
16. The amount of 5000 euro will be allocated from the general council fund to clean up and modernize the WCRC data base.
17. The reserve fund of the WCRC North American Trustees will be made available to the North American trustees once the finance office has confirmed that the fund is indeed the grant made by CANAAC in 2011 to underwrite fund raising expenses.
18. The audit of the 2014 accounts was accepted.
19. The finance coordinator, along with the general secretary, will take steps to implement the recommendations in section 1 of the audit

- report and report progress to the meeting of the finance committee in June.
20. In response to section 2.5 of the audit report, the finance office along with the general secretary will review the current system of advances and give increased attention to the issuing of advances and the monitoring of expenses.
 21. Credit cards will continue to be issued to the general secretary, the executive secretaries, as well as the finance and administrative staff, and credit cards will be issued to the president and the general council coordinator, all the while recognizing the risks cited by the audit report.
 22. In response to Section 3.6 of the audit report, the finance office will compile a list of all relocation costs for review at the June meeting of the finance committee.
 23. The engagement of the EKD High Audit Office for the 2015 audit was approved.
 24. A funds development committee will be set up consisting of four or five people, chosen by the officers, including at least one member from the finance committee and one from the communications core group. This committee will coordinate funds development for the WCRC as a whole, report to the executive committee and will have authority to create and implement a regionally based and appropriate funds development campaign. The 2016 budget shall include operational provision for the work of this committee.
 25. The president and general secretary will focus their efforts to collect overdue membership fees on those member churches that have the largest underpayment.
 26. The executive committee directs the general secretary to monitor that there are sufficient funds available for programme work.
 27. The contributions toward the pension fund will be reviewed at the September meeting of the finance committee and necessary adjustments made in the 2016 budget and subsequently.
 28. The office of the Partnership Fund will work in conjunction with the office of communications to set up a web page and use other media to communicate more widely the impact of the Funds and encourage applications.
 29. The report of the finance committee was received.

Partnership Fund

30. The executive committee shall wait for the ruling of the court [in Uganda] before any decision to write off the sum is taken.
31. The considerations outlined in the text of report [regarding donors and donorship] will be converted into actions.
32. Fund E shall permanently be transformed into the "Emergency Fund" and be bestowed with all the corresponding characteristics of such an instrument. It shall be referred to as such from this date on.

33. Effective immediately the Partnership Fund shall be considered and referred to as the "Reformed Partnership Fund" (RPF), and actions shall be put in motion to establish this modification within every aspect of the organization.
34. The report of the Partnership Fund committee was received.

Constitution and Membership Committee

35. Follow up conversations with the following membership applicants will be pursued:
 - Reformed Evangelical Church of Australia – by Robyn Goodwin
 - Congregational Church of Brazil – by Clayton Leal
 - Igreja Reformada em Mocambique (Reformed Church of Mozambique) – by Kobus Gerber
36. A follow up conversation with the Reformed Church and Assemblies of Togo will be pursued by Lydia Adajawah.
37. A follow up conversation with the congregation in the Ukraine will be pursued by Jan-Gerd Heetderks.
38. The application of the Evangelical Church Association (India) for membership is accepted, subject (in the light of their answer to question 14 of the questionnaire) to further dialogue with the general secretary and clarification of the meaning of their WCRC membership: i.e. are they willing to work towards the ordination of women and to support their appointment to decision-making bodies?
39. A follow up conversation with two Baptist applications in the Democratic Republic of Congo will be pursued by Kobus Gerber.
40. No church will be declared inactive at this point.
41. The president will appoint a revision committee with the following mandate:

To update as needed, clarify and propose appropriate revisions to the constitution of the WCRC paying particular attention to among others:

 - the function of the officer's committee and the officer positions
 - the role of regional VPs in their relationship to regional councils
 - the function of the General Secretary in relation to other officers
 - the size of delegation to the General Council
42. The report of the constitution and membership committee was received.

Theology, Mission and Communion Core Group

43. Appoint a small group to develop a strategic plan for the ongoing publication of *Reformed World*, taking into consideration matters such as theological editing, budget, investment of staff time, target readership and distribution, and details of publication, in order to best meet the goals of the WCRC with the resources that are available.
44. Request the TMC secretary to report next year on mission projects in

- which we are engaged in conjunction with the Partnership Fund.
45. Encourage the TMC secretary to undertake the long-range goal of an exploration study of what is happening in new expressions of Christendom and report back with a view to possible engagements.
 46. Encourage the long-range goal to have the African region, in partnership with the European region, explore contacts with the African Instituted Churches.
 47. Support plans to add more theological documents to the WCRC website.
 48. Support continued involvement of the TMC secretary in program activities of John Knox Centre.
 49. Ask the office of theology, in conjunction with other staff, and involving the network of theologians, to provide a written plan for a theological framework for the 2017 general council.
 50. Plan a GIT program in 2017 in Germany in conjunction with the general council, with a location in Wuppertal in addition to Leipzig.
 51. Support the proposal to hold a second consultation on Mission in the Frontline, and that this be coordinated by the secretary of theology as it is intended to focus particularly on mission.
 52. Concur with plans to explore with the John Knox Centre to have Kobus Gerber assist with a revision of the handbook by Lucas Visscher (*The Reformed Family*, 1999), over the next couple of years.
 53. Request that the officers will name a replacement for Carola Tron Urban to the Reformed – Anglican Dialogue (with attention to gender and region).
 54. Thank the TMC Secretary, Douwe Visser, for his work on behalf of the WCRC in 2014.
 55. The report of the TMC core group was received.

Justice Core Group

56. Ask the general council planning committee to provide a workshop on the justice issues related to global communities of indigenous people, and other activities to educate and raise awareness about indigenous communities.
57. The staff should find ways to encourage use and increase awareness and availability of the "Broken for You" Lenten resource in the summer 2015, in order to give churches adequate time to translate and plan for use during Lent of 2016.
58. Send a letter to the general secretaries of WCC, LWF and CWM acknowledging the current status of NIFEA, recommitting to the integrity of the NIFEA process and affirming the need for a collaborative approach to the work of this economic justice initiative.
59. Appoint Clifton Kirkpatrick and Jerry Pillay (or designees) to support the general secretary by serving as liaisons to the general secretaries of WCC, LWF, and CWM in an effort to foster the collaborative implementation of NIFEA.

60. Advise the general council planning committee to encourage member churches to bring delegates who are reflective of the full expression of the communities to which they belong in order to have active participation, while also reaching the needed quotas.
61. Affirm and implement the recommendation made by the justice core group in its report last year to: "ask the Constitutional Committee to work out – in relation to Article IX of the constitution – a practical model for the delegation of member churches to the GC which is a solution for the decision of the UGC 2010 to have a balanced assembly." (JCG, recommendation #5, p.178)
62. Task the staff to identify seminaries and universities in the global south, contact admission departments, deepen relationships with universities and seminaries, and women's desk offices to promote scholarship availability for women in the global south attending institutions in their home countries or regions.
63. Ask the general council planning committee to add to the small group themes or workshop offerings: "How to Promote Women in Leadership."
64. Create a working advisory group to strategize how to move forward on the issue of women's ordination toward 2017 General Council, and ask the executive secretary for justice and partnership to appoint its members: 1) to bring a final report with recommendations on how to fulfill the mandate of the UGC; 2) to produce materials to assist member churches to engage in dialogue with the executive committee; and 3) develop with the regional councils a mapping of member churches indicating where the issues related to women's ordination and gender justice require further attention.
65. The report of the justice core group was received.

Communications Core Group

66. The report of the communications core group was received.

Officers

67. The 2016 executive committee meeting will be held in Havana, Cuba, May 7-14, arriving the 6th and departing on the 15th, with the understanding that costs must be within the same range as the budget for the 2015 meeting in Lebanon. The identified challenges around sufficient Internet access are to be addressed.
68. The report of the officers was received.
69. The Statement on the Middle East was adopted.
70. The report of the South Asia Region was received.

Meeting of the Michigan Corporation

71. The minutes of the 2014 meeting of the executive committee of the

WCRC Michigan Foundation held in Hannover, Germany, were approved.

72. Agreed that the actions of the WCRC executive committee during its meeting in Dhour Choueir, Lebanon, 9-15 May 2015, be fully concurred with and entered into the permanent record of the WCRC Michigan Foundation as constituting decisions of 2015.

**NARRATIVE RECORD
of the meeting of the executive committee¹
Dhour Choueir, Lebanon, 9-15 May 2015**

SATURDAY, 9 MAY

Opening Worship

On Saturday evening the meeting was formally opened with worship at the National Evangelical Church of Beirut. Jerry Pillay preached the sermon.

SUNDAY, 10 MAY

Plenary Session

The meeting of the executive committee of the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) included visits to eleven congregations of its member churches. The congregations visited were: Armenian Evangelical First Church; Armenian Evangelical Church Ashrafieh; Armenian Evangelical Emmanuel Church; Armenian Evangelical Nor Marash Church; Tripoli Evangelical Church; Saida Evangelical Church; Ras Beirut Evangelical Church; Minyara Evangelical Church; Rabieh Evangelical Church; Hadath Evangelical Church; National Evangelical Church of Beirut.

On Sunday afternoon the meeting was opened by WCRC president, Jerry Pillay, with prayer. Pillay gave thanks to the National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon and the Dhour Choueir Evangelical Conference Center for hosting the executive committee. He also noted the context of the Middle East in which the executive committee was gathered and the importance of meeting in Lebanon as an act of solidarity.

The roll was called by the general secretary, Chris Ferguson, who confirmed that there was a quorum present. Apologies for absence were received, and advisors, consultants and ecumenical guests were welcomed.

Pillay introduced the WCRC staff and then introduced Najla Kassab of the National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon in her role as host. Kassab emphasized the uplifting effect that holding the WCRC executive

¹ Executive Committee actions are marked in boldface type.

committee in Lebanon has had on local churches.

Pillay expressed a desire to appoint a listening team from the committee to work with Phil Tanis in his role as WCRC executive secretary for communications to craft a public statement on the Middle East. Peter Borgdorff moved that the listening team be made by presidential appointment.

The president will appoint a listening team to draft a statement on the Middle East.

Action 1

Report of the President

The president's address (*document 01*) was invited and moderated by Helis Hernán Barraza Díaz, vice president. In addition to the submitted text the president made the following extemporaneous remarks:

- Between paragraphs 17 and 19 he added a call for interfaith dialogues to bring people together, particularly in the context of the Middle East. He stated that in each of the religions there is a God that respects life, and he pled for a deeper quest for religious dialogue. Rather than being sidelined by nationalism and patriotism he asked: How do we go back to what God is calling us to do?
- Adding to paragraph 24 the president noted the tragic loss of unity in a world that seemed to be moving more towards fragmentation than unity in diversity.
- Alongside paragraph 50 the president commended the outstanding work Dora Arce Valentín did to place the Accra Confession in the regions. Because this happened before the global consultation, it helped some regions regroup to do work in the context of the WCRC. The president held this up as an example of how to reengage the regions.

Following the presentation questions, comments and responses were offered.

Barraza Díaz thanked the president for his report, noting that it was both interesting and contained a plan. He highlighted the basic points it had tabled in light of upcoming challenges and commended it to the committee.

The report of the president was received.

Action 2

Report of the General Secretary

The president introduced the general secretary and invited him to make his report (*document 02*).

The general secretary presented his report with contributions from the executive staff. During his presentation the general secretary recalled a question following the president's report and noted that his report was an attempt to put the strategic plan back in play and to put it at the center of the executive committee's reflections. He also noted that the currently vacant administrative assistant position would be filled by June 2015.

In addition to the written report the general secretary noted he had entered his work at a *kairos* moment. He placed emphasis around paragraph 9 on the strategic plan, as well as the call to communion and commitment to justice as embodied in the Accra Confession, as being the goal markers for 2017.

The general secretary singled out paragraphs 122 and following on matters of planning for the general council and affirmed that under Lisa Vander Wal's leadership the specific planning processes were moving forward.

The general secretary also drew attention to paragraphs 132 and following noting that despite initial consensus on Erfurt as the best site for the general council, additional staff research had led to a change in assessment that Leipzig would be a better option in terms of price and conditions. As a result this proposed change was being brought back to the executive committee.

The general secretary noted appreciation for all the desks and regions, lifting up the example of Phil Tanis's visit to Ukraine, as well as WCRC interventions with regard to the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Church of Scotland. Extending observations in paragraph 148 he also noted the lack of a clear plan to realize better regional empowerment, and stressed that regional empowerment remains a top WCRC priority.

On the topic of ecumenical relations the general secretary noted the renewed call to focus on communion with the Lutheran World Federation, and cited the 2017 General Council and the physical space of Wittenberg as a time and place in which to further strengthen this relationship. The general secretary also noted in relation to paragraph 151 that the mandate to look at advocacy around financial architecture, in particular the São Paulo Declaration, has led to firm recommendations for common ecumenical work. However, the general

secretary observed that there still remained some unresolved issues around this matter with regard to the World Council of Churches (WCC). The general secretary described this as perplexing, but noted the strength of the ecumenical process and the urgency of advancing the issue. Ultimately, the general secretary noted the importance of maintaining WCRC ecumenical relations and shared that to this end he is taking a key part in the WCC reference group around the *Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace* and serving as co-rapporteur. A majority of worldwide ecumenical organizations he said, including the World Student Christian Federation (WSCF), are facing significant crisis, particularly around financial issues and we must not let each other walk alone.

Adding to paragraph 161 and following the general secretary gave thanks for the participation of Susanne Erlecke and the Evangelisch Kirche Deutschland (EKD) at this executive committee meeting. The general secretary also celebrated the 25 years Peter Bukowski served as moderator of the Reformed Alliance and noted that the relationship with the Reformed Alliance was developing new synergies and moving in a positive direction. The general secretary also noted and gave thanks for Karen Georgia Thompson and the United Church of Christ's presence at the executive committee.

The president thanked the general secretary for his report. The president noted that the general secretary had incorporated aspects of finance in his report, but asked that the executive committee not delve into finance questions, as they would be addressed by the finance committee report. He invited all other questions and comments, which followed.

The report of the general secretary was received.

Action 3

The president closed the session in prayer.

Mission Context Session on Lebanon and the Middle East

Najla Kassab introduced the panel on the church in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and Egypt:

- Paul Haidostian, Union of Armenian Evangelical Churches in the Near East and president of Haigazian University
- Bassem Boushra, Synod of the Nile
- Haitham Jazrawi, Assembly of Presbyterian Churches in Iraq
- Salam Hanna, Presbyterian Church of Latakia in Syria

Each spoke about aspects of the region, based on their expertise and experiences. The president offered thanks to the speakers and opened

the panel to questions. There was an extensive discussion between panelists and executive committee members.

The president noted there would be further discussions on the Middle East during Wednesday's program. The general secretary closed with prayer.

MONDAY, 11 MAY

Plenary Session

The morning session was opened with worship led by Yael Hadiputeri.

The president invited the general secretary to introduce ecumenical guests bringing greetings to the executive committee.

The general secretary invited Gregory Fairbanks of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity who addressed the committee.

The president thanked Fairbanks for his presence at executive committee and other WCRC-related events.

The general secretary introduced Susanna Erliche from EKD. In doing so he noted a recent excellent encounter at EKD offices in Germany and hopes for future work together. Susanna Erliche's remarks are appended to the minutes (*document 09.4*).

The president thanked Susanna Erliche for being present and for linking the ideas of reformation and transformation. The president also asked Erliche to take the executive committee's thanks and greetings back to the EKD and Bishop Petra Boss-Huber in particular.

The general secretary introduced Lavinia Mohr of the World Alliance of Christian Communicators (WACC), noting that in a time of stress on new forms of communication and networking and network building the WACC meets ways to deepen relationships and that Lavinia's presence at the executive committee is a great sign of rich future in communication together.

Mohr brought greetings from the WACC and invited closer collaboration between the WACC and WCRC. She noted the confluence between the Accra Confession and the WACC's own work. Mohr shared the story of the WACC and offered prayers of success for the meeting.

The president thanked Mohr for her words, noting that changing stories and people's realities is the key.

The president invited Cheryl Meban to pray for ecumenical partners and guests.

The president invited the executive committee to return to a discussion of the general secretary's report. The executive committee engaged the general secretary in a discussion based on his report.

The 2014 executive committee minutes were received and approved.

Action 4

The president tabled a proposal for a change in the venue and date for the 2017 General Council: That the venue for the general council be Leipzig, Germany, and that the dates be 27 June to 7 July 2017.

The president asked the general secretary to continue with a presentation on the planning process for the general council. The general secretary invited Lisa Vander Wal to present on the topic. Together they reviewed the progress made by the general council planning committee and the findings of the local coordination committee. Discussion followed.

The venue for the 2017 General Council will be Leipzig, Germany, and the dates will be 27 June to 7 July.

Action 5

Regional Council Reports

The regional reports were chaired by Yueh-Wen Lu.

The ACRC report (*document 08.1*) was presented by Lydia Adajawah. She offered the following comments in addition to the report: The ACRC was preparing to meet in Nigeria for the Accra Confession regional consultation to provide accompaniment and solidarity in the context of the situation with *Boko Haram* when the Ebola issue required a change of venue to Nairobi, Kenya. Twenty-nine participants from 25 member churches gathered. The ACRC chose a representative for the global meeting, and Salome Twum represented ACRC in Germany. At the ACRC meeting the concept of *ubuntu* was studied, and it bears further study. A consultation on trafficking and child abuse was planned, but after a consultation with Dora Arce Valentín it was decided that East Asia and Africa should combine for a workshop on youth empowerment. God willing this will happen in September 2015.

There were no questions or comments on the ACRC Report.

The report from AIPRAL (*document 08.2*) was given by Gabriela Lucía

Mulder with interpretation by Adriana Santos. She offered the following comments in addition to the report: The Presbyterian Church of Mexico has been in crisis. They have asked AIPRAL to be a part of negotiating this, and AIPRAL is seeking executive committee advice. AIPRAL is trying to respect both churches and make some progress. The assembly of AIPRAL in 2016 will also celebrate the 60th anniversary of AIPRAL. AIPRAL was created prior to the WARC, and its first name was the Union of Reformed Churches. The name was changed when it became a region for the WARC. AIPRAL wanted to thank Chris Ferguson for his presence with churches in Colombia in his role as general secretary. His presence was so important, especially when speaking with authorities. AIPRAL is still participating in the news agency of Latin America, Religions for Peace and the Network of Women of Faith of Latin America. Activities with the WCRC are present in the general secretary's report, but with regard to GIT it is believed that an opportunity was lost with Latin America. There was no participation from Latin America even though the GIT took place in Costa Rica. AIPRAL would like to look at the reasons why, especially given the focus on working closely with the regions. AIPRAL also sees the need to work on the necessities faced by the regions and understand each region in the context of its own reality. That's why it is so important to work with regional secretaries and all regions together.

Yueh-Wen Lu invited questions and comments on the AIPRAL report, which followed.

Yueh-Wen Lu invited Lisa Vander Wal to deliver the CANAAC report (*document 08.3*). She offered the following comments in addition to the report: CANAAC is such a diverse region. It is difficult to come to a consensus about concerns as a region. There is not a great response back from CANAAC communications. This makes it difficult to do work as a region when communication pieces aren't worked out. A website is in process. CANAAC is also dealing with the challenges of how to best empower youth. There will be a CARICOM youth conference in Cuba in collaboration with AIPRAL. There will also be a CANAAC consultation with AIPRAL as a follow up to the Accra Confession regional consultations: "Gender reading signs of the times" is to be organized by the WCRC's justice and partnership office and is planned for the coming fall. More guidance is needed from the WCRC as to how to do the work of a regional council.

Yueh-Wen Lu invited questions and comments, which followed.

Yueh-Wen Lu invited Yong-Kyu Kang to deliver the NEAAC report (*document 08.4*).

Yong-Kyu Kang offered the following comments in addition to the

report: NEAAC has found the Accra Confession very relevant to issues such as territorial disputes, economic injustice and sexual violence, although it remains unknown in many congregations.

Yueh-Wen Lu opened the report to questions and comments, but first made the observation that the two members churches from Korea mentioned in the NEAAC report merged last year. The process will be complete hopefully by end of this year, and so more details about the point of contact for this newly merged church will be forthcoming. Discussion on the report followed.

It was noted that the SAARC report (*document 08.5*) came in late and will be circulated by email to executive committee members for later discussion (see Friday, 17 May session below).

Yueh-Wen Lu invited Jan-Gerd Heetderks to deliver the WCRC Europe report (*document 08.6*).

Jan-Gerd Heetderks offered the following comments in addition to the report: It is not so easy to be a communion in Europe because there are so many churches with so many languages. So WCRC Europe always asks the question: How can we be a communion? One of the ways WCRC Europe has done this is through a regional Accra Confession consultation, and there is now a book from Europe about Accra. WCRC Europe also wants to have a consultation on human trafficking and a bigger conference on asylum that thinks more theologically on asylum and refugees. This year WCRC Europe delegations visited churches in Ukraine and Spain.

There were no questions around the WCRC Europe report.

Allen Nafuki questioned why there is never any news about the Oceania region, or even contact from Asia. He suggested that perhaps Oceania and the South Pacific should be a separate region.

The president received Nafuki's comments as a proposal for investigation by the officers and general secretary.

The reports from ACRC, AIPRAL, CANAAC, NEAAC and WCRC Europe were received.

Action 6

The general secretary assumed chairing the meeting and presented the report from the Presbyterian Ministry at the United Nations (*document 09.3*).

The general secretary noted that Mark Koenig and Ryan Smith sent

regrets. He highlighted two aspects of the office/ministry: 1) the involvement of church members around the vocation to global discipleship and 2) the advocacy work done, which is based on PC(USA) policies. The WCRC has its own UN status. He added that now is the time to strengthen and maximize that relationship with the UN Office. He also observed the following: The UN Office has a privileged status on the Security Council Working Group. This group has been able to raise specifics around South Sudan, Sudan, Syria and the Democratic Republic of Congo, amongst other regional concerns, directly at the ambassadorial level. Another strong piece of involvement for the office has been in the Ecumenical Women Working Group and the UN Commission on the Status of Women. Dora Arce Valentín has participated in this, as has Joanna Hipp. Other issues in which the office has strong involvement have been around Israel-Palestine and peace and reconciliation for the Korean Peninsula. The office facilitates member churches trying to make impact at the UN. Ryan Smith has given advice to Dora Arce Valentín and pointed to ways to partner, network and impact the UN around human trafficking concerns. Another area of note has been its work on religious freedom and the relationship to global violence. The office has also worked on human rights issues in Colombia, Philippines and Nigeria. The general secretary thanked the UN Office for keeping the WCRC informed of global advocacy issues and for its work at the UN in New York, and also proposed a conversation with Gradye Parsons and the PC(USA) about the future nature of the working relationship between the WCRC and the UN Office.

The UN Ministry report was received.

Action 7

The general secretary noted the apology for absence sent by Cyril Richie and invited Douwe Visser to report briefly on the John Knox Centre. Visser reported that he is still working as a consultant with the John Knox Centre. There will be a series of consultations that will happen in October involving a comparison between Christianity and Islam, specifically in terms of religion and the state. Plans are to receive input from Christian and Muslim representatives. Another area of emerging work for the Centre has been with migrant churches in Geneva. Many of the pastors in these churches desire further education and training, and the Centre is developing a program to work on that. There is a changing relationship after the WCRC's move to Germany, but the relationship is still present and flourishing, and the John Knox Centre places great value on the relationship with the WCRC.

The general secretary presented the report of the Global Christian Forum prepared by Wes Granberg-Michaelson (*document 09.1*). He noted that the report highlighted deep cries for solidarity around discrimination, persecution and martyrdom by the global Christian

community. While the whole Christian family has felt a need to respond, there is also a need for joint strategies. A meeting thus will be held in Albania in 2015 followed by a global gathering in 2017. There has been a strong request for presence from the WCRC at this consultation. Jerry Pillay will represent the WCRC in his capacity as president. The Global Christian Forum has also asked for the WCRC to send in the names of additional churches that should be invited to participate. The Global Christian Forum has just one full time staff person and also requests the WCRC continue to contribute annually to support this wide platform for global Christianity.

The report of the Global Christian Forum was received.

Action 8

The session was adjourned with prayer by Carola Tron Urban.

Review of Strategic Plan

The president reconvened the executive committee for an overview of the strategic plan.

The general secretary noted that the strategic planning process occurred from 2010-2011. The process looked at core messages from the 2010 Uniting General Council combined with the new constitutional identity. The general secretary presented a slide summary of the strategic plan.

The general secretary noted that on the way to 2017, by way of observing its five key directions, the WCRC will use new methodologies, affirm the role of young people and place particular emphasis on local congregations. He stated that networking is vital for effective communication and leadership development is essential for building the capacity of member churches. With regard to regional empowerment and engagement, sharing resources and adequate funding, communication and partnership, he concluded that WCRC must understand we are better together.

In terms of programme priorities he explained that all priorities are aimed at building communion: the solid test is whether we are about communion in all we do.

The general secretary suggested that the executive committee break into small groups of 2-3 people and discuss the strategic plan overview as presented.

Small group discussions occurred, followed by a larger group discussion.

The president noted that in regional meetings members would address three questions:

- 1) What are some of the things you have done in your region in the past four years? And how have these related to the five key directions of the WCRC?
- 2) What are some of the main challenges and social issues you need to address in your region?
- 3) In relation to the WCRC strategic plan identify three priorities your region would like focus on; how can the global office assist you in this?

The president stated that the core groups would have similar questions:

- 1) What are some of the things core groups have done in the past years? And how is that related to our directives?
- 2) Given current world challenges, what should your core group give attention to?
- 3) What are the two to three priorities your core group would like to focus on as we work toward 2017 General Council?

Regional Groups and Core Groups

The executive committee broke into regional groups and core groups for the remainder of the day.

TUESDAY, 12 MAY

Regional Groups and Core Groups

Worship was led by Joanna Hipp.

The general secretary opened the session with greetings and an introduction of Allan Buckingham's family travelling with him: his daughter, and his mother-in-law.

The general secretary invited Yong-Kyu Kang to introduce a Korean missionary serving in Tripoli, Lebanon.

The general secretary also introduced Elsy Wakeel, World Student Christian Federation Middle East Secretary, who was joining the meeting as an ecumenical guest.

The executive committee spent the remainder of the day in regional groups and core groups.

In the evening Najla Kassab organized a space for fellowship in the Cedar Building of the Dhour Choueir Evangelical Conference Center.

WEDNESDAY, 13 MAY*Core Groups*

The general secretary welcomed the arrival of Gradye Parsons.

Worship was led by Veronica Njoki Muchiri.

The general secretary invited Elsy Waki to bring ecumenical greetings from the World Student Christian Federation. Waki is the Middle East secretary for the WSCF and is based in Beirut. In the region the WSCF is working with seven Arab countries and 20 student Christian movements. She reported on a new project currently being planned: a theological institute in the Middle East for students during this critical time, in conjunction with churches in the region. She also thanked Chris Ferguson for his assistance in the WSCF's current reorganizational efforts.

The general secretary introduced Karen Georgia Thompson, minister of ecumenical and interfaith relations for the United Church of Christ. The general secretary noted that Karen Georgia Thompson was not technically an ecumenical guest as the UCC is fully a member of WCRC, and she herself serves as treasurer on the regional council of CANAAC. However, he expressed thanks that she had made a special effort to be with the WCRC executive at this time.

Included in her remarks, Karen Georgia Thompson raised the following: "I would note that as we move toward commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation we sometimes get stuck around celebration and remembering, around investing in the history of what has brought together. But I would pose the question: How will we make history for tomorrow? What do we bring into our communions and regions so that 500 years, or five years, from now we will have something to talk about?"

The president thanked Karen Georgia Thompson for taking time to be with the executive committee, and also thanked her for her service to the regional council CANAAC.

These greetings were following by core group meetings.

Plenary Order of the Day

After core groups the plenary order of the day was convened under the heading: Middle East Crisis.

The president reconvened the committee and invited Najla Kassab to introduce guests present for the session with significant ties to the Middle East region. These included church leaders from WCRC member churches.

The general secretary introduced the panelists for the session:

Dr. Arsenian Ekmekji: dean of Arts and Sciences at Haigazian University and a professor of intercultural theology. She is also a member of the National Commission on Electoral Law Reform in Lebanon. Arda Arsenian Ekmekji delivered a written paper (*document 09.5*).

Dr. Basem Shabb: a heart surgeon and a member of the Lebanese parliament.

Andreas Zaki Stephanous: director general of CEOSS. He is also president of the Fellowship of Evangelical Churches in the Middle East.

After the presentations the president thanked the panelists and opened the session for questions and discussion, which followed.

The general secretary closed with prayer.

Committee Meetings

Committee meetings were held in the afternoon and followed by a group trip to Byblos.

THURSDAY, 14 MAY

Plenary, Reports and Decisions

Morning Worship was led by Allen Nafuki.

The president thanked Allen Nafuki for highlighting the challenges faced by the island of Vanuatu in the context of worship.

The general secretary welcomed Martin Junge, general secretary of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), and invited him to bring greetings to the committee. The general secretary noted that there has been a great mutual preoccupation with how to advance ecumenical dialogue and common engagements with mission to build and strengthen the regular fellowship between WCRC and LWF. He expressed great thanks that Martin Junge has made the effort to be here.

Martin Junge presented his remarks (*document 09.6*).

The president thanked him for his presence at the meeting, saying, “It speaks volumes. You made some important points. In terms of justice we need to work together. You’ve spoken strongly about communion, saying communion is a call of God. We have taken that seriously. As we move toward 2017 we hope we can take our current dialogue and ask how can we implement some of these things that will speak to the centuries that follow. We hope we can make 2017 a powerful year for Christian witness to the world. But you’ve also said it is about what happens after 2017. It is indeed about the continuity of being church together.”

Report of the finance committee

The president called on Johann Weusmann as general treasurer to present the report of the finance committee (*document 10.1*).

Johann Weusmann presented the report, noting that the finance committee has never had so many recommendations before. The financial statement of 2014 and budgetary plan for 2015 were distributed earlier to all executive committee members and received provisional approval from the officers and finance committee but still need final approval by the entire executive.

The 2014 financial statement was received.

Action 9

The 2015 financial plan was approved.

Action 10

Weusmann presented a number of recommendations coming from the finance office report.

The general secretary is the one responsible to ensure that expenses stay within the approved budget.

Action 11

Documentation of the Miscellaneous Switzerland line items will be presented by the finance office to the finance committee by the end of September 2015.

Action 12

Weusmann noted that in previous years the budget for the next year was done in May, but always had to be revised by the officers. The proposal is to henceforth adopt the budget in the second half of year. Discussion followed.

The first draft of the 2016 budget will be presented to the

finance committee at the end of September/beginning of October 2015. It will then be submitted for approval electronically by the officers and subsequently by the executive committee members no later than the beginning of November.

Action 13

Weusmann gave some explanation for the next recommendation: the WCRC receives funding from the Netherlands for the executive secretary for justice's office. However this funding may be ending in another year.

The general secretary noted that here are also CWM funds for the office and that staff are seeking funds for the continuance of the position and office. After some additional discussion the general secretary stated that when this arrangement was first started, it was anticipated that core budget funding eventually would be increased to help cover the costs of the office and that the time has come to make good on that.

The budget for 2016 will provide for the possibility of a substantially reduced subsidy for funding the work of the executive secretary for justice and partnership.

Action 14

Weusmann explained that the next recommendation is a follow up from a letter on this from the previous general secretary. Some pledges have come in for the 2017 General Council and work is being done to obtain more.

After some discussion the general secretary added that a percentage of the annual membership contributions are set aside for the coming general council. Thus, all member churches are contributing; this recommendation comes because more money is needed.

The general secretariat (including the finance office) will begin immediately to raise funds for the 2017 General Council and the general secretary will follow up with the request to member churches to make a special contribution equivalent to one year's membership dues.

Action 15

Weusmann explained that the finance committee met with the communications core group to discuss two issues that pertain to both. One of the recommendations was then presented and approved.

The amount of 5000 euro will be allocated from the general council fund to clean up and modernize the WCRC database.

Action 16

The finance committee also discussed a \$15,000 grant given by CANAAC to the North American trustees to fund their work. This money has apparently not been spent but confirmation is needed.

The reserve fund of the WCRC North American Trustees will be made available to the North American trustees once the finance office has confirmed that the fund is indeed the grant made by CANAAC in 2011 to underwrite fundraising expenses.

Action 17

Weusmann noted that the next set of recommendations have to do with the auditor's report. He also observed that if the WCRC was still in Switzerland, because of the exchange rates, the financial situation would be very bad, basically bankrupt.

He said that the reports from the EKD high audit office have given us some great insight into administration and finance and that has been useful. However, the executive needs to be aware that some organizations require different auditing standards.

The audit of the 2014 accounts was accepted.

Action 18

The finance coordinator along with the general secretary will take steps to implement the recommendations in section 1 of the audit report and report progress to the meeting of the finance committee in June.

Action 19

In response to section 2.5 of the audit report, the finance office along with the general secretary will review the current system of advances and give increased attention to the issuing of advances and the monitoring of expenses.

Action 20

After some discussion it was decided to drop recommendation 13, concerning "old age advances."

Credit cards will continue to be issued to the general secretary, the executive secretaries, as well as the finance and administrative staff, and credit cards will be issued to the president and the general council coordinator, all the while recognizing the risks cited by the audit report.

Action 21

In response to Section 3.6 of the audit report, the finance office

will compile a list of all relocation costs for review at the June meeting of the finance committee.

Action 22

The engagement of the EKD High Audit Office for the 2015 audit was approved.

Action 23

The next recommendation also comes in conjunction with the communications core group. Weusmann noted that there have been many efforts to do funds development with no success. Adding experts to such a committee could help with the differing regional norms.

A funds development committee will be set up consisting of four or five people, chosen by the officers, including at least one member from the finance committee and one from the communications core group. This committee will coordinate funds development for the WCRC as a whole, report to the executive committee and will have authority to create and implement a regionally based and appropriate funds development campaign. The 2016 budget shall include operational provision for the work of this committee.

Action 24

Weusmann said that the next recommendation emphasizes the importance of prioritizing engagement with churches through the general secretary and the president. Discussion between members of the finance committee and constitution and member committee ensued to clarify what the intent of this recommendation was.

The president and general secretary will focus their efforts to collect overdue membership fees on those member churches that have the largest underpayment.

Action 25

Weusmann said that the finance committee met with Dora Arce Valentin and Douwe Visser on the next recommendation. Both the president and general secretary noted that this is a management issue, while the core groups carry out planning and evaluative work.

The executive committee directs the general secretary to monitor that there are sufficient funds available for programme work.

Action 26

Weusmann explained that the next recommendation has to do with the pension fund. The WCRC has a pension fund for four people. Not all of

the four pensions are sufficient, so more money will be needed next year. A question was raised about whether the WCRC could join a larger, more stable pension fund. Weusmann explained that this could actually cost more money and that none of the German churches approached were willing to do so presently.

The contributions toward the pension fund will be reviewed at the September meeting of the finance committee and necessary adjustments made in the 2016 budget and subsequently.

Action 27

Weusmann said that the final recommendation from the finance committee aims to both show what the Partnership Fund is doing and attract more applications for this fund.

The office of the Partnership Fund will work in conjunction with the office of communications to set up a web page and use other media to communicate more widely the impact of the Funds and encourage applications.

Action 28

The report of the finance committee was received.

Action 29

The president expressed thanks to the finance committee, noting that the fact that we have finished finance within the hour speaks volumes. Enormous work has been done here. Thanks were also given to Johann Weusmann as general treasurer and to the whole team.

Report of the Partnership Fund committee

Kobus Gerber presented the report (*document 10.2*) noting that the committee tried to follow in their discussions a comprehensive approach and looked to deal with the most important issues. Gerber presented the first two recommendations (under report item numbers 2 and 3 respectively), neither of which elicited any discussion.

The executive committee shall wait for the ruling of the court [in Uganda] before any decision to write off the sum is taken.

Action 30

The considerations outlined in the text of report [regarding donors and donorship] will be converted into actions.

Action 31

Gerber said their third recommendation under point 5 (emergency fund) proposes that "Fund E" be turned into an "emergency fund."

Responding to a question he said that the application procedures and amounts will remain the same. After another question he gave several examples of what an emergency is: the earthquake in Nepal; no food, water, medicine; a flood; a huge fire. This is about things to keep people alive in the now, not about long-term solutions.

Fund E shall permanently be transformed into the “Emergency Fund” and be bestowed with all the corresponding characteristics of such an instrument. It shall be referred to as such from this date on.

Action 32

There was some discussion on how the application process for emergency funds starts within the office, especially if the general secretary is traveling. It was decided that the report should note, “A structure and system for the approval of disbursements is in place.”

Gerber noted that regarding the Partnership Fund’s work with Bread for the World (BftW), there is positive progression here. Some of the WCRC’s local churches have struggled with the requirements that BftW has. There are plans to go into discussion with BftW to build capacity and to train and to think of long-term investment.

Gerber also noted, “we really have a gift in Werner Jöcker. He is a blessing. We are now up to date and the system is flowing.”

Gerber moved to point 12 (renaming the Partnership Fund). There has been confusion about what the Partnership Fund does due to its name. The committee recommends changing it.

Effective immediately the Partnership Fund shall be considered and referred to as the “Reformed Partnership Fund” (RPF), and actions shall be put in motion to establish this modification within every aspect of the organization.

Action 33

The report of the Partnership Fund committee was received.

Action 34

The president expressed thanks to the committee, to Kobus Gerber and the team, and to Douwe Visser and Werner Jöcker.

Report of the constitution and membership committee

Peter Borgdorff presented the report (*document 10.3*). He reported that only one of four new member applications is being recommended for approval. Other applications (both new and prior ones) will need

additional follow up. After discussion the executive committee grouped the first three together, along with assigning those who would follow up with each church.

Follow up conversations with the following membership applicants will be pursued:

- **Reformed Evangelical Church of Australia – by Robyn Goodwin**
- **Congregational Church of Brazil – by Clayton Leal**
- **Igreja Reformada em Mocambique (Reformed Church of Mozambique) – by Kobus Gerber**

Action 35

Borgdorff reported that the next recommendation follows the same pattern. There was some discussion about this church's beliefs on baptism and re-baptism. It was noted that they are a breakaway from the Assemblies of God and there is no sign they are subscribers to the historic Reformed creeds.

A follow up conversation with the Reformed Church and Assemblies of Togo will be pursued by Lydia Adajawah.

Action 36

Borgdorff noted that the next recommendation is unusual because it is a single congregation. It does have letters of endorsement, but the primary thing is that they need the WCRC right now. They need recognition from someone outside Ukraine. Why not the Hungarian church? Because the committee couldn't answer that question, it was decided to table this application and seek answers.

There was some discussion about whether the WCRC constitution contains any statement about whether a single congregation is allowed as a member or whether all members need to be denominations. Borgdorff reported that the constitution does not make a provision for single congregations, but neither does it exclude them; adding that may need to be clarified.

A follow up conversation with the congregation in the Ukraine will be pursued by Jan-Gerd Heetderks.

Action 37

Borgdorff said that the Evangelical Church Association has some issues with women's ordination and women office bearers travelling by themselves to mostly mountain churches. They would be joining a communion that has a different set of values around those issues so it would be better to talk about it up front. The committee feels that the WCRC needs to say that this is a value that the WCRC holds.

The application of the Evangelical Church Association (India) for membership is accepted, subject (in the light of their answer to question 14 of the questionnaire) to further dialogue with the general secretary and clarification of, the meaning of their WCRC membership: i.e. are they willing to work towards the ordination of women and to support their appointment to decision-making bodies?

Action 38

Borgdorff noted that the next recommendation returns to the previous discussion point about theological tradition. There is no evidence these applicants have any history with Reformed confessions. It is not even clear what their rationale was nor were their letters of endorsement. Their reason was distance. The committee is not prepared to say more than that Kobus Gerber should have a discussion with them.

A follow up conversation with two Baptist applications in the Democratic Republic of Congo will be pursued by Kobus Gerber.

Action 39

Borgdorff stated that the next recommendation (number 8 in the report, below) addresses the constitution adopted by the general council in 2010, which is in need of some updating, almost all copy editing. He also noted there is a specific point in 8b on whether United and Uniting churches could be incorporated more prominently into the formal identity of the WCRC, including the name.

To update as needed, clarify and propose appropriate revisions to the constitution of WCRC paying particular attention to among others:

- a) the function of the officer's committee and the officer positions*
- b) the role of regional VPs in their relationship to regional councils*
- c) the function of the General Secretary in relation to other officers*
- d) the size of delegation to the General Council*

Discussion followed regarding some broader issues within the constitution over balance issues with delegates. It was decided to "park" the recommendation for the time being.

Borgdorff reported that the finance committee had asked them to provide advice on member church contributions from 2011 and before which haven't yet been received. This is noted in the committee's report, and no recommendation is being made to the executive committee at this point.

Borgdorff moved on to the next recommendation, noting that by his

counting 135 churches were in some stage of arrears. Some are behind only one year, but a number of them are for two or more years. The executive committee made a decision in a previous meeting that if a church is in arrears three years or more and not in contact with the general secretary it could be deemed to be inactive. However, there are concerns about the reliability of the WCRC database; for instance, some churches claim to have paid even if the WCRC records show them as not having paid. Being an inactive member disqualifies members from receiving travel subsidies or being appointed to committees. So it is a restricted membership. The suggestion is to not take any action this year and focus efforts on conversation and correct updates to our database record.

No church will be declared inactive at this point.

Action 40

The president asked if there was any discussion on the remaining points of the committee's report.

In regards to the streamlining of responses to member churches asking for a reduction in dues, the general secretary stated it was important to tighten up the system and to make clear this was a regular process and not a negotiation. There was some discussion on this point, with the general secretary concluding that this is simply for clarification, so churches know there is a committee and not just the general secretary involved in this process.

Regarding the other points, Borgdorff said that in an increasingly diverse polity environment the question of what is constitutional and what is encouraged is best represented by the term values. The WCRC can be proactive by beginning that discussion now when we have examples, but not specific cases. The issues likely to spark it are: same sex marriage and gay ordination and women's ordination.

Borgdorff continued by saying the WCRC counts the size of denominations by formal membership. There are increasingly numbers in the western north who are active in the church but not members. When we say the WCRC represents 80 million people we may want to do some research to see if that number is accurate. It is not all statistically provable, but it is a part of our impact.

Gradye Parsons added that last year PC(USA) asked the question: How many people did your church impact beyond its membership? It was found that on average congregations made a positive impact on 800 people above and beyond their members. He observed, the National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon currently hosting the executive committee obviously has an impact far beyond their membership

numbers. He raised the fact to argue that the WCRC ought to be looking more at the wide-ranging impact of our Reformed communion on the world.

The president noted that the executive committee would take up recommendation 8 again in the justice and partnership core group report (*document 10.5*).

The report of the constitution and membership committee was received.

Action 42

The president expressed thanks to Peter Borgdorff and the constitution and membership committee.

Report of the theology, mission and Communion core group

William Koopmans presented the report (*document 10.4*).

The president asked that the executive confine their discussion to recommendations as they appear in the body of the report.

Appoint a small group to develop a strategic plan for the ongoing publication of *Reformed World*, taking into consideration matters such as theological editing, budget, investment of staff time, target readership and distribution, and details of publication, in order to best meet the goals of the WCRC with the resources that are available.

Action 43

Request the TMC secretary to report next year on mission projects in which we are engaged in conjunction with the Partnership Fund.

Action 44

There was some discussion about how these recommendations are coming from the report. Koopmans explained that a number were carried over from 2014; the core group did not want those to be lost. There was also concern that with 2017 approaching the office could be overloaded with too much work, so some come as long range planning.

Encourage the TMC secretary to undertake the long-range goal of an exploration study of what is happening in new expressions of Christendom and report back with a view to possible engagements.

Action 45

Encourage the long-range goal to have the African region, in partnership with the European region, explore contacts with the African Instituted Churches.

Action 46

Support plans to add more theological documents to the WCRC website.

Action 47

Support continued involvement of the TMC secretary in program activities of John Knox Centre.

Action 48

The president asked if there was any discussion on the next recommendation. It was asked about the meaning of “to provide a theological framework.” Bas Plaisier said that next year the network of theologians will gather together. There were long discussions in the core group about the nature of the task of the network of theologians, and the core group saw that the network should be used in preparation for the general council.

At the invitation of the general secretary Lisa Vander Wal said that the general council planning committee is involving the office of theology and the network of theologians in the council planning for 2017. This is all in conjunction with the plan. It is also a reminder that there is more than just the planning committee working on the theological framework.

Koopmans added that this recommendation was intended as a momentum encouragement. It was not intended as the setting of a new direction.

Ask the office of theology, in conjunction with other staff, and involving the network of theologians, to provide a written plan for a theological framework for the 2017 general council.

Action 49

The president asked if there was any discussion on the next recommendation.

Johann Weusmann said he would have expected to hear the reasons why the GIT is proposing to meet in Wuppertal and would have expected to hear about the Barmen Declaration. Douwe Visser agreed that a section about the reasons for Wuppertal could be added.

Plan a GIT program in 2017 in Germany in conjunction with the general council, with a location in Wuppertal in addition to Leipzig.

Action 50

The president moved the discussion to the next recommendation.

Support the proposal to hold a second consultation on Mission in the Frontline, and that this be coordinated by the secretary of theology as it is intended to focus particularly on mission.

Action 51

The next recommendation had no discussion.

Concur with plans to explore with the John Knox Centre to have Kobus Gerber assist with a revision of the handbook by Lucas Visscher (*The Reformed Family, 1999*), over the next couple of years.

Action 52

Before the next recommendation was adopted a question was raised about how serious this dialogue will be, with Visser responding that the Anglicans are taking this dialogue very seriously.

Request that the officers will name a replacement for Carola Tron Urban to the Reformed – Anglican Dialogue (with attention to gender and region).

Action 53

A question was raised as to when more discussion and any decision on the Joint Declaration might happen. There was some discussion, including a request to ensure sufficient time is devoted to a theological discussion at next year's executive committee meeting. It was also noted that regionally several agreements and declarations have been made between WCRC members and other ecumenical organizations. The president also stated that the report of the officers will contain more information on this subject.

Thank the TMC Secretary, Douwe Visser, for his work on behalf of the WCRC in 2014.

Action 54

The president thanked the core group moderator and reporter and Visser.

The report of the TMC core group was received.

Action 55

The president noted that the stewards will be leaving the meeting soon. He expressed the executive committee's sincere thanks to them: "We

have been so privileged to have you with us here. We have had important conversations about life in Syria and Lebanon, and we thank you for being such wonderful servants of Christ. Take our greetings back to your churches.”

The president closed the session in prayer.

FRIDAY, 15 MAY

Opening

Before formally opening the session the president noted that it was Chris Ferguson’s birthday.

Lisa Vander Wal led morning worship.

The president thanked Vander Wal for worship. He then introduced Elmarie Parker, a PC(USA) mission co-worker, a guest at the meeting this morning.

Report of the justice and partnership core group

The report was presented by Yueh-Wen Lu (*document 10.5*).

The president asked if there was any discussion on the first recommendation.

Mary Fontaine thanked the justice core group for their support on the issue of indigenous communities. She added that activities to educate and raise awareness for indigenous communities is for the long term for support of the global indigenous community and expressed hopes that the office will publish articles, stories and video links to provide support for indigenous communities on a long-term basis.

Cheh Liang Mok added that in Malaysia the indigenous people also face religious injustice.

Ask the general council planning committee to provide a workshop on the justice issues related to global communities of indigenous people, and other activities to educate and raise awareness about indigenous communities.

Action 56

Yueh-Wen Lu continued to present the recommendations.

The staff should find ways to encourage use and increase awareness and availability of the “Broken for You” Lenten

resource in the summer 2015, in order to give churches adequate time to translate and plan for use during Lent of 2016.
Action 57

Send a letter to the general secretaries of WCC, LWF and CWM acknowledging the current status of NIFEA, recommitting to the integrity of the NIFEA process and affirming the need for a collaborative approach to the work of this economic justice initiative.
Action 58

Appoint Clifton Kirkpatrick and Jerry Pillay (or designees) to support the general secretary by serving as liaisons to the general secretaries of WCC, LWF, and CWM in an effort to foster the collaborative implementation of NIFEA.
Action 59

Around the next recommendation there was discussion regarding the intent of it, noting that that spouses of ministers should not be entitled to travel subsidies. It was also noted that this is a core value of the whole organization and therefore important that the planning committee address churches alongside and in coordination with the general secretary's office.

Advise the general council planning committee to encourage member churches to bring delegates who are reflective of the full expression of the communities to which they belong in order to have active participation, while also reaching the needed quotas.
Action 60

The remaining recommendations were passed with no discussion.

Affirm and implement the recommendation made by the justice core group in its report last year to: "ask the Constitutional Committee to work out – in relation to Article IX of the constitution – a practical model for the delegation of member churches to the GC which is a solution for the decision of the UGC 2010 to have a balanced assembly." (JCG, recommendation #5, p.178)
Action 61

Task the staff to identify seminaries and universities in the global south, contact admission departments, deepen relationships with universities and seminaries, and women's desk offices to promote scholarship availability for women in the global south attending institutions in their home countries or

regions.

Action 62

Ask the general council planning committee to add to the small group themes or workshop offerings: "How to Promote Women in Leadership."

Action 63

Create a working advisory group to strategize how to move forward on the issue of women's ordination toward 2017 General Council, and ask the executive secretary for justice and partnership to appoint its members: 1) to bring a final report with recommendations on how to fulfil the mandate of the UGC; 2) to produce materials to assist member churches to engage in dialogue with the executive committee; and 3) develop with the regional councils a mapping of member churches indicating where the issues related to women's ordination and gender justice require further attention.

Action 64

The president returned to the recommendation tabled from the constitution and membership committee. He asked Yueh-Wen whether the recommendation is in conflict with anything that has already been said. She replied no. With no further discussion, the recommendation was adopted.

The president will appoint a revision committee with the following mandate:

To update as needed, clarify and propose appropriate revisions to the constitution of the WCRC paying particular attention to among others:

- a) the function of the officer's committee and the officer positions**
- b) the role of regional VPs in their relationship to regional councils**
- c) the function of the General Secretary in relation to other officers**
- d) the size of delegation to the General Council**

Action 41

The report of the justice core group was received.

Action 65

The president thanked Yueh-Wen Lu, her co-moderator, Dora Arce Valentín and the whole team. He then asked for the presentation of the communications core group report.

Report of the communications core group

Allan Buckingham presented the report (*document 10.6*), saying that moderator Yvette Noble Bloomfield was unable to join this meeting. Her presence was missed and we appreciated that Cheryl Meban moderated our meetings.

He presented the report and said that the two recommendations co-sponsored with finance have already been approved.

The report of the communications core group was received.

Action 66

The president offered thanks to Cheryl Meban for moderating and Allan Buckingham for presenting, as well as to Phil Tanis and the core group.

Report of the Officers

The general secretary presented the report (*document 10.7*).

The president asked if there was any discussion on the recommendation for the 2016 executive committee meeting.

It was confirmed that the dates are firm. Questions were raised about the challenges of Internet access in Cuba. The general secretary responded that there is a changing scene around Internet access there, but that Internet access will be a priority in meeting planning and venue selection. It was noted that Bogotá, Colombia, will serve as a back-up if Havana does not work.

The 2016 executive committee meeting will be held in Havana, Cuba, May 7-14, arriving the 6th and departing on the 15th, with the understanding that costs must be within the same range as the budget for the 2015 meeting in Lebanon. The identified challenges around sufficient Internet access are to be addressed.

Action 67

The general secretary raised up certain parts of the next several items, all related to the 2017 General Council, but with no specific recommendations. They are being presented for information.

Gradye Parsons wondered whether the 2017 General Council would be discussed elsewhere in the meeting. After the president replied that this would be the final time for discussion on the council, Parsons said he had some points he'd like to raise with the planning committee. The

president asked Lisa Vander Wal (committee moderator) to coordinate a lunchtime meeting for anyone who would like to give input into the processes.

The report of the officers was received.

Action 68

The president thanked the officers and also expressed appreciation to Martin Junge, general secretary of the LWF. He said that Martin was here at the right time, it being especially good to have had conversations around items 7 and 8 in the officers' report. He said that the WCRC also looks forward to significant collaboration on NIFEA and to future conversations with the LWF on moving forward together.

Regional Responses to the Review of the Strategic Plan

On Monday, 11 May, the regional groups met to discuss and answer a series of breakout questions (see above) around the strategic plan posed by the president and general secretary. The president invited the results of those discussions.

Lydia Adajawah presented the ACRC response to the series of questions. She highlighted the need for the ACRC to engage in capacity building, including infrastructure and personnel. She underscored the need for permanent staff devoted to ACRC activities and a recent focus on human trafficking, xenophobic attacks and youth empowerment. She noted the expectation that the global office would help with capacity building, with workshops and with links to ecumenical and development partners.

Lisa Vander Wal presented the CANAAC response. She identified the challenge CANAAC faces in structural complications, noting the need for clarity of vision around structure. She invited help from the WCRC with regard to processes, specifically how delegations could work better. She also identified the need for CANAAC to hold more realistic mission priorities. Finally, she noted a lack of participation by member churches and its related effect on questions of leadership. She concluded that effective communication with member churches was a priority in which CANAAC needed help from the WCRC staff.

Jan-Gerd Heetderks presented the WCRC Europe response. He named questions of migration and related issues as a priority for WCRC Europe. He also noted that WCRC Europe had been thinking about how its member churches could support the global office.

Gabriela Lucía Mulder presented the AIPRAL response. Priorities she identified for AIPRAL were to hold an assembly with a particular focus

on eco-justice and water issues, as well as to get ready for the general council by empowering leaders to participate. She also noted that AIPRAL will continue working on indigenous issues with the WCRC justice and partnership office. Another priority for AIPRAL is to continue with the empowerment of women and youth.

Yael Hadiputeri presented the NEAAC response. She noted that NEAAC has set ecological change, interfaith dialogue with Islam, and human rights issues, particularly discrimination, as top work priorities.

The president thanked all the regions for their reports.

Statement on the Middle East

The president introduced the message on the Middle East that had emerged from the executive committee listening team (*document 10.8*). It was read by William Koopmans and comments were solicited. Suggestions and amendments were proffered by Gradye Parsons, Jan-Gerd Heetderks, Bas Plaisier, Dora Arce Valentín, Carola Tron Urban, Allan Buckingham and Najla Kassab. These were loosely grouped around questions of complicity in violence, efforts for peace, regional balance, religion as a political tool, Christian-Muslim relations, regional mission history, indigenous Christian emigration and the relationship between privilege and suffering. These contributions were incorporated into the final statement.

The Statement on the Middle East was adopted.

Action 69

The statement was translated into Arabic, placed on the website and presented at the afternoon press conference.

Plenary, Remaining Reports

Peter Bukowski re-convened the executive committee with song.

Najla Kassab introduced Hrayr Cholakian from Union of the Armenian Evangelical Churches in the Near East. She noted that even while the Union had several meetings at same time as the executive committee they dutifully made sure they would have several representatives in attendance.

The general secretary said as part of the family we feel well received and honored by your gift of service as you have hosted us here these past days.

The president said there is an outstanding report from the South Asia

Region (*document 08.5*). He suggested the report be received and then ask the general secretary to discuss the report's recommendations with the region to take it further.

The report of the South Asia Region was received.

Action 70

The general secretary introduced a need that became clear to him as the WCRC's deals with global advocacy on daily basis from the Hannover office. Sometimes there is a need for an immediate response, but there is not a single compendium of policy stances on social and related issues. Therefore Joanna Hipp was asked to collect and organize all WARC, REC and WCRC statements on social policy.

Joanna Hipp presented an overview of the project, which covers 1996-2015. This collection is being organized along country and thematic lines. It is meant to be used internally, but will be usable by outside researchers with ease. Most importantly it helps the Hannover office and serves as a quick reference for policy.

The general secretary offered great thanks to Joanna for her work on this project.

The president invited Carola Tron Urban to share some information on the theological seminary in Argentina.

Carola Tron Urban shared the situation of the seminary in Buenos Aires. It has been in Buenos Aires since the 1960s. After a long time of institutional and economic crisis nine churches gathered to deal with the crisis. There will be an extraordinary meeting on 23 May 2015 to discuss the question of the continuity of the seminary. It is very possible that the decision will be to close it. The member churches who own the seminary have hope, because it has been known for a while that this has not been going in the right direction. She is hopeful the churches will be able to have a new seminary that will strengthen the ecumenical relationship and fit within their own economic context.

The president gave his thanks. He then invited Najla Kassab to make a presentation on the conference venue at which the meeting has been held. Kassab did so, noting that it was started in 1876 by the Free Church of Scotland as a school for boys. She presented a brief history of the centre and said that today it is meant to serve the village and so is particularly open to cultural and health related activities. It is a place to share God's love. She hopes it will be source of living water for those who visit it. One project they are presently working on is the construction of a safe playground for the children of the village.

The president thanked her for that presentation, noting that the executive has been so deeply blessed in this environment.

The WCRC executive committee meeting was adjourned with prayer by Jerry Pillay.

Meeting of the Michigan Corporation

The executive committee of the WCRC Michigan Foundation constituted itself.

The minutes of the 2014 meeting of the executive committee of the WCRC Michigan Foundation held in Hannover, Germany, were approved.

Action 71

Agreed that the actions of the WCRC executive committee during its meeting in Dhour Choueir, Lebanon, 9-15 May 2015, be fully concurred with and entered into the permanent record of the WCRC Michigan Foundation as constituting decisions of 2015.

Action 72

The meeting of the executive committee of the WCRC Michigan Foundation was closed with prayer by Bas Plaisier.

Closing Worship

Closing worship was held outdoors on the grounds of Dhour Choueir Evangelical Conference Center. Chris Ferguson delivered the sermon.

ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT

Rev Dr Jerry Pillay

Introduction

1. Psalm 106 verses 1-3 reads thus: "O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever. Who can utter the mighty doings of the Lord, or declare all his praise? Happy are those who observe justice, who do righteousness at all times."
2. It is quite interesting that in the context of worship, thanks and praise to God that the Psalmist adds the focus of justice and righteousness. This is as if to say that those "worthy" to worship God are the ones whose lives and living express justice and righteousness. The prophet Isaiah also goes to great extent to relate this connection between worship and justice in a very special way as he links true worship in the contexts of the poor, oppressed and forgotten people.
3. This report majors on two essential sections, among other things, as it focuses on the theme of this executive committee meeting on "Justice, Peace and Reconciliation" and then on "Organizational Matters" that pertain to the WCRC. It shall make some significant points as it calls for a return to the 2011 Vision and Strategic directions of the WCRC. However, before we venture there let us assess the context in which we meet here in Lebanon.

The Context

4. As we gather here in Lebanon we are starkly reminded of the conflict in the Middle East. The situation here is complex, volatile and unsettling as one wanders through the corridors of understanding. What exactly are the relationships and source of conflict between the neighbouring countries? Will there ever be peace and reconciliation between Israel, Palestine, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and the others? The Israel-Hezbollah conflict is also about ISIS, oil, nukes and global terror. It is not my intention to venture into this discussion; there are other more competent people who will address us on this theme during our time in Lebanon. My point of focus is in relation to our theme for this Executive Committee meeting here in Lebanon: *Justice, Peace and Reconciliation*.
5. However, let me offer some brief information about the context in Lebanon in order to set the scene. With its high literacy rate and trading culture Lebanon has been an important commercial hub for the Middle East. It has also been the centre of Middle Eastern conflicts, despite its small size, because of its borders with Syria and Israel and its uniquely complex communal make-up. From 1975 until

the early 1990's Lebanon endured a civil war in which regional players—in particular Israel, Syria and the Palestine Liberation Organization—used the country as a battleground for their own conflicts.

6. Syrian troops moved in shortly after the war started. Israeli troops invaded in 1978 and again in 1982, before pulling back to a self-declared "security zone" in the south from which they withdrew in May 2000. Syria continued to exert considerable political clout in Lebanon even after the withdrawal of its troops in 2005 ended a 29-year military presence. It seems that the government remains fragile and increasingly at the mercy of the Syrian situation.
7. Muslim groups have demanded that representation should reflect their increased proportion in the population. This communal tension has been at the heart of most internal conflict in Lebanon, and neighbouring states have used it as a pretext to intervene. Lebanon has also seen several large influxes of Palestinian refugees. They and their descendants make up as much as a tenth of the country's population and, needless to say, their presence, status and actions have been major sources of discord.
8. The Middle East continues to remain fragile and volatile. Peace is only maintained by treaties and security agreements that are essentially not adhered to or valued with sincere commitment. This reality is not only to be found in the Middle East. The truth is that our world is plagued by injustices, cruelty, violation of human rights, hunger, poverty, political turmoil and oppression, economic discrepancies, unemployment, religious violence and intolerance, and the list goes on. The tragic fact is that we tend to do some of these in the name of God, but at the heart of it all is economic, political and selfish endeavor. The world is dominated by greed, power over the powerless, self-acquisitiveness which usually leads to injustice and oppression.
9. The world is in crisis as we consider the situations in the Middle East, Russia and the Ukraine, racial tensions in the USA, the impact of IS and the violence it has generated in Europe and other parts of the world, religious conflicts in Nigeria, Sudan, Kenya, Egypt and other parts of Africa with the rise of the Boko Haram. We witness the rise of ethnic, tribal and xenophobic intolerance and racial violence in many parts of the world. We are in crisis. However, crisis gives us opportunity to make changes, challenge injustices, work for peace, assert moral and human values and to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ afresh in a world of growing secularism, materialism, greed and violence. The crucial question for the WCRC is how we plan to engage these realities and challenges?

10. It is very appropriate that this executive committee meets under the theme: *Justice, Peace and Reconciliation*. In my opinion, the mandate of the 2010 General Council: *Covenanted to Communion and Committed to Justice* addresses some of these challenges we face today. The Accra Confession of 2004, in particular, places this squarely and consciously on the table. However, we seem to have side tracked from this direction, I will return to this later in the section on "Organizational Matters." For now, allow me to focus on our theme for this executive meeting.

Justice, Peace and Reconciliation

11. At the Global Consultation on the Accra Confession I was asked to speak on the "*WCRC and its justice perspective: Where we are, and where do we plan to go as we celebrate a decade of the Accra Confession?*" Since many members of the executive committee were not present at that meeting, I have decided to offer here some of the things I mentioned which captures where I see us on the aspect of justice.
12. I will not attempt to go into detail on my thoughts, so I will merely offer a summary in points and undertake a little elaboration where necessary. I will also reflect on the Accra Confession since its adoption ten years ago. What follows is an extract from that presentation.

a. Introduction

- i. The 2010 General Council met under the theme: "*called to communion, committed to justice.*" We have said quite emphatically that we cannot have communion without justice and justice without communion. They are two sides of a coin, two wings of a bird or two blades of a scissor—you need both to work effectively. However, the tendency has been to put more emphasis on communion and less on justice or vice-versa. There are those who are not comfortable talking about justice so they wish to focus more on communion, and then there are those who only really wish to speak about justice.
- ii. In the context of the WCRC, you have to have both. Our communion has great diversity. How do we experience *koinonia*? How do we engage true fellowship, justice, peace and integrity? We are surrounded by inequalities brought about by economics, socio-political standing, geographical setting, etc. The question is: How do we bring these inequalities to the table and how do we address them within

the communion because invariably they influence and affect relationships.

- iii. Hence if we are to work on being a *true* communion then we would have to focus on justice issues as we address injustices in the world and in relationships.
 - iv. I am finding that there is a tendency today to warm up to the idea of justice but that is largely attributed to the changing circumstances of people in their context.
- b. Where are we as the WCRC on Justice?
- i. In my opinion, the Accra Confession best expresses the WCRC view about justice but before we attempt to look at that, it may be necessary to mention something about the background which led to the formulation of the Confession.
 - ii. The Council at Debrecen called on the WARC Member Churches: *"To work towards the formulation of a confession of their beliefs about economic life which express justice in the whole household of God and reflect priority for the poor and support an ecologically sustainable future."*
 - iii. This resulted in the Accra Confession which was adopted at the 24th General Council of WARC in 2004. It was based on the *seeing, judging and acting* model accepted at Kitwe and the *recognition, education and confession* model spoken about at Debrecen.
 - iv. Whilst the Accra Confession tends to deliberate quite extensively on economic justice, it also recognizes that gender justice and eco-justice are necessary ingredients to a conversation on justice.
 - v. After the adoption of the Accra Confession in 2004, I must admit that we struggled to get off the ground in some quarters. It seems that our discussions got dominated by two words that were used; namely: "Empire" and "Confession." Some, particularly Europe and America, became quite uncomfortable with the use of the word "Empire." They felt targeted because of their economic status in the world. However, this was primarily a misunderstanding since "Empire" was not intended to have a geographical focus in as much as it was aimed at reflecting on the concept of power and wealth itself. For example, today we notice that there are new arising empires such as China.
 - vi. The word "confession" also created, and perhaps still does, confusion among member churches. This largely arises out of the different understandings and processes and

procedures within these churches in formulating and accepting confessions. In some churches “confessions” have to go through a process whereby a two-thirds majority is required to accept a confession, in others a general assembly may take such a decision. My general response to this conflictive conversation in my travel to member churches is to say to them that they should not get too caught up in the debate of “confession” or “declaration” or whatever else; instead they should focus on the content of the Accra Confession and what it has to say about justice and what that means for us in our own context or in the worldwide context. I have found that this approach has helped to make a difference.

- vii. The crucial change in the perception and acceptance of the Accra Confession really came in 2008 when we faced the world economic recession. Suddenly it all started to make sense and the Accra Confession was praised for its prophetic insight and wisdom. It would be true to say that ever since then the Accra Confession has been received with new appreciation and understanding, but this is not true for everyone.
- viii. So, let’s return to the question about where we are on justice as the WCRC by asking: “What have we done with the Accra Confession in the last decade?”
- ix. If the truth be told, the WCRC itself has not done much with it or, at least, it could have done much more than it has attempted to do in the last 10 years. I will mention some of the things the WCRC has succeeded in doing just now; allow me first to qualify my position briefly in the next point.
- x. I suspect that many of our member churches have not as yet distributed the Accra Confession to their own members. Ten years later it still remains on our shelves, so to speak, or in file 13. We have not adequately motivated and excited our congregations to engage with the Accra Confession contextually. The real challenge is to live out the Accra Confession wherever we are. I must acknowledge that there are some member churches that have done/are doing well with the latter through dialogue, Bible studies, inclusion in liturgy and other such activities, based on the Confession. However, we need to see much more than this!
- xi. All is not lost; one of the greatest joys is to see other ecumenical organizations use the Accra Confession in fabulous and different ways. For example, the WCC has written many books using this Confession, the Council for World Mission has formulated its theological statement using this as its basis, and Europe has conducted workshops and produced books and articles on the Confession. Indeed,

there are many commendable initiatives and explorations on the theme of justice emerging out of the Accra Confession. We simply applaud these contributions and are so pleased that others have taken this further than we have. We have always maintained that the Accra Confession is the WCRC "gift" to the (ecumenical) world, and we mean that. Hence we are greatly overjoyed to learn that it is being used and appreciated at such a wide level.

- xii. However, let me be quick to add that whilst we offer the Accra Confession as a "gift" to others, we must also reclaim the vision of the Accra Confession with its focus on justice for ourselves as an organization, and it is imperative that we appropriate the "gift" for ourselves. Justice is not just something we impart to others; we make it a part of our lifestyle, too!
- xiii. So what have we done in the past 10 years with the Accra Confession? Where are we in our justice focus? As far as economic justice is concerned, one of the major developments is the establishment of the New International Economic and Financial Architecture Plan. It is a collaboration of four organizations: WCC, CWM, LWF and the WCRC to suggest alternatives to the economic models we currently have. There is no sense in just criticizing current economic trends without also trying to provide alternatives. This group is busy attempting precisely the latter. We commend this initiative and hope that it would deliver new models that promote economic justice, for all.
- xiv. In the area of gender justice, we have conducted workshops and produced a lot of books and material to sensitize and educate both men and women on this subject. However, we need to continue to encourage and develop practical ideas of how we may work more effectively in the area of gender justice.
- xv. Of greater challenge is the fact that the 2010 Uniting General Council resolved that the next council would consist of 50% women and 50% men as delegates. This was, indeed, a bold decision which has made some people uncomfortable and unhappy. How are we going to effect such a decision if we do not actively dialogue and challenge the leadership of member churches who remain with male-dominated leadership? We need to embark on a strategy now if we are to succeed in implementing the 2010 decision.
- xvi. In the area of eco-justice we have also joined with an ecumenical initiative with the WCC, CWM and others on the Oikotree movement. We need to continue with this in a more defined and definite way.

xvii. Although our justice perspective speaks of an integrated approach of working with other organizations to address economic, gender and eco-justice; I'm not sure that we as the WCRC have adequately articulated or implemented this. Of course, financial resources have become a challenge over the last few years. This has prompted us to move from Geneva to Hannover in Germany. As an organization we have focused on financial survival and sustainability, and rightly so. However, new experiences and realities urge us to consider new ways of working and achieving our goals. In this light, I submit that we need a more definite and effective strategy for WCRC justice work. I sincerely hope that this consultation would be able to deliver such a strategy.

c. Where do we go?

- i. Let me conclude by offering what I would consider as some principles that we should adopt as the WCRC as we talk about where we need to go. It is not my intention to provide thoughts about programmes and activities but to mention at least three concepts that need to undergird our continued work in the area of justice. What are they?
- ii. Firstly, we need to have *critical solidarity*. In South Africa at the birth of our democracy, the SACC decided to adopt a position of critical solidarity, but it proved to be more in solidarity and less critical. We must guard against such trappings and dangers. By critical solidarity, I refer to our prophetic witness in the world. We need to look at what is happening in different places where our member churches are found, and beyond, and we need to get more connected with their situations of injustices, oppression and struggles. We seem to be less concerned with these at the moment. We need to get more involved with the realities of our people. WARC did this when it took decisions to call for sanctions and boycotts in the apartheid South Africa, and we all know the impact this had in the dismantling of apartheid. What is happening in Israel/Palestine, in the Ukraine, in Nigeria, Madagascar, etc.? How do we speak into these contexts bearing in mind what we learn from the example of our Lord, Jesus Christ?
- iii. Secondly, we need what I would call *constructive engagement*. Even within the WCRC family we have different theological and ethical views on different subjects. For example, the ordination of women and human sexuality. How do we journey with one another on

these often divisive issues? How do we create “safe spaces” for open and honest reflections and dialogue without injuring the unity and love we ought to have for one another as part of the same body? These are critical and necessary questions given the reality of our times and the struggle to be church together in the world. We need constructive engagement that speaks of hospitality, love and sustained unity.

- iv. Thirdly, we need *conscious transformation*. Simply meaning, we need to consider what actions can be taken to change unjust and oppressive situations. We cannot simply look at injustices and move on. Compassion compels us to stay, to pitch our tents and work for justice. We tend to turn a blind eye to many realities perhaps because it is easier to do than to get involved. The parable of the Good Samaritan tells us that a good neighbour is one who slows down and takes the time to make another’s problem, his problem. Why? In essence, this is what the Lord requires: “To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.” (Micah 6:8)
 - v. In concluding, let me say that what we need is *vision* and *visibility* as the WCRC at all levels from the congregations to the denominational structures of member churches, and right to the global structures of the WCRC. We need a strategy that puts justice at the heart of our communion as we seek to get our “hands dirty” as we work for justice, peace and unity in the church and most significantly in the world.
13. To summarise, the Accra Confession speaks about justice on three levels: economic justice, gender justice and eco-justice. This is quite comprehensive and absolutely essential as we address the challenges in the world today.
 14. Getting back to the Middle East situation we have to say that justice has to do with human rights. Quite clearly as we look at the situation between Israel and Palestine it has a lot to do with human rights. Christians are often divided about where they stand on this issue, some with Israel and others with Palestine. More frequently than not those who side with Palestine are doing so from the perspective of human rights and justice. And the majority of Christians that support Israel tend to justify this from some sense of biblical allegiance, often not asking deeper theological and biblical questions on the context.
 15. The Palestinians have made it quite clear that there can be no peace without justice, and quite rightly so. Palestinian Christians

have taken it further to say that justice and peace must be brought about by love and not necessarily through violence and hatred. Niam Ateek's book *Justice, and only Justice: A Palestinian Theology of Liberation* articulates this rather well (Ateek 1998).

16. The enmity and hatred are so powerful and debilitating that it affects the free travel of foreigners who wish to visit any of these countries or anyone who speaks out against Israel. Religious bodies and different faith communities have a responsibility of working for justice, peace and reconciliation; instead we get caught up with political and economic issues that often make us take sides based on this instead of justice and peace.
17. For example, in Judaism, Christianity and Islam the true object of faith is not the community of believers but the one, transcendent God who is the Creator and Lord of all. In the Jewish *Shema* ("Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one God" (Deut. 6:14)), in the first article of the Christian Creed ("We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth") and in the first phrase of the Muslim *Shahadah* ("There is no God but God") the one, unique God of all the universe is proclaimed as the only reality worthy of ultimate loyalty and devotion. Belief in the transcendent unity and uniqueness of God provides an internal critique of all tendencies to absolutize the faith community itself. In addition, the loyalty owed to God implies loyalty to and responsibility toward every human being.
18. Each of the three religions, therefore, contains normative principles that emphasize the religious and ethical relationship that binds all persons together in a universal, moral community. When this is realized, religious belief can become an ally of universal, moral community and human rights rather than a threat to them.
19. Only when Jews, Christians and Muslims have discovered in their own beliefs a better way to respect one another will the "fissiparous quality of religious life" be transformed (Smith 2007). The universalist aspect of each tradition is a key factor in this process. Taken alone, however, it is insufficient. In addition, each community must find a basis for respecting the distinctiveness of the other communities within the structure of its own belief. The task, then, is not the homogenization of the religious faiths but of their development in a *new direction*. For each faith, this development will entail a new respect for and understanding of the distinctive religious faith of the others. This is the only way in which we can find peace and reconciliation and respect and appreciation for a common humanity and human life.

20. Peace is not just the absence of war; it is more than that. It is about finding a new way of life that reflects the *Shalom* (wholeness) of God. It is about inviting the reign of God that brings in justice, peace and the reconciliation of human beings to be reconciled with God and with one another and with all creation, both human and non-human. It is embedded in the knowledge that you cannot have peace without justice and you cannot have true reconciliation without having peace and justice.
21. The ecumenical movement has helped show us how justice, peace and reconciliation (unity) all come together, and that it is difficult to have the one without the other. Ecumenism is concerned with the world. This has always been the case in history, whether in earlier centuries, or during the self-consciously ecumenical twentieth century. The Greek word *oikoumene* refers to the whole inhabited earth. From the perspective of the Christian faith, the ecumenical movement sees the world in a particular light—of what it is, could be, should be and will become.
22. In recent years, attempts have increasingly been made to use the metaphor of *oikos*, household, implied in the *oikoumene*, to develop this vision further. Ecumenical leaders and theologians are deliberately relating the *oikoumene* of the church to the *oikonomia* or fullness of the life of the Trinitarian God, to be reflected in the life of the church (Smith 2007). The *oikoumene* is furthermore related to the global political and economic realities, critically discussed from the perspective of the political economy of the Holy Spirit, as well to the inhabitable earth, and, in fact, the whole of creation and ecology. The *oikos* of church, political economy and earth all together form part of the one household of life in the economy of the living Triune God.
23. The ecumenical movement has generally focused on two essential themes that it has attempted to hold together in varying degrees over the years; that is, it has always understood that “efforts towards manifesting the unity of the church” and “efforts towards common witness and service in the world (justice)” should be held together. The WCRC has done no different in holding communion and justice together.
24. We have spoken above mainly about justice and peace. Let us now reflect on unity and reconciliation. The world is characterized by “an identity of fragmentation” or “not-having-an-identity” according to Gerben Heitink, the leading Dutch practical theologian. We do not live in a time of unity, whether in the world, in societies or in the lives of people—and it is therefore not a time for unity in the church or for the ecumenical movement either. The

earlier enthusiasm is gone. The vision is lost. Some talk about “paradigm shifts” and “challenges,” others talk about “crises,” “stagnation” and “standstill,” but they all refer to the same reality, the loss of the classical vision of visible ecumenical unity.

25. Over the last decade the world has become one—and this one world in which we live has become a new kind of world within many of us and of our contemporaries, and it has deeply affected our views of unity in church and society. This new kind of oneness is affected by the effects of globalization which has radically challenged and changed culture, economy and political power across the globe. In short, the one world is impacting on our smaller life-worlds, we become increasingly part of this one new world-community, and in the process other communities, other societies, other spheres of life—whether cultural, economic, or political—lose their orientating and life-giving influence in our lives. One of these effects is that many earlier spheres and circles of community in our lives increasingly lose their role in our lives—including church and society.
26. It may seem obvious that Reformed Christians should be deeply committed to the visible unity of the church. Historically, many Reformed people have taken the unity, the catholicity and the ecumenicity of the church extremely seriously. Systematically, that is easy to explain in terms of the deepest thrust of the Reformed faith itself, probably most aptly described in the well-known words “We do not belong to ourselves”—used by Calvin in his depiction of the Christian life.
27. Perhaps here we should refer to the Confession of Belhar (1986) which helps us to bring the understanding of unity and justice together in both church and society. It is a long quote but worth the full mention:

“We believe in one holy, universal Christian Church, the communion of saints called from the entire human family. We believe that Christ’s work of reconciliation is made manifest in the Church as the community of believers who have been reconciled with God and with one another; that unity is, therefore, both a gift and an obligation for the Church of Jesus Christ; that through the working of God’s Spirit it is binding force, yet simultaneously a reality which must be earnestly pursued and sought: one which the people of God must continually be built up to attain; that this unity must become visible so that the world may believe that separation, enmity and hatred between people and groups is sin which Christ has already conquered, and accordingly that anything which

threatens this unity may have no place in the Church and must be resisted;

“That this unity of the people of God must be manifested and be active in a variety of ways: in that we love one another; that we experience, practice and pursue community with one another; that we are obligated to give ourselves willingly and joyfully to be of benefit and blessing to one another; that we share one faith, have one calling, are of one soul and one mind; have one God and Father, are filled with one Spirit, are baptized with one baptism, eat of one bread and drink of one cup, confess one Name, are obedient to one Lord, work for one cause, and share one hope; together come to know the height and breadth and the depth of the love of Christ; together are built up to the stature of Christ, to the new humanity; together know and bear one another’s burdens, thereby fulfilling the law of Christ that we need one another and build one another, admonishing and comforting one another; that we suffer with one another for the sake of righteousness; pray together; together serve God in this world; and together fight against all which may threaten or hinder this unity;

“That this unity can be established only in freedom and not under constraint; that the variety of spiritual gifts, opportunities, backgrounds, convictions, as well as the various languages and cultures, are by virtue of the reconciliation in Christ, opportunities for mutual service and enrichment within the one visible people of God;

“That true faith in Jesus Christ is the only condition for membership of this Church.” (Belhar Confession 1986; for the text, see Cloete & Smith 1984)

28. It is thus clear that unity should be visible, yes, but in a variety of ways, and then a range of Biblical allusions invite those who confess to use their imagination to think creatively about different forms in which this living unity could become visible. This unity is not to be equated with uniformity.
29. The second set of convictions is found in the overall structure of the Confession, in the way this living unity, real reconciliation (article three) and caring justice (article four) belong integrally together. That there can be no real unity without real reconciliation and caring justice is confessed here. At least according to Belhar these belong together.
30. Indeed this understanding of justice, peace and reconciliation and unity have deep implications for the WCRC in a variety of ways in how we relate to one another as member churches, how we work towards a true communion as we seek justice, peace and

reconciliation and unity among ourselves. It also has implications about how we work for these in a world filled with injustices, no peace and no reconciliation. We shall return to this in the paragraph on "Theology, communion and mission."

Organizational Matters

Leadership and management

31. It was my privilege and joy to visit and address various general assemblies of member churches, offer presentations in different forums, deliver academic papers in university settings and journey with member churches in various ways. Chris and I have been particularly engaged in addressing conflict situations with our member churches in the Democratic Republic of the Congo that are leading to a potential split in the denomination. Our efforts there have been hugely successful in getting the warring parties together, but the process is now delayed and stalled by the lack of a desire to resolve the issues at hand. We pray that a vision for unity and reconciliation will be restored.
32. It is quite concerning that fragmentations and splits within member churches are becoming the order of the day. These are usually initiated by personality conflicts, differences in worship and theological issues, and these days mainly on the differences of understanding and acceptance on the matter of human sexuality. It is painfully sad to see that the issue of homosexuality, lesbianism, and same-sex marriage is continuing to divide the churches rather widely. In the last report I pointed to ways in which the WCRC can offer to play a role in assisting our churches with these challenges, and I am pleased to say that some churches affected by this have already taken us up on these challenges, and processes are already in progress to journey with our member churches in significant ways of facilitating dialogue and understanding. This is something we will continue to do with energy and commitment.
33. I have continued to facilitate the process of reunification with the Dutch Reformed family in South Africa. Significant meetings and breakthroughs were achieved with conversations with all four churches: URCSA, DRC, DRCSA and DRCA leading to the signing of a "Memorandum of Agreement" among these churches. The DRC and URCSA advanced their movement by adopting a special "Memorandum of Agreement" and a "Road Map towards Unity."
34. Unfortunately, I am sad to report that the second process to adopt the Belhar Confession as a confession within the DRC has already conclusively failed because the process requires that all synods and congregations have to approve this with a two third majority. We

have confirmation that least two synods have officially not approved this with the majority required or have overwhelming said “no” to Belhar in spite of the fact that the General Synod in 2013 with a 93% support voted to accept the Belhar Confession, and then send it to synods and congregations to vote. This is, of course, hugely disappointing for the leadership of both churches and has its own setbacks on the unity dialogues. We had a meeting in April where this was addressed, and we agreed that the leadership teams should continue with earnest to salvage the situation. A lot has to do with what transpires at the DRC General Synod in October 2015. Please continue to pray over this process and for wisdom and courage for the executive of the DRC and all concerned.

35. At the May 2014 executive meeting we rejoiced in the smooth transition and movement we had made from Geneva to Hannover. We acknowledged with thanks and appreciation the work of the Rev. Dr. Setri Nynomi over the past 14 years as he came to the end of his tenure with the WCRC. We welcomed with joy the appointment of the Rev. Chris Ferguson as the new general secretary of the WCRC with from effect 1 August 2014, which included the handing over period for a month.
36. The handing over period went well and culminated in a wonderful service at the end of August 2014. Chris fully took over the reins of leadership as general secretary since 1 September 2014. He has been in office now for almost ten months. I have been able to work with him consistently on a number of matters pertaining to the life and work of the WCRC. We have had regular Skype calls and at least four officers Skype conferences since September 2014 to now, and we also met physically in November 2014 at the global consultation on the Accra Confession in Hannover.
37. I must point out that just prior to the time of Setri’s departure, there were some challenges related to the reappointment of Viktória as the assistant to the executive secretaries for theology and justice. It was then decided to give her a temporary appointment until April 2015. Unfortunately this created tensions among the staff, and Chris as the new general secretary had to address this matter which started to escalate in proportion, warranting my intervention and involvement as president. I visited the office and addressed the issues with the general secretary, executive secretaries and support staff in separate and combined meetings. We agreed on a fair process that would determine whether Viktória would be appointed to a permanent position or not. As it would be, the process involving all the executive staff decided that she should not be appointed to the said position.

There were differences of opinion between executive staff on this decision that resulted in some additional tension. There is a process in place to appoint a new staff member to this position even as I write, and I am sure that Chris would report on this. Whilst this matter, in my opinion, is now concluded I thought I should mention it because some rumours and misinformation have been doing its rounds. My intention is to set the record straight on this matter.

38. In my 2014 report I pointed out that the WCRC must move from *Transition* to *Transformation*. In my view, we currently have a vision of transformation but the time has now come for implementation of this vision with all energy, desire and determination.
39. Admittedly, since 2011 to 2013 we were quite occupied with issues related to finance, relocation and the move to Hannover. Whilst we may have succeeded in holding the fort during those trying times, it can be said that our work of delivery on our vision, mission and strategic direction, agreed upon in 2011, took a little bit of a dive and distraction. My view is that this current executive committee must direct all its focus and energy on implementing this strategy as much as possible in the next two and a half years so that we have a very solid and formidable foundation to offer to the new executive committee that would be appointed by the 2017 General Council.
40. To refresh your memories of this strategic document, I requested the General Secretary to resend it to all members of the executive committee, but I will include here a few points for easy reference. In 2011, the executive agreed on the following "Vision, Mission and values Statement:"

Vision

To live out the Communion of Reformed Churches, participating in God's mission, that all may experience the fullness of life in Jesus Christ.

Mission

Drawing on the heritage of the Reformed confessions as a gift for the renewal of the whole church, the World Communion of Reformed Churches is committed to communion and justice and, in partnership with other ecumenical bodies and organizations, we participate in God's mission in the world as we proclaim the saving grace and love of our Triune God by mutually working

for: Christian unity and renewal in worship, theology and spirituality; justice; eradication of poverty; building right relations; integrity of creation; interfaith relations; reconciliation, healing, peace and the transformation of both churches and society.

Values

In a spirit of openness and transparency, and speaking the truth in love to ourselves and the world, we affirm the values described in Article IV of the WCRC Constitution:

- A. The World Communion of Reformed Churches strives to demonstrate and live the *oneness* in Christ we profess, to carry out its ministry in ways that *enable all member churches to share* their gifts, and to honour and be committed to God's saving purposes for the transformation of the world. The World Communion of Reformed Churches serves its members with love and care, encouraging their mutual support and nurture of one another.
 - B. The World Communion of Reformed Churches in its order and actions is called to respect, defend, and advance the *dignity of every person*. In Jesus Christ all human differences must lose their power to divide. No one shall be disadvantaged for, among other reasons, race, ethnicity, or gender, and no individual or church may claim or exercise dominance over another.
 - C. The World Communion of Reformed Churches embraces *God's covenant promises for the redemption, restoration and renewal of the whole creation* through Jesus Christ. In doing so, it affirms the biblical calling of the members to recognize the gift of baptism in one another, and the call to be unified in ministry, and together to bear witness to God's justice and peace and to the integrity of creation.
41. The Executive also approved the following key strategic directions for the WCRC:

1. Key directions

- 1.1. The WCRC aims, by the end of 2017, to be known as a Communion that unites Reformed churches in God's mission in the world. Our internal relationships will evidence the oneness for which Jesus prayed. The WCRC will have significantly contributed to the world church's awareness of and ability to

address theologically and practically, issues of justice, equality, reconciliation and peace-building. The WCRC will be the place to go for theological and practical resources on these issues. The WCRC will be an interwoven network committed to sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ with the world, and will be widely acknowledged as an effective convener of significant training and resourcing for leaders and future leaders so that they may contribute theologically and practically to the mission of the member churches. The core of the network will be sustainable with core functions funded with revenue from member churches. The WCRC, at every level, embarks on this journey using the following key directions (not in rank order):

1.1.1. *Mission*

The WCRC is called into God's holistic mission and commissioned to seek new ways of engaging in mission. As a communion, the WCRC strengthens doing mission in unity and stimulates reflections that make our churches' mission effective and relevant to the 21st century. The call to proclaim the saving grace and love of the triune God and to be God's agents of transformation in the world places mission at the heart of everything the WCRC and its member churches do.

1.1.2. *Communion*

The WCRC is deeply committed to the life of the whole Communion. As a Communion the WCRC is based on the understanding of *koinonia*. Jesus Christ has revealed that *koinonia* is the reality of the participation of his sisters and brothers in his body. This reality is clearly visible in our life when we share bread and wine at Christ's table, when in fact we share the body and blood of Christ, and when through this *koinonia* "all kinds of injustice, racism, separation and lack of freedom are radically challenged". Therefore the WCRC affirms that there can be no communion without justice and no justice without communion. Any separation between the call to communion and the commitment to justice would ignore the basis of *koinonia*. And so we affirm the gifts of unity in Christ through a full communion where all of our churches recognize each other's baptism, invite one another to the table, and affirm the integrity of one another's ministry.

1.1.3. *Justice*

The WCRC will actively engage in biblically and theologically grounded justice and be aware of its implications. This includes

building right relations among all people, justice in the economy and the earth, economic justice, eradication of poverty, gender justice, integrity of creation, reconciliation, interfaith engagement, healing, and working towards the transformation of both churches and society. The theological self-understanding of who we are as a Communion undergirds the commitment to being a prophetic voice for justice on the part of the WCRC and its member churches and regional councils.

1.1.4. *Theology*

The WCRC envisages bringing together seminaries, theologians, leaders and potential leaders from different contexts, to find, within and beyond the WCRC, fresh understandings of Reformed theology and new expressions of Reformed identity, doing what we can together, and drawing on the resources of theological centres and individuals. The WCRC intends to knead its values and beliefs into the dough of the church, doing contextual theology to reflect current realities.

1.1.5. *Ecumenical Engagement*

Called to be part of God's wider family working with others in response to the line in the high priestly prayer "... that they may be one", the WCRC is committed to working closely with other ecumenical bodies, as well as in commissions and dialogues with other world communions as expressions of this key direction. Our understanding of being in communion is both for the Reformed family and for the whole church. To be Reformed is to be ecumenical; therefore the WCRC will continue to be engaged actively in endeavours that foster Christian unity and ecumenical mission."

42. It is very clear from the above that we have committed ourselves to achieving certain objectives and goals by 2017. Thus, it is my desire and intention to bring us back to these objectives with more deliberate effort and focus. This should be the focus of this executive committee as well.
43. I have personally requested all the executive secretaries to evaluate their work in the last year against the WCRC strategic directions with the objective of showing how we are attempting to maintain the course and to be redirected, if needs be, to our agreed vision and strategy. In line with this, we will expect the conveners of the core groups to address this with great precision,

care and focus during our meeting in Lebanon. The officers will set the process for this discourse and meet with all the necessary persons and parties to ensure delivery of expectation. It is hoped that the executive committee will then receive very polished reports emerging from the core groups for dialogue and decision. It is imperative that we now do justice in implementing what we set out to do in 2011, even though some of the challenges we face continue to remain with us in whatever way. I am reminded of the words of the Apostle Paul in Philippians: *"Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own."* (3:12).

A few observations about our work in the past year

Finance

44. It is fairly apparent that we have good financial systems in place which allows for better management and auditing processes to be fulfilled and maintained. We express our sincere thanks and appreciation to Johan, Gerhard and Anna for their dedicated work and service in this area in bringing us now up to date, as they will report to the executive meeting. A special thanks to the finance committee for their sound judgment and contributions to the relevant processes and general oversight.
45. However, whilst we have the financial systems now in place it is becoming increasingly clear that we still continue with our challenges in receiving income for our work. Attracting funding for our core budget (administration and salaries) has always been a problem since donors are not particularly keen to fund this. It must be noted, however, that we are starting to encounter the same challenges with funding for our programmes which was not necessarily the case previously with most of our programmes. In some cases funding has stopped altogether or has been significantly reduced because our funding partners are also going through financial challenges themselves. We are particularly thankful to some of our ecumenical partners who continue to fund some of our programmes and even financially support some of our staff salaries. We hope and pray that they will continue to sustain such commitments as long as possible.
46. The particular challenge in raising income is also experienced in the percentage of member churches that fail to pay their membership fees, not paying what they are expected to pay by the use of the grid or have reduced or stopped their financial contributions to the WCRC over and above their membership fees. In my opinion, it is necessary for us to relook at the contribution

grid we have adopted to ascertain whether it is realistic or not in expectation of member churches. I must caution also that such a grid must not be exclusively based on monetary contributions but must take into cognizance other contextual, cultural and diverse factors as well. Most significantly though, we need to encourage a culture of covenant and commitment to the work, life and witness of the Communion which includes financial commitment as well. Even if all our members pay their membership fees, it would not be enough to finance our work but, at least, it will indicate accountability and commitment which is usually only visible closer to a general council.

47. The financial challenges would also require that we give greater effort and value to our fund raising initiatives and programmes. At this executive meeting proposals would be brought and discussed by the finance committee, in consultation with the communication core group, which also has a fund raising component to it, and eventually tabled at a plenary business session of the executive. I know that we have had some really painful and tearful discussions on this subject in the past but let us see how we can reasonably discern the way forward collectively and corporately on this matter, bearing in mind all the dynamics associated to this subject and the further truth that we cannot expect one model to fit every context or country. The fact of the matter, sisters and brothers, is that we have to put a fund raising strategy in place otherwise we will be found in dire financial situations, much sooner rather than later, even though we are currently financially stable and steady. Let us positively engage this at our meeting here in Lebanon.

Theology, Communion and Mission

48. Our work on theology, communion and mission has continued to be maintained in spite of challenges mentioned in other parts of this report. I am particularly grateful to Douwe for his work on the GIT, mission on the front line programmes addressing religious conflicts and violence and the dialogue with the Roman Catholics, Lutherans and Pentecostals. Some of these discussions have been more or less completed but I think it is necessary for the executive to engage with these more intently. We need to ensure that these reports are not stacked on the shelves or relegated to the archives; we need to find ways in which we can implement and give new life and meaning to these conversations, if possible and practical. I hope that the core group will engage this further in your meetings in Lebanon.
49. Given what I said earlier about communion under reconciliation and unity, I trust that the core group would also pick this up in your discussions. We have had significant consultations and

dialogues about communion and how we can build this within the WCRC and outside of the organization; I hope that these can feed your discussions and guide us in new ways about thinking and building the unity and cooperation within the WCRC and beyond. We have the task of building a true Communion committed to justice, peace and reconciliation. How do we do this? Let this become the focus of our conversation in Lebanon as we keep in tune with our strategic vision and plans.

Justice and Partnership

50. Our area of work on justice and partnership had its fair share of challenges with Dora having to work in Cuba for many months, and then moving to Geneva once the paperwork related to work permits, etc. were resolved and then focusing on the move to Hannover. The regional and global consultations on the Accra Confession last year, as part of our 10th anniversary of the Confession, helped shed new light and direction for our work in justice and partnership. My sincere hope is that the core group attending to this would bring some very engaging and fruitful suggestions as to how we can seriously direct our work and witness in this area. Given all the challenges we face in this world with regards to greed, injustices and oppressive economic and political systems, it is important that we as the WCRC are in the forefront, working with others, to address some of these challenges. How do we engage our member churches on justice issues and how do we walk alongside them as we respond to economic, gender and eco-justice?

Communication and Fund Raising

51. Phil has tried hard to work on communication matters and to update the website regularly, whilst applying his mind around the fund raising challenges. We need to engage the whole area of communication with in-depth vision and strategy. I have expressed from time to time that our move to Hannover would require more endeavor and effort in this area. We need to rise to this challenge in light of our vision and strategic direction. Here again, I am hoping that the core group would offer some significant contributions to raise this profile and witness of the WCRC.
52. I have offered the above comments in this section not to sound critical in any way, which is certainly not my intention. I am simply trying to offer some sense of direction in light of the intention to return more deliberately to our 2011 vision and strategy document. Our task as the executive is to implement the decisions of the WCRC. I, as president, am trying to remind us of this so that we would deliver appropriately and fulfill our responsibilities as members.

Summary of Vision

53. The world is in crisis. Crisis gives the WCRC the opportunity to restate and reclaim its focus on justice, peace and reconciliation.
54. The WCRC should return to its mandate given at the 2010 Uniting General Council in a more deliberate and intentional way as it focuses on *communion* and *justice*.
55. Our focus on the Accra Confession should help us to remain focused and faithful to our calling in addressing the injustices in the world today, and the desire for unity within the Communion and with others as we continue in the endeavor of Christian unity.
56. The WCRC needs to return to its 2011 "Vision, Mission, and Values Statement" and to the key directions it set for its work until 2017. As we prepare for 2017 we need to ensure that we are going to deliver on those set goals and objectives. We need to use this executive committee meeting to redirect us to that end.

Thanks and appreciation

57. I wish to express my thanks and appreciation to the staff for all their work and effort in keeping the WCRC alive and at work in many places around the world in the relationships we maintain, the programmes we run and the life we share together. I wish to express our thankfulness and appreciation to Chris Ferguson (general secretary); the executive secretaries: Douwe Visser, Dora Arce-Valentin, and Phil Tanis; all the financial and supporting staff and interns: Gerhard Plenter, Claudia Duval, Anna Krüger, Werner Joecker, Paul Oppenheim, Joanna Hipp and Fundiswa Kobo. May God continue to bless you with all strength, wisdom and good health.
58. I like to express my sincere thanks and gratefulness to the officers for their constant journey, wisdom, support and encouragement. It is very apparent that they take their role and responsibilities with WCRC very seriously. I appreciate the time and effort they make to connect via Skype and the fruitful and thoughtful contributions they make to our conversations. May God bless and keep each of you in joy, peace and good health.
59. We are truly blessed to have the kind of members we have who serve on the executive committee. I have had occasions to meet with some of you physically during the year and to talk with others electronically. I am often deeply amazed and moved by the interest and concern you have for the work of WCRC. You really want us to be out there making a difference in the world, and that is absolutely spot on! When things may appear to be quiet, you

express a desire to know what is going on, and I might add that is indeed your responsibility. It is important that you are always in the communication loop but, more significantly, it is vital that your role with the WCRC is not only at the executive meeting. We each need to be out there as the hands, feet, voices and representatives of the WCRC. Thank you for your dedication and service in the past year.

60. I wish to express our sincere thanks and appreciation to all our volunteers, people who work in the different regions, serve on various committees, attend and contribute to our programmes and conversations and bless us in a variety of ways.
61. I like to recognize with joyful thanksgiving the many organizations and churches that generously and graciously support our work and programmes with financial and other resources, not forgetting particularly the CWM for their contributions to our endowment fund, and other churches, like the united churches in Germany, who are not even members but still support our work, nevertheless.
62. Finally, I wish to thank my family for their patience, support and love. My wife, Sandra, and children have been a tower of strength and comfort. Equally, I like to acknowledge and thank your loved ones for their support to you and for the work of the WCRC.

Conclusion

63. We are at a crucial time in the life and work of the WCRC as we steadily move forward to the next general council in 2017. Our journey thus far has led us through some significant and historic milestones as we moved from Geneva to Germany, elected a new general secretary, appointed in some instances new staff and chartered our way forward through financial challenges. It is now important for us to remain on track and to finish our part of the race, as current leaders, with the motivation and goal to deliver the things we set out to do in 2011. May God continue to give us grace, wisdom, courage and joy to do what God calls us to do in this world as we work towards justice, peace and reconciliation. To God be the Glory!

REPORT OF THE GENERAL SECRETARY

Rev Chris Ferguson

God of Life, Lead us on your path of Justice, Peace and Reconciliation

*"...then...you shall be called the repairer of the breach,
the restorer of streets to dwell in." (Isaiah 58:6-12)*

1. I begin my first report as general secretary to the executive committee giving thanks to God for the gift of this Communion of churches and for the vision, leadership, faithfulness, dedication, passion and commitment of all those who have worked, prayed and gone the second mile to bring us to where we are today: Called to Communion and Committed to Justice. I specifically want to express deep appreciation for the ministry and service of Rev. Dr. Setri Nyomi. Thanks to his graciousness and diligence the handover and transition were smooth and efficient. And every day we continue to see the fruits of his 14 years of leadership. I also offer a special thanks to the president who has taken special pains to support and guide me, and to the staff that have supported me and born with me in what is always a challenging time as styles change and new leadership comes on board. I appreciate beyond words the many, many expressions of support and prayers for me and for Susan, my wife, as we have taken up this new responsibility.
2. As our theme highlights, we are called to be on God's "path of Justice, Peace and Reconciliation." And as the verse from Isaiah tells us we have a specific calling to walk that path as those who build up which is destroyed, to unite that which is divided, to repair the breach, so that the places where human beings are meant to dwell are fit to live in, once again.
3. I give this report in Lebanon. Our global context as a Communion is clear. This gripping call to restore streets to live in comes as we meet right beside the ongoing and utter devastation of war. The churches that are hosting us both serve and count as their own members those who have no longer any street to live in.
4. Over ten years ago the WARC in Accra began a confession crying out for lives in a scandalous world. Such is still the fundamental truth of our context, the first truth about where we are on our path: God's *oikoumene* is facing great and unprecedented threats to the lives of all peoples and creation itself. Recent evidence includes the hurricane in Vanuatu and earthquake in Nepal, terrorist massacres justified by religion in Kenya (echoed in other

parts of Africa and the Middle East), a complex and brutal war in Syria, the unresolved and perilous divisions on the Korean peninsula, xenophobia and conflict in South Africa, growing resistance and protest against racist police repression and brutality in the USA, threats against those who work for peace and defend the landless in Colombia, tragic conflict and division in South Sudan, spiralling human trafficking around the world and the unspeakable tragedy of migrants dying as they attempt to find asylum and streets to live in.

5. The examples are virtually unending and they touch all part of this world loved by God, and clearly our Communion is present and witnessing and often our own family also suffering in all these broken, devastated and destroyed places. And yet the prophet insists: "if you remove the yoke from among you, the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil, if you offer food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom like noonday, the Lord will guide you continually..."
6. I give thanks that God's guidance has lead us firmly towards the greater unity of this family of Reformed, Presbyterian, Congregationalist, United and Uniting, Waldensian and other first Reformation churches. We know by God's grace that this path of justice, peace and reconciliation requires us to repair what is broken and divided between and amongst us and ever deepen our unity. We have learned that communion building is inseparable from justice, peace and reconciliation.
7. From the 2010 Uniting General Council (UGC) the WCRC has been working through the challenges of building and building up our Communion and meeting all the challenges that has brought in facing tough financial and sustainability issues, leading to a move of offices, while articulating and implementing a strategic plan and struggling with the task of electing a new general secretary. Taken all together the last number of years has required considerable dedication to institutional and organizational dimensions of our communion, and while programmes have been well done and important work has continued, in truth full attention to both the significant challenges of this broken world and building up our Communion have suffered.
8. Two years from our next general council we are not as far along the path set out in the bold vision from the UGC as we had hoped and prayed. Our executive committee theme has us pray again to God to take up within even more clarity of purpose the central mission that God has given our Communion. With the move behind

us and a new general secretary in place we have opportunity to re-center the work of this executive, the staff, the regions and all the Communion on God's fierce call to unite that which is divided, to repair the breach and in all things "live out the Communion of Reformed Churches, participating in God's mission, that all may experience the fullness of life in Jesus Christ."

9. I make my first report to you, then, guided by the stark reality of the world in which we live, the vision set out by the UGC and expressed in the 2011 Strategic Plan, nurtured and inspired by the call to communion and commitment to justice as embodied in the Accra Confession. My report attempts to reflect on the mission statement as articulated in the strategic plan and uses the following statement of key directions as a framework:

(6.1) The WCRC aims, by the end of 2017, to be known as a communion that united reformed churches in God's mission in the world. Our internal relationships will evidence the oneness for which Jesus prayed. The WCRC will have significantly contributed to the world church's awareness of and ability to address theologically and practically, issues of justice, equality, reconciliation and peace building. The WCRC will be the place to go to for theological and practical resources on these issues. The WCRC will be an interwoven network committed to sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ with the world, and will be widely acknowledged as an effective convener of significant training and resourcing for leaders and future leaders so that they may contribute theologically and practically to the mission of the member churches. The core of the network will be sustainable with core functions funded with revenue from member churches. The WCRC, at every level, embarks on this journey using the following key directions: Mission, Communion, Justice, Theology and Ecumenical engagement.

10. The strategic plan also stresses new ways of working. The emphasis is on closeness with regional bodies, national churches and relating to local congregations. Regional empowerment and networking are foregrounded. Developing the capacity of member churches to undertake life-giving projects with reference to the Partnership Fund and others is in the plan. Young people are lifted up as key to this new way of working. Great emphasis on work with ecumenical partners is highlighted. Strengthening partnerships both as method and goal is underlined. Specific focus is given in the plan to working with EDAN to ensure that the WCRC takes into account persons of disability and disability issue.

11. My report is not an evaluation or assessment of where we are with our vision and goals as such. I am, of course, coming into the middle of the story and only with nine months direct experience. Together with the president I have, however, seen my role as bringing the plan back into play as a tool for the executive, staff and regions to re-center, re-focus and re-invigorate the life, witness and programmes of the Communion after several years of having to focus on internal issues and transitions. As we hear the reports about the programme priorities and our other work we do so not only out of appreciation for hard work well done but with the critical eye to see how we can now move further and closer to the bold vision in both communion and justice that God has set.

12. My initial overall assessment as the incoming general secretary led me to focus on some specific areas that I judged to be imperative given our recent history. Due to the combined realities of a financial crisis, the move from Geneva (and specifically the Ecumenical Centre) to Hannover (out of the ecumenical mainstream and symbolically farther from the Global South) and the prolonged process in electing a general secretary there was a general perception, both within our membership and the wider ecumenical family, of a weakened, disheartened WCRC withdrawing from ecumenical relations, distant from its members outside of Europe and simply concentrating on survival. I felt it was extremely important to immediately address this perception by adding my personal presence and energy to vigorous programme of visits, participation, solidarity and accompaniment to member churches, regions, ecumenical partners and processes. I will detail these further on in my report. It was imperative to connect with our membership after the move and evidence in real terms to both members and ecumenical partners that we are very much active and present both in our ecumenical contributions and in our Communion strengthening and building. We are not focusing on transition and survival but on communion, justice and transformation. The tenth year commemoration of the Accra Confession with its regional events provided an excellent opportunity to disabuse all of any false idea that the move to Hannover had somehow sidelined us or signalled less interest in the whole Communion.

13. An additional discovery that required much additional attention was that the office in Hannover was and still is very much in a period of transition in terms of many basic administrative and organizational systems and procedures. The database was woefully out of date and simply not fulfilling our needs. The filing system had never been effectively re-established after the move. The tracking and monitoring of reporting and relations with donors and

partners continues to need attention and restructuring. The finance office had to spend much of the first half of 2014 correcting errors in the accounting for 2013 due to inherited problems. The result was by the fall of 2014 no significant bookkeeping entries had been made, and we were unable to track our income or expenditures effectively throughout 2014. This also caused a serious delay in sending our membership fee reminders. In addition the very serious flaws and inaccuracies in the database meant that extra efforts were needed to assure that all members were informed of their fee obligations. Steps have been taken to bring the systems up to speed. It is still a work in progress. More details specifically about finance will follow below.

14. Similarly, when I began in September I was met with deep and unresolved issues within the staff team. Some of the stresses and tensions of the move and budget pressure were dealt with directly. Werner Joecker was asked to move from a half time programme assistant to a full time position, and he assumed responsibility for the Partnership Fund and also special assignments such as the database problems. This has proved to be a constructive step and we are thankful to Werner for his dedication and expertise. Initially Viktoria Koczian's contract ended after her six month probation period. She was given a three month transitional contract. After much consultation and deliberation a new six month temporary position was created as programme assistant, split between the two offices. When that contract ended—and following a full and exhaustive review of staff needs and evaluation—Viktoria was not offered a new contract. A job search has been conducted and a new programme assistant for the two offices will begin work June 1. The staff have worked hard and faithfully, but there have been very many tensions and issues that have troubled the team. There have been ongoing attempts to work things through, and the president has helpfully been involved at several stages while the officers in their role as the personnel committee have been informed.

Justice and Partnership

15. **Tenth anniversary of the Accra Confession.** The executive secretary facilitated a series of consultations in regional councils that culminated with a global gathering. These consultations served to celebrate the Accra Confession but more importantly to evaluate its impact and to reflect critically on and make recommendations about how to faithfully live out in each changed context. After the CANAAC/CANACOM meeting in March, AIPRAL met in Barranquilla, Colombia, in June. In September the NEAAC consultation gathered in Taipei hosted by the Presbyterian Church

in Taiwan. The ACRC, in partnership with the justice and partnership office, held its consultation in Nairobi, Kenya. WCRC Europe contributed to the global efforts by organizing a meeting on asylum and migration in October. In November, together with ecumenical partners, representatives of the regions met to articulate a global perspective on the Accra Confession today and to prepare recommendations for the Communion. The global gathering challenged us as WCRC "to recognize that the world and economic powers look different today than they did at the 2004 drafting of the Accra Confession. Neo-liberal economics, race and patriarchy are entangled. Economic inequality has increased exponentially and the obstinate persistence of racism and racial tensions escalate. Group identities that are most influenced by the effects and realities of empire include but are not limited to discrimination based on caste, indigeneity, gender, sexuality, and disabilities." The recommendation to us is "to address the effects of an unjust neo-liberal economic system in a more integrated manner that analyzes and responds to these unjust social, political and economic realities. These interconnections include: growing inequalities that link to human trafficking, displacement and migration; environmental racism, the dangers of nuclear power plants and their vulnerability in the midst of extreme climate change; and political crises which lead to religious and political fundamentalism. We also cannot ignore the deepening of the Palestine-Israel conflict as well as other conflicts around the world. In the spirit of our theme the consultations have called us as a Communion to re-invigorate our engagement with the Accra Confession and to take up the vocation of being repairers of the breach and restores of streets to live in." Specifically the November consultation recommended these action areas as part of the "urgent prophetic response" to the signs of the times: critical reading of scripture and creative resources for congregations to witness to the God of Life, caste, climate change, gender and sexuality, human trafficking, immigration and migration, the New International Financial and Economic Architecture and racism, among others.

16. The final documents from all of these consultations are attached to the report of the justice and partnership office. The consultations not only contributed to further promotion of the Accra Confession but also to renewing and energizing connections with some regions and the WCRC. This was a constructive example of regional empowerment as per the strategic plan.
17. The justice and partnership desk continues to develop news ways to inform about and promote not only the Accra Confession as such but the confession as part of a deeper and broader witness for the

imperative of economic and ecological justice as a faith imperative. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and our website are becoming more and more useful tools to promote our work and to connect with member churches, regions, partners, NGOs and others.

18. **Oikotree.** We continue our active commitment with the Oikotree movement including sharing leadership in the facilitating group and in the recent workshop on transformative theological education.
19. **Human trafficking.** This has been an important expanding priority for WCRC justice and partnership work. Our programme creates awareness among member churches and ecumenical partners while making the link between human trafficking and global economic injustice. We have created and supported networks of churches committed to working on the issue of human trafficking while working more closely with our UN office in New York in the advocacy dimension of the work. The “Broken for You” Campaign was launched for Lent 2015 to put resources directly in the hands of congregations. There was significant activity on Facebook in response to the material and indications that it has been used and appreciated in Europe, Latin America, the USA and Asia. The evaluation process is ongoing. A special thanks to Joanna Hipp, Ryan Smith and Sergio Garcia for their contributions to the work. Along with the active involvement of the working group in writing the material we would like to note the link between advocacy and action and theological reflection which has been a feature of this activity and which we hope to expand with deeper involvement of young theologians and GIT participants in the future.
20. **New Economic and Financial Architecture (NIFEA).** The justice and partnership secretary, together with staff persons from WCC, CWM and LWF, have been providing support material and to advance the implementation of the NIFEA initiative. The 2014 executive had stressed the urgency of implementing this programme. The WCRC has been committed to moving forward with a joint ecumenical initiative based on the earlier cooperation with the São Paulo declaration. Unfortunately the four general secretaries have not reached a workable consensus on the joint or common nature of this urgent advocacy initiative and the priorities. This has been a great disappointment for all. I continue to look for ways to ensure that we can proceed ecumenically. If this is not resolved soon we will have to rethink our approach. The specific initiative about a global ecumenical school for economics is also on hold.
21. **Gender justice: Scholarship for women.** There is one ongoing scholarship from previous years. We received nine new

applications. Only one woman from Burkina Faso qualified, and there is one potential candidate from Venezuela. Obviously there is much more to be done to support our churches in identifying women for theological education and ordination. From our global office, we are making the scholarship more visible through social media: using the website, Facebook and the *Reformed Communiqué* with stories told about the impact of this program for women currently in ministry and their churches. **Gender violence.** As part of our partnership with our UN office, we continue to promote the Orange Day, SayNO-Unite and HEforSHE campaigns, all of them designed to create awareness about violence against women and children and to work to end it. We continue our engagement with the We Will Speak Out Coalition (WWSO). Our intern Joanna Hipp has participated in events and movements raising awareness, advocating and producing material to increase our Communion's involvement in these campaigns. The WCRC's presence in these advocacy spaces has been noted and appreciated. **UN Commission on the Status of Women.** Joanna Hipp represented the WCRC in the 59th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), which focused on the 20th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Her active involvement in a wide variety of activities and events as well her regular posts and communications contributed to the ecumenical impact at CSW and to raising the WCRC's profile in UN advocacy. **Sylvia Michel Prize.** Yvette Rabemila and Brigitte Rabarijaona, both ordained ministers in the Church of Jesus Christ in Madagascar, were awarded the 2014 Sylvia Michel Prize at a worship service in Heiden, Switzerland, on Sunday, 8 March 2015. Our executive for communications was present during the ceremony and the previous meeting with PaNKS (Swiss women presidents of the Reformed Churches in Switzerland) in which we reaffirmed our commitment to continue our partnership with them and with the prize.

22. **Critical analysis of the perspective of Uniting General Council recommendations and the strategic plan.** At the request of the president and the general secretary the executive secretary for justice included in her annual report critical reflections on the work of her office in light of the Strategic Plan. Linking justice and communion. This has been a fundamental approach to the programme work as has grounding the work theologically and biblically. Close work with regions and networking. This is a basic work method for the office, and in some cases regional councils are proactive, others are struggling to rebuild networks and empower themselves as regions. Building active networks has been a challenge. There are two networks but lack of involvement of the members and lack of budget for

activities have been obstacles. The office has tried to develop a strategy of using working groups and so far with one exception it has not been as successful as wanted and needed. Advocacy. This is crucial but we are doing less than we should be doing. It is recommended that we reflect on the role of the UN office in New York and seek ways to make our member churches' advocacy needs more visible through them. Our work with them on CWS and human trafficking has been important but more could be done. Partnerships ecumenically and with others. We have a long way to go in terms of working in partnership methodologically and engaging in work with other partners. So far, our presence as part of the facilitating group of Oikotree gives us a space, as well as our participation in the WWSO coalition. We are trying to engage other partners like the World Student Christian Federation in our focus on youth empowerment as a way to develop other levels of partnership.

Links with the other key directions in the Strategic plan:

Areas that require more development:

Mission

- Interfaith dialogues
- Immigrant churches, by and among indigenous people. In the case of immigrant churches, the only thing we are doing is through the presence of the Hispanic Caucus of the PCUSA and their active role as part of AIPRAL and CANAAC. They were present in both of the consultation celebrating the anniversary of the Accra Confession and are very present in our social media.

Covenanting for Justice, Living out the Accra Confession

- We need to improve the way we work with our Theology and Mission desk.
- We recognize that almost nothing has been done programmatically about climate justice but having it as a transversal issue on all of what we do from our justice desk, like NIFEA, Accra consultations and human trafficking approaches.

Gender Justice

- On gender leadership and power, we still have so much to do. The consultations celebrating the 10th anniversary of the Accra Confession showed us how much is needed to work more intentionally on these issues. Even the participation of women in these consultations was a challenge for some regional bodies.
- The issue of the ordination of women, according to the strategic plan, is to engage not only the secretariat and the core group members but the entire executive

committee. Team visits were suggested by the strategic plan involving all of the secretariat. So far, we have done nothing in that sense. A more intentional strategy needs to be settled if we want to move forward with the challenges we have as a Communion on this matter

Justice, peace and reconciliation

- We have done nothing about indigenous people. We will have to encourage regional councils and member churches working with indigenous communities to generate initiatives and work in partnership with the justice desk to address this.
- In partnership with the office of the general secretary and the communication desk we are trying to accompany the member churches in their struggles for justice. The need of better networks and the link with the regions is crucial to us in our commitment to be in solidarity with them.

Theology, Mission and Communion

23. The highlight in 2014 for the office of Theology, Mission and Communion (TMC) was the **Global Institute of Theology (GIT)** in San José, Costa Rica, 5-28 July. Thirty students from all over the world attended this GIT. We had a team of lecturers from various countries but half of them from Costa Rica. The theme of the core course was "Transforming Mission, Community and Church." This theme was developed in three sub-courses: Mission as Evangelism and Service, Places of Epiphany and Reformed presence in the world and The Reformed Church challenging the ecumenical world. In addition to his overall leadership the TMC executive secretary taught the last sub-course. An important feature of the GIT was the exposure programme to church, society and nature. And as always with the GIT most important was the building up of a community of students and lecturers and the interaction that goes with this. The global division in wealth, for example, is visible within the small GIT community. This brings forth lively discussions but also mental and spiritual challenges. This was evidenced also in the vibrant and participative daily worship. The 2014 GIT was hosted by the *Universidad Bíblica Latinoamericana*. An excellent job was done by their staff, especially our contact person Karla Koll. Obtaining visas for all the participants was a real challenge and it was uncertain up to the very last minute as to whether or not we could hold the event. Costa Rica has a policy of restricted entry, and being a small country the number of consulates and embassies is limited. With the delay in visa approvals and extra travel to obtain the visas the costs were greater than expected, and the event was US\$30,000

over budget. Sadly, in the end eight students were denied visas. Almost all students submitted essays and a number of the best essays will be published in *Reformed World*, 2014/2. The overall goal of the GIT is the training of future leadership within the Reformed community from an ecumenical perspective. That goal has been reached this time again, and in general the evaluation of the GIT by the students was positive. It is planned to have the next GIT to coincide with the WCRC's 2017 general council. Preparations for the GIT are starting now, including the fundraising for this event.

24. The TMC office has led three events related to Ecumenical Dialogues. First there was a preparatory meeting in London about the **Anglican-Reformed Dialogue**. This dialogue will take place 24 October to 1 November 2015 in India. Those who attended the preparatory meeting were the two co-chairs and the two co-secretaries: Elizabeth Welch (United Reformed Church UK, Reformed co-chair), Bishop David Chillingworth (Scottish Episcopal Church, Anglican co-chair), Alyson Barnett-Cowan (Anglican co-secretary), Douwe Visser (Reformed co-secretary). John Gibaut will be replacing Alyson Barnett-Cowan on the Anglican side. The overall theme of the dialogues is "Communion."
25. The office also facilitated the first meeting in the **Pentecostal-Reformed** round of dialogues. This meeting took place in Berekfürdő in Hungary, 16-21 November. In total there were 13 delegates, seven Reformed and six Pentecostal. Also present were our intern Fundiswa Kobo and the then assistant in the office of TCM, Viktoria Koczian. The overall theme of this round of dialogue is "Mission." This first meeting focused on "Ministering to the needs of the world, Mission as evangelization and diaconate." Two main papers about this topic were presented, from both the Pentecostal and Reformed sides. These papers led to lively discussions. On the last day, however, it was difficult to come to agreement about the topic for the second meeting, scheduled 3-10 December 2015. We left the meeting undecided about this. The delegations also met members of both the Reformed Church in Hungary and the Pentecostal Church in Hungary.
26. The third event in the programme of dialogues was the fifth meeting in **the Catholic-Reformed** round of dialogues, meeting this year in Ghent, Belgium. There were 15 delegates, nine from the Reformed side and six from the Catholic side. This meeting was the final meeting of the two delegations in plenary, and most of the time was dedicated to producing a draft of the final report, to be finalised this autumn. The theme is: "Justification and Sacramentality, the Christian Community as an agent for Justice."

This meeting also discussed the possibility of the WCRC affiliating with the "Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification." The Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity would very much welcome this. The 2010 Uniting General Council gave mandate to consult the member churches about this. I have already urged the TMC executive to undertake this consultation immediately.

27. Regarding **Reformed World**, the first issue of 2014 was a special issue dedicated to Setri Nyomi. This issue was presented during a festive meeting of the executive committee in Hannover. Setri greatly appreciated this tribute. Issues number two and three of 2014 have been fully prepared with articles received and edited. The first one of these two is dedicated to the GIT 2014 with essays from students and an introductory article written by the dean of the GIT, Peter Wyatt. The second of the two issues has reactions from a variety of authors on the WCC document "Together towards Life." Unfortunately neither issue has been published and distributed yet. The TMC office takes responsibility for this unfortunate delay and together with the general secretary and the communications secretary will work to ensure that the three issues of *Reformed World* will appear on time.
28. The **network of theologians** had a meeting of its theme group "Sola Scriptura" 28 June - 1 July 2014. They discussed a draft of the study document that will be published this year. Another of the four theme groups, "Church and Society," was supposed to meet in November during the global Accra consultation organized by the justice and partnership office, but in the end only two members were present there. The two other groups, "Places of Epiphany" and "Churches beyond the Differences" did not meet in 2014.
29. A follow-up consultation for "**Mission in the Frontline**" was planned in Oman for 20-26 April 2015. However contacts with the co-organizers are not easy, and the visa procedures are difficult for some participants that would be involved. In consultation with the general secretary it was decided that we should organize this consultation somewhere else and at another time. Special attention is to be given to assure that the consultation helps strengthen and support the on-the-ground work of churches and regions in difficult situations such as the Middle East.
30. The work of the **John Knox** programme commission is something the TMC secretary was asked to stay involved in. Planning of a consultation on "Religions and State" is quite advanced. This consultation will take place 11-16 October 2015 at the John Knox Centre in Geneva.

31. The TMC secretary has been active in publishing articles and contributing to **theological production**. For example, publishing the article: "Having the Words of Eternal Life, the Vital Message of Life" in the Festschrift for Prof. Michael Weinrich. The secretary has also attended the annual meeting of **NetAct**—a network of African Theological Institutions which is a WCRC affiliated member. Additionally, the TMC secretary represents the WCRC in a **network of German theologians of the Reformed Alliance**. This is an important activity drawing us nearer to our German member churches. The TMC office is also preparing a consultation for the autumn of 2015 on "secularisation in Europe" along with WCC, CWM and EMW as part of the process of engaging with the WCC Mission document "Together Toward Life."
32. This has been the first full year for the office working from Hannover; while missing frequent ecumenical contacts in Geneva, there is now a sense of being fully landed in Germany and a need to address and expand all energies to the important work of the office as part of the larger WCRC staff team.

Communications

33. Phil Tanis, the executive secretary for communications, has completed more than a year in his position. The personal and family transitions have gone smoothly. An ongoing challenge has been finding the time to properly learn **German**. In terms of work priorities it will be important to discern the benefits of becoming fluent in German against the time costs to do so, thus determining at what speed this should happen.
34. There have been other continuing challenges in the office. The impact of the geographical move of the office, combined with staff turn over, continued to be felt through the year. Much of the WCRC's **institutional memory** was lost, despite being able to contact former staff with specific questions. Contributing to this was the state of the electronic filing system, which had not yet implemented systematized filing procedures. Much time has been spent tracking down and piecing together what has happened over the last several years in order to move forward certain specific initiatives. Hans von Rütte, from the WCC archives, has been advising us on filing systems.
35. A similar discovery was made with the **database**: it had not been effectively updated for some time. With the rapid change in email addresses in general, as well as the periodic change in leadership of our member churches, we were hampered in both the sending of church membership dues notices, as well as in over all

communications. Thankfully Werner Joecker was able to devote time to collecting updated information for the database; in addition, Anna Krüger obtained new contact information in the course of her financial responsibilities. Thanks must go to regional leaders, including many executive committee members, who assisted both Anna and Werner in this.

36. At the time of this writing, we are considering what database system will best serve our needs in the future. Two systems are being considered: 1) Filemaker Pro, which we currently use, and 2) Salesforce, which has been brought to our attention by the Christian Reformed Church in North America. There are a number of factors impacting the decision, including costs (both financial and time) and potential future uses of each system. Regardless of which system is selected, additional resources will need to be devoted to the database. A discussion of the strategic necessity of an effective database will be undertaken by the communication core group.
37. Another transition challenge that is being met concerns the closure of **Ecumenical News International** (ENI). While we continued to work with the WCC and ENI officers to formally close the organization, the ENI officers sent two email messages for us. The first was to former ENI reporters, asking who would be interested in writing for the WCRC. The result is a list of reporters from many parts of the world ready to work for us. The second message was to those who received press releases from ENI. The response to this message saw the number of those subscribing to the monthly WCRC eNews climb by several hundred.
38. Finally, the needs of the finance office continued to take the majority of Anna's time. The anticipated 50/50 split between finance and communications was revised to 70/30 as the financial needs became apparent. In reality, Anna spends closer to 90% of her time on finance responsibilities. Discussion continues between executive staff as to how to best utilize the **support staff** available. In the meantime, the assistance given by Joanna Hipp, our intern from the Presbyterian Church (USA), needs to be singled out as she has done much for communications, especially pertaining to social justice work. Paul Oppenheim, our senior volunteer has provided invaluable assistance to the communications desk, especially in the area of translations.
39. The impact of **online communication** has grown significantly in the past year. Social media has especially increased as regular posting on both Facebook and through Twitter have raised the WCRC's profile. One example: in mid-March 2014, the WCRC

Facebook page had 1972 “likes” with 1800 people “reached” and 156 “engaged” in one week; a year later, there were 2557 (+30%) likes with a reach of 4112 (+128%) and 392 (+150%) engaged. Each weekday there is at least one post on Facebook and a “tweet” via Twitter, with higher activity as needed; weekends see activity whenever pertinent. Posts/tweets include calls to prayer, links to articles on the WCRC website, sharing of resources, visitors to the WCRC offices, activities of WCRC staff, news from member churches and more. A Facebook page for the WCRC’s Office of Theology was also set up at the request of the executive secretary for theology. It currently has 423 likes while work continues to increase regular posts to it. The WCRC Flickr account holds high resolution images of activities, allowing for downloading by news organizations and others. A new Instagram account features pictures and short posts of WCRC staff and member activity around the world.

40. The **WCRC eNews** is now sent to over 1200 email addresses each month (double that of a year ago). The list includes all executive committee members and member churches, journalists and editors, ecumenical partners and those who are interested in the WCRC’s work. The eNews features from three to five links in each edition, focusing on news and resources. It consistently exceeds “industry” averages for “opens” and “click throughs.” There have been a number of other targeted mass email messages sent over the past year (including the “Broken for You” announcement and an update from the (new) general secretary). Specific messages to member churches are sent by language preference. It is anticipated that communication via mass (but targeted) emailing will increase in the coming years.

41. The **website**, thanks to a grant from *Fondation pour l’aide au protestantisme réformé* (FAP), is finally coming online in eight languages (Arabic, English, Chinese, French, German, Indonesian, Korean and Spanish). While the first phase of this project (with the four European languages) was completed in the months between communication secretaries, it was decided that the site could use a reorganization before bringing the other four languages online. This reorganization necessitated a significant rewriting of the content, followed by translation of the text. During this translation period, a redesign of the site was discussed, decided upon and done. Going forward it is anticipated that up to two articles per month will be translated into all eight languages. Depending on budget, additional pages and/or resources will be translated into as many of the languages as possible. The blog on the website will soon be restarted with news from churches and “Reformed Tastes” (a glimpse into WCRC members’ work from around the world) as

the regular features. Officers, executive committee members and staff will also be invited to participate in the blog on a periodic basis.

42. The “March” issue of the **Reformed Communiqué** features four of the languages (English, French, Indonesian and Korean) to mark the debut of the new website. There are plans to feature three other languages (plus English) in the September issue (while the June and December editions will likely be just in English). The *Communiqué* has been repositioned over the last year to act as a “best of” the articles that have already appeared on the WCRC website (outside of the general secretary’s column, which will do so in the coming year). Comparing printed circulation figures (which have increased this past year) to online access (website, eNews, Facebook, etc.) shows that more people are reading the articles virtually than in printed form (which is not a surprise). While printing and mailing the *Communiqué* remains important, especially for some specific target audiences, a discussion about how much money to spend on the *Communiqué* as opposed to translation (as but one example) will be taken up by the communication core group.
43. A new **introductory brochure** for the WCRC was created in the past year in the four European languages and will also be translated into any other language as needed. A new bookmark and the annual report were also produced, and a memory stick with the WCRC’s logo was made (and is being used as both a gift and as a replacement to the production of printed reports at meetings).
44. The communications secretary has traveled with fellow executive secretaries this past year to better communicate their work. He attended the start of the GIT in Costa Rica, the Accra Confession consultation in Taiwan and the Sylvia Michel prize award presentation in Switzerland. Phil joined the incoming general secretary on an official visit to the historic concurrent general synods held in Iowa by the Christian Reformed Church in North America and the Reformed Church in America. The secretary joined a WCRC Europe delegation on an official visit to Ukraine and made a well received presentation at the CWM communication consultation in Singapore (titled “Engagement and Advocacy in the Digital Space: The Scope and Power of Electronic Communications”); he also paid a visit to several of our member churches in South Korea just prior to the CWM consultation.
45. **Future Plans.** As we are now past the half-way point to our next general council (and through most of our office transition), it is

important to take a moment to reflect on the strategic plan adopted by the executive committee in 2011 from a communications perspective. Communications is categorized as one of the methodologies within the plan; put another way, effective communicating will incarnate our values. Everything we do, every way in which we show what we do, will be embedded with our values. Those values are taken directly from our constitution: "The WCRC strives to demonstrate and live the oneness in Christ we profess, to carry out its ministry in ways that enable all member churches to share their gifts, and to honour and be committed to God's saving purposes for the transformation of the world, [is] called to respect, defend, and advance the dignity of every person, embraces God's covenant promises for the redemption, restoration and renewal of the whole creation through Jesus Christ." Five key directions were identified in the strategic plan; all five lead to this: "The WCRC aims, by the end of 2017, to be known as a Communion that unites Reformed churches in God's mission in the world." "To be known" implies that communication must be done (and done well!). Specifically, three expected outcomes were identified for communications: 1) Make visible the five key directions; 2) Make visible the involvement of regions and member churches; 3) Attract the support of new donors and retain the commitment of current donors.

46. Reflecting on the first two together, one can see that all news, features, etc., coming directly from the WCRC touch on at least one of the **five key directions**. When news from member churches is shared (whether it be a news feature or a call to prayer), it is always with one of the five in mind. The work of the general and executive secretaries also emphasizes the commitment to the five key directions. The challenge, however, lies in increasing the involvement of the regions and member churches. A meeting with regional leaders was held in 2012 that committed the WCRC to "promote and support regional activities related to WCRC's five key directions and make them visible."
47. Another short-term objective was to "create **regional web pages** that are coordinated in the regions." This has not yet happened, although the Indonesian region has created a site on their own, work is being done on a CANAAC site and preliminary discussions have occurred with the ACRC about assisting in the development of a site for them. It should be decided if this objective remains viable (given the WCRC website, alternative means to communicate and language challenges even within regions) and, if so, what the WCRC communications office might do to assist.

48. The third expected outcome, pertaining to donors, also has challenges. A portion of the executive secretary's work is dedicated to **development**. The production of the annual report and material for the annual appeal are a part of this, as is involvement in the database. The general and other two executive secretaries continue to raise funds for the organization, as well as their own programmes. A draft strategic plan for development has been developed for discussion.
49. Attention will continue on two items from last year's report (both drawn from the strategic plan):
- increasing networks among communicators, especially professionals in member churches;
 - enhancing contact lists for and relationships with both religious and secular media professionals
50. An increasing amount of time will also be dedicated to the **2017 General Council** over the coming year, including the development of a GC2017 app. The communications office will also work closely with the coordinator of the event as soon as s/he is brought on board.

Finances

51. The finance office is served by Gerhard Plenter and Anna Krüger.
52. The WCRC financial structure, as in previous years, is divided into core budget and programme budgets. While the core budget receives the organization's income, with membership fees, grants and donations as its main sources, and covers payroll, administration fees and WCRC's communication work, the programme budget is split into a series of programmes. Programmes are under the direction of the executive secretaries or the general secretary. They are funded through earmarked grants and donations.
53. In 2014 **the core budget** had a deficit of EUR 13,341.61 in the 2014 budget year. Funds from the Reserve Fund were allocated to balance this deficit. The Reserve Fund was therefore decreased from EUR 79,359.94 to EUR 64,320.97.
54. Here, it is important to point out that the Relocation Fund that had been opened in 2013 with the remaining funds of a special UEK relocation grant, and at the beginning of the 2014 budget year had EUR 143,989.29 was used up in its entirety.

55. Moreover, in the budget year 2013, rather than paying our Swiss human resource provider Antex according to each invoice received, rounded amounts were paid and down payments were made. Due to a lack of documents available to us at the end of the budget year 2014, we have only now found out that we had a year-end balance of CHF 42,150.95 in our favour with Antex.
56. If not for the relocation grant and this positive balance, the 2014 core deficit would have been considerably higher and possibly exceeded the Reserve Fund.
57. Most, although not all, overspending in the budget year 2014 can be attributed to the relocation, as well as to costs related to pension and insurance payments in Geneva, and most of them will therefore not continue to occur in the present and future budget years.
58. Budget lines with significant overspending are the following:

Budget line	Budgeted	Actuals
Swiss HR Insurance	EUR 0	EUR 52,644.79
IT	EUR 27,400.00	EUR 55,706.74
Furniture and Equipment	EUR 20,000.00	EUR 39,615.41
Miscellaneous Switzerland	EUR 0	EUR 37,191.56
Insurance	EUR 3,000,00	EUR 6,098.03

59. Swiss Human Resource Insurance: This budget line was opened for Geneva-based staff expenses (Setri Nyomi, Paraic Reamonn, Frans du Plessis) such as pension plan and obligatory health and accident insurances. The amount charged in 2014 for the WCRC's pension plan for Geneva-based staff was higher than expected as a reconciliation was made to include Dora Arce Valentin's share which, due to an oversight by our provider Axa, was not considered in 2013. All the above were cancelled at the end of 2014 as we do not currently have any staff under Swiss contracts.
60. Miscellaneous Switzerland: This budget line includes miscellaneous expenses related to Switzerland that had not been budgeted for initially and could not be allocated otherwise, such as a balance due to WCC for expenses related to the budget year 2013, payment of VAT arrears from previous years and social security charges for Geneva-based staff for 2013 and 2014 that due to a lack of documentation could not be clearly allocated to each staff

member. We are in the process of clarification with the help of Antex.

61. Insurance: This is another good example of how Switzerland-related expenses have contributed to our overspending. EUR 5,765.64 of the expenses in this line are for compulsory health and accident insurances for Geneva-based staff, as well as for our offices in the Ecumenical Centre. The staff insurances have been cancelled, and we expect to be able to reduce the office insurance due to the significant reduction in office space in the Ecumenical Centre.
62. Rent: Slight overspending occurred in this budget line as a result of maintaining offices in the Ecumenical Centre. This has now been reduced to one office that creates monthly costs of EUR 450.
63. Adjustment: EUR 15,000.00 were budgeted on the expense side as adjustment, i.e. contingencies in the event of overspending or lower than expected income. Overspending in other lines, however, exceeded this amount by far.
64. Slight overspending was observed in other budget lines, while slight underspending occurred in: Other Professional Fees, Audit Fees, HR Administration, Training, Miscellaneous, Archiving, e.g. No money was spent from the Officers budget because the 2014 officers meeting was combined with the global Accra Confession consultation.
65. Staff costs for General Secretary and Assistants were also significantly lower than expected.
66. **Programme expenses** could be covered through existing funds. Funds need to be raised to continue some programmes as the fund balance have been depleted.
67. The General Secretary Programme and the Youth Programme do not have any funds left. The Youth Programme was put on hold several years ago while the General Secretary Programme was active in 2013.
68. The Native American Project has limited funds and has not been activated since its creation. The Making A Difference Programme was discontinued several years ago. Research is being done to determine if an alternative use can be found or if the funds need to be returned to the donor.

69. The Theological Education Scholarship Fund for women in the global South has funds of over EUR 170,000.00 which need to be used in order to be true to donors. This is on the priority list of the programme staff who will describe the work that has been done in the past year which has not yet had an impact on finances.
70. The funds in the North American Internship Programme will have been used up in their entirety at the end of the current intern's term. The Global Internship Programme requires fundraising if it is to continue beyond 2015. This is being carried out and new alternatives are being explored by me.
71. Partnership Fund A – We are expecting EUR 400,000.00 from Bread for the World (BfW) in 2015. As the funds for the past grant had been spent completely in 2013 nothing was received in 2014. A bridging grant was requested from BftW in 2014 and received in 2015. Separate auditing is carried out by an independent Hannover-based auditor (Curacon). Partnership Fund A has been carrying forward a deficit since 2012. BftW rules state that deficits have to be covered with our own funds. Therefore, a decision was made and carried out to cover this deficit by transferring funds from Partnership Fund E. The Partnership Fund Report continues further details.
72. Partnership Fund B – The only donor for this Fund is currently the Evangelical Church in Westfalia.
73. Partnership Fund C – It was recently brought to the attention of the Finance Office that at least until 2009 we had a Partnership Fund C. Research needs to be done to have clarity on how the funds in this programme were used before it was temporarily discontinued.
74. Partnership Fund D – This Fund is inactive and has a positive balance of EUR 14,176.62.
75. Partnership Fund E – In 2013 and 2014, it was assumed by the Partnership Fund and Finance Office staff that these funds came from the BfW PS Fund A grant to be used for emergency projects when in fact in the past it was replenished with funds originating from PS Fund B to be used for emergency projects. Due to the reallocation of EUR 37,028.66 to cover the deficit in Partnership Fund A, a balance of only EUR 3,705.55 remained. According to our agreement with BfW, starting with the current project, grants for emergency projects will be paid with BfW funds through PS Fund A.

76. EUR 236,959.93 were used from accumulated programme funds to support programmes in 2014.
77. The Finance Committee has affirmed that the standard **programme administration fee** will remain 8% unless the donor specifies otherwise.
78. As per a decision of the Finance Committee from December 2014, 8% of all incoming programme donations were allocated to the core budget as administration fees revenue. To comply with BftW standards, PS Fund A is an exception to this. Here, 15% of all outgoing grants are allocated as programme administration fees revenue.
79. Core income from programme administration fees was down to EUR 18,000 as opposed to EUR 88,000 that had been budgeted for the year. The majority of programming was funded from reserves, not from new money. PS Fund B gave a grant to the GIT and another one to Covenanting for Justice. The incoming donations in those programmes could therefore not be taken into account for programme administration fees as those had already been taken when the funds came in to PS Fund B. The executive secretaries say that the efforts expended on relocating diminished the capacity to do fundraising for programmes.
80. The Finance Committee asked in December 2014 that executive secretaries who oversee programmes submit an outline for their **fundraising plans** for 2015. Concern was also expressed that programme costs and budgets need to correlate. The committee agreed that a unified fundraising system needs to be implemented for programmes, affirming as well the need for tighter projections for budgeting and programme evaluation. It was agreed in the same committee meeting that similar financial controls need to apply to both the Core and the Programme budgets.
81. **Core Budget Income.** Aside from general member church, institutional and individual donations, we received a special UEK donation of EUR 200,000 which was fully allocated to the UEK Special Reserve.
82. There was a considerable decrease in **membership contributions** in Africa, Asia, the Pacific and Europe, while an increase can be observed in Latin America, and, although a minor one, in CANAAC.
83. Five percent (5%) of all European membership contributions including the special contributions from the Swiss Cantonal Churches were allocated to WCRC Europe.

84. Seven and a half percent (7.5%) of all membership contributions were allocated to the General Council Reserve.

	2012	2013	2014
Membership Africa	EUR 32,699	EUR 49,292	EUR 35,393
Membership Latin America	EUR 9,827	EUR 4,784	EUR 8,488
Membership CANAAC	EUR 264,598	EUR 228,394	EUR 230,028
Membership Asia	EUR 79,515	EUR 60,770	EUR 53,901
Membership Pacific	EUR 7,618	EUR 12,054	EUR 4,720
Membership Europe (incl. SCC)	EUR 388,055	EUR 487,723	EUR 444,817
TOTAL	EUR 782,312	EUR 843,017	EUR 777,347

85. In 2014, dues letters were only sent out towards the end of the year which could some of the decrease in membership contributions. This year, preparation for sending out dues letters has started in the first quarter and is expected to be almost completed by the time the executive committee meets in May. Follow-up letters will be sent around June. This practice will be used in the future.
86. Some churches have voiced their concern as to the practicability of the grid as they deem the basis of assessment unreasonable in regards to their financial situation or budget structure. While the grid decreased membership fees for some, it more than doubled or tripled them for others (one such example is the Presbyterian Church of Korea).
87. Although the grid is an aspirational goal, past year-end results have not reached the amounts desired. The budget should be based on actual remittances, and this was done for the first time in the 2015 budget. Some regions were budgeted rather carefully, as the 2014 actuals contain significant payments of arrears.

	Budgeted 2014	Actuals 2014	Budgeted 2015
Membership Africa	EUR 57,600	EUR 35,393	EUR 20,000
Membership Latin America	EUR 16,000	EUR 8,488	EUR 3,000
Membership CANAAC	EUR 240,800	EUR 230,028	EUR 222,000
Membership Asia	EUR 142,400	EUR 53,901	EUR 40,000
Membership Pacific	EUR 22,400	EUR 4,720	EUR 2,000
Membership Europe	EUR 528,200	EUR 444,817	EUR 455,000
TOTAL	EUR 1,007,400	EUR 777,347	EUR 742,000

88. We have been unable to reach some member churches. Therefore, we need support from the regions to update the **database**. Werner Joecker has taken on the task of updating the database and looking into the possibility of adding more features, such as creating a fee remittance history and a feature to export invoices.
89. As of December 31, 2014, the WCRC had EUR 75,493.44 as **non-realised exchange rate gains**. In a pre-audit meeting with the auditor it was determined that they could not be booked into the actual budget.
90. The **2014 books were once again audited** by the EKD high audit office. The first part of the audit took place between March 2 and March 16 in the WCRC's Hannover offices. Audited statements as well as an auditor comment are available in both German and English for this executive committee meeting. The audit report has many challenges for us and raises important questions for us bringing our financial management where it should be. Some have already been addressed and others need to be addressed immediately. For example, concerning the audit procedures at least two other funding partners besides BftW have informed us that the EKD ORA audit does not meet their required standards. There are also questions as to whether single entry book keeping is the appropriate system for an organization receiving charitable funds.
91. The **2015 budget** was presented as a draft to the Finance Committee on 22 December 2014. It was then discussed in the subsequent meeting and submitted to the officers and executive committee members for approval via electronic response. At the time of writing of this report, it remained a working budget and should be officially adopted at this executive committee meeting.

92. As previously stated, the budget for membership fees will be based on 2014 receipts, with special contributions (arrears payments) excluded. The European region was rounded up.
93. The standard programme administration fees, with the exception being BftW funds which allow 15% of outgoing grants, will be 8% unless the donor specifies otherwise.
94. **Staff Costs.** Salaries: executive secretary salaries are higher than in 2014 because Phil Tanis was employed for only part of 2014. Support staff salaries are lower but do provide for a fourth full-time assistant. Expat expenses: This includes support of language training for the general secretary, executive secretaries and their families. Home leave for executive secretaries and their families is allowed every two years. The Finance Committee added an extra EUR 2,000 to Executive Secretaries Expat Expense to the proposed budget to cover these costs.
95. The committee reduced the amount budgeted for **contributions** to general council expenses in the proposed 2015 budget from EUR 200,000 to EUR 100,000.
96. It is proposed that the **2016 budget** will be presented later in the year as this allows for more realistic projections. A first draft of the 2016 budget will be presented to the Finance Committee at the end of September/beginning of October 2015. It should then be approved electronically by the officers and subsequently by the executive committee members no later than the beginning of November.
97. **General Council.** Please refer to the planning committee report for more detailed information, as well as a draft budget. Requests were sent to those who made donations for the 2010 Uniting General Council. A bigger push for contributions will be made in 2016 and 2017. The reserve fund for the general council is now EUR 461,871. If all the membership contributions budgeted in 2015 are received we can expect EUR 55,000 from the portion of membership fees (7.5%) to go into the General Council Reserve Fund.
98. In July 2014, all member churches were asked to give the equivalent of one year's membership fee as a special contribution for the general council. As of March 2015, only two churches have pledged to contribute to the general council. The Church of Lippe has agreed to give up to EUR 150,000 and expects to transfer the first rate of EUR 50,000 in 2015. The Church of Scotland has

pledged to give three rates of GBP 8,000 each year from 2014 to 2016.

99. **Investments.** In 2014, the WCRC received a substantial donation of EUR 1,211,500 (GBP 1,000,000) from the CWM to be used as to establish an **endowment fund**. These funds were transferred to a designated reserve. In the 2014 Executive Committee meeting in Hannover the general secretary and general treasurer were jointly authorized to invest the WCRC monies. It was decided to reinvest our current assets invested with BNP Paribas and Swiss Life and to invest more than just the CWM grant of GBP 1,000,000.
100. The general treasurer and I, after broad consultation with the assistance of the Finance Office, decided to invest a total of EUR 800,000 in equal parts in two different funds with the German KD-Bank (Bank für Kirche und Diakonie), USD 400,000 with the Barnabas Foundation and USD 400,000 with the Presbyterian Foundation. The authorized amount has been transferred to the KD-Bank and invested in the Fair World Fund and the KCD Sustainability Mix in the first quarter of 2014. The Fair World Fund is an international mixed fund with equities and annuities and sustainability approach. It has a moderate risk. The KCD Sustainability Mix is a global mixed fund with focus on Euro securities and has a moderate risk.
101. Two funds were identified for the USD 800,000 to be invested in the US: the Barnabas Conservative Fund and the Presbyterian Foundation Praxis Intermediate Bond Fund Portfolio. The investment has been delayed as we have encountered difficulties to access and transfer them from the BNP Paribas USD account where they are currently being held. We are in the process of working with our bank to resolve these difficulties as well as to sell and reinvest the current investment we have with them. We have made considerable progress and hope to be able to finalize this second part of our overall investment soon.
102. The WCRC's standards for ethical investment will be met. The general treasurer and I will pursue revising the standards for implementation within two years.
103. The Finance Office would like to point out that concern was raised by the Finance Committee about the low rate of return of low and moderate risk investments. As a result, it was agreed to invest in higher risk stocks than those the Finance Office had initially proposed and feels comfortable with.

104. **Bank Accounts.** The WCRC currently has one main EUR account in Germany with KD-Bank as well as a EUR account with Sparkasse that allows cash withdrawals. We have one main CHF account with PostFinance in Switzerland and one main USD account with 5th3rd Bank in the USA for which Peter Borgdorff is the only signatory. All other accounts require joint signatures. As a general rule, we are working on reducing the number of bank accounts. In this process, we have already closed all our UBS accounts and are working on closing all BNP Paribas accounts after having determined that only a very limited number of member churches use it for the transfer of their contributions. We have a second USD account in Germany and are currently evaluating whether there is in fact a need to keep it. As a requirement for the Lombard Prize, our Lombard account and investment need to be maintained. Additionally, Bread for the World requires us to keep separate accounts for PS Fund A projects which were opened with KD-Bank.
105. In 2014, the **Finance Committee** met on December 2014 through a Skype meeting. It was agreed that the committee will meet quarterly in order to stay abreast of the financial situation. I have asked for more involvement of the committee in fundraising.
106. **EUR vs CHF – Relocation to Hannover.** The Finance Office deems it essential to point out that were the WCRC's main offices still in Switzerland, due to the depreciation of the euro versus the Swiss franc with the main source of income being outside and the main source of expenses being inside Switzerland, the organization would be broke now. This is very well illustrated by the non-realised currency gains on CHF accounts.

EUR / CHF



Partnership Fund

107. The Partnership Fund (PS Fund) is a small development fund run by the WCRC. Beneficiaries are member churches and councils of the WCRC mostly located in the global south. In order for an application to benefit from the PS Fund, it has to comply with certain criteria and has to be approved by the Partnership Fund Committee (PSFC). Applications may only be approved for funding every second year provided previous projects have been closed off (this entails financial receipts and reports and a comprehensive final report of the project). Regional Councils may benefit annually, provided previous projects have been closed off. The maximum amount payable is EUR 25,000 and EUR 7,500 for emergency projects.
108. Since 2009 the PS Fund is subordinate to the executive secretary for theology, mission and communion. Up until mid-August 2014 the PF was administered by Viktoria Koczian, assistant to the mentioned department and who took over from Paraic Reamonn earlier that year. Starting that month the responsibilities were passed on to Werner Joecker who joined the WCRC staff in May.
109. 2014 fiscal year:

	EUR
Opening Balance	135,083.06
Income	63,028.66
Expenditure	- 172,033.55
Balance	26,078.17

Supporting documentation is available in the full Partnership Fund report, including details on approved and pending projects.

110. New follow-up grant with BftW: Difficulties related with the transition of the offices from Geneva to Hannover and the fact of having spent the total PS Fund A grant amount in 2013 did not allow us to maneuver as freely as in the preceding periods. For this purpose the WCRC applied for a bridging Complementary Grant of EUR 50,000 that was approved by October 28th. The funds were released in January 2015. The application for the follow-up grant for the PS Fund A with BftW was made in August 2014 and approved only in December the same year (KED 20146842). The release of the corresponding payments is conditioned on the audit results. It may be noted that for this period and if the variables remain constant the project funds have to be administered in a formal and structured way to prevent the Fund from again

depleting before the end of the runtime. For this purpose a proposal for a change in the policies will be submitted (two step project approval process) for the consideration of the PSFC.

111. **Audit.** Starting November 18th a Hannover-based independent auditor, Curacon, was entrusted with examining the (semesters) 1S2013, 2S2013 and 1S2014 for the PS Fund A. The report was presented on March 9th 2015 without observations. Supporting documentation will be available for the meeting. This puts the WCRC in the position to start using the grant.
112. **Budget and planning.** The budget for 2015 will be made in accordance with the Finance Office and following a common structure such as suggested by BftW. Supporting documentation will be available for the meeting.
113. **Future.** Procedural matters and policies need to be adapted to the current circumstances and when non-existent to be created. This includes information policies. In order to replenish the active funds other than A and E and to decrease the dependency from the few current donors, contacts need to be reactivated and new ones established. Especially to give us the capacity in order to react appropriately to all the challenges.

Development and Fundraising

114. The very good news is that we now have in hand the generous and visionary contribution of GBP 1,000,000 from CWM. The investment of this amount is almost complete. This comes in the context of a forward looking partnership agreement and a first step towards creating a larger and more sustainable endowment fund.
115. The WCRC has committed itself to raising up to CHF 9,000,000 over the next six years. The challenge is that the WCRC has not created a vision, strategy or implementation structure for development and fundraising. After the decision to discontinue the development office no new plan was put in place. Moreover, there is no agreement that an endowment fund strategy with such a far-reaching goal is practical or attainable on the global level for the WCRC. Not all regions see endowment funds in a positive light. There is a general feeling that we must undertake a regionally sensitive contextual approach to sustainability, but much work must be done to develop a comprehensive approach that takes seriously the opportunities and commitments related to the CWM gift while integrating specific strategies for each region.

116. The exercise of consulting and deciding on how to invest the CWM contribution demonstrated very different approaches to investment and fundraising within the WCRC. We have to honour the differences but still arrive at a comprehensive and sustainable strategy.
117. The UEK has also very generously given funds over three years that have facilitated the relocation and very importantly allowed us to rebuild the reserve funds.
118. The vision in the strategic plan to concentrate on ensuring funding of the core budget through membership contributions while diversifying other funding approaches should be re-affirmed. The lessons learned last year about the urgent need to attend to the database and getting notices out in a timely way, as well as following closely conversations with those who feel the gird poses real challenges for them will no doubt have a positive impact in 2015-2016. There is also an urgent need to renew our approach to programme funding together with our executive secretaries. To that we add the challenges that always attend raising resources for our general council.
119. In October 2014 I visited the USA and met with member churches and others to get a sense of our readiness to launch a major fundraising campaign in North America. Given the internal transition issues we are still facing and the need to develop a more comprehensive strategy that takes into account both the endowment fund approach and other approaches that might have a better chance to succeed in Asia and Europe, I have recommended that we continue to and strengthen our USA based annual appeal, build on initiatives like the "Geneva Pastors" and work with the Presbyterian Foundation and others for this year while putting in place a comprehensive plan with the full involvement of the executive and the regional councils. The North American trustees play a key role in this with special thanks to Stephen Lytch who serves as president of that group and with the staff support of Phil Tanis.
120. In consultation with the North American trustees and others a report with recommendations has been prepared for discussion during this meeting that should involve close participation from the finance committee, the communications core group, the regional groups and the officers so that we emerge with a plan to develop a strategy that we all feel we can wholeheartedly support. This would include forming a committee and follow up structure that guarantees immediate attention to this urgent need.

121. In the midst of severe financial challenges faced by the WCRC over the last few years there has been a consistent and overwhelming outpouring of concrete support and surprising initiatives. These have been expression of God's grace that once again point us to our mission and purpose. We are not simply struggling to keep an organization on the right track; we responding to God's call, and the bolder and more visionary we are in taking up that mantle of restoring streets to live in and building the unity necessary to do so, guided by God, following Jesus, then the more the resources will come. Chief to our fund development is our own missional renewal. We must be a visible, uniting, ecumenical presence in public witness as we pray towards 2017: "God of Life, Renew and Transform Us." We must quickly put in place a positive constructive plan that excites and inspires each of us to ensure that we have the resources to do as a communion that which God would have us do.

General Council

122. The 26th General Council planning committee held their initial meeting 17-21 November 2014, dividing their time between Hannover and Erfurt. The committee members are Dario Barolin, Doug Chial, Sabine Dressler, Cheryl Meban, Jerry Pillay, Aiko Widhidana Sumichan and Lisa Vander Wal (convener). Cheryl and Jerry were unable to attend the first meeting. Chris Ferguson, Dora Arce-Valentin, Phil Tanis and Claudia Duval were present as staff.
123. The committee reviewed their mandate and addressed key issues in the planning process. Topics included the following: How do we incorporate a sense of "worshipful work" within the meeting? How do we balance the 500th commemoration of the Reformation with the WCRC's work of communion and justice? What outcomes do we hope will arise from the general council? What should be the length of the meeting? How do we balance time for meaningful programme, discernment and outcomes; travel to visit Reformation sites and government venues and time away from home along with budget concerns? How do we ensure that our goals for representation (women, youth, region) are met? What processes are necessary to deal with potentially Communion-dividing issues?
124. The committee had an initial discussion about the overall integrated approach of "worshipful work" and began to explore approaches to the theme and programme with a view to integrating these with the Reformation anniversary focus and the vision of the Accra Confession.

125. The committee discussed the importance of approaching the discernment and decision making process in a new way, following some examples from member churches which use a very participatory bottom-up approach. Rather than working in separate thematic/topical committees or sections the delegates discuss all the primary issues using small group processes. The committee proposes developing these ideas further and presenting them at the 2016 executive committee meeting.
126. The committee considered the length of the meeting and has proposed that meeting be limited to 10 days, not inclusive of pre-councils and travel days. This would mean that offsite travel be limited to two one-day trips—to Wittenberg and to Berlin—rather than many local excursions.
127. Budget principles were discussed and were included in the working budget prepared by a subgroup that will be presented as initial information to officers and the finance committee.
128. There was a recommendation to limit the contract time of the general council coordinator to 18 months.
129. The committee spent considerable time addressing the recommendations concerning venue. See below.
130. Subcommittees were established and will begin to meet in 2015 with another full committee meeting in 2016 at a date to be decided. The minutes of the first meeting are available at this executive.
131. The Reformed Alliance of Germany is fully participating in the planning process and has put in place a local planning committee that coordinates fully with the general council planning committee. In addition there is a staff follow-up group that meets regularly in Hannover.
132. In following up on the recommendations of the planning committee the staff group encountered a series of practical issues concerning the proposed venue at the Erfurt Messe (conference grounds). After extensive consultations and field visits the staff group is proposing modifications to both venue and date.
133. **Venue.** In trying to get more solid figures for the budget we discovered that there were issues with the Erfurt Messe proposal. Their offer to us was not clear on several key points as to what exactly was included and what would require further negotiation or which items needed to be negotiated with other vendors. The

process became more frustrating as new figures and deeper clarity were not forthcoming despite repeated requests. Sabine Dressler then reviewed the original proposals from both Erfurt and Leipzig to try to find points of comparison. To our surprise the Leipzig offer was generally less expensive even though the facilities are generally considered superior, and Leipzig has a better track record, including experience with church conventions like Willow Creek and the World Baptist Alliance. Moreover, several of the other negative factors about Leipzig, like distance from town, dispersed hotel rooms and longer transportation times did not seem as pronounced as we had originally assumed.

134. **Hotels.** In Erfurt we discovered that the hotel situation was not as easy as we had been told. Our meeting is in the high tourist session, and the chair of the hotel managers association basically told us they really don't need our business during that period. Therefore, each hotel was willing to give us some space but not as many rooms as we had hoped in each hotel. We would need to be more spread out than we had planned. In addition the prices even for mediocre accommodations seemed high. The hotel prices are better in Leipzig, especially with the new dates (see below).
135. **Transportation.** The distance between Leipzig and the various airports in Germany is less than to Erfurt, and there is also an international airport in Leipzig. The journey times from Leipzig to both Wittenberg and Berlin are much less than from Erfurt.
136. **Church connections.** There is a Reformed Church in Leipzig, and the Lutheran Church there is very keen on us coming, while Erfurt has only a United church (which is not yet a member of the WCRC).
137. **Date.** In negotiating with Leipzig it became clear that we could save even more with a change of date (even when factoring in higher fares). The new suggested dates are June 27 to July 7. Pre-councils for youth and women would be 27-28 June and 8 July would be a travel day. This modifies the 10+2 proposal of the general council planning committee to 9+2 for budget and time efficiency reasons. The savings in costs could be over EUR 100,000.
138. **Proposal.** It is thus proposed that the venue for the 2017 General Council be Leipzig, Germany, and that the dates be 27 June to 7 July.
139. In conversation with the Reformed Alliance and some United Churches in Germany we are exploring the possibility of having the

general council coordinator be provided by one of the United Churches as a fully paid seconded staff. This would, of course, be after a full selection process on our end. This would provide further relief to the budget.

140. A **working budget** has been prepared and the general treasurer has already begun fundraising with the German government.

Internships

141. Since June of last year we have had the excellent participation of two interns, one from South Africa, Fundiswa Kobo, and one from the USA, Jopanna Hipp. Their contributions have been significant and it is evident that this experience over the last three years shows the great contribution such training makes to the wider WCRC family. The funding for the three-year programme ends this year. Every effort is being made to renew the programme. An initial evaluation has begun. After a full review proposals for the future will be shared. There is funding earmarked in the EMW 2015 contribution for internships. New forms of partnering and exchange for internships should be explored as well.

UN Office

142. We are deeply grateful to the PCUSA and to the staff at the Presbyterian Ministry at the United Nations in New York, Mark Koenig and Ryan Smith, for their work in helping to keep the WCRC informed of global advocacy issues and opportunities. As our vehicle for presence at the UN it would be important to review our relationship and to ensure that we are making best use of this presence, given the vision of our strategic plan. It is clear that we are becoming closer with the office and receiving much help from the ministry, especially in terms of participation in CSW and with our human trafficking programme. Their full report is available.

Global Christian Forum

143. Wes Granberg-Michaelson ably represents us at this important and wide table of global Christianity. The Global Christian Forum (GCF) continues its patient task of building new bonds of ecumenical fellowship with the widest diversity of Christian traditions around the world. In so doing, it enjoys the support and confidence of the World Council of Churches, the World Evangelical Alliance, the Pentecostal World Fellowship, and the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. Virtually all the Christian world communions, including the WCRC, also support the GCF.

144. Its major undertakings have been two large global gatherings, the first held in Limuru, Kenya, in 2007, and then in Manado, Indonesia, in 2011. The next of these is planned for 2017 in Latin America. A number of regional meetings, team visits and consultations also undergird its work. In all of its meetings, it has been guided by an intentional commitment to include half of its participants from evangelical, Pentecostal, and other similar Christian communities which have not been previously involved in the formal ecumenical movement. Doing so has successfully brought many new partners into serious ecumenical fellowship.
145. The Manado global gathering encouraged the GCF's governing committee to plan initiatives addressing issues of common global concern to the Forum's broad constituency. After careful consultation with its main partners the GCF agreed to address the challenge of "Discrimination, Persecution, and Martyrdom" being experienced among many parts of the global Christian community. Cries for solidarity have become more urgent, but the separate traditions of world Christianity do not even share a common vocabulary, much less joint strategies and actions in response.
146. Therefore, the GCF will facilitate a global consultation on "Discrimination, Persecution, and Martyrdom," hosted by the churches in Tirana, Albania, in November 2017. Albania was chosen, with the support of the Orthodox Church there, in light of its past history when the Christian community suffered massive repression and its present reality with a renewed church in a pluralistic context. WCRC President Jerry Pillay will represent us.

Regions and Regional Councils

147. I was able to attend the meeting of WCRC Europe in 2015 in Belfast and was very grateful for that opportunity. The round of consultations marking the 10 years of the Accra Confession gave a good opportunity to stimulate and support the work of AIPRAL, NEACC, ACRC and CANAAC. I will be visiting Indonesia immediately following this executive meeting, and the South Asia region has had a meeting just prior. We have shared in activities and supported solidarity visits with both AIPRAL and Europe. The regional councils have all been active helping contact member churches in times of emergency and in encouraging members to pay their fees.
148. The strategic plan makes it clear that regions are crucial to all that we do. However, we lack a clear, well-resourced and comprehensive plan to empower the regions to better serve the member churches and congregations. Some regions like CANAAC

and some member churches have been very clear that they are looking for more support and encouragement from the WCRC. Others function well but feel much more should be done. In my view it is imperative that we make regional empowerment a top priority and seek strategies of working with ecumenical partners like CWM, EMW and member churches with strong regional networks to do so.

Strategic Partners, Networking and Ecumenical Relationships

149. The relationships with our closest partners continue to deepen and widen. We have well-defined common work and shared vision with the Council for World Mission (CWM), the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), the World Council of Churches (WCC), the *Evangelisches Missionswerk* in Germany (EMW) and Bread for the World (BftW).
150. I have made two visits to Singapore to meet with CWM, once with board members and once with staff. Their general secretary participated in our Accra Global gathering while Phil Tanis presented at and participated in their communication consultation. Sudipta Singh visited our offices in Hannover. Our staff people collaborate on common projects, and we continue to identify more and more programmes and initiatives we can undertake together.
151. We are thankful for renewed conversations with LWF and are deeply appreciative of Martin Junge's presence at this meeting as we look forward to deepening our unity and common action.
152. The EMW relationship is moving ahead with increased partnership, although some funding issues at their end have raised the possibility of less financial support to the WCRC this year rather than the hoped for increase.
153. The collaboration with Bread for the World is strong, and progress is being made to ensure that all necessary improvements are made in the handling of the Partnership Fund.
154. A visit to *Kirk in Actie*/ICCO and the Protestant Church in the Netherlands showed the strength in that partnership.
155. The progress on the NIFEA (New Economic and Financial Architecture) together with LWF, CWM and WCC has not advanced as hoped and as urgently needed. There have been problem in getting the necessary consensus among the four general secretaries as to the joint nature of the programme, such as sharing a common secretariat and articulating priorities. I will

continue to make final efforts to see if a common ecumenical effort is possible before proposing an alternative approach.

156. As a key part in making visible our full participation and contribution as a Communion in ecumenical witness for justice and peace I have agreed to serve as co-rapporteur on the reference group for the WCC Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace. The first meeting was held in February 2015 in Bossey, Switzerland. Mobilizing our Communion to participate fully in this should be a focus for the next year leading up to our 2017 General Council and could well be an emphasis emerging from that meeting.
157. We continue to relate to the annual meeting of general secretaries of Christian world communions. Our next meeting will be in London later this year.
158. We continue to seek ways of forming a strategic partnership with the World Student Christian Federation, including relating to their strong regional networks. The WSCF offers us a new way of emphasizing partnership with ecumenical youth and student organizations. I attended the WSCF assembly in Bogota, Colombia, in February 2015. Many global ecumenical organizations find themselves living through crises of sustainability and leadership. The WSCF has been one of those. As part of our emphasis on ecumenical solidarity I have been accompanying the WSCF in its transformation and transition process.
159. Another important ecumenical organization that has been going through a significant organizational crisis is the CLAI (Latin American Council of Churches). In close consultation with AIPRAL I formed part of an ecumenical accompaniment team to help support CLAI (along with the WCC, ACT Alliance, United Methodist Church and others).
160. We hope to explore new partnerships with the World Association of Christian Communicators (WACC), who we are pleased to report are present at this meeting and interested in seeing how we can work more closely together.
161. We have taken first steps to strengthen our relationship with the EKD. Douwe Visser attended their most recent assembly and we are especially pleased with the appointment of Susanne Erlecke as our liaison. We are delighted she has been able to attend our meeting.

162. I have had meetings with EMS and UEM to see how to develop even more active partnerships with these two German-based international mission groups.
163. We are extremely grateful for the ongoing support of the UEK and continue to look for ways to draw closer to the United Churches in Germany. We will continue to explore with them possible interest in some United Churches joining the WCRC in the future. These explorations have included the question if the WCRC would consider a name change to reflect the important place of United and Uniting churches in our Communion.
164. I attended the recent assembly of the Reformed Alliance in Germany. They elected a new moderator, Martin Engels, and installed Achim Detmers as general secretary. They paid homage to the significant leadership of our own Peter Bukowski, who retired after serving as the moderator for 25 years! This was also the opportunity to celebrate the ministry of Jörg Schmidt, who, with over 30 years of service, was general secretary during the last eight. Along with Peter, Jörg played a very special role in encouraging and facilitating our move to Hannover. We give great thanks to God for the generous hospitality and excellent collaboration that we enjoy with the Reformed Alliance. I must include a special mention to the ongoing support of Sabine Dressler in many things but particularly in general council planning.
165. We have enjoyed visits to our offices in Hannover from members and ecumenical partners such as the regional Lutheran bishop of Hannover. Please check us out on Facebook, where we post many of these visits.

Visits to members

166. I have considered it extremely important and a high priority to be present and visible and to make early visits to as many regions as possible and to make our interest and involvement in the lives of our member churches known.
167. I participated in the AIPRAL Accra Confession consultation. I have also visited the leadership and local congregations of the Presbyterian Church of Colombia twice in order to support them in their work with communities at risk and in the peace process in that country. I also participated in an international, ecumenical peace conference for Colombia together with AIPRAL at the invitation of CLAI.

168. At the request of our president I participated with Jerry Pillay in a conflict transformation effort with a member church in Democratic Republic of Congo.
169. At the request of two member churches in Scotland I have accompanied talks between them upon the dissolution of a covenant over issues of human sexuality.
170. **I** was the keynote speaker at the anniversary celebrations of the National Council of Churches of India and visited the offices and diaconal and mission work of both the Church of South India and the Church of North India.
171. I had two opportunities to visit with leadership and participate in assemblies of the RCA and CRCNA in the context of their new found unity after 157 years of separation. I visited the offices of the United Church of Christ and the PC(USA) in the United States and the UCC Canada and the Presbyterian Church in Canada. All of these were very inspiring and energetic visits.
172. In the Middle East I participated in a meeting in Cairo to explore with our member churches and others the challenges they face. I visited our member churches in Lebanon and was a keynote speaker at an ecumenical event in Bethlehem.
173. I traveled to Berne, Switzerland, to visit with leadership of the Swiss Protestant Federation.
174. The work of communion building and unity in justice is demanding and challenging, but above all it is inspiring as our churches show courage, wisdom and faithfulness in facing a broken and hurting world.

Concluding Remarks

175. It is clear that through all the transition and troubles, struggles and possibilities there are so many churches in our family that support the Communion in prayer and action. There is, in fact, in the ecumenical world and among our members high expectations for us. There is a constant call for us to bring fully our special gifts as a WCRC family.
176. A special thanks to all who have so graciously supported Susan and me this year. Through some of the difficult moments I have come to value the support and solidarity of Jerry Pillay in a very special way. Thanks to the officers and all who have upheld us in your prayers and offered help.

177. Things have not always been easy or smooth within the staff team but I want to give thanks to God for each and every person, for all have been dedicated and shared their gifts and passions. To Anna, Werner, Claudia, Viktoria, Phil, Douwe, Dora, Gerhard and Paul— and a very special thanks to our interns Joanna and Fundiswa.
178. The time is here and the opportunity great to hear to embrace the call to move on from transition and take up again the full extent of the call to be repairers of the breach and restorers of streets to live in.
179. Thank you.

REPORT OF THE OFFICE FOR THEOLOGY, MISSION AND COMMUNION

Rev Dr Douwe Visser

The highlight in 2014 for the office of Theology, Mission and Communion (TMC) was the **Global Institute of Theology (GIT)** 2014 in San José, Costa Rica, 5-28 July 2014. Thirty students from all over the world attended this GIT. We had a team of lecturers from various countries but half of them from Costa Rica.

The students were all obliged to take the lectures of the core course in the morning hours. The theme of the core course was "Transforming Mission, Community and Church." This theme was developed in three sub-courses:

1. Mission as Evangelism and Service
2. Places of Epiphany and Reformed presence in the world
3. The Reformed Church challenging the ecumenical world

I myself taught the last sub-course. For this core course the students all had to write an essay, concentrating on one of the three sub-courses. In the afternoon the students attended elective courses. They could make a choice of two out of six possible courses.

The GIT also had in its programme exposure to church, society and nature. It was a rich programme but as always with the GIT most important was the building up of a community of students and lecturers and the interaction that goes with this. The global division in wealth, for example, is visible within the small GIT community. This brings forth lively discussions but also mental and spiritual challenges.

Very important also was the daily worship in the morning and the evening. The students were very active in that, and a rich worship life could be experienced.

For the GIT our hosting academic partner was the *Universidad Biblico Latinoamericana*. An excellent job was done by their staff, especially our contact person Karla Koll, one of the lecturers of UBL.

It was very tense almost until the last moment whether the GIT could take place since it was under great pressure because of visa issues. Costa Rica has for many countries a policy of restricted entry, and being a small country the number of consulates and embassies is limited. So students had to make extra travel costs in order to get their visa. That made the travel costs this time extremely high and in the end these came out with €30,000 more than budgeted.

Until two weeks before the starting date we were actually not even sure whether the course could take place, and in the end 8 students were denied visa.

After the GIT students submitted their essays. Only one student did not write an essay so the response was this time very high. A number of the best essays are published in *Reformed World*, 2014/2.

The overall goal of the GIT is the training of future leadership within the Reformed community from an ecumenical perspective. That goal has been reached this time again and in general the evaluation of the GIT by the students was positive.

The next GIT will take place in 2017. This means not after two years as we planned to have it since 2010 but one year later. That has to do with the WCRC's 2017 General Council. The GIT 2017 will take place in conjunction with that. Preparations for the GIT are starting now, including the fundraising for this event.

Concerning the **programme of ecumenical dialogues** three events happened. First of all I had a preparatory meeting in London about the Anglican–Reformed Dialogue. This dialogue will take place 24 October to 1 November 2015 in India. Those who attended the preparatory meeting were the two co-chairs and the two co-secretaries:

Elizabeth Welch (United Reformed Church UK, Reformed co-chair)

Bishop David Chillingworth (Scottish Episcopal Church, Anglican co-chair)

Alyson Barnett-Cowan (Anglican co-secretary)

Douwe Visser (Reformed co-secretary)

Alyson has now been replaced by John Gibaut, the former Director of Faith and Order. During the meeting we worked out the program for the first meeting and also who will give a presentation. The overall theme for this dialogue is "Communion," and shortly we will arrange travel preparations for the Reformed participants.

The second event in the program of dialogues was the first meeting in the Pentecostal–Reformed round of dialogues. This meeting took place in Berekfürdő in Hungary, 16–21 November. In total there were 13 delegates, seven Reformed and six Pentecostal. Also present were our intern Fundiswa Kobo and the assistant in the offices of TCM, Viktoria Koczian.

The overall theme of this round of dialogue is "Mission." For this first year it was elaborated with the subtheme: "Ministering to the needs of the world, Mission as evangelization and diaconate." Two main papers about this topic were presented, from both the Pentecostal and Reformed sides. These papers led to lively discussions. On the last day, however, it was difficult to come to agreement about the topic for the second meeting, scheduled 3-10 December 2015. We left the meeting undecided about this, and it will be further worked out in a (Skype) meeting between co-chairs and co-secretaries.

During the meeting we met with delegations from both the Reformed Church in Hungary and the Pentecostal Church in Hungary.

A first meeting in a round of dialogues always has a sort of an introductory character. Delegates who will come together for a number of years have to get to know each other better and we also have to enter more into detail in the theme of the dialogue. This first meeting helped to do this.

The third event in the program of dialogues was the fifth meeting in the Catholic-Reformed round of dialogues. We met this year in Gent, Belgium. There were 15 delegates, nine from the Reformed side and six from the Catholic side. This meeting was the final meeting of the two delegations in plenary, and most of the time was dedicated to the writing of the final report of which there is now a draft. In autumn a small group will meet to finalise the report. The theme is: "Justification and Sacramentality, the Christian Community as an agent for Justice."

This meeting also discussed the possibility of the WCRC affiliating with the "Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification." The Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity would very much welcome this. The 2010 Uniting General Council gave mandate to consult the member churches about this. Our general secretary has already announced that he would like this process to start now.

Regarding **Reformed World**, the first issue of 2014 was a special issue dedicated to Setri Nyomi, our general secretary from 2000 to 2014. This issue was presented during a festive meeting of the executive committee in Hannover, 17 May 2014. Setri thanked us for this issue with great appreciation. With the issues number two and three of 2014 we were successful in receiving the articles. The first one of these two is dedicated to the GIT 2014 with essays from students and an introductory article written by the dean of the GIT, Peter Wyatt. The second of the two issues has reactions from a variety of authors on the WCC document "Together towards Life." Both issues could have been published much earlier than actually was the case. This process, however, took a lot of time. I take responsibility for the late appearance

and have to take care that this year the three issues of *Reformed World* will appear on time. At the meeting I will present a plan for outsourcing the publishing of *Reformed World* and to work together for this with Sage Publications.

The **network of theologians** had a meeting of its theme group "Sola Scriptura" 28 June – 1 July 2014. They discussed a draft of the study document that will be published this year.

Another of the four theme groups, "Church and Society," was supposed to meet in November during the global Accra consultation organised by the justice and partnership office, but in the end only two members were present there. The two other groups, "Places of Epiphany" and "Churches beyond the Differences" did not meet in 2014.

A follow-up consultation for "**Mission in the Frontline**" was planned in Oman for 20-26 April 2015. However contacts with the co-organisers are not easy, and the visa procedures are difficult for some participants that would be involved. In consultation with the general secretary it was decided that we should organise this consultation somewhere else and at another time. Further discussion and planning is pending at this moment.

The work of the **John Knox** programme commission is something I was asked to stay involved in. We are now quite far in the planning of a consultation on "Religions and State." This consultation will take place 11-16 October 2015 at the John Knox Centre in Geneva.

I will now end with mentioning a few of the "**smaller activities**" I undertook. First of all the writing of an article for the Festschrift of Michael Weinrich, who retired from his professorship in Bochum. Michael Weinrich has been involved in several of the ecumenical dialogues and is a member of the global network of theologians. My article is titled: "Having the Words of Eternal Life; the Vital Message of Life."

I attended the annual meeting of NetAct, the African network of theological institutions that is also an affiliated member of WCRC. The meeting took place in Johannesburg, 25-29 January 2015. NetAct is a vibrant organisation with a growing number of member institutions. For WCRC it is good to be involved in this.

I am involved in a network of German theologians, set up by the Reformierte Bund. So far we had two meetings, 13 June 2014 and 13 January 2015. I find it interesting to be involved in this.

And finally in line of reactions on the WCC document "Together towards Life" we are preparing a consultation on "Secularisation in Europe." This

consultation is prepared together with the WCC, CWM and EMW. The consultation is planned for autumn this year.

The past year has been the first full year in our new office in Hannover. I do miss the frequency of the ecumenical contacts as it was in Geneva, but I also feel on the other hand that I have “landed” in the new work environment. All energy is now needed to continue and—where possible—to expand the challenging and interesting programme of the TMC office. For that I am part of the larger team of executive and administrative colleagues. I hope that with them I can be of good service to the World Communion of Reformed Churches.

REPORT OF THE OFFICE OF JUSTICE AND PARTNERSHIP

Rev Dora Arce Valentín

As in last year's report, this one follows the priorities approved for the period 2013-2015.

I. 10th Anniversary of the Accra Confession

- a. In March 2014 we started a series of consultations in our regional councils that culminated with a global gathering. These consultations evaluated the process and brought together the voices of each of the regions to also engage in a celebration of the anniversary of the Accra Confession. After the CANAAC/CANACOM, meeting we met in Barranquilla, Colombia, from June 3-5, 2014, for the AIPRAL consultation. September 9-11 we gathered in Taipei, Taiwan, hosted by the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, for the NEAC consultation. Later in September, from 26 to 28, ACRC in partnership with our office organized their consultation in Nairobi, Kenya. WCRC Europe contributed to the global efforts by organizing a meeting on asylum and migration held in Hannover, October 8-10. November 3-5 we came together with the voices of all the regional councils that were part of the consultations to evaluate the process, bring reflections to some of our ecumenical partners and to prepare recommendations on how to help member churches frame their mission in the midst of the global challenges to struggle with the crisis of justice and peace. The final documents of all these consultation are attached to this report.
- b. We are moving forward to continue the improvement of information about what we are doing to promote the Accra Confession, not only as such, but as a cry for economic and environmental justice. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and our website are becoming more and more useful tools to promote our work and to connect with member churches, regions, partners, NGOs and others in addition to the expansions of networks.
- c. We continue our commitment with the Oikotree movements. We participated in two meetings of the facilitating group, and we have been very active before, during and after the last workshop organized by the working group on transformative theological education. The workshop was held in Matanzas, Cuba, from February 3-9, 2015.

II. Human Trafficking

- a. We continue our efforts to create awareness among member churches and ecumenical partners about the reality of trafficking as part of the consequences of inequality and the economic and financial systems that generate it. We continue expanding our networks and connecting member churches which are interested to make human trafficking a part of their work. We continue to work closely with our UN office in New York and involve them in the work that we are doing.
- b. In November 2014 the working group on human trafficking met to prepare the release of the "Broken for You" campaign. We also prepared a list of local churches willing to use the resource, almost as a pilot project, so we would ensure obtaining feedback that will help us to evaluate the results and strategize how to move forward. We created a questionnaire for the churches to fill out in response to the resource, after Easter. The campaign came out in January 2014, and so far we have been receiving good information about how churches are using the materials. We regret the lack of resources for translation, and that will be part of the discussion during the evaluation. We are planning another meeting of the working group after Easter. Thanks to our communication executive and to our intern Joanna Hipp and Ryan Smith for their contribution to the task. Also to Sergio Garcia who graciously designed the logo. Writers and members of the working group were key resources. Without them this initiative couldn't have happened.
- c. We continue with the commitment to link actions against human trafficking with theological reflection. As we did with the concept paper and the introductory document to "Broken for You," this aspect will be part of the evaluation and we will increase the participation of young theologians (for instant, participants of the GITs) in our future initiatives.

III. New Economic and Financial Architecture

- a. The staff persons from WCC, CWM, LWF and ourselves have worked together in a concept paper named "Working Together Towards a New International Financial and Economic Architecture," for the general secretaries' meeting in order to facilitate the conversations and make clear the priorities recommended by the panel, as well as the working structure and resourcing.

- b. As it was discussed in Hannover, during the 2014 executive committee, the panel recommended by the São Paulo meeting to develop a document with recommendations for action to the general secretaries. So far, the process is still under consideration of the four bodies to agree on how to move forward. The discussion on the table is mainly about the priorities and the structure/resources for the follow up.
- c. The project that came out as part of the São Paulo recommendation in relation with the school of governance, economics and management is also developing and waiting for agreements among the organizations about how to proceed with what has been done so far.

IV. Gender Justice

- a. Scholarship for women. We continue to manage the theological education scholarship fund for women. For the period January-December 2014, we continued giving scholarship to Shwe Ni Khaing, from the Baptist Theological College. We received nine new applications. From all of them, only one woman from the Eglise Evangelique Reformée du Burkina (AEERB), already qualifies for the scholarship. We are in conversation with one potential candidate from IPV (Venezuela). That means we need to continue encouraging member churches and area councils to promote the opportunity to empower women through theological training that will allow them to be ordained. From our global office, we are making the scholarship more visible through social media: using the website, Facebook and the *Reformed Communiqué* with stories told about the impact of this program for women currently in ministry and their churches.
- b. Gender violence. As part of our partnership with our UN office, we continue to promote the Orange Day, SayNO-Unite and HEforSHE campaigns, all of them designed to create awareness about violence against women and children and to work to end it. We continue our engagement with the We Will Speak Out Coalition (WWSO). Our intern Joanna Hipp, working primarily for this office, participated on behalf of WCRC in the following events: 1) November 24, 2014: planning and evaluation meeting Geneva. Gathered together at the YWCA, and alongside LWF, Tearfund and other organizations, we met to discuss strategy review planning and member concept papers. 2) 16 Days of Activism November 24-December 10, 2014: Joining the working group on 16 Days of Activism, we produced a resource for churches, communities of faith, congregants, lay people, etc. to actively engage each day to learn more about sexual and gender

- based violence. This resource was meant to help individuals and faith leaders to engage with this issue, and talk about it in their churches and communities. We provided prayers, stories, sermons, sermon illustrations, poems, songs and more from people from around the world. Alongside the WWSO project, the WCRC also created a 16 Days of Activism resource; 3) Planning for an interfaith event in London, February 2015: co-hosted with the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Prevention of Sexual Violence Initiative PSVI team. The goal was to help mobilize faith communities and organizations to not only speak out but move to practical action. The key faith leaders were chosen based on: post-conflict countries or individual faith leaders who have a depth of experience engaging to end sexual violence in their country of origin. 4) Working group for the Commission on the Status of Women event Friday, March 13, 2015: Joining together with the We Will Speak Out Coalition US, we planned a parallel event hosted at the Commission on the Status of Women. This also allowed more persons to become aware of the WCRC.
- c. Joanna Hipp participated on behalf of our office, in the 59th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), which focused on the 20th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. While no country has gender equality, the CSW meeting emphasized what is being done well in the progress for women's rights and gender equality, but also emphasized the many things that still need to be done, especially in relationship to many issues such as: healthcare, education and poverty as they relate to LGBTQi persons, migrants, immigrants, asylum seekers, young women and girls. Joanna was part of the planning group to develop liturgy for worship on Tuesday, March 9. She was also part of the We Will Speak Out working group for the We Will Speak Out US parallel event on gender-based violence on March 13. She met with Ryan Smith at the Presbyterian Ministries at the United Nations and with the young adults from the Lutheran World Federation cohort. She participated with the young adult women's leadership development led by Jackie Spycher and attended the march for gender equality and women's rights on International Women's Day. She made the WCRC visible by meeting with and also attending parallel events of our partner organizations: WCC, LWF, YWCA, WWSO, WWSO.US, PC(USA), Ecumenical Women and other NGOs, as well as posting updates through the WCRC Twitter account.
- d. Silvia Michel Prize for Women. Yvette Rabemila and Brigitte Rabarijaona, both ordained ministers in the Church of Jesus Christ in Madagascar, were awarded the 2014 Sylvia Michel Prize

at a worship service in Heiden, Switzerland, on Sunday, March 8 2015. Our executive for communications was present during the ceremony and the previous meeting, including the one with PANKS (Swiss women presidents of the Reformed Churches in Switzerland) in which we reaffirmed our commitment to continue our partnership with them and with the prize.

V. Other activities

- a. The executive secretary participated in the meeting of the Oikotree facilitating group and transformative education working group, in Kuala Lumpur, May 2-6, 2014.
- b. The executive secretary with Joanna Hipp, visited Geesje Werkman, project manager for "Kerk in Actie" in the Protestant Church in the Netherlands in Utrecht. We also visited the Hague. This visit was planned in coordination with Rev. Jan-Gerd Heetderks, WCRC Europe president, in order to know better what the Protestant Church in the Netherlands is doing about migrants and human trafficking.
- c. The executive secretary participated in the first meeting of the planning committee for the 2017 General Council and visited Erfurt with the rest of the members. The meeting took place from 17-20 November, 2014.
- d. The executive secretary participate in the staff retreat from 8th to 10th of December 2014.
- e. The executive secretary is working closely with the general secretary and the executive for communications in order to stand in solidarity with member churches facing difficult situations on issues of gender, economic, ecologic injustice and in pastoral accompaniment in their struggles for peace and reconciliation.
- f. The executive secretary received at the justice and partnership office some of the visitors to our headquarters, interested to know more about our work.
- g. The executive secretary worked in fundraising for the justice and partnership programme.

VI. Final considerations

We conclude this period after a long time of transition with many other challenges to overcome. Nevertheless, we are grateful for the opportunities God has put before us to work with this

organization, and mobilizing all kinds of resources to promote what we believe is core in our "esse" as a worldwide Reformed family, our passion for justice and peace, our commitment to become a communion that celebrates our diversity as a gift of God.

I am grateful for the people who work as part of the WCRC staff, our officers and members of the Justice and Partnership Core Group who have been supportive of our work.

To God be the glory!

Critical analysis of the perspective of Uniting General Council (2010) recommendations and the strategic plan approved in 2011

The very basis of the strategic plan in terms of the work of the desk of Justice and Partnership rely on the affirmation that “there can be no communion without justice and no justice without communion” (SP p.5). As it is clear in the same introduction to the strategic plan this approach to justice, grounded biblically and theologically, refers to building right relations among people, justice in the economy and the earth, gender justice, eradication of poverty, reconciliation and interfaith engagement, among others.

Methodologically, we also agreed in working closely with the regional bodies and networking in order to build the capacity of the member churches. This also includes possibilities to strengthen partnership both as methodology and as an engagement of work.

In that sense, we have been trying to work as closely as possible with the regional councils. Some of them are very proactive and work well in partnership with the office. Others are still struggling to rebuild their networks and empower themselves as regions. Some others are still not even at the level of being considered part as a region itself in the Communion. The consultations celebrating the 10th anniversary of the Accra Confession gave us the opportunity to work with the regional councils. We did not visit or organize a consultation in regions where we were not able to contact the regional leaders to support us in organizing the meetings. Finding the right dates that would work for a consultation was also an issue in some regions.

Networking is still a challenge. We do have two formal networks, Gender Justice and Justice in the Economy and the Earth. It has been a challenge to empower these two networks, not only because many members are not active and barely respond to the communications but also because of the lack of budget dedicated to activate the work of the networks. So far, we only had the chance to meet once around a consultation on human trafficking in 2012. One of the ways in which we are trying to face the challenge is organizing working groups. Currently, the one that has been empowered is the one working on human trafficking. Last year we decided to organize different working groups within the networks, but this is still not functioning the way we want and need.

In addition to this, we recognize advocacy as a very important part of our work as an international organization. We are doing less than we should be doing. In that sense, one of the things we may need to reflect on is the role of our United Nations office and the ways in which we can

make visible the struggles of many of our member churches through them in a more effective way. So far, we are only working together in the Commission for the Status of Women and at a different level with their participation in the working group on human trafficking.

Lastly, we have a long way to go in terms of working in partnership methodologically and engaging in work with other partners. So far, our presence as part of the facilitating group of Oikotree gives us a space, as well as our participation in the We Will Speak Out Coalition. We are trying to engage other partners like World Student Christian Federation in our focus on youth empowerment as a way to develop other levels of partnership, but we still have to develop a better strategy to improve and empower our programmatic work in partnership with other ecumenical institutions or even NGOs bodies and organizations that can strengthen what our member churches are doing or looking to do.

At the executive committee meeting in Ghana (2013) we presented the priorities of this desk and obtained approval. They were framed under the vision of the strategic plan and included the priorities until 2015. We are developing our activities under those approved priorities.

Looking at the strategic plan again and the different priorities that link with the desk of Justice we have to say we still have many challenges to work with. They are:

Mission

- Interfaith dialogues
- Immigrant churches, by and among indigenous people. In the case of immigrant churches, the only thing we are doing is through the presence of the Hispanic Caucus of the PCUSA and their active role as part of AIPRAL and CANAAC. They were present in both of the consultation celebrating the anniversary of the Accra Confession and are very present in our social media.

Covenanting for Justice, Living out the Accra Confession

- We need to improve the way we work with our Theology and Mission desk. We are moving slowly, but we still have much more work to do on this partnership.
- The NIFEA needs to move forward, and we hope we will be able to overcome the impasse because of the ongoing conversations between the general secretaries of the four ecumenical bodies engaged in the project.
- We recognize that almost nothing has been done programmatically about climate justice but having it as a transversal issue on all of what we do from our justice desk,

like NIFEA, Accra 's consultation and human trafficking approaches.

Gender Justice

- On gender leadership and power, we still have so much to do. The consultations celebrating the 10th anniversary of the Accra Confession showed us how much is needed to work more intentionally on these issues. Even the participation of women in these consultations was a challenge for some regional bodies.
- The issue of the ordination of women, according to the strategic plan, is to engage not only the secretariat and the core group members but the entire executive committee. The lack of interest shown by the leaders of the member churches to use the funds for the scholarship is a sign of the way our churches are taking this matter. On the other hand, team visits were suggested by the strategic plan involving all of the secretariat. So far, we have done nothing in that sense. A more intentional strategy needs to be settled if we want to move forward with the challenges we have as a Communion on this matter. A recommendation to address this will be taken to the core group meeting to be discussed and presented to the executive committee for action.

Justice, peace and reconciliation

- We have done nothing about indigenous people. We will have to encourage regional councils and member churches working with indigenous communities to generate initiatives and work in partnership with the justice desk to address this.
- In partnership with the office of the general secretary and the communication desk we are trying to accompany the member churches in their struggles for justice. The need of better networks and the link with the regions is crucial to us in our commitment to be in solidarity with them.

**Appendix to the Report of the
Office of Justice and Partnership:
Reports from the consultations on the
10th anniversary of the Accra Confession**

Africa (ACRC)

ACRC Statement on the Tenth Anniversary Celebration of Accra Confession

Preamble

In Nairobi, Kenya, on the 26th to the 28th September 2014, at the Desmond Tutu Centre of the All Africa Conference of Churches, 27 delegates of the Africa Communion of Reformed Churches (ACRC), in partnership with the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC), together with ecumenical friends, held a consultation intended to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the Accra Confession.

Through inspiring Bible studies and God's guidance, critical theological perspectives on the Accra Confession, reflections on the ecological, economic, socio-political and religious context on the continent of Africa, they discerned what the future activities on the faith stance of the Accra Confession could be in a number of ways.

Notwithstanding the challenges the Africa Communion of Reformed Churches has faced since the adoption of the Accra Confession, the consultation was re-energized and motivated to discern opportunities to participate in the WCRC communion building, justice programme and programmatic strategies for future prophetic witness and activities by member churches to strengthen the impact of the Accra Confession on the continent of Africa in particular and the globe.

Listening and discerning together

Delegates of the consultation, through worship and inspiring presentations, group and plenary discussions, guided by the power of the Holy Spirit discerned *inter alia* that:

- The Bible gives testimony of a life-giving God, e.g. in the story of Creation (Gen 1:27) and that the earth is the Lord's; God owns the whole of creation (Psalm 24), and through the Gospel of Jesus Christ continues to promise fullness of life despite the degradation of creation by selfish human acts manifest in the suffering of millions in Africa and other parts of the world.

- The Accra General Assembly in 2004 employed the Biblical understanding of Babylon as empire² to conceptualise the convergence of military violence, economics, politics, religion and culture as empire in the 21st century that destroys the whole of creation and life. In harnessing its resources of faith the Accra Confession is a prophetic faith stance, aligned with the heritage of other confessions that irrupted in crisis situations that undermined the integrity of life and the dignity of creation and humanity.
- Empire has worsened in the ten years after the adoption of the Accra Confession.
- Accra speaks to the theological understanding of human dignity, challenging the African Church to constantly critique her own internal contradictions in the light of the commodification of life and her complicity in furthering the death dealing effects of Empire.

Challenges on the Work of Accra

Confessing its own omissions in furthering the work of Accra on the continent, in the light of evidence about little awareness of the confession among member churches, while affirming efforts³ made by a few members in the region to keep the work of the confession alive, the consultation offered its own critique of the Accra Confession and identified *inter alia*:

- The language of justice in the Accra Confession dichotomises eco-justice from gender justice, thereby potentially excluding other women whose experiences and location in Africa are pertinent to the cries for justice that God equally listens to.

² "The Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa and the Evangelical Reformed Church in Germany, after much deliberation have come to a definition of empire as we have stated in the Preface, but find important enough to repeat at this point. "We speak of empire, because we discern a coming together of economic, cultural, political and military power in our world today. This is constituted by a reality and a spirit of lordless domination, created by humankind. An all encompassing global reality serving, protecting and defending the interests of powerful corporations, nations, elites and privileged people, while exploiting creation, imperiously excludes, enslaves and even sacrifices humanity. It is a pervasive spirit of destructive self-interest, even greed – the worship of money, goods and possessions; the gospel of consumerism, proclaimed through powerful propaganda and religiously justified, believed and followed. It is a colonization of consciousness, values and notions of human life by the imperial logic; a spirit lacking compassionate justice and showing contemptuous disregard for the gifts of creation and the household of life," Boesak, A. Weusmann, J. Amjad-Ali, C. 2010. *Dreaming A Different World-Globalisation and Justice for Humanity and the Earth, The Challenge of the Accra Confession for the Churches Dreaming a Different World*, p23.

³ Boesak, A. Weusmann, J. Amjad-Ali, C. 2010. *Dreaming A Different World-Globalisation and Justice for Humanity and the Earth, The Challenge of the Accra Confession for the Churches Dreaming a Different World*

- Ten years after the adoption of the Accra Confession and continuing efforts to enhance its witness among member churches and the continent at large, we are witnesses to the undying stubbornness of empire as seen in the harrowing experiences of the death of consciousness among victims of centuries of oppression and racial, economic, cultural and sexist exclusion.
- The relationship between the Belhar and Accra confessions should be mutually held together in order for their prophetic contribution to offer a framework for African Christianity and its own theology.

Way Forward

The consultation, after listening, critiquing and discerning its witness to the prophetic stance of the Accra Confession, grappled with the need to move out of the “mission-station” mind-set, identifying some of the theological principles and activities in the interim to advance its work of the Accra Confession. The consultation:

- Urges the ACRC executive committee to encourage the leaders of member churches to motivate their denominations to support ACRC’s work and to find ecumenically minded persons to solicit support for the ACRC and WCRC.
- Urges the ACRC executive committee to discern and investigate the role of the ACRC in the life of the African Union and other pan-African bodies as the ACRC speaks prophetically in the African context.
- Seeks the creation of opportunities for African church leaders, theologians, pastors and Christians to discuss cultural and spiritual experiences that are uniquely African.
- Urges the ACRC executive committee to investigate opportunities and facilitate processes for theological reflection, including the organization of conferences, scholarships and stimulating engagement on the Accra Confession.
- Acknowledges a lack of participation by the youth and differently abled people of the continent in its activities generally, and resolves to convene a youth consultation and a similar consultation for differently abled people on the Accra Confession in the region as a starting point in consultation with ecumenical partners and networks.

- Requests all member churches in the region to remember in prayer victims of harmful religious practices and violence particularly in the continent and around the globe as a whole.
- In partnership with the WCRC “Broken for You” project, pledges solidarity with African young women and men who are victims of the evil acts of human trafficking and child abuse on the continent.
- Denounces power obsession in all structures of member churches so as to enhance and live out the teachings and principles of the Accra Confession.
- Seeks means to discuss and translate the Accra Confession into all official languages of the region and encourage member churches to ensure its dissemination in vernacular.
- Suggests developing liturgies and Bible study material on the Accra Confession that challenge the status quo.
- Suggests compiling narratives of the victims of socio-economic, ecological and religious violence so as to develop prophetic story-telling in public witness.
- Encourages member churches to participate in prophetic policy making processes at levels of the WCRC.
- Encourages member churches to declare environmental days in their annual plans to grow rather than plant trees.
- Celebrates, in partnership with the community of the WCRC, the thirtieth anniversary of the Belhar Confession in 2016.

Prayer

God in your Mercy, journey with us your servants, in your Mission to transform and restore your Creation to the fullness of life in Christ Jesus.

Caribbean and North America (CANAAC)

An open letter to the WCRC, with proposals for action for CANAAC and CANACOM:

As we, the Consultation on the Accra Confession, gathered in Ocho Rios, Jamaica, from 20-22 March 2014, we had occasion to reaffirm the tenets we confess in the confession. What was acknowledged in the

“Letter from Accra” is as true now as it was at its creation: “In today’s world the divisions between the North and the South, the rich and the poor, and the powerful and the powerless, grow sharper and seek to isolate us from one another.”

As we began, we were led in study of Mark 10, in which many of the themes of the Accra Confession find biblical expression. As we reflected together, we were encouraged to examine our present reality, the losses we grieve as we consider the ten years since the creation and adoption of the Accra Confession and the hopes we continue to hold for a new reality of social, economic, ecological and political justice. Finally, we considered the call to action for the church in the Caribbean and North American context.

The Present Reality

In the ten years since the Accra Confession was adopted, nothing much has changed; in fact,

- Many of the economic, ecological, social and political realities have deteriorated and become deeply entrenched
- There still is a disconnect between North and South
- Among member churches there is a general lack of awareness of what the Accra Confession is and what it calls us to do
- In North America, there is the reality that people are being paid to ignore the negative effects of empire (trade agreements and recessions, unemployment, inequality, and erosion of democracy and sovereignty)
- In the Caribbean, with its history of colonization, slavery and resistance, the Accra Confession’s statement is still true, that “the cries of ‘never again’ are put to the lie by the ongoing realities of human trafficking and the oppression of the global economic system”
- Often church perpetuates empire, so church also is complicit in continuing inequities
- Empire is not clearly delineated between North vs. South; ideologies of empire are present in both regions.

The Things We Grieve

- Our failure to live according to the Accra Confession as a region
- Our failure to raise awareness of the confession within local contexts to the extent that we could
- Our failure to translate belief into action
- Instead of improvement, we have seen a worsening in economic and political realities.

The Hope Which Sustains Us

- We desire restoration of relationships
- We seek security and abundant life for all
- We recognize the need for redistribution of power
- The Bible calls us to confess not only what we believe but also the ways in which we have harmed one another; through such confession and subsequent action we can forgive and be restored
- To that end, we call ourselves to awareness, advocacy and action, which will again focus us upon the Accra Confession's call to social, economic, ecological and political justice.

We therefore propose these three areas of partnership toward justice that can bring action to the tenets we confess in the Accra Confession.

Human Trafficking

Human trafficking exploits persons socially, economically and physically, turning persons into commodities for economic and sexual gain. The Accra Confession calls us to reject this exploitation and commodification of persons; in the words of the confession, "We believe that God is a God of justice. In a world of corruption, exploitation and greed, God is in a special way the God of the destitute, the poor, the exploited, the wronged and the abused (Ps 146:7-9). God calls for just relationships with all creation."

We must address this injustice through awareness, advocacy and action:

- Network with civil agencies with existing resources to address this issue
- Provide resources for education and sensitization: bring awareness of subliminal messaging (song lyrics and the like); church resources for recognizing signs of abuse and exploitation within itself and the wider context; ad campaigns against human trafficking to build awareness
- Develop/contribute/utilize resources for the WCRC's "Broken for You" campaign (Lent, 2015)
- Distribute CWM and Cuban resources developed about human trafficking.

Poverty, Inequality and Unemployment

As the Accra Confession says, "We reject the current world economic order . . . and any other economic system . . . which defy God's covenant by excluding the poor, the vulnerable, and the whole of creation from the fullness of life."

- Develop Cottage industry: making use of internet capabilities: mentoring; micro-lending; expertise-sharing and capacity building; opportunities for marketing
- Expand fair trade
- Living wage: advocate for a wage that allows people to thrive; join campaigns elsewhere with resources regarding living wage.

Seeds for Life

As the Accra Confession states, we "reject any ideology or economic regime that puts profits before people, does not care for all creation and privatizes those gifts of God meant for all." Therefore we support efforts to de-centralize control of food and farm systems and work with global civil society to strengthen local and regional food economies that are just and sustainable. Therefore we will support:

- efforts to shift control of food and farm systems back into the hands of people and communities
- work with civil society to build just and sustainable local and regional food economies everywhere
- ensure abiding access to water, land and resources necessary to ensure sufficient, healthy and culturally appropriate food, fair prices for producers and abundant livelihoods for all.

Seeds for Life as gifts from God—not for privatizing and commodifying—can serve as a universal theme around which member churches can contribute, teach, preach and act according to their context. We will:

- develop resources for preaching and teaching using the central touchstone of Seeds for Life and including related issues, such as trade, corporate consolidation, commodification, etc.
- join other faiths, alliances and people's movements and take advantage of and contribute to existing resources and campaigns
- support local, national and global efforts to promote and scale up small and medium-scale farming, fishing and livestock production using agroecological approaches.

Finally, as stated in the "Letter from Accra": "If confessing what we believe as Christians requires our spiritual and practical resistance to economic injustice as well as environmental destruction, then we need new depths of spirituality. This isn't mere political activism; we're being called to a spiritual engagement against evil, and for that we need our lives to be deeply rooted in the power of God's Spirit. To put it simply, we need, as never before, the transformation of our lives promised through Jesus Christ."

WCRC Europe

Report on the European Consultation on the Accra Confession - October 2014 (Hannover)

Introduction and background

In 2004, WARC gathered in General Council in Accra, Ghana. It was a Council with difficult negotiations, with searching for common ground, with many discussions and new definitions. It was a battle for meanings and a struggle for interpretations: what do confession and confessing mean today, facing the struggle, for example, in the Global South of our Community? What does "Empire" mean and what is "living in the midst of Empire"?

One of the main questions was, how could we confess our reformed faith, and following that, how it is possible to reject injustice – especially the economic injustice as one consequence of the neoliberal globalization? We dealt with reflections in a time of crisis, we heard from each other – and it was impressive and sometimes distressing to hear the stories of those who felt suffering. And, at the end, we confessed the Accra Confession (AC) – everybody in his or her own way (the possibility was given by the AC 15). It was a great moment for our Community and a task for the future.

The Accra Confession motivates us to seek a global covenant for justice in the economy and the earth in the household of God.

In 2004, we had the economic injustice of globalization in our focus. It is not a secret that the AC was a difficult point in our later European discussion. There was a lot of rejection in our communities, and the European participants of the General Council had to explain about the process in Accra and the discussions there, to bring more insight to the process of Covenanting, more understanding for the need for the Covenanting process, and more common prayer. Especially the matter of "Empire" was a contentious point – and that appears to be unchanged. Perhaps the discussion about Empire slowed us down in the description of our real problems and our handling with it. We have to define it again and again, and we have to see how it works or rather how they work; we need to think about the empires with which we are confronted in the plural.

As the European contribution to describe the engagement in terms of the AC, the European Area collected in 2010 stories of Reformed Churches and communities, published as booklet: *Europe Covenanting for Justice*.

Now ten years later we have to read the AC anew – not only with respect to the meaning of 2004, but in an advanced way, with new questions for our community today. This does not mean that the problems, economic structures and challenges from 2004 are “yesterday-stories” but the world has turned more and more – we note new coalitions of power, further developed bodies of “Empire” – and more community and partnership is needed. For some of our brothers and sisters in Europe, the political situation has changed in the last ten years. Financial Crisis, unemployment and poverty, especially in the South of Europe was not to be expected in 2004 to the extent it has occurred. We are witnessing political changes and new threats in the world. More than ever we are required to be community and to look in the neighbourhood.

As we have been thinking since 2004, how we can go on with the covenanting process and how we could describe, in the light of the AC, our European challenges in terms of globalization today – the issue of the regional consultation on the AC became clear: We all are affected by migration and asylum – as Christians, as a reformed communion – with our own reformed history of migration and our gratitude for God’s help in times of homelessness.

So WCRC Europe decided in 2013, in consultation with the justice department, that the regional Accra conference should find a focus in asylum and migration issues.

The consultation was organized in cooperation with the ‘Reformierter Bund’ of Germany and we are grateful for this collaboration.

The aim of the consultation was to reflect on how the Accra Confession works in our community and how we live out our covenanting process. For the European Area, we recognized the issue of asylum and migration as our major challenge in Europe – for our Churches but even for the whole society. The consequences of migration are evident in some places: when the Steering Committee visited the reformed community in Athens, we saw the situation of refugees in Piraeus and we felt how this situation gives people in Athens sometimes a feeling of sorrow, helplessness and denial.

Some months ago, the UNHCR gave us information about the current situation of refugees: By the end of 2013, 51.2 million individuals were forcibly displaced worldwide as a result of persecution, conflict, general violence, or human rights violations. Some 16.7 million persons were refugees: 11.7 million under UNHCR’s mandate and 5 million Palestinian refugees registered by UNRWA. The global figure included 33.3 million internally displaced persons and close to 1.2 million asylum-seekers.

In the light of the crisis in Iraq and Syria, and recognizing the situation in the Mediterranean, we must expect that the figures for 2014 are much higher. A UNHCR statement said that the numbers were up substantially in both absolute and percentage terms. In all, 90,000 people crossed to Europe between July 1 and September 30 and at least 2,200 lost their lives, compared to 75,000 people and 800 deaths for the period between January 1 and June 30.

The issues of refugees and asylum seekers and of migration are most urgent for the countries of the European Union. The catastrophe of Lampedusa brings the plight of those who seek to flee their own countries into tragic focus. The EU faces the challenge of developing policies to address the specific situation of migrants, respecting human rights and giving protection to vulnerable people.

For the institutions of the EU, and also for national governments, it is highly important to see and consider their own situation and possibilities, but nevertheless it often gives the impression that the EU is building its own power structures, which are building a new "iron curtain", excluding people who are in need for help.

The consultation – storytelling

The working method of the consultation was the practice of storytelling. We decided to do so, because we are deeply convinced that we need first empathy and then, as a second step, action.

As European member churches of the WCRC, we are part of and affected by the complex situation in the one or other way. To reflect on our role, at first we listened explicitly to those churches situated in external border countries:

- What are their experiences with regard to the issues of refugees and migrants?
- How do they get involved and what can others learn from their expertise?
- What problems do churches observe by their engagement?
- In which way could we as a communion support each other by taking up responsibility for the sake of humanity?
- In which way does our involvement reflect our theology and our "being the body of Christ"?

The testimonies of the delegates of the churches during the conference were very impressive:

Samuel Amedro, President of the Église of Evangélique au Maroc, told about the situation of the 40,000 refugees who are stranded in North Africa about the work of his church. "Every year, there are more

migrants who die in Morocco than in Mediterranean Sea. That is our everyday reality. From my point of view, it is murder. And when you have a murder, you are supposed to find the murderer and the sponsor. You could say: they should go back home! If you think so, you will probably be right. But let me ask you one question: who can steal the dream from the one who has nothing else but his dream? Their dream is the only richness they have. And it is a fabulous engine inside to go through all the proof they have to go through. And you have to know that, most of time, there is no room for them in their own country. In fact, they are not allowed to go back home: because of the shame, because of the investment the whole family made in them sending them for migration. They are forced to succeed! Because the survival of all their family depends on them..."

The Église Evangélique au Maroc looks after the people nobody wants in Europe but who are still trying to get over the fence – the seven meter high border between Morocco and the Spanish enclave of Melilla - the fence which was built to keep refugees on the African continent. Amedro's church is not rich - what they can give is food, a smile, a prayer, a some companionship and respect for the dignity of those who have nothing - except their dreams of a decent life.

The work of the church is illegal - the state does not allow Moroccans to assist refugees. But the members of the church look after refugees and migrants, who made it from different countries to Morocco and who are now living in a camp in the forest. Many of the women are victims of violence and rape; their babies, who are born in the forest, have no legal status and no one knows them. With a plastic tarpaulin, a church is built and, from a few branches, a wooden cross is made - that is enough to worship.

Amedro told about the people who again and again try to get over the fence but get wounded by barbed wire or by the bullets of the border police. The church is giving emergency medical assistance. How to proceed, he does not know - just that it is getting worse. "We will carry on - please, you are our voice in Europe", he appealed to the Reformed churches.

The delegates from Hungary, Italy, Greece, Spain, Poland, Lebanon and Morocco gave an impressive picture of the engagement especially of very small churches. They demanded change in European immigration policy and pointed, in their reports to how necessary it is, as Reformed sister churches, that we know more about each other and how important it is to network with one another.

A few quotes:

Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (Doris Peschke):

"A Call for change of attitudes regarding migration in accordance with European values

- A truly human approach to refugee protection in line with international and European conventions, including legal and secure access to Europe for those in need of protection

- A common European asylum system including decent reception conditions as well as a Common European Resettlement scheme."

Paolo Naso, Italy:

"We invite you to consider Sicily and Lampedusa as the gate where Europe meets the global South, its suffering, its hopes, its human and spiritual richness. So, if Lampedusa is European, it is German also. Swedish or Dutch... And we invite you to include what symbolically Lampedusa expresses in the theological, social and political agenda of your churches".

Nikos Stefanidis, Greece:

And I want to close by saying that we are not simply a humanitarian organization.

We want to speak also about Christianity, about the Bible, about God the Father the Son and the Holy Spirit, about salvation. And we do it in a very careful way.

We provide, in the beginning, a three course meal. After few hours of serving them, we announce that it is time to leave so we can clean the centre for the next day. But we explain that if anyone is interested to hear about Jesus and has questions about Christianity they can stay. Usually about 30-70 refugees are staying. Many are continuing asking questions and reading the Bible and some accepting Jesus and are baptized. And all this for God's glory only.

The consultation – conclusions

At the end of the conference, we tried to focus on two questions:

1. Why do these small churches invest so much in helping refugees and migrants?
2. Why does Europe do what it does to prevent (too many) refugees and migrants entering Europe ("Fortress Europe")?

In relation to question 1, different motives were mentioned:

One motive, which can be found in almost all countries, was and is the biblical imperative: "Love your neighbour". So, e.g., in Greece (Nikos), churches asked: Is to help refugees just a governmental job? What is our mission? And: What would Jesus do? And the answer is: This is what God asks us to do."

Another reason also was the biblical note “We’ve been slaves in Egypt”, understood as a political reason to look after “slaves” today. In Spain e.g., it was the memory of the Franco dictatorship: the protestant church in Spain was persecuted by her own government and helped by churches from outside Spain.

Similar to that experience are churches going to help because of their own history of being migrants. In Italy this is a major reason to help: the Waldensian church is a migrant church.

Another reason for supporting refugees and / or migrants is that it is just part of the diaconal work. In Hungary, it’s the necessary pastoral care; it meets the needs the churches are facing in their society.

In Poland, church people see their involvement as act of gratitude: Polish people left Poland for other countries in Europe and they were helped.

Last but not least, an important motive was just to notice and to speak out: With the Accra Confession (16) we realize: the integrity of the church is at stake!

“It’s a question of injustice, what we are facing. The work we do is not an act of sympathy but an act of integrity. We do this to build the church. To help, as we do, is a question of being church, an act of integrity of being church, and so we build church. These acts cause a revival of the church. How can we be a church and not do it. This is why the world will believe.” (Najla Kassab from the Lebanon)

“The being of the church is at stake.” (Doris Peschke from the CCME).

These words call to mind the words of the AC:

16. We believe that the integrity of our faith is at stake if we remain silent or refuse to act ...

35. We believe in obedience to Jesus Christ, that the church is called to confess, witness and act, even though the authorities and human law might forbid them, and punishment and suffering be the consequence (Acts 4.18ff). Jesus is Lord.

In relation to question 2:

When it comes to the political analysis, there is a gap. Churches and especially congregations in all European countries work for migrants and asylum-seekers, but the church is often restrained in the political discussion about the system.

The political analysis of the situation is not easy too.

There were different questions:

What is the difference between asylum-seekers and migrants? For asylum-seekers there are international conventions especially the Geneva convention but, for example, the fence in Morocco keeps out every one and asylum-seekers are not enabled to ask for asylum. And do people who seek for a better life and flee starvation have fewer rights even though they are not covered by international conventions?

How many refugees / migrants can a society bear?

How to act against a strong movement of populist parties in some parts of Europe?

Is it possible to 'manage' migration (not asylum!)?

Does Europe want to keep cheap labour from outside of Europe?

The participants asked how the churches are involved in the political system. There was a consensus that it is no "accident" that the small churches at the borders of Europe are so involved in helping refugees. Once they met the needs literally by their feet, on the coastlines of their countries they can help better than the "mainline" churches. They usually have more problems when it comes to "political" questions and action. On the other hand, for example in German churches but also churches in other countries, you find congregations helping refugees because of their face-to-face-experience. Refugees are brought to many places in different cities, where church people meet them and help them.

It is clear that another European immigration policy is necessary and that the churches have to try to use their influence to realize another, human policy. In the light of the Accra Confession, as Churches we have to ask how we are part of the system of exploitation and expulsion and maybe how we benefit. We need certainly to find the connection between the neoliberal ideology and the reasons for asylum seeking and migration. This is what the Johannesburg Declaration means when it says: "We speak of empire, because we discern a coming together of economic, cultural, political and military power in our world today that constitutes a reality and a spirit of lordless domination, created by humankind yet enslaving simultaneously."

But over and above that, it requires us to analyse carefully the reasons for these situations and to discuss these reasons.

Churches need to stand up against dehumanizing procedures and the criminalization of help. Some churches do. There are ongoing discussions in some countries with politicians on these matters.

The participants of the conference also asked for a strong communion so that, on the one side, sister churches know about their work and problems and that, on the other side, churches can help each other too.

"We believe in God, Creator and Sustainer of all life, who calls us as partners in the creation and redemption of the world. We live under the promise that Jesus Christ came so that all might have life in fullness (Jn 10.10). Guided and upheld by the Holy Spirit we open ourselves to the reality of our world." (AC 17)

November 2014
Martina Wasserloos-Strunk
Jan-Gerd Heetderks

Latin America (AIPRAL)

10 years from the "Accra Confession" We ratify our commitment with the "Alliance Economic Justice and the Life on Earth"

*"Since you did it for one of the least important
of these brothers of mine, you did it for me.
Since you didn't do it for one of the least important
of these, you didn't do it for me."
-Matthew 25:40 & 45*

Background

In the last quarter of the 20th century, Christianity entered in a confessional emergency period: military dictatorships in South America, totalitarian governments, apartheid in South Africa, civil wars, revolutions, the fall of the Berlin Wall, globalization, "Free Trade Treaties." In view of the dramatic historical changes, the Reformed confessional family found itself challenged to react against the reality of the world stating its faith and updating its speech in order to go with that context. From the Reformed perspective, the faith takes risks if it doesn't react against the injustices.

The Accra Confession was born within a long reflection process, since the increasing situations of injustice to which we, the church, are called to preach the Gospel of love and justice. Within this process we remember:

- 1989, 22nd Assembly of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, Seoul, South Korea. A call to all member churches is made in order to get together in favor of economic justice.
- 1995, Theological Consultation in Kitwe (South Africa).

- 1997, World Alliance of Reformed Churches' Assembly in Debrecen declares the *Processus Confessionis*.
- 2004, WARC Assembly in Accra, Ghana, the "Alliance for economic justice and life on earth:" Accra Confession.
- 2010, World Communion of Reformed Churches' (WCRC) Unification Assembly, Grand Rapids, United States. The WCRC ratified the Accra Confession, not as another document but as a pact and a commitment, current and renewed in the communities through the reflective process led by the final document of the "Global Theological Consultation about Communion and Justice" which took place in Cartigny, Switzerland, in 2010 for the General Assembly:

"Communion and justice have always been core callings of Reformed people, but never more urgently than today. In Jesus Christ God has justified us. God who is just sanctifies us and calls us to do justice. In the commitment to justice we are called to act faithfully with what God has entrusted to us. Working for justice we see the world through the prism of God's grace making manifest God's love. Through covenanting for justice we are part of God's work in the whole creation, "to clothe ourselves with the new self, created according to the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness." (Ephesians 4:24)

- 2012, Meeting on the New International Financial Architecture, Sao Paulo, Brazil, mentions in its new Declaration: *The 2008 global financial and economic crash increased poverty and unemployment among millions in the global North and worsened and deepened poverty, hunger and malnutrition among even larger numbers in the global South, already experiencing decades of poverty and deprivation caused by injustices in international financial and economic relations. A system of speculation, competition and inadequate regulation has failed to serve the people and instead has denied a decent standard of life to the majority of the world's population. The situation is urgent.*

Meaning and impact to our churches

More than 10 years after this *processus confesionis*, which culminated in our Accra Confession, we can affirm as Reformed Churches in Latin America and the Caribbean that we consider it as an echo to the clamour of millions of poor people who beg God to intervene in their liberation from poverty and in defense of human dignity (Exodus 2:23-

25). The "Accra Confession" has allowed us to actualize the Good News of the Gospel in our reality, from our Reformed tradition, to announce hope and certainty that a new heaven and a new earth are possible (Revelations 21, 1ss). Therefore, the Reformed family in the region has promoted Christian education processes in the churches, it has organized courses in the theological education institutions, it has done publishing, and some of our churches have included them in their Book of Confessions. The confession is allowing us to strengthen our impact commitment from the analysis of the signs of the times, in order to hold talks with the government's representatives about the changes and reforms that the new economic model needs to make better conditions for our people's lives.

"The Church [is] Reformed, Always Reforming" (*Ecclesia Reformata, Semper Reformanda*) is not only a motto, but part of our identity, which appealed us to hold up the faithfulness to the Gospel of full life through the constant renovation of the church, through a continual reading of the signs of the times. However, and in view of the new economic model crisis which increases poverty and inequality in all regions of our world, as well as the ecological devastation and its implications shown in the climate change, we recognize in a humble way that our word and action as churches have been weak and inadequate.

In the theological horizon of the "Accra Confession", we have Jesus as center and model. In its Christology the human being is affirmed as a total and holistic being. Accra commits us to choose the radicalism of the love that is lavished on humanity, and the whole creation. Love which turns into peace with justice, and into dignity to the people. Love which transforms the people into a better distribution of the exiting resources, in order to satisfy the decent needs of well living. Love which walks towards a "theology of the enough."

Accra explicitly exposes the ideal of "human being" from the exclusionary capitalist system, characterized by exploitation and selfishness, where humanity represents an object, or a means to rescue the Biblical image of the human being in God's image, only subject. Accra exposes tactically the absence of freedom and rights in the totalitarian systems.

The different types of migration in the world, internal as well as external, are usually related to the economic, social or political situation and the mistreatment of the nature, condemned in the "Accra Confession". As we shared the situation of the community "Predio el Tamarindo," in the Colombian and Caribbean, we got to know one of the cases of internal migration caused by the negative impact of the Free Trade Treaties, which have generated many violent forced displacements in Latin America. We saw how people like in

"ASOTRACAMPO" get together to protect their lands. We have experienced in an explicit way the need to keep confessing our faith in the spirit of the "Accra Confession". We need to express that we must denounce this sin and announce that Jesus came to teach that every person must restore his or her dignity back. (Jn. 10:10)

This are signs of how human beings have learned to behave negatively, bringing violent relationships through our way of making economy in a speculative way, hardly democratic politics, which culminate in a negative patriarchal relationship that falls into a terrible mistreatment of nature. This type of ethic behavior denies our human values and even more our Christian spirituality.

Context and validity

"I am a person of black African descent. I have no more tears, I have no more strength, I don't want to live anymore. A friend of yours asked me if she could make a book with my name and with a picture of me, from here a answer her: make your book, use my picture and use my name, and if that saves "Tamarindo" and saves Colombia, sign it with my blood too."
–Marisol (Colombian woman 3 times displaced before arriving to Predio Tamarindo", where she has been, once again, displaced)

Over the years, and the recent crisis of the current economic system, which affects the Northern countries, shows that its capacity to produce poverty has no limits. Therefore, we can affirm today that the world economy has an undeniable reality: rich people are getting richer and poor people are getting poorer. It is not necessarily an academic study to see what happens in Latin America, where the gaps of incomes and wealth are getting dramatically bigger every day. Here we hold the inequality world title, with an average GINI coefficient of 0,51. In this sense, the Global Wealth Report from the Credit Suisse Research Institute found that the richest 10% of the world owns 84% of the world's wealth, while the poorest half owns only 1%. The same survey found that the richer 1% owns already 46% of the world's assets. On the other side, 50% of those with lower incomes own hardly 1%.

The OEA joined the international debate on inequality, when they turned it into a central theme in their meeting in Paraguay. They affirm that the economic growth itself does not resolve inequality and that the continent has changed a lot "for good" with the progressive governments in the last years, in terms of democratic progress and economic growth, but that this progress has not been complete. This is

because the economic growth "has not turned our countries into more egalitarian societies. On the contrary, there still remains a high level of injustice in the distribution of wealth and the access to social goods, an inequality so big, that it even damages our democratic fabric."

This growing inequality is creating a consumer human being, without social sensibility and with a spirituality that focus on competition and its prosperity based on individual success in order to access the goods that are needed to live and be happy. In this way, the economic model denies the grace of God to all human beings and promises salvation through the accumulation and the economic growth.

Challenges and Tasks

10 years after the Accra Confession, the member churches of AIPRAL:

- Celebrate the strength of the God of justice, who challenges to resist in hope and solidarity and encourages us to commit in new prophetic actions where there is suffering and injustice.
- We recognize that we need to improve our commitment as confessing churches through strategies and actions that allow all members of our ecclesial community to know and interiorize what we confessed in Accra.

Therefore with the force of the Holy Spirit we promise:

- To recover a spirituality linked to God that protects human life and all His creation, that allows us to resist the dehumanization and insensitivity that produces the consumer culture and individualistic to the service of the God of the current economic model.
- To develop pedagogic and educative processes in our national and local churches, in the theological education institutions and in catechism spaces, which focus on the Gospel of full life that forms human beings that resist the god of this world, maintaining hope and building social alternatives in faithfulness with the God of life.
- From AIPRAL we ask God that His spirit moves the leadership of all our churches so that they encourage their ecclesiastic body to include "The Accra Confession" in their books of confession or founding documents.
- To translate the vision and theological challenges of the "Accra Confession" into a language that can be showed in public forums, in governments, in IMF spaces and the World Bank, in the intergovernmental organism of the region, to have an effect that serves as an alternative for the current economic model or any other model of authoritarian system that doesn't state positively de good living of the whole creation.
- To participate and support community processes and social sectors that build economic, cultural and politic alternatives

- which focus on the defense of human dignity, the value of work y the protection of God` s creation, from which we all take part.
- To strengthen the dialogue and the communion with our sister churches in the Global North and South in order to organize a joint strategy that allows to keep resisting and searching alternatives to the current economic model, which makes its devastating consequences in this common house that God has given us to live in communion and justice.

*Now we proclaim with passion
that we will commit ourselves,
our time and our energy to changing,
renewing, and restoring the economy
and the earth, choosing life, so that
we and our descendants might live*
–Deuteronomy 30.19
Accra Confession (Art. 42)

This document has been produced and approved in the Consultation on the 10th Anniversary of the Accra Confession, which took place in Branquilla, Colombia, 3-5 June 2014.

Footnote: All quoted documents are available at wrc.ch.

Northeast Asia (NEAAC)

Statement from the North East Asia Area Council 10th Anniversary of the Accra Confession Consultation held 9-11 September 2014 in Taipei, Taiwan

Who we are

We are a fellowship of churches from Taiwan, Korea, Japan and Hong Kong who have met ten years after the Accra Confession was prophetically pronounced to receive and evaluate the relevance of the document in our respective countries and also in this region as a whole.

What we have done

We spent this time together to pray, to share communion and to understand the history of the Accra Confession. We read and reflected on the Confession in small groups, and we thought about how we can implement our findings in the local churches.

The Accra Confession declares that each of us should live "life in fullness" according to God's order, and we confess that we human beings have created obstacles to prevent that precious gift from our

Creator to become reality. The Confession has been challenging us to acknowledge and live out that all of God's creation is designed to live in harmony.

We confess that the Accra Confession is still very unknown in our churches, and we need to do the job in each of our own churches to help deepen understanding and application of the Accra Confession.

However, we found that the Accra Confession is still very relevant and perhaps all the more so ten years later and specifically in our region as we can easily think of problematic examples in our countries which are related to the issues of economic injustice and ecological destruction, which are raised in principle in the Accra Confession.

We visited a community in Taipei which is the victim of unjust forced eviction. The land, the historical and cultural heritages and the people living on the land were unjustly uprooted solely for "economic development." We were reminded that similar situations abound in each of our countries as well.

What we should do

We noticed that although each country faces different issues with inclinations and nuances, many of the issues are not just isolated local events, but are interwoven as a region because of the nature of a globalized world.

While a globalized economy has brought its conveniences and advantages, it also clearly destabilized our regional economy and marginalized and alienated many people who are under the influence of this global system.

And because of its global nature it also makes every one of us complicit and entangled in the system. We need to raise awareness of and dig deeper into the workings of such global forces of oppression and exploitation, and we also desperately need to try and find ways to respond to it.

Territorial disputes are causing increased military tension in our region. Egoistic and one-sided interpretation of history taken by each country is also evoking political confrontations. Visible conflicts yield hatred, and governments and mass media seem to be intentionally feeding "self-serving" information. In some countries excessive manifestation of nationalism has shown up in forms of hate speech and xenophobia. As sisters and brothers in Christ in North East Asia, we are seriously concerned about the situation that puts peace among us under threat.

As a region, we find that migrant workers in Asia are the people economically exploited, socially marginalized and culturally alienated.

In each country, wage exploitation, racial discrimination and suppression of human rights have generated severe social problems. These issues are closely interconnected to economic justice.

Nuclear power is also endangering our region, as when disasters happen the impact cannot be confined to one country. And the promotion of it always is tied with an economic growth rhetoric. Nuclear power, as we learned from the Fukushima incident, is unstable, difficult to control, unclean and harmful to the entire creation. We, as churches which are against ecological injustice, need strong solidarity to work on these critical issues. And the relation between nuclear power and nuclear weapons should be further explored.

Aging and the gap between the generations have also become critical issues since the older generation has benefitted from the prosperity of the past, and the younger generation is suffering from the difficulty of finding stable jobs. We strongly believe that the church should play the role of bridging the generation gap and voicing the difficulties and struggles all generations are encountering.

Given that in this region Christians are a minority living in a multi-religious society, it is essential that we as Christians cooperate with other religions in addressing the issues raised by the Accra Confession. All people, regardless of beliefs, are impacted by the current economic and financial architecture. All bear a common responsibility as citizens to transform the injustices inherent in the system to ensure a social safety net to protect the weak, the disadvantaged, the young and the women in particular.

The culture of this region is predominantly patriarchal. Discrimination and gender violence, against both women and those in the LGBT community, remains widely tolerated. In a world community that is increasingly advocating for an "option for women" in tackling the challenges of poverty, illiteracy and low wages, North East Asia is relatively "rich" compared to most regions of the world. This region should therefore provide an example to the world in providing sexual, cultural and economic protection for all, especially those traditionally discriminated against. The churches should lead the way in this, advocating for appropriate legislation.

Concluding remarks

We are desperately in need of a specific action plan, mutual sharing and possibilities for solidarity as we try to disentangle the issues which are far more complicated and out of range of our meager powers alone.

Nevertheless, we covenant that the renewal of our faith and the fullness of the gospel (fullness of life, justice and peace) in the church—which does not avoid the bearing of the cross—is vital for our collective witness in our societies.

Global Consultation Report

Accra Confession: Ten Years Later

What have we done?

The Accra Confession emerges from the suffering and struggle of the people of God to live life in its fullest. As we celebrate ten years of the Accra Confession, we recognize that its adoption by the World Alliance of Reformed Churches broke new ground on an issue that was necessary and urgent. The Accra Confession has provided the basis for missional engagement in new and radical ways, becoming a paradigm-changing moment in the history of the Reformed communion.

Over the last ten years the Accra Confession has inspired conversations around what it means to live faithfully as disciples of Christ in the midst of economic injustice. Within the communion and beyond, these conversations provided for a new shared language for the naming of injustice and the call to build a just world. The Accra Confession recognized the connection between the ecological and economic crises and spoke of covenanting for the economy and the earth.

At the same time, certain concepts within the confession challenged member churches, particularly language around empire and neo-liberalism, confession and communion. Despite these contentions, the Accra Confession brought people together around justice issues.

What have we gained?

One of the most important gains since the Accra Confession was adopted has been the document itself: a confession that arose out of the cries and struggles of the global South, resonating with those who suffer in all parts of the world, and strengthening knowledge of North/South dynamics. In discerning the signs of the times, the Accra Confession has proven prophetic.

Since 2004, the Accra Confession has afforded us many opportunities to gain partners who are walking together, such as CWM, LWF, WCC,

WSCF, resulting in many initiatives including the New International Financial and Economic Architecture. New faith-based social movements, such as Oikotree and Peace for Life, and numerous publications have also been made possible in part because of the principles of the Accra Confession. The confession also gives us entry points for individuals, churches, NGO's and even governments to engage realities of power, domination, inequality, gender injustice and climate change.

What has happened since 2004?

The emergence of the WCRC as a communion that brought the WARC and the REC together reaffirmed the centrality of the Accra Confession. The confession produced a number of consultations and conversations, among which were the South Africa—German dialogue, the Oikotree project, the São Paulo statement on a New International Financial and Economic Architecture and a Gender Reading of the Accra Confession, helping all involved come to terms with the meaning of some of the challenges of the Accra Confession.

The global financial crisis of 2008 confirmed the Accra Confession's definition of empire as "the coming together of economic, cultural, political and military power that constitutes a system of domination led by powerful nations to protect and defend their own interests." It also brought to light the convergence of interconnected and complex issues, such as global warming and extreme climate disasters, increased nationalism and non-state players affecting global and regional politics, sustained militarization, the shift in global political and economic powers, agri-business, and unjust trade agreements.

At the same time there has been an emergence of social movements in response to these issues. Arab Spring and the Occupy Movement are a couple of examples of these social movements.

What is missing?

We recognize that the world and economic powers look different today than they did at the 2004 drafting of the Accra Confession. Neo-liberal economics, race and patriarchy have entangled in legion manner. Economic inequality has increased exponentially and the obstinate persistence of racism and racial tensions escalate. Group identities that are most influenced by the effects and realities of empire include but are not limited to discrimination based on caste, indigeneity, gender, sexuality, and disabilities.

We must now work to address the effects of an unjust neo-liberal economic system in a more integrated manner that analyzes and

responds to these unjust social, political, and economic realities. These interconnections include: growing inequalities that link to human trafficking, displacement and migration; environmental racism, the dangers of nuclear power plants and their vulnerability in the midst of extreme climate change; and political crises which lead to religious and political fundamentalism. We also cannot ignore the deepening of the Palestine-Israel conflict as well as other conflicts around the world.

What is the urgent prophetic response?

We, as the WCRC, are called to respond in new ways to the signs of the times in this new day, 2014. We are called to faith in God, faithfulness to the Word of God, and action according to the principles laid out in the Accra Confession. We recognize that the present social and economic crisis and the state of endless war constitute a crisis of faith and therefore needs a response of faith to witness to the God of Life.

We are called to repentance and confession for the ways in which we each have been complicit in the inequalities and injustices which we have named in this document.

We commit ourselves to openness to the challenges of the Accra Confession itself as new crises arise and call for new understandings of our own prophetic faithfulness.

We commit ourselves to liberation and resistance against all forms of domination.

We commit to work together with partners and social movements with whom we walk this journey of justice.

We commit to deep listening to voices on the margins and those we have silenced, as well as to the voice of the Spirit as she speaks to us through other religious communities.

And therefore we commend to the WCRC body, in its entirety, these action areas:

- Critical reading of scripture and creative resources for congregations to witness to the God of Life
- Caste
- Climate change
- Gender and sexuality
- Human trafficking
- Immigration and migration
- The New International Financial and Economic Architecture
- Racism

- The theology of enough

The World Communion of Reformed Churches Area Councils commit to the following:

From ACRC:

Based on the regional meeting in Nairobi, what is our priority, how do we want to do it, how might this play out at a global level?

- Diverse African spirituality to be embraced
- *Ubuntu* concept to be encouraged. "I am because we are" as our optic framework
- How do we bring an economy of life in the midst of an economy of death?
- *Ubuntu* undergirds spirituality of being together, sharing and it is from there that we can move and offer something towards Accra.
- The groans of death from Kitwe are affirmed after all these years and they have become worse....
- *Ubuntu* is an alternative to the global context.
- Other regions may have the same ethos and we are humble about that.
- Issues of rape, racism, patriarchy, etc. have been shaped by economies of death but the African concept of *Ubuntu* addresses every injustice that Accra has addressed.
- *Ubuntu* deals with inclusivity, eco-justice, etc.
- *Ubuntu* will not stand alone but can be connected with indigenous spiritualities as found in Asia and South America.
- *Ubuntu* as a vision that challenges all injustices
- It links with *koinonia*, *shalom* from Biblical spirituality and indigenous spirituality.
- We need to teach about Ubuntu even among Africans
- Link this with Oikotree as one avenue to teach about this to Africans and all other continents.
- Link it with other concepts that deal with humanity in totality
- In a quest to live out *Ubuntu*, we also hope that in the General Council in 2017 our churches will have equal representation of men and women.

From AIPRAL:

- For "processes to educate and encourage all member churches to include the Accra Confession in their books of confessions or catechism"

- For the placement of “the principles of the Accra Confession in public forums such as world banks, governments and other international organizations”
- To “participate [in] and support community efforts that build economic, cultural and political alternatives that place human dignity and care of the environment at the forefront”
- To “make stronger alliances with our sister ‘northern churches’ to develop new economic systems that give God honour and glory for the welfare of all of God’s people.”

From CANAAC:

As the Caribbean and North American Council, we are challenged by the deep differences between the two parts of the council: North America and the Caribbean. Additionally, there is a great divide in the economic and cultural histories and the current realities of our member churches.

We need to build relationships between the two parts of the region, as well as within each. This also includes building awareness in the US & Canada of issues of empire and colonization, along with current issues of trade agreements and policies.

Information related to Accra can be disseminated to the North American churches, including:

- Cuba and the trade embargo
- DR & Haiti
- Empire & colonization descriptions
- Hispanic communities within the NA churches
- Race and racial tensions
- Issues related to the Military Industrial Complex
- Immigration/migration—education, action
- Gender and economic Inequality
- Climate change

How do we come to realize that we are all vulnerable? In the US there are also victims of empire?

Human trafficking

This is an issue that affects both parts of our region; thus, this is a major consideration in which we can work together:

- Finding stories about human trafficking

- Participating in “Broken for You” — a Lenten resource being developed

The “Slavery Footprint”—look at what we purchase and how many slaves it took to produce.

From Europe:

- We work together with CEC (CCME) in our advocacy work (bureau in Brussels). We are not working on special ‘reformed’ actions or advocacy but try to strengthen reformed networks relating to some issues.
- We will suggest to the council of WCRC Europe to organize a consultation on human trafficking

From NEAAC:

- Further study into the workings of empire in Asian context in hope of contributing to the global discussion.
- Promoting inter-religious work at the ground level to work together with other religious groups against economic and ecological injustices.

REPORT OF THE OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS

Phil Tanis

Having now completed more than a year in this position, I am pleased to offer the following report, reflecting on both achievements and challenges of the past year and looking toward successfully accomplishing the goals and objectives of the WCRC's strategic plan as we head toward the General Council in 2017.

Continuing Transition

First a brief note on my personal transition: it's gone well. As I've previously stated, Hannover immediately felt like home to me, and this has also been the case for my family (who moved from the States at the end of July 2014). I am thankful that they settled smoothly. My wife, Gretchen (an ordained minister in the Reformed Church in America), is involved in the start up of a new English-language service at the Reformed Church in Hannover (to launch on Pentecost this year), and the children are thoroughly enjoying their time at the International School Hannover Region.

One transition (which is both personal and professional) is more of a challenge: finding the time to properly learn German. Several classes have been taken, but the demands of the job are such that not enough time has been available to achieve the progress desired. This will be an ongoing challenge, and one I invite Core Group discussion on, strategically positioning the benefits of becoming fluent in German against the costs to do so, thus determining at what speed this should happen.

There have been other continuing challenges in the office. The impact of the geographical move of the office, combined with staff turn over, continued to be felt through the year. Much of the WCRC's institutional memory was lost, despite being able to contact former staff with specific questions. Contributing to this was the state of the electronic filing system, which had not yet implemented systematized filing procedures. Much time has been spent tracking down and piecing together what has happened over the last several years in order to move forward certain specific initiatives. Hans von Rütte, from the World Council of Churches (WCC) archives, has been advising us on filing systems.

A similar discovery was made with the database: it had not been effectively updated for some time. With the rapid change in email addresses in general, as well as the periodic change in leadership of our member churches, we were hampered in both the sending of church

membership dues notices, as well as in over all communications. Thankfully Werner Joecker was able to devote time to collecting updated information for the database; in addition, Anna Krüger obtained new contact information in the course of her financial responsibilities. Regional leaders, including many executive committee members, assisted both Anna and Werner in this (thank you!).

At the time of this writing, we are considering what database system will best serve our needs in the future. Two systems are being considered: 1) Filemaker Pro, which we currently use, and 2) Salesforce, which has been brought to our attention by the Christian Reformed Church in North America. There are a number of factors impacting the decision, including costs (both financial and time) and potential future uses of each system. Regardless of which system is selected, additional resources will need to be devoted to the database. A brief discussion of the strategic necessity of an effective database will be undertaken by the core communication group.

Another transition challenge that is being met concerns the closure of Ecumenical News International (ENI). While we continued to work with the WCC and ENI officers to formally close the organization, the ENI officers sent two email messages for us. The first was to former ENI reporters, asking who would be interested in writing for the WCRC. The result is a list of reporters from many parts of the world ready to work for us. The second message was to those who received press releases from ENI. The response to this message saw the number of those subscribing to the monthly WCRC eNews climb by several hundred.

Finally, the needs of the finance office continued to take the majority of Anna's time. The anticipated 50/50 split between finance and communications was revised to 70/30 as the financial needs became apparent. In reality, Anna spends closer to 90% of her time on finance responsibilities. Discussion continues between executive staff as to how to best utilize the support staff available. In the meantime, I would like to single out the assistance given by Joanna Hipp, our intern from the Presbyterian Church (USA), who has done much for communications, especially pertaining to social justice work.

Updates on Continuing Communications

The impact of online communication has grown significantly in the past year. Social media has especially increased as regular posting on both Facebook and through Twitter have raised the WCRC's profile. One example: in mid-March 2014, the WCRC Facebook page had 1972 "likes" with 1800 people "reached" and 156 "engaged" in one week; a year later, there were 2557 (+30%) likes with a reach of 4112 (+128%) and 392 (+150%) engaged. Each weekday there is at least

one post on Facebook and a "tweet" via Twitter, with higher activity as needed; weekends see activity whenever pertinent. Posts/tweets include calls to prayer, links to articles on the WCRC website, sharing of resources, visitors to the WCRC offices, activities of WCRC staff, news from member churches and more. A Facebook page for the WCRC's Office of Theology was also set up at the request of the executive secretary for theology. It currently has 423 likes while work continues to increase regular posts to it.

The WCRC Flickr account holds high resolution images of activities, allowing for downloading by news organizations and others. A new Instagram account features pictures and short posts of WCRC staff and member activity around the world.

The WCRC eNews is now sent to over 1200 email addresses each month (double that of a year ago). The list includes all executive committee members and member churches, journalists and editors, ecumenical partners and those who are interested in the WCRC's work. The eNews features from three to five links in each edition, focusing on news and resources. It consistently exceeds "industry" averages for "opens" and "click throughs." There have been a number of other targeted mass email messages sent over the past year (including the 'Broken for You' announcement and an update from the (new) general secretary). Specific messages to member churches are sent by language preference. It is anticipated that communication via mass (but targeted) emailing will increase in the coming years.

The website, thanks to a grant from Fondation pour l'aide au protestantisme réformé (FAP), is finally coming online in eight languages (Arabic, English, Chinese, French, German, Indonesian, Korean and Spanish). While the first phase of this project (with the four European languages) was completed in the months between communication secretaries, it was decided that the site could use a re-organization before bringing the other four languages online. This reorganization necessitated a significant rewriting of the content, followed by translation of the text. During this translation period, a redesign of the site was discussed, decided upon and done.

Going forward it is anticipated that up to two articles per month will be translated into all eight languages. Depending on budget, additional pages and/or resources will be translated into as many of the languages as possible. The blog on the website has been restarted with news from churches and "Reformed Tastes" (a glimpse into WCRC members' work from around the world) as the regular features. Officers, executive committee members and staff will also be invited to participate in the blog on a periodic basis (see action 50 of last year's executive committee).

The "March" issue of the *Reformed Communiqué* featured four of the languages (English, French, Indonesian and Korean) to mark the debut of the new website. There are plans to feature three other languages (plus English) in the September issue (while the June and December editions will likely be just in English). The *Communiqué* has been repositioned over the last year to act as a "best of" the articles that have already appeared on the WCRC website (outside of the general secretary's column, which will do so in the coming year).

Comparing printed circulation figures (which have increased this past year) to online access (website, eNews, Facebook, etc.) shows that more people are reading the articles virtually than in printed form (which is not a surprise). While printing and mailing the *Communiqué* remains important, especially for some specific target audiences, a discussion about how much money to spend on the *Communiqué* as opposed to translation (as but one example) will be taken up by the communication core group.

A new introductory brochure for the WCRC was created in the past year in the four European languages and will also be translated into any other language as needed. A new bookmark and the annual report were also produced, and a memory stick with the WCRC's logo was made (and is being used as both a gift and as a replacement to the production of printed reports at meetings). There has been discussion about what type of "gift" WCRC staff and officers can utilize on visits, and suggestions are welcome.

I have been privileged to travel with my fellow executive secretaries this past year to better communicate their work. I attended the start of the Global Institute of Theology in Costa Rica, the Accra Confession consultation in Taiwan and the Sylvia Michel prize award presentation in Switzerland. (Before Chris Ferguson began his fulltime work, I joined him on an official visit to the historic concurrent general synods held in Iowa by the Christian Reformed Church in North America and the Reformed Church in America.) I was honoured to join a WCRC Europe delegation on an official visit to Ukraine and to make a well received presentation at the Council for World Mission's (CWM) communication consultation in Singapore (titled "Engagement and Advocacy in the Digital Space: The Scope and Power of Electronic Communications"); I also paid a visit to several of our member churches in South Korea just prior to the CWM consultation.

Future Plans/Strategic Goals

As we are now past the half-way point to our next General Council (and through most of our office transition), it is important to take a moment

to reflect on the strategic plan adopted by the executive committee in 2011. Communications is categorized as one of the methodologies within the plan; put another way, effective communicating will incarnate our values. Everything we do, every way in which we show what we do, will be embedded with our values. Those values are taken directly from our constitution.

The WCRC:

- strives to demonstrate and live the oneness in Christ we profess, to carry out its ministry in ways that enable all member churches to share their gifts, and to honour and be committed to God's saving purposes for the transformation of the world.
- [is] called to respect, defend, and advance the dignity of every person.
- embraces God's covenant promises for the redemption, restoration and renewal of the whole creation through Jesus Christ.

Five key directions were identified in the strategic plan:

1. Mission
2. Communion
3. Justice
4. Theology
5. Ecumenical Engagement

All five lead to this: "The WCRC aims, by the end of 2017, to be known as a Communion that unites Reformed churches in God's mission in the world."

"To be known" implies that communication must be done (and done well!). Specifically, three expected outcomes were identified for communications:

1. Make visible the five key directions
2. Make visible the involvement of regions and member churches
3. Attract the support of new donors and retain the commitment of current donors

Reflecting on the first two together, one can see that all news, features, etc., coming directly from the WCRC touch on at least one of the five key directions. When news from member churches is shared (whether it be a news feature or a call to prayer), it is always with one of the five in mind. The work of the general and executive secretaries also emphasizes the commitment to the five key directions.

The challenge, however, lies in increasing the involvement of the regions and member churches. A meeting with regional leaders was held in 2012 which committed the WCRC to "promote and support regional activities related to WCRC's five key directions and make them visible." Two of the short-term objectives within this were to create a multi-lingual website and work with regions on translation of material (as well as development of material). This is being accomplished, although material development needs to be done with fellow executive secretaries as well as regional leaders.

Another short-term objective was to "create regional web pages that are coordinated in the regions." This has not yet happened, although the Indonesian region has created a site on their own, work is being done on a CANAAC site and preliminary discussions have occurred with the ACRC about assisting in the development of a site for them. The core group should discuss whether this objective remains viable (given the WCRC website, alternative means to communicate and language challenges even within regions) and, if so, what the WCRC communications office might do to assist.

The third expected outcome, pertaining to donors, also has challenges. A portion of the executive secretary's work is dedicated to development. The production of the annual report and material for the annual appeal is a part of this, as is involvement in the database. The general and other two executive secretaries continue to raise funds for the organization, as well as their own programmes. A draft strategic plan for development will be presented to the core communication group, the finance committee and the North American trustees to discuss during the executive committee meeting. Discussion by the core group would be welcomed as to how to better support and coordinate organization-wide development efforts, as well as how the executive secretary for communications can be specifically involved.

With the fundamentals of the WCRC's communications settled over the last year, attention will continue on two items from last year's report (both drawn from the strategic plan):

- increasing networks among communicators, especially professionals in member churches;
- enhancing contact lists for and relationships with both religious and secular media professionals

An increasing amount of time will also be dedicated to the 2017 General Council over the coming year, including the development of a GC2017 "app." I also look forward to working with the coordinator of the event as soon as s/he is brought on board.

REPORT OF THE FINANCE OFFICE

Gerhard Plenter/Anna Krüger

The WCRC financial structure, as in previous years, is divided into core budget and programme budgets. While the core budget receives the organization's income, with membership fees, grants and donations as its main sources, and covers payroll, administration fees and the WCRC's communication work, the programme budget is split into a series of programmes. Programmes are under the direction of the executive secretaries or the general secretary. They are funded through earmarked grants and donations.

2014

Core Budget

Expenses

The core budget had a deficit of EUR 13,341.61 in the 2014 budget year. Funds from the Reserve Fund were allocated to balance this deficit. The Reserve Fund was therefore decreased from EUR 79,359.94 to EUR 64,320.97.

Here, it is important to point out that the Relocation Fund that had been opened in 2013 with the remaining funds of a special UEK relocation grant, and at the beginning of the 2014 budget year had EUR 143,989.29, was used up in its entirety.

Moreover, in the budget year 2013, rather than paying our Swiss human resource provider Antex according to each invoice received, rounded amounts were paid and down payments were made. Due to a lack of documents available to us at the end of the budget year 2014, we have only now found out that we had a year-end balance of CHF 42,150.95 in our favor with Antex.

If not for the relocation grant and this positive balance, the 2014 core deficit would have been considerably higher and possibly exceeded the Reserve Fund.

Most, although not all, overspending in the budget year 2014 can be attributed to the relocation, as well as to costs related to pension and insurance payments in Geneva, and most of them will therefore not continue to occur in the present and future budget years.

Budget lines with significant overspending are the following:

Budget line	Budgeted	Actuals
Swiss HR Insurance	EUR 0	EUR 52,644.79
IT	EUR 27,400.00	EUR 55,706.74
Furniture and Equipment	EUR 20,000.00	EUR 39,615.41
Miscellaneous Switzerland	EUR 0	EUR 37,191.56
Insurance	EUR 3.000,00	EUR 6,098.03

Remarks:

Swiss Human Resource Insurance: This budget line was opened for Geneva-based staff expenses (Setri Nyomi, Paraic Reamonn, Frans du Plessis) such as pension plan and obligatory health and accident insurances. The amount charged in 2014 for WCRC's pension plan for Geneva-based staff was higher than expected as a reconciliation was made to include Dora Arce Valentin's share which, due to an oversight by our provider Axa, was not considered in 2013. All the above were cancelled at the end of 2014 as we do not currently have any staff under Swiss contracts.

Miscellaneous Switzerland: This budget line includes miscellaneous expenses related to Switzerland that had not been budgeted for initially and could not be allocated otherwise, such as a balance due to WCC for expenses related to the budget year 2013, payment of VAT arrears from previous years and social security charges for Geneva-based staff for 2013 and 2014 that due to a lack of documentation could not be clearly allocated to each staff member. We are in the process of clarification with the help of Antex.

Insurance: This is another good example of how Switzerland-related expenses have contributed to our overspending. EUR 5,765.64 of the expenses in this line are for compulsory health and accident insurances for Geneva-based staff, as well as for our offices in the Ecumenical Centre. The staff insurances have been cancelled and we expect to be able to reduce the office insurance due to the significant reduction in office space in the Ecumenical Centre.

Rent: Slight overspending occurred in this budget line as a result of maintaining offices in the Ecumenical Centre. This has now been reduced to one office that creates monthly costs of EUR 450.

Adjustment: EUR 15,000.00 were budgeted on the expense side as adjustment, i.e. contingencies in the event of overspending or lower than expected income. Overspending in other lines, however, exceeded this amount by far.

Slight overspending was observed in other budget lines, while slight underspending occurred in: Other Professional Fees, Audit Fees, HR Administration, Training, Miscellaneous, Archiving, e.g. No money was spent from the Officers budget because the 2014 officers meeting was combined with the global Accra Confession consultation.

Staff costs for General Secretary and Assistants were also significantly lower than expected.

Programme Budget

Programme expenses could be covered through existing funds. Funds need to be raised to continue some programmes.

The General Secretary Programme and the Youth Programme do not have any funds left. The Youth Programme was put on hold several years ago while the General Secretary Programme was active in 2013.

The Native American Project has limited funds and has not been activated since its creation. The Making A Difference Programme was discontinued several years ago. Research is being done to determine if an alternative use can be found or if the funds need to be returned to the donor.

The Theological Education Scholarship Fund for women in the global South has funds of over EUR 170,000.00 which need to be used in order to be true to donors. This is on the priority list of the programme staff who will describe the work that has been done in the past year which has not yet had an impact on finances.

The funds in the North American Internship Programme will have been used up in their entirety at the end of the current intern's term. The Global Internship Programme requires fundraising if it is to continue beyond 2015. This is being carried out and new alternatives are being explored by the general secretary.

Partnership Fund A – We are expecting EUR 400,000.00 from Bread for the World (BftW) in 2015. As the funds for the past grant had been spent completely in 2013 nothing was received in 2014. A bridging grant was requested from BftW in 2014 and received in 2015. Separate auditing is carried out by an independent Hannover-based auditor (Curacon). Partnership Fund A has been carrying forward a deficit since

2012. BftW rules state that deficits have to be covered with our own funds. Therefore, a decision was made and carried out to cover this deficit by transferring funds from Partnership Fund E. The Partnership Fund Office will explain further details and share background information with you.

Partnership Fund B – The only donor for this Fund is currently the Evangelical Church in Westfalia.

Partnership Fund C – It was recently brought to the attention of the Finance Office that at least until 2009 we had a Partnership Fund C. Research needs to be done to have clarity on how the funds in this programme were used before it was temporarily discontinued.

Partnership Fund D – This Fund is inactive and has a positive balance of EUR 14,176.62.

Partnership Fund E – In 2013 and 2014, it was assumed by the Partnership Fund and Finance Office staff that these funds came from the BftW PS Fund A grant to be used for emergency projects when in fact in the past it was replenished with funds originating from PS Fund B to be used for emergency projects. Due to the reallocation of EUR 37,028.66 to cover the deficit in Partnership Fund A, a balance of only EUR 3,705.55 remained. According to our agreement with BftW, starting with the current project, grants for emergency projects will be paid with BftW funds through PS Fund A.

EUR 236,959.93 were used from designated programme funds (formerly called reserves) to support programmes in 2014.

Programme Administration Fees

The Finance Committee has affirmed that the standard programme administration fee will remain 8% unless the donor specifies otherwise.

As per a decision of the Finance Committee from December 2014, 8% of all incoming programme donations were allocated to the core budget as administration fees revenue. To comply with Bread for the World standards, PS Fund A is an exception to this. Here, 15% of all outgoing grants are allocated as programme administration fees revenue.

Core income from programme administration fees was down to EUR 18,000 as opposed to EUR 88,000 that had been budgeted for the year. The majority of programming was funded from designated programme funds, not from new money. PS Fund B gave a grant to the GIT and another one to Covenanting for Justice. The incoming donations in those programmes could therefore not been taken into account for programme administration fees as those had already been taken when

the funds came in to PS Fund B. The executive secretaries say that the efforts expended on relocating diminished the capacity to do fundraising for programmes.

Programme Budgeting and Fundraising

The Finance Committee asked in December 2014 that executive secretaries who oversee programmes submit an outline for their fundraising plans for 2015. Response has been limited. Concern was also expressed that programme costs and budgets need to correlate. Programme executives have been semi-autonomous in their fundraising. The Committee agreed that a unified fundraising system needs to be implemented for programmes, affirming as well the need for tighter projections for budgeting and programme evaluation. It was agreed in the same committee meeting that similar financial controls need to apply to both the core and the programme budgets.

Core budget

Income

Special Donations

Aside from general member church, institutional and individual donations, we received a special UEK donation of EUR 200,000 which was fully allocated to the UEK Special Reserve.

Membership Fees

There was a considerable decrease in membership contributions in Africa, Asia, the Pacific and Europe, while an increase can be observed in Latin America, and, although a minor one, in CANAAC.

5% of all European membership contributions including the special contributions from the Swiss Cantonal Churches were allocated to WCRC Europe.

7.5% of all membership contributions were allocated to the General Council Reserve.

	2012	2013	2014
Membership Africa	EUR 32,699	EUR 49,292	EUR 35,393
Membership Latin America	EUR 9,827	EUR 4,784	EUR 8,488
Membership CANAAC	EUR 264,598	EUR 228,394	EUR 230,028
Membership Asia	EUR 79,515	EUR 60,770	EUR 53,901
Membership Pacific	EUR 7,618	EUR 12,054	EUR 4,720
Membership Europe (incl. SCC)	EUR 513,404	EUR 487,723	EUR 444,817
TOTAL	EUR 907,661	EUR 843,017	EUR 777,347

In 2014, dues letters were only sent out towards the end of the year which explains some of the decrease in membership contributions. This year, preparation for sending out dues letters has started in the first quarter and is expected to be completed by the time the executive committee meets in May. Follow-up letters will be sent around June. This practice will be used in the future.

Some churches have voiced their concern as to the practicability of the grid as they deem the basis of assessment unreasonable in regards to their financial situation or budget structure. While the grid decreased membership fees for some, it more than doubled or tripled them for others (one such example is the Presbyterian Church of Korea).

Although the grid is an aspirational goal, past year-end results have not reached the amounts desired. The budget should be based on actual remittances, and this was done for the first time in the 2015 budget. Some regions were budgeted rather carefully, as the 2014 actuals contain significant payments of arrears.

	Budgeted 2014	Actuals 2014	Budgeted 2015
Membership Africa	EUR 57,600	EUR 35,393	EUR 20,000
Membership Latin America	EUR 16,000	EUR 8,488	EUR 3,000
Membership CANAAC	EUR 240,800	EUR 230,028	EUR 222,000
Membership Asia	EUR 142,400	EUR 53,901	EUR 40,000
Membership Pacific	EUR 22,400	EUR 4,720	EUR 2,000
Membership Europe	EUR 528,200	EUR 444,817	EUR 455,000
TOTAL	EUR 1,007,400	EUR 777,347	EUR 742,000

It has been suggested by the general treasurer that membership income could be increased by focusing on United Churches, especially in Germany.

Database

We have been unable to reach some member churches. Therefore, we need support from the regions to update the database. Werner Joecker has taken on the task of updating the database and looking into the possibility of adding more features, such as creating a fee remittance history and a feature to export invoices.

Non-realised Exchange Rate Gains

As of December 31, 2014, the WCRC had EUR 75,493.44 as non-realised exchange rate gains. In a pre-audit meeting with the auditor it was determined that they could not be booked into the actual budget.

2014 Audit

The 2014 books were once again audited by the EKD high audit office. The first part of the audit took place between March 2 and March 16 in the WCRC's Hannover offices. The audit was completed at the of March, and audited statements, along with comments, are attached.

2015

2015 Budget

The 2015 budget was presented as a draft to the Finance Committee on December 22, 2014. It was then discussed in the subsequent meeting and submitted to the officers and executive committee members for approval via electronic response. At the time of writing of this report, it remained a working budget and should be officially adapted in May during the executive committee meeting in Lebanon.

As previously stated, the budget for membership fees will be based on 2014 receipts, with special contributions (arrears payments) excluded. The European region was rounded up.

The standard programme administration fees, with the exception being Bread for the World funds which allow 15% of outgoing grants, will be 8% unless the donor specifies otherwise.

Staff Costs:

Salaries: Executive secretary salaries are higher because Phil Tanis was employed for only part of 2014. Support staff salaries are lower but do provide for a fourth full-time assistant.

Expat expenses: This includes support of language training for the general secretary, executive secretaries and their families. Home leave for executive secretaries and their families is allowed every two years.

The Finance Committee added an extra EUR 2,000 to Executive Secretaries Expat Expense to the proposed budget to cover these costs.

General Council: The committee reduced the amount budgeted for General Council subsidies in the proposed budget from EUR 200,000 to EUR 100,000.

ENI was not budgeted because it has been discontinued.

2016 Budget

The 2016 budget will be presented later than in previous years as this allows for more realistic projections. A first draft of the 2016 budget will be presented to the Finance Committee at the end of September/ beginning of October 2015. It should then be approved electronically by the officers and subsequently by the executive committee members no later than the beginning of November.

General Council

Please refer to the Planning Committee for more detailed information, as well as a draft budget. Requests were sent to those who made donations for the 2010 Uniting General Council. A bigger push for contributions will be made in 2016 and 2017. The Finance Office, however, deems it important not to wait until 2016 to actively start fundraising. The general secretary, the general treasurer and others will meet to discuss fundraising among the German churches, drawing on experience from fundraising in Michigan for the Uniting General Council.

The reserve fund for the General Council is now EUR 461,871. If all the membership contributions budgeted in 2015 are received we can expect EUR 55,000 from the portion of membership fees (7.5%) to go into the General Council Reserve Fund.

In July 2014, Rev. Dr. Setri Nyomi asked all member churches to give the equivalent of one year's membership fee as a special contribution for the General Council. As of March 2015, only two churches have pledged to contribute to the General Council. The Church of Lippe has agreed to give up to EUR 150,000 and expects to transfer the first rate of EUR 50,000 in 2015. The Church of Scotland has pledged to give three rates of GBP 8,000 each year from 2014 to 2016. The first rate was received on November 26, 2014 (GBP 8,000 / EUR 10,085).

Investment (Annex)

In 2014, the WCRC received a substantial donation of EUR 1,211,500 (GBP 1,000,000) from the Council for World Mission (CWM) to be used as foundation assets. These funds were transferred to a designated reserve. In the 2014 Executive Committee meeting in Hannover the

general secretary and general treasurer were jointly authorized to invest WCRC monies. It was decided to reinvest our current assets invested with BNP Paribas and Swiss Life and to invest more than just the CWM grant of GBP 1,000,000.

The general secretary and general treasurer, after consultation with the Finance Office, decided to invest a total of EUR 800,000 in equal parts in two different funds with the German KD-Bank (Bank für Kirche und Diakonie), USD 400,000 with the Barnabas Foundation and USD 400,000 with the Presbyterian Foundation.

The authorized amount has been transferred to the KD-Bank and invested in the Fair World Fund and the KCD Sustainability Mix in the first quarter of 2014.

The Fair World Fund is an international mixed fund with equities and annuities and sustainability approach. It has a moderate risk. The KCD Sustainability Mix is a global mixed fund with focus on Euro securities and has a moderate risk.

Two funds were identified for the USD 800,000 to be invested in the US - the Barnabas Conservative Fund and the Presbyterian Foundation Praxis Intermediate Bond Fund Portfolio. These funds have not been invested as we have encountered difficulties to access and transfer them from the BNP Paribas USD account where they are currently being held. These difficulties have now been resolved, and we are in the process of working with our bank to sell and reinvest the current investment we have with them. This second part of our overall investment is therefore expected to be finalized soon.

The WCRC's standards for ethical investment will be met. The general treasurer and the general secretary will pursue revising the standards for implementation within two years.

The Finance Office would like to point out that concern was raised by the Finance Committee about the low rate of return of low and moderate risk investments. As a result, it was agreed to invest in higher risk stocks than those the Finance Office had initially proposed and feels comfortable with.

Pension Fund

We have to build a pension fund for staff with "Beamte" status (executive secretaries and general secretary). Currently, in Germany we receive no interest on that money. Therefore, we have to put more money into the pension fund, which is an increasing long-term expense. Currently, it is an internal fund. This needs attention. We cannot allow the pension fund to fall behind.

Corporate Credit Cards

In 2014, additionally to the credit card the general secretary has, corporate credit cards were introduced for executive secretaries and subsequently also for the general secretariat. Currently, the organization has 6 corporate Visa cards with KD-Bank with the highest limit for the general secretary and lower limits for the general secretariat.

As a result, business and project advances have been reduced and shall be the exception only in cases where credit cards might not be accepted or for officers, such as the president, who continues to have a permanent advance.

Bank Accounts

The WCRC currently has one main EUR account in Germany with KD-Bank as well as a EUR account with Sparkasse that allows cash withdrawals. We have one main CHF account with PostFinance in Switzerland and one main USD account with 5th3rd Bank in the USA for which Peter Borgdorff is the only signatory. All other accounts require joint signatures.

As a general rule, we are working on reducing the number of bank accounts. In this process, we have already closed all our UBS accounts and are working on closing all BNP Paribas accounts after having determined that only a very limited number of member churches use it for the transfer of their contributions.

We have a second USD account in Germany and are currently evaluating whether there is in fact a need to keep it. As a requirement for the Lombard Prize, our Lombard account and investment need to be maintained. Additionally, Bread for the World requires us to keep separate accounts for PS Fund A projects which were opened with KD-Bank.

The Finance Committee

In 2014, the Finance Committee met on December 2014 through a Skype meeting. It was agreed that the committee will meet quarterly in order to stay abreast of the financial situation.

Role

It was suggested to articulate more clearly the role of the committee vis à vis the officers. The general secretary has asked for more activism in fundraising. He also asked for clarification whether responsibility for fundraising is the responsibility of the Finance Committee or another group. This needs to be discussed in a subsequent meeting.

EUR vs CHF – Relocation to Hannover

The Finance Office deems it essential to point out that were the WCRC's main offices still in Switzerland, due to the depreciation of the euro versus the Swiss franc with the main source of income being outside and the main source of expenses being inside Switzerland, the organization would be broke now.

This is very well illustrated by the non-realised currency gains on CHF accounts.

EUR / CHF

WCRC DEVELOPMENT PLAN PROPOSAL: SHARING OUR GIFTS

Phil Tanis

The 2011 Strategic Plan framed development and fundraising as a “sharing” of our resources:

Sharing of resources & ensuring adequate funding of the whole
To strengthen our communion, we need to ensure that all are contributing, and that resources are shared equitably and invested well: fruitfully and ethically. This includes financial, human and other resources. While the resources exist for the WCRC to be the communion God wants us to be, resources need to be identified and accessed for the life and work of the communion. As a family the WCRC needs to be sharing resources with each other, and to be creating a culture of sharing. “Where our treasure is, our heart will be also,” therefore every part of the communion should be strongly encouraged to contribute financially as well as in other valuable ways.

The spirit of this is vitally important—that we not only focus on acquiring financial resources for the operations of the WCRC but that we strive to share all of our resources. We need to become a Communion in which its members care for each other and demonstrate this through the act of sharing, whether it be financially, spiritually, theologically, culturally, missionally, etc.

Thus whatever financial development plans we put into place should only be a part of a larger effort to “Share Our Gifts.” This document, however, focuses on financial development.

An appendix to the 2011 Strategic Plan focuses on fundraising strategies and cites four points that are “aimed at strengthening the resources of the WCRC for the following:”

1. Developing resources that fund the WCRC vision and mission. This affects the overall fundraising efforts of the WCRC.
2. Locating resources for the programmes. This is what ensures that the WCRC makes the impact it is poised for.
3. Strengthening resources for the core budget. The member churches provide the bulk of this.
4. Seek life gifts and other long-term gifts for the WCRC and its endowment fund.

While the strategic plan doesn't explicitly state this, the current funding model of the WCRC, reliant on membership dues for core operations and additional donations for programme activities, is not sustainable.

While membership dues should continue to play a role both financially and as a visible commitment of membership, alternative means to fund the operations of the organization need to be developed.

Endowment obligations & feasibility studies

One of the means to ensure organizational sustainability is by creating a large enough endowment to generate operational funds on a consistent basis. To that end the WCRC received a significant donation from the Council for World Mission (CWM) last year as a challenge grant for the endowment fund.

The £1,000,000 received came with obligations, including: the "WCRC shall establish a program, strategy or mechanisms to raise an amount up to 10 million francs, which will be the projected sum of the endowment fund." In addition, the "WCRC agrees that the commitment to raise up to 10 million francs, in endowment funds, inclusive of the grant...shall be within 6 years."

This agreement lends not only a renewed urgency but also a legal obligation to the work being done to build the endowment fund. However, the ability to raise money for an endowment has not been researched sufficiently. cursory talks with development officers in the US have generated concerns about the viability of raising money for an endowment in the North American region. Even less research has been done in other regions of the world.

Thus before any endowment fundraising campaign can begin, feasibility studies should be conducted to determine potential success. Whether these feasibility studies are done by development professionals or through a consultation of member church development staff members should be discussed.

Feasibility studies and/or consultations should occur with the cooperation of all regional councils, as well as the officers and executive committee members. Some preliminary research and discussions have taken place as to how to best raise money in various areas of the world (and for what needs of the organization, whether it be the endowment, programme costs or specific projects) but, again, creating a solid foundation based on specific understandings of the uniqueness of each region (and, in some areas, each country) is imperative before launching any formal fundraising campaign.

North America

The North American trustees have been conducting an annual appeal for a number of years now, generating donations in the low to mid-10,000s

(dollars) each year. A target of CHF 20,000 has been cited by past executive committees, and the North Americans should be urged to continue to develop this one aspect of endowment fundraising while also participating in the larger campaign (beginning with a feasibility study or consultation).

The trustees should also be encouraged to continue to strengthen the WCRC's relationship with both the Presbyterian Foundation and Barnabas Foundation, seeking ways in which to cooperate in development activities.

Staff coordination

The staff of the WCRC must not only continue to raise funds for both their programme activities and other on-going costs of the organization, but they should commit to doing so in a more coordinated way. Too often staff members have not effectively communicated with colleagues about their fundraising activities. This has caused confusion (and, at times, embarrassment) as staffers have asked for funding from the same organization without knowing funds have already been sought from said organization.

There are several key commitments staff should make along these lines:

- Staff should communicate fully their fundraising activities, including requests that have been denied
- Staff should create a multi-year development plan, listing all organizations and individuals to be approached (and for which projects)
- The communication office should provide assistance in the creation of development materials and in the writing/editing of grant proposals

In addition, executive committee members should lend their expertise and insights into what organizations in their regions might have funds available for WCRC projects and programmes.

Investing in development/fundraising

The old adage goes "to make money one has to spend money." This is also true when fundraising. Resources must be used to write and submit grants, to meet with prospective donors, to send out membership dues letters, etc. The communication executive devotes up to 20% of his time on development, which is itself a spending of resources.

In the North American development world, the figure used for development costs is anywhere from 15-20% of the total amount raised. In other words, to raise \$1,000,000, up to \$200,000 needs to be invested. The WCRC has not yet taken the decision to commit to something like this, but if the organization is to take seriously its obligation to raise CHF 10 million to meet the commitments of the CWM grant, it must find ways to fund this effort. Even if outside professionals aren't hired, there will be costs to bear: feasibility studies/consultations, resource development, mailings, staff time and travel, etc.

It could also be important to calculate how much time (and money) executive staff spend on fundraising. Knowing these numbers would allow this question to be answered: Are the time and money devoted to raising funds an efficient and effective use of executives' resources? It could also allow a discussion about whether there are better ways to raise funds.

Near term fundraising/development

Even while feasibility studies/consultations are being developed, specific fundraising should continue, and a number of others should be developed quickly.

Membership dues: efforts to encourage member churches to fulfill their obligations are already happening through more effective communications, especially with those churches that haven't been in touch for several years.

Programmes (including the Partnership Fund): relationships have been developed with a number of organizations for on-going programme costs. At the same time, executives continue to explore ways to obtain funds from a wider variety of sources.

General Council 2017: meeting the costs of the next general council is high on the priority list of the general secretary, the coordinating committee and the local organizing committee.

In-kind contributions: the general secretary is exploring several avenues to obtain support through partnerships with member churches.

Annual appeal: as noted above, the annual appeal (sent to donors in North America) continues to cultivate long-term support, as well as generate funds for the endowment and other specific projects.

Cultivation of donors: efforts have been made in the past year to communicate more regularly with those on the North American donor

list. Potential donors in other areas of the world should be identified and approached.

Development of relationships with granting institutions: there are numerous institutions and agencies around the world that could provide money for WCRC programmes. These should be identified (with the help of executive committee members) and approached with specific projects.

500th Reformation anniversary: how can the WCRC capitalize on holding its general council the same year as the anniversary of the Reformation? Discussion and decisions on possibilities needs to happen very soon.

2017 and beyond

At the very least, the general council should be used to launch a formal, multi-year fundraising campaign for the WCRC (tied to the CWM challenge grant). The energy stemming from a general council (combined with the 500th anniversary of the Reformation) should not be wasted.

Thus, work should proceed apace on feasibility studies/consultations around the world. Fundraising strategies should be developed to specifically fit each region (and in some cases a particular country).

Make no mistake: conducting a global fundraising campaign will not be easy or simple, especially given the different approaches and attitudes on this subject. But if it can be crafted properly, sensitive to cultural differences, then not only will it be successful but it will also enhance the Communion, allowing all another way to “Share Our Gifts.”

Recommendations

Given all of the above, the following items are presented for discussion and possible action by the executive committee (working through the finance committee and communication core group, with advice from the North American trustees):

1. To reaffirm the strategic direction of fund development as adopted in the 2011 Strategic Plan appendix.
2. To affirm that the WCRC needs to continue to raise funds through a number of streams—member church dues, programme-specific fundraising, endowment development—while also exploring new areas of revenue generation
3. To initiate development feasibility studies in cooperation with the regional councils, tailored to the specific contexts of each

region, with the need to raise funds for an endowment fund at the forefront.

4. To commend the North American trustees on their endowment fundraising to date and encourage continued development of it, as well as on strengthening relationships with the Presbyterian and Barnabas foundations, led by Steve Lytch as trustee president.
5. To assign/create whatever committees are deemed necessary to provide oversight and assistance for a campaign to "Share Our Gifts" throughout the Communion.

REPORT OF THE PARTNERSHIP FUND

Werner Joecker

1. Introduction

The Partnership Fund (PS Fund) is a small development fund run by the WCRC. Beneficiaries are member churches and councils of the WCRC mostly located in the global south. In order for an application to benefit from the PS Fund, it has to comply with certain criteria and has to be approved by the Partner Ship Fund Sub-Committee (PSFC). Applications may only be approved for funding every second year provided previous projects have been closed off (this entails financial receipts and reports and a comprehensive final report of the project). Regional Councils may benefit annually, provided previous projects have been closed off. The maximum amount payable is EUR 25,000 and EUR 7,500 for emergency projects.

Since 2009 the PS Fund is subordinate to the executive secretary for theology, mission and communion. Up until mid-August 2014 the PF was administered by Viktoria Koczian, assistant to the mentioned department and who took over from Paraic Reamonn earlier that year. Starting that month the responsibilities were passed on to Werner Joecker who joined the WCRC staff in May.

The PS Fund is divided into five sub-funds:

- Fund A. Specifically related to one donor, Bread for the World, EED (BftW).
- Fund B. Relates to all other donors.
- Fund C. Related in the past to projects co-financed with FAP. Presently inactive.
- Fund D. Relates to income received from donors for a specific project.
- Fund E. Emergency sub-fund. Used to help member churches immediately after some catastrophic event.

2. 2014 fiscal year

	EUR
Opening Balance	135,083.06
Income	63,028.66
Expenditure	- 172,033.55
Balance	26,078.17

Supporting documentation will be available for the meeting.

Numbers of projects approved: 5. These include only those listed under A or B.

PF Fund A	Cap Camp
PS Fund B	Congregational Federation Australia
	Schweiz. Evangelischer Kirchenbund
	GIT 2014
	Accra Global Consultation Hannover

Details:

Project number: A1401
 Applicant: The Evangelical Reformed Church in Germany together with the United Protestant Church in Belgium, the Église presbytérienne au Rwanda, and the United Reformed Church in Southern Africa
 Project name: Seeds of love and freedom: CAP camp, 25 July-15 August 2014, Germany
 Location: Möllenbeck monastery, Rinteln, and Frenswegen monastery, Nordhorn

Project number: B1305
 Applicant: Office of Justice and Partnership
 Project name: Called to communion, committed to justice: the Accra Confession ten years later.
 Location: WCRC regions (Global Consultation in Hannover)

3. Pending projects 2014 and 2015

On the Way Church	Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa, Namibia Synod	Namibia
Education for deprived school children	The Church of South India, Karnataka Southern Diocese	India
Building of an ampliation for a suburb church Guatemala	Iglesia Evangelica Nacional Presbiteriana de Guatemala	Guatemala
MAJUP Musical instruments and education	Iglesia Presbiteriana de Cartagena	Colombia
UEM EPR for Capacity Building Matilde Umuraza	Eglise presbytérienne de Ruanda	Rwanda

Nkhoma University Malawi	Church of Central Africa Presbyterian	Malawi
University capacity building and outreach	United Church of Zambia	Zambia
Bethel Church	Bethel Church	India
Networking Protestant Theological Education in Africa-2014	NetACT	South Africa
Development rural community San Francisco de Paula Cuba	Iglesia Presbiteriana Reformada Central	Cuba
Consultation challenges WCRC-SARC India	Presbyterian Church of India	India
CERSES School for deaf children Cameroon		Cameroon
Theological Education Togo	Eglise Evangelique Presbytérienne du Togo	Togo
Defined by Hope: Overcoming the trauma of War & Hate in South Sudan		United States
Biblical values teenagers EECMY	Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus	Ethiopia

4. New follow-up grant with Bread for the World

Difficulties related with the transition of the offices from Geneva to Hannover and the fact of having spent the total PS Fund A grant amount in 2013 did not allow us to manoeuvre as freely as in the preceding periods. For this purpose the WCRC applied for a bridging Complementary Grant of EUR 50,000 that was approved by October 28th. The funds were released in January 2015. The application for the follow-up grant for the PS Fund A with BftW was made in August 2014 and approved only in December the same year (KED 20146842). The release of the corresponding payments is conditioned to the audit results.

It may be noted that for this period and if the variables remain constant the project funds have to be administered in a formal and structured way to prevent the Fund from again depleting before the end of the runtime.

For this purpose a proposal for a change in the policies will be submitted (two step project approval process) for the consideration of the PSFC.

5. Documents and forms

Consequent to the transition from Geneva to Hannover and to some changes in policies the documentation had to be adapted to the current situation. Supporting documentation will be available for the meeting.

6. Audit

Starting November 18th a Hannover-based independent auditor, Curacon, was entrusted with examining the (semesters) 1S2013, 2S2013 and 1S2014 for the PS Fund A. The report was presented on March 9th 2015 without observations. Supporting documentation will be available for the meeting. This puts the WCRC in the position to start using the grant.

7. Budget and planning

The budget for 2015 will be made in accordance with the Finance Office and following a common structure such as suggested by BftW. Supporting documentation will be available for the meeting.

8. Outlook

Procedural matters and policies need to be adapted to the current circumstances and when non-existent to be created. This includes information policies.

In order to replenish the active funds other than A and E and to decrease the dependency from the few current donors, contacts need to be reactivated and new ones established. It may be noted that in order to react appropriately to all the challenges the PS Fund needs to be brought up to its former volume.

A BRIEF REPORT ON AFRICA COMMUNION OF REFORMED CHURCHES 2014 ACTIVITIES

Lydia Adajawah,
President, ACRC

INTRODUCTION

Below is a brief report on 2014 activities of the Africa Communion of Reformed Churches (ACRC).

ACTIVITIES

1. A consultation on the 10th Anniversary celebration of the Accra Confession in Nairobi, Kenya.

The ACRC consultation on the 10th Anniversary celebration of the Accra Confession was held at the Desmond Tutu Conference Centre, Nairobi, Kenya, between the 25th and 29th September 2015. It was initially scheduled for Abuja, Nigeria, to enable the ACRC to pay a solidarity visit to the Reformed family in Nigeria, and indeed the whole of Nigeria, due to the atrocious activities of the Islamic fundamentalists, the Boko Haram. This dream unfortunately could not be realised as another deadly menace, the Ebola pandemic, cropped up suddenly in some parts of West Africa including Nigeria. We were thus forced to change the venue to Nairobi, Kenya.

The three day meeting was attended by 29 participants from 25 member churches.

GOAL

To reflect together from the African context our commitment towards justice in the global context of violence, injustice and degradation of both human beings and nature.

THE MEETING

It covered the following areas:

1. An official opening programme
2. Bible Studies by Rev. Salome Twum
3. Presentations by resource persons:
 - a. Introduction to the Accra General Assembly 2004 and the Confession by Rev. Chris Ferguson.
 - b. "Theological perspectives on Accra and its impacts, including the important theological institutions in Africa" by Rev. Dr. Kobus Gerber, Mrs Veronica Muchiri, and Rev Lilly Phiri.
 - c. "The Accra Confession from the socio-political and religious context" by Mrs. Lydia Adajawah and Rev. Dr. Vuyani Vellem

- d. "WCRC Justice Programme: Challenges for the Region" by Rev. Dora Arce-Valetin

4. Others:

- a. Group discussion on the current situation in the light of Accra, challenges for the church.
- b. Opportunity for ACRC to present their programmatic strategies
- c. Challenges and opportunities for WCRC/ACRC membership – poor communication, non-payment of membership dues, availability of Partnership Fund for development projects, scholarship for theological training for women, Global Institute for Theology (GIT), nominations for Sylvia Michel Award, etc.
- d. Group and plenary discussions
- e. Presentation and discussion of final document of drafting committee
- f. Closing worship with communion

2. GLOBAL CONSULTATION ON THE ACCRA CONFESSION IN HANNOVER, GERMANY.

According to the general programme of the executive secretary for justice and partnership, Rev. Dora Arce-Valetin, one representative from each regional council should represent his/her region for the global consultation in Hannover, Germany, from November 1st to 6th. The ACRC was represented by Rev. Salome Twum.

Other participants from Africa included Rev. Lilly Phiri, Rev. Dr. Vuyani Vellem, Dr. Omega Bula, and Lydia Adajawah. In attendance was the president of the WCRC, Rev. Dr. Jerry Pillay

Below is a report from that meeting:

Based on the regional meeting in Nairobi, what is our priority, how do we want to do it, how might this play out at a global level?

1. Diverse African spirituality to be embraced
2. Ubuntu concept to be encouraged. "I am because we are" as our optic framework
 - How do we bring an economy of life in the midst of an economy of death?
 - *Ubuntu*, undergirds spirituality of being together, sharing and it is from there that we can move and offer something towards Accra.
 - The groans of death from Kitwe are affirmed after all these years and they have become worse....

- *Ubuntu* is an alternative to the global context.
- Other regions may have the same ethos and we are humble about that.
- Issues of rape, racism, patriarchy, etc. have been shaped by economies of death but the African concept of *Ubuntu* addresses every injustice that Accra has addressed.
- *Ubuntu* deals with inclusivity, Eco-justice, etc.
- *Ubuntu* will not stand alone but can be connected with indigenous spiritualities as found in Asia and South America.
- *Ubuntu* as a vision that challenges all injustices

It links with *koinonia*, *shalom* from Biblical spirituality and indigenous spirituality.

1. We need to teach about *Ubuntu* even among Africans
2. Link this with Oikotree as one avenue to teach about this to Africans and all other continents.
3. Link it with other concepts that deal with humanity in totality
 - In a quest to live out *Ubuntu*, we also hope that in the 2017 General Council our churches will have equal representation of men and women.

THE WAY FORWARD

It is being proposed that a joint consultation be held on human trafficking and child abuse/youth empowerment with gender perspective as tool for analysis for two regional councils, the ACRC and NEAAC (Northeast Asia Area Council).

The venue and time being proposed are Nigeria and September 2015, respectively. The Rev. Dora Arce-Valentin is working out the details.

**ALIANZA DE IGLESIAS PRESBITERIANAS
Y REFORMADAS DE AMERICA LATINA
REPORT TO THE WCRC EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

Rev. Dr. Darío Barolin
Executive Secretary

We are pleased to present the report of AIPRAL's activities over this past year organized under several points.

AIPRAL's Departments

- The department of **Justice and Communion** organized its event in Cuba (October 2014). With this event AIPRAL completed the discussion on the issue of water and climate justice that was initiated in the last assembly in Guatemala (2011). AIPRAL invited the *Consejo Latinoamericano de Iglesias* (CLAI) to be part of this event as a concrete act of ecumenism and cooperation. Unfortunately this event had to be covered using AIPRAL's reserve fund because the request of funds was not answered.
- AIPRAL is planning a meeting in August to collect, systematize the produced material and transform it into a pedagogic and liturgical resource to encourage local communities to engage in the issue of climate justice from a Reformed perspective. We applied again to Partnership Fund for this event.
- The **Women Department** prepared the material for the Latin-American Women's Day of Prayer. Last year the material was prepared by the women from the National Caucus Hispano Latino from the PC(USA).
- The **youth department**, coordinated by Gustavo Quinteros, organized a youth event around the issue of youth activities in favor of an abundant life. The event was held in Tegucigalpa, Honduras. It received a good and positive answer from the churches and their youth movements. This event was done thanks to the support of Fondation pour l'aide au protestantisme réformé (FAP).
- Because we could not count on the usual financial aid, we decided to reduce the level of activities for this present year for all the department. However, they will have an active role in the preparation of the coming assembly and its material.

Companion to National Churches

We were invited to participate at the general assembly of the **National Presbyterian Church in Mexico** in Villa Hermosa. It was a good opportunity to reaffirm the relationship with this church, knowing the tension around the issue of ordination of women. We informed them about the request of the CMIRP (**Mexican Communion of Reformed and Presbyterian Churches**) to be part of AIPRAL and WCRC, and we invited them to express their opinion about that. The visit was cordial and very positive. Also, we visited the new church born out of those excommunicated from the National Presbyterian Church. They had initiated the process to be part of AIPRAL and WCRC. We insisted in our visit that to be part of AIPRAL and WCRC brings challenges about their relationship with the National Presbyterian Church.

We had an interview with some of the board members including the moderator of the **Costa Rican Evangelical Presbyterian Church** (IEPC). We worked as a link with the WCRC to reach an agreement regarding their contribution to the WCRC.

We were invited for the **PC(USA)** to participate at their general assembly in Detroit and we also participated in the inaugural moments of the concurrent general synods of the **RCA** and **CRC** in Pella, Iowa. The relationship with our sister churches in the North with activities in our regions is very important. We look forward to find more spaces of communication and dialogue to enrich the Reformed testimony in both regions.

We participated at the Synod of the **Evangelical Congregational Church of Brazil** (IECB). This church is a member of AIPRAL but not of the WCRC yet. Rev. Clayton Da Silva and the executive secretary of AIPRAL are having discussions with this church to become a WCRC member.

We had a conversation with the authorities of the Church members in Brazil—**Independent Presbyterian Church, United Presbyterian Church and Evangelical Congregational Church of Brazil**—about the coming assembly of AIPRAL to be held in São Paulo and possibly with the executive committee of the WCRC. We found good interest from the churches to host the assembly and the executive committee. We also visited, with Rev. Clayton Da Silva, the place where AIPRAL's assembly will take place and hopefully also the meeting of the WCRC.

A special place for AIPRAL's accompaniment was the **Presbyterian Church of Colombia** because the situation of death threats to some of their members. We visited Colombia three times in this period for different activities and we used these opportunities to talk with church

authorities, local communities and people affected by the violence in Colombia.

It was very important to count on the presence of Rev. Chris Ferguson in the visit to the local communities, in the conversation with govern authorities and to design possible action in the future.

Also we resumed the conversation with the **Presbyterian Church of Colombia Reformed Synod**. This church requested in the past to become member of AIPRAL, but they did not finish the process. We are back in dialogue to incorporate them into our family.

Communication

AIPRAL's web page has been redesigned, and now the executive secretary can upload information by himself. Also we are using Facebook to inform about AIPRAL's activities. Also we are communicating in more regular ways through e-mail to church leaders.

La Voz was published as usual twice a year. Also this magazine is uploaded to the website to reach a bigger number of people.

We participated in the directive board of "ALC noticias" as an effort to facilitate communication of social and ecclesial issues inside the church and in society, specially related to human rights

Compañerismo en Misión

As AIPRAL we continue the participation in this editorial enterprise through the former president of AIPRAL, Rev. Clayton Dan Silva.

Religions for Peace

AIPRAL participates in this space in Latin American and the Caribbean. Since last May Religions for Peace organized two meetings, one in Panama and the second in São Paulo. The issues of inequality and exclusion were the focus of both meeting. Gabriela Mulder made a presentation from a gender perspective. She also is co-coordinator of the Women of Faith's Latinoamerican and Caribbean network.

WCRC

- In our region was celebrated the Global Institute of Theology (GIT) last June, and we are glad that this event took place in Costa Rica. We recognize the relevance of this endeavor and we encourage continued work on this. Also we are thinking that

regional institutes of theology also can be added to this. However much more dialogue is necessary to really involve the region in the process of decision-making and strategic aspects.

- In Colombia an event organized by WCRC on the 10th anniversary of Accra Confession was celebrated. AIPRAL took an active role coordinating this event. We consider the Accra Confession to be at the very core of the WCRC and marks its distinctiveness.
- It was very important to have the presence of general secretary of the WCRC in different events in the region.

Financial aspects

For the last 10 to 15 years AIPRAL has gotten its financial support mainly through specific projects around sub-regional or regional events. However, this has drastically changed in the last two years for several reasons. Also this situation necessitates repeating the same request for every event and creates a continuous anxiety about the possibility or not to have the economic support. So, we think that it is necessary to work toward a financial architecture more oriented to a longer period (5 years) and to support the whole organization's mission and activities. To do this it is necessary to count on the WCRC's support and advice.

REPORT OF THE CARIBBEAN AND NORTH AMERICAN AREA COUNCIL

Lisa Vander Wal, Steering Committee Convenor

Since the executive committee meeting of May 2014, in Hannover, Germany, the steering committee of CANAAC has met via teleconferencing and email and Facebook exchanges among members of its executive committee and the wider committee.

Global Consultation on the Accra Confession

The CANAAC region was well represented at the Global Consultation on the Accra Confession that took place in November 2014, including participants from Canada, the US and the Caribbean. As the CANAAC region met together at the consultation, we identified points of urgency within the region with respect to the Accra Confession's call to justice:

- As a region, we are challenged by the deep differences experienced between the two regions of the council: North America and the Caribbean. There is a great divide between their economic and cultural histories and in terms of the current realities of our member churches;
- We need to build awareness, particularly in the US & Canada, of historical issues of empire and colonization, as well as present circumstances of detrimental trade agreements, climate change, immigration/migration concerns, and gender and economic inequality;
- Human trafficking is an issue that spans both areas of our regional council. We agreed that this is a justice endeavor in which we can work together, sharing stories and resources about human trafficking and participating in the "Broken for You" Lenten resource developed for the 2015 Lenten season.

Communication

Communication continues to be a major challenge between CANAAC and the churches within the region. Letters sent to heads of communions requesting contact information and information about current initiatives and challenges have yielded little response, which hampers our ability to reach out to our member churches.

It may be surmised that one reason for this lack of response is the absence of a clear sense of purpose and perceived effectiveness of the regional council. To put it another way, what does CANAAC offer to member churches that would elicit enthusiastic support and response?

A second reason is related to the isolated nature of our regional council and a sense of disconnectedness between the North American and Caribbean contexts. Whether this divide is perceived or real, it is an impediment to meaningful conversation about the very real justice issues which exist within the region.

Thirdly, with budgets tightening in many of our member churches, at least some churches in the region are faced with a choice: do they apply their limited resources (including money and personnel) to the WCRC (global) or the regional council?

An additional challenge has been the lack of a CANAAC website due to its lapse during the change-over of CANAAC leadership. Phil Tanis and Allan Buckingham are in the process of helping to create a new website.

Building relationships

Due to the above concerns, the steering committee is struggling to find effective ways to build relationships among member churches and with ecumenical officers, CANACOM and other regional councils. This is a work in progress.

Youth

Building relationships among our youth and intentionally engaging youth and young adult concerns is another priority that was identified at CANAAC's most recent General Assembly.

The Young Adults in Mission (YAM) 2015 Work Camp, sponsored by CANACOM, will take place from July 9-26, 2015, in Cuba with the theme "God Is Always on Line."

Justice

Human trafficking is one justice concern which we hope to address across the region. Several of our churches engaged the "Broken for You" Lenten campaign, and we look forward to the feedback that is received regarding its reception within the churches.

Under the leadership of Dora Arce-Valentin, Dario Barolin, Karen Georgia Thompson, and Lisa Vander Wal, a joint meeting regarding gender justice between CANAAC and AIPRAL is being planned for June 2015 in the Caribbean region. Plans are underway but not yet finalized.

Other concerns

The steering committee will continue its work this year via teleconferencing and likely a face-to-face meeting in the fall of 2015. Additional priorities to be addressed include by-laws revisions and planning for our next General Assembly in Fall 2016.

A final word: in his report to the executive committee in May 2014, President Jerry Pillay expressed a conviction that more of the WCRC's work needs to be done through the regional councils. We in the CANAAC region would welcome this as a reality, and we hope for more guidance and resources from the global WCRC so that it can be put into action.

REPORT OF THE NORTHEAST ASIA AREA COUNCIL

Rev. Kyeong Shin Kang
(Moderator)

1. Organization

Moderator	Rev. Kyeong Shin KANG	PROK
Vice-Moderator	Rev. Eric SO	HKCCCC
Vice-Moderator	Prof. Victor Hsu	PCT
Vice-Moderator	Rev. HEO Baekki	KCCJ
Committee member	Elder Yoshi FUJIMORI	CCJ
Area Secretary	Rev. Joohee CHO	PCK
Treasurer	Rev. Songhee CHAI	PCK

2. Member Church Issues

The NEAAC covers four countries/regions in Northeast Asia: China, Japan, Korea and Taiwan. The following are the current member churches.

China	Hong Kong Council of the Church of Christ in China
Japan	Church of Christ in Japan Korean Christian Church in Japan
Korea	Presbyterian Church of Korea (Tong Hap) Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea Presbyterian Church in Korea (Daeshin) Presbyterian Church in Korea (Baeksuk)
Taiwan	Presbyterian Church in Taiwan

We have contacted PCK-Daeshin and PCK-Baeksuk regarding their membership, but both churches have not responded to any of our inquiries. Therefore, both PCK-Daeshin and PCK-Baeksuk have been categorized as non-active member churches.

3. Northeast Asia Area Accra Consultation

The 10th Anniversary Northeast Asia Area Accra Consultation was held in Taipei, Taiwan, from September 8th to the 12th. Eighteen members from member churches convened for the consultation. We spent time together to understand the history of the Accra Confession and discuss how we can implement it in our local churches. Though the Accra Confession is still unknown in many of our churches, we have found that it is very relevant to many causes in our communities such as territorial

disputes, economic injustice, age discrimination and sexual violence. We have realized that we lack a specific action plan to tackle these extremely complicated issues. However, despite the diversity of causes and differences within our region, we have confirmed our solidarity in Christ. Joshua Lin (PCT) was chosen to attend the 2014 Global Accra Consultation held in Hannover. Please refer to the attached report for full details on the Northeast Asia Area Accra Consultation.

4. Next Meetings

The next meeting will be held in November 2015 in Seoul, Korea. We are planning to hold both the Administrative Committee meeting and the Area Council meeting together.

5. Financial Report

Description	Revenue	Expense
Balance from 2014	\$ 5,590.22	
Membership Fee	\$ 3,000	
Interest	\$ 0.49	
Revenue Total	\$ 8590.71	
WCRC EX Committee Meeting (Moderator)		\$ 1464.86
Global ACCRA Consultation (Joshua Lin)		\$ 1914.62
Expense Total		\$ 3379.43
Current Balance		\$ 5211.28

**Applied currency rate of 2015, April 24th 1USD=1078.60 KOR*

< Comprehensive Report of North East Asia Area Council 10th Anniversary of the Accra Confession Consultation >

Comprehensive Report

Statement from the North East Asia Area Council 10th Anniversary of the Accra Confession Consultation held 9-11 September 2014 in Taipei, Taiwan

Who we are

We are a fellowship of churches from Taiwan, Korea, Japan and Hong Kong who have met ten years after the Accra Confession was prophetically pronounced to receive and evaluate the relevance of the document in our respective countries and also in this region as a whole.

What we have done

We spent this time together to pray, to share communion and to understand the history of the Accra Confession. We read and reflected on the Confession in small groups, and we thought about how we can implement our findings in the local churches.

The Accra Confession declares that each of us should live "life in fullness" according to God's order, and we confess that we human beings have created obstacles to prevent that precious gift from our Creator to become reality. The Confession has been challenging us to acknowledge and live out that all of God's creation is designed to live in harmony.

We confess that the Accra Confession is still very unknown in our churches, and we need to do the job in each of our own churches to help deepen understanding and application of the Accra Confession.

However, we found that the Accra Confession is still very relevant and perhaps all the more so ten years later and specifically in our region as we can easily think of problematic examples in our countries which are related to the issues of economic injustice and ecological destruction, which are raised in principle in the Accra Confession.

We visited a community in Taipei which is the victim of unjust forced eviction. The land, the historical and cultural heritages and the people living on the land were unjustly uprooted solely for "economic development." We were reminded that similar situations abound in each of our countries as well.

What we should do

We noticed that although each country faces different issues with inclinations and nuances, many of the issues are not just isolated local

events, but are interwoven as a region because of the nature of a globalized world.

While a globalized economy has brought its conveniences and advantages, it also clearly destabilized our regional economy and marginalized and alienated many people who are under the influence of this global system.

And because of its global nature it also makes every one of us complicit and entangled in the system. We need to raise awareness of and dig deeper into the workings of such global forces of oppression and exploitation, and we also desperately need to try and find ways to respond to it.

Territorial disputes are causing increased military tension in our region. Egoistic and one-sided interpretation of history taken by each country is also evoking political confrontations. Visible conflicts yield hatred, and governments and mass media seem to be intentionally feeding "self-serving" information. In some countries excessive manifestation of nationalism has shown up in forms of hate speech and xenophobia. As sisters and brothers in Christ in North East Asia, we are seriously concerned about the situation that puts peace among us under threat.

As a region, we find that migrant workers in Asia are the people economically exploited, socially marginalized and culturally alienated.

In each country, wage exploitation, racial discrimination and suppression of human rights have generated severe social problems. These issues are closely interconnected to economic justice.

Nuclear power is also endangering our region, as when disasters happen the impact cannot be confined to one country. And the promotion of it always is tied with an economic growth rhetoric. Nuclear power, as we learned from the Fukushima incident, is unstable, difficult to control, unclean and harmful to the entire creation. We, as churches which are against ecological injustice, need strong solidarity to work on these critical issues. And the relation between nuclear power and nuclear weapons should be further explored.

Aging and the gap between the generations have also become critical issues since the older generation has benefitted from the prosperity of the past, and the younger generation is suffering from the difficulty of finding stable jobs. We strongly believe that the church should play the role of bridging the generation gap and voicing the difficulties and struggles all generations are encountering.

Given that in this region Christians are a minority living in a multi-religious society, it is essential that we as Christians cooperate with other religions in addressing the issues raised by the Accra Confession. All people, regardless of beliefs, are impacted by the current economic and financial architecture. All bear a common responsibility as citizens to transform the injustices inherent in the system to ensure a social safety net to protect the weak, the disadvantaged, the young and the women in particular.

The culture of this region is predominantly patriarchal. Discrimination and gender violence, against both women and those in the LGBT community, remains widely tolerated. In a world community that is increasingly advocating for an "option for women" in tackling the challenges of poverty, illiteracy and low wages, North East Asia is relatively "rich" compared to most regions of the world. This region should therefore provide an example to the world in providing sexual, cultural and economic protection for all, especially those traditionally discriminated against. The churches should lead the way in this, advocating for appropriate legislation.

Concluding remarks

We are desperately in need of a specific action plan, mutual sharing and possibilities for solidarity as we try to disentangle the issues which are far more complicated and out of range of our meager powers alone.

Nevertheless, we covenant that the renewal of our faith and the fullness of the gospel (fullness of life, justice and peace) in the church-which does not avoid the bearing of the cross-is vital for our collective witness in our societies.

REPORT OF THE SOUTH ASIA REGION

Rev. S. S. Majaw
Secretary, WCRC-SAARC

INTRODUCTION

Member churches of the four countries i.e.: **India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh** which are members of the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) constitute the South Asia Region. These countries are facing many problems and challenges: **social, political, economic, cultural and last but not least, spiritual**. A major problem from which all the above countries suffer from is governance deficit, which in turn is a direct and indirect consequence of a decline in moral and spiritual values. As a Church we cannot remain as a mere spectator. The Church needs to be pro-active, alive and constantly aware of the environment it lives in. It must be sensitive to social challenges that arise from time and be able to steer and guide its flock through such testing times.

India is an emerging economic giant and the New BJP government under the leadership of Narendra Modi, as Its Prime Minister has made development and good governance as the focal point of the new administration. It has galvanised the whole nation towards what has been claimed as the "Achcha Din," the good days. But there are other aspects of this new government which are causing apprehension and doubt about the secular profile of this new Indian government. Fringe, ultra right elements with the Sangh Parivar (the Hindu Family) appear hell bent in turning this secular democratic country into a Hindu Theocracy. The present GHAR WAPSI campaign (Home Coming campaign), meaning all Christians and Muslims must turn back to Hinduism is being vigorously pushed by these fringe elements

But there are other elements which bring out sad happening in the country as the whole such as spreading the **GHAR WAPSI (Home Coming)** which means that all Christians and Muslims must turn back to Hinduism, by force if must be, is a matter of great concern for all freedom loving people.

Then there is the blow hot - blow cold relationship between India and Pakistan. Tension between the two is at present quite high. It makes it difficult for the members from Pakistan to come to India to participate in any programme organised by WCRC South Asia Region and vice versa.

Profile and composition of the SARC is as follows:

1. OFFICE BEARERS:

- (a) **President:** Rev. Dr Sadananda, General Secretary, Church Of South India (CSI)
- (b) **Vice President:** Rev. Prubal dutta, Church of North India(CNI)
- (c) **Secretary:** Rev. S. S. Majaw, Presbyterian Church of India (PCI)
- (d) **Treasurer:** Rev. A.Z. Beirona, Congregational Church of India (Maraland).

2. MEMBER CHURCHES:

The following are the current member churches of the South Asia Region:

- INDIA:**
 - (a) Church of South India, (CSI) Chennai
 - (b) Church of North India, (CNI) Delhi
 - (c) Presbyterian Church of India (PCI) Shillong
 - (d) Congregational Church of India (Maraland)
 - (e) Reformed Presbyterian Church North East India (RPC-NEI)
- PAKISTAN:**
 - (a) Presbyterian Church of Pakistan
 - (b) Church of Pakistan
- BANGLADESH:**
 - (a) Church of Bangladesh
 - (b) Evangelical Reformed Presbyterian Church in Bangladesh
- SRI LANKA:**
 - (a) Christian Reformed Church in Sri Lanka
 - (b) Presbytery of Lanka

REPORT FOR THE PERIOD 2014-15

We understand that the Presbyterian Church Of India (PCI) in its executive committee held during 14 and 15 January 2015 at Silchar Mission Compound, Silchar, Assam, India, has decided to accept the request of the **Evangelical Churches Association (ECA)** to become a member of the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC). The Evangelical Churches Association, PO Box, Chienkongpang, Churrachandpur-795128, Manipur, India and its total membership 35,000. Hence, we look forward to the WCRC accepting their request.

3. CONSULTATION ON ECONOMIC AND ECOLOGICAL DESTRUCTION: CONCERN AND CHALLENGES FACED BY MEMBER CHURCHES IN SOUTH ASIA held at CSI CENTRE, CHENNAI, INDIA from 30 APRIL - 01 MAY 2015:

The 1st Consultation on Economic and Ecological Destruction organised by the South Asia Region was held during 30th April and 1st May,

2015 at CSI Centre, Chennai, India with the following objectives, viz.

(01) to understand the areas of contemporary relevance of the Accra Confession in the region;

(02) to explore and expand the salient features of the South Asian experience on Peace and Justice issues so as to activate provisions of the Confession in the region and;

(03) to propose action-methodologies to the ecumenical community on implementing the call of the Accra Confession in the region and globally. There were representative participants from the Church of South India (CSI), Church of North India (CNI), Presbyterian Church of India (PCI), Church of Bangladesh (COB) and Reformed Presbyterian Church in North East India (RPC-NEI).

The consultation was inaugurated by Most Rev. Dr. G. Dyvasyrvadam, moderator of CSI, with keynote address delivered by Rev. Dr. P. B. M. Basaiawmoit, member, Peace and Justice Committee, PCI and resource persons on (1) Ecological Destruction, (2) Localising the Accra Confession and, (3) Highlighting CSI's engagement in conserving and promoting ecology were Mr. A. K. Goldsmith from the Council of Baptist Churches in North East India; Rev. Asir Ebenezer, secretary, Diaconal Ministry CSI and Rev. Dr. Mathew Koshy Punnackal, convener, Ecological Concerns, CSI; respectively.

AFFIRMATION:

We affirm our faith in the God of Life who sets **"the earth on its foundations"** (Ps. 104: 05); in whose hands "are the depths of the earth, and the mountain peaks belong to him. The sea is his, for he made it, and his hands formed the dry land" (Ps. 95: 04, 05); turns "the deserts into pools of water and the parched ground into flowing springs; there he brought the hungry to live" (Ps. 107: 35, 36) for it is he who "raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap" (Ps. 113: 07), sees the misery of his people, hears their cry of agony while under the yoke of the oppressors and is concerned about their suffering (Ex. 03: 07) and; "loves righteousness and justice" (Ps. 33: 05).

CONFESSION:

We confess that we have not paid much attention to issues of economic injustice that have been perpetuated, for a considerable period of time, on vulnerable sections of society and which therefore continue to adversely impact the rural peasantry, the landless, small and marginal farmers, Dalits, tribals, women, deprived families, and unorganised

sector of labour. Of great concern is the fact that a majority of our members are drawn from amongst the above.

We also confess that we have been most negligent and inattentive to issues of ecological destruction that happen almost on a daily basis in and around us. Rampant deforestation is a major concern of carbon foot printing that is causing irreparable loss to the environment. Around the world, especially in WCRC countries, activities that adversely impact on water, air and the soil continue with hardly any form of official regulation. Extractive exploitation of minerals and fossil fuel without adhering to environment protection norms has become more of a rule than an exception. Loss of biodiversity, changing land contours and many other activities detrimental to the environment and ecology are major areas of concern.

Instead of honouring his trusteeship role, man appears hell bent in assisting and facilitating the end of the world. We appear to have forgotten the onus of stewardship that our Maker has placed upon our shoulders. It is the responsibility of the Church to reawaken our conscience towards the environment.

COMMITMENT:

We stand committed: (a) to continue with God's mission on earth for all of humanity and creation including the non-life until they are relieved and delivered from their groaning and agony so as to behold God's glory (Rom. 08: 18, 19; (b) to be inclusive in our love and compassion as God himself extends his love to all and beyond the human species and: (c) to relentlessly respect, protect, preserve and promote ecological, healthy environment and economic justice. (**Respect**, since the earth belongs to the Lord and everything in it Psalm 24: 1: **Protect** because we are His stewards Gen.2;15 and **Preserve** as we borrowed it from the future generation).

CONCLUSION:

We sincerely acknowledge and appreciate WCRC's Partnership Fund for sponsoring the consultation, the Church of South India for its hospitality and resource persons for their time, energy and sharing of knowledge and experiences.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We strongly recommend the following:

01. That **WCRC member churches in South Asia** be requested to:

- a) seriously study the **2004 Accra Confession** if possible within six months period by reflecting on it and make Action Plans to carry it forward at the country level;
- b) prepare a country based Biodiversity Action Plan for implementation so as to face the challenges of the ongoing economic and ecological destruction process;
- c) revisit their faith affirmations, respective church life styles, mission understanding and thrust in the context of the prevailing economic and ecological crises;
- d) promote and encourage using of **solar energy and rain water harvest** beginning with all church buildings, institutions and offices.

02. That the WCRC:

- a) convene a three day consultation **in Colombo, Sri Lanka**, sometime in January/February, 2016 for member churches in South Asia, and to include activists of voluntary and civil society organisations and, policy makers from all the eight (8) SAARC countries* to:
 - 1. take up the issue of economic and ecological destruction in the context of South Asia and globally
 - 2. develop a theology of Creation with inputs of experiences and studies from member churches;
- b) carry out periodical appraisal and critical evaluation on pragmatic implementation of the Accra Confession and subsequent related actions by member churches, nations and global organisations;
- c) take initiatives for bringing about a nuclear free world which includes doing away with nuclear energy since it is not a clean energy at all but with high cost of capital investment and hazardous right from mining due to radiation emission at all levels;
- d) take initiatives also to put a halt to genetically modified (GM) seeds for cropping and farming since it is one of the primary causes for pauperising farmers and extinction of reproductive/fertile traditional seeds and this includes all form of genetic engineering as it is immoral to tamper with natural creation.

***Note:** the eight SAARC (South Asia Association for Regional Co-operation) nations are Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

THE COUNCIL OF THE WORLD COMMUNION OF REFORMED CHURCHES IN EUROPE

Jan-Gerd Heetderks, president

How to live out communion? That is always the question if you think about the relations of the member churches with the other member churches.

In a continent with so many different languages it is not easy to share in each other's church life by written reports on the web or by sharing church newspapers. So often we hardly know what is happening in other churches of our communion. We hardly know about the highlights but also we hardly know the sad stories. The meetings of the Council are very important to meet each other also in an informal context and tell each other about our life in church and society, but this is also limited. We hope that on the basis of our background and on the basis that we have been brought together in the communion of the World Communion of Reformed Churches partnerships between individual churches will grow and bloom. We think and hope that (informal) networks will strengthen our communion and we will promote that by organizing conferences of participate in conferences.

An **overview** over the activities of WCRC Europe since the last meeting of the executive committee:

Council of WCRC Europe, Belfast, 26-27 February 2015

The Presbyterian Church in Ireland hosted the two-day annual meeting of the fifth Council of the World Communion of Reformed Churches in Europe at Assembly Buildings in Belfast, Northern Ireland.

Church officials, representing 40 Churches from 27 nations across Europe, met to discuss a variety of issues and receive a number of reports of common interest. The WCRC's last European Council met in the Polish capital Warsaw in March 2014.

Theme of a part of the meeting was nationalism in a European context; how it expressed itself across Europe and the relationship of churches to nationalism and nationalist movements from a theological point of view. Rev. Doug Gay from Trinity College, Glasgow, who has researched and written extensively on this subject, gave a keynote address with insightful inputs from colleagues from Hungary, Switzerland and Italy.

Also there were discussions about the plans of WCRC Europe in the future.

It was decided that there will be organized a **regional conference on human trafficking**. This conference is scheduled for autumn 2015, with people from the European Reformed community and will be organized by the Reformed Alliance and WCRC Europe. WCRC global has this year a Lent campaign about human trafficking (“Broken for You”) and so the theme falls in line with this activity of WCRC global. The executive secretary for justice and partnership will be asked for support.

It was also decided to organize a **conference on asylum**. Because of the importance of the topic “asylum and migration” for people in Europe and for a common vision of our life and community in Europe we want to plan a further conference about this issue in Berlin in spring 2016. The conference will hear voices from European countries about difficulties and opportunities in terms of integration and think about the question how we could live with the stranger in the midst of our societies on the way to communion. It is intended to learn more about a Reformed “theology of migration” and to recognize and rebuild our engagement in Europe.

The general secretary of the WCRC Chris Ferguson was guest of the council and so the council had the opportunity to get to know him.

Celebrating the 10th anniversary of the Accra confession - Regional consultation on asylum

The WCRC organized regional consultations on the theme: “Called to Communion, Committed to Justice: The Accra Confession Ten Years Later.” The regional consultation for Europe took place from 9-10 October 2014 and was a conference about asylum. The Reformed Alliance of Germany organized this conference together with WCRC Europe.

Celebrating the 10th anniversary of the Accra confession – Global consultation

The consultation was held in Hannover in November 2014 and was the culmination of a months-long series of meetings re-engaging the membership of the WCRC with the Accra Confession. The president and vice-president Martina Wasserloos-Strunk and also the European vice-president of WCRC global Bas Plaisier attended the conference.

Theology

The steering committee asked the secretary of the theology department of the WCRC, Douwe Visser, to set up in consultation with professor Michael Weinrich a new network of theologians as continuation of such a network that has been part of WCRC Europe over the past years

Douwe Visser organized a meeting of several (young) theologians in April 2014 in Hannover.

Reformed Church in Transcarpathia (Ukraine)

As proposed at the council meeting in Warsaw the steering committee wrote in April a solidarity letter to the Reformed Church in Transcarpathia and assured our Reformed sisters and brothers in Ukraine of our on-going prayer and concern.

Because the situation in Ukraine didn't get better in any way and the hostilities were going further and further in September the steering committee wrote a second letter to express the sincerest concerns and prayers of WCRC Europe for the Reformed Church in Transcarpathia. We also offered in this letter a visit to our brothers and sisters in the Ukraine.

Bischof Zán-Fábián invited a delegation to the Ukraine and the president and vice-president Balasz Odor visited the Reformed Church in Transcarpathia.

The economic and political situation in the Ukraine is very difficult. Because of the depreciation of the Ukrainian money even people with a normal salary are having big problems. The situation of the poor is terrible.

We were deeply impressed by the work of the church in the face of immense challenges. We met a living church with an eye for Biblical traditions and beliefs but also for the circumstances of the society. The church does a lot of diaconal work – with the help of many churches in Europe – and has very important projects.

The delegation also included Phil Tanis, executive secretary for communications of the WCRC; Seon Koo Kim, a missionary to Hungary from the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea; Miroslav Pfann, a Czech Reformed minister who will soon be serving churches in Ukraine; Rev Susan Brown, a minister in the Church of Scotland; and Diána Erdélyi, ecumenical secretary for the Reformed Church in Hungary.

Solidarity-Visit Spanish Evangelical Church

The steering committee has been making during the last years solidarity visits to member churches alongside its normal committee meetings. We are prioritising smaller member churches, in particular those who have experienced recent difficulties.

In October 2014 the steering committee visited the Spanish Evangelical Church (EES).

The steering committee spoke with the president and the general secretary of the church and with two pastors. Also the steering committee got a presentation on the work of El Faro. El Faro is the social outreach arm of the EES and has been going for 18 years. It started in Santa Columba, near Barcelona, and was initially for addressing social problems in the area.

The members of the EES spoke of the history and profile of their church. There has been a Reformed presence since the beginning of the 16th century. After the Civil War, it was severely persecuted by Franco. Under his rule, its seminary closed and many congregations were dispersed. Religious freedom was revoked.

Religious freedom returned in 1980. However, the State imposed a federation of non-Catholics but this was clearly unsatisfactory.

Today, there are 300,000 evangelical and protestant people in Spain. Social work and theological work are both big parts of the mission of the EES. At this moment—in common with many churches—the EES has a big problem with support of retired pastors and widows. A juridical process has been taken even as far as Strasbourg.

REPORT ON THE GLOBAL CHRISTIAN FORUM

Wes Granberg-Michaelson

It's my privilege and honor to serve as the representative of WCRC to the International Committee of the Global Christian Forum. As part of the three-person "Facilitation Team" of this committee, I have ongoing contact with the Global Christian Forum's secretary, Larry Miller, and other committee members in guiding the work of the Global Christian Forum.

The Global Christian Forum continues its patient task of building new bonds of ecumenical fellowship with the widest diversity of Christian traditions around the world. In so doing, it enjoys the support and confidence of the World Council of Churches, the World Evangelical Alliance, the Pentecostal World Fellowship, and the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. Virtually all the Christian world communions, including the WCRC, also support the Global Christian Forum.

Its major undertakings have been two large global gatherings, the first held in Limuru, Kenya, in 2007, and then in Manado, Indonesia in 2011. The next of these is planned for 2017 in Latin America. A number of regional meetings, team visits, and consultations also undergird its work. In all of its meetings, it has been guided by an intentional commitment to include half of its participants from evangelical, Pentecostal, and other similar Christian communities who have not been previously involved in the formal ecumenical movement. Doing so has successfully brought many new partners into serious ecumenical fellowship.

The Manado global gathering encouraged the Forum's governing committee to plan initiatives addressing issues of common global concern to the Forum's broad constituency. After careful consultation with its main partners (WCC, WEA, PWF, Vatican's PCPCU) the Forum agreed to address the challenge of "Discrimination, Persecution, and Martyrdom" being experienced among many parts of the global Christian community. Cries for solidarity have become more urgent, but the separate traditions of world Christianity do not even share a common vocabulary, much less joint strategies and actions in response.

Therefore, the Global Christian Forum will facilitate a global consultation on "Discrimination, Persecution, and Martyrdom," hosted by the churches in Tirana, Albania, in November 2017. Albania was chosen, with the support of the Orthodox Church there, in light of its past history when the Christian community suffered massive repression and its present reality with a renewed church in a pluralistic context.

The Forum also tries to respond to requests from churches in countries that desire to establish a wider ecumenical fellowship modeled after the breadth of Christian traditions found in the GCF. Further, in anticipation of the 2017 global gathering in Latin America, the Forum is taking steps to share its vision and build connections with various Pentecostal and other church groups in the region.

For the WCRC executive committee, two present actions in response to the Global Christian Forum's present plans would be advised:

1. The WCRC should consider nominating churches for the consultation on "Discrimination, Persecution, and Martyrdom." Fifty voices of churches experiencing these realities will be brought to Albania, along with 50 other churches whose response will be to listen and consider avenues of shared solidarity.
2. The WCRC should already begin considering those from its member churches who would be valuable participants in the 2017 global gathering in Latin America. While most of the WCRC's energy will be devoted to the General Council earlier in that year, participation in the GCF global gathering should not lose our attention.

The Global Christian Forum is like an ecumenical mustard seed. It has an extremely limited budget—about US\$200,000—one full time staff person (Larry Miller) and some part time administrative and consulting assistance. All else is done by those who volunteer their time or whose efforts are supported by various church bodies. Yet, its work is bearing fruit. Particularly in light of world Christianity's rapid growth to the Global South, the Global Christian Forum is creating a new ecumenical space that is offering engagement to emerging and growing churches that otherwise would remain far on the margins of the ecumenical movement.

The support the WCRC is deeply valued and appreciated.

Complete information about the work of the Global Christian Forum can be found at www.globalchristianforum.org.

A copy of the Global Christian Forum's recent newsletter is also available.

REPORT OF THE PRESBYTERIAN MINISTRY AT THE UNITED NATIONS

Mark Koenig and Ryan Smith

1. The 2015 report of the Presbyterian Ministry at the United Nations to the World Communion of Reformed Churches' Executive Committee meeting features elements of the ongoing witness in the name of Jesus made possible by an ongoing presence at the UN in New York. This is not an exhaustive report.

2. This report covers the time period from March 2014 through March 2015. Much of the work referenced remains ongoing.

3. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) holds special consultative status as a non-governmental organization with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. This allows the church to speak to a truly global audience and to contribute to its agenda by attending international conferences and events sponsored by the UN, making written and oral statements at these events, and taking part in advocacy and networking. This recognition secures accreditation for specific consultation and participation at UN Commissions and with individual Programmes and Agencies.

4. The Presbyterian Ministry at the United Nations represents the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) within the UN community. Policies of the General Assemblies of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) guide the work of the ministry. Staff members consult with colleagues in appropriate programs and ministries of the Presbyterian Mission Agency and the Office of the General Assembly in this work. PC(USA) mission partners are also consulted.

5. The Presbyterian Ministry at the United Nations represents the World Communion of Reformed Churches at the United Nations.

6. The ministry's work falls into two broad areas: to equip individuals and communities to engage in global discipleship and to advocate for justice and peace in the name of Jesus Christ, based on policies of the General Assemblies of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

7. The Rev. Mark Koenig serves as the director of the Presbyterian Ministry to the United Nations. Mr. Ryan Smith serves as the Presbyterian Representative to the United Nations.

8. Rooted in the Reformed tradition, we affirm that God, Creator and Sovereign of all, so loved the world that Jesus the Son was sent with a message of justice and peace, redemption and reconciliation. God calls

us to serve as Christ's ambassadors, working for peace, justice, and reconciliation in a world where humanity and creation are wounded, broken, and in need of healing.⁴ Together we seek life in all its fullness by:

9. Raising concerns for an end to violence, for justice, and for peace in meetings with representatives of Security Council member states arranged by the NGO Working Group on the Security Council. Countries of ongoing concern are **Syria, South Sudan, Sudan**, and the **Democratic Republic of the Congo**. Other countries and issues become the focus as the needs arise. Partner churches provide information that guides the implementation of PC(USA) policy and shapes the concerns for which we advocate.

10. Working with the NGO working group, **Ecumenical Women** to pursue justice for women. The Association of Presbyterian Women Aotearoa/New Zealand is a member of Ecumenical Women.

11. Engaging the **59th Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)**. The main focus of the session was on the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, including current challenges that affect its implementation and the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women. The Commission undertook a review of progress made in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, 20 years after its adoption at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995. Our participation takes place in partnership with Ecumenical Women. Ryan co-chaired Ecumenical Women this year. Churches and Christian-based organizations around the world were asked for input on the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The results helped shape the joint ecumenical statement to the Commission and the advocacy talking points that centered on ending violence against women and girls; addressing poverty, inequalities and climate changes as they impact women and girls; ensuring access to education and training for women and girls; ensuring full access to reproductive health and informed decision-making.

Highlights of our presence at this year's CSW include:

- Participation by Ms. Joanna Hipp as a member of the Presbyterian delegation.
- A parallel event on Sacred and Safe: Building Capacity of Faith Communities to Address Gender-Based Violence

⁴ 2 Corinthians 5:18-20

- A parallel event on Women of Faith, Women of Doubt: The positive and negative role of religious traditions and gender norms are causing international conflict and threaten to erode recent gains for women and LGBT people around the world. Co-hosted with St. Paul's Foundation, SoulForce, Riverside Church, Unitarian Universalist and Muslims for Progressive Values
- A side event with the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Botswana to the United Nations on Real Talk/Real Action: Engaging Men and Boys in Prevention and Intervention Strategies that Address Gender-Based Violence
- The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) had the opportunity to make an oral intervention (statement) during a meeting of the Commission.
- Ecumenical Women had the opportunity to make an oral intervention (statement) during a meeting of the Commission using the ECOSOC status of the Women's Missionary Society of the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

12. Taking part in the NGO Working Group on **Israel-Palestine**. The group provided a number of educational events for the UN community on issues related to Israel-Palestine that included a book launch event with Richard Falk (*Palestine: The Legitimacy of Hope*) and a presentation by Omar Barghouti. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) represented the working group and made an oral intervention (statement) on behalf of civil society during the observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

13. Participating as an NGO observer to the **Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People**.

14. Advocating for peace on the **Korean Peninsula** and for the reunification of the peninsula. Representatives of the National Council of Churches in Korea met with our ecumenical partners.

15. Providing input into a report issued by the High Commissioner for Human Rights on the right to education as a fundamental human right.

16. Hosting seminars for 14 groups and sponsoring a Doctor of Ministry class on Israel-Palestine with Columbia Theological Seminary.

17. Arranging presentations to the NGO community at the UN by the Rev. Lala Rasendrasasina President/Moderator of the **Church of Jesus Christ in Madagascar** (FJKM), and the Reverend Libias Boloma, General Secretary of the **Church of Central Africa Presbyterian's (CCAP) Harare Synod**.

18. Offering worship resources for the **International Day of Peace** (September 21), **United Nations Day** (October 24), and **Human Rights Day** (December 10).

19. Partnering with UNICEF and the United States Fund for UNICEF to work on behalf of **children**. Encouraging participation in Trick-or-Treat for UNICEF that provides funding to support children worldwide. Encouraging participation in the UNICEF Tap Project that provides funding for clean water. Participating in US Fund for UNICEF's Annual Meeting focused on building a movement to put children first.

20. Promoting the **Red Hand Campaign** to end the use of children as soldiers. This effort seeks to establish an international consensus that children should not be used as soldiers. It asks states to ratify the *Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict* – an international treaty committing states to address this issue. Four member states ratified in the time covered by this report. There remain 36 United Nations member states that have not ratified the treaty.

21. Participating in the UN observance of **World Interfaith Harmony Week**. Working with an interfaith youth group from Rockland County, New York to build community and create resources to share.

22. Promoting the work of the **Nonviolent Peaceforce** as a way to reduce violence and protect civilians in situations of violent conflict. An opportunity to speak to the faith-based NGO community was provided for David Hartsough.

23. Inviting support for efforts to ban the use of **landmines** on the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action – April 4.

24. Working on issues of **human trafficking**. We served as a resource partner for the development of the *Broken for You* resource. We promoted the resource through social media and directly to the 36 women Presbyterian participants in the Commission on the Status of Women including 11 young adults. We partner with ECPAT (End Childhood Prostitution and Trafficking) USA on local business commitments to stop the commercial sexual exploitation of children and with the Freedom Network USA on a human rights based approach to trafficking. We also partner with the U.S. Department of State, the U.S. Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, the Coalition of Immokalee Workers and the U.S. Fund for UNICEF.

25. Addressing issues related to **religious freedom** through participation in the NGO Committee on Freedom of Religion or Belief and work with the Office of International Religious Freedom at the US Department of State.

26. Participating in the NGO Working Group on **Food & Hunger**, including briefing the Chair of the Committee on World Food Security on the issues addressing our partners related to food and hunger concerns.

27. Advocating that human rights be honored and justice and peace pursued in **Colombia**, the **Philippines**, and **Nigeria**, in addition to the countries previously mentioned.

28. Participating in UN meetings and forums on **environmental justice**, including the climate change conference in Lima. Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) staff colleagues take the lead area.

29. Developing **young adult leaders**. Four seminary students and five college students served with the ministry during this time period.

30. We give thanks for all who have been partners in the work described above and who support the ministry through prayer, participation and financial gifts. We are particularly grateful for the ecumenical community at the UN.

31. Presbyterian Ministry at the United Nations **social media** presence:

- Web page – www.pcusa.org/un
- Blog – www.pcusa.org/blogs/swords-plowshares
- Twitter – [@PresbyUN](https://twitter.com/#!/PresbyUN)
- Facebook – <https://www.facebook.com/PresbyterianMinistryUN>

Feel free to contact us with any questions:

Mark Koenig – mark.koenig@pcusa.org

Ryan Smith – ryan.smith@pcusa.org

EKD GREETINGS

Delivered by Sussane Erlecke

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, dear president, dear general secretary, first of all, please allow me to thank you for inviting me here today. It is a great pleasure to be with you, an inspiring experience and wonderful motivation to my work. At this point I am delighted to send heartfelt greetings to all participants of the WCRC committee meeting from the Evangelical Church in Germany (the EKD) and especially from Bishop Petra Bosse-Huber. She wishes us a pleasant and blessed togetherness, intensive and gainful discussions, the courage to implement changes wherever needed to renew church.

To consider oneself as a reformed church means to be open to transformation at all times and by all means. It means to ask oneself what effort one has to make in order to be a living witness to the world in the 21st century. Therefore Bishop Bosse-Huber's particular attention and greetings, as well as my personal greetings, extend to our hosting church, the Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon.

In view of the further deterioration of the political situation in Syria and Iraq, we know you are facing an extraordinary challenge in Lebanon. No one of us can completely imagine what you have to struggle with. This encounter with people in deep need is a huge task. This region is the cradle of Christianity. I deeply want to assure you that our prayers accompany you and that we know that we all have to take care of people who have to flee their homes. I am saying this especially coming from a country where people live in peace for 70 years now. We do have to take responsibility too.

At last weeks conference of the Ecumenical Officers at the WCC, one colleague of the Armenian Apostolic Church (Holy See of Cilicia) said: "There was a time for words, a time for preaching the gospel, now there is the time for action, for concrete social work, for caring and loving our new neighbours no matter which religion he or she might belong to." Maybe that is why one little word can make the difference. The ecumenical project proclaimed at Busan is not any longer the "Pilgrimage *for* Justice and Peace" But, the Pilgrimage *of* Justice and Peace". This little preposition "of" shows us the direction. We can always ask God to provide us with what we need. We can do more than we expect by his virtue of love which grants us with fullness and joy, which motivates us to overcome difficulties and which will cancel the memory of sorrows one day. His spirit will guide us and comfort us.

EKD Greetings

May God bless you in your work! We wish you all in the WCRC God's blessing forever. We look forward to seeing you in 2017. May God grant you with his love, stop violence and make peace possible soon. On behalf of Bishop Petra Bosse-Huber and the EKD I say: God bless you all!

Susanne Erlecke concluded with a presentation of gifts to the National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon and the executive committee.

PLENARY REFLECTION ON THE CHRISTIANS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Delivered by Arda Arsenian Ekmekji

My Father was a survivor of the Armenian Genocide of 1915. He was 3 years old when he was forced out of Turkey and walked for 13 months all the way to Aleppo and then to Palestine, where my grandfather, a Pharmacist was eventually assigned to work in the Christian Mission Society Hospital in Gaza. My father died at the ripe age of 91 in 2003, just a few days before the Iraqi invasion. Next to his bedside, after his death 5 different ID cards were found spanning 100 years of History of the Middle East. From an Ottoman Empire identity card, to British Mandate, Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, Israeli Occupation and Palestinian Authority. His residence address had never changed, the Politics of the region had. This is the history of the Middle East my Friends capsuled in one family.

I was born in a Lutheran Hospital, grew up in an Armenian home, attended a French Catholic School, played with my Arab Sunni friends, sang in the Anglican Choir and graduated from a Presbyterian College. I eventually married a Lebanese, born in Aleppo Syria and have been part of the Armenian Evangelical Church for the past in all its denominations for the past 43 years. If you ask me what is your identity, I will tell you I am a Middle Eastern Christian, a special breed of Human Beings who are, ecumenical, multi-layered, multi-faceted, tolerant, open to all and ready to serve all human beings. This does not apply to me only. This is the definition of the Christians of this region. As an archeologist, I seem myself as compilation of different cultural layers one over the other.

The late Ghassan Tueini, owner and editor of the leading Lebanese Daily *Al Nahar* one stated: "In every Christian in Lebanon is a layer of Islam and in every Muslim is a layer of Christianity".

The Christians of the Middle East did not come here on the Mayflower nor with the Crusaders. They are the local inhabitants of the region, the first churches after Antioch, the first communities that Christ's disciples converted and established. For hundreds of years they survived the Islamic caliphate, the Mongol invasions, the Ottoman Empire. Yet the violence of these past 10 years finally broke their backs and is forcing on them this uncalled for exodus.

When the second Caliph Omar ben el Khattab entered Jerusalem in 637, he refused to pray in the Holy Sepulcher so that his followers will not turn it later into a Mosque in respect to his visit. Whereas the Greek Orthodox Archbishop asked the Muslims to keep the keys of the Church

with them so the Christian denominations will not fight among them for the right to have those keys. Until this day, the Muslim Sunni Nusseibeh family closes the doors of the Church every night. The daughter and sons of this family were my classmates, yes in the Catholic school and are today the Moderate Negotiators in Oslo, the UN Ambassadors, the Human Right activists and advocates for the Christian of the Palestine and the Middle East.

What Happened to this Middle East? When did things start going wrong?

Where in the world today in 2015 do you have Occupied Territories? Where in the world today do you still have Apartheid and Walls? Where in the world do you have people who have been refugees for 67 years?

When in Berlin the Wall was being dismantled in 1989, Israel was erecting walls between the two populations of the country. Families were divided, olive groves, farming lands, students from their schools. While the native residents have been expelled " foreign colonies " have replaced their lands. Dear Friends. No one is born a terrorist, they are made. Violence, Impunity, Injustice, Frustration, helplessness and hopelessness all are ingredients for violent outbursts.

Robert Ardrey in his book *The Territorial Imperative* (1966), states that the right to territory and land is nether a human nor a civil right. It is an animal right. When human beings are denied their ancestral homes, see their thousand year old olive groves bulldozed, one should not expect anything less than animal, aggressive reaction.

Since September 11, 2001, the world has undergone a "fundamental" change. The violence that post-Saddam Iraq has been subjected to since March 2003, the Arab Springs of Syria and Egypt, the recent emergence of ISIS, have not only been responsible for thousands of Christians fleeing their native countries, but also has tolled the tocsin of alarm for the Christians of Palestine, Jordan and Lebanon. Many feel threatened and insecure and decide to leave their ancestral homes looking for greener pastures elsewhere. Someone will say, "It's better, let them all go to the West and assimilate in Sweden, or Holland- but wait. What will happen to these areas without our light and salt?

What is the long-term significance of this Christian emigration from the Near East? What are its implications for the Western and American democracies?

Unfortunately, since the rise of Israel in 1948 and the "unresolved matter" of Palestinian refugees and the Palestinian state, fanaticism is becoming more and more the attractive resort for the Youth. Injustice, Impunity, corrupt states are leading to the disappearance of the

moderates while the religious fanatics are becoming more and more entrenched in their extremist ideas.

For centuries, the Christians of the Middle East have been responsible for creating educational and cultural oases that raised and educated non-Christian generations of young men and women, instilling in them notions of Christian love (agape), tolerance, service, empathy and most of all forgiveness. Many of the current moderate Muslim politicians and ambassadors, i.e. the allies, who can build bridges with the modern world, are the product of these institutions. These Churches have been responsible for the multicultural and pluralistic ideas that made the Middle East such a wealthy cultural region. Do not alienate the Moderates and side with the extremists. Whether it is Christian Zionism or Islamic fundamentalism, they are BOTH equally dangerous fro the Middle East. Your Churches have to Endorse moderation for a better balanced world.

However, unless an immediate end is put the injustices of the region, Unless a wholesome solution for the TWO state Palestine? Israel is established, one can predict that the 21st century will witness the fiercest and one of the most violent conflagrations in modern history. If the great powers are aspiring through their foreign policies to put an end to terrorism, I fear that instead they are creating new Franksteins that neither the United States nor Europe will be able to eventually contain. George W. Bush one said that he was going to "smoke the terrorists out;" but the important thing he never said was what was he going to do with them afterward. Putting the genie back into the bottle has never been an easy task. Millions of dollars are invested annually on conflict resolution programs in Middle Eastern universities, yet war and violence seem to be always the only methods practically applied. We need to address the roots of the injustice and violence. Do not compromise Truth and Right for economic interests and oil.

On the other hand, Lebanon has a great role to play in the region. A small nation of 4.5 million with 18 different denominations and confessions, it is today the only country in the Arab and Islamic world that boasts of a Christian President. Unfortunately the seat has been vacant for the past year, and fear is arising among many that the last bastion of Christendom in the region may be lost. More than ever, there is a need for a unified Christian stand to counter the effects of destabilization. Today Lebanon hosts 1.2 million Refugees. Around 2/3 of these are children and around 10.000 are orphans who have lost both parents. These orphans are potential time bombs if they fall in the wrong hands and raised with hatred and violence.

The time has come for the Christian churches to raise their voices and pleas.

The same way that Pope Francis dared to call the Armenian Genocide a Genocide, The Churches of USA and Europe should actively pressure their governments and eradicate the roots of violence before treating its results. Christian love in the Middle East is a basic indigenous ingredient; if we totally remove it the world will never be the same again. Let us put an end to Injustice, war and violence in Palestine, Iraq, Syria , Egypt and diffuse the tension that so violently is threatening the entire region. Let us lend a hand to these refugees, support the local moderates and help them to remain in their lands, so they can act as the buffers and our future partners in the building of democracies and world peace.

LUTHERAN WORD FEDERATION GREETINGS

Delivered by Martin Junge

Dear sisters, dear brothers in Christ,

It is with great pleasure and with gratitude to God that I join the sessions of your Executive Committee to present the greetings of the Lutheran World Federation. For various reasons I have never been able to be personally present at your recent meetings. This time it worked out, and I am very grateful for that.

When you left the Ecumenical Center in Geneva a bit more than a year ago we mutually pledged our additional efforts not to allow physical distances to distance our two communions from each other. In line with this commitment, we have made it a point with your General Secretary to meet whenever he is in Geneva, and to be in contact as often as packed schedules allow, or issues so require. I believe this to be very important, not only for the sake of the relationships between the WCRC and the LWF, but also for the sake of the world in which we serve. Indeed, in times of a general tendency towards fragmentation and of withdrawal, not only in the world but also in the church, we do have a shared responsibility to not allow the ecumenical movement to become fragmented, and instead to let our ecumenical unity to be a prophetic presence of hope in our world that so much longs for justice, peace and reconciliation.

You meet these days to envision the WCRC rooted in communion and justice. Hence, you are looking for how to continue expressing and holding together both a rather new vocation – your identity as a communion, and the longstanding identity mark of the WCRC – its commitment to issues to justice.

In the LWF we are growing in the understanding that 'communion' is above all a *gift*, and yet at the same time and as a consequence of it, also a *task*. The moment we begin to think the communion as a decision, of an Assembly, for instance, the day we locate its origins in our minds, or consider it as a result of our theological conceptualization, we have gone back to a federative model that may *do* many meaningful things together, but does not *live and exist together* as one body. The call into communion is a call from God. Hence, it is not our property, but comes from the sovereign God, who chose to call and make this call to be the cornerstone of communion. We have become more and more aware of this call lately. It is one of the most powerful centripetal forces that brings us together while so many centrifugal forces drive us apart. This is where the *task* of the communion arises as well; the ongoing

reflection and attempt to express the gift of the communion, and to be coherent with it by the ways we relate to each other and witness in this world. It is a journey into uncharted land – as, in fact, most of the journeys are that have their point of departure in God’s word. But it is also a journey into a land full of promises, as I want to continue to believe and hope.

As said earlier, justice is the very special commitment and passion of the WCRC. You have upheld it with a special vocation as a Reformed family for decades, and for this you are known and widely recognized. I was grateful to realize that by bringing the concepts of communion and justice together while envisioning the WCRC’s future, you are reminding all of us that our togetherness is not an end in itself, but that our togetherness is meant to better witness to God’s mission of transformation, healing and reconciliation in our world. And hence, justice matters!

Recent discussions between the WCRC and the LWF have resulted in a renewed interest to revisit the question of whether the WCRC might be considering signing the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of the Justification (JDDJ) signed between the LWF and the Roman Catholic Church in 1999, and joined by the Methodists in 2006. I understand that this is an internal discussion process at this point of time, which the LWF both welcomes and respects. When you find yourself ready for it, the LWF will be ready and willing to offer accompaniment on your reflections on this important decision.

Let me express from the LWF’s perspective how I see the importance of your process towards a possible joining of the JDDJ. It relates precisely to the aspect that I highlighted earlier: your particular commitment to justice. You would bring this very gift into the JDDJ! Because indeed, if the WCRC was to join, it would bring much more to the table than the pencil to sign the document. It would bring the identity of the WCRC and its own particular profile into it. It would hence bring, among others, precisely the special vocation for justice, which in fact is currently explored between the WCRC and the Roman Catholics in your bilateral dialogue. A JDDJ joined by the WCRC wouldn’t be anymore the JDDJ that was signed 1999. And this is good so.

Without knowing the outcome of your internal process, let me therefore express already at this stage how much we would welcome such contribution and how nicely it would actually speak of the journey towards unity that Lutherans and Reformed have been able to walk together during the last decades, as recently affirmed again by the bilateral document *Communion: On being the Church*.

Ahead of us, as you know, is the 500th Reformation anniversary of the Reformation which had its origins in the revolutionary thinking of Martin Luther. A reformation movement that had preceding events, and that had other reformation moments and movements afterwards. The Reformation, this we have been stressing as we journey towards the anniversary, does not belong exclusively to Lutherans. It is a movement that took place and continues to take place within the body of Christ and in this world. It has been taken up, it has meandered into other expressions and denominations, and it has been transformed further and read anew. And as such, it calls us indeed to reflect how we, Reformed and Lutherans, intend to give expression to our shared sense of ownership of reformation, while expressing at the same time the distinctiveness of our theological and spiritual profiles. While the date of the anniversary is already very close, just around the corner actually, I want to invite us to look beyond that date in order to reflect and work towards expressing all what unites us, and offer it as a witnessing gift in our world. "*What about October 32?*", we have been asking ourselves, thereby reminding us that the reformation anniversary is just a milestone as we continue seeking to faithfully witness in God's mission. We look forward to continue discussions with the WCRC, both in view of 2017, and of what comes afterwards.

Let me conclude by offering all our best wishes and prayers for a successful meeting. May the Holy Spirit guide you, and may you experience God's presence. May the gift of communion move you further into relationships of mutuality and care, so as to better serve in this world longing and groaning for justice, peace and reconciliation.

Thank you.

REPORT OF THE 26th GENERAL COUNCIL PLANNING COMMITTEE INITIAL MEETING: 17-21 NOVEMBER 2014

The Planning Committee meeting began in Hannover and concluded in Erfurt, Germany.

Members present: Dario Barolin, Doug Chial, Sabine Dressler, Lisa Vander Wal (convener), Aiko Widhidana Sumichan

Staff present: GS Chris Ferguson, Dora Arce Valentin, Phil Tanis and Claudia Duval

Members excused: Cheryl Meban and Jerry Pillay

Introductory Matters

We began by reviewing our charge as outlined in Article IX of the "Record of Proceeding" and the terms of reference established by the WCRC's executive committee. We received several documents and recommendations prepared by Setri Nyomi regarding budget, venue, and planning steps taken in previous planning committees. We recognized that this will be the first General Council since the Uniting General Council in 2010 and will include new dynamics.

Several initial questions arose as the PC began its discussion:

1. How do we incorporate a sense of "worshipful work" within the meeting?
2. How do we balance the 500th Commemoration of the Reformation with the WCRC's work of communion and justice?
3. What outcomes do we hope will arise from the GC?
4. Length of meeting. How do we balance:
 - a. time for meaningful program, discernment and outcomes,
 - b. travel to visit Reformation sites and government venues,
 - c. time away from home, "wear and tear on the human body," and budgetary concerns?
5. How do we ensure that our goals for representation (women, youth, region) are met?
6. What processes are necessary to deal with potentially communion-dividing issues?

We were pleased to receive the report of the Reformierte Bund and the Host Committee regarding initial preparation and planning which will inform the work of the PC.

Values Clarification

The PC affirmed these values as integral to the meeting of the General Council:

- Commitment to justice and communion, combined rather than separate
- Celebration of diversity and welcoming all voices
- Critical accompaniment and solidarity in dialogue
- Reformed AND ecumenical
- Transformative and passionate engagement
- Prayerful and Scripture-based discernment, inclusive of sharing and listening
- Critical theological reflection

Theme and Programme

The WCRC is a new creation learning how to live as a communion. We are at a place where we have been dramatic in proclaiming that theology and justice are intricately connected. Still, in the newness of the communion, we have yet to integrate these two things fully. How do we build communion with theological integrity while at the same time deepening our commitment to mission and justice? What renewal is necessary to bring us to the point of transformation?

Worship and Bible study are foundational for theme and programme. In addition, three important foci must be integrated within the 26th General Council:

- The theme: "Living God, Renew and Transform Us"
- The 500th Anniversary of the Reformation
- The Accra Confession

After considerable consideration of how these components intersect, we see the theme as the door to the future, and the other components as *lenses* through which we move through it. The Reformation was a courageous reevaluation and re-formation of the core of the Christian faith; it belongs to a diverse family and, as such, is ecumenical. It also provides a sense of urgency toward continued re-formation for the present and future transformation of the world.

The Accra Confession, a critical reading of the signs of the times at its formation and recently confirmed at its 10th anniversary, is a lens

which continues to focus our commitment to justice. One overarching question will likely be important at the General Council: in what ways have we *failed* to live out the Accra Confession? And how may confessing our failures be an integral part of the prayer embodied in the theme: Living God, renew and transform us. The General Council has the potential to further unpack the Accra Confession so that it might impact and transform every place the WCRC lives.

We envision three keynote “moments,” each to involve either a single speaker or a panel to guide our attention upon a component:

- reading the signs of the times, using the lens of the Accra Confession (Allan Boesak?)
- the importance of the Reformation: theological and societal aspects
- renewal and transformation

The framework would include a variety of voices, with “pop-up” stories of challenges and stories of transformation, which would then be undergirded with critical theological reflection. Opening and ending sermons could focus upon either a single component or issue or an integration of the three main components. The day we travel to Wittenberg would obviously focus upon the Reformation.

We see Bible studies as an essential part of the theme framework. We see value in balancing the keynote pieces (speakers and panels) with “bottom up” Bible study and reflection in (20?) small groups. The Bible studies would be focused around a particular issue or component and include reading selected texts, reflecting upon them, and working toward a direction that involves renewal and transformation. Leaders of the groups would then meet together to provide an aggregate of concerns and a mapping of programmatic direction.

One challenge we anticipate in this model is language. We would need to carefully compose the groups in such a way that qualitative translation will allow all voices to be heard. Care would also need to be expended by the leader group to not force too much consensus, lest more radical ideas for transformation be silenced.

Discernment Processes

The Bible study group model outlined above would also be the framework for discussion groups. Instead of the previous model of specific groups around social issues, policy and programme, we envision these components to be discussed by everyone within small groups. The discussion would be guided according to a carefully crafted format in which the leaders of the groups would be trained. The leaders would

then provide a compilation of the output of the groups that faithfully includes all the voices.

This is a discernment model that has been used by the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America for several years. The value of it, attested widely by RCA participants (including Phil Tanis and myself), is that every delegate is able to reflect and provide input for all issues before they reach the plenary floor. In plenary, voices that are less confident and experienced are often muted. When people have opportunity to “listen for the voice of the Spirit” in a small group setting, they have much greater confidence when the plenary discussion occurs.

The challenge of such a model is two-fold. Leaders who are able to understand the process and carefully lead the discussion are important for its success; setting of group norms for respectful listening is also essential. Additionally, as noted above, leaders must not try to force too much consensus, as new and potentially transformative must be allowed to emerge.

Venue of Erfurt, Germany

There is significant value in situating the General Council in Erfurt. Although there is no close presence of the Reformed church in Erfurt, the city contains ample evidence of the Lutheran Reformation and reminds us that there is ecumenical diversity in the “re-formed” faith. The cloister and university where Luther lived and studied are high points to geographically ground the Reformation events. The city has great charm and a number of interesting sites, including a Jewish museum; these will provide opportunities for delegates to experience the German culture as well as ties to the Reformation and other important historical and political events.

The fairgrounds are impressive, sophisticated and professional. Virtually everything that would be needed is available: technology, catering, and meeting spaces for large and small groups.

Length of the General Council

A significant decision that needs to be made that dramatically affects the budget is the number of days the General Council will meet. Participation is a high value and a longer assembly may preclude participation for those who are unable to be away from their home settings for a longer time period. Of course, a greater number of days significantly adds to the cost of accommodations.

Still another factor is the number of off-venue excursions planned for the assembly. Although there is a desire to grant the delegates a fuller cultural experience of Germany (which may also affect government funding), travel costs and other logistics may outweigh the benefit of additional excursions.

Finally, It was noted that another complicating and undeniable factor is simply the endurance of the human body. Too many long days will diminish stamina and meaningful participation.

For these reasons, we recommend that excursions be limited to Wittenberg (an important Reformation site) and Berlin (to visit with government officials). We also recommend that we limit the assembly to ten days, not inclusive of pre-councils and travel days.

There might be post-General Council opportunities for delegates to extend their stay through volunteering with local churches or excursions beyond those offered in the actual meeting.

Coordinator

We discussed the length of time for which a coordinator should be contracted. We agreed that eighteen months seems a sufficient amount of time, provided the right person can be identified. They should begin the position in February 2016.

Budget

Shortening the meeting will reduce the overall budget about 10%. We discussed other cost-saving possibilities and alternative funding sources. For instance, we hope to receive co-opted staff and other subsidies from other agencies (e.g., CWM, WCC, Bread for the World).

The committee also discussed the need to ensure that financial challenges do not preclude potential delegates from coming to the General Council. What savings might be found in the budget to increase the level of travel subsidies? Might travel subsidies also be focused on ensuring a balance in gender representation? After comparing the budgeted registrations fees with similar, recent conferences, it was agreed that they could be raised. This increased revenue could also be put toward more subsidies.

Staff were asked to work with the subcommittee below to create a new proposed budget.

Subcommittees

Worship: a skilled, inclusive and diverse committee including Sabine and members from CICW and the WCC

Coordinating Committee: Sabine + one from the Reformed Alliance, Chris and Claudia

Theme and Programme: Jerry, Dario, and Lisa

Communication & Technology, Publications & Promotions: Phil & Aiko

Budget: Chris, Sabine and Johann will work together to clarify the budget; Doug & Dario will also be involved

Pre-councils: Chris asked Dora to provide rationale and plan for these

REPORT OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE

Members present: Lu Yueh Wen, Clifton Kirkpatrick, Chris Ferguson, Anna Krueger (Assistant to the Finance Office), Johann Weusmann (convener and General Treasurer), Steve Lytch (recorder), Cheh Liang Mok, Veronica Muchiri; via Skype: Gerhard Planter (Finance Coordinator). Stephen Kendall was excused.

I. 2014 Financial Statement

The committee reviewed the 2014 financial statement, which was previously adopted by the officers.

RECOMMENDATION 1

That the Executive Committee receive the 2014 financial statement.

II. 2015 Financial Plan

The committee reviewed the 2015 Financial Plan, which was previously adopted by the officers.

RECOMMENDATION 2

That the Executive Committee approve the 2015 Financial Plan.

III. Finance office report

A. The committee gives thanks for the work of the finance office and draws attention to its report. It expresses concern that the 2014 budget had a deficit of EUR 13,341.61. Therefore it makes the following recommendation:

RECOMMENDATION 3

That the General Secretary ensure that expenses stay within the approved budget.

B. Concern was expressed about the lack of documentation of Miscellaneous expenses left over from Switzerland such as Insurance, IT, furniture and equipment.

RECOMMENDATION 4

That documentation of the Miscellaneous Switzerland line items be presented by the finance office to the Finance Committee by the end of September.

C. Procedures for adopting the budget were reviewed. It was agreed that the budget should be adopted later in the year to facilitate more realistic planning.

RECOMMENDATION 5

That the first draft of the 2016 budget be presented to the Finance Committee at the end of September/beginning of October 2015. It will then be submitted for approval electronically by the officers and subsequently by the Executive Committee members no later than the beginning of November.

D. Various groups have provided funding for a limited time for the position of Executive Secretary for Justice and Partnership. The committee wants to ensure that funding will continue to be available for this position. Therefore the Committee recommends:

RECOMMENDATION 6

That the budget for 2016 provide for the possibility of a substantially reduced subsidy for funding the work of the Executive Secretary for Justice and Partnership.

E. Regarding funding for General Council

RECOMMENDATION 7

That the office begin immediately to raise funds for the 2017 General Council and that the General Secretary follow up with the request to member churches to make a special contribution equivalent of one year's membership dues.

F. Data base

Elder Mok, speaking on behalf of the Communications Core Group, reported on the need for an improved data base in the office. Phil Tanis and others have done research on potential alternatives to the current data base, and they believe that Sales Force would best meet our needs. Phil described the capabilities of Sales Force. It will help WCRC keep track of membership fees and donations, mailing lists, and other data. It will be especially useful in preparing for the General Council. It comes with 10 free licenses, but he estimates a cost of approximately €5000 to facilitate a transition.

RECOMMENDATION 8 (presented in conjunction with the Communications Core Group)

That 5000 euro be allocated from the General Council fund to clean up and modernize our data base.

G. Reserve funds

In 2011 CANAAC made a grant of \$15,000 to the North American trustees to fund their work. That money has not been spent and apparently is in a reserve account in the amount of €11,012.44.

RECOMMENDATION 9

That the reserve fund WCRC North American Trustees be made available to the North American trustees once the Finance Office has confirmed that the fund is indeed the grant made by CANAAC in 2011 to underwrite fund raising expenses.

F. The committee commends the Finance Office for reducing the number of bank accounts.

G. The Committee notes that the depreciation of the euro against the Swiss franc confirms the decision to relocate out of Switzerland.

IV. Audit report

The committee expresses thanks for the work of the auditor. It recognizes the work of the office during the period of transition and the challenges that relocation and change of staff presented. The committee now commends to the staff the recommendations of the auditor and makes the following recommendations to the Executive Committee:

RECOMMENDATION 10

That the Executive Committee accept the audit of the 2014 accounts.

Comment: The audit was done by the EKD at a considerable cost saving. Some donor organizations are asking for an audit of their projects by an international auditing firm.

RECOMMENDATION 11

That the Finance Coordinator along with the General Secretary take steps to implement the recommendations in section 1 of the audit report and report progress to the meeting of the Finance Committee in June.

RECOMMENDATION 12

In response to section 2.5 of the audit report, that the finance office along with the General Secretary review the current system of advances and give increased attention to the issuing of advances and the monitoring of expenses.

RECOMMENDATION 13

~~*That the Personnel Committee address the concerns in section 3.1 of the audit report concerning old age advances.*~~

RECOMMENDATION 14

That credit cards continue to be issued to the General Secretary, the Executive Secretaries, as well as the finance and administrative staff, and that credit cards be issued to the

President and the General Council Coordinator, all the while recognizing the risks cited by the audit report.

RECOMMENDATION 15

In response to Section 3.6 of the audit report: That the Finance Office compile a list of all relocation costs for review at the June meeting of the Finance Committee.

RECOMMENDATION 16

That the engagement of the EKD High Audit Office for the 2015 audit be approved.

V. Funds Development

The committee discussed fund raising needs with the Communications Core Group. It was noted that due to declining program reserve funds, there needs to be a new sense of partnership between the program staff and WCRC funds development efforts. We cannot survive if reserves continue to decline without being replenished. This will require continuing attention to developing programs of high quality that further the mission of WCRC in a way that is evident to potential donors.

RECOMMENDATION 17 (in conjunction with the Communications Core Group)

To create a funds development committee of 4 or 5 people, chosen by the Officers, including at least one member from the Finance Committee and one from the Communications Core Group. This committee would coordinate funds development for the WCRC as a whole, report to the Executive Committee, and would have authority to create and implement a regionally based and appropriate funds development campaign. The 2016 budget shall include operational provision for the work of this committee.

VI. Membership fees

The committee reviewed a graph showing each member church's payment of membership fees. Many churches are in arrears.

RECOMMENDATION 18

That the President and General Secretary focus their efforts to collect overdue membership fees on those member churches that have the largest underpayment.

VII. Program funds

The committee met with Dora Arce Valentin, Executive Secretary for Justice and Partnership and Douwe Visser, Executive Secretary for Theology, Mission and Communion who reported on their fund raising activities. The committee expressed concern that program reserves are not being replenished as they are spent.

RECOMMENDATION 19

That the Executive Committee direct the General Secretary to monitor that there are sufficient funds available for program work.

VIII. Pension fund

The finance office reviewed WCRC's pension obligations. Concern was expressed that there will be sufficient income to meet our obligations. Adjustments will have to be made to the 2016 budget and again in subsequent years in order to meet our obligations.

RECOMMENDATION 20

That the contributions toward the pension fund be reviewed in the September meeting of the Finance Committee and necessary adjustments made in the 2016 budget and subsequently

IX. Partnership funds

Werner Joecker, Assistant for Partnership Funds, reviewed the report of the Partnership Funds. The committee commended the work of the funds and was impressed by their impact in various areas.

RECOMMENDATION 21

That the Office of Partnership Funds work in conjunction with the Office of Communications to set up a Web page and use other media to communicate more widely the impact of the Funds and encourage applications.

X. Investments

Anna Krueger reviewed the two investment accounts of approximately €400,000 each that we have with KD bank in Germany. \$800,000 from the CWM account has been transferred to Fifth/Third bank in the United States. \$400,000 will be invested in the Barnabas Foundation and \$400,000 in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Foundation. Anna reviewed the funds in which these amounts will be invested. The committee is satisfied with our investments.

PARTNERSHIP FUND COMMITTEE REPORT

Participants: Dr. Kobus Gerber (convener), Dr. Douwe Visser (coordinator Partnership Fund), Najla Kassab, Salome Twum, Bas Plaisier, Werner Joecker (assistant to the Partnership Fund)

1. Preliminaries. After his initial warm greetings the convener acknowledged the reporting and documentation received from the administration and considered it to be a sufficient and appropriate basis for working on the different points of the proposed agenda and he commenced the Meeting.

The meeting was held without its members Yvette Noble-Bloomfield and Subha Singh Majaw who could not attend due to health problems and without Clayton Leal da Silva.

The proposed agenda was accepted but the convener decided not to dwell too much on points that can be found in the materials sent prior and proposed to follow an order according to the importance of the issues at hand.

2. Auditors report. The reports are part of the enclosure. The administration gave a brief summary and listed the five points or remarks outlined separately by the auditors, Curacon. The committee discussed the case of project A1315, Trinity Community Clinic Community Health Project. Here the grant money was transferred to a personal account and not to the church account and thus stolen. It was decided that the administration shall wait for the final ruling of the court in charge of the legal proceedings in Uganda, also for the lawyers report and the report of the insurance advisers of the bank involved in the transaction. Nevertheless the Executive Committee shall be asked for a provision as resolution in this case.

In general and for the attention of the Finance Committee the report shall be considered as being looked upon by the PFC and its observations dealt with actively and in an appropriate manner.

Recommendation: The Executive Committee shall be asked to wait for the ruling of the court before any decision to write off the sum is taken.

Priority: High

Start date: Immediately

Time-line for solutions: Effective immediately

Reporting: Present report upon completion.

3. Donors and donorship. Considered as the most significant challenge presently. In order to regain former strength, flexibility and maneuverability the WCRC needs to reengage in new fundraising activities in the immediate future. Currently we cannot attend to the applications appropriately in time and amount. We are currently restricted to only two donors. It is necessary to reactivate known relationships and acquire new ones. In order to replenish Fund B to its former strength in other years a mark of 300.000 EUR shall be set to attend to projects from Theology and Mission. For this purpose the coordinator also proposed to contact the United Churches in Germany. Peter Borgdorff from the CRCNA shall also be asked to provide some more information about whom else the administration might direct to for the same purpose. Care should be taken not to address individual churches or organizations but to deal with them as a group to provide a proposed target sum of 100.000 USD pa.

It was clarified that the administration shall guarantee a stable and consistent amount of funds in the near future in order to attend to all the corresponding projects in a timely manner.

The convener made the suggestion to address the Finance Committee and ask for their help to determine if interest profits of the CWM endowment fund might be used for this purpose. The President of the WCRC, Jerry Pillay, added the information that these profits cannot be channeled into any other use before two years from the date it was awarded. But he promised to seriously look again into this request once the period has expired.

The convener specifically asked the coordinator to reactivate the former good relationship with Swiss churches in general for theology projects, and specifically FAP being one of the major sponsors, who in the past to co-funded projects under Fund C.

Recommendations: The considerations outlined in the text to be converted into actions.

Priority: High

Start date: Immediately following the acceptance of the PFSC of the Strategic Fundraising Plan.

Time-line for solutions: Fundraising effective immediately and ongoing.

Reporting: Upon progress.

4. It was decided that the assistant should outline a Strategic Fundraising Plan taking into account the observations from above.

Consistent with this is the design and publishing of a brochure or flyer dedicated to the presentation of the PF in collaboration with the Office for Communications. During a meeting held with the Finance Committee the convener of this committee urged to set up a web site in order to better promote the activities and enlarge the degree of perception. This will be included in the corresponding report.

Priority: High

Start date: Immediately.

Time-line for solutions: 3 months from today

Reporting: Upon completion.

5. Emergency Fund, Fund E. As the present donor, BftW, allows for disbursements for emergency projects in the course of his grant period, the administration has made use of this alternative. However, this has been challenging as the donor releases the funds only after completing time consuming procedural steps. Nevertheless, the PFSC considers vital to count on this instrument. To resolve this situation it was decided to reactivate Fund E and replenish it with fresh funds. A first target sum of 10.000 EUR was proposed and conditioned to that it has to be constantly available. For now we shall re-allocate the idle balance from Fund D to E in the amount of EUR 14.762. At the same and according to the Fundraising Plan the administration shall direct its efforts to provide for this monies.

Recommendation: Fund E shall permanently be transformed into the "Emergency Fund" and be bestowed with all the corresponding characteristics of such an instrument. It shall be referred to as such from this date on.

Priority: High

Start date: Immediately.

Time-line for solutions: Ongoing

Reporting: Upon completion.

6. Decision making process for the Emergency Fund E: An internal structure and system for the approval of disbursements is in place.

Priority: High

Start date: Immediately.

Time-line for solutions: Effective immediately

Reporting: Upon request and whenever the circumstances require.

7. Bread for the World. The Committee discussed the current situation and the means how to grow the relationship and obtain a larger sum for

grants in midterm. It has also been noted that in the last twelve months the administration has embarked in a trust building process that has improved the relationship considerably. The administration is in contact with its counterparts on a daily basis. The coordinator keeps the overview of these processes. In cooperation with BftW the administration also shall work on the possibility to separately finance projects that correspond to core values of the Communion by the way of specific projects whenever the need may arise in the future (Justice issues, peace and healing processes).

It was recommended to work towards to gradually enlarge the grant sum to a threshold of 600.000 EUR and from this perspective decide on measures to adapt the organization and consider enlarging the staff before moving further as administrative work will constitute a challenge.

Bas Plaisier asked if BftW also allows for 15% to be spent on administrative costs, as he had known from a similar experience from "Kerk in Actie". The administration confirmed this and briefly explained the mechanics of the contribution to the core budget.

Again, the case of the stolen funds under project A1315 was recalled by the convener to know if this case may lead to repayment to the donor or to other consequences that might affect future disbursements depending on the moment when the auditors give their final opinion. The coordinator recalled that in view of this the administration so far has been acting with total transparency, a fact acknowledged by the donor, and that he does not expect that the organization may see itself forced to any reimbursement.

Priority: High

Start date: (see above)

Time-line for solutions: Ongoing

Reporting: Next Executive Meeting and if the circumstances may require.

8. Capacity Building training in the office and the regions. This matter has come to constitute a major goal of the Communion and it was decided that its implementation shall begin immediately. As previous contacts regarding the Capacity Building Programme from BftW had been made already, any follow-up shall be transformed into action. BftW agreed for the next application to implement an additional budget line for this specific purpose. The PFSC nevertheless decided to speed the process up effective immediately. The PFSC does not want to wait until the next application but to engage in actions in this direction now, such as new forms for application and reporting, accompanied by the corresponding instructions that shall serve as a first step towards this goal. The PFSC sees Africa as a model/pilot region in order to spread

this programme into the regions in the second phase. Third phase will be to train member churches by "training the trainers". The coordinator keeps the overview and the assistant shall outline a plan and look for initial training in order to accompany the pilot regions in their first processes. Salome Twum insists on a fast implementation of reporting forms and the administration was in a position to tell her that first tests had been conducted successfully and that a current application process from her region will be managed according to these criteria.

The coordinator also recommended to contact Ms. Agnes Kruszely from FAP, a partner with whom in the past work shops had been organized.

Priority: High

Start date: Immediately after acceptance of the corresponding plan and 1 month for establishing the plan.

Time-line for solutions: Three months after acceptance of the plan.

Reporting: Upon the end of the timeline and when the circumstances may require.

9. Review of project documentation. In order not to get into details the convener recommended that current versions of documents pertinent to application procedures shall be sent to the members of the PFSC for their rapid evaluation.

Priority: medium

Start date: Immediately

Time-line for solutions: Three months

Reporting: Upon the end of the timeline.

10. Policies. Many procedures followed in the day-to-day business do not obey formal procedures or existing policies. In addition the Communion does not have any descriptions like for example organizational charts or definitions of the types of funds. These shall be obtained via 1) refining the drafts presented in the meeting, 2) on constant basis provide for updates to be discussed, 3) look into past minutes of similar meetings for compilation, organization and possible re-implementation.

Priority: medium

Start date: Immediately

Time-line for solutions: Until the next Executive Committee Meeting.

Reporting: Upon the end of the timeline.

11. GIT funding. Shall be dealt with as in the past.

Priority: medium
Start date: Immediately
Time-line for solutions: Finished
Reporting: Present report.

12. Renaming the Partnership Fund. In order to respond to past and present considerations of different kinds effective immediately the PF shall be considered and referred to as “**Reformed Partnership Fund**” (RPF) and actions shall be put in motion to establish this modification within every aspect of the organization.

Recommendation: Renaming the funds name to the proposed.
Priority: medium
Start date: Immediately
Time-line for solutions: Finished
Reporting: Present report.

13. Overview of projects pending. In order to get a better notion of what kind of projects the administration is working with the assistant was asked to give a brief situation report based on enclosure no. 11 that reflects the grass roots approach of the work of the RPF. The presentation was lively enriched by additional comments on P1508, Care for the Aged Initiative, Akuapem Presbytery, Presbyterian Church of Ghana by Salome Twum. With an actual recollection of the current status she underlined the importance of the project. Najla Kassab inquired for the whereabouts of a project of the Armenian Church in Lebanon, under Rev Kilaghbian, that was mentioned in the report. The assistant shall look into this upon his return to office. Najla also gave a brief insight into further necessities such as those of refugees from the Syrian city of Homs, 42 families that need to be placed in appropriate housing.

She also described how the beneficiaries identify these efforts as being a major constitutive element of the WCRC. This is a factor of true Communion building.

Priority: High
Start date: Ongoing
Time-line for solutions: Ongoing
Reporting: The convener expressed his desire that more frequent reporting shall be issued on a habitual basis. The periodicity is to be established but may be set to monthly.

Having dealt with all the pending items of the agenda the convener closed the meeting accompanied by the observation that the additional time slot may not be required. He thanked present members for their

way they dealt with each other and the administration for their reports and documentation.

Final recommendations:

- 1. That the report be accepted in its present final form.**
- 2. That the coordinator and assistant be thanked for their reports and work done.**

CONSTITUTION AND MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE REPORT

Peter Borgdorff (Moderator), Lydia Adajawah, Yael Hadiputeri, Carola Tron Urban, Cheryl Meban and Gradye Parsons (second session only).
Staff in attendance: Chris Ferguson (General Secretary) and Anna Kruger (Finance Office).

New Member Applications

1. Reformed Evangelical Church of Australia – pending. Has not been withdrawn, but not completed. **Recommend: request that Robyn Goodwin pursue this matter on our behalf**
2. Congregational Church of Brazil – pending. **Recommend: request that Clayton Leal pursue this matter on our behalf.**
3. Igreja Reformada em Mocambique (Reformed Church of Mozambique) – 2012, apparently info was given to previous general secretary, but hasn't been processed. – **Recommend: request that Kobus Gerber pursue this matter on our behalf.**
4. Request from Reformed Church and Assemblies of Togo (12 congregations, 700 members, women deacons but not elders, baptism by immersion). Breakaway from Assemblies of God. No sign that they are subscribers to the historic reformed creeds. – only one recommendation. Relationships in the region are unclear at present. – Recommend: tabled in order to allow for further conversation with the church about the nature of their reformed connections and confessions. **Recommend: request that Lydia Adajawah pursue this matter on our behalf**
5. Ukraine: Single congregation – 40 people. Tabled for further investigation. **Recommend: request that WCRC Europe (Jan Geert Heetderks) pursue this matter on our behalf.**
6. ECA congregations India – mountain church. Feb 2015 – Recommendation from Reformed Presbyterian Church NE Asia. And from PCIIndia. **Recommend: that their application for membership be accepted, subject (in the light of their answer to question 14 of the questionnaire) to further dialogue with the General Secretary and clarification of, the meaning of their WCRC membership: i.e. are they willing to work towards the ordination of women and to support their appointment to decision-making bodies?**

7. Two Baptist applications in The Democratic Republic of Congo. EBC 6000 members, 68 pastors, women elders (55 since 1953), 9 women pastors. Presbyterian form of structure (though they call it congregational!) There were no letters of recommendation attached. Neither was any evidence submitted that suggested any Reformed roots. If there is a reason for considering an exception to normal requirements for WCRC membership, it would need to be discovered in further conversation with African Regional Council. **Recommend: request that Kobus Gerber pursue this matter on our behalf.**

8. Recommendation concerning Constitution Revision:

The constitution adopted by the Uniting General Council in 2010 is in need of technical revision and perhaps an even more thorough review in preparation for the excom meeting in 2016 and for recommendation to the General Council meeting in 2017. **It is recommended that the executive committee mandate, and the president appoint, a revision committee with the following mandate:**

- a) **To update, clarify and propose appropriate revisions to the constitution of WCRC.**
- b) **Advise the Excom on whether Uniting and United churches can be incorporated more prominently in the formal identity of WCRC.**
- c) **Review the manner by which WCRC can assure delegate balance at the General Council meeting as referenced in Excom's minutes of 2014 (p. 178).**

~~9. In response to a request from the Finance Committee, the CMC recommended that membership contribution arrears prior to 2011 be written off.~~

10. The committee considered what to do with member churches that are in arrears for 3 or more years (list attached). Each regional VP is asked to review the list in order to correct the database and to alert the General Secretary to discrepancies or special circumstances that pertain to a particular member church. (Please send any information to Anna Kruger) The committee is particularly concerned to know whether the arrears are due to indifference to membership or due to a lack of local resources. The administration will make a special effort to ascertain whether any errors in the database need to be corrected. Due to the procedures suggested, it is **recommended that no church be declared inactive at this point.** Given the scale of the problem, and its potential impact on the size of the Communion, such a decision should be left until the pertinent facts

can be verified and a final decision be delayed until after the next General Council meeting.

11. In order to streamline WCRC's response to churches that request a reduction of fees, it was decided to formalize the procedure as follows: when a request for reduction is received it will be referred to the next meeting (normally quarterly) of the General Secretary, the General Treasurer and the moderator of the Constitution and Membership Committee who together will make the decision concerning such a request.
12. The committee discussed the relationship between values that WCRC encourages and promotes (e.g. ordination for qualified women) and what is appropriate for inclusion in the constitution. This discussion will continue as constitutional revision matters are further advanced.
13. Gradye Parsons called two matters to the committee's attention:
 - a. The continuing challenge of how two WCRC denominations work out differences of polity and/or agreement.
 - b. The need to review how WCRC member churches count their membership and/or how new applicants are asked to indicate the scope of their ministry. It was suggested that there are important measurements that go beyond formal membership count. Not all who attend are necessarily members. Adherents would be an appropriate designation. But then, it would also be appropriate to estimate how many people are impacted by a church's ministry. Impact may tell us more about the vitality of a church as compared to formal membership alone.

THEOLOGY, MISSION AND COMMUNION CORE GROUP REPORT

I. Core group members present

Peter Bukowski, Susanne Erlecke (guest), Kobus Gerber, Yael Eka Hadiputeri, Najla Kassab, William Koopmans (reporter), Elisée Musemakweli, Grayde Parsons, Bas Plaisier (moderator), Carola Tron Urban, Lisa Vander Wal, Douwe Visser (staff), Werner Jöcker (staff)

II. Materials

Report from WCRC's office for Theology, Mission and Communion (TMC); Report GIT 2014; A Little Miracle: The 2014 Global Institute of Theology (Peter Wyatt); GIT 2014 Expenditure; GIT 2014 Participants List; Draft document *Work Plan May 2015-May 2016*

III. Observations regarding activities and sectors of work

A. An overview of work done since May 2014:

1. GIT 2014

The highlight in 2014 for the office of TMC was the *Global Institute of Theology 2014* in San José, Costa Rica, 5-28 July 2014. Thirty students from all over the world attended this 4th GIT of the WCRC. The team of lecturers was from various countries but half of them were from Costa Rica. The work of the staff was received with great appreciation. The theme of the core course was: 'Transforming Mission, Community and Church'. This theme was developed in three sub courses:

- a. Mission as Evangelism and Service
- b. Places of Epiphany and Reformed presence in the world
- c. The Reformed Church challenging the ecumenical world

We note with deep regret the complications that were experienced with the process of applying for visas and the denial of visas to a number of students that prevented them from participating. With anticipation we look forward to the publication in Reformed World of essays arising from this project. The next GIT is being planned for 2017 in conjunction with the General Council of WCRC.

The TMC core group notes that students who have participated in the GIT often become important ambassadors for the work of the WCRC, and it is desirable to take that into consideration as one factor among others in the selection of

students, with a goal to have students present from all regions.

2. *Preparations for Reformed – Anglican Dialogue*

Preparations are under way for the Reformed-Anglican dialogue that is scheduled to take place 24 October – 1 November 2015 in India. The Anglicans have now also composed their team. The overall theme for this dialogue is 'Communion,' and travel preparations for the Reformed participants will soon be made. Carola Tron Urban will not be able to continue to participate as our representative and we desire that the officers will name a replacement to this position.

3. *Reformed - Pentecostal Dialogue, Hungary*

The first meeting of this dialogue took place in Berekfürdő in Hungary, 16-21 November. In total there were 13 delegates, seven Reformed and six Pentecostal. The meeting included delegations both from the Reformed Church in Hungary and the Pentecostal Church in Hungary.

The overall theme of this round of dialogue is 'Mission'. For this first year it was elaborated with the subtheme: 'Ministering to the needs of the world, Mission as evangelization and diaconate.' Two main papers about this topic were presented, both from Pentecostal and from Reformed side. These papers led to lively discussions. The topic for the second meeting, scheduled 3 – 10 December 2015 will be further worked out in a (Skype) meeting between co-chairs and co-secretaries.

4. *Reformed – Catholic Dialogue, Gent, Belgium*

Fifteen delegates met this year in Gent, Belgium (nine Reformed and six Catholic). This meeting was the fifth and final meeting of the two delegations in plenary and most of the time was dedicated to the writing of the final report of which there is now a draft. In autumn a small group will meet to finalise the report. The theme is: "Justification and Sacramentality, the Christian Community as an Agent for Justice."

This meeting also discussed the possibility of WCRC affiliating with the 'Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification'. The Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity would very much welcome this. The General Council of 2010 gave a mandate to consult the member Churches about this.

The core group discussed the importance of strengthening the connection between justification and justice, which is addressed in this study. The core group expects that we will receive the report as soon as possible, along with a report from the TMC secretary outlining the implications of the report with regard to discussion of a possible affiliation. The outcome of this discussion is expected to be on the agenda for a decision at the next executive committee meeting. Any additional steps including input from member churches ought to start as soon as possible.

5. *Reformation Jubilee 2017*

The core group takes note of the current urgency to develop theological themes in preparation for Jubilee 2017 as little appears to have been followed through by the office on that recommendation from 2014.

The TMC secretary has proposed that themes be considered such as:

- Pre-Reformation dynamics;
- Why have churches so frequently split, while emphasizing needs to unite?
- The role of the theological emphasis on the sovereignty of God in Reformation churches.

The core group reaffirms that the report of the Reformed and Lutheran dialogue is expected to provide essential background material.

6. *Reformed World 2014 / 2015*

As outlined in the TCM secretary's report, a special issue dedicated to Setri Nyomi appeared in 2014; issues 2 and 3 are at the printer, to appear as a double volume featuring the 2014 GIT and reactions from a variety of authors on the WCC document "Together towards Life". The move from Switzerland to Germany necessitated arrangements with a new printer, which caused delay. Budget cuts also created complications.

The secretary presented a plan for outsourcing the publishing of *Reformed World* through Sage Publications. The core group takes note of the complexity of this entire issue as it involves budgetary implications and present staff tensions. Recognizing the importance of *Reformed World*, which has been published continuously since 1879, we believe that it is necessary for the Executive Committee to appoint a small group to develop a strategic plan for the ongoing publication, taking into

consideration matters such as theological editing, budget, investment of staff time, target readership and distribution, and details of publication, in order to best meet the goals of the WCRC with the resources that are available.

7. Network of Theologians

The network of theologians has a number of sub groups. The theme group 'Sola Scriptura' had a meeting 28 June – 1 July 2014. They discussed a draft of the study document that will be published this year.

Church and Society – had a meeting in November
Places of Epiphany – has been quite silent
Churches beyond the Differences – has not been active.

The secretary will seek to encourage more activity, especially in light of the upcoming General Council.

The executive secretary continued work with the European Network of Theologians.

8. Mission in the Frontline

A follow-up consultation for 'Mission in the Frontline' was planned in Oman for 20 – 26 April 2015. However, contacts with the co-organisers are not easy and the visa procedures are difficult for some participants that would be involved. That venue is also very expensive. It was decided that this consultation should happen somewhere else and at another time. Further discussion and planning is pending at this moment. The core group emphasizes the importance of this topic in the contemporary context of mission and communion and hopes that this can proceed as soon as possible.

The core group also takes note of the contemporary relevance of a dialogue with Muslims as a possible future engagement.

9. John Knox Programs

The work of the John Knox programme commission is something with which the secretary was asked to stay involved. They are planning a consultation on 'Religions and State' which will take place 11 – 16 October 2015 at the John Knox Centre in Geneva.

10. Other engagements

Various engagements of the TMC secretary can be mentioned in addition to the items listed above, such as a contribution to the Festschrift of Michael Weinrich, attendance of NetAct, participation in the African network of theological institutions, and planning along with other organisations for a consultation on "Secularisation in Europe," in response to the WCC document Together towards Life.

B. Planned activities for 2015/ 2016

1. A work plan listing anticipated activities for May 2015 – 2016 was received from the TMC secretary, consisting of the following components:
 - Preparatory Conference on Secularisation in Europe
 - Preparation for Global Ecumenical Theological Institute (WCC)
 - ExCom Lebanon
 - *Reformed World* 2015-1
 - Mercersburg Foundation (2 keynote addresses)
 - *Reformed World* 2015-2
 - Religions and State (John Knox Consultation)
 - First Meeting of Reformed - Anglican Dialogue
 - Final Drafting Meeting of Ref-RC Dialogue
 - Second Meeting of Reformed - Pentecostal Dialogue
 - *Reformed World* 2015-3
 - Preparatory meeting for GIT 2017 (WCRC)
 - Global network of Theologians plenary meeting
 - *Reformed World* 2016-1

In addition to this proposed list of work, the core group elaborated on areas of desired engagement in the following ways:

2. The planning of a 2nd consultation Mission in the Frontline. It is suggested to explore holding that consultation in Lebanon at Dhour Choueir Evangelical Conference Center. We note that this is important work and needs to have direction and coordination from the office of theology, as it will focus particularly on mission in the frontline.
3. The GIT 2017 students will be in Germany in conjunction with the GC, a part of the GIT program will be held in Wuppertal in addition to Leipzig.

4. It is important to engage in ongoing theological work with respect to the meaning and practice of Communion. It would be valuable and important to follow up on the report from the 2014 Communion Consultation held in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Such theological reflection could result in a collection of essays for a future *Reformed World* issue.
5. The core group proposes that Douwe Visser discuss with John Knox Centre about Kobus Gerber's offer to assist with revising the work by Lucas Visscher, et al., *The Reformed Family*, 1999, in the next couple of years.
6. The core group recognizes the need to take actions consistent with the proposal in Recommendation 14 of 2014, "That the WCRC Executive Committee consider asking ... for a draft proposal of a statement ("Wittenberg declaration") by which the General Council expresses its understanding of the current meaning of Reformation as well as of future guidelines for WCRC resulting from this..." This action would be a logical consequence from our previous work summarized in the Report of the Reformed and Lutheran Dialogue, entitled *Communion: On Being the Church [Report of the Lutheran-Reformed Joint Commission between the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC), 2006-2012]*.

IV. Recommendations

That the WCRC executive committee:

1. appoint a small group to develop a strategic plan for the ongoing publication of *Reformed World*, taking into consideration matters such as theological editing, budget, investment of staff time, target readership and distribution, and details of publication, in order to best meet the goals of the WCRC with the resources that are available.
2. request the TMC secretary to report next year on mission projects in which we are engaged in conjunction with the Partnership Fund.
3. encourage the TMC secretary to undertake the long-range goal of an exploration study of what is happening in new expressions of Christendom and report back with a view to possible engagements.

4. encourage the long-range goal to have the African region, in partnership with the European region, explore contacts with the African Instituted Churches.
5. support plans to add more theological documents to the WCRC website.
6. support continued involvement of the TMC secretary in program activities of John Knox Centre.
7. ask the office of theology, in conjunction with other staff, and involving the Network of Theologians, to provide a theological framework for the GC 2017.
8. approve the recommendation to plan a GIT program in 2017 in Germany in conjunction with the GC, with a location in Wuppertal in addition to Leipzig.
9. supports the proposal to hold a second consultation on Mission in the Frontline, and that this be coordinated by the secretary of theology as it is intended to focus particularly on mission.
10. concur with plans to explore with the John Knox Centre to have Kobus Gerber assist with a revision of the handbook by Lucas Visscher (*The Reformed Family*, 1999), over the next couple of years.
11. request that the officers will name a replacement for Carola Tron Urban to the *Reformed – Anglican Dialogue* (with attention to gender and region).
12. thank the TMC Secretary, Douwe Visser, for his work on behalf of the WCRC in 2014.

V. Conclusions

1. As we review the work that has been accomplished, as well as the goals outlined for the coming year, the activities of the office of TMC as well as the engagements of the TMC core group are fully in line with the strategic plan of the WCRC. We have embarked on mission in the frontline, have plans through theological work and consultations to strengthen communion, which also relates to regional work. Our coordination of the GIT focused upon the theological development of young leaders. Ongoing publication of *Reformed World* and theological

preparation for the 2017 GC are essential engagements that will continue to advance the work of the WCRC.

2. In light of world challenges, our core group has identified to focus on mission in the front line and the importance of inter-religious dialogue.

The core group identifies, from this perspective, the need for a solid theological foundation of communion for the practice of justice. Secondly, as this work is to be carried out within the regions, a mutual empowerment and enrichment is necessary between churches, regions and the WCRC office.

3. As we move towards the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, we wish to highlight the contributions of Reformed theology as it pertains to communion and justice. This leads to two priorities:

3.1 Working on a clear reformed understanding of communion and renewal of the church as that pertains to presenting a united interaction with the world in which we live.

3.2 Developing a theology of justice that would provide the underpinnings for living out the broader implications of the Accra Confession.

REPORT OF THE JUSTICE AND PARTNERSHIP CORE GROUP

Present: Helis Barraza Diaz (co-moderator), Yueh-Wen Lu (co-moderator), Clifton Kirkpatrick (North America, member), Veronica Muchiri (Africa, member), Lydia Adajawah (Africa, member), Gabriela Mulder (Latin America, member), Jan-Gerd Heetderks (Europe, member), Johan Weismann (Europe, member), Mary Fontaine (North America, member), Clayton Leal Da Silva (Latin America, member), Joanna Hipp, (North America, Intern and minute taker), Karen Georgia Thompson (CANAAC/UCC Guest), Dora Arce-Valentín (staff).

Apologies: Robyn Goodwin (Pacific, consultant)

Introductory remarks:

The Core Group met along with staff, and reviewed the WCRC strategic plan and the critical analysis of the perspective of the UGC Strategic Plan approved in 2011 as it related to the work of the justice and partnership programme including the priorities listed below. These priorities were presented in the work plan provided by the staff, and approved by the Core Group. These four priorities for the Justice and Partnership Programme are:

- Follow up to the 10th Anniversary of the Accra Confession
- Human Trafficking
- New International Financial and Economic Architecture
- Gender Justice

The Core Group discussed justice issues and listened to the stories of member churches within the Middle East. The staff will work collaboratively with the communications office, to collect stories and blog posts, to circulate on the website, eNews, Reformed Communiqué, and other social media outlets to raise awareness and provide news and information from the region that reflects the perspective of Christians in the region.

The Core Group received the programme report with gratitude to the staff. The priorities listed below are all sufficiently funded for implementation.

Follow-up to the 10th Anniversary of the Accra Confession

In consultation with the area councils, the follow up to the anniversary celebration over the next program year (2015-2016), will focus on gender perspective and youth empowerment. We invite the area councils to come together bi-regionally in order to build the capacity of

the communion and foster collaboration across the regional councils. The proposal for the follow-up consultations is as follows: AIPRAL/CANAAC; ACRC/NEAC; WCRC Europe/Middle East; Indonesia/South East Asia.

As part of our critical reading of the Strategic Plan under the Justice, Peace and Reconciliation priorities, we recognize the importance of addressing our concern for indigenous communities.

Recommendation 1:

The Justice Core Group recommends that the Executive Committee ask the General Council Planning Committee provide a workshop on the justice issues related to global communities of indigenous people, and other activities to educate and raise awareness about indigenous communities.

Human Trafficking - “Broken for You” Project

Migration continues to be an issue for many of our communities and is affected by human trafficking, which crosses economic, ecological and gender justice as migrating peoples continue to be exploited. Indigenous communities continue to be of concern, as their vulnerability is increasing and they are targeted by human traffickers. The Core Group heard the stories of the increasing number of missing indigenous women, who are suspected to be victims of trafficking.

The Justice and Partnership office will continue to promote actions at the global and regional levels to raise awareness and promote advocacy on behalf of the men, women and children who continue to be vulnerable as they seek opportunities for improving their lives and that of their families and communities. The Lenten resource “Broken for You” was provided for use by member churches as a part of the “Broken for You” Project.

The project will continue as well the development of resources that will share the stories of those affected, highlight the ways in which churches and communities are getting involved, and empower churches to be a part of making a difference on behalf of “the least of these.” The Human Trafficking Working Group will meet in July 2015 to discuss the current status of the project, evaluate the Lenten resources, and discuss the next steps for continuation of the “Broken for You” Project. Additionally, the Human Trafficking Working Group will also identify a specific local initiative that is effectively working with victims and survivors of human trafficking.

Recommendation 2:

The Justice Core Group recommends that the staff find ways to encourage use and increase awareness and availability of the

"Broken for You" Lenten resource in the summer 2015, in order to give churches adequate time to translate and plan for use during Lent of 2016.

New International Financial and Economic Architecture (NIFEA)

The Justice Core Group invited the General Secretary to attend its meeting to provide additional information on the status of the NIFEA, and the progress toward implementation. The General Secretary highlighted that NIFEA is meant to be a collaborative effort between WCRC, WCC, LWF, and CWM, which requires approval and input from the General Secretaries of the four collaborating entities. The Core Group discussed ways to move forward, with hopes that continuing efforts to bring the four organizations together will provide viable actions. The Core Group continues to affirm the importance of continuing this project, due to NIFEA's importance as a substantive part of the Accra Confession, and provides a foundation for forwarding the recommendations of the Sao Paulo Statement and the accompanying Action Plan devised by the panel of experts.

Recommendation 3:

The Justice Core Group recommends that the Executive Committee send a letter to the General Secretaries of WCC, LWF and CWM acknowledging the current status of NIFEA, recommitting to the integrity of the NIFEA process and affirming the need for a collaborative approach to the work of this economic justice initiative.

Recommendation 4:

The Justice Core Group recommends that the Executive Committee appoint Clifton Kirkpatrick and Jerry Pillay (or designees) to support the General Secretary by serving as liaisons to the General Secretaries of WCC, LWF, and CWM in an effort to foster the collaborative implementation of NIFEA.

Gender Justice

The Justice Core Group discussed the ordination of women and women's empowerment as a main focus of gender justice. The goal is to reach 50% gender balance at the next General Council, as well as active participation from young people and lay people. The Core Group affirms that General Council should be gender and age balanced in representation, with the goal to empower active participation by each delegate.

Scholarships for women are available, however challenges persist in sustaining a viable applicant pool and disseminating information to churches and educational institutions. The Core Group determined there is a need for on-going engagement with churches and other entities to

effectively provide scholarship information and recruit prospective recipients.

Recommendation 5:

The Justice Core Group recommends that the Executive Committee advise the General Council Planning Committee, with the General Secretary, to encourage member churches to bring delegates who are reflective of the full expression of the communities to which they belong in order to have active participation, while also reaching the needed quotas.

Recommendation 6:

The Justice Core Group recommends that the Executive Committee affirm and implement the recommendation made by the Justice Core Group in its report last year to: "ask the Constitutional Committee to work out – in relation to Article IX of the constitution – a practical model for the delegation of member churches to the GC which is a solution for the decision of the UGC 2010 to have a balanced assembly." (JCG, recommendation #5, p.178)

Recommendation 7:

The Justice Core Group recommends that the Executive Committee task the staff to identify seminaries and universities in the global south, contact admission departments, deepen relationships with universities and seminaries, and women's desk offices to promote scholarship availability for women in the global south attending institutions in their home countries or regions.

Recommendation 8:

The Justice Core Group recommends that the Executive Committee ask the General Council Planning Committee to add to the small group themes or workshop offerings: "How to Promote Women in Leadership".

Recommendation 9:

The Justice Core Group recommends that the Executive Committee create a working advisory group to strategize how to move forward on the issue of women's ordination toward General Council 2017, and ask the Executive Secretary for Justice and Partnership to appoint its members: 1) to bring a final report with recommendations on how to fulfill the mandate of the UGC; 2) to produce materials to assist member churches to engage in dialogue with the Executive Committee; and 3) develop with the region councils a mapping of member

churches indicating where the issues related to women's ordination and gender justice require further attention.

Other Concerns

The core group highlighted the importance of the relationship between WCRC and the UN Office, especially within the human trafficking network, gender violence, and in relation to issues in the Middle East. The Executive Secretary for Justice and Partnership will continue to strengthen advocacy relations with the UN Office in the future.

COMMUNICATIONS CORE GROUP REPORT

When looking at the past and future work of the Core Group for Communications, we felt that our work was much more related to the “Renewed Way of Working” or Methodologies than the Key Directions. We have therefore used that section of the strategic plan as the template for our report.

7.1.1. Networking

Networking is vital for effective communication, mutual enrichment, and for equipping and empowering local churches and the regional councils; all of which is required if we are to become a true Communion. Resources of member churches can be made available to the whole. The WCRC secretariat can serve as a clearing house that puts regions and member churches in touch with each other.

7.1.5. Communication

The church has the opportunity to use new and developing technologies to communicate. The WCRC will invest in doing this well, being aware that not all have the same access to these technologies. Communicating the WCRC’s vision, mission and key directions, and mobilizing involvement in the Communion’s commitments and relationships is important. There is need to use electronically based social media, conventional media, and face-to-face encounters at the regional and global levels to:

1. Make visible the key five directions 2. Make visible the opportunity for youth to be involved at the level of the regions and in member church activities related to the five key directions. 3. Attract the support of new donors and retain the commitment of current donors interested in supporting the vision, mission and key directions of the WCRC.

The website is constantly being reorganized and improved to better share priorities and reflect the key directions. Coming changes include: the addition of 4 non-European languages, in order to better engage the regions; larger more engaging pictures; easier navigation to ensure everyone, but especially those not familiar with the WCRC, can easily find the information they are after.

The desire with the website, as well as the social media channels (recent statistics available in the executive secretary’s report) is to tell stories about what’s going on in the Communion. This is how we learn about each other and discover networking possibilities. Going forward there will continue to be stories posted weekly in English and several of

the other official languages, and at least monthly in the unofficial ones. Executive Committee members are asked to forward stories or story ideas to the Office of Communications.

With the recognition that not all communication can be electronic, the Core Group agreed that *Reformed Communiqué* should be published 3 times per year rather than 4, and that the money normally allocated for a 4th issue be used for translation. *Reformed Communiqué* will periodically be published in multiple languages in one issue to help reach more of the Communion.

7.1.2. Leadership development

Leadership development is essential for integrating the values, learnings and work of the Communion into the life of the church, and so to build the capacity of the member churches as well as the whole Communion. This is also an important element in sourcing theological, advocacy and other practical resources we need to relate to each other. As a Communion, the WCRC will mature by incarnating the values it espouses.

Significant discussions were had about maintaining and improving our existing networks. While the Office of Communications is not directly responsible for much of the leadership development work, it can be an asset in connecting, developing and empowering these groups.

7.1.4. Sharing resources & ensuring adequate funding of the whole

To strengthen our communion, we need to ensure that all are contributing, and that resources are shared equitably and invested well: fruitfully and ethically. This includes financial, human and other resources.

Lengthy discussions were had around resource sharing (fundraising) as the Core Group and with the Finance Committee. From these discussions we noted the importance of accurately being able to identify our members and our donors. Unfortunately our current database is barely up to the task, and contains a reasonable amount of inaccurate data. With the General Council coming up, it is important that we are in a good position to have a system for registration that can collect participant's information and maintain contact with them after the event.

In consultation with and support of the Finance Committee we are therefore recommending:

Recommendation 1: That 5000 euro be allocated from the General Council fund to clean up and modernize our database.

Discussions also took place about the funds development campaign. It was noted that currently there is no person or body with the authority to move this effort forward, though the executive secretary for communications has fundraising in his job description. We feel that this is important work and it should not be forgotten.

In consultation with and support of the Finance Committee we are therefore recommending:

Recommendation 2: To create a funds development oversight committee of 4 or 5 people, chosen by the Officers, including at least one member from the Finance Committee and one from the Communications Core Group. This committee would coordinate funds development for the WCRC as a whole, report to the Executive Committee, and would have oversight and authority to create and implement a regionally based and appropriate funds development campaign. The 2016 budget shall include operational provision for the work of this committee.

REPORT OF THE OFFICERS

1. Venue and Date of the 2016 Executive Committee

Setri Nyomi began a process with AIPRAL to recommend a venue in Latin America. From those conversations emerged a proposal to hold the Executive Committee meeting in Sao Paulo, Brasil in conjunction with the AIPRAL Assembly, and for AIPRAL and WCRC Executive Committee to have a 1.5 day consultation on climate change. The IPIB-The Independent Presbyterian Church—has issued an invitation.

After considerable discussion, and with great thanks and sincere appreciation for the proposal, the officers affirm that the Executive Committee meeting be held in Latin America, but not in Brazil.

The officers propose a venue where for reasons of solidarity, communion building, and context, our presence could have a significant impact and make a difference.

Two possibilities were explored: Cuba and Colombia. Our member church in Cuba had already issued an invitation. WARC and WCRC have long called for an end to the US led blockade and now in this historic moment of changes and transitions, but with the blockade still in place, it was felt our presence would be a sign of solidarity and make clear witness.

The recommendation: That the 2016 Executive Committee meeting be held in Havana, Cuba, from May 7-14, arriving the 6th and departing on the 15th, with the understanding that costs must be within the same range as the budget for the 2015 meeting in Lebanon. The identified challenges around sufficient internet access are to be addressed.

Should for valid reasons it is not possible to meet in Cuba, then all efforts will be made to hold the meeting in Colombia.

2. The officers were delegated the responsibility to name the General Council Worship Committee. The names of those appointed are attached.

3. Draft General Council Budget

Draft budget was shared with the officers for review. It has been shared with the Finance Committee and General Treasurer. It will be revised and sent to the Executive Committee by email for approval.

4. General Council Coordinator

The possibility of having a second General Council Coordinator seconded and fully paid by a German church has been explored. The secondment process is in advanced stages with a highly qualified and motivated candidate having been identified from the Church of Westphalia. It is the hope that the sending church will bear the full costs. In any case, if the secondment goes through the costs will be minimal.

5. General Council Planning

On the one hand, much planning has taken place following the first meeting of the planning committee. A local planning committee has been established. A staff planning group with the Reformed Alliance has met regularly and worked hard to secure the appropriate venue and achieve cost reductions to the budget. The GT has begun fundraising. There have been contacts with government and coordination with Reformation Jubilee committees in Germany.

On the other hand, the process of production, distribution of materials and theme planning is late. There must be immediate and urgent attention to this, but there is every indication that with the coordinator in place in July, strong staff efforts and the planning committee soon to hold its next meeting that the tasks can be accomplished.

6. The officers are proposing a face to face officers meeting together with the General Council Planning Committee no later than the first week in September and with regular Skype conversations in between starting the soonest.

7. Joint-Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification and the "Wittenberg Declaration"

The officers, in considering the call from the 2014 Executive Committee to see 2017 as an opportunity to take the relationship with LWF to the next level, propose building on the excellent results of the Reformed-Lutheran dialogue to move from dialogue to implementation as an expression of visible unity and a living out of the Lund principle on the global level between communions. This means working together to formulate a joint commitment to this end. (Referred to at the 2014 Executive Committee as a possible "Wittenberg Declaration.")

The officers dialogued with LWF General Secretary Martin Junge, and having received from him an expression of interest and affirmation, the officers will undertake with the appropriate staff and Executive

members a process to consult within the WCRC and bring a proposal to the 2016 Executive Committee Meeting.

At the same time, it is proposed to immediately begin the process of consultation with member churches for affiliation with JDDJ as previously decided in channeling the necessary preparation of appropriate material and regional involvement.

8. NIFEA

In dialogue with the LWF General Secretary and in support of our common commitment to reactivate urgently the NIFEA initiative, it is proposed to begin a process with LWF to focus on the Reformation and Economic Jubilee in the 21st Century as a contribution to 2017.

STATEMENT ON THE MIDDLE EAST

We the Executive Committee of the World Communion of Reformed Churches have gathered here at the Dhour Choueir Evangelical Conference Center in Lebanon under the theme: *God of Life, Lead us on your Path of Justice, Peace and Reconciliation.*

Inspired by the words of the prophet Isaiah, we strive to be “called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to dwell in” (Isaiah 58:12) and can thus find no place more appropriate to be than here, in the Middle East.

As we have heard from our sisters and brothers who dwell in these streets, the cradle of Christianity is in crisis, and many of their streets are shattered, both figuratively and literally:

- A brother from Iraq told us that he must keep the records of his church packed in his car, not knowing when he may have to flee from radical Islamic forces.
- A sister from Lebanon told of Palestinians living as refugees for nearly seven decades and commented on the irony as she watched walls erected in Israel/Palestine even as they were coming down in Berlin.
- Despite churches being burned, a brother from Egypt related a heartening story of Christians and Muslims standing side by side seeking change—a symbol of hope even in the midst of ongoing struggle.
- A youth worker in the region raised concerns for young people, for their current safety and of whether there is even any future here for them.
- The work of a brother from Syria has moved from writing sermons to supplying water to his flock and many others.

Yet these stories of struggle only hint at the complex picture of this region. Christians here are the first disciples of the church of Antioch and have endured much during their two thousand years of faithfulness.

Historically Christians and Muslims have often lived peacefully as neighbours, enjoying a dialogue of life and sharing common values for the good of their community. We lament the deterioration of relationships that has sprung from radical religious movements and express deep regret concerning the way religion is used for political agendas.

Even today and despite their increasingly smaller numbers Christians in the Middle East remain the salt and light in their communities. We have seen evidence that their roles and impact in their communities goes far beyond their numbers. For instance, the peacemakers in the region are often the graduates of Christian schools, regardless of their present religious practice.

We are heartened by Middle East Christians' demonstration of grace, courage and resolve to stay in their communities. The region would be seriously impoverished without their presence as a vital means to a peaceful, just and reconciled Middle East.

We have heard these stories from our sisters and brothers and realize that the Middle East is complex, and each country has its own specific context. The situation in one country may be dramatically different than in another.

Our coming here has given us a renewed opportunity to express our solidarity with our members in this region. We do not want to see this as a single act but the beginning of a renewed commitment. How then can we as a World Communion of Reformed Churches respond to our sisters and brothers in the Middle East?

We call for global recognition of the suffering of all people in the Middle East.

We call for violence to cease in Syria immediately and pray for peace to spread like ripples from there throughout the entire region.

We urge our officers and secretariat to strengthen the bonds among our member churches in this region to consolidate their communion.

We commit ourselves to tell the stories of our Middle East sisters and brothers to the wider world.

We encourage our member churches:

- To join us in a fresh sense of solidarity with Christians in the Middle East and a lasting commitment to the wellbeing of all people of this region.
- To hear anew the stories of our sisters and brothers, as opposed to simply accepting the rhetoric of the media.

- To welcome the refugees as neighbours rather than treat them as “others.”
- To not ignore or allow our governments to ignore the places of massive suffering or their contribution to it.
- To speak up for the wellbeing of Christians and all people in this region, decrying the violence that creates such destruction and dehumanizes people.
- To draw inspiration from our sisters and brothers in the Middle East who show the love of Christ in the face of incredible challenges and frequent calls to suffer.
- To live and to pray in the spirit of Isaiah 58:6-12, which says:

Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?

Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin?

Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly; your vindicator shall go before you, the glory of the Lord shall be your rearguard. Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am.

If you remove the yoke from among you, the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil, if you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday. The Lord will guide you continually, and satisfy your needs in parched places, and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters never fail.

Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to live in.



EVANGELISCHE KIRCHE IN DEUTSCHLAND

(EVANGELICAL CHURCH IN GERMANY)

OBERRECHNUNGSAMT

(HIGH AUDIT OFFICE)

(English Version)

REPORT

ON THE AUDIT OF

THE FINANCIAL STATEMENT FOR 2014

WORLD COMMUNION OF REFORMED CHURCHES

(WCRC)

HANOVER

LIST OF IMPORTANT ABBREVIATIONS

BSL	Buchungsstelle (Booking account, classification level in the finance software KFM)
CHF	Swiss franc (currency code according to ISO 4217 for the Euro zone)
DVO.EKD	Dienstvertragsordnung (Employment contract regulations of the EKD, salary regulation), new version of 25th August 2008 (ABl. EKD page 341), last changed on 29th September 2014 (ABl. EKD 2015 page 2)
EKD	Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland (Evangelical Church in Germany)
EUR	Euro (currency code according to ISO 4217 for the Euro zone)
GG	Grundgesetz für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland (Constitution for the Federal Republic of Germany)
GLD	Gliederung (classification level in the finance software KFM)
GRP	Gruppierung (classification level in the finance software KFM)
HHSt.	Haushaltsstelle (General Ledger account, classification level in the finance software KFM)
IKS	Internal control system
KFM	Kirchliches-Finanz-Management (finance software of KIGST GmbH, Offenbach am Main)
Nds. MBl.	Niedersächsisches Ministerialblatt (ministerial law gazette of Lower Saxony)
ORA	Oberrechnungsamt der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland (High Audit Office of the Evangelical Church in Germany)
ORAG	Church law on the High Audit Office of the Evangelical Church in Germany of 12 th November 1993 (ABl. EKD page 513)
RT	Rechtsträger (client in the finance software KFM)
SB	Sachbuchteil (classification level in the finance software KFM)
SGB VI	Sozialgesetzbuch (Social Security Code) / Book Six (VI) - Social pension fund
TVPöD	Tarifvertrag für Praktikantinnen/Praktikanten des öffentlichen Dienstes (labour contract for trainees in the public service) of 27th October 2009, last changed by labour contract alteration no. 4 of 1st April 2014)
Tz.	Textziffer (classification number of the content statements in this report)
UK	Unterkonto (sub-account - classification level in the finance software KFM)
USD	US - dollar (currency code according to ISO 4217 for the Euro zone)
WRV	Weimarer Reichsverfassung (Weimar Constitution)
ZB	Zeitbuch (accounting journal in the finance software KFM)
ZW	Zahlweg (payment method / bank data in the finance software KFM)

I. AUDIT BASICS

Audit assignment

The High Audit Office of the Evangelical Church in Germany (ORA) audits the budget and asset accounting of the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC).

The audit assignment is based on an administrative agreement reached between the WCRC and the EKD on 10th/11th December 2014. The Standing Budget Committee of the EKD synod approved the acceptance of this audit assignment in its conference on 12th/13th March 2014.

Audit subject and aim

The report at hand is for the purpose of preparing the decision about the approval of the General Treasurer and the General Secretary for the management in the accounting year 2014 by the Executive Committee of the WCRC.

Possible reporting duties resulting from the hitherto status as a non-profit institution according to Swiss law to the Swiss authorities are not covered by this report.

Subject of the audit was the annual financial statement of the WCRC for the accounting year 2014.

For this, it was precisely audited,

- whether the budget and economic management as well as the asset administration in the accounting year 2014 took place correctly and according to applicable law and
- whether the annual accounts 2014 essentially convey an appropriate image of the results and asset situation.

The correctness of accounting was the audit standard in this case. In this respect, the audit aim was to determine whether there were considerable differences between the amounts mentioned in the accounting and those proven in the books and whether the approval and authorization of the annual accounts as well as the approval of the WCRC General Treasurer and the WCRC General Secretary by the Executive Committee can be recommended.

It is furthermore the assignment of the audit to check the budget and economic management of the WCRC. This specifically includes the administrative action, which is not directly

reflected in the annual accounts to be presented. In this case, the audit standards are the correctness and cost effectiveness of the actions.

For this, it was precisely audited

- whether the entrusted resources were deployed in an adequate, economic and thrifty way,
- whether and in which cases of relevance the regulations and principles applicable to the budget and economic management were not complied with and
- what recommendations of action are to be derived from the audit results for the future, if applicable.

As a whole, it is the intention of the audit to support the church-leading persons and organs in the execution of their functions and stimulate economic thinking as well as responsible action concerning the handling of the resources entrusted to the church.

Type, extent and execution of the audit

The ORA carried out the audit based on a risk-oriented audit approach.

Accordingly, the audit must be planned and executed in such manner that incorrectnesses and infringements in the accounting and the budget and economic management of the WCRC are recognized with adequate certainty. It was not the aim and task of the audit to trace discrepancies without significance in single cases or the whole.

The audit was carried out according to the dutiful judgment of the auditor in samples and according to certain focuses. These were selected so that they allowed for the significance of the different audit topics, conveyed a meaningful image of the corresponding section and facilitated the conclusion as to whether applicable law had been complied with.

In this context, the following audit focuses were determined:

- correctness and completeness of the annual financial statement (appropriate reproduction of the asset and result situation, adherence to the budget),
- correctness of the asset evidence (correct compilation and applicable recording of the essential asset positions) and
- inspection of single fields of high significance (relocation of the WCRC, labor cost accounts, project/program budgets, among others).

If action was taken against existing regulations in the case of single measures of those proven in the accounts and this remained without audit objections, no approval is to be deduced from this fact.

Audit

The audit was carried out by Mr. Soeren Rischbieter in the period from 16th February to 23rd March 2015 – with interruptions. It temporarily took place in the WCRC office in the Calvin Centre in Hanover (Knochenhauerstr. 42).

The following documents were available for the audit:

- a) the 2014 budget for the WCRC and
- b) the financial statement presentation (annual financial statement KFM, SB 00) including the advances and transit accounts (SB 52) as well as the capital account (SB 92) for the budget year 2014 of 2nd March 2015 (ZB closure no. 0227).

In addition, further WCRC files, especially the accounting documents (invoice documents and bank statements), were available. The records requested within the audit were submitted resp. access to the corresponding documents was allowed.

The audit was carried out based on the WCRC budget code (“WCRC General Finance Management Policies“), which has already been applied from the financial year 2013 onwards and was officially put into effect by the Executive Committee of the WCRC at its meeting of 11th to 18th May 2014. The information required on the occasion of the audit was provided by Mr. Gerhard Plenter (Evangelical Reformed Church, Leer) as well as Ms. Anna Krueger (assistant for finance and communication). In addition, further WCRC staff members were available for further enquiries.

Completeness statement

To ensure the audit basics the ORA has requested a completeness statement for the financial statement 2014 from the WCRC. It was given by the General Secretary within the scope of this audit.

II. ORGANIZATIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES

The World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) is a non-profit-oriented, international, non-governmental organization representing 230 member churches from 106 countries with a total of approx. 80 million Christians as a united ecumenical body for reformed churches. It developed from the association of the Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC) and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) in 2010 and succeeded them legally. The current WCRC constitution was approved by the Uniting General Council in 2010. The organization is officially based in Geneva.

In its self-concept, the WCRC follows the tradition of the Reformers Johannes Calvin, John Knox and Huldrych Zwingli as well as the reformation movements around Jan Hus and Pierre Valdo.

The World Communion of Reformed Churches is to foster its member churches in their community and support them in the social discussion. In addition, it is also to contribute to the ecumenical movement and the transformation of the world by standing up e. g. for economic and ecological justice, world-wide peace and conciliation, promoting and protecting religious, civil and all other human rights; appealing for emergency relief and continuous development in the world and promoting them as well as pointing out reformed perspectives for unity among the churches (see article V of the constitution).

In terms of articles 60 and the following of the Swiss Civil Code, the WCRC is constituted as an association. In Germany, its status is that of a public body in terms of article 140 GG in conjunction with article 137 paragraph 5 S. 2 WRV, awarded by the Federal Government of Lower Saxony, order issued on 11th December 2012¹. It is subject to state supervision by the Ministry of Culture of Lower Saxony.

In addition, a contract for the regulation of issues corresponding to the legislative responsibility of the federal government was concluded between the Federal Republic of Germany and the WCRC dated 11th/14th April 2014. It was ratified by Federal Law on 10th December 2014.

¹ see announcement of the Ministry of Culture of Lower Saxony of 16th January 2014 (Nds. MBI 4/2013, page 67)

The organs of the WCRC are:

- the General Assembly (with President and General Treasurer),
- the Executive Committee and
- the General Secretary.

The Chief Executive Officer of the WCRC is the General Secretary elected by the Executive Committee. According to article XII of the constitution, he bears the responsibility for the management and coordination of their work towards the General Council and the Executive Committee. On 1st September 2014, Rev. Chris Ferguson (United Church of Canada) became the office holder having taken over the office from Dr. Setri Nyomi (Ghana), who withdrew from the WCRC management on 30th August 2014.

The WCRC President is Dr. Jerry Pillay (South Africa), the office of General Treasurer was assigned to Dr. Johann Weusmann (Germany).

The current administration of the WCRC is assumed by an operational office directed by the General Secretary. It was based in Hanover (Germany) during the audit period. In addition, a branch is currently still maintained in Geneva.

The accounting year (budget year) is the calendar year.

III. ACCOUNTING / PRESENTATION OF THE ACCOUNTING RESULTS

In the audit period, the WCRC accounting was carried out in the cameralistic accounting style using the software KFM – Kirchliches-Finanz-Management (of the company KIGST GmbH – Offenbach am Main, Germany), which was already deployed for the accounting of the year 2013.

The ORA did not check the software applied. Within the scope of the audit activities, however, there were no indications leading to the assumption that the application might contain essential errors.

According to general financial principles, the annual accounts are to convey an adequate image of both the asset and the result situation.

This can be summarized as follows:

Presentation of the result situation

The accounts results of the audit period according to the documents presented for the audit are as follows:

	Revenues	Expenses
	EUR	EUR
Budget appropriation according to budget	2,803,400.00	2,803,400.00
TARGET COSTS 2014 (plan valuation)	2,803,400.00	2,803,400.00
According to the annual financial statement the following amount to:		
The actual receipts	2,809,603.03	
The transfers from program reserves	725,081.52	
The transfers from other reserves	149,955.38	
The actual expenditures		1,763,617.23
The allocations to program reserves		512,513.21
The allocations to other reserves		1,421,851.10
The deficit 2014 (transfer from the General Reserve)	13,341.61	
ACTUAL COSTS 2014 (result)	3,697,981.54	3,697,981.54

Advances and transit accounts

The advances and transit accounts (SB 52) of the WCRC were randomly audited. They were predominantly balanced within the year-end tasks. This especially refers to the passage accounts. The audit revealed no indications concerning any relevant cases of delayed accounting.

As far as any audit-relevant circumstances arose these were broached resp. spoken about during the audit statements.

Presentation of the asset situation

The total asset stock of the WCRC amounted to 3,075,524.89 EUR for the year-end closing as of 31st December 2014. Compared with the previous year (modified final stock 2013: 2,021,296.15 EUR²), this stock has increased net by 1,054,228.74 EUR (+52.16 %).

The asset accounting of the WCRC (SB 92) according to the documents presented for the audit are as follows as of 31st December 2014:

Reserve assets (incl. trust assets, according to SB 92)	Opening stock	Final stock	Difference
	EUR	EUR	(versus previous year)
WCRC Capital			
Reserve Fund	79,359.94	64,320.97	-18.95%
North American Reserve Fund	29,804.51	29,804.51	0.00%
IT Provision	12,063.59	12,063.59	0.00%
WCRC North American Trustees	11,012.44	11,012.44	0.00%
Reformation in the 21st Century Fund	3,964.36	3,964.36	0.00%
Alliance for Life Fund	2,973.51	2,973.51	0.00%
Relocation Fund	143,989.29	0.00	-100.00%
Special asset positions			
UEK Special Donation	296,089.12	496,089.12	67.55%
General Council Fund	406,665.56	461,871.82	13.58%
CWM Endowment Reserve	0.00	1,211,500.00	100.00%

² The final stock amounted to 2,018,094.07 EUR in 2013. This was increased by 3,202.08 EUR by stock correction booking. Concerning this measure, please refer to the explanations in the audit statements (Tz. 3.3).

Continuation of the table "Reserve Assets"

Theology & Mission office programs			
Global Institute of Theology (GIT)	39,724.53	2,581.11	-93.50%
Theological Dialogs	17,075.77	20,797.37	21.79%
Mission	33,229.63	17,805.90	-46.42%
Madip	27,965.33	27,965.33	0.00%
Georges Lombard Prize	19,169.16	17,014.65	-11.24%
Justice & Partnership office programs			
Covenanting for Justice	4,346.22	12,078.90	177.92%
Gender Justice	142,680.31	76,836.33	-46.15%
Theological Education for Women	174,752.08	174,649.38	-0.06%
New econ. & fin. Architecture (NEFA)	42,918.46	43,379.59	1.07%
Oikotree (KCTE)	15,269.47	15,144.01	-0.82%
Human Traffickers	0.00	0.00	0.00%
Partnership Funds			
Partnership Fund A	37,446.80	0.00	-100.00%
Partnership Fund B	42,725.43	8,196.00	-80.82%
Partnership Fund D	14,176.62	14,176.62	0.00%
Partnership Fund E	40,734.21	3,705.55	-90.90%
General Programs			
WCRC regional support	40,000.00	39,954.00	0.00%
Oikotree	0.00	0.00	0.00%
General Secretary programs	0.00	0.00	0.00%
Youth program	0.00	0.00	0.00%
Global South Internship support	11,958.78	38,074.23	218.38%
North American Internship support	11,862.96	1,255.73	-89.41%
Native American project	3,164.33	3,164.33	0.00%
Regional Communication support	12,262.45	0.00	-100.00%
Custodian funds			
WCRC Europe	226,800.45	188,034.70	-17.09%
Further custodian funds			
Cooperation & Witness	18,016.30	18,016.30	0.00%
Calvin Publications fund	26,638.17	26,638.17	0.00%
Publications fund	6,204.11	6,204.11	0.00%
UCC Death	5,175.70	5,175.70	0.00%
Sustainability fund	16,858.47	16,858.47	0.00%
Guinea fund	4,218.09	4,218.09	0.00%
Total	2,021,296.15	3,075,524.89	52.16%

IV. AUDIT STATEMENTS

1. General statements

1.1 Applicability of the budget code

At the latest meeting of the Executive Committee, which took place in Hanover from 11th to 18th May 2014, the budget code of the WCRC, which was already supposed to have been the basis for the accounting for the year 2013 in its draft phase, was formally put into effect by resolution.

Following the move from Geneva to Hanover on 1st January 2014, the accounting year 2014 represents a year of transit and re-orientation, also concerning accounting. Thus, it has not been possible to implement the regulations of the budget code entirely, as was the case with accounting for the year 2013.

For example, the new budget code assumes that the so-called "expanded public accounting system " will be applied. Currently, however, the organizational requirements demanding sufficient time advance have not yet been fulfilled since an evaluation of the fixed assets has to be carried out, among others.

Therefore, the ORA has mainly based this year's audit on the correct accounting with special focus on the continuity of accounting.

1.2 Correctness of the accounting / documentation

The accounting and the documentation were carried out according to the bank statements. The invoice documents were basically archived separately for each bank account and in the chronological order of the account statements with the corresponding documents matched with the bookkeeping entries. There is no archiving in a factual order.

The documents were randomly audited. Here, it was noticeable that the documentation is not carried out with the required rigor. Instead of the account statements there were partly merely tabular compilations of the bookkeeping entries from online banking archived in the front. In some few cases, account statements were missing. In addition, not all the documents had been properly archived at the time of the audit. Furthermore, no cash order had been made for a multitude of single transactions (especially revenues) and the booking took place on the sole basis of the information given in the account statement. Apart from the fact that, as a result, there was neither a determination of the factual and calculative correctness nor an authorization of the payments (see also Tz. 1.3 concerning authorization procedures), the significance of the documentation is also insufficient in such cases.

Attention must be paid to the fact that documents are basically to be self-explanatory. This can be achieved by means of written notes (e. g. referring to resolutions or technical files a transaction is based on), for example, as well as payment-justifying documents. In this context, the ORA points out that e-mails with few details are generally not suitable as payment-justifying documents. In the future, it is to be ensured that no booking is carried out without a significant document or without the corresponding authorization.

Concerning the promptness of accounting it was noticed that booking backlogs, which were only caught up with a significant offset of several weeks, had arisen selectively in the course of the accounting year. Between the accounting journal closure no. 2 (of 27th May 2014) and the accounting journal closure no. 3 (of 15th September 2014), for example, there is a period of approx. 14 weeks. Between the accounting journal closure no. 152 (of 31st October 2015) and the accounting journal closure no. 153 (of 12th December 2014) there is also a time frame of approx. 6 weeks. The WCRC disposes of no current information to its financial status within these periods.

The ORA does not misjudge the fact that backlogs in accounting were hardly to be avoided due to the move to Hanover and the resulting required adjustment of accounting as well as the processing of the financial statement for the accounting year 2013, which reached into the second quarter of 2014, and that some readjustment processes had to be passed through in the organization of processes. However, a contemplation of the entire accounting year 2014 did present some organizational risks (e. g. lack of substitutes in accounting in case of absences due to holidays or illness) and optimization potentials (prompt and coherent booking and documentation of transactions, among others), which were discussed within the scope of the audit.

In spite of the clear weaknesses, which the ORA attributes to the transfer situation, the general traceability of the audited transactions was given.

1.3 Accounting directives

During the audit, it became evident that the booked transactions did not comply with the formal requirements of correct accounting directives in many cases. Generally, it is to be confirmed on the documents according to the four-eyes principle that

1. the thus resulting revenue or expense is correct in content and amount (declaration of the factual and calculative correctness)
and
2. the revenue or expense is actually to occur (directive).

After the ORA had pointed out this requirement within the scope of the previous audit, it was determined that a number of documents had been signed by the General Secretary. However, a signature was missing in numerous cases although no bookings should have been carried out without such a formal directive. Apart from the directive of a booking a further requirement is the determination of the factual and calculative correctness of a payment, which is also to be documented by an authorized person's signature. This applies both to incoming payments and out-payments.

The ORA renews its recommendation to design the accounting directives as a part of the internal control system by suitable organizational measures in such a manner that the responsibility for all transactions is documented and can be retraced.

2. Statements about the year-end closing

2.1. Correctness and completeness of the annual financial statement

The 2014 year-end closing of the WCRC was compiled dated 2nd March 2015 (ZB closing no. 0227). It shows a volume of **3,697,981.54 EUR**.

For the audit, the documentation from accounting (SB) was provided as annual accounting document. Close inspection and checking of the proven year-end closing results gave no indication for differences of relevant significance.

As a result, according to the findings of the ORA the annual financial statements for the accounting year 2014 show no fundamental breaches.

2.2. Budget balancing / utilization of the 2014 profit

The balancing of the ordinary budget was induced by a withdrawal of the deficit remaining after execution of all necessary bookings amounting to **13,341.61 EUR** from the General Reserve Fund (SB 92, BSt. 5110.00 UK 1).

2.3. Balancing of payment methods and capital asset accounts / depots

For the audit, account and depot statements as well account balance statements were presented for all the payment methods installed in the WCRC as well as for all the asset components proven in the balance sheet (SB 92). In this regard, no objections have resulted.

2.4 Development of Reserves

As of 31st December 2014, the total stock of WCRC assets amounted to **3,075,524.89 EUR** and has increased by 1,054,228.74 EUR compared with the balance of the previous year. This corresponds to an increase of +52.16 %.

This asset increase mainly results from

- a special contribution of 200,000.00 EUR by the Union of Evangelical Churches (UEK), which was conducted to an already existing earmarked reserve (SB 92, BSt. 5120.00) to its full amount as well as
- a contribution of 1,211,500.00 EUR (= 1.0 GBP) from the Council for World Mission (CWM), which was conducted to its full amount to a newly-established earmarked reserve (SB 92, BSt. 5140.00) based on the corresponding resolution of the Executive Committee.

The reserves were especially made use of within the program budgets (see Tz. 3.5).

While managing the reserves, it was noticed that changes (withdrawals and allocations) were not always booked via the ordinary budget (SB 00). Furthermore, when a booking occurred via the WCRC budget the appropriate grouping figures (withdrawal of reserves: GRP 31xx, allocation of reserves: GRP 91xx) were not always used and, in one case, the gross-principle was also not followed. This complicates the traceability and transparency of changes in the balance sheet and is to be avoided in future.

2.5 Advance and transit accounts

The advance and transit accounts (SB 52) were balanced and traceable on the whole (with few permitted exceptions, e. g. the booking accounts corresponding with the SB 92 balance sheet, where the solvent capital is assigned to the assets).

The audit of the SB 52 resulted in a statement for the accounting of advancements. The BSt. 0200.00 had shown an opening stock of 2,756.84 EUR, which resulted from not yet settled advancements from previous years. Due to a corresponding ORA statement in the report on the audit of the annual statement of 2013 the WCRC office had carried out the revision of various advance payments. At this, the accounting years 2012 and 2013 were analyzed. After this, a part of the affected cases could be seen as concluded since the advancements had been settled after presentation of the corresponding records.

As of 31st December 2013, four open cases with a total of 11,686.80 EUR still remained. Within the scope of the year-end tasks, a balance was carried out by means of transfers from the WCRC core budget (SB 00) so that the BSt. 0200.00 is overall balanced with a final stock of 0.00 EUR.

For three of the open cases, the ORA asked for the presentation of the documents which justify these bookings. Hereupon, the WCRC office sent written declarations of the advancement recipients stating that the advance payments received in the years 2012 and

2013 had been completely used up resp. what context the means had been deployed in. The examination of these documents resulted in the following:

- A reconciliation of the advancements did not take place.
- The WCRC office does not dispose of any detailed proof substantiating a concrete utilization of the means. The invoice documents presented to the ORA in copy cannot be assigned to the periods in question.
- A rectification of the advance accounts finally occurred by means of a flat transfer from the ordinary WCRC budget so as to achieve a balancing of the advance accounts.

The approach towards the rehabilitation of open advancements is not convincing and, thus, objected to. At this, the ORA does not misjudge that a clarification was complicated considerably due to the time delay and an insufficient documentation in the past.

In the future, the monitoring of the granted advancements ought to be suitably ensured. Also, the WCRC office should work towards the achievement of a prompt settlement as well as the presentation of significant proof and communicate these priorities to the advancement recipients.

3. Single statements

3.1. Personnel administration / payroll (Germany)

The personnel administration for the staff employed in Hanover is carried out by the WCRC office. For the payroll it makes use of the Central Payroll Office of the Ev.-ref. Church (Leer).

Private-law employment contracts have been established with the staff deployed in Germany. In the case of the theological staff (General Secretary, Executive Secretaries) the regulations of civil service law were the point of orientation. Their remuneration is in the style of the Lower Saxony pay regulation, among others. The other administrative staff members receive remuneration according to DVO.EKD (administrative staff) resp. according to TVPöD (trainees). In addition, one volunteer is employed on a 450-EUR basis.

For the audit of the personnel administration and the payroll, the ORA was provided with an overview of the staffing, the sample labor contract used by the WCRC as well as the payroll documents. In addition, access was given to single labor contracts. The audit resulted in the following statements:

- The basic salaries that the salary payments are based on correspond to the significant chart payments and the groupings agreed to by labor contract. The same applies to family-relating salary components. The pay scale increases carried out in 2014 were taken into account.
- In two cases, theological employees obtain a flat, monthly and unlimited bridging bonus (400 EUR resp. 200 EUR), which increases the salary. This was determined in the labor contract but it was traceable neither concerning the reason nor the amount. In particular, it is not recognizable which salary law was referred to when granting these bonuses, who decided about the grant and whether this is in accordance with the intended salary structure. In this respect, it is recommended to check the correctness of bonus grants and to document this.
- The theological employees have access to the social health and care insurance according to § 7 of the labor contracts in connection with Article 5 of the contract concluded between the Federal Republic of Germany and the WCRC. The employees have made use of this possibility. Within this context, they receive an employer's contribution for this voluntary health and care insurance. According to the ORA, such a claim does not arise from the labor contracts. Therefore, the ORA suggests checking the legality of these salary components, which affect the gross salary, and correcting the payroll in compliance with the effective terms of exclusion resp. concretizing the labor contract understandings.

For the rest, the audit of the payrolls of the staff handled in Germany has resulted in no further statements.

3.2. Granting claims of old-age allowance

An exemption from old age insurance according to § 5 paragraph 1 page 1 no. 3 SGB VI is assumed for the theological staff employed on the WCRC office. This is based on the labor contract agreement of a claim to an "old-age allowance" in the sense of § 82 of the Lower Saxony Civil Service Supply Law.

For all staff affected, there is a warranty note of the regional tax office of Lower Saxony, which officially determines that the required pension expectancy in the sense of the social law is ensured. Therefore, it was not subject of the audit to determine whether the elements of an offence concerning social insurance law for an exemption from insurance (supply in case of reduced working capacity, claim to continued payment in case of illness, among others) are fulfilled.

For the coverage of the agreed supply claims in the form of old-age allowance, a monthly amount of 30 % of the gross personnel costs per staff member are paid to a supply reserve, which is administered in trust by the Ev.-ref. Church based on a contract concluded for this purpose. The following statements concerning supply claims have resulted:

- According to the Coordinator of Finance it is currently unclear what possible pension expectancies the WCRC theological staff has from former employments and what relation these have with the existing expectancies of old-age allowance towards the WCRC. The ORA suggests clarifying this promptly and, thus, obtaining certainty as to whether a comfortable supply can be ensured in total and whether a further commitment of the WCRC can be excluded.
- Currently, there is no calculation available (actuarial expertise or similar) concerning the expectable total of actual payments to be effected. Insofar, it is unclear to what extent the established supply reserve constitutes a sufficient basis for the pending old-age allowance payments. The reserve stock will probably develop rather slowly due to the current low-interest phase. Therefore, the ORA suggests investigating to what extent the old-age allowance payments will presumably have to be completed by means from the current budget.

3.3 Development of the program budgets

The program budgets with earmarked reserves exist for and contributions are partly provided for by third parties are processed within the ordinary WCRC budget (SB 00).

The various program budgets are each separately administered and settled in the single plans 2, 3, 4 and 5 of the budget. For the year 2014, the program budgets are as follows (all amounts in EUR):

Program budgets	Opening stock	Revenues	Expenses	Closing stock
Program of the "Theology and Mission" office (single plan 2)				
Global Institute of Theology	39,724.53	112,681.46	149,824.88	2,581.11
Theological Dialogs	17,075.77	20,843.65	17,122.05	20,797.37
Mission	33,229.63	13,469.77	28,893.50	17,805.90
Madip	27,965.33	No activities		27,965.33
Georges Lombard Prize	12,788.14	0.00	39.31	12,748.83
Program of the "Justice and Partnership" office (single plan 3)				

Covenanting for Justice	4,346.22	60,329.09	52,596.41	12,078.90
Gender Justice	142,680.31	-19,680.56	46,163.42	76,836.33
Theol. Education for Women	174,752.08	391.80	494.50	174,649.38
New econ. & fin. Architecture	42,918.46	17,744.56	17,283.43	43,379.59
Oikotree	15,269.47	0.00	125.46	15,144.01
Human traffickers	0.00	No activities		0.00
Partnership Funds				
Partnership Fund A	37,446.80	37,028.66	74,475.46	0.00
Partnership Fund B	42,725.43	26,000.00	60,529.43	8,196.00
Partnership Fund D	14,176.62	No activities		14,176.62
Partnership Fund E	40,734.21	0.00	37,028.66	3,705.55
General Programs				
WCRC Regional Support	40,000.00	40,000.00	40,046.00	39,954.00
Justice/Partnership off. support.	0.00	No activities		0.00
General Secretary Programs	0.00	No activities		0.00
Youth Program	0.00	No activities		0.00
"Global South" Internship	11,958.78	44,112.14	17,996.69	38,074.23
"North America" Internship	11,862.96	6,105.45	16,712.68	1,255.73
"Native American" Project	3,164.33	No activities		3,164.33
Support Region. Communication	0.00	No activities		0.00
	712,819.07	359,026.02	559,331.88	512,513.21

The following statements concerning the program budgets resulted within the scope of the audit:

- Eight of the twenty-three programs showed no financial activities in the year 2014.
- For the administration of the program budgets the WCRC practices a procedure which completely transfers the earmarked stocks of the program reserves from the WCRC balance sheet to the ordinary budget for administration every year so as to make the available means visible in the program budget for the responsible executive secretaries. At the end of a financial year, the remaining means are transferred back to the corresponding reserves within the scope of the year-end procedures considering the running revenues and expenses of the projects.

In the accounting year 2014, the program means were transferred back very late, namely in May resp. in September. This approach contradicts the original intent of creating transparency in the previously described sense. Therefore, it is recommended to carry out the transfers at the beginning of an accounting year, if the procedure is to be maintained.

- An amount of 19,680.56 EUR was provided from the means of the program "Gender Justice" (GLD 3320) for the program "Covenanting for Justice" (3310). These funds served to finance the Cuba Consultation.
- The development of the program budget "Georges Lombard Prize" was only traceable to a limited degree within the scope of the audit.

This is to be attributed to the fact that a correction of the opening stock was carried out for the corresponding reserve (SB 92, BSt. 5210.00, UK 5) in the year 2014, among others. The original opening stock had amounted to 15,967.08 EUR and was increased by 3,202.08 EUR since one had erroneously assumed that the stock of the corresponding depot (Lombard Odier) had been registered incompletely during the rearrangement of accounting and the therein contained solvent means had not been activated. Thus, on the active side of the balance sheet, a corresponding new booking account (BSt. 2140, "Lombard Odier") with an equally newly-installed payment method 14 was installed, which the alleged necessary stock correction took place on. At this, however, it was overlooked that the entire depot stock then (solvent means and capital assets) had already been registered at the BSt. 1410.00 UK 1 (Lodh Fund, Lombard Odier). This error was favored by the fact that it was a foreign currency depot in USD and the mistake was not evident due to the exchange difficulty.

After the correction, the changed opening stock of the reserve amounted to 19,169.16 EUR. However, of these, only an amount of 12,788.14 EUR was transferred back into the program budget and, considering the originated program expenses of 39.31 EUR, only an amount of 12,748.83 EUR was transferred back into the program reserve.

The traceability of the closing stock of the program reserve is additionally complicated by the execution of further non-budget-effective bookings. This applies to an unclear further reserve withdrawal amounting to 3,178.94 EUR, for example, which could not be explained satisfactorily by the WCRC within the scope of the audit.

Therefore, the balance is to be basically corrected concerning the stock of the depot "Lombard Odier" and the corresponding reserve "Georges Lombard Prize".

- The program "Support Regional Communication" (GLD 5580) shows no activities in the accounting year 2014. The means of the reserve corresponding to this program (SB 92, BSt. 5240.00, UK 8) amounting to 12,262.45 EUR were completely conveyed to the budget for Communication (GLD 1170 of the core budget) and. In this budget (GLD 1170), merely expenses of 8,186.91 EUR arose. Thus, the remaining amount of 4,075.54 EUR flowed into the total coverage of the WCRC budget. In this regard, the WCRC should check to what extent the program means might be subject to an appropriation and, if necessary, carry out a posterior correction.
- The WCRC financial committee had decided that a flat contribution for administrative costs be conveyed from the program budgets to the core budget so as to finance the originating administrative overhead expenses in the Hanover office. It had originally been fixed at 15 % but was reduced to 8 % at a later time. The ORA was provided with a compilation numeralizing and explaining the offset contribution proportions for checking. In this regard, no objections have resulted.

- The available program revenues (including the means from program reserves) originate from the following sources (all amounts in EUR):

Composition of program revenues		
712,819.07	67%	Means from program reserves
102,000.00	10%	Subsidies of the EMW e. V., Hamburg
257,026.02	24%	Other revenues
1.071.845,09	100%	Program revenues (total)

- The program expenses in their totality (including the return of unused means to the program reserves) are composed as follows (all amounts in EUR):

Composition of program expenses		
224,595.50	21%	Travel expenses
49,975.82	5%	Personnel costs
249,998.21	23%	grants to third parties
34,762.35	3%	Other material costs
512,513.21	48%	Return to program reserves
1,071,845.09	100%	Program expenses (total)

A cursory inspection of the program costs resulted in no indications for a misappropriated use resp. assignment of the means.

3.4. Membership fees

Within the audited period, the development of the WCRC membership fees in absolute figures as evidenced in the documents provided is as follows:

Region	Plan EUR	Result EUR	more / less EUR
Africa	57,600.00	35,393.88	-22,206.12
Latin America	16,000.00	8,488.10	-7,511.90
Caribbean and North America	240,800.00	230,028.18	-10,771.82
Asia	142,400.00	53,901.53	-88,498.47
Pacific	22,400.00	4,720.13	-17,679.87
Europe	400,200.00	364,289.69	-35,910.31
Total	879,400.00	696,821.51	79,24

In the previous year, the membership rate (membership fees received in proportion to the planning, excluding special donations and additional contributions) was 89.74 %.

Currently, the WCRC office is busy reprocessing the membership fees of the last years so as to get an overview of the existing payment obligations and fee arrears of the member churches. At the time of the audit, no final results were available in this respect.

3.5 Emission of official credit cards to WCRC staff

The WCRC holds a total of six credit cards (VISA Business Silver), which are used by the theological staff as well as by two administrative employees.

The ORA does not misjudge that transactions are thinkable which may seem to make the existence and use of a credit card necessary. However, this does include a series of risks. From the ORA point of view, the emission of official credit cards to WCRC staff is, therefore, strongly to be disadvised. Apart from an administrative effort, which should not be underestimated, especially aspects of cash safety resp. of the IKS argue against the establishment of such a procedure. In this context, the following are to be named, among others:

- The single disposition authorization contradicts effective budget right (violation of the four-eyes principle).
- The use of a credit card cannot be limited as regards content. This basically also enables its use beyond the desired utilization (within the card limit).
- With knowledge of the credit card data it is also possible to use the card without actually having it so that the question of onus arises in the case of unclear accounting positions, if the card owner rejects or denies responsibility (possible abuse).
- Clarification of unclear accounting posts may involve high research effort, if the cause of a payment does not explicitly arise from the booking comment on the credit card statement.

If it is necessary, e. g. for business trips, to equip staff with financial means in the forefront, the proven method of advance payments should be applied. With the knowledge of the risks above-mentioned and the displayed alternative, the ORA suggests inducing a basic decision concerning the future use of credit cards.

3.6 Relocation of the WCRC office to Hanover

The WCRC had received a contribution of 200,000.00 EUR from the UEK to finance the relocation of the office from Geneva to Hanover. At the beginning of the accounting year 2014, an earmarked reserve consisting of remaining means of this contribution (SB 92, BSt. 5110.00 UK 7) showed a stock of 143,989.29 EUR. This amount was booked into the WCRC budget in its totality.

The expenses generated in connection with the relocation (for furniture, transport, among others) in the accounting year 2014 were mostly booked via the advance and transit accounts (SB 52, BSt. 6900.00 UK 1) first and later financed from the WCRC budget (SB 00). In total, a cost volume of 100,824.80 EUR was established this way. On inquiry, the ORA received the explanation that a row of further costs had been directly handled via the core budget (SB 00) but a compilation of all relocation costs and their financing was not yet available.

Thus, it was not possible to conduct an overall view of the relocation measure and the corresponding expenses within the scope of the audit. The ORA has recommended compiling a full settlement so as to be in the position to submit proof and information towards the contributor, for example.

3.7 Payment of a rent deposit

A rent deposit amounting to 3,570.00 EUR was paid to rent a flat for the new WCRC General Secretary. During the audit it was noticed that there was no cash voucher for this payment and that the booking had occurred in the ordinary WCRC budget (SB 00, HHSt. 1111.4112). This process merely represents a deposit and is, therefore, a typical case for the application of the advance and transit accounts.

A transfer to SB 52 should be carried out so as to avoid losing sight of the payment made and the connected claim for repayment.

3.8 Statements from previous audits

Within the current audit, the ORA requested the status of the statements from previous audits mentioned in the following:

- **Performance of the financial assets**

The balance sheet for the year 2013 showed differences between the book value and the market value (hidden reserves) of the financial assets held by the WCRC and proven in SB 92 because the performance and the development due to exchange rate alterations had not been reproduced for the accounting department. In this context, the ORA had recommended inducing a decision about a (uniform) handling of value adjustments. In the balance sheet for the year 2014, the arisen value changes were booked within the scope of the year-end tasks so that the stocks proven in SB 92 tallied with the stocks communicated in the balance messages and the depot statements.

It was basically possible to retrace the procedure selected to record value fluctuations at the time of year-end closing for the accounting department.

- **Distribution of interests**

In the accounting year 2013, the ORA had determined that WCRA interest earnings of 8,184.24 EUR had accidentally not flown into the ordinary budget resp. into the interest distribution but had been recorded as stock in the transit accounts of SB 52 (BSt. 8200.00).

In this respect, a correction was carried out in the accounting year 2014 and the previously mentioned amount was split up into the General Reserves (662.10 EUR), the General Assembly Reserve (4,653.45 EUR) as well as the "WCRC Europe" trust assets (2,868.69 EUR).

- **Correction Barnabas Foundation**

Within the scope of the accounting re-organization, the stock of the WCRC fund at the "Barnabas Foundation" in the balance sheet (SB 92, BSt. 2120.00) had been booked with an incorrect opening stock in the previous year. Instead of the value from the depot account handled in USD a (converted) CHF stock from the WCRC balance 2012 had been the basis. This mistake was corrected in the accounting year 2014 by means of a number of adjusting entries.

- **Review personnel costs accounting (Antex)**

Within the scope of the relocation of the WCRC office and the resulting re-organization of its administration, it had initially been necessary to subordinate the accounting and review of the payroll accounting, which had been outsourced to a service provider in Switzerland. This step was mainly required against the background of some specifics of the Swiss social security systems and the duties to supply (insured according to private-law), which showed extensive need for clarification.

In the accounting year 2014, the review of this topic complex was further advanced in co-operation with the former personnel service provider (Antex, Geneva branch) and the responsible insurance company (Axa-Winterthur).

Within the scope of the audit, the current status was discussed and insight given into the documentation currently available. At the time of the audit, however, it was not yet possible to carry out a final settlement because not all questions had been clarified terminally. Within the scope of the audit, for example, the ORA was informed by the WCRC office that the former accountant had obviously received a

bonus amounting to 5,000 CHF in December 2012. The documents available so far had, however, not provided the necessary information to retrace who had induced this and what legal foundation this payment was based on.

3.9 General notes

Various questions and problems which had arisen during the audit were discussed orally. Any further handling of these points within the scope of this audit is unnecessary since the questions were clarified resp. future observation is to be expected. Essentially, the following points were discussed:

- Handling resp. proof of inventory differences due to currency fluctuations on the foreign currency accounts of the WCRC (ancillary account),
- Avoiding manual bookings on technical budget positions,
- Approval of payments / availability KFM foreign payment module,
- Tax status of the WCRC with credit institutes (especially KD-Bank, non-resident resp. resident),
- Status of the WCRC in the USA (Michigan Corporation, duties of the resident there, ensuring access to the assets there) and
- Necessity of opening separate current accounts in the case of projects financed by external funds.

V. FINAL REMARK

Final talk

An extensive talk informing about the substantial results of the audit took place on the occasion of the audit in the WCRC office in Hanover on 16th March 2015.

The WCRC participants were the Finance Co-ordinator, Mr Gerhard Plenter and the Assistant for Finances and Communication, Ms Anna Krueger, for the ORA Mr Soeren Rischbieter took part.

Audit result

Audit of the financial statements 2014

Subject of the audit was the annual financial statement submitted by the WCRC for the year 2014. After the result of this audit, the ORA can confirm that

- the accounting in the accounting year 2014 occurred in due form and essentially in compliance with the principles of orderly accounting,
- the WCRC financial statement conveys an image of the results and assets situation which largely corresponds to the actual circumstances and complies with the general fiscal principles and
- the year-end closing 2014 was correctly developed from the WCRC accounting.

Audit of the economic management and assets administration

With reference to the WCRC management of the budget and economy and the assets administration and as a result of the audit, the ORA can – independently from the questions brought up in the audit statements – confirm that

- the budget resolved by the WCRC Executive Committee was essentially executed in due form, economically and thriftily and
- there are no indications for the fact that the regulations and principles effective for management might have been ignored to a considerable extent.

Recommendations for action

From the ORA point of view, the following questions and problems mentioned in the audit statements should be dealt with especially so as to increase the transparency, exactness and legality of the WCRC accounting and offer better conditions to supervise financial risks:

- Optimization of the process organization in accounting (promptness, directive processes, recording organization, documentation)
- Clarification of open questions and issues in connection with the remuneration and old-age pension of the WCRC staff.

Recommendation of discharge

According to the dutiful discretion of the ORA, there are no objections against the approval and authorization of the annual accounts by the Executive Committee according to articles X and XIV of the WCRC constitution.

In the overall view, the exoneration of the General Secretary and the General Treasurer for the budget and economic management as well as the asset administration of the WCRC for the accounting year 2014 can be recommended.

Hanover, 27. March 2015



(OKR WEITZENBERG)

HIGH AUDIT OFFICE OF THE EVANGELICAL CHURCH IN
GERMANY

BUDGET LINE	DESIGNATED ACCOUNT	Budget 2014	Actuals 2014	Budget/Actuals 2014	Budget 2015	Budget 2014-2015
1100 REVENUE	CORE	1.438.400,00 €	2.626.136,45 €	1.187.736,45 €	1.336.800,00 €	-101.600,00 €
1100 EXPENSE	CORE	1.438.400,00 €	2.626.136,45 €	1.187.736,45 €	1.336.800,00 €	101.600,00 €
1100 DIFFERENCE	CORE	0,00 €	0,00 €	0,00 €	0,00 €	0,00 €
2200 REVENUE	THEOLOGY & MISSION OFFICE Programmes	319.400,00 €	277.778,28 €	-41.621,72 €	141.000,00 €	-178.400,00 €
2200 EXPENSE	THEOLOGY & MISSION OFFICE Programmes	319.400,00 €	277.778,28 €	-41.621,72 €	141.000,00 €	178.400,00 €
2200 DIFFERENCE	THEOLOGY & MISSION OFFICE Programmes	0,00 €	0,00 €	0,00 €	0,00 €	0,00 €
3300 REVENUE	JUSTICE & PARTNERSHIP OFFICE Programmes	447.300,00 €	438.751,43 €	-8.548,57 €	404.000,00 €	-43.300,00 €
3300 EXPENSE	JUSTICE & PARTNERSHIP OFFICE Programmes	447.300,00 €	438.751,43 €	-8.548,57 €	404.000,00 €	43.300,00 €
3300 DIFFERENCE	JUSTICE & PARTNERSHIP OFFICE Programmes	0,00 €	0,00 €	0,00 €	0,00 €	0,00 €
4440 REVENUE	PARTNERSHIP FUND	467.100,00 €	198.111,72 €	-268.988,28 €	472.000,00 €	4.900,00 €
4400 EXPENSE	PARTNERSHIP FUND	467.100,00 €	198.111,72 €	-268.988,28 €	472.000,00 €	-4.900,00 €
4400 DIFFERENCE	PARTNERSHIP FUND	0,00 €	0,00 €	0,00 €	0,00 €	0,00 €
5500 REVENUE	GENERAL Programmes	131.200,00 €	157.203,66 €	26.003,66 €	123.200,00 €	-8.000,00 €
5500 EXPENSE	GENERAL Programmes	131.200,00 €	157.203,66 €	26.003,66 €	123.200,00 €	8.000,00 €
5500 DIFFERENCE	GENERAL Programmes	0,00 €	0,00 €	0,00 €	0,00 €	0,00 €
	TOTAL REVENUE	2.803.400,00 €	3.697.981,54 €	894.581,54 €	2.477.000,00 €	-326.400,00 €
	TOTAL EXPENSE	2.803.400,00 €	3.697.981,54 €	894.581,54 €	2.477.000,00 €	326.400,00 €
	DIFFERENCE	0,00 €	0,00 €	0,00 €	0,00 €	0,00 €