



World Communion  
of Reformed Churches

**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE  
MINUTES 2016**

**Living God, renew  
and transform us**

**World Communion of Reformed Churches**  
**Executive Committee**  
**7-13 May 2016**  
**Havana, Cuba**

**Theme: Living God, renew and transform us.**

*"I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect."*  
—Romans 12:1-2

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## **PARTICIPANTS**

### **Officers**

- Jerry Pillay, president, Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa
- Yvette Noble Bloomfield, vice president, United Church in Jamaica & the Cayman Islands
- Helis Hernán Barraza Díaz, vice president, Presbyterian Church of Colombia
- Yueh-Wen Lu, vice president, Presbyterian Church in Taiwan
- Bastiaan Plaisier, vice president, Protestant Church in the Netherlands
- Johann Weusmann, general treasurer, Evangelical Church in the Rhineland
- Chris Ferguson, general secretary, United Church of Canada

### **Members**

- Lydia Adajawah, Africa Communion of Reformed Churches
- 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
- Jan-Gerd Heetderks, WCRC Europe
- Najla Abou Sawan Kassab, National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon
- Clifton Kirkpatrick, Presbyterian Church (USA)
- Clayton Leal da Silva, Presbyterian Church of Brazil
- Subha Singh Majaw, Presbyterian Church of India
- Cheryl Meban, Presbyterian Church in Ireland
- Cheh Liang Mok, Presbyterian Church in Malaysia
- Veronica Njoki Muchiri, Presbyterian Church of East Africa
- Gabriela Lucía Mulder, AIPRAL
- Gradye Parsons, Presbyterian Church (USA)
- Salome Twum, Presbyterian Church of Ghana
- Lisa Vander Wal, CANAAC

### **Advisors**

- William T. Koopmans, Christian Reformed Church in North America
- Stephen Kendall, Presbyterian Church in Canada
- Stephens Lytch, Presbyterian Church (USA)

### **Guests**

- Michael Blair, United Church of Canada
- Susanne Erlecke, Evangelical Church in Germany
- Eleazar Fernandez, Union Theological Seminary, Philippines

- Avelino González-Ferrer, Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity – The Vatican
- Natasha Klukach, World Council of Churches
- Milton Mejía, Latin American Council of Churches
- Larry Miller, Global Christian Forum
- Necta Montes, World Student Christian Federations
- Medardo Gomez Soto, Lutheran World Federation
- Seung Un (Paul) Tche, Council on Christian Unity of the Christian Church
- Karen Georgia Thompson, United Church of Christ
- Lorenzo Vargas, WACC Global
- Robina Winbush, Presbyterian Church (USA)

### **Staff**

- Dora Arce Valentín, executive secretary for justice and partnership, Presbyterian Reformed Church in Cuba
- Aruna Gnanadason, consultant, Church of South India
- Alexander (Sandy) Horsburgh, minute taker, Church of Scotland
- Werner Joecker, assistant for the Reformed Partnership Fund
- Anna-Lena Krüger, assistant for finance and communication
- Hanns Lessing, General Council coordinator, Evangelical Church of Westphalia
- Wan-Jou Lin, intern, Presbyterian Church in Taiwan
- Katrina Mertz, assistant to the general secretary
- Paul Oppenheim, support staff, Evangelical Reformed Church in Germany
- Gerhard Plenter, financial coordinator, Evangelical Reformed Church
- Philip Tanis, executive secretary for communications, Reformed Church in America

### **Visitors**

- Sylvia Bukowski
- Mariana Camargo
- Lucas Arturo Millenaar
- Kathy Parsons
- Hendrika Plaisier
- Kevin Thompson

### **SET support team**

- Moraima González (Organizer)
- Julio Nápoles del Toro ( Organizer)
- Hilda Torres Beltrán (Interpreter)
- Adelfa Díaz Gómez (Assistant)
- Ida María Ayala (Interpreter)
- Lynda Busquets Ayala (Interpreter)

- Yosmel Fernández (Interpretation Equipment)
- Andrés Rodríguez (Driver)
- William Masjuán (Driver)
- Osquel Lorenzo (IT)
- José Rodríguez (Driver)
- María de los Ángeles (steward)
- Alain González Hernández (steward)

## **CORE GROUPS AND COMMITTEES**

### **THEOLOGY, MISSION AND COMMUNION**

Moderator: Bas Plaisier

Peter Bukowski

Kobus Gerber

Najla Kassab

William T. Koopmans

Gradye Parsons

Lisa Vander Wal

Staff: Aruna Gnanadason

### **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

Gabriela Lucía Mulder

Johann Weusmann

Staff: Dora Arce-Valentín

### **COMMUNICATION**

Moderator: Yvette Noble Bloomfield

Peter Borgdorff

Allan Buckingham

Stephens Lytch

Cheryl Meban

Cheh Liang Mok

Salome Twum

Staff: Philip Tanis, Anna Krüger

### **FINANCE COMMITTEE**

Moderator: Johann Weusmann

Stephen Kendall

Clifton Kirkpatrick

Yueh-Wen Lu  
Stephens Lytch  
Cheh Liang Mok  
Veronica Njoki Muchiri  
President, General Secretary  
Staff: Gerhard Plenter, Anna Krüger

### **CONSTITUTION AND MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE**

Moderator: Cheryl Meban  
Lydia Adajawah  
Peter Borgdorff  
Gradye Parsons  
President, General Secretary

### **PARTNERSHIP FUND COMMITTEE**

Moderator: Kobus Gerber  
Yvette Noble Bloomfield  
Najla Kassab  
Clayton Leal da Silva  
Subha Singh Majaw  
Bas Plaisier  
Salome Twum  
Staff: Werner Joecker, Philip Tanis

### **PERSONNEL COMMITTEE**

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

### **WCRC ENDOWMENT FUND TRUSTEES**

Co-moderators: Peter Borgdorff and Clifton Kirkpatrick  
Allan Buckingham  
Brenda Bullock  
Mary Fontaine  
Stephen Kendall  
William T. Koopmans  
Stephens Lytch (president)  
Gradye Parsons  
Staff: Philip Tanis

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

## TIMETABLE

*Please note: the published timetable changed during the course of the meeting. For a more accurate reflection of the sequence of events, please refer to the Narrative Record.*

### **Friday, May 6th**

All day                      Arrival of officers and some members

### **Saturday, May 7th**

All day                      Arrival of all other Executive Committee members

9:00-12:00                Officers' Meeting

13:00-14:30              Lunch

16:00-17:30              Opening Service

18:00-19:00              Dinner

19:00-21:00              Core Groups 1

### **Sunday, May 8th**

A.M.                        Worship with local congregations

13:00-14:00              Lunch (For those who do not eat with the congregations)

14:30-15:30              LISTENING SESSION 1  
President's address and discussions

15:30-16:00              Snack Break

16:00-17:00              General Secretary's report and discussion

17:00-18:00              DIALOGUE GROUPS 1

18:00-19:00              Special dinner with host church

19:00-21:00              The Church in Cuba presentation  
Discussion: PRC in Cuba

### **Monday, May 9th**

9:00-9:30                 Worship

9:30-10:30                DECISION SESSION 1

10:30-11:00              Ecumenical Greetings

11:00-11:30              Snack Break

11:30-13:00              LISTENING SESSION 2  
Regional Councils  
UN Office  
John Knox Centre  
General Council Planning Report

13:00-14:00              Lunch break

14:00-15:00              LISTENING SESSION 2 (CONTINUED)

15:00-16:00              DIALOGUE SESSION 2

16:00-16:30              Snack Break

16:30-18:00              COMMITTEES 1: (Finance & Constitution)

18:00-19:00              Dinner

19:00-21:00              CORE GROUPS 2



### **Tuesday, May 10th**

9:00-9:30      Worship  
9:30-11:00     DECISION SESSION 2  
11:00-11:30    Snack Break  
11:30-13:00    LISTENING SESSION 3  
                  Communication Core Group Report  
                  Focus JDDJ, Lutheran/Reformed Declaration  
                  Other reports  
13:00-14:00    Lunch Break  
14:00-15:00    DIALOGUE GROUPS 3  
15:00-15:30    Snack Break  
16:00-17:30    COMMITTEES 2  
18:00-19:00    Dinner  
19:00-21:30    Cuban Christian Council Anniversary

### **Wednesday, May 11th**

7:00            Officers' Breakfast  
9:00-9:30      Worship  
9:30-11:00     DECISION SESSION 3  
11:00-11:30    Snack Break  
11:30-13:00    LISTENING SESSION 4  
                  Theology, Mission & Communion Core Group Report  
                  Finance Committee Report  
13:00-14:00    Lunch  
14:00-15:00    LISTENING SESSION 4 (CONTINUED)  
15:00-16:00    DIALOGUE GROUPS 4  
16:00-16:30    Snack Break  
16:30-18:00    REGIONAL MEETINGS  
18:00-19:00    Dinner  
19:00-21:00    Special Briefing: Cuba/LA political, social, cultural,  
                  ecumenical context  
                  Including Milton Mejía, General Secretary – CLAI

### **Thursday, May 12th**

9:00-9:30      Worship  
9:30-11:00     DECISION SESSION 4  
11:00-11:30    Snack Break  
11:30-13:00    LISTENING SESSION 5  
                  Justice & Partnership Core Group Report  
                  Constitution & Membership Committee Report  
                  Any other reports  
13:00-14:00    Lunch  
14:00-15:00    DIALOGUE GROUPS 5  
15:00-16:30    Personnel Committee/NA Trustees  
16:30           Visit to Havana  
                  Evening out

**Friday, May 13th**

7:00	Officers' Breakfast
9:00-9:30	Worship
9:30-11:00	DECISION SESSION 5
11:00-11:30	Snack Break
11:30-13:00	DECISION SESSION 5 (CONTINUED)
13:00-14:00	Lunch Break
14:00-15:00	PLENARY: Outstanding matters
16:00-17:00	Closing Worship
18:00	Dinner

**Saturday, May 14th**

Departures



## **ACTIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 2016**

*Please note: During the course of the meeting, and particularly during discussions on the General Council, the names of certain people were mentioned in connection with possibly being invited to speak or otherwise participate at the General Council. In the interests of confidentiality, these have not been recorded as actions, and their names have been removed from the documents appended to the minutes. The names were, however, recorded by the General Council Planning Coordinator and due consideration given to them by the Planning Committee.*

The Executive Committee:

### **Address of the President**

1. Received the Address of the President.

### **Report of the General Secretary**

2. Received the Report of the General Secretary.

### **Appointments**

3. Appointed Gradye Parsons, Najla Abou and Sawan Kassab, supported by Phil Tanis, Dora Arce Valentín and a member of the PRCC as a resource person, to serve as the Message Committee.
4. Appointed Lisa Vander Wal, Kobus Gerber, Clayton Leal da Silva, Lydia Adajawah and Chen Liang Mok to serve as facilitators of Dialogue Groups.
5. Appointed William Koopmans, Veronica Njoki Muchiri and Cheryl Meban, supported by Hanns Lessing, to serve as the Drafting Committee.

### **Regional Councils**

6. Received the report of the Northeast Asia Area Council (NEAAC) and remitted it to the Dialogue Groups for further consideration.
7. Received the report of the South Asia Regional Council (SARC) and remitted it to the Dialogue Groups for further consideration.
8. Received the report of the African Communion of Reformed Churches (ACRC) and remitted it to the Dialogue Groups for further consideration.
9. Received the report of the Caribbean and North American Area Council (CANAAAC) and remitted it to the Dialogue Groups for further consideration.
10. Received the report of the Council of WCRC Europe and remitted it to the Dialogue Groups for further consideration.

11. Received the report of *Alianza de Iglesias Presbiterianas y Reformadas de América Latina y el Caribe* (Alliance of Presbyterian and Reformed Churches in Latin America and the Caribbean (AIPRAL)) and remitted it to the Dialogue Groups for further consideration.
12. Noted the report of WCRC Indonesia.
13. Affirmed the need to gather regional leaders in a consultation to share concerns and to assist Regional Councils in defining a common vision for carrying out the work of the WCRC.
14. Remitted the matter of using the *Otto per Mille* Fund for the support of Regional Councils for consideration at the Regional Council Consultation and requested that the consultation report back.
15. Agreed to seek advice from the Regional Council Consultation on whether or not to approve the South Asia Regional Council as a full regional council of the WCRC.
16. Remitted the question of whether or not to approve the South Asia Regional Council as a full regional council of the WCRC to the General Council, or a future meeting of the Executive Committee, as appropriate, for decision.
17. Deferred a decision on whether or not to create an Indonesian Regional Council.

#### **UN Office**

18. Noted the report of the Presbyterian Ministry at the United Nations.
19. Noted that Ryan Smith is the sole staff person in the UN office.
20. Remitted the following recommendation to the Office of Justice and Partnership, along with the General Secretary, for consideration, factoring in budgetary implications: that a WCRC delegation be sent to the meeting of the UN Commission on the Status of Women the next time it gathers.

#### **General Council Planning Committee**

21. Affirmed the theme trajectories set out in the report of the General Council Planning Committee and encouraged the Planning Committee to give attention to the interconnections between them.
22. Encouraged the General Council Planning Committee to give consideration to the expansion of the justice theme beyond economic justice to incorporate the global crisis of religious conflict and growing fundamentalism and its effect on member churches.
23. Affirmed the different methodologies for the exploration of the stated themes as set out in the report of the General Council Planning Committee.

24. Encouraged the General Council Planning Committee to employ creativity and variety in presenting themes, through the possible use of conversation involving experts, lay people and young people.
25. Approved the suggested speakers as examples for the theology theme, offering comments contained in the report for consideration.
26. Approved the suggested speakers as examples for the justice and communion themes, offering comments contained in the report for consideration.
27. Remitted the suggestion that concern about refugees be a major theme at the General Council to the General Council Planning Committee for consideration.
28. Approved the proposals for the Bible studies and offered its comments, as detailed in the report, to the Planning Committee for consideration.
29. Remitted the comments on the Reception by the German Federal Government, contained in the report, to the Planning Committee.
30. Affirmed the proposals for a Youth Gathering immediately prior to the General Council.
31. Gave approval to the General Council Planning Committee to make the preparatory process for the Youth Gathering global.
32. Remitted the questions, comments and suggestions on the Youth Gathering to the General Council Planning Committee, especially to the group working on the Youth Gathering and Youth Pre-Council.
33. Affirmed the proposals for the Visitors' Programme.
34. Affirmed the proposals for the Admission of Delegates contained within the report of the General Council Planning Committee.
35. Affirmed the proposal for reimbursement contained within the report of the General Council Planning Committee.
36. Remitted matters relating to process, the JDDJ, and self-care and scheduling and to the Planning Committee and General Secretariat for consideration.
37. Urged the Planning Committee to take great care over the inclusion of those who are differently abled.

### **Wittenberg Declaration**

38. Approved the process for the production of the proposed Wittenberg Declaration.

### **Report of Drafting Committee 2**

### **Communications**

39. Acknowledged and affirmed the report and proposals of the Communication Core Group as they were presented.

**Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ)**

40. Affirmed its own consensus of 2015 with regard to the JDDJ.
41. Took note that the discussion on association with the JDDJ does not involve theological changes to its Reformed understanding of justification.
42. Declared that the intended association procedure in 2017 would essentially be a public affirmation of what has already been concluded in the dialogue processes of the WCRC.
43. Instructed the General Secretary to provide a clear definition of what it means for the WCRC to “associate” with the JDDJ.
44. Emphasized that association with the JDDJ document would be a tremendous act of witness for the Reformed family, with strong implications for the local church context as well as for the Communion.
45. Directed the General Secretary to send a letter to the member churches, acknowledging that the process to date had not met the high standard for process normally expected; further directed the General Secretary to invite the member churches to offer their wisdom and advice as soon as possible and to pursue this matter urgently in order to meet the requirements for association and celebration in 2017.
46. Instructed the General Secretary to collect, collate and make available resources for local congregations to study the JDDJ after 2017.
47. Committed to a timeline by means of which:
  - a. The revised Reformed Signing Statement to the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification would be made available to the WCRC member churches by August 2016.
  - b. The covering letter would advise the member churches that they had opportunity to provide feedback by the end of November 2016.
  - c. The covering letter would summarize the intended celebrative nature of the public signing ceremony and its valuable implications for ecumenical relations, not only with Lutheran but also Roman Catholic and other denominations, with respect to the Doctrine of Justification.
48. Instructed the General Secretary to plan an appropriate ceremony for the association with the JDDJ preferably with the participation of both Lutheran and Roman Catholic representatives.
49. Strongly encouraged the General Council Planning Committee to schedule the signing to take place in an outdoor venue in front of the Castle Church in Wittenberg so as to attract the

maximum crowd and take advantage of the fitting symbolism of the location.

### **Wittenberg Declaration**

50. Affirmed the result of the Reformed and Lutheran dialogue and supported the intention to proceed with a draft document in the expectation that the Lutheran World Federation would concur.
51. Concurred with the proposal to draft the document, pursue its adoption, and prepare an appropriate celebration of it in Wittenberg for the General Council.

### **Finance Committee Report**

52. Approved the 2015 financial statement.
53. Approved the 2016 budget.
54. Gave the officers authority to give preliminary approval to a balanced 2017 budget, subject to final approval at the next meeting of the Executive Committee prior to the General Council.
55. Instructed the General Treasurer and Finance Office to explore the fiscal implications of new non-German, Hannover-based executive staff to be formally employed by their home church for salary and pension purposes.
56. Directed the General Secretary to cancel the lease of the office in Geneva if the way was clear.
57. Accepted the 2015 auditor's report, including the responses prepared by the Finance Office, and offered thanks to the Finance Office for its work.
58. Approved the EKD audit office to do the 2016 audit.
59. Thanked the Evangelical Reformed Church in Germany for the services of Gerhard Plenter and for providing payroll services.
60. Instructed the General Secretary, in consultation with the General Treasurer and the Finance Committee, to draft a new job description for the Financial Coordinator.
61. Resolved that the rule on regional balance of fees be waived.
62. Approved the General Council budget.

### **Report on Officers' meeting**

63. Remitted the questions raised by the Officers on regional matters to the Regional meetings.

### **Report of the Drafting Committee 3**

#### **Staff**

64. Acknowledged with gratitude Douwe Visser's service as Executive Secretary for Theology, Mission and Communion and offered the assurance of its prayers for his good health.



65. Expressed gratitude to Aruna Gnanadason and Hanns Lessing for providing staff support in the meantime.
66. Resolved that the search for a successor Executive Secretary in the event of Douwe Visser's retirement be commenced as quickly as possible to ensure continuity in its Theology, Mission and Communion engagements.

### **Global Institute of Theology (GIT)**

67. Agreed effort should be made to ensure that all the regions and genders would be represented and that there would be a balance of staff to represent more global voices.

### **Theology**

68. Agreed that past Reformed publications on the JDDJ should be investigated and to find and publish articles about the Reformed Signing Statement from various contexts.
69. Affirmed the proposal to continue with the Roman Catholic–Reformed dialogue.
70. Requested the General Secretary to prepare a plan to keep the Roman Catholic Church informed regarding the intended manner of reception of the Roman Catholic–Reformed dialogue report.

### **Human Sexuality**

71. Affirmed the General Secretary's proposal to convene a consultation on Human Sexuality and Communion, taking into account the concerns that were raised in the report of the Theology, Mission and Communion Core Group.

### **Mission in the Frontline**

72. Agreed that the importance of Mission in the Frontline should not be lost during the planning of the General Council.

### **Constitution and Membership Committee**

73. Agreed to offer affiliate membership status to the *Communauté Baptiste des Fidéles en Afrique* (CBFA) in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.
74. Deferred a decision on receiving the L'Elgise Baptiste au Congo into membership until further communication had been received, and encouraged Kobus Gerber to remain in communication on behalf of the Executive Committee.
75. Requested the General Secretary to continue to seek clarification on the theological and constitutional situation on ordination for women and women's roles as officers, elders or deaconesses within the Evangelical Churches Association (ECA) in India.

76. Requested Kobus Gerber to continue to follow up the application from *Igreja Reformada em Moçambique*.
77. Requested the General Secretary to continue to explore the possibilities for affiliate membership for the Ecumenical Commission for Human Development (Pakistan) and to complete their application.
78. Resolved to await the arrival of further documents relevant to the application for membership by the Destiny Worship Centre Church (Malawi).
79. Encouraged Lydia Adajawah to continue to follow up the application from the *Centre International de la Mission d'Evangelisation de Delivrance et d'Intercession-Ames pour Christ* (Mali) and liaise with the Hannover office.
80. Thanked Lydia Adajawah for the considerable investment of time and energy that she undertook to investigate the Elgise Reformee des Assemblees de Dieu du Togo.
81. Instructed the Constitution and Membership Committee to consider clearer constitutional categories for affiliate and associate membership.
82. Affirmed that only appointed delegates to the General Council are eligible for election to the Executive Committee.
83. Requested that the General Secretary immediately assemble a pre-General Council Nominations Work Group, consisting of Executive Committee members who will not serve another term, to assist in the process of preparing for a smooth nomination process up to and at the General Council.
84. Instructed the General Secretary, in conjunction with the Work Group, to communicate with all of the Regional Councils as soon as possible:
  - a. The need to discern names for the next set of Officers and Executive Committee members before the General Council;
  - b. That the Regional Councils should seek to bring a diverse set of nominees by gender and age;
  - c. That names for Officers should be suggested as early as possible.
85. Instructed the General Secretary, working with the Work Group, to collect the names recommended and present the names to the General Council Nominations Committee.
86. Instructed the 2017 General Council Nominations Committee to be committed to:
  - a. Transparency
  - b. Focus on gifts, skills and talents

## **Report of Drafting Committee 4**

### **Critical justice issues and themes**

87. Affirmed the recommendation of the Communion and Justice Core Group to direct the General Council Planning Committee to cluster public justice issues around the five themes of refugees, economic and ecological justice, overcoming racism and affirming the rights of Indigenous Peoples, peace-making and gender justice, both in the General Council and in the General Council's public witness in Berlin.

### **New International Financial and Economic Architecture (NIFEA)**

88. Affirmed the recommendations of the Justice and Partnership Core Group regarding the relaunching of NIFEA.
89. Instructed that, prior to the General Council, the Justice and Partnership Core Group and the TMC Core Group be kept informed and given the opportunity for input to both the work of the WCRC and related networks in their areas of concern and in the introduction of business for the General Council.
90. Instructed the Officers (in consultation with the Executive Committee) to clarify the accountability, communication and relationships between the Executive Committee, the Core Groups, the networks, the Regional Councils and the staff in order to equip the WCRC for effective ministry for the next seven years.

### **Women's Ordination**

91. Affirmed that "Toward a Declaration of Faith on Women's Ordination" be presented to the 2017 General Council, recommending its adoption and referencing criteria and implications of adopting such a declaration.
92. Instructed that "Toward a Declaration of Faith on Women's Ordination" be renamed "A Declaration of Faith on Women's Ordination" and that it be revised to show the Declaration clearly and concisely at the beginning; and that the rest of the paper be explanatory.
93. Instructed the General Secretary and staff to prepare a clear introductory presentation defining and explaining terms in the document (such as Declaration of Faith), including constitutional support.
94. Instructed the General Secretary and staff to provide supporting documentation and a process for guided discussions on "A Declaration of Faith on Women's Ordination" at the 2017 General Council.
95. Affirmed the decision to commit resources to accompany churches in achieving the goal of women's ordination in the spirit of communion.

### **UN Office on the Status of Women**

96. Affirmed the value of strengthening the WCRC's work with and through the UN Office, especially on matters related to the Status of Women.

## **Proposals of the Officers**

### **Strategic Plan**

97. Endorsed the final phase of the strategic plan (as presented in the General Secretary's report) for implementation leading to the 2017 General Council.

### **2019 Executive Committee**

98. Accepted the gracious invitation of the Zurich Cantonal Church to host the 2019 Executive Committee meeting, upon confirmation by the new Executive Committee.

### **Staff**

99. Accepted the early retirement of Douwe Visser, asked the General Secretary to expedite the process of finalizing the said retirement and expressed thanks to Douwe for his many years of service to the organizations that he had served.

### **Message from Cuba**

100. Approved the text of the Message from Cuba.

### **Letter to World Council of Churches**

101. Instructed the General Secretary to send the letter of solidarity and support relating to the detention of members of a WCC delegation by the state of Israel to the General Secretary of the World Council of Churches.

### **Constitution and Bylaws**

102. Adopted the proposed changes to the Constitution and Bylaws and instructed that they be collated and a document showing them be sent to the member churches for review.

### **Executive Committee of the WCRC Michigan Foundation**

103. Approved the minutes of the 2015 meeting of the Executive Committee of the WCRC Michigan Foundation, held in Dhour Choueir, Lebanon, 9-15 May 2016.
104. Agreed that all the actions of the Executive Committee during its meeting in Havana, Cuba, 7-13 May 2016, be fully concurred with and entered into the permanent record of the WCRC Michigan Foundation as constituting the decisions of 2016.

**NARRATIVE RECORD  
of the meeting of the Executive Committee  
Havana, Cuba, 7–14 May 2016**

**SATURDAY, 7 MAY**

**Opening Worship**

The Executive Committee convened in the Iglesia Presbyteriana Reformada de Luyanó, Havana, Cuba, on 7 May 2016.

The Executive Committee was welcomed to the church by Daniel Izquierdo, pastor of the church and General Secretary of the Presbyterian Reformed Church of Cuba (PRCC). He said a few words about the church.

Lisa Vander Wal, Najla Abou Sawan Kassab, Yvette Noble Bloomfield, Milton Mejía, Ofelia Ortega, Francisco Marrero, Gabriela Lucía Mulder, Medardo Gómez, Yueh-Wen Lu, Dora Arce Valentín and Chris Ferguson all participated in leading different parts of the service.

President Jerry Pillay gave thanks for the welcome and for all the preparatory work that had been done in Cuba for the meeting. He preached on the theme, *Living God, renew and transform us*, picking up ideas from Isaiah 43:14-21 and Revelation 21:1-6. He spoke of the renewal of mind, of heart and of ways, and of our renewed minds and hearts leading to renewed actions.

**SUNDAY, 8 MAY**

The Executive Committee was distributed among eight churches within and outwith Havana for morning worship. The congregations visited were in Los Palos, La Fernanda, Havana, Luyanó, Guines and San Antonio.

Greetings from the World Communion of Reformed Churches were brought to all the congregations.

**Afternoon Plenary Session**

*Listening Session 1*

On Sunday afternoon, the Executive Committee met in plenary. Peter Bukowski opened the meeting with song and the President constituted the meeting with prayer. He welcomed members to the sixth and final full meeting of this Executive Committee.

The General Secretary called the roll. He declared the meeting to be quorate.

He informed the Executive Committee that apologies had been received from Executive Committee members Yael Eka Hadiputeri, Indonesian Christian Church; Eric So, Moderator of NEAAC; Elisée Musemakweli, Presbyterian Church in Rwanda; Allen Nafuki, Presbyterian Church of Vanuatu; and Carola Tron, Waldensian Evangelical Church of the River Plate; and advisors Robyn Ellen Goodwin, Uniting Church in Australia; and Dr Yong-Kyu Kang, Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea. He also welcomed Sandy Horsburgh, Minute Secretary.

The President offered a general welcome to guests and ecumenical delegates and the General Secretary welcomed Ofelia Ortega, former WARC Vice President, who was observing this particular session.

*Address of the President (Document 1)*

Yvette Noble Bloomfield took the chair and invited the President to address the Executive Committee.

The President presented his report.

Yvette Noble Bloomfield invited questions and comments. Questions and discussion covered religious violence, the contemporary relevance of the Belhar and Accra confessions, women's ordination, what guidance the current Executive Committee needed to give the next Executive Committee, the Global Christian Forum, the Barmen Declaration, the strategic plan and the inclusion of the voices of Indigenous Peoples. Yvette thanked the President for his faithful, energetic and sacrificial leadership.

Lisa Vander Wal moved acceptance of the President's Address and was seconded by Cheryl Meban.

**ACTION 1**

**The Executive Committee received the Address of the President.**

*Report of the General Secretary (Document 2)*

The President introduced the General Secretary and asked him to present his report.

The General Secretary presented his report.

The President invited comments and questions.

Questions were asked about the proposed consultation on human sexuality, the procedure leading to the possible signing of the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ) at the 2017 General Council, church-state relations in Central and South America, membership payments due from African churches, the perception that both the world and the churches were in a state of crisis, the long term financial future of the WCRC and the planning for the General Council.

Peter Bukowski moved acceptance of the General Secretary's Report and was seconded by Salome Twum.

## **ACTION 2**

### **The Executive Committee received the Report of the General Secretary.**

Bas Plaisier closed the session in prayer.

### **Evening Session**

The Executive Committee accepted an invitation to dinner hosted by the Presbyterian Reformed Church of Cuba (PRCC) in the Tocooro Restaurant, Havana.

After dinner, the Rev Francisco Morerro, Moderator of the PRCC, spoke about the current situation and work of the church. He spoke of the history of the church from its foundation in the 1890s, initially from the Presbyterian Church in New Jersey. The Revolution had resulted in isolation and persecution of church members which led to many, including pastors, leaving the country. However, the church, though called upon to make tremendous sacrifices, was determined to survive and to articulate the faith in a Marxist/Leninist context. Following state constitutional reform in 1992, there was an explosive growth in Cuban churches. Membership and vocations increased significantly. The visit of Pope John Paul II was one of the events that reinvigorated Cuban churches.

The PRCC remains a small church within the Cuban context. It is, nonetheless, influential. It faces challenges around the desire of so many young people to emigrate, loss of members, lack of leaders and financial dependence.

He described how the PRCC has always been a progressive denomination, for instance ordaining women since the 1950s. It is very active in mission and social service and is rising to current challenges with creativity and courage. The church rejoices in its faith, believing strongly that God has called it to witness in this place and context. It

believes in the power of offering love in God's name. It values being in communion with other Reformed churches around the world.

Warm words of gratitude were expressed for the presence and visit of the Executive Committee.

Ofelia Ortega, much beloved by us all, added a comment. She spoke of the 1960s, 70s and 80s, rather than being a terrible time for the church, as being the best time in the life of her denomination, because in that time it had no one to rely on but God and had done much practical ecumenical work.

The President offered the thanks of the Executive Committee, and the General Secretary prayed, in a mixture of English and Spanish, for the PRCC.

## **MONDAY, 9 MAY**

### **Morning Worship**

The Executive Committee began the day with worship, led by Allan Buckingham.

### **Morning Plenary Session**

#### *Ecumenical Greetings (Document 11)*

The President introduced the first business session of the day.

The Executive Committee received ecumenical greetings from Natasha Klukach, representing the World Council of Churches; Medardo Gomes Soto, representing the Lutheran World Federation; Avelino González-Ferrer, representing the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity; and Larry Miller, representing the Global Christian Forum. (For all ecumenical greetings presented in writing, please see the Document 11 section.)

The ecumenical delegates were thanked for their greetings.

#### **LISTENING SESSION 2**

The President introduced the use of the discernment process of decision-making. He explained, in some detail, how it works, noting that its use by the Executive Committee in this meeting was an important way of preparing for its use in the 2017 General Council.

Bas Plaisier took the chair and invited questions and comments.



Members of the Executive raised questions and concerns about the discernment process and consensus models, which many had experienced in other settings previously. Assurances were made by other members that using these processes here would assist in their development for use at the General Council.

The Executive Committee moved to appoint a Message Committee, as nominated by the General Secretary.

### **ACTION 3**

**The Executive Committee appointed Gradye Parsons and Najla About Sawan Kassab, supported by Phil Tanis, Dora Arce Valentín and a member of the PRCC as a resource person, to serve as the Message Committee.**

The Executive Committee moved the appointment of facilitators of Dialogue Groups as nominated by the General Secretary.

### **ACTION 4**

**The Executive Committee appointed Lisa Vander Wal, Kobus Gerber, Clayton Leal da Silva, Lydia Adajawah and Chen Liang Mok to serve as facilitators of Dialogue Groups.**

The General Secretary nominated members to serve as the Drafting Committee.

### **ACTION 5**

**The Executive Committee appointed William Koopmans, Veronica Njoki Muchiri and Cheryl Meban, supported by Hanns Lessing, to serve as the Drafting Committee.**

The Executive Committee turned to consideration of the reports from the Regional Councils.

*Northeast Asia Area Council (Document 9.4)*

Yueh-Wen Lu presented the report of the Northeast Asia Area Council (NEAAC).

The President called for questions.

### **ACTION 6**

**The Executive Committee received the report of the Northeast Asia Area Council and remitted it to the Dialogue Groups for further consideration.**

*South Asia Region (Document 9.5)*

Subha Singh Majaw presented the report of the South Asia Region (SAR).

The President called for questions. A question was raised about why most of the members of the committee came from one church only and why there were no representatives from Sri Lanka. In reply, Subha indicated that visa problems had prevented the attendance of people from Bangladesh and Pakistan.

**ACTION 7**

**The Executive Committee received the report of the South Asia Region and remitted it to the Dialogue Groups for further consideration.**

*African Communion of Reformed Churches (Document 9.1)*

Lydia Adajawah presented the report of the African Communion of Reformed Churches (ACRC).

The President called for questions.

**ACTION 8**

**The Executive Committee received the report of the African Communion of Reformed Churches and remitted it to the Dialogue Groups for further consideration.**

*Caribbean and North American Area Council (Document 9.3)*

Lisa Vander Wal presented the report of the Caribbean and North American Area Council (CANAAC).

The President called for questions.

**ACTION 9**

**The Executive Committee received the report of the Caribbean and North American Area Council and remitted it to the Dialogue Groups for further consideration.**

*The Council of WCRC Europe (Document 9.7)*

Jan-Gerd Heetderks presented the report of the Council of WCRC Europe.

The President called for questions.

**ACTION 10**

**The Executive Committee received the report of the Council of WCRC Europe and remitted it to the Dialogue Groups for further consideration.**

*Alianza de Iglesias Presbiterianas y Reformadas de América Latina y el Caribe (Alliance of Presbyterian and Reformed Churches in Latin America and the Caribbean (AIPRAL)) (Document 9.2)*

Gabriela Lucía Mulder presented the report of AIPRAL.

The President called for questions. A question was asked about relations between AIPRAL and the Executive Committee. Gabriela indicated that the reference in the report to difficulties between AIPRAL and the Executive Committee was the personal opinion of the Executive Secretary of AIPRAL and did not necessarily represent more widely held opinion in the region. The General Secretary added that he understood that the question was more a constitutional one rather than any reflection on individuals. He recommended that Dialogue Groups take up this issue, as it had appeared, in other forms, from other regions.

**ACTION 11**

**The Executive Committee received the report of Alianza de Iglesias Presbiterianas y Reformadas de América Latina y el Caribe (Alliance of Presbyterian and Reformed Churches in Latin America and the Caribbean (AIPRAL)) and remitted it to the Dialogue Groups for further consideration.**

*WCRC Indonesia (Document 9.6)*

The General Secretary explained that this was a recently formed body and was not yet a full regional council. Nonetheless, a report from it was tabled. Whether or not WCRC Indonesia could become a full regional council would be decided at the General Council, there being a question over whether a single country, albeit one with 27 member churches, could be a region.

**ACTION 12**

**The Executive Committee noted the report of WCRC Indonesia.**

The Executive Committee turned to consideration of other reports.

*Report of the Presbyterian Ministry at the United Nations (Document 10.1)*

The General Secretary tabled the report of the UN Office. He indicated that there were questions over strengthening participation in the work

of the office and asked that the specific item on the status of women be a particular focus.

The President asked questions for clarity.

### **ACTION 18**

#### **The Executive Committee noted the report of the Presbyterian Ministry at the United Nations.**

##### *John Knox Centre*

The General Secretary delivered a verbal report in which he explained that communication problems had prevented a written report being available to table. Informal communications between the General Secretary and the Director of the John Knox Centre had stressed the importance of the relationship between the WCRC and the Centre.

##### *General Council Planning Committee Report (Document 8)*

The President invited Lisa Vander Wal and Hanns Lessing to present the report of the General Council Planning Committee.

In her preliminary remarks, Lisa expressed particular thanks to Hanns for his outstanding work on the General Council Planning Committee.

Hanns took the Executive Committee through the report. He highlighted the following points for discussion in the Dialogue Groups:

- The excursions to Berlin and Wittenberg
- Theme inputs (deliberately avoiding the language of “Keynotes”) especially the suggestions made for speakers
- The theme texts and Bible study texts
- Suggestions for Bible study leaders
- How to present stories of the work of the WCRC member churches and regions to the German Government, and how to formulate a statement from the General Council to the German Government
- The development of procedural processes (he asked that this be deferred until the use of the discernment model had been assessed at the end of this Executive Committee meeting)
- Women’s and Youth Pre-Councils
- The Visitors’ Programme
- The admission of delegations
- The policy on reimbursement
- The question as to how much discretion can be offered to member churches in deviating from the policy that delegations be gender balanced

The Executive Committee broke for lunch.

### **Afternoon Plenary Session**

#### LISTENING SESSION 2 (CONTINUED)

Questions were asked about the process leading to associating with the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ); about planning for the Women's Pre-Council; about whether Executive Committee members could be included in all the communications which were being sent to member churches in advance of the General Council; about the expansion of the number of languages beyond the official languages named in the Constitution and By-laws being used in General Council materials; about the strategy for the number of regions there may be and about the future of the Executive Committee as more regions may be added.

Peter Borgdorff suggested that the Dialogue Groups were not in a position adequately to discuss the planned political reception with the German Federal Government.

Hanns replied that there would be four official languages for translation and interpretation purposes. Interpretation into Indonesian and Korean would be supported but not all documents would be translated into them.

The General Treasurer questioned whether the German Government was the right body to address with the message of the Council, arguing that it would be more important to get the message to international journalists for a much wider dissemination of the Council's concerns. He suggested that a nicely framed Accra Statement would be a more appropriate, and indeed a more welcome, gift.

Cliff Kirkpatrick asked if there were plans to deal with public issues concerns more effectively than was the case in Grand Rapids.

Yueh-Wen Lu asked if a day-and-a-half each was sufficient for the Women's and Youth Pre-Councils. She also asked about co-opted staff, particularly with reference to co-ordination with stewards.

Lisa Vander Wal responded that a decision on whether or not to have a Public Issues Committee was still to be made. Expert advice would be taken. Hanns responded that work was continuing on developing a volunteer and seconded staff team.

The Executive Committee then broke into Dialogue Groups, followed by Committees and Core Groups for the rest of the day.

## **TUESDAY, 10 MAY**

### **Morning Worship**

The Executive Committee began the day with worship, led by Peter Bukowski.

### **Morning Plenary Session**

The President opened the morning session.

#### *Ecumenical Greetings (Document 11)*

The General Secretary introduced further ecumenical guests. The Executive Committee received greetings from Susanne Erlecke, representing the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD), and from Milton Mejía, representing the Latin American Council of Churches.

### **DECISION SESSION 2**

The President moved the meeting into a Decision Session and thanked the members of the Drafting Group for their work in preparing the report arising from the previous day's Dialogue Groups.

#### *Report of the Drafting Committee 1 (Document 12.7)*

William Koopmans, presenting the Drafting Committee's report, explained that the paper before the Executive Committee was a compilation of the work of the groups. He thanked Cheryl Meban for her valiant efforts late the previous evening. He noted that more than one hundred proposals, observations and suggestions had been made.

He spoke to the report, requesting that the Executive Committee only debate what really needed to be debated.

The Executive Committee considered the proposals contained within the report.

Proposal 1: The Executive Committee affirms the need to gather regional leaders in a consultation to share concerns and to assist Regional Councils in defining a common vision for carrying out the work of the WCRC.

### **ACTION 13**

**The Executive Committee affirmed the need to gather regional leaders in a consultation to share concerns and to assist Regional Councils in defining a common vision for carrying out the work of the WCRC.**

Proposal 2 was not approved, on the grounds that the Partnership Fund could not legally be used to support Regional Councils. The General Secretary commented that the *Otto per Mille* Fund could be used for supporting regions and proposed that this be remitted to the Regional Council Consultation for consideration, and to report back to a future meeting of the Executive Committee.

**ACTION 14**

**The Executive Committee remitted the matter of using the *Otto per Mille* Fund for the support of Regional Councils for consideration at the Regional Council Consultation and requested that the consultation report back.**

Proposal 3: The Executive Committee approves the South Asia Regional Council as a full Regional Council of WCRC, subject to:

- a. a consultation with and the participation of the member churches in the region;
- b. consultation with the General Secretary;
- c. its by-laws being consistent with the constitution of the WCRC, in particular in terms of provision for gender balance and the inclusion of youth.

It was argued that the Executive Committee needed a strategic plan for how many Regional Councils may be created in future.

The General Treasurer cautioned about the financial implications of making a decision on approving the South Asia Regional Council as a full Regional Council of WCRC.

The President proposed that this matter be remitted to the Regional Council Consultation. Yvette Noble Bloomfield asked what constitutional right the Regional Council Consultation had to make decisions. The President responded that it could only offer advice that would then go to the officers and Executive Committee for action.

**ACTION 15**

**The Executive Committee agreed to seek advice from the Regional Council Consultation on whether or not to approve the South Asia Regional Council as a full regional council of the WCRC.**

**ACTION 16**

**The Executive Committee remitted the question of whether or not to approve the South Asia Regional Council as a full regional council of the WCRC to the General Council, or a future meeting of the Executive Committee, as appropriate, for decision.**

Proposal 4: The Executive Committee recommends to the General Council that an Indonesian Regional Council be created.

**ACTION 17**

**The Executive Committee deferred a decision on whether or not to create an Indonesian Regional Council.**

Proposal 5: Executive Committee notes that Ryan Smith is the sole staff person in the UN office.

**ACTION 18**

**The Executive Committee noted that Ryan Smith is the sole staff person in the UN office.**

Proposal 6: The Executive Committee recommends that a WCRC delegation be sent to the meeting of the UN Commission on the Status of Women the next time it gathers.

The General Treasurer cautioned that this proposal would commit the WCRC to considerable expense which may impact on other areas of work.

**ACTION 20**

**The Executive Committee remitted the following recommendation to the Office of Justice and Partnership, along with the General Secretary, for consideration, factoring in budgetary implications: that a WCRC delegation be sent to the meeting of the UN Commission on the Status of Women the next time it gathers.**

Proposal 7: The Executive Committee affirms the theme trajectories set out in the report of the General Council Planning Committee and encourages the Planning Committee to give attention to the interconnections between them.

**ACTION 21**

**The Executive Committee affirmed the theme trajectories set out in the report of the General Council Planning Committee and encouraged the Planning Committee to give attention to the interconnections between them.**



Proposal 8: The Executive Committee encourages the expansion of the justice theme beyond economic justice to incorporate the global crisis of religious conflict and growing fundamentalism and its effect on member churches.

#### **ACTION 22**

**The Executive Committee encouraged the General Council Planning Committee to give consideration to the expansion of the justice theme beyond economic justice to incorporate the global crisis of religious conflict and growing fundamentalism and its effect on member churches.**

Proposal 9: The Executive Committee affirms the different methodologies for the exploration of the stated themes.

#### **ACTION 23**

**The Executive Committee affirmed the different methodologies for the exploration of the stated themes.**

Proposal 10: The Executive Committee encourages more creativity, and not getting stuck in common practices (i.e. not just have a lecture in theology). It offers, as examples, holding a conversation for justice, or featuring a conversation with Jürgen Moltmann about theology with a layperson, or a young person, or with a person asking his views on specific issues in their life.

#### **ACTION 24**

**The Executive encouraged the General Council Planning Committee to employ creativity and variety in presenting themes, through the possible use of conversation involving experts, lay people and young people.**

Proposal 11: The Executive Committee approves the suggested speakers for the theology theme, offering comments contained in the report for consideration.

#### **ACTION 25**

**The Executive Committee approved the suggested speakers as examples for the theology theme, offering comments contained in the report for consideration.**

Proposal 11: The Executive Committee approves the suggested speakers for the justice theme, offering comments contained in the report for consideration.

#### **ACTION 26**

**The Executive Committee approved the suggested speakers as examples for the justice and communion themes, offering comments contained in the report for consideration.**

Proposal 12: The Executive Committee remits the suggestion that concern about refugees be a major theme at the General Council to the General Council Planning Committee for consideration.

**ACTION 27**

**The Executive Committee remitted the suggestion that concern about refugees be a major theme at the General Council to the General Council Planning Committee for consideration.**

Proposal 13: The Executive Committee approve the proposals for the Bible studies and offers its comments to the Planning Committee for consideration.

**ACTION 28**

**The Executive Committee approved the proposals for the Bible studies and offered its comments, as detailed in the Report, to the Planning Committee for consideration.**

Proposal 14: The Executive Committee remits the comments on the Reception by the German Federal Government, contained in the report, to the Planning Committee.

**ACTION 29**

**The Executive Committee remitted the comments on the Reception by the German Federal Government, contained in the report, to the Planning Committee.**

Proposal 15: The Executive Committee affirms the proposals for a Youth Gathering immediately prior to the General Council.

Kobus Gerber noted that the report did not fully represent the depth of discussion in the Dialogue Groups.

Allan Buckingham asked for further information about the Youth Gathering. He indicated that he was not yet convinced that it was a good idea. Lisa Vander Wal responded that it was a new thing, aiming really to empower youth, and for which there was energy among youth to put it on.

Yueh-Wen Lu argued that, for some potential participants, the Youth Gathering, Youth Pre-Council and General Council represented too long a commitment of time, were they to attend all three.

Dora Arce Valentín explained that there was a mandate from the 2010 Uniting General Council to do as much as possible to empower young people in the Reformed family. She assured the Executive Committee that all the preparations were on track.

Clayton Leal da Silva spoke in support of the Youth Gathering, noting that a similar event had worked well with AIPRAL.

Cliff Kirkpatrick offered his full support but cautioned that the events all need to be done well. He asked whether the Youth Gathering, Pre-Council and GIT could be planned together. Hanns assured the Executive Committee that this was being done. He added that the necessary finances and human resources are all in place. He reiterated that the Planning Committee was looking for the approval of Executive Committee to make the preparatory process global.

Yueh-Wen Lu made a plea for recognition that the concerns of youth who are studying and youth who are working are very different.

### **ACTION 30**

**The Executive Committee affirmed the proposals for a Youth Gathering immediately prior to the General Council.**

### **ACTION 31**

**The Executive Committee gave approval to the General Council Planning Committee to make the preparatory process for the Youth Gathering global.**

Proposal 16: The Executive Committee remits the questions, comments and suggestions on the Youth Gathering to the General Council Planning Committee, especially to the group working on the Youth Gathering and Youth Pre-Council.

### **ACTION 32**

**The Executive Committee remitted the questions, comments and suggestions on the Youth Gathering to the General Council Planning Committee, especially to the group working on the Youth Gathering and Youth Pre-Council.**

Proposal 17: The Executive Committee affirms the proposals for the Visitors' Programme.

### **ACTION 33**

**The Executive Committee affirmed the proposals for the Visitors' Programme.**

Proposal 18: The Executive Committee affirms the proposals for the Admission of Delegates contained within the report of the General Council Planning Committee.

**ACTION 34**

**The Executive Committee affirmed the proposals for the Admission of Delegates contained within the report of the General Council Planning Committee.**

Proposal 19: The Executive Committee affirms the proposal for reimbursement contained within the report of the General Council Planning Committee.

**ACTION 35**

**The Executive Committee affirmed the proposal for reimbursement contained within the report of the General Council Planning Committee.**

Proposal 20: The Executive Committee remits matters relating to process, the JDDJ, and self-care and scheduling to the Planning Committee and General Secretariat for consideration.

**ACTION 36**

**The Executive Committee remitted matters relating to process, the JDDJ, and self-care and scheduling and to the Planning Committee and General Secretariat for consideration.**

Proposal 21: The Executive Committee urges the Planning Committee to take great care over the inclusion of those who are differently abled.

**ACTION 37**

**The Executive Committee urged the Planning Committee to take great care over the inclusion of those who are differently abled.**

The Executive Committee broke for refreshments.

LISTENING SESSION 3

*Communications Core Group Report (Document 12.4)*

Yvette Noble Bloomfield, Convener of the Communications Core Group, introduced the report of the Group and presented its proposals.

The President thanked the Group for its report, commending its brevity and clarity.

He called for questions for clarity.

The recommendations were remitted to the Dialogue Groups for further consideration.

The General Secretary introduced Moraima Gonzales, event co-ordinator, and thanked her for her hard work in preparation for the meeting.

*Focus on the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ) and on the proposed Wittenberg (Lutheran/Reformed) Declaration*

The President invited Bas Plaisier to give a verbal report on the JDDJ.

Bas noted that the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and the Roman Catholic Church had signed the JDDJ in 1999, after a long period of discussion between them, and the Mennonites and Methodists had subsequently associated with it.

He reminded the Executive Committee of the statement by Martin Jünger, general secretary of the LWF, which he delivered at the 2015 Executive Committee in Lebanon. He quoted extensively from it. He further reiterated that the decision to initiate a consultation process with the member churches leading up to this meeting had been taken at the 2015 Executive Committee meeting.

He spoke of two letters to the member churches, one of which was sent in October/November 2015 and the second on 2 December 2015, the latter admitting that the proposed timeline was too tight. That letter had indicated that the Reformed Signing Statement would be sent to the member churches on 15 March 2016.

He invited Hanns Lessing to give more information about the process leading up to the General Council.

Hanns reiterated that the 2015 Executive Committee meeting had agreed a process of consultation which should lead to final decision. He indicated that directly after that Executive Committee meeting, there would be a letter sent to the member churches clarifying the process. He emphasized that the process was intended to lead to the WCRC, not the individual member churches, associating with the JDDJ.

William Koopmans then introduced Sections 7 and 8 of the Theology, Mission and Communion Core Group report (Document 12.5).

The President asked for questions for clarity. Members of the Executive Committee raised questions and offered comments about the process involved in associating with the JDDJ.

The General Secretary explained that there was no real difference between association and affiliation. He explained the methodology of differentiated consensus, which recognizes difference but asserts that these differences do not divide. He declared that the JDDJ is not a creedal statement.

He went on to explain what it would mean to associate. To do so, he said, would assert the conviction that there was nothing in the document that represented an impediment to unity. The purpose of the Reformed Signing Statement was to be a vehicle for the WCRC to add its own voice to the discussion on Justification represented by the Joint Declaration. He reminded the Executive Committee that the Reformed Signing Statement was focussing on the concern for justice. It was intended that the Statement would represent Reformed observations on the JDDJ, thereby adding to the ecumenical conversation.

The General Secretary said that the consultation process with the member churches sought only for their advice about whether the WCRC, as a Communion, should buy into this expression of differentiated consensus.

The matter was referred to the Dialogue Groups.

Bas Plaisier then introduced the concept of the "Wittenberg Declaration." He asserted that, as a result of Reformed-Lutheran Dialogues over many years, there was agreement between the WCRC and the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) that there was no longer anything which should divide Reformed from Lutherans. The purpose of the proposed Wittenberg Declaration, therefore, was to reiterate what had already been agreed between the WCRC and the LWF over the course of their dialogues and to help both Reformed and Lutherans to move from dialogue to implementation. The first version of the Declaration would be prepared in June 2016.

The General Secretary further emphasized that the proposed Declaration would only express matters already agreed through the recent dialogues.

### **ACTION 38**

**The Executive Committee approved the process for the production of the proposed Wittenberg Declaration.**

*Ecumenical Greetings (Document 11)*

The Executive Committee received ecumenical greeting from Seung Un (Paul) Tche, representing the Council on Christian Unity of the Christian

Church (Disciples of Christ Consultative Council), and from Necta Montes, representing the World Student Christian Federation.

The Executive Committee broke for lunch. The afternoon was devoted to further meetings of Dialogue Groups and Committees.

### **Evening Session**

*Special briefing on the Cuban and Latin American political, social, cultural and ecumenical context*

In conversation with Dora Arce Valentín (as moderator), Lourdes Regueiro and Milton Mejía addressed the matter in hand.

They spoke about the economic crisis that had been ongoing for many years. Reference was also made to the impact of climate change. They spoke of the increase of poverty and the destruction of nature in Latin America. They noted that the region is largely free from interstate conflict. The severity of the water crisis, not only for the region but for parts of North America too, was emphasized. The diversion of water to the United States indicated that the region saw itself as one that could solve its own problems by itself.

The intervention of China, Saudi Arabia and Qatar, which have been buying much fertile land in the region, was highlighted.

Powerful words were spoken about the economic pillaging of the region, often with the complicity of local governments.

Although millions of people live in abject poverty, the rates of child mortality and malnutrition are actually in decline.

Credit was given for the support given to Cuba by Latin American partners in helping the country emerge triumphantly from the fifty-year-long embargo/blockade by the United States, and the desire of other countries in the region to see Cuba back as a full member of the family of nations in the area. It was implied that this had helped bring about the situation whereby the United States eventually re-established diplomatic relations.

There are fears that this rapprochement with the US would lead to pressure being brought to bear on Cuba to adopt a more capitalist economic system.

Questions were invited and discussion ensued.

The President thanked both participants warmly for their input.

The session was closed with prayer by Cliff Kirkpatrick, and the Executive Committee adjourned for the night.

## **WEDNESDAY, 11 MAY**

### **Morning Worship**

The Executive Committee began the day with worship, led by Sylvia Bukowski.

### **Morning Plenary Session**

The President introduced the business of the day.

#### *Ecumenical Greetings (Document 11)*

The General Secretary introduced further ecumenical guests. The Executive Committee received greetings from Lorenzo Vargas, representing WACC Global; from Michael Blair, representing the United Church of Canada; and from Karen Georgia Thompson, representing the United Church of Christ, CANAAC and United and Uniting Churches Globally.

#### DECISION SESSION 3

#### *Report of the Drafting Committee 2 (Document 12.7)*

William Koopmans spoke to the Report of the Drafting Team on Dialogue Session 2 and presented the proposals contained therein.

#### *Communications*

Proposal 1: That the Executive Committee acknowledge and affirm the report and proposals of the Communication Core Group as they were presented.

### **ACTION 39**

**The Executive Committee acknowledged and affirmed the report and proposals of the Communication Core Group as they were presented.**

#### *Theology (JDDJ)*

Proposal 1: To concur with the Executive Committee 2015 decision to have a process to associate with JDDJ to be ready for the General Council in 2017.



Proposal 2: That the Executive Committee affirm its own consensus of 2015 with regard to the JDDJ.

The Drafting Committee reported that it had chosen to phrase its proposal in terms of "consensus" because no specific decision had been made or recorded in the minutes. It indicated that the best recollection available was that the Theology, Mission and Communion Core Group had made such a suggestion and that the Executive Committee had referred it to the General Council Planning Committee. No recorded decision by the Planning Committee could be located.

**ACTION 40**

**The Executive Committee affirmed its own consensus of 2015 with regard to the JDDJ.**

Proposal 3: That the Executive Committee takes note that the discussion on association with the JDDJ does not involve theological changes to our Reformed understanding of justification.

**ACTION 41**

**The Executive Committee took note that the discussion on association with the JDDJ does not involve theological changes to its Reformed understanding of justification.**

Proposal 4: That the Executive Committee declares that the intended association procedure in 2017 is essentially a public affirmation of what has already been concluded in the dialogue processes of WCRC.

**ACTION 42**

**The Executive Committee declared that the intended association procedure in 2017 would essentially be a public affirmation of what has already been concluded in the dialogue processes of the WCRC.**

Proposal 5: That the Executive Committee provide a clear definition of what it means for the WCRC to "associate" with the JDDJ.

By consensus, the proposal was amended and the following action agreed:

**ACTION 43**

**The Executive Committee instructed the General Secretary to provide a clear definition of what it means for the WCRC to "associate" with the JDDJ.**

Proposal 6: That the Executive Committee emphasizes that association with the JDDJ document would be a tremendous act of witness for the

Reformed family, with strong implications for the local church context as well as for the Communion.

**ACTION 44**

**The Executive Committee emphasized that association with the JDDJ document would be a tremendous act of witness for the Reformed family, with strong implications for the local church context as well as for the Communion.**

Proposal 7: That the Executive Committee sends a letter to churches admitting that the process to date has fallen short of what it should have been. However, in spite of this, the Executive Committee wishes this to be pursued in order to meet the 2017 celebration, and requests churches' responses as quickly as possible.

The Executive Committee heard a plea from that a clear and consistent process be developed for all circumstances when member churches are asked to concur with any significant theological statements.

By consensus, the proposal was amended and the following action agreed:

**ACTION 45**

**The Executive Committee directed the General Secretary to send a letter to the member churches, acknowledging that the process to date had not met the high standard for process normally expected; further directed the General Secretary to invite the member churches to offer their wisdom and advice as soon as possible and to pursue this matter urgently in order to meet the requirements for association and celebration in 2017.**

Proposal 8: That the Executive Committee provides resources for local congregations to study the JDDJ document after 2017.

By consensus, the proposal was amended and the following action agreed:

**ACTION 46**

**The Executive Committee instructed the General Secretary to collect, collate and make available resources for local congregations to study the JDDJ after 2017.**

Proposal 9: That the Executive Committee commits to a timeline by means of which:

- a. The revised Reformed Signing Statement to the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification will be made available to the WCRC member churches by August 2016.

- b. The covering letter will advise the member churches that they have opportunity to provide feedback by the end of November 2016.
- c. The covering letter will summarize the intended celebrative nature of the public signing ceremony and its valuable implications for ecumenical relations, not only with Lutheran but also Roman Catholic and other denominations, with respect to the Doctrine of Justification.

#### **ACTION 47**

**The Executive Committee committed to a timeline by means of which:**

- a. **The revised Reformed Signing Statement to the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification would be made available to the WCRC member churches by August 2016.**
- b. **The covering letter would advise the member churches that they had opportunity to provide feedback by the end of November 2016.**
- c. **The covering letter would summarize the intended celebrative nature of the public signing ceremony and its valuable implications for ecumenical relations, not only with Lutheran but also Roman Catholic and other denominations, with respect to the Doctrine of Justification.**

Proposal 10: That WCRC member churches be requested to express their concurrence for the WCRC to associate with the JDDJ.

On being asked for approval or otherwise by consensus, the Executive Committee did not approve this proposal.

Proposal 11: That, for the sake of the integrity of the process, the Executive Committee consider the possibility of the Executive Committee meeting in the end 2016 or early 2017 to discuss and explore the JDDJ and the signing document so that it is comfortable and familiar with the contents of documents (JDDJ, plus signing document, as well as Wittenberg Declaration).

On being asked for approval or otherwise by consensus, the Executive Committee did not approve this proposal.

Proposal 12: That the General Secretary be instructed to plan an appropriate ceremony for the association with JDDJ preferably with the participation of both Lutheran and Roman Catholic representatives.

#### **ACTION 48**

**The Executive Committee instructed the General Secretary to plan an appropriate ceremony for the association with JDDJ preferably with the participation of both Lutheran and Roman Catholic representatives.**

Proposal 13: That the Executive Committee strongly encourages the General Council Planning Committee to schedule the signing to take place in an outdoor venue in front of the Castle Church in Wittenberg so as to attract the maximum crowd and take advantage of the fitting symbolism of the location.

**ACTION 49**

**The Executive Committee strongly encouraged the General Council Planning Committee to schedule the signing to take place in an outdoor venue in front of the Castle Church in Wittenberg so as to attract the maximum crowd and take advantage of the fitting symbolism of the location.**

Proposal 14: That the Executive Committee encourages the General Council Planning Committee to find another place and time during the General Council in Leipzig for a celebration around the WCRC association with the JDDJ in the presence of representatives from Roman Catholic, Methodist, Lutheran and other churches.

Proposal 15: That the signing ceremony should highlight the importance of the connection between justification and justice.

On being asked for approval or otherwise by consensus, the Executive Committee did not approve these proposals.

*Wittenberg Declaration*

Proposal 1: That the Executive Committee affirms the result of the Reformed and Lutheran dialogue and supports the intention to proceed with a draft document in the expectation that the LWF will concur.

**ACTION 50**

**The Executive Committee affirmed the result of the Reformed and Lutheran dialogue and supported the intention to proceed with a draft document in the expectation that the LWF would concur.**

Proposal 2: That the Executive Committee concurs with the proposal to draft the document, pursue its adoption, and prepare an appropriate celebration of it in Wittenberg for the General Council.

**ACTION 51**

**The Executive Committee concurred with the proposal to draft the document, pursue its adoption, and prepare an appropriate celebration of it in Wittenberg for the General Council.**

The Executive Committee broke for refreshments.

#### LISTENING SESSION 4

*Report of the Theology, Mission and Communion Core Group (Revised TMC Report) (Document 12.5)*

Bas Plaisier introduced the report of the Theology, Mission and Communion Core Group.

The proposals under Sections 7 and 8 of the Theology, Mission and Communion report had already been dealt with during the previous session.

The President asked for questions for clarity.

Lydia Adajawah asked about the Global Institute of Theology (GIT), expressing a concern that the participants be gender and region balanced. Bas assured the Executive Committee that students from all continents and regions would be invited. The Faculty would select candidates from all the applicants on the basis of geographical origin, gender and educational background.

Clayton Leal da Silva asked if the inclusion of youth pastors as well as students might be considered. Aruna Gnanadason responded that the focus was

- on theological knowledge,
- the holding of an undergraduate theological degree,
- and the ability to communicate in English

being prerequisites for admission as a student of the GIT. She assured the Executive Committee that the GIT was open to young pastors who met these requirements.

Peter Borgdorff asked for clarity on what kind of issues might require consultation with a denomination. Bas cited an example where a member church had been criticized, and this had been felt to be unfair and even inaccurate. He felt that, in future, a member church that was being criticized should be given the right to reply.

Lydia Adajawah asked about dialogues, noting that they were all among Christians. She encouraged work to be done in opening up dialogue with non-Christians, citing particularly those who were actively persecuting Christians. Bas emphasized that dialogue, in this context, was a

technical term that was always used for a particular kind of contact with other churches or communions. He assured the Executive Committee that the question of interfaith conversation had been on the agenda of the TMC for some time and was being pursued as a matter of urgency.

Subha Singh Majaw asked about the process for beginning the conversation among member churches on human sexuality. The General Secretary emphasized that there would be a small and limited consultation process with some member churches which would focus on the divisions which are caused by differences over human sexuality. The main focus would be on communion, rather than thinking about the theological issues around human sexuality itself.

The report was remitted to the Dialogue Groups.

*Report of the Finance Committee (Document 12.1)*

The General Treasurer spoke to the report of the Finance Committee. He thanked Anna Krüger and Gerhard Plenter for their work over the past year.

Referring to the Annual Statement, the General Treasurer indicated that there had been a surplus at the end of 2015, in part because of a favourable Swiss franc to euro exchange rate.

Referring to the 2016 Budget, the General Treasurer explained that he expected that income would cover budgeted expenses.

Kobus Gerber referred to the current severe drought in Africa. He expected this would have a detrimental effect on what African Churches would be able to contribute to the WCRC. The General Treasurer assured the Executive Committee that the Finance Committee had taken cognisance of this and had a contingency plan in place.

Referring to the pension plan, the General Treasurer reported that there had been extensive discussions in the Finance Committee because the pension obligations on the WCRC were very onerous. Since investments were not giving good returns, extra money had to be provided to meet obligations. Work was being done on employing people through a kind of process of secondment or special assignment from their church, so that they would remain on the payroll and in the pension plan of their own church. This was the only way, he said, of avoiding the obligations imposed by German law. There was no proposal as yet, but this was simply being given as information.

Peter Borgdorff asked if the extra costs of the General Council were included in the budget. The General Treasurer assured the Executive

Committee that the General Council budget was separate from the general budget, and that the special grants from churches to support the General Council shown in the General Council financial statement had already been received.

Referring to the Auditor's Report, the General Treasurer indicated that the WCRC had received a clean report for the 2015 accounts. He assured the Executive Committee that all matters raised in the 2014 Auditor's Report had been addressed.

The General Treasurer explained that the job description of the Finance Coordinator was still the one used when there was a full time Finance Coordinator. A new one was needed now that this was a voluntary position. This was in the process of preparation.

The General Treasurer turned to the principle of regional financial balance, expressed in the rule that if one member church in a region defaults on its contribution or pays less than it is asked for, the other churches in the region are expected to make up the shortfall. The General Treasurer indicated that this was not working and that the proposal before the Executive Committee was that it should be waived.

Jan-Gerd Heetderks asked if there was planning in the medium term budget for a replacement for the retiring Executive Secretary for Theology, Mission and Communion. The General Treasurer replied that there would be extra expense covering for Douwe Visser in his absence, but that otherwise there was no anticipated budgetary impact.

Hanns Lessing spoke to the General Council budget.

The President asked for questions for clarification.

Gradye Parsons pointed out a discrepancy in the contribution from the PC(USA). The General Treasurer gave an assurance that this would be investigated.

Kobus Gerber observed that the generosity of the German government and churches was extraordinary and that it needed to be borne in mind that such generosity would not be available for future General Council meetings elsewhere. The General Treasurer responded that the location of the 2017 General Council was critical to costs and fundraising opportunities. He pointed out that it was almost impossible to compare General Councils.

Peter Borgdorff asked about the response to the appeal to member churches for an additional year's contribution to fund the General Council. The General Secretary responded that there had been a very

good response from a very few member churches, and that there had been expressions of willingness from others.

The General Treasurer proposed that the Executive Committee move directly to a Decision Session. This was agreed.

### DECISION SESSION 3 (Continued)

The General Treasurer proposed each of the recommendations in the Report of the Finance Committee.

The General Treasurer reported that the Finance Committee, led by Anna Krüger and Gerhard Plenter, had given careful consideration to the Finance Office Report, which has been circulated to all members of the Executive Committee in advance of the meeting. The committee was thankful that the financial position of the WCRC was more secure this year. The committee had also reviewed the 2015 Annual Financial Statement and recommended it be approved.

Proposal 1: That the Executive Committee approves the 2015 financial statement.

#### **ACTION 52**

**The Executive Committee approved the 2015 financial statement.**

The General Treasurer reported that the Finance Committee had reviewed the budgets for 2016 and 2017.

The President asked for questions for clarity. There being none, the General Treasurer presented the second proposal.

Proposal 2: That the Executive Committee approves the 2016 budget.

#### **ACTION 53**

**The Executive Committee approved the 2016 budget.**

Proposal 3: That the officers be given authority to give preliminary approval to a balanced 2017 budget, subject to final approval at the next meeting of the Executive Committee prior to the General Council.

In response to a question from Cheryl Meban, the President indicated that the Executive Committee referred to in Proposal 3 was the current Executive Committee that would meet immediately prior to the opening of the General Council.

#### **ACTION 54**



**The Executive Committee gave the officers authority to give preliminary approval to a balanced 2017 budget, subject to final approval at the next meeting of the Executive Committee prior to the General Council.**

Proposal 4: That when hiring new executive staff, the possibility of engaging staff on special assignment from their home churches be explored.

The Finance Committee had reviewed the WCRC's pension obligations and considered various options for addressing the issue. The General Treasurer explained that the burden on employers for pension provision imposed by the German Federal Government was extremely difficult for the WCRC to meet for its executive staff, since they were not a part of the life-long German pension system (as were the German administrative staff). The option favoured by the Finance Committee was that, if possible, executive staff coming from churches from outwith Germany should continue as employees of their home church for salary and pension purposes.

Following debate and further clarification, Proposal 4 was modified and action was taken.

#### **ACTION 55**

**The Executive Committee instructed the General Treasurer and Finance Office to explore the fiscal implications of new non-German, Hannover-based executive staff to be formally employed by their home church for salary and pension purposes.**

Proposal 5: The committee recommends that the Executive Committee direct the General Secretary to cancel the lease of the office in Geneva if the way be clear.

The General Treasurer explained that the WCRC continued to rent a small office space in the Ecumenical Centre in Geneva, but this was no longer considered necessary.

#### **ACTION 56**

**The Executive Committee directed the General Secretary to cancel the lease of the office in Geneva if the way was clear.**

Proposal 6: That the Executive Committee accept the 2015 auditor's report, including the responses prepared by the Finance Office, and offers thanks to the Finance Office for its work.

The General Treasurer reported that the Finance Committee had reviewed the auditor's report. It was noted that all the corrections from

the 2014 report had been made and that the 2015 report found no problems.

**ACTION 57**

**The Executive Committee accepted the 2015 auditor's report, including the responses prepared by the Finance Office, and offered thanks to the Finance Office for its work.**

Proposal 7: That the Executive Committee approves the EKD audit office to do the 2016 audit.

**ACTION 58**

**The Executive Committee approved the EKD audit office to do the 2016 audit.**

Proposal 8: That the Executive Committee thank the Evangelical Reformed Church in Germany for the services of Gerhard Plenter and for providing payroll services.

**ACTION 59**

**The Executive Committee thanked the Evangelical Reformed Church in Germany for the services of Gerhard Plenter and for providing payroll services.**

Proposal 9: That the General Secretary, in consultation with the General Treasurer and the Finance Committee, drafts a new job description for the Financial Coordinator.

The General Treasurer noted that the current job description for the Financial Secretary of the WCRC dated from the time when it was a full time, executive post. As it was now being done on a voluntary basis, there was much in it that did not apply. He recommended it be revised.

**ACTION 60**

**The Executive Committee instructed the General Secretary, in consultation with the General Treasurer and the Finance Committee, to draft a new job description for the Financial Coordinator.**

Proposal 10: That the rule on regional balance of fees be waived.

The Finance Committee had received the membership fee grid. It was reported that the General Secretary continued to follow up with churches in arrears and encourage them to pay their dues.

The General Treasurer further reported that the Finance Committee had considered the existing rule whereby, if a church in a particular region

was in arrears or had defaulted on its payments, the other churches in the region would be expected to make up the difference. The Finance Committee had found that this rule was not working and recommended that it be waived, though it acknowledged that it may be necessary to reintroduce it at some time.

### **ACTION 61**

**The Executive Committee resolved that the rule on regional balance of fees be waived.**

Proposal 11: That the Executive Committee approves the General Council budget.

### **ACTION 62**

**The Executive Committee approved the General Council budget.**

The President thanked the General Treasurer, Gerhard Plenter, Anna Krüger and the whole Finance Committee for their outstanding work.

The President called on the General Secretary to present a verbal report of the Officers' meeting that had been held earlier that morning.

The General Secretary presented the report and asked that the following matters be remitted to the Regional Meetings for consideration.

The Officers wished consideration to be given to:

1. the most appropriate mechanism for consultation with regions and asked each region to list issues from their own context which they felt needed to be addressed in the proposed consultation with the regions.
2. membership fees, participation and communication and relationships between the regions and the Hannover office.
3. participation in General Council and the key role that regions could play in processes like nominations.

### **ACTION 63**

**The Executive Committee remitted the questions raised by the Officers on regional matters to the Regional meetings.**

The rest of the day was given to Dialogue Groups and Regional Meetings. In the evening, the Executive Committee attended a service marking the 75th Anniversary of the Cuban Council of Churches, at which the President and General Secretary brought greetings.

## THURSDAY, 12 MAY

### **Morning Worship**

The Executive Committee began the day with worship, led by Najla Abou Sawan Kassab.

### **Morning Plenary Session**

Gabriela Lucía Mulder displayed some photographs showing the damage caused by the recent tornado in Uruguay. She shared a letter from Carola Tron which described some of the damage sustained in her country and the consequent homelessness and suffering. The letter also spoke of the efforts being made by the Waldensian Evangelical Church of the River Plate to care for those who had lost loved ones and to help those whose homes had been damaged or destroyed to rebuild.

The President gave an assurance of the continuing prayers of the Executive Committee for the people of Uruguay. The General Secretary led the Executive Committee in prayer.

The President wished Paul Oppenheim a happy birthday. The Executive Committee sang to him and he was presented with a framed WCRC print.

The President introduced the business of the day.

### DECISION SESSION 4

#### *Report of the Drafting Committee 3 (Document 12.7)*

William Koopmans spoke to the third report of the Drafting Committee on Dialogue Groups and presented the proposals, as well as noting several observations, contained therein.

#### *Staff*

Proposal 1: That the Executive Committee acknowledges with gratitude Douwe Visser's service as Secretary for Theology, Mission and Communion and offers the assurance of our prayers for his good health.

### **ACTION 64**

**The Executive Committee acknowledged with gratitude Douwe Visser's service as Executive Secretary for Theology, Mission and Communion and offered the assurance of its prayers for his good health.**

Proposal 2: That the Executive Committee expresses gratitude to Aruna Gnanadason and Hanns Lessing for providing staff support in the meantime.

**ACTION 65**

**The Executive Committee expressed gratitude to Aruna Gnanadason and Hanns Lessing for providing staff support in the meantime.**

Proposal 3: That, in the event of Douwe's Visser's retirement, the search for a successor Executive Secretary be commenced as quickly as possible to ensure continuity in our TMC engagements.

Jan-Gerd Heetderks asked about the financial implications of Douwe Visser's request to take early retirement. The General Treasurer noted that the phrase, "as quickly as possible" in the proposal, in relation to the commencement of the search process, gave room for addressing these implications.

**ACTION 66**

**The Executive Committee resolved that the search for a successor Executive Secretary in the event of Douwe Visser's retirement be commenced as quickly as possible to ensure continuity in its Theology, Mission and Communion engagements.**

*Global Institute of Theology*

Observation: In the planning of the GIT, endeavour to ensure that all the regions will be represented and that there is a balance of staff to represent more global voices.

**ACTION 67**

**The Executive Committee agreed effort should be made to ensure that all the regions and genders would be represented and that there would be a balance of staff to represent more global voices.**

*Publications*

Observation: past Reformed publications on JDDJ and publish articles about a signing document from various contexts.

**ACTION 68**

**The Executive Committee agreed that past Reformed publications on the JDDJ should be investigated and to find and**

**publish articles about the Reformed Signing Statement from various contexts.**

*Dialogues*

Proposal 1: Affirm the proposal to continue with the Roman Catholic–Reformed dialogue.

**ACTION 69**

**The Executive Committee affirmed the proposal to continue with the Roman Catholic–Reformed dialogue.**

Proposal 2: Request the General Secretary to prepare a plan to keep the Roman Catholic Church informed regarding our intended manner of reception of the Roman Catholic–Reformed dialogue report.

**ACTION 70**

**The Executive Committee requested the General Secretary to prepare a plan to keep the Roman Catholic Church informed regarding the intended manner of reception of the Roman Catholic–Reformed dialogue report.**

*Human Sexuality*

Five observations were noted. From the second observation, Grady Parsons moved the deletion of the words: “such as human trafficking, child marriage, polygamy and the like.” This was agreed by consensus.

Proposal: That the Executive Committee affirm the General Secretary’s proposal to convene a consultation on Human Sexuality and Communion, taking into account the concerns that are raised in the report of the Core Group.

**ACTION 71**

**The Executive Committee affirmed the General Secretary’s proposal to convene a consultation on Communion and Human Sexuality, taking into account the concerns that were raised in the report of the Theology, Mission and Communion Core Group.**

*Miscellaneous*

Observation: It is important during the General Council planning stage not to lose sight of the importance of Mission in the Frontline.

**ACTION 72**

**The Executive Committee agreed that the importance of Mission in the Frontline should not be lost during the planning of the General Council.**

The President thanked William Koopmans for presenting the report.

LISTENING SESSION 5

The Executive Committee moved into a listening session.

*Justice and Partnership Core Group (Document 12.6)*

Yueh-Wen Lu spoke to the report of the Justice and Partnership Core Group.

The President asked for questions for clarity.

Questions were asked about the meaning of the phrase “a declaration of faith” in relation to the section on women’s ordination and whether this was to be understood as simply an expression of agreement, or was it to be considered as seriously as a *status confessionis*. The significance of the word “Toward” in the title was emphasized.

There was discussion around the distinctions between the content of faith and the content of individual church polities, and the imperative for the WCRC not to seek to interfere with these.

The recommendations contained in the report of the Justice and Partnership Core Group were remitted to the Dialogue Groups.

*Constitution and Membership Committee Report (Document 12.2)*

Cheryl Meban presented the Committee’s Report, recommendations and the Proposed Amendments to the Constitution and Bylaws (see Appendix 2 of Document 12.2).

The President asked for questions for clarification.

Questions were asked on the difference between associate and affiliate membership and on the status of the application for membership from a church in Ukraine. Further information was offered on the application for membership from the Reformed Church Assemblies of God in Togo.

The Executive Committee then turned to consideration of the matter of applications for membership of the WCRC.

A membership application had been received from the *Communaute Baptiste des Fideles en Afrique* (CBFA – Baptist Reformed). The committee reported that this application was incomplete, due to the absence of letters of recommendation.

Proposal 1: That the *Communaute Baptiste des Fideles en Afrique* (CBFA) in the Democratic Republic of the Congo be offered affiliate membership status (Constitution V, d) as they deepen their understanding of our communion.

### **Action 73**

**The Executive Committee agreed to offer affiliate membership status to the *Communaute Baptiste des Fideles en Afrique* (CBFA) in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.**

A membership application had been received from the *L'Elgise Bapliste au Congo* (Congo EBC). The committee reported that it was awaiting further communication via Kobus Gerber.

Proposal 2: To defer a decision on receiving the *L'Elgise Bapliste au Congo* into membership until further communication had been received, and to encourage Kobus Gerber to remain in communication on behalf of the Executive Committee.

### **Action 74**

**The Executive Committee deferred a decision on receiving the *L'Elgise Bapliste au Congo* into membership until further communication had been received, and encouraged Kobus Gerber to remain in communication on behalf of the Executive Committee.**

An application for membership from the Evangelical Churches Association (ECA) in India had been received in 2015. The General Secretary reported that, following the Constitution and Membership Committee's request for further information on their position regarding the ordination of women, confirmation had been received of a formal decision to affirm women's ministry, made in 2015. In the view of the committee, the content of this information was not sufficiently clear.

Proposal 3: That the Executive Committee requests the General Secretary to continue to seek clarification on the theological and constitutional situation on ordination for women and women's roles as officers, elders or deaconesses within the India ECA.

### **Action 75**

**The Executive Committee requested the General Secretary to continue to seek clarification on the theological and**



**constitutional situation on ordination for women and women's roles as officers, elders or deaconesses within the Evangelical Churches Association (ECA) in India.**

With regard to the application from the *Igreja Reformada em Moçambique* (IRM), the General Secretary had reported that this had been difficult to follow up. There were as yet no letters of recommendation.

Proposal 4: That the Executive Committee requests Kobus Gerber to continue to follow up the application from the *Igreja Reformada em Moçambique* (IRM).

**Action 76**

**The Executive Committee requested Kobus Gerber to continue to follow up the application from *Igreja Reformada em Moçambique* (IRM).**

The committee further reported on incomplete applications. The application from the Ecumenical Commission for Human Development (ECHD) in Pakistan fell into this category. In the view of the committee, this had more of the character of an ecumenical NGO than a church.

Proposal 5: That the General Secretary continues to explore the possibilities for affiliate membership for ECHD and to complete their application.

**Action 77**

**The Executive Committee requested the General Secretary to continue to explore the possibilities for affiliate membership for the Ecumenical Commission for Human Development (Pakistan) and to complete their application.**

The committee reported that the application from the Destiny Worship Centre Church (Malawi) was not yet complete.

Proposal 6: That the Executive Committee resolve to await the arrival of further documents.

**Action 78**

**The Executive Committee resolved to await the arrival of further documents relevant to the application for membership by the Destiny Worship Centre Church (Malawi).**

The committee reported that the application from a church in Mali was not yet complete.

Proposal 7: That the Executive Committee encourages Lydia Adajawah to continue to follow up and liaise with the Hannover office.

**Action 79**

**The Executive Committee encouraged Lydia Adajawah to continue to follow up the application from the *Centre International de la Mission d'Evangelisation de Delivrance et d'Intercession-Ames pour Christ (Mali)* and liaise with the Hannover office.**

The committee reported that Lydia Adajawah had visited the *Elgise Reformee des Assemblees de Dieu du Togo* (Reformed Church Assemblies of God in Togo). She had found 150 people in its chapel, including about 30 children, and learned that this group had broken away from the Assemblies of God and that there were five other branches scattered across the country served by eleven ministers, three of whom had been trained by the Assemblies of God, with the others having been trained by the main leader, Rev. Kapora Tena. The church does not practice women's ordination, but two women were serving on the church council. In the view of the committee, the Reformed Church Assemblies of God in Togo was not yet ready for membership in the WCRC because they had no connection with churches with Reformed histories and theology.

Proposal 8: That Executive Committee thank Lydia Adajawah for the considerable investment of time and energy that she undertook to investigate the Reformed Church Assemblies of God in Togo.

**Action 80**

**The Executive Committee thanked Lydia Adajawah for the considerable investment of time and energy that she undertook to investigate the *Elgise Reformee des Assemblees de Dieu du Togo*.**

The committee reported that the General Secretary was following up on other applications.

Proposal 9: That the Executive Committee instruct the Constitution and Membership Committee to consider clearer constitutional categories for affiliate and associate membership.

**Action 81**

**The Executive Committee instructed the Constitution and Membership Committee to consider clearer constitutional categories for affiliate and associate membership.**

The Executive Committee turned to considering the proposals for changes to the Constitution and Bylaws.

The President asked for questions for clarification. Several detailed questions were asked.

Yvette Noble Bloomfield proposed that the proposed changes to the Constitution and Bylaws be not referred to the Dialogue Groups but, instead, be dealt with in plenary. Allan Buckingham spoke in favour of the consistent use of the consensus model using Dialogue Groups and that therefore the proposed changes to the Constitution and Bylaws be discussed in Dialogue Groups.

On a vote being taken, Yvette's proposal was carried.

#### *Report from the Officers (Document 12.3)*

The General Secretary presented a report from the Officers.

Proposal 1: To affirm the final phase of the Strategic Plan (as presented in the General Secretary's Report, (Document 2)) for implementation leading to 2017 General Council.

Proposal 2: To graciously accept the invitation of the Zurich Cantonal Church to host the 2019 Executive Committee meeting, upon confirmation by the new Executive Committee.

Proposal 3: To accept the early retirement request of Douwe Visser, to ask the General Secretary to expedite the process of finalizing the said retirement and to express thanks to Douwe for his many years of service to the organization.

Veronica Njoki Muchiri asked about the pattern of the location of future Executive Committee meetings. The General Treasurer listed the countries in which they had been held in recent years and offered the opinion that a return to Europe in 2019 would be consistent with that pattern.

The proposals were remitted to the Dialogue Groups.

The Executive Committee broke for lunch.

#### **Afternoon Plenary Session**

Peter Bukowski opened the session with song.

The President said farewell to Avelino González-Ferrer who was about to depart and looked forward to their meeting in Rome in June. He also acknowledged the presence of Robina Winbush.

#### DECISION SESSION 4 (Continued)

The Executive Committee returned to consideration of the proposed changes to the Constitution and Bylaws (Appendix 2 of Document 12.2).

Cheryl Meban presented the recommendations of the Constitution and Membership Committee report.

The Executive Committee turned immediately to the proposed amendments to the Constitution and Bylaws and had a vigorous and in-depth discussion on many points before taking action on the following:

#### **ACTION 82**

**The Executive Committee affirmed that only appointed delegates to the General Council are eligible for election to the Executive Committee.**

The Executive Committee asked that the Constitution and Membership Committee consider the remainder of the discussion and redraft the proposed amendments to the Constitution and By-Laws and return them for final consideration tomorrow.

#### *Recommendations for the General Council Nomination Process (Document 12.2, Appendix 1)*

Cheryl Meban introduced the Recommendations for the General Council Nomination Process and presented the proposals of the group (Gradye Parsons, Cheryl Meban, Peter Borgdorff and Henning Becker) who had formulated them.

Proposal 1: That the process starts in May at the Executive Committee meeting with some of the Executive Committee members who cannot or will not serve another term serving as a pre-General Council Nominations Work Group.

#### **ACTION 83**

**The Executive Committee requested that the General Secretary immediately assemble a pre-General Council Nominations Work Group, consisting of Executive Committee members who will not serve another term, to assist in the process of preparing for a smooth nomination process up to and at the General Council.**

Proposal 2: The Work Group, working with the General Secretary, to communicate with all of the Regional Councils as soon as possible:

- a. The need to discern names for the next set of officers and executive committee members before the general council;
- b. That the regional councils seek to bring a diverse set of nominees by gender and age;
- c. That names for officers be suggested as early as possible.

**ACTION 84**

**The Executive Committee instructed the General Secretary, in conjunction with the Work Group, to communicate with all of the Regional Councils as soon as possible:**

- a. The need to discern names for the next set of Officers and Executive Committee members before the General Council;**
- b. That the Regional Councils should seek to bring a diverse set of nominees by gender and age;**
- c. That names for Officers should be suggested as early as possible.**

Proposal 3: The Work Group will collect the names recommended and present the names to the General Council Nominations Committee.

**ACTION 85**

**The Executive Committee instructed the General Secretary, working with the Work Group, to collect the names recommended and present the names to the General Council Nominations Committee.**

Proposal 4: That at the 2017 General Council the Nominations Committee be committed to:

- a. Transparency
- b. Focus on gifts, skills and talents

**ACTION 86**

**The Executive Committee instructed the 2017 General Council Nominations Committee to be committed to:**

- a. Transparency**
- b. Focus on gifts, skills and talents**

The Executive Committee adjourned for the rest of the day, variously enjoying a visit to the Havana craft market, a walking tour of the Old City of Havana and, together, partaking of dinner in the Hotel Florida, Havana.

## FRIDAY, 13 MAY

### **Morning Worship**

The Executive Committee began the day with worship, led by Clayton Leal da Silva. Many members of the Executive Committee shared moving testimony of their gratitude for the Communion and candles were lit to express that gratitude.

### **Morning Plenary Session**

The President opened the session.

Milton Mejía and Helis Hernán Barraza Díaz introduced Marco León Cacarco, Mileno Reyes and Felix Antonio Muñoz, guests from Colombia. All were members of *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* (FARC). Helis spoke of the armed conflict, which had lasted more than 50 years. He laid the blame for it on the great inequality in the country, which sees wealth concentrated in very few hands and the vast majority of people very poor indeed.

The guests spoke of the quest by FARC for social justice. The General Secretary spoke of the transition FARC was making from pursuing armed conflict to being a democratic political party.

The President offered the good wishes of the Executive Committee for the success of the peace process in Colombia and presented a lovely framed print.

The President called for the fourth report of the Drafting Committee on the deliberations of Dialogue Groups.

#### *Report of the Drafting Committee 4 (Document 12.7)*

William Koopmans spoke to fourth Report of the Drafting Committee and presented the proposals, as well as noting observations.

#### *Critical justice issues and themes*

Proposal: To affirm the recommendation of the Core Group to direct the General Council Planning Committee to cluster public justice issues around the five themes of refugees, economic and ecological justice, overcoming racism and affirming the rights of Indigenous Peoples, peace-making, and gender justice, both in the General Council and in our public witness in Berlin.

### **ACTION 87**

**The Executive Committee affirmed the recommendation of the Communion and Justice Core Group to direct the General Council Planning Committee to cluster public justice issues around the five themes of refugees, economic and ecological justice, overcoming racism and affirming the rights of Indigenous Peoples, peace-making, and gender justice, both in the General Council and in the General Council’s public witness in Berlin.**

*New International Financial and Economic Architecture (NIFEA)*

Proposal 1: That the Executive Committee affirm the recommendations of the Justice and Partnership Core Group regarding the relaunching of NIFEA.

### **ACTION 88**

**The Executive Committee affirmed the recommendations of the Justice and Partnership Core Group regarding the relaunching of NIFEA.**

Proposal 2: That prior to the General Council, the Justice and Partnership Core Group and the TMC Core Group be kept informed and given the opportunity for input to both the work of the WCRC and related networks in their areas of concern and in the introduction of business for the General Council.

### **ACTION 89**

**The Executive Committee instructed that, prior to the General Council, the Justice and Partnership Core Group and the TMC Core Group be kept informed and given the opportunity for input to both the work of the WCRC and related networks in their areas of concern and in the introduction of business for the General Council.**

Proposal 3: That the officers (in consultation with the Executive Committee) clarify the accountability, communication and relationships between the Executive Committee, the Core Groups, the networks, the Regional Councils and the staff in order to equip the WCRC for effective ministry for the next seven years.

### **ACTION 90**

**The Executive Committee instructed the officers (in consultation with the Executive Committee) to clarify the accountability, communication and relationships between the Executive Committee, the Core Groups, the networks, the Regional Councils and the staff in order to equip the WCRC for effective ministry for the next seven years.**

*Women's ordination*

Proposal 1: That the Executive Committee affirm the recommendation of the Justice and Partnership Core Group that the document "Toward a Declaration of Faith on Women's Ordination" be presented to the 2017 General Council, recommending its adoption and referencing criteria and implications of adopting such a declaration.

**ACTION 91**

**The Executive Committee affirmed that "Toward a Declaration of Faith on Women's Ordination" be presented to the 2017 General Council, recommending its adoption and referencing criteria and implications of adopting such a declaration.**

Proposal 2: That the title of the document be changed to "Toward a Testimony of Faith on Women's Ordination."

Speaking on Proposal 2, Peter Bukowski argued for the deletion of the word "Toward" from the title. He also suggested that the paper be reordered so that the declaration of faith came first, expressed in a clear and concise form, and then the rest of the paper would consist of an explanation and commentary on the Declaration.

**ACTION 92**

**The Executive Committee instructed that "Toward a Declaration of Faith on Women's Ordination" be renamed "A Declaration of Faith on Women's Ordination" and that it be revised to show the Declaration clearly and concisely at the beginning; and that the rest of the paper be explanatory.**

Proposal 3: To instruct the General Secretary and staff to prepare a clear introductory presentation defining and explaining terms in the document (such as Declaration of Faith), including constitutional support.

**ACTION 93**

**The Executive Committee instructed the General Secretary and staff to prepare a clear introductory presentation defining and explaining terms in the document (such as Declaration of Faith), including constitutional support.**

Proposal 4: To instruct the General Secretary and staff to provide supporting documentation and a process for guided discussions on the document "Toward a Declaration of Faith on Women's Ordination" at the 2017 General Council.

**ACTION 94**



**The Executive Committee instructed the General Secretary and staff to provide supporting documentation and a process for guided discussions on "A Declaration of Faith on Women's Ordination" at the 2017 General Council.**

Proposal 5: That the WCRC commit resources to accompany churches in achieving the goal of women's ordination in the spirit of communion.

The General Treasurer sought clarification over the use of the term "resources." He proposed that the word "commit" be deleted and the word "seek" be inserted in its stead.

Dora Arce Valentín assured the Executive Committee that written resources were already being prepared. The General Secretary indicated that resources had already been committed and that nothing in Proposal 5 required the WCRC to commit further resources, but that he understood it simply as affirming the decision to commit the resources already committed.

Discussion took place on how best the WCRC might accompany and encourage member churches which are still on the way towards ordaining women.

The General Secretary reminded the Executive Committee that there was a clear mandate from the 2010 Uniting General Council that WCRC should work with member churches to promote women's ordination.

Cliff Kirkpatrick and Veronica Njoki Muchiri argued that Proposal 5 should be passed as it stood in the print.

**ACTION 95**

**The Executive Committee affirmed the decision to commit resources to accompany churches in achieving the goal of women's ordination in the spirit of communion.**

*UN Office on the Status of Women*

Proposal 1: That the Executive Committee affirms the value of strengthening the WCRC's work with and through the UN Office, especially on matters related to the Status of Women.

**ACTION 96**

**The Executive Committee affirmed the value of strengthening the WCRC's work with and through the UN Office, especially on matters related to the Status of Women.**

The President thanked the Justice Core Group for its work

*Report of the Officers (Document 12.7)*

Yueh-Wen Lu took the chair and called for the report of the Dialogue Groups' consideration of the proposals made by the Officers.

William Koopmans spoke to the Drafting Committee's report on the Dialogue Groups' consideration of the proposals made by the Officers, as well as noting observations.

Proposal 1: That the Executive Committee endorses the final phase of the strategic plan (as presented in the General Secretary's Report (Document 2)) for implementation leading to the 2017 General Council.

**ACTION 97**

**The Executive Committee endorsed the final phase of the strategic plan (as presented in the General Secretary's Report) for implementation leading to the 2017 General Council.**

Proposal 2: That the Executive Committee accepts the gracious invitation of the Zurich Cantonal Church to host the 2019 Executive Committee meeting, upon confirmation by the new Executive Committee.

**ACTION 98**

**The Executive Committee accepted the gracious invitation of the Zurich Cantonal Church to host the 2019 Executive Committee meeting, upon confirmation by the new Executive Committee.**

Proposal 3: That the Executive Committee accepts the early retirement of Douwe Visser, asks the General Secretary to expedite the process of finalizing the said retirement and expresses thanks to Douwe for his many years of service to the organizations that he has served.

**ACTION 99**

**The Executive Committee accepted the early retirement of Douwe Visser, asked the General Secretary to expedite the process of finalizing the said retirement and expressed thanks to Douwe for his many years of service to the organizations that he had served.**

*Message from Cuba (Document 13.2)*

Yueh-Wen Lu called for the report of the Message Drafting Committee.

Gradye Parsons read the draft Message from Cuba.

Members of the Executive Committee suggested a number of changes, including that the Message be signed by the whole Executive Committee.

### **ACTION 100**

**The Executive Committee approved the text of the Message from Cuba.**

*Letter to World Council of Churches regarding the treatment of members of its delegation to Israel (Document 13.1)*

Yueh-Wen Lu explained that several members of a recent WCC delegation had been detained in prison on entry into Israel. She read the proposed text of a letter of solidarity and support.

### **ACTION 101**

**The Executive Committee instructed the General Secretary to send the letter of solidarity and support relating to the detention of members of a WCC delegation by the state of Israel to the General Secretary of the World Council of Churches.**

The President took the chair. He informed the Executive Committee that Milton Mejía had been asked to add a few words to the "Message from Cuba" to reflect the broader Latin American context, rather than just the Cuban context.

The Executive Committee broke for refreshments.

The President called the meeting to order.

The Executive Committee returned to consideration of the proposed changes to the Constitution and Bylaws (Document 12.2, Appendix 2).

Cheryl Meban spoke to the work done overnight by the Membership and Constitution committee. She highlighted the remaining areas and proposed changes.

The Executive Committee discussed each proposed change and made proposals for others until consensus was reached. The Constitution and Membership Committee was asked to collate all the agreed proposed changes to the Constitution and By-laws and transmit them in a unified document to the member churches for review.

### **ACTION 102**

**The Executive Committee adopted the proposed changes to the Constitution and Bylaws and instructed that they be collated and**

**a document showing them be sent to the member churches for review.**

The President thanked Cheryl for her work and the work of the Constitution and Membership Committee and the Executive Committee applauded in appreciation.

The General Secretary reiterated that the Executive Committee remained in post until the election of a new Executive Committee. It would act as the Business Committee of the General Council. He explained that the Executive Committee would be convened on the opening day, or day before, the General Council. For the avoidance of doubt, that did not mean that outgoing members of the General Council would be delegates to the General Council unless they were delegated by their member church.

The Executive Committee thanked the General Secretary for this explanation.

Gradye Parsons asked about the distribution of regional representation on the Executive Committee. The General Secretary responded to the effect that the number of Executive Committee members assigned to each region was a matter of practice, not rules. The President assured the Executive Committee that this matter would be considered by the Officers in advance of the appointment of the General Council Nominations Committee and appropriate advice given.

*Evaluation of Consensus Model*

The President invited comments, and a good number of Executive members responded with comments and questions.

Lisa Vander Wal assured the Executive Committee that the General Council Planning Committee was well aware that moderators of groups, committees and plenary sessions needed in-depth training. She informed the Executive Committee that that would be an important part of the preparation for the General Council. She added that work needed to be done on how proposals were framed so that they helped rather than hindered discussion, and that this would be included in the training given to moderators.

The President assured Executive Committee that all matters raised would be considered and he thanked members for their contributions.

The General Secretary informed the Executive Committee that there would be no formal report from the Personnel Committee.

The Executive Committee meeting was formally adjourned.

*Executive Committee of the WCRC Michigan Foundation*

The Executive Committee reconstituted as the Executive Committee of the WCRC Michigan Foundation. It was led in prayer by Peter Borgdorff, who took the chair.

**ACTION 103**

**The Executive Committee of the WCRC Michigan Foundation approved the minutes of the 2015 meeting of the Executive Committee of the Michigan Foundation of WCRC, held in Dhour Choueir, Lebanon, 9-15 May 2016.**

**ACTION 104**

**The Executive Committee agreed that all the actions of the Executive Committee during its meeting in Havana, Cuba, 7-13 May 2016, be fully concurred with and entered into the permanent record of the WCRC Michigan Foundation as constituting the decisions of 2016.**

The meeting of the Executive Committee of the Michigan Foundation was closed with prayer by Peter Borgdorff.

The Executive Committee reconstituted as the Executive Committee of the WCRC.

The President asked the General Secretary to give a note of thanks. He mentioned the stewards, the translators, the Cuban support team and all the staff, the PRCC and the two ecumenical organizations which helped organize the meeting. He also mentioned the minute secretary most graciously. The Executive Committee applauded.

The President added his thanks to everyone who had chaired a group, written reports and contributed to discussion so beautifully. He wished everyone well for safe travel home.

The General Secretary led applause for the officers.

The session closed with an Ascription of Glory.

**Afternoon Session**

*Closing Worship Service*

The Executive Committee and all participants in the meeting sat together around the Lord's Table for a celebration of Holy Communion,

which was led, almost entirely, by women. The General Secretary preached.

*Visit of the First Vice President of Cuba*

The Executive Committee received a visit from the first Vice President of the Council of State and Ministers of Cuba, Miguel Mario Díaz-Canel Bermúdez.

On his arrival, First Vice President Díaz-Canel was welcomed by President Jerry Pillay. He explained that he, the General Secretary and other Officers and executive staff had met with the First Vice President before he met the full Executive Committee.

The First Vice President brought greeting from President Raúl Castro. He spoke of building a better world. He spoke of how the government of Cuba was trying to perfect their economic and social system and make social justice possible. He expressed the Government's hope that the majority of the people can participate in development.

First Vice President Díaz-Canel said that the young generation would have a particular challenge in continuing the Revolution without the physical presence of those who founded it. He spoke of the assault of neo-liberalism and capitalism, and of the perceived complicity of the mass media and entertainment industries.

He expressed the great desire of the Government of Cuba to normalize relations with the United States, which would require the lifting of the blockade by the US, and the ending of the "illegal" occupation of military bases and the "illegal" broadcasting of radio and television programmes to Cuba from the US.

He expressed thanks for solidarity with Cuba during the years of blockade and cited several instances in which particular support had been received.

The President replied, declaring that the WCRC stood in solidarity with the Cuban people and their government, and asked for questions.

Lydia Adajawah took the opportunity to thank the Cuban Government for sending so many doctors to Ghana, and asked how they were able to train so many who were prepared to go even where Ghanaian doctors would not go.

The First Vice President spoke of the formation of Cuba being from African as well as Spanish roots, and of the consequent particular affinity with Africa. He said that it was a tradition, since the "triumph of

the Revolution,” that they shared with other countries what little they had. He went on to say that Cuba had trained 37,000 doctors and sent them to 137 overseas countries. Most had been trained for free. The people of Cuba had, he said, a deep commitment to serving others in the cause of peace and social justice.

Helis Hernán Barraza Díaz spoke of Cuba as an alternative icon instead of the Empire and asked how Cuba was getting ready for the return of the Empire. The First Vice President spoke of defending peace and of how the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States had declared itself a peace zone. This was, he said, an example to the world.

The First Vice President was presented with the WCRC print by Yvette Noble Bloomfield. The contact at the Ministry of Religious Affairs also received a gift.

At that point, the General Secretary was solemnly invested as a Friend of the People of Cuba and received the *Medalla de la Amistad* (Medal of Friendship), presented by the First Vice President in recognition of his personal commitment to Cuba and his decades of humanitarian advocacy work on behalf of the people and churches of the country.

The General Secretary declared himself speechless, quickly qualifying that with the word “almost,” before responding with his customary grace and eloquence.

The President thanked the First Vice President once again.

The session was closed by the President pronouncing the Benediction.

**DOCUMENT 1**  
**ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT**  
**Rev. Dr. Jerry Pillay**

**Introduction**

1. As I begin to write this report, we have just come out of our Easter celebration so the focus on the suffering, death and resurrection of our Lord, Jesus Christ, is still fresh on my mind. The experience of Easter is always one that leaves a fresh imprint in my heart and mind of the challenges we encounter as we seek to follow Christ in this world.
2. The theme for this executive committee meeting is the same that we have proposed for our 2017 General Council: "*Living God, Renew and Transform us.*" We thought it might be appropriate to use the same theme as part of our preparation for the general council. It is not a theme that you can exhaust because it can be tackled from a number of different angles.
3. The theme reflects a prayer to the "living God" which speaks of God's presence and power in the world. The Resurrection power tells us that there is nothing in this world that God cannot overcome. The Gospel writer Mark tells us that God in Christ overcomes danger, demons, diseases, death (chapter 5). The cross speaks of the measure that God will go through to restore and save the world. It is all because of love! This theme is reflected as a prayer to God who lives and reigns in the world to make us more like Jesus. It is a prayer that God will make the Church and Christians to be what God wants and wills for us to be, and that God will use us to change the world so that it may reflect God's reign and presence bringing justice, peace, love and abundance of life to all. But what does it mean to be renewed and transformed?
4. The word "renew" implies that we have lost something, and that we should go back to what we should be, to begin or take up again, to restore to a former state, to replenish, revive or re-establish, to make new. It is the first step to real transformation. In many senses the Church has lost, neglected, forgotten and forsaken its calling. We are called to proclaim the good news of salvation and life in Jesus Christ but we have become side-tracked from our main purpose as Church.
5. The word "transform" means to change completely from inside out. It has the same meaning as transfiguration (Matthew 17:2) or metamorphosis which means to change into another form. The picture here is of a caterpillar which changes into something quite different when it becomes a butterfly. So how do we seek renewal and transformation?
6. The "us" in the theme is a reference to both the Church and the world. We recognise that the Church is in much need of renewal and transformation in as much as the world with all its injustices, corruption, deceit and unrighteousness. We thus need to speak to ourselves first before we can tell the world what to do or not to do. In



some senses the Church is a microcosm of the world rather than being a bridgehead to an alternative world filled with justice, peace and fullness of life for all (John 10:10).

7. How does the prayer for renewal and transformation impact on the WCRC? I would like to offer three areas in this regard in which we should seek renewal and transformation: 1) theological, 2) contextual and 3) institutional.

### **Theological Renewal and Transformation**

8. The Reformation embraced a number of quite distinct, yet overlapping, areas of human activity: the reform of both the morals and structures of church and society, new approaches to political issues, shifts in economics thinking, the renewal of Christian spirituality and the reform of Christian doctrine (McGrath 2012). In this section I shall attempt to point out certain aspects of Reformed theology to indicate the need for renewal and transformation.
9. At the heart of the Reformation was the quest to return to the Bible. The Reformation saw a new importance being attached to Scripture—or, perhaps, an ancient view of the importance of Scripture being recovered. The idea of *sola scriptura*, “by Scripture alone,” became one of the great slogans of the Reformers as they sought to bring the practices and beliefs of the Church back into line with those of the Golden Age of Christianity. According to McGrath (2012), if the doctrine of justification by faith alone was the material principle of the Reformation, the principle of *sola scriptura* was its formal principle. If the Reformers dethroned the pope, they enthroned Scripture.
10. Mainstream Reformers had no difficulty with the notion of a “traditional interpretation” of the Bible. In fact they advocated that they were not attempting to start a new Church but were seeking to reform and renew Christianity, which implied affirming continuity with the great historic tradition of Christian faith, stretching back through the patristic era to the Apostles themselves.
11. For example, Calvin asserted that the institutions and regulations of both church and state were required to be grounded in Scripture. Zwingli stated that “the foundation of our religion is the written word, the Scriptures of God.” Heinrich Bullinger stated that the authority of Scripture was absolute and autonomous: “Because it is the Word of God, the holy biblical Scripture has adequate standing and credibility in itself and of itself.” Such views indicate the consistently high view of Scripture adopted by the Reformers. It represents a major point of continuity with medieval theology.
12. The difference between the Reformers and medieval theology at this point concerns how Scripture is *defined* and *interpreted*, rather than the *status* that it is given. It is this interpretation of Scripture in a changing world that becomes a crucial element for renewal and transformation. It is a stark reminder that the Reformation can not only be discussed in

terms of its ecclesial meaning but also in its relation to culture as a whole. The issue of context and biblical interpretation becomes a serious matter of importance.

13. The Bible is a central document of Western civilization, not only as the source of Christian ideas but also as an influence upon education and culture. Today this is being seriously challenged as we question the "hermeneutical lens" we tend to use in interpreting Scripture. Further, the critical question is "Who is interpreting Scripture and for whom?"
14. Gerald West (2009), speaking into the South African context, makes the point that the Bible has always been at the centre of the liberation struggle even though it has been categorised as a tool of oppression. For example, it was used as the tool to build an apartheid South Africa but equally it was used as the key text of the struggling masses in South Africa for liberation and justice.
15. It is important to note that the ideological equation of the Bible with the Word of God has been seriously challenged by many scholars. Tinyiko Maluleke (1996), for example, states the following: "I propose that the equation of the Bible with the 'Word of God' is not only naïve but it is a dangerous form of naïveté. Furthermore, I propose that this equation has been and will continue to be more debilitating for Black African theologies than any of the dangers highlighted by Bediako, Sanneh, and Mugambi (1995) combined. The equation of colonialism with Christianity if and where it has occurred, has done far less harm to Black and African theologies than the equation of the Bible with the Word of God."
16. The above points establish the need for Reformed theology to seek renewal and transformation in the area of further understanding *sola scriptura*, the focus is not only on *what* the interpretation is but, more significantly, on *who* is interpreting. The Reformed faith has the obligation of protecting the text from being co-opted by the powerful and the elite and, thereby, giving vent and expression to the "voice" of the poor, marginalised and oppressed masses. How do the latter groups inform biblical interpretation? How can this become a source for renewal and transformation?
17. Essential to the Reformation is the doctrine of justification by faith alone: *sola fide*. The theme of "redemption through Christ" is central throughout the New Testament, Christian worship and Christian theology. The term "soteriology" is used in Christian theology to communicate the images which describe the redemption achieved through the death and resurrection of Christ. McGrath (2012) points out that there are five broad components to this network of ideas: images of victory, images of a changed legal status, images of changed personal relationships, images of liberation and images of restoration to wholeness. All of these images, no doubt, describe renewal and transformation.
18. It is not my intention here to get stuck in the theological debates of the doctrine of justification by faith. It is interesting to note that though there are differences in Luther's and Calvin's thought about this our

- joint Lutheran-Reformed dialogue have found that they are not significantly different; in essence they attempt to say the same thing.
19. My point of entry into this discussion for here is to mention that this doctrine provides for us a solid theological undergirding for renewal and transformation. The redemption of Christ through the cross and resurrection provides the basis for renewal and transformation. It is through this act that God in Christ makes all things new. Luther's focus on the *teologia crucis* makes this point abundantly clear.
  20. The new theological emphasis on individual faith contributed to the growing influence of the new individualistic philosophy. The basic tenet of Protestantism was the doctrine that human beings were justified by faith rather than by works. Each person had to search his or her own heart to discover if acts stemmed from a pure heart and faith in God.
  21. Unfortunately, the new theological focus on individual faith was to strongly influence the economic views of the new middle-class artisans and small merchants. Such people felt quite genuinely and strongly that their economic practices, though they might conflict with the traditional law of the old church, were not offensive to God. On the contrary: they glorified God.
  22. The new doctrines stressed the necessity of doing well at one's earthly calling as the best way to please God, and emphasised diligence and hard work. These doctrines subsequently led to the spiritualising of economic processes and the belief that "God instituted the market and exchange." This emphasis, however, sadly took the Christian focus away from the general concern for the community and the obligation to the poor. It gave acceptance to the liberal paradigm: poverty as backwardness, stressing that the poor should be enabled to reach their full potential.
  23. Although this view on poverty has been seriously debated and challenged over the years, we still need to assess how the Reformation relates to imperial capitalism and to the male means-end rationality in science, technology and individualistic calculating mentality (Duchrow 2015). How does this view of *sola fide* stand in need of renewal and reformation is a question we must continue to engage.
  24. John Calvin's theology took the believer's responsibility in the world more seriously than Luther. His view on the *sovereignty of God* gave rise to the idea of mission as "extending the reign of Christ" both by inward spiritual renewal of individuals and by transforming the face of the earth through filling it with "the knowledge of the Lord." This particular view led Calvin into bringing about social transformation in Geneva.
  25. It stressed the point of *covenantal theology* and laboured the fact that God covenants with all human beings and they are part of the human chain. Calvin employed the traditional organic metaphor for society (as found in Acts 2: 42ff), in which, as he wrote, no member has "power for itself nor applies it to its own private use, but each pours it out to the fellow members;" what chiefly matters is "the common advantage of

the whole body" (Inst., 111, vii, 5). Occasionally he identified this community with the whole human race. "All people," he could maintain, "are bound together as a sacred chain ... [which] ...should be embraced in one feeling of love" (Commentary Acts 13:36; Inst., 11, viii, 55).

26. Consequently, it is not surprising that Calvin showed a particular concern for the poor which resulted in his attempt to transform his society, especially in Geneva. He concerned himself with the issues of commerce and economic justice. His theology was not disembodied, divorced from the realities of life where labourers and employers are often at odds over economic matters. Calvin realised that because of the nature of humanity and the sinfulness of all of our institutions, our endeavours are to some extent motivated by self-interest, pride, and greed. Yet his is a "world-affirming theology" in the sense that he sought to apply the gospel to all of life. For him, that meant seeking the guidance of scripture for the problems besetting humanity, particularly those besetting the citizens of Geneva.
27. Thus Calvin as a theologian and pastor became involved in everyday matters as diverse as the high cost of dying, hospitals, sumptuary laws, and the regulation of business and industry and the question of wages. Calvin and Farel instituted the first free public education for both sexes. Beyond the welfare system and education the work of Calvin and the pastors reached out to suggestions for railings to protect children on stairs and balconies. Fires and chimneys were regulated and efforts were made to clean the town and for street repair. Regulation of prices for the necessities of life was an accepted principle of the early Reformation in Geneva. Some today may not agree with or approve of Calvin's stands, but they must admit that he regarded no area as too secular to be of legitimate Christian concern. The Reformers generally advocated an involvement with the world. However, unlike the Middle Ages, they went a step further to attempt to transform society.
28. Given the dynamics of a world in which the rich get richer and the poor get poorer and the numbers of people living in poverty and hunger continues to increase, it is important for Reformed theology to make a clear commitment of standing with the poor and oppressed in the world. We need to shift from a "widow-dressing" theological approach to an in-depth involvement with the plight of the poor. We need to ask whether our theological positions are life-enhancing and life-affirming; do they follow the Bible in socio-historic precision, in essence, do they contribute to liberation and justice?
29. In addition, we need to reflect on the Reformation and its historical impact in view of the global threat to humanity and the Earth—both positively and negatively. We are living in difficult times as we experience climate change and witness the devastation of the earth. Reformed theology must awaken to a renewed sense of responding to our given realities and focus on the need of "caring for the earth."
30. The Accra Confession (2004) is a significant attempt in focusing theology on "covenanting and caring for the earth." It has outlined and

prophetically engaged the issues of economic justice, gender justice and eco-justice. It has rightfully pointed us to these matters and prompted us to respond to the unjust realities of life. Now in this second decade of the Accra Confession we need to ask how this document can be a basis for renewal and transformation for ourselves as the WCRC and for the world at large. The refusal to do this is to not take seriously one of the significant tenets of Reformed theology: the reformed church is continually reforming.

31. This also impacts on our understanding of *Reformed spirituality*. Spirituality is the pattern by which we shape our lives in response to our experiences of God as a very real presence in and around us (Rice 1991). To be spiritual is to take seriously our consciousness of God's presence and to live in such a way that the presence of God is central in all that we do. Such spirituality turns to the world not away from it. It gives attention to the threats of life and embraces the need for justice.
32. Reformed spirituality is geared towards equipping life-giving transformative engagement in the world. It is a spirituality that is built in community and builds community. Thus, any piety that appears to be content with a personal relationship with Jesus, and which shuns or belittles the horizontal dimension of discipleship, is suspect. Any spirituality that advocates a withdrawal from what is going on in the world is contrary to Christ's spirit.
33. This concept of spirituality aligns well with the African concept of *Ubuntu* which says that "I am because of you." I belong therefore I am. This concept of community is needed to help shape and define our Communion. What does it mean to be a family together as we address diversity and differences? How can member churches hold up the quest for unity in the midst of differing views and theological interpretations? Our quest for renewal and transformation would certainly have to address such relevant questions.
34. At the centre of Reformed theology is the message of *sola gratia*. It reminds us that grace alone is the source and sustenance of our salvation. God's provision of saving, sustaining and glorifying grace is the golden thread uniting all Christian scripture and enabling all Christian faithfulness. This means all works honouring God—including our personal sanctification, our love for neighbours and enemies, our zeal for world mission, our free offer of the Gospel, our warnings of judgement, our promises of eternity, our mercy toward the poor and oppressed, our stewardship of God's world, our battles against Satan, our prayer for God's blessing, and our work toward Christ's coming—all find proper motivation and enablement in love for Christ. Of course, this can be misused to use grace to excuse sin, but the principles of grace revealed in all Scripture are the fuel of personal holiness and spiritual revival for those led by the Spirit.
35. Thus, presenting the doctrines of grace in a warm and embracing way is not to obscure holy boldness but to encourage compassion and humility in the face of God's sovereign mercy to all he loves from every tribe,

language, people and nation. As the kindness of God has led to repentance and renewal among us, we must be committed to a manner and ministry that reflects God's grace to others (cf. Romans 2:4; 1 Peter 3:15). We must be on guard that the grace message that God has brought to us (or our particular expression of it) does not become a jewel that we admire and adore for the joy it brings us rather than for the hope it offers the world.

36. The critical question is: How do we understand this concept of grace in the light of the new emerging world experiences impinging on the role of women in society, issues of human sexuality, interreligious encounters and tensions, racism, xenophobia, tribalism, the refugee situation, etc. How do we express grace and hospitality to differing views, theological beliefs and human experiences? All of these impress upon us the need for renewal and transformation as we seek to build inclusive communities and foster better relationships with people of other faiths. These are realities that the WCRC would have to deal with, and it is these that would hopefully bring theological renewal and transformation.

### **Contextual Renewal and Transformation**

37. Whilst Reformed theology and tradition may have the same substance of faith and belief, as expressed above, it does not mean that it has the exact same impact in different contexts. Hence what is needed as a sign of renewal and transformation is a contextual reading and adaption of Reformed teaching and beliefs.
38. For example, in Africa we need to ask what value and significance the Reformed faith can have in the context of poverty, religious violence, civil factions, political instability and dictatorship. The ecumenical movement is called upon to play a very engaging role in bringing peace in Africa as it addresses the causes of religious, ethnic and xenophobic violence. There is a need for conversation with religions and ideologies—seeking to faithfully embody alternative ways of living together amidst the rise of religio-national fundamentalism, privatisation and market ideologies. This means that ecumenical organisations must give serious effort to work with people of other faiths and (even) of no faith. The ecumenical agenda needs to consciously create space for inter-religious dialogue, something we have not really given time to, at least in Africa.
39. Added to this is the issue of globalisation which has impacted on economic, political, cultural and religious spheres of society. These changes have many consequences. Migration, whether forced or voluntary, changes in family structures and economic, ecological and social pressures have encouraged mobility which has created multiple social and religious identities. We have seen this impact on Europe especially in the past year. Previously the ecumenical movement did not need to address this. Now it must. These new realities are changing the

world, churches and the way we engage ecumenism today. It is a call for renewal and transformation.

40. In South Africa, the ecumenical movement needs to visit afresh its work in the area of dealing with racism. It is quite evident that in South Africa today the quest for racial identity is becoming deeply entrenched. The dismantling of apartheid does not mean racism is gone. It is still with us and needs to be addressed by ecumenical organisations in South Africa with energy and intentionality. What renewal and transformation can Reformed theology and practice continue to bring in such a context given the fact that Reformed theology was used in the first place to support and justify apartheid? Since racism is becoming a worldwide problem, perhaps we need to put the Belhar Confession back on the table to provide the theological foundation to uphold human dignity, equality, justice, unity and reconciliation. This is especially appropriate as we celebrate 30 years since the launching of the Belhar Confession this year.
41. The executive committee meets here on this beautiful island of Cuba. The island was inhabited by various Mesoamerican cultures prior to the arrival of Christopher Columbus in 1492. Since then Cuba became a Spanish colony. A series of rebellions during the 19<sup>th</sup> century failed to end Spanish rule. However, the Spanish-American War resulted in a Spanish withdrawal from Cuba in 1898, and the island gained formal independence in 1902 ([en.m.wikipedia.org](http://en.m.wikipedia.org)).
42. In the years following the independence Cuba saw economic development but faced political corruption and various struggles. During 1953-59 Fidel and Raul Castro Ruz led the Cuban Revolution which saw the rise of a socialist state by the Community Party led by the brothers. Unfortunately the country has been isolated by the United States since the revolution.
43. In spite of this embargo on Cuba, the country has managed to gain access to foreign commerce and travel and has made efforts to obtain diplomatic relationships with a number of other countries. Just last year Presidents Obama and Raul Castro opened the doors to dialogue, and this has led to limited trading opportunities. I am pleased to say that it all started at the funeral service of the late Mr. Nelson Mandela in December 2013 where both of them shook hands.
44. Further, President Obama made an official visit to Cuba on 20 March 2016, and with this the "old battle lines fade," as it was captured by the *New York Times*. This was the first by a sitting American president since Calvin Coolidge. We have every reason to believe that this would open the gates for trade and prosperity for Cuba, but it also faces the danger of an American "takeover." How do these new developments bring renewal and transformation to the people of Cuba?
45. The point I am trying to make here is that different contextual realities would need to inform and shape Reformed theology, faith and practice. We need to take cognisance of the fact that these contextual realities

would embrace and emanate different expressions of Reformed theology, which can become a source for renewal and transformation.

## **Institutional Renewal and Transformation**

46. It is clear that ecumenical organisations are struggling to survive financially, and commitment to ecumenism is dwindling. Whilst member churches are still keen to belong to say the WCRC, yet they are becoming less involved in the work of the organisation at the different levels. It's not because they have lost or are losing interest, it's just that they are becoming more absorbed with their own internal denominational life, struggles and issues.
47. Whilst saying what I have said above, I must make it very clear that, in my opinion, ecumenism is not dying but morphing into something new. For example, this is quite conspicuous in the formation of the South African Church Leaders' Indaba (SACLI) which encompasses most churches in South Africa. It does not function as an institutionally set up organisation but as a *network* of Christians working together for the transformation of society. The focus is not on organic unity but on creating a forum for Christians to come together to act on social issues. It is not a communion or *koinonia* but more of an alliance to demonstrate Christian unity and prophetic witness on particular issues. Invariably, there is no discussion on doctrinal issues; the focus is on common witness and service.
48. The WCRC is a communion, and rightly so, but we need to continue to network and work with other ecumenical organisations and NGOs in the endeavour to engage God's mission in the world. We need to take seriously our partnerships in the common interest of the "preferential option of the poor."
49. As we continue to embrace our future, and in the struggle for organic unity, we need to have before us this picture of an emerging ecumenism which calls us to engage the ecumenical discourse with the following understanding:
  1. We need to be less *institutional* and more *relational* as we network, develop partnerships and work with others in God's mission in the world. We need to give greater value to such partnerships as we seek to be where God is, among the poor, needy and oppressed.
  2. We need to realise that the new ecumenical space is not just with ecumenical organisations and church leaders but with ordinary Christians who are daily seeking to understand their faith in a world of conflict, struggle and suffering. Thus it deems it necessary for us to equip and empower the ecumenical "agents" in the pews and "market place." We have to follow the work of the Spirit to identify new areas where Christians are finding one another, often by working together to meet the



- needs of the wider community. What would this mean for future ecumenical vision and work?
3. For example, in South Africa we have come to realise that true ecumenism is to be found in ordinary Christians and not just in church leaders. Conradie (2013) points out that in South Africa there seems to be a tension between grassroots ecumenical fellowship and national ecumenical structures. Ecumenism is alive and well in local communities throughout South Africa. Whilst maintaining their distinct denominational identities, lay Christians seem to have no problem in joining hands in prayer groups, marches, funerals, Bible study groups, community structures, governing bodies, soup kitchens, trade union meetings, etc. In many places, local ecumenical initiatives have contributed to a renewal of local congregational life and the unity of the church becomes a concrete reality. New impulses are also given to regional, national, and international ecumenism by such local efforts. Here the focus is not on ecclesiology but on *mission*. The truth is that national ecumenical movements are being overtaken by reality and they cannot find the drive to keep in flow with the Spirit. This calls for radically re-thinking on how we do ecumenism today in the world. How can we in the WCRC use this to build our member churches, local churches, and regions? It seems to me that we need stronger regional structures if we are to truly impact our member churches. But equally member churches need to fully participate in these structures if we are to make it work.
  4. We can no longer work as independent organisations and churches in ecumenical work; instead we must continue to foster interdependence, cooperation and collaboration. We have done well in our dialogues with the Lutherans, Roman Catholics and Pentecostals, but how do we take this further in the quest for unity in Christian witness, a testimony that the world needs to see. How do we strengthen out ties with the WCC, CWM, EKD, etc.?
  5. We will need fresh expressions in thinking ecumenical theology as we consider the need for Christian unity and witness in the world. How do we address challenges which breed divisions, separation and distinctive identities? What do we say about confessions and creeds and its use in the quest for unity and mission? We will need to give considerations to these questions as we embrace a new vision for ecumenism and address the fragmentation of churches.
  6. How do we address the deepest fault lines in ecumenical relationships as we address issues of ideologies especially in terms of race, ethnicity, subculture, class, gender and sexual orientation? These are issues that are dividing churches and creating disunity. Ecumenical organisations will have to address

inclusion and exclusion. It will have to assess and reassess its endeavour of serving as an ecumenical platform and of providing a safe space for churches and Christians to share their differences on issues but are still able to remain a part of the Christian family.

7. As we consider issues of injustices, the need for security and peace in so many countries, religious factions and fundamentalism, civil wars, etc., we will need to give greater consideration to these in ecumenical dialogue and deliberation.

## **WCRC: Life and Work**

### *President's visits and conferences*

50. It was a joy and pleasure to visit member churches, general assemblies and special events and give addresses in different places throughout the past year. It was encouraging to know that many people still look to the WCRC for leadership, support and guidance on a number of issues. We have been called upon to help in a number of areas, especially with significant matters that are bringing huge challenges to our member churches, e.g. human sexuality, leadership struggles, peace initiatives, etc. We are, indeed, glad that we are able to assist and journey with our fellow members in some ways and, hopefully, helping to make a difference.
51. Among the many WCRC responsibilities that have kept me pretty busy in the past year I would like to mention some special events that took place. Chris and I were very pleased to participate in the *Ecumenical Forum on Peace of the Korean Peninsula in South Korea* (11-13 September 2015) and in the 100<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea (14-17 September 2015). We played a key role in some of the addresses that were presented and noted the significant value and appreciation offered by our member churches there for the involvement of the WCRC. The situation is not very promising as it stands in spite of numerous attempts been made to bring about peace and reconciliation. It is fairly apparent that the WCRC would continue to offer its support to the peace process and we remain committed to the peaceful reconciliation of both South and North Korea.
52. I was privileged to participate in a very special consultation hosted by the Global Christian Forum on *Discrimination, Persecution and Martyrdom: Following Christ Together* which took place in Albania from 1-5 November 2015. The purpose of this gathering was to "amplify the voices of churches suffering discrimination, persecution, and martyrdom, to intensify solidarity with one another, and to envision concrete next steps together as the suffering church of Jesus Christ."
53. I was pleased to moderate a group, offer input and preach the closing sermon at the consultation. This consultation drew together key ecumenical leaders from across the globe. It deliberated on the religious

violence and persecution that was taking place around the world. We were deeply moved by the stories, especially in the Middle East, Nigeria and Sudan, among others, which spoke about the plight of Christians in these predominantly Muslim countries. The message below that came out of the consultation puts it all together very well:

1. For the first time in the modern history of Christianity high level leaders and representatives of the various Church traditions gathered together to listen to, learn from, and stand with discriminated and persecuted Churches and Christians in the world today.
2. This global gathering of 145 people took place from 2 – 4 November, 2015, in Tirana, Albania, a country that was declared by its constitution to be an atheist state in 1967, and now has flourishing churches in a framework of religious freedom even though some discrimination may remain.
3. The Consultation, entitled *Discrimination, Persecution, Martyrdom: Following Christ Together*, was convened by the Global Christian Forum together with the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (Roman Catholic Church), the Pentecostal World Fellowship, the World Evangelical Alliance, and the World Council of Churches. It was organized in close collaboration with the Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania, the Albanian Bishops' Conference, and the Evangelical Alliance of Albania.
4. We have come together because discrimination, persecution and martyrdom among Christians and people of other faiths in the contemporary world are growing due to a complex variety of factors in different realities and contexts.
5. As we follow Christ, Christians can be exposed to any form of persecution, suffering and martyrdom, because the sinful world is against the Gospel of salvation. But from earliest times Christians experienced the hope and reality of the Resurrection through walking the way of the Cross. Together we follow Christ as we "hunger and thirst for righteousness" (Matthew 5:6) for all.
6. The life of the Church for centuries has been a constant witness in two ways: the proclamation of the Gospel of Christ, and the testimony through the shedding of the martyr's blood. The 21st century is full of moving stories of faithful people who have paid for their dedication to Christ through suffering, torture and execution. Christian martyrs unite us in ways we can hardly imagine.
7. We acknowledge that solidarity among Christian churches is needed to strengthen Christian witness in the face of discrimination, persecution, and martyrdom. In the 21st century, we need to urgently strengthen the solidarity of all

Christians, following up on what has been accomplished with insight and discernment from this Consultation.

8. We repent of having at times persecuted each other and other religious communities in history, and ask forgiveness from each other and pray for new ways of following Christ together. In communion with Christ we commit ourselves:
  - (a) **To listen more** to the experiences of Christians, Churches, and of all those who are discriminated against and persecuted, and deepen our engagement with suffering communities.
  - (b) **To pray more** for Churches, Christians, and for all those suffering discrimination and persecution, as well as for the transformation of those who discriminate and persecute.
  - (c) **To speak up more** with respect and dignity, with a clear and strong voice together, on behalf of those who are suffering.
  - (d) **To do more** in mutual understanding to find effective ways of solidarity and support for healing, reconciliation, and for the religious freedom of all oppressed and persecuted people.
9. Listening to the experience of those going through challenging times, praying and discerning together ways of following Christ in these harsh realities, the Consultation calls on:
  - (a) **All Christians** to include more prominently in their daily prayers those who are discriminated against, persecuted, and suffering for the fulfilment of God's Kingdom.
  - (b) **All Christian organisations on regional, national and local levels** from various traditions to learn, pray and work together in their localities for the persecuted to ensure they are better supported.
  - (c) **All Churches** to engage more in dialogue and co-operation with other faith communities, and be "as wise as serpents and innocent as doves" (Matthew 10:16) by remaining vigilant, watchful and fearless in the face of discrimination and persecution.
  - (d) **All persecutors** who discriminate against and oppress Christians and violate human rights to cease their abuse, and to affirm the right of all human beings to life and dignity.
  - (e) **All governments** to respect and protect the freedom of religion and belief of all people as a fundamental human right. We also appeal to governments and international organisations to respect and protect Christians and all other people of goodwill from threats and violence committed in the name of religion. In

addition, we ask them to work for peace and reconciliation, to seek the settlement of on-going conflicts, and to stop the flow of arms, especially to violators of human rights.

- (f) **All media** to report in an appropriate and unbiased way on violations of religious freedom, including the discrimination and persecution of Christians as well as of other faith communities.
- (g) **All educational institutions** to develop opportunities and tools to teach young people in particular about human rights, religious tolerance, healing of memories and hostilities of the past, and peaceful means of conflict resolution and reconciliation.
- (h) **All people of goodwill** to work for justice, peace and development, knowing that poverty and disrespect of human dignity are major contributing factors to violence.

10. We recommend that the Global Christian Forum evaluates within two years the work of this event, and reports to all four bodies for their follow up.

- 54. The next Consultation is expected to possibly take place in Cuba. The WCRC is pleased to be a part of this initiative and we look forward to our continued participation in this process, especially given the fact that religious violence seems to be the norm of the day.
- 55. I was also greatly pleased to participate at a special consultation put in place in preparation for the Reformation celebrations in 2017. This "Twin-Consultation" on the theme of "*Reformation, Education and Transformation*" had its first meeting in Brazil in November 2015 and it would have a second follow-up consultation in May 2016 in Germany. It is a conversation among 100 delegates coming from Africa, Latin America, Asia, North America and Europe to focus "on how reformatory ideas work in different societal contexts and what role reformatory education programmes have in transformation processes."
- 56. Participants are, from their particular perspectives, looking at what it means for reformatory Churches today to express social witness, find answers on how to contribute to ending human suffering and what an active theology of empowerment can accomplish. Discussions are focused on what it means to actively participate in democratisation processes, on taking a stand on political participation and alternative development concepts. It is intended to stimulate an exchange on how reformatory traditions relate to religious pluralism and/or secularisation, concepts of public theology and the liberation and transformation of education. Some of the important tracks covered at the consultation were: education, public theology, justice and reconciliation, contextually special forms in the different churches and the necessity to newly interpret and develop theological core issues.

57. I was delighted, in spite of my busy schedule, to be asked to present one of the keynote papers at the second consultation which takes place in Halle, Germany, 18-22 May 2016. I am looking forward to what comes out of this final consultation, especially its contribution to the Reformation Jubilee in 2017.
58. Chris and I were also pleased to be given an opportunity to present papers at a special theological colloquium hosted by the Council for World Mission in Bethlehem 28-31 October 2015. It focused on the theme *Mission in the Context of the Empire: A Call for Global Theological Resistance in Palestine*.
59. It is interesting to note that drawing from the Accra Confession's definition of empire, this theological colloquium was intended to "contribute to and revitalise global ecumenical biblical and theological reflection that questions any alliance with the colonial project of Empire." The statement from this colloquium can be found on the CWM website.
60. I was pleased to present a paper at the *Third Consultation on Economic, Social and Environmental Challenges* in Franschhoek, South Africa, in February 2016. This international consultation was hosted by the Ecumenical Institute of South Africa (EISA), Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland (EKD), Evangelische Akademie Tutzing, Konrad Adenauer Foundation and the University of Stellenbosch Business School. The theme of the consultation was *Leading Amidst Growing Ambiguities*. The consultation addressed the following sub-themes: economic development and social justice; challenges in ambiguities we are facing; business, ecology and sustainability and business and social justice. It was, indeed, a very thought-provoking consultation and many of the ideas that emerged from here could be shared with the NIEFA project. The documents from this gathering can be found on the EISA website.
61. More recently, on 20 March 2016, I presented a keynote paper at the pre-assembly conference of the CWM Africa Region on the theme *Healing Relationships: hoping for a new spirituality*.
62. It was, indeed, a very full and busy year but an incredibly fruitful and rewarding one for the WCRC. Our participation and contributions to various events and meetings has stood us in good stead as an organisation that is frequently called upon to contribute to various things taking place around the globe. This significantly connects with my call at the last executive committee for the WCRC to take seriously the issue of visibility and adding value to what is going on in the world.
63. My role in facilitating the reunification process of the Dutch Reformed Church family in South Africa: URCSA, DRC, DRCSA and DRCA have been overtaken by certain events. The DRC did not succeed in obtaining the two thirds majority required to adopt the Belhar Confession within their church. However, there are numerous congregations and some synods that view it differently and have accepted and are using the Confession. In spite of this setback all four churches are participating in

a process of writing an interim constitution that will help foster their relationships and work together. This is highly commendable.

64. The DRC decision on human sexuality at its last general synod has also created challenges within their church. Consequently, a lot of time and effort is put into addressing these challenges by the church leadership. My prayer and hope is that this would not overshadow or sideline the quest for unity and reconciliation and reunification. The URCSA general synod would be taking place later this year and this would be a crucial time of discerning the way forward. My prayer is that the desire for continuity in the process of reunification would be affirmed and sustained with diligence and effort.

*WCRC vision, mission and strategic plan*

65. In my 2014 address to the executive committee I pointed out that the WCRC must move from *Transition to Transformation*. Further, I stated that "since 2011 to 2013 we were quite occupied with issues related to finance, relocation and the movement 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 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 that would be appointed by the 2017 General Council."
66. Allow me again to remind you of our vision and mission statements, values and key strategic directives. My repetition of this from my last report is intentional because I want to show how we have managed to redirect our initiatives in fulfilling some of our objectives and goals.

**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.

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."

67. Since our last executive committee meeting in 2015, I have worked with the general secretary, staff and officers to focus on our key directives. It became pretty obvious that we needed to pinpoint certain key activities and focus on these in 2016 and 2017. I am pleased to inform you that we were able to identify some priorities within our five directives to ensure a more realistic, effective and efficient delivery of our plans. Whilst all our other work and programmes would continue, priority would be given to the things we have identified to be essential for the 2017 General Council.
68. The general secretary would address our revised strategic plan for 2016-2017 in his report or that of the officers' report, so it is not my intention to say much more now. However, I like to point out that some of the things we have identified are very relevant and significant for our times. These, no doubt, are issues that will surface or re-surface at the 2017 General Council. More significantly, they are matters that our member churches and regions wrestle with on a daily basis, in some places, that need to be addressed with caution, care and significance.
69. What are some of those issues? To name a few: Religious violence is very serious and our programme *Mission on the Frontlines* addresses this; the issue of human sexuality is seriously dividing churches and some of our member churches continue to bear the harsh repercussions in response to decisions they have taken on this matter. Hence we propose to have a consultation on "communion and human sexuality." Our focus is not on taking a position on this complex topic but to discuss the (dis)unity it is causing among member churches and

ascertain how we can still keep our eyes fixed on unity and communion in spite of differences.

70. Our *regions* need to be more properly organised and empowered. We plan to have a consultation to work at this so that we could present a more strong regional operation to the 2017 General Council.
71. Another significant issue that would be raised at this executive committee meeting is the proposal for a *Declaration on the Ordination of Women*. The 2010 Uniting General Council in Grand Rapids took a decision that opted for the equal participation and numbers of women at the council and on the executive committee from 2017. This is going to be a challenge but we are working on it. Of course, one of the best ways to address this is to increase the participation of women in the highest leadership level of member churches. This is really hard to do from where we sit as the WCRC because member churches have their own views, life and structures and, in short, we cannot tell them what to do. However, if we are going to be true to the decision we took in 2010 then something radical and binding has to emerge concerning the ordination of women. In fact, this was already said by decision of the 2010 Uniting General Council which called for this to be "binding" on the WCRC. The task group commissioned to work on this by our executive secretary for justice and partnership found it necessary to call for a "Declaration on the Ordination of Women" as a serious measure in moving forward on this matter. I know that this may not go down well with some of our member churches who still do not ordain women in ministry. However, it is a road we must travel if we are to remain true to what we believe as a Communion. Dora will raise this subject in her report.
72. Plans are afoot, and not without struggle, to take our conversations with the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification further in our 2017 General Council so that it is not merely relegated to the shelves of history but become meaningfully expressed in lived-out Christian unity. We are hoping that our Reformed-Lutheran conversation would pave the way for something like a "Wittenberg Declaration" in which we reflect our commitment to unity. This endeavour has resulted in some complexities, but the desire to achieve this is there among the Lutherans and us. The general secretary would say more about this. My intention in giving it a mention is to express my support for such initiatives, hoping that you would support it, too.
73. The WCRC has really taken its *ecumenical engagement* to greater levels as we work with other ecumenical organisations in addressing pertinent global and regional issues. The general secretary would report on this and on his involvement in representing the WCRC. I am pleased to observe that the WCRC is becoming a "go to" organisation on some of these issues, of course, always in participation with other ecumenical bodies.
74. Personally, I feel very positive about our strategic plan for 2016-2017. I sense that our focused worked with these priorities in mind, among the

other things we continue to do, will enable us to deliver a very strong and forward-looking WCRC to the 2017 General Council. Indeed, we are pressing the right buttons as we tackle some of the real issues and challenges facing the world and our churches today. It is important to be relevant and to make a difference; to struggle with the struggles of life.

75. In our 2015 executive committee meeting in Lebanon I said, "it is my desire and intention to bring us back to these objectives (of the WCRC) with more deliberate effort and focus. This should be the focus of this Executive Committee as well." I am pleased to report that, in keeping with our vision and key strategic direction indicated earlier, we are on track and target. I wish to express my sincere thanks to the general secretary, staff and officers for their work and efforts to this end.

## **Matters from Previous Executive Committee Meeting**

### *2017 General Council*

76. At our last meeting deep concern and anxiety was expressed at what was perceived as the lateness and staggering on our plans for the 2017 General Council. I am pleased to report that our plans are well intact and quite advanced in progress in virtually all respects. We need to finalise some details with regards to speakers, etc. but there are fruitful discussions on this matter. Adequate time has been allocated on our agenda for the presentation of the report of the general council planning committee and ensuing discussions so it is not my aim to say anything more about this, except to reassure the executive committee that the general council planning committee and staff, especially Hans Lessing now our full-time co-ordinator, are well on top of things. Also, the local planning committee is doing a great piece of work and the worship committee has been meeting and advancing well in their preparations. We are really grateful to all our folks who are assisting the preparations in various ways. Indeed, God bless you all!

### *Discernment/Consensus Model*

77. The general council planning committee has proposed that we use the consensus/discernment model in making decisions in its full form and depth. This is not new to us. I am told that it has been used since the general council in Accra in 2004. We also used it at the 2010 Uniting General Council. We have partially used this in some of our executive committee meetings with the use of the orange and blue cards. We did not use it in Lebanon.
78. Since it is proposed that we use this model in 2017 we thought it might be wise to put it into operation at this executive committee meeting so that we fully acquaint ourselves with its use. Hence our meeting has been structured around the use of this model. There are three main

stages to this model: 1) *Listening*, 2) *Dialogue* and 3) *Decision*. In the first stage we merely listen to the presentation of the report and may have questions for clarity. The reports are then taken to a number of small groups meeting concurrently for dialogue and discussion on the proposals, if there are any. The small group is allowed to amend the proposals or to even add new ones as long as they relate to the subject under discussion. These proposals are then passed on to a drafting committee that is tasked to take the various comments from the small groups into consideration and come up with a "consolidated" proposal/s. These are then brought to the decision session that is usually the next day.

79. The consensus/discernment model usually takes time and is better used in a big gathering that allows virtually all the participants/delegates to contribute to the decision-making process, an ideal mechanism for the general council. People who do not prefer to speak in public are empowered to speak in the small groups. The moderators/facilitators of these groups are trained to encourage free and protected participation of all members of the group and not just the vocal few. In this sense people go away feeling that they have been heard. This is what we would wish to achieve at the general council. Of course, we will have to suitably adapt the model for our purpose at the general council, as we will do at this executive committee meeting. At the council we would face further challenges to accommodate language and diversity but there are experienced people to assist us with these.

#### *Staff matters*

80. The 2015 executive committee meeting also spent a great amount of time discussing issues related to the staff in Hannover. Concerns were expressed about work performance, relationships between members of staff and other related matters. I am pleased to report that I have worked very closely with the general secretary on these matters and he was able to engage the services of a professional person to come in and help with staff-related issues. She took them through team building exercises and individual and group sessions which helped to build relationships. I am pleased to report that the situation is so much better now even though some things are still being worked on. On certain visits to the office for other meetings I managed to meet individually with staff members and offer personal words of support and encouragement to them in their work. The general secretary has cut down on his travels, spending more time in the office building cohesion, relationships of staff and management structures. As a matter of courtesy he discusses all his travel plans with me so that I am fully acquainted with his diary in this respect. In addition to office management and administration, I wish to acknowledge that travel is part and parcel to his work in building the Communion.

81. As far as the staff is concerned, we are sorry to hear that Douwe is forced to undergo surgery on both his knees and this, effectively, would put him out of work for six months or more. We wish him well and pray God's healing and sustaining presence over him at this time. Obviously, this would create a great sense of concern about his work in the area of Theology, Mission and Communion, especially as we prepare for the 2017 General Council. Given the work load and responsibilities assigned to these areas, it is expected that we should engage the services of others to help with the main tasks that needs to be delivered. The general secretary has been in discussions with Douwe about this, and there are ideas about how to proceed to cater for the work that needs to be done during Douwe's confinement and recovery.
82. I have not reflected much on the work of the executive secretaries in this report but the general secretary would cover this in his report, as will the executive secretaries themselves. I wish to thank them for their work in the past year.

### *Finance*

83. As far as our financial situation is concerned, I am pleased to report that much has been done to provide the WCRC with a more financially stable environment. Whilst we rejoice that this is the case, we cannot become relaxed because we need to consider the financial stability of the organisation beyond 2017. We did have a bit of a scare with additional costs to our pension fund, but thanks to the generosity of some of our member churches and others we were able to raise most of the 250,000 euro that was needed to cover the deficit.
84. We are, indeed, grateful to our German churches for their generous contributions which have done an enormous amount of good to sustain the WCRC financially. However, we must not become comfortable with this because such commitments have their own challenges and timelines. It is important that we look at other possibilities of fund raising and financial self-sustainability. The last executive committee meeting appointed a funds development and sustainability committee to look into these matters. We have struggled to find the right people to take us forward in this regard but we must not give up. It is absolutely imperative that we develop the necessary measures to make the WCRC financially sustainable, noting that membership contributions are not solely adequate for this task.
85. Whilst talking about finance, I must say how thankful we are to know that we have virtually received all the money for our budget for the 2017 General Council. We are most grateful to our General Treasurer, Johann Weusmann, for his incredible work in raising these funds and all others who contributed to this endeavour. It is really encouraging to know that we are going into this general council having the necessary resources we need to make it happen.

86. I wish to express my sincere thanks to Johann, Gerhard, Anna, Chris and the finance committee for their superb work in both raising and managing our finances. My prayer and hope is that this would be an on-going trend for the WCRC.

### **Thanks and appreciation**

87. There are many people who keep the WCRC wheels turning at the different levels of the organisational structure from the officers, executive committee, and global office, regions, member churches and committees. I wish to express my thanks and appreciation to everyone concerned for all their work and effort in keeping the WCRC alive and at work in many places around the world.

88. I wish to express our heartfelt thanks and appreciation to Chris Ferguson (general secretary), the executive secretaries: Douwe Visser, Dora Valentín Arce, Phil Tanis; all the financial and supporting staff and interns: Claudia Duval (who has now left us), Katrina Mertz, Anna Krüger, Werner Joecker, Paul Oppenheim, Emelda Ndipewah, Amritha Perumalla, Joanna Hipp and Fundiswa Kobo. May God continue to bless and sustain them as they serve the WCRC in their respective and various capacities.

89. I would like to express my sincere thanks and gratefulness to the officers for their constant journey, wisdom, support and encouragement. We have had some challenging moments but they have hung in there strong and well. I appreciate the time and effort they make to connect via Skype throughout the year 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.

90. We are truly blessed to have the kind of members we have who serve on the executive committee. Thank you for your deep interest in the well-being and work of the WCRC. As I have previously said, 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. We are ambassadors of the organisation on the ground where we need to be felt most. Thank you for your continued work and service.

91. 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. It is they who sustain the life and work of the WCRC on the ground, where it matters most.

92. I would like to recognize with joyful thanksgiving the many organisations and churches that generously and graciously support our work and programmes with financial and other resources, not forgetting particularly the Council for World Mission (CWM) and the German churches that support our programmes and projects. Again a special

thanks to all those who contributed so graciously to the fund raising initiatives for the 2017 General Council.

93. Finally, I wish to thank my family for their patience, support and love. My wife, Sandra, and children have been extremely understanding and supportive given my different roles in the WCRC, the University of Pretoria and the UPCSA. Equally, I like to acknowledge and thank your loved ones for their support to you and for the work of the WCRC.

## **Summary and Conclusion**

94. The cross and the resurrection speak of renewal and transformation. In this address, I have outlined the need for renewal and transformation of the WCRC on at least three levels: theological, contextual and institutional. We need to embrace a greater and deeper vision of these as we continue to pursue our work and witness as an organisation. Our efforts of renewing and transforming the world must start with us if we are to earn respect and remain relevant in addressing the challenges in a changing world. This would also require challenging some of our member churches in certain areas as we continue to proclaim unity, justice and peace.
95. We have revisited the vision and key strategic directives of the WCRC and suggested ways in which we can gather momentum as we move towards the 2017 General Council. We have identified some of the "big issues" that would surface at the general council and directed our work and delivery towards this end. In each of our five key directives we have outlined one or more things that need to be done. It is hoped that through this endeavour we would leave a very strong and focused WCRC for the next elected leadership in 2017.
96. The past year has been a really remarkable and productive one. In spite of our challenges we have successfully managed to steer our way to getting on track for the upcoming 2017 General Council. Whilst there are some things that still need to be worked through and sorted out, we have managed to gain a good degree of stability in our global office in comparison to the previous year. Among the other programmes and projects managed by our staff, they are now giving priority to the priorities identified by the officers in the revised strategic plan.
97. Our preparations for the 2017 General Council are well advanced with all aspects being addressed and adequately dealt with. Of major significance is the fact that we have managed to raise most of the money required to host the general council. We rejoice in this good news and we thank both God and all those who assisted to raise funds to make this possible.
98. Our financial situation is quite stable as we move into the next general council, and we are absolutely thankful to all those who worked tirelessly to make this possible. However, I am concerned about what happens beyond 2017. We need to continue to have a vision for



financial sustainability for the WCRC and more effort needs to be devoted to this end.

99. This next year is going to be a very busy one for all of us as we prepare for the 2017 General Council. I trust that you all, in whatever capacity, would do your best to make it a very successful year and a very enjoyable general council. Remember that to those whom much is given much more is required. God bless!
100. Our thanks and appreciation to the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Cuba and all our friends for their warm hospitality and service to us during our stay on this beautiful island during this executive committee meeting. God bless you all!

**DOCUMENT 2**  
**REPORT OF THE GENERAL SECRETARY**

Rev. Chris Ferguson

“Living God, Renew and Transform Us” – Romans 12:2, Luke 4:16,  
Jeremiah 10:10

1. Giving thanks to the Living God I begin my report by affirming that the WCRC on its many levels is embracing the call for renewal embodied in our general council theme. Thanks to the faithfulness, prayer, hard work and dedication of the officers, executive committee members, staff, regional councils and member churches we are, despite considerable past and on-going challenges, moving forward with renewed vigour on many fronts. The call to renewal and transformation has inspired us not to conform but to turn around and renew ourselves for our mission.
2. As a World Communion we are all aware that our entire world, people and planet, are in a multi-dimensional crisis that engulfs our global life together in all its dimensions—politically, economically, socially, culturally, religiously, ecologically and militarily with massive threats to life, sustainability and wellbeing. In this we continue to see that the inequity, systemic racism, war, poverty and violence are deeply rooted in and driven by an inherently unjust and ecologically destructive economic and financial system that works against the “life abundant for all” that is at the core of the mission of Jesus Christ and therefore our own (John 10:10, Luke 4:16ff).
3. We begin with our turning to the Living God and in that prayer and confession we reject all systems, ideologies, regimes and idols that that impose domination, division, destruction, despair, suffering and death over God’s creation (Jeremiah 10.10, the Belhar and Accra Confessions).
4. This last year has seen a deepening and worsening of this global crisis beyond the long list of terrible and terrifying events and crises that impact specific places, sectors, classes, genders and contexts. We see the writing on the wall and are just now grasping the true global dimension of the crisis, and from that deep place we cry out to God to renew us for the transformation of the world.
5. At the same that the WCRC as a family—spread out over 110 countries and compromising over 80 million people—enables us to have a global vision that allows to see the extent of the crisis, we are well positioned to see the power of God’s Spirit at work in love, witness, healing, reconciliation, service, justice and peace-making. In the enormity of the challenges we see enormous signs of God’s grace and goodness. Our theological tradition in this family of Reformed and reforming churches allows and empowers us to fully acknowledge the crisis and threat to life while celebrating God’s liberating and transforming grace without ever doubting the full power of God’s presence nor the full extent of

God's call to us to participate in God's mission as revealed through Jesus Christ in the power of the Spirit. The Spirit of the Lord is upon us (Luke 4:16).

6. My last report in 2015 situated the challenges facing us as a Communion within the mandate of the Uniting General Council as specifically expressed in the 2011 strategic plan. We left Lebanon determined to refocus our efforts in light of that plan "live out the Communion of Reformed churches, participating in God's mission, that all may experience the fullness of life in Jesus Christ." It has been a full and, in many ways, tumultuous year. Yet by God's grace even in the face of worsening world situation and challenges to our unity as a Communion and ongoing financial challenges we are moving forward and are better placed than in recent years to focus on the high vision of the plan.
7. As I remind us of the statement of intended achievements of the plan, we will all see that we are not where we need to be with one year left before the 2017 General Council and must discern well what we can accomplish together in the remaining time.
8. The plan places a strategic emphasis on five key directions for the work and witness of the WCRC: mission, communion, justice, theology and ecumenical engagement with the overall aim that by the end of 2017 the WCRC will:

be known as a communion that unites Reformed churches in God's mission in our world. Our internal relationships will evidence the oneness for which Jesus prayed. The WCRC will have significantly contributed to the world Churches' 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 revenue from member churches.  
*(WCRC Strategic Plan, adopted May 2011)*

9. As I present the report of the past year's activities, including the report on the planning for the general council, please keep this lofty vision in mind as you hear what we have accomplished so far and what we have yet to do. We spoke last year of bringing the plan back into play. As some financial, organisational and staffing issues have challenged us, we have done so to a limited extent, and we are now positioned to do more but not all. We come late but are very blessed to have the opportunity of the upcoming general council to further build our Communion and make our witness for justice, peace and reconciliation

as a confessing communion committed to justice. At the end of the report I will represent a proposal for the final year of our strategic plan, as adopted by the officers for the consideration of the executive.

10. In the last year we have continued to put the WCRC back on the map with many of our member churches and within the ecumenical community. Through extensive visits and contributions to key events and occasions by the president, general secretary and staff, through well received regional consultations and networks. Through participation in ecumenical processes we are slowly re-establishing our presence with some who felt us far from them in the last number of years through our presence, our theological and justice seeking contributions. Through participation in situations of conflict and discord as mediators and facilitators, we have been in the last year making a qualitative shift where we get clear and growing feedback that our leadership is being felt and appreciated. This has involved travel and involvement in the life of our churches and the ecumenical movement. The effects of heavy travel and time out of the office have netted significant outcomes in terms of building relationships, making a contribution in times of crisis and conflict, bringing the Reformed and United and Uniting voices to bear on pressing issues, raising the profile of the WCRC and fundraising but had an obvious negative impact on the staff team and the functioning of the office. In conversations with the president and officers we have worked at finding a constructive balance. This included both reducing travel and even more intentionally addressing staff team building.
11. We have made steady progress in addressing the organisational and administrative challenges of transferring and setting up the appropriate systems and structures for the effective operation of the Hannover office. It has taken time to put the financial systems in place and address inherited weakness and problems, but as the report from the financial office shows we are well on our way with the solving past problems, and a very positive auditors report testifies to this progress—with great thanks to the finance staff team.
12. A very significant issue beyond the usual challenges with information technology and record management has been the database. We were at less than 60% accuracy and efficiency. This had a negative impact on all aspects of our life and work including membership fee and general council planning and participation. As instructed by last year's executive significant staff time, energy and resources were devoted to a new database that now is working much better and has positioned us well for general council and our regular needs. A special thanks to Werner Joecker and all who have worked so hard on this
13. Both the president I reported last year on very serious issues within the staff team that began before I took office. Since then considerable efforts have been made to address staff team and personnel issue and overall office management and administration. A professional consultant was brought in for team building work with the whole staff and

individuals, and the president, accompanied by the officers acting as a personnel committee, have with the general secretary played an active role to address the issues. I have worked at improving internal communication in the office, at being more physically present in the office and restoring more regular staff meetings. The situation has improved greatly and there is an overall positive sense of forward movement as we address issues together.

14. There have been changes in the staff team itself. Amritha Perumalla joined the team as administrative assistant to both the TMC and the J&P executive secretaries. She is on parental leave until August. Emelda Ndipewah has been ably filling the role until Amritha's return. Claudia Duval, the assistant to the general secretary left in January 2016 to take up new challenges teaching refugees. We are all aware of her significant contributions in often very stressful times and great efforts on behalf of the WCRC, and we wish her the very best. Katrina Mertz began in January and is already very much on board as assistant to the general secretariat. Welcome Katrina. Rev. Dr Hanns Lessing joined the team as general council coordinator, working part time for part of last year and now full time. We heartily welcome Hanns and are especially grateful to the Church of Westphalia in Germany who has seconded Hanns to us and who have agreed to support the entire cost of salary and support until the end of 2017; not only a significant addition to our team but a great contribution to our general council budget. Our team is enriched by two interns this year Ms. Wan-Jou Lin from the PCT and Doyoung Chung from the PROK.
15. The change with greatest impact for us concerns our executive secretary for theology, mission and communion, Rev. Dr Douwe Visser. Douwe has had significant pain and mobility issues over the last number of years that have steadily worsened. He was scheduled for knee replacement surgery on May 6 and after rehabilitation and rest will have surgery on the other knee. With the combined surgeries and rehabilitation process he would be off work and out of the office for the better part of the year. In face of this long absence and then seeing the moving right into a general council, Douwe has decided to ask for early retirement so that he will transition directly from his sick leave period into retirement. Douwe feels this is not only best for the WCRC but will also allow him to enjoy his new found mobility and enjoy a longer retirement free of the pain and distress that has afflicted him. Exact dates and details will follow. It is expected that Douwe will join us for the general council, although not in a specific staff role, and we will be well able to express our appreciation and gratitude for his significant ministry to the REC, WARC and WCRC fully at that time. For now we hold him in our thoughts and prayers for his surgery and recovery and rehabilitation, remembering and appreciating his wife Antoinette with thanks also for her service to the WCRC. As this is a sudden development I have asked Dr Aruna Gnanadason to serve as a consultant working mostly from India to help in the coming months to

ensure continuity and follow up in the TMC responsibilities. Aruna has served in the past several GITs as dean of students, so we have asked her to take the staff lead role in ensuring the planning and implementation of GIT. I offer a special thanks to Aruna for stepping in at the very last moment so willingly and generously. More detail on future staff plans will follow.

## **Theology, Mission and Communion**

16. The work of TMC addresses directly four of the five directives in the strategic plan of 2011. You will have read the report of Douwe already, and so I will simply highlight several points from his report:

- The next Global Institute of Theology will be held in 2017, in conjunction with the general council. It will be held in Wuppertal, moving to Leipzig when the council begins. The core staff team will be Aruna Gnanadason with Musa Dube as academic dean. Andrew Donaldson will lead worship while Bas Plaisier will be president. Preparatory meetings have already taken place and plans are proceeding well. Assisting in the formulation of the GIT's curriculum will be our network of theologians, who will gather again at the beginning of 2017.
- *Reformed World* saw two issues published in 2016, the second being a double volume. As requested by last year's executive, Phil Tanis has worked on the production and distribution side of the publication while Douwe remained editor, taking responsibility for content. The first edition of 2017 will be focused on human trafficking with content coordinated through the J&P office. A staff team will coordinate the remaining issues this year and leading into the general council. See appendix 1 for more details.
- A consultation on "mission in secularised contexts" was held in Hungary earlier this year. The next "Mission on the Frontline" consultation will be addressed below.
- A number of important dialogues have continued in the last year. The Roman Catholic-Reformed dialogue has concluded, and a draft of the dialogue's final report is available for your review. The Anglican-Reformed dialogue held a second meeting in India last October, focused on "communion." And the first meeting with Pentecostal representatives on "mission" was held in Turkey in December. While all of these dialogues have been meaningful to participants and have produced important documents, an evaluation of how ecumenical dialogues should be structured and utilised going forward is recommended.
- Affiliation with the JDDJ and work toward a so-called "Wittenberg Statement" have both made progress and will be taken up below, though it can be noted that a working group on the latter will gather in Hannover in late June under the coordination of Aruna.

## **Justice and Partnership**

17. Our executive secretary for justice and partnership, Dora Arce Valentín, has also been active on a number of strategically important programmes. I raise the following highlights to you:
- The consultations marking the 10th anniversary of the Accra Confession noted a need for additional follow-up sessions. These have been done through two (so far) consultations bringing together two regions in each, under the theme “Gender reading of the signs of the times.” The first meeting was held in Africa and included Northeast Asia participation while the second brought together the Americas—AIPRAL and CANAAC—here in Cuba.
  - The Oikotree Movement, which allows us to work in partnership with CWM and WCC on justice issues, has produced two books, both of which are available for your review here.
  - A special focus of the past year has been on human trafficking. The Lenten “Broken for You” resource was reviewed and additional goals defined at a meeting on the US-Mexico border of the task group last summer. One of the results is the aforementioned issue of Reformed World, which will deepen the theological foundations of these actions.
  - While parts of the NIFEA project have continued—such as the GEM school to be held in Hong Kong later this summer—others have stalled. A working group from within the WCRC was thus called together to re-start and re-focus the WCRC’s contribution on this project. This has helped make us ready to re-launch the NIFEA project with some vigour.
  - Gender justice issues remain a key part of the office’s work. The theological scholarship for women continues, as does cooperation with our UN office to promote a number of advocacy and awareness campaigns. A task group on women’s ordination met twice and will present an important document for your consideration: “Toward a Declaration on Faith on Women’s Ordination.” This document will address the mandate to consider whether women’s ordination is binding on the Communion.

## **Finances**

18. As already mentioned we have made great strides this year, despite unexpected increases in pension fund obligations. As you’ll see in the report from the office of finance, we came in very close to budget expenses in 2015—but with a sizeable surplus of over 220,000 euro, much of this due to currency fluctuations that were to our benefit. We have seen our assets, general reserve fund and long-term stabilization fund (the UEK Fund) grow.

19. The audit report was very positive, and for this we again thank our finance staff team, Anna Krüger and Gerhard Plenter. The team is confident that the several recommendations from the audit report will be implemented in a timely manner.
20. The pension fund obligations are a continuing concern. Due to extremely low interest rates and mandates from the German government, we have had to significantly increase the amount of money placed in our pension fund for our executive staff. The finance committee is looking at alternatives to remaining in this system to relieve the financial burden this creates for the organisation—and they will be bringing a report for consideration on this once this very complicated issue is sorted.
21. Despite this challenge a balanced budget for 2016 will be presented to this executive for approval, and preliminary figures for 2017 are already in place for review by the finance committee. A special thank you needs to be given to the many people who assisted in filling the financial gap we had for this year's budget. Concerns continue over the membership fees from churches that constitute the bulk of our core budgeting needs. You will see in the finance report downward trends in contributions from most of our regions. This is noted in appendix 2, a funds development update, which notes the challenges we continue to have putting together a viable strategy to effectively and regularly raise funds on a global scale.

## **Communications**

22. The communication office, our executive Phil Tanis and assisted by Paul Oppenheim, continues to promote the work of the WCRC through a number of means, all of which emphasize the five key directions of our strategic plan:
  - The website is now operating in seven of eight planned languages. A new blog focusing on the entire Communion is operating within the site. More work will be done on the website in the coming months, broadening and deepening the resources available through it while also positioning it for the general council.
  - Social media efforts increasingly engage the Communion with its members, partners and the broader world while the monthly eNews continues to highlight stories, prayer requests and resources.
  - The *Reformed Communiqué* is now being published three times each year as a multi-lingual newsletter. It contains articles already featured on the website, some new features and a regular column from me. It will increasingly and strategically focus on the general council in the coming year, including modifying its mailing list to ensure all participants receive important news.
  - A limited edition print, made of a specially commissioned painting, will be a primary gift from the Communion to be utilized by the



president and myself as we represent the WCRC around the world in the coming year. I'm pleased to say that each of you will receive a copy at this meeting.

- Also available at this meeting is the *2015 Annual Report*, which is a key part of the funds development efforts in North America. The annual appeal in that region continues to bring money in for our endowment. The North Americans will also be utilising the general council's visitors programme to build support for the Communion.
- Very important networking has taken place with the WCC, CWM and CEC communication departments.
- Work on the general council is also being supported by the communications office, and you'll see some of the results—the folder, poster and button. More is coming, including work on the website, brochures in multiple languages and more. Phil has also provided input into the discernment process, based on his work with the Reformed Church in America.

### **Reformed Partnership Fund**

23. Werner Joecker's report shows continued good stewardship of the Fund and its continuing impact on our member churches around the world. I would like to note several points:

- The Fund will be boosted through a large portion of the new money coming from *Otto per Mille* while steady support from both *Brot für die Welt* and *Evangelische Kirche von Westfalen* continues.
- We continue to seek additional sources of funding for the emergency fund.
- The Fund can be utilised by member churches to contribute to special projects, such as the Reformed Church in America did for the Bekaa Valley school project.
- Working cooperatively with the communications office, a branding and marketing strategy is nearing completion for implementation in the coming months.
- You will see in appendix 3 that a plan to compensate for Douwe's absence is being put into place. This will involve a cooperative staff team, though I will assume overall responsibility for the programme, for the time being.

### **2017 General Council**

24. The report of the general council planning committee and the general council coordinator has been circulated. I am pleased to highlight that overall the planning and fundraising is on time and on track. I also would like to note the following:

- The planning committee under the able leadership of Lisa Vander Wal concluded its last meeting just a week ago and its report includes proposals for strengthening consensus building and participatory decision-making. More work is needed on specific details and this executive meeting will try an expanded consensus and discernment approach.
- The worship committee has met under the leadership of Pastor Sabine Dreßler and will meet again in early 2017.
- The local committee is also hard at work.
- Hanns Lessing has made impressive progress in all the major areas of logistics and programme planning.
- The new database is ready to serve both council communications and registration.
- Exciting ideas are developing for an expanded visitors programme and a Reformed youth camp.
- There is a permanent general council planning staff group of the WCRC together with the Reformed Alliance of Germany to ensure smooth and creative planning and implementation with the host church. This is going very well. The participation of the local Reformed Church in Leipzig is especially exciting—and the responses from the whole of the United churches in Germany and the EKD have been extremely supportive and positive.
- Several member churches have already responded to the call for special funding support.
- The general council budget is balanced thanks to truly extraordinary efforts of Dr Johann Weusmann, who has expended extensive time or energy to secure high levels of support from the German government at various levels and the churches in Germany.

25. As the final chapter of the strategic plan indicates, this general council is much more than a constitutionally required business meeting. It is the Communion in action. The vision that the general council powered by the theme “Living God, renew and transform us” will be:

- A testimony confessing the God of Life in all that we do
- A significant experience of unity and communion-building within the WCRC family
- Public witness, advocacy and theological articulations for transforming the world rooted in justice, peace, reconciliation and healing
- A concrete expression of communion living out full equitable participation of men and women, youth, clergy and lay people
- A significant contribution to Christian unity with Lutherans and lifting up the JDDJ in its positive implications
- A moment to articulate our faith stance and vision for the next seven years in context of the crisis facing humanity and all creation

26. By God's grace we have an opportunity for the general council to be a significant expression of God's mission. We prepare by fully embracing as theme, vision and method the call and commitment to confessing the Living God, renewal and transformation so that all may have life in abundance.

### **Member churches**

27. Following up last year's WCRC statement on the Middle East has included five visits to and events in Lebanon and Israel-Palestine. This has included participating at round tables and consultations of our church members, participating in the WCC pilgrimage for justice and peace reference group meeting in Bethlehem and co-sponsoring with CWM a theological symposium on new ways of reading the Bible in reference to the Israeli-Palestinian situation, as well as participating in a German-hosted dialogue with Palestinian theologians and members of the Jewish-Christian dialogue.
28. In South Korea I together with President Jerry Pillay participated in the PROK anniversary assembly, and I attended the PCK assembly. Both the president and I made presentations at an ecumenical peace consultation held just before. As well as reaching out to our member churches we are strengthening our relationships with the NCCK and have been encouraged to play a much more active and visible role with the WCC in the ecumenical forum seeking peace and reconciliation on the Korean peninsula. We have reached out to the Korean Christian Federation in North Korea, who have historic ties to the WARC, and we are attempting to put forth Korean peninsula peace efforts in support of our Korean church members. Given his long experience, Paul Oppenheim has been serving as special advisor to the general secretary on these issues. He attended a meeting of partner churches committed to the peace progress in Germany late last year. We are especially pleased that Doyoung Chung, one of two interns, is from the PROK.
29. It has been a special privilege to have attended other significant member church assemblies and events since the last executive committee meeting. I was the guest preacher at the PCT mission anniversary (ably translated by Vice President Yueh-Wen Lu).
30. We presently have two interns and are committed to the ecumenical youth leadership development initiative. We are thankful that the PCT has wholly subsidized the cost of the intern from their church.
31. The United Church of Canada's general council meeting was important as they work through a call to transformative change—a feature was celebrating a full communion agreement with the United Church of Christ (USA) and a mutual recognition of ministries agreement with the UCC Philippines, strengthening unity within the Communion. The UCC also has been living into the process of reconciling with Canadian First Nations peoples.

32. In Italy I represented the WCRC at the Waldensian synod, a very compelling meeting as the church works through a new moment in relationship with the Roman Catholic Church and responds with full Gospel zeal, boldness and purpose to the global migration through "Project Mediterranean Hope." We began a conversation with the *Tavolo Valdese* that has now resulted in a 350,000 euro per year agreement for programme and project funding to the Reformed Partnership Fund and other WCRC initiatives through the *Otto per Mille* (or Eight per 1000) programme.
33. The Evangelical Church in Spain invited me to be a speaker at their assembly in Madrid, focusing on the Accra Confession. Many churches are bold in their embracing the call to both communion and justice and constantly remind us of how historical and central both the Belhar and Accra confessions are for their identity in the WCRC family.
34. I mentioned the visits to our member churches in Lebanon and Syria. I visited our two member churches in Ghana and saw the need to draw closer in dialogue around the issue of human sexuality and communion.
35. For over one and a half years I have been facilitating a dialogue between the Church of Scotland (CoS) and the United Free Church of Scotland (UFCoS), in the context of the UFCoS moving to end a ministry covenant with the CoS. The dialogue is in a reflective pause, but it underlines the urgency to address differences in respectful dialogue especially around issues of human sexuality and interpretation of Scripture. I feel privileged to have been asked to play such a role, which is key and central to the WCRC mission and vision of communion.
36. It has been a real joy to visit Cuba twice, to prepare for this meeting and to participate in two consultations, both co-hosted by the church in Cuba and the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Matanzas.

## **Ecumenical relationships**

37. The honest assessment is that we have a good relationship with the WCC, but we must make it much better. The very good news is we are on the way. I serve on the leadership for the reference group for the pilgrimage of justice and peace to bring a Reformed voice and to mobilize our family and other Christian world communions to fully embrace the call to move together for justice and peace. Phil Tanis has worked hard with the WCC director of communication to increase cooperation and synergy. The WCC has already committed generously to second communications staff for the general council. Close working relationships on refugee, Middle East, Korean peninsula and the Colombia peace process issues are being developed.
38. A very important step forward is that we have made significant progress in overcoming the obstacles in working together on the NIFEA initiative. As seen in the justice and partnership report and the strategic plan, we are re-launching with vigour and a sense of urgency. We are thus finding good ways to move ahead on work with the WCC on a number

of fronts. We are particularly pleased that Natasha Klukach is here with us representing the WCC. We look forward to her greetings.

39. Within Germany I have been able to participate in the assembly of the Reformed Alliance and the EKD this last year. We are continuing our close cooperation with EMW, and I was pleased to be asked to speak (along with the LWF and WCC general secretaries) at their assembly.
40. We welcome Bishop Medardo Gomez Soto here, representing the LWF and celebrate a dynamic realization of our relationship with them. We are dialoguing fully with the LWF and the Roman Catholic Church on the process of affiliating with the JDDJ, something they have very strongly invited us to do. We are mutually committed to symbolizing our resolve to move forward with the results of the wholly positive Lutheran-Reformed dialogue. Our aspiration is to celebrate a common declaration that there are no theological impediments to full communion and unity between us and to declare a path forward to put that into practice. I attended the LWF council meeting in Geneva. And there have been several meetings at the staff level to work out the way forward. Rev. Dr Martin Junge and I maintain regular and fluid communication.
41. I attended the meeting of the Anglican's consultative committee in Lusaka, Zambia. This was the first time since 1984 that WARC/WCRC was present at an ACC meeting so this was truly historic. We have an ongoing dialogue with the Anglicans and the theme is communion. We certainly have much to learn from them as they seek to affirm communion in the face of great threats to unity.
42. There are still challenges to understand fully how to strengthen bi-lateral relations among Protestants in a way that also advances and does not impede the grand vision of visible unity with all the churches.
43. We are very pleased with successfully completion of the most recent Roman Catholic-Reformed dialogue and look forward to our 10 June audience with Pope Francis and the meetings with the PCPCU and PCJP. We welcome Fr. Avelino González-Ferrer, and look forward to a deep and dynamic fellowship and relationship with him.
44. A rich and important part of our WCRC identity and family are the United and Uniting churches. At the welcoming service when the WCRC moved to Hannover a challenge was put by a leader of the German United *Landkirche*, suggesting that a change of name might make it possible for United churches such as hers to join the WCRC. The Reformed Alliance wrote a letter to the general secretary and president suggesting we consider this or some other way to signalling the United/Uniting part of our identity. Among the proposals for constitutional revision you will find one suggesting a possible solution. Late last year the faith and order commission of the WCC convened a meeting of United and Uniting churches in Chennai. These meetings have been held every seven or so years. I attended and was excited by the energy and many questions raised about the coming together of the United/Uniting (those who want to) and the relationships with the WCC and Christian world communions like the WCRC. We seem to have the

- greatest number of United/Uniting churches and feature as a key part of our identity so we need to increase the dialogue about the imperative for unity and our relationship to the United/Uniting churches. Rev. Karen Georgia Thompson who is here was named the convener of that group. One proposal for us to consider is to make space in the general council for a presentation and dialogue with the United/Uniting group.
45. The United/Uniting meeting was hosting by the Church of South India (CSI). While at the United/Uniting meeting we were caught in the worst flooding in Chennai in a century. We are so grateful for the concern and assistance of our hosts, who attended us while reaching out to the affected, which included their own people. It was impressive to see the CSI mobilize in diaconal service and relief. We give thanks to God for this.
  46. In London I attended my first meeting of the conference of secretaries of the Christian world communions. This is an important ecumenical table. I was moved and encouraged by the level of trust and honest sharing and determination to be together of the Christian world communions.
  47. We are ably represented on the steering committee of the Global Christian Forum (GCF) by Rev. Dr Wesley Granberg-Michaelson. Jerry Pillay represented us and was a speaker at the GCF's "Discrimination, Persecution and Martyrdom" consultation and will bring his full report. We are very pleased that Dr Larry Miller, the general secretary of the GCF, is here with us and we await his comments.
  48. We are grateful for the ongoing collaboration with the United Nations office and its staff, Ryan Smith and Rev. Mark Koenig, most especially around our anti-human trafficking work. We hope as part of the final stage of the strategic plan to have a conversation and consultation about how the WCRC can be more intentional and focused in UN advocacy work with the office.
  49. I have met several times with Collin Cowan, the general secretary of the Council for World Mission, in order to strengthen our already deep and vital relationship. Although not able to be with us, Collin sends his warmest and deepest greetings. Along with a renewed mutual commitment for the re-launching of the NIFEA process, we have agreed to hold joint staff meetings in the near future. We will also have a "follow-up summit" meeting with officers to seek the next steps to the agreement we currently have including to explore the future sustainability issues in light of the one million pound endowment grant.
  50. We have guests with us from two other important ecumenical partners: WACC is with us for the second executive committee, this time represented by Lorenzo Vargas, and we wish to deepen and strengthen this relationship. We continue to explore a dynamic relationship with the WSCF and welcome the new general secretary, Necta Montes, who is here with us.
  51. Allaying fears of isolation we have received many visitors in the Hannover office, including member churches from Myanmar, Brazil,

Argentina, India and Switzerland, as well as ecumenical organizations such as the WCC and Council for European Churches.

### **Regional councils**

52. The strategic plan makes clear that we must attend to the many issues concerning empowering regions and clarifying relationships. Among the constitutional revisions proposed there is a proposal for clarification about the relationship of officers to the regional councils. There is much activity and creativity in some councils and much concern for improvement in others. The strategic plan proposes a consultation process to give the regions the attention needed.

### **Strategic plan**

53. I prepared the following proposal, which was then amended and approved by the officers, to summarize and focus our work until the 2017 General Council:

### **Final Phase: January 2016-June 2017**

#### *Introduction*

54. The 2011 Strategic Plan (SP) was put in place to guide the Communion in carrying out its vision and purpose to be a living and effective expression of "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph 4:3) in order to share in God's mission in the world.
55. The plan places a strategic emphasis on five key directions for the work and witness of the WCRC: mission, communion, justice, theology and ecumenical engagement with the overall aim that by the end of 2017 the WCRC will:

be known as a communion that unites Reformed churches in God's mission in our world. Our internal relationships will evidence the oneness for which Jesus prayed. The WCRC will have significantly contributed to the world Churches' 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 revenue from member churches. (*WCRC Strategic Plan, adopted May 2011*)

56. This plan is in its last phase with just over one year left before the 2017 General Council (2017GC). The WCRC is not where it needs to be if the high goals and aspirations set out in the plan are to be met even on the basic level. There are important achievements in some of the strategic areas and at the same time the period since 2011 has been marked by very significant challenges in terms of organisational sustainability, leading to the decision to relocate the organisational offices from Geneva, Switzerland, to Hannover, Germany, which at the same time overlapped with a transition period in the general secretariat. The living into the new vision of the WCRC as a united communion, the financial crisis, the move and the extended search for a new general secretary has meant that the WCRC has not been able to apply itself to the major challenges of the SP with the necessary vigour, focus and resources.
57. Notwithstanding, in this final phase of the SP there is the opportunity to focus on drawing the plan to a close in such a way as to maximize the achievements of the key challenges in 2016-2017 and additionally report our successes, shortcomings and learnings to the 2017GC by preparing for the meeting in such a way as to enter into the council with a focused and understood proposal for the vision of the WCRC for the 2017-2024 period in order to: inspire, mobilize, strengthen and lift up the mission of the member churches and the Communion as a whole on all levels for the renewal of the churches to contribute ecumenically, inter-religiously and with the wider global civil society for the transformation of the world in response to the call of the living God (Romans 12:2, Luke 4, Jeremiah 10:10).

### *Foci 2016*

58. The strategic focus for 2016 will be identifying a limited number of key outcomes that have to be achieved in 2016 to move the WCRC forward with its stated goals for 2017 as mentioned in the SP while at the same time contributing to and assuring the effective planning and successful meeting of the 2017GC. The council is not an end itself but will, if successful, contribute significantly to carrying out the core vision and mission of the WCRC in both consolidating communion and advancing the justice God calls for. The following lists the *key* strategic proposals; it is *not* a list of all activities or programmes already dealt with in the SP.

### *Mission*

59. While continuing to work with ecumenical partners like the WCC, CWM and EMW on a variety of mission activities our specific strategic focus will be to implement the postponed **Mission on the Frontlines** conference in the context of religion, violence and peace-building with special attention to supporting Middle Eastern and African churches. The event will be planned and implemented with a view to deepening the



collaboration between and among the offices of theology, mission and communion (TMC), justice and partnership (J&P) and general secretariat (GS) as per the SP. The event will be held in the last quarter of 2016.

### *Communion*

60. It is widely acknowledged that there needs to be more specific follow up to the 2014 Communion Consultation. The issue of human sexuality now presents itself more than ever before as both a church-dividing and communion-dividing issue. It is proposed that in the second semester of 2016 WCRC convene a **consultation on communion and human sexuality** to provide an opportunity and the safe space to explore in mutual respect how the WCRC can ensure that we maintain and deepen our unity in the face of our differences while drawing on the gifts and theological and biblical perspectives of our Reformed tradition.
61. One of the major instruments and working methods in the SP for building communion is regional councils and implementing work regionally. In fact there is considerable concern that regions are not getting the support and clarity need to function well. It is proposed that in the second half of 2016 to hold **a consultation with the members of the officers group and the leadership of the regional councils** to make specific proposals and take next steps to ensure that regional councils are appropriately empowered.

### *Justice*

62. In addition to the ongoing work of J&P it is imperative to make a bold move in 2016 to ensure WCRC leadership in **the re-launching of the NIFEA initiative** and begin to make a global impact on the urgent concerns of economic and ecological injustice. It is planned to **have a small and focused meeting in April 2016** to plan and implement next steps. Funds have been secured for the next steps. Collaboration with the WCC is already taking place for two programmes but the strategic focus is to take the NIFEA vision to the next level. In addition there will be a reinvigorating of the justice network to present a vision of WCRC justice work beyond 2017, as well as a consultation about how to strengthen our UN New York office work.
63. In gender justice the focus will include a very special focus on the full participation of women in the ministry and leadership of the church with a special report from the task group on the **ordination of women**. This includes with the GS and the executive committee concrete and specific steps to ensure the required equity and balances in the delegates to the 2017GC and ensuring full and equitable participation by women, youth and men in all WCRC events, activities and publications.

### *Theology*

64. In addition to the ongoing dialogues and *Reformed World*, a key priority will be the GIT in 2017. And there will be two specific strategic foci strongly linked to the 2017GC, with both also following up from previous dialogues and intersecting with ecumenical engagement. A consultation with member churches and decision-making concerning **WCRC association with the JDDJ** will include articulating the WCRC contribution through a signing statement on Justice and Justification which has been a focus of the Reformed-Roman Catholic Dialogue. The second special focus is follow up to the Lutheran-Reformed Dialogue aiming to make a significant contribution towards Lutheran-Reformed communion through a joint declaration to be made in the context of the 2017GC called provisionally the "**Wittenberg Declaration.**" A WCRC drafting group has been convened for the end of June to produce our proposal to the Lutherans for a road map and the content. This involves both the GS and the TMC offices.

#### *Ecumenical Engagement*

65. We are now in a better position to give the kind of leadership ecumenically that the SP imagines. **GS leadership in the WCC Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace (PJP) Reference Group and more emphasis on WCRC participation in the PJP is proposed as a priority, as well as more focus on ecumenical collaboration on key WCRC public witness foci.** In 2016 special attention will be given public witness and advocacy that is important to members of our Communion and in close collaboration with the WCC and the wider ecumenical movement, specifically:

- Peace and Reconciliation on the **Korean peninsula**: Working with the PCK, PROK, NCKK and WCC, a WCRC-led delegation to North Korea in 2016. WCRC leadership in peace advocacy.
- Supporting member churches and regional leadership in the **Colombia** Peace Process: advocacy, accompaniment, empowerment and behind-the-scenes international ecumenical diplomacy. Delegations, visits, advocacy campaigns.
- **Middle East** including Israel-Palestine: support member churches and WCC consensus advocacy.
- **South Sudan**: with the ACRC plan a pastoral visit in 2016 as part of a wider Africa visit to areas of protracted violence and conflict.
- Strengthening direct relations with other communions: the general secretary will attend the **Anglican Consultative Council** in Zambia in April. On 10 June, a meeting with **Pope Francis and the Pontifical Councils** on Christian Unity and Justice and Peace will take place. An initiative to meet with the **Mennonites** before the 2017GC will be undertaken.

### *Overarching Strategic Foci*

66. In 2016 special attention and priority must be given to **organisational sustainability**. This includes fundraising and institutional strengthening, and regional empowerment. A meeting for fundraising and fund development strategy is planned before the end of June.
67. There needs to be overall attention given to regional empowerment and networking in all activities.
68. The top priority is the effective planning in all dimensions for the 2017GC, and attending to the need to enhance regional / global synergy.

### **Conclusion**

69. The Communion is alive and active. Thanks be to God we have witnessed great demonstrations of unity, solidarity, love, service, prayer and compassion among us. We also see real threats to unity and to our Communion itself. We are being constantly called forward to greater unity, greater ecumenical engagement and greater public witness and transformation for justice for the glory of God.
70. I give a special thanks to all those who have encouraged and supported Susan and me. I offer a special thanks to the officers and for the ceaseless and fulsome support of our president, with whom it is a joy to work—and even some times great fun. Your prayers and help have upheld us with God’s help and grace.
71. The next to last word must be for the staff. Work at the WCRC is demanding, intense and stressful all too often. We have struggled to build back up to a staff team spirit we aspire to. We are getting there thanks to the dedicated efforts of Anna, Werner, Amritha, Emelda, Claudia, Katrina, Paul, Gerhard, Douwe, Hanns, Dora, Phil, Doyoung and Wan-Jou. We give thanks for your gifts, skills and dispositions to serve—and thanks to your families for their support to us through you. We give thanks in a special way for the ministry and work of Douwe, and lift him up in our prayers as he begins recovery after his first surgery.
72. Living God, renew and transform us. So be it. To God be the glory.

**GENERAL SECRETARY REPORT: APPENDIX 1  
ACTION PLAN FOR REFORMED WORLD**

With the medical leave and early retirement of Douwe Visser, discussions have taken place about how to ensure that *Reformed World* continues for the coming year. Staff have agreed to work collaboratively to produce the journal through the 2017 General Council.

Specifically, Phil Tanis will continue to coordinate the production and distribution of the journal while Chris Ferguson will act as editor in chief. Dora Arce Valentín had already been given responsibility for the content of the first issue of 2016, which will contain theological essays focused on human trafficking (articles have been solicited but not all received). Aruna Gnanadason will review the essays from the "Secularisation in Europe" conference held in Hungary earlier this year for possible use in the second issue. She will also review other submissions already received for potential future use. The third issue of 2016 and the first of 2017 will be devoted to themes that lead the Communion toward the 2017 General Council. Hanns Lessing will take the editorial lead on these.

It is also anticipated that the editorial advisory board will be re-engaged to both assist on content as well as begin to look at the action passed by last year's executive committee (which has not yet been addressed):

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.

## **GENERAL SECRETARY REPORT: APPENDIX 2 FUNDS DEVELOPMENT UPDATE**

The World Communion of Reformed Churches is a membership-based organization, primarily composed of churches/denominations. Its 225+ member churches, gathered together as a General Council, are responsible for setting the direction of the organization. Between councils, they are also responsible to fund the organization itself. This is not to say that all of the operations of the organization are funded through the membership, but it has been decided that the “core” operations of the organization should be sustained through the membership.

In order to ensure that this happens, the executive committee adopted a “grid” of membership fees, based on a number of criteria including church size and the economic context in which the church operates. The intention of the grid was to ensure that not only was the organization properly funded but that it was funded fairly and equitably.

Due to a number of factors, the levels of financial support from the membership have not been met. And while the total sum collected generally stays within a stable range, the amounts coming from each region fluctuate, with most showing a downward trends.

	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>
Membership Africa	EUR 49,292	EUR 35,393	EUR 15,313
Membership Latin America	EUR 4,784	EUR 8,488	EUR 4,149
Membership CANAAC	EUR 228,394	EUR 230,028	EUR 275,951
Membership Asia	EUR 60,770	EUR 53,901	EUR 59,909
Membership Pacific	EUR 12,054	EUR 4,720	EUR 3,714
Membership Europe (incl. SCC; 5% WCRC Europe)	EUR 510,646	EUR 467,644	EUR 473,013
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>EUR 865,940</b>	<b>800,174</b>	<b>832,049</b>

These issues were noted some time ago. It was also realized that diversifying the income of the organization was important. Programme offices have had a tradition of raising money to fund their activities. The North American Trustees have been working to create an endowment from which the WCRC can draw funds. And CWM provided a “challenge grant” to spur the fundraising endeavors:

The purpose of the grant is to initially contribute to WCRC, the recipient, an amount specified below for the creation of an

endowment fund which will be invested appropriately, ethically in acceptable form and manner to create an income stream to support the work of WCRC in the world; the grant also aims to initially establish the endowment fund in order for WCRC to raise an amount up to 10 million Swiss francs from other donors to the aforesaid endowment fund.

(Grant agreement between CWM and WCRC)

For a variety of reasons, however, fundraising efforts for an endowment or the core budget have not materialized in any significant way. Attempting to restart the process—as well as place it in a global, strategic context—last year's executive committee passed the following action:

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.

(Executive Committee Minutes 2015)

The difficulties in fundraising were also seen in the attempt to assemble such a committee. Generating names of potential participants was difficult enough. Successfully convincing people to join such a committee was even harder. In the end, a small group of consultants agreed to gather virtually for an initial discussion about the challenges of fundraising for an organization such as the WCRC. However, due to other circumstances, the meeting wasn't able to happen.

Despite the continuing absence of a global funds development plan, there has been progress on bringing additional funds to the WCRC:

- The Otto per Mille programme will be moving 350,000 euro through the WCRC on an annual basis (with a portion of that taken for administrative fees and placed in the core budget).
- Donations for the justice office were received last fall as a potential budget shortfall emerged (and was thus soon erased).
- The annual appeal in North America continues to bring in donations to the endowment fund, as well as specific projects.
- The 2017 General Council and projects associated with it have found sufficient funds to meet an ambitious budget.
- The UEK fund for the long-term stabilization of the organization was increased by roughly 37% thanks to a final donation given by the United Evangelical Churches in 2015.

And work on specific fundraising tactics is also happening:

- The North American trustees are continuing the cultivation of potential donors by supporting an “enhanced visitors programme” for the 2017 General Council.
- Discussions have begun with CWM to discuss how to better utilize their generous contribution given that using it as a challenge grant for additional fundraising is proving difficult.
- Discussions have been initiated with South Korean members to support a seconded staff member, part of whose portfolio will be focused on fundraising.

A global strategic plan to solicit and raise these funds still remains a challenge to develop. To that end, the consultants have agreed to proceed through a process that will engage each in their own contexts to better delineate and define appropriate ways to obtain funds. It is expected that a report compiling their individual inputs will be collected later this year. Once that report is finished, next steps—including the constitution of a funds development committee as called for at the 2015 Executive Committee meeting—can proceed.

**GENERAL SECRETARY REPORT: APPENDIX 3  
ACTION PLAN FOR THE REFORMED PARTNERSHIP FUND**

With the medical leave and early retirement of Douwe Visser, discussions have taken place about how to ensure a continued smooth operation of the Reformed Partnership Fund (RPF). Thankfully the RPF is blessed with Werner Joecker, an excellent coordinator, and fully functioning evaluation systems that include an active board and chairperson. None of this will change.

Chris Ferguson will assume overall responsibility for the programme (working within the established systems noted above). Chris Ferguson will take the lead position for representations of the RPF in public meetings (such as at *Brot für die Welt*), but have the option of appointing another staff member to go in his place. This includes all donor relation responsibilities.

For day-to-day operations, Phil Tanis will act as supervisor of Werner. Phil will also be the coordinator of a staff team that will gather regularly to conduct preliminary evaluations of applications (basically serving as a collective Douwe). The staff team will be comprised of Phil, Chris and Dora Arce Valentin.



**GENERAL SECRETARY REPORT: APPENDIX 4  
WCRC STRATEGIC PLAN: FINAL PHASE: 2016-JUNE 2017**

**Introduction**

The 2011 Strategic Plan (SP) was put in place to guide the Communion in carrying out its vision and purpose to be a living and effective expression of “the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:3) in order to share in God’s mission in the world.

The plan places a strategic emphasis on five key directions for the work and witness of the WCRC: mission, communion, justice, theology and ecumenical engagement with the overall aim that by the end of 2017 the WCRC will:

be known as a communion that unites Reformed churches in God’s mission in our world. Our internal relationships will evidence the oneness for which Jesus prayed. The WCRC will have significantly contributed to the world Churches’ 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 revenue from member churches.  
*(WCRC Strategic Plan, adopted May 2011)*

This plan is in its last phase with just over one year left before the 2017 General Council (2017GC). The WCRC is not where it needs to be if the high goals and aspirations set out in the plan are to be met even on the basic level. There are important achievements in some of the strategic areas and at the same time the period since 2011 has been marked by very significant challenges in terms of organisational sustainability, leading to the decision to relocate the organisational offices from Geneva, Switzerland, to Hannover, Germany, which at the same time overlapped with a transition period in the general secretariat. The living into the new vision of the WCRC as a united communion, the financial crisis, the move and the extended search for a new general secretary has meant that the WCRC has not been able to apply itself to the major challenges of the SP with the necessary vigour, focus and resources.

Notwithstanding, in this final phase of the SP there is the opportunity to focus on drawing the plan to a close in such a way as to maximize the achievements of the key challenges in 2016-2017 and additionally

report our successes, shortcomings and learnings to the 2017GC by preparing for the meeting in such a way as to enter into the council with a focused and understood proposal for the vision of the WCRC for the 2017-2024 period in order to: inspire, mobilize, strengthen and lift up the mission of the member churches and the Communion as a whole on all levels for the renewal of the churches to contribute ecumenically, inter-religiously and with the wider global civil society for the transformation of the world in response to the call of the living God (Rom 12:2, Luke 4, Jer 10:10).

## **Foci 2016**

The strategic focus for 2016 will be identifying a limited number of key outcomes that have to be achieved in 2016 to move the WCRC forward with its stated goals for 2017 as mentioned in the SP while at the same time contributing to and assuring the effective planning and successful meeting of the 2017GC. The council is not an end itself but will, if successful, contribute significantly to carrying out the core vision and mission of the WCRC in both consolidating communion and advancing the justice God calls for. The following lists the *key* strategic proposals; it is *not* a list of all activities or programmes already dealt with in the SP.

### **Mission**

While continuing to work with ecumenical partners like the WCC, CWM and EMW on a variety of mission activities our specific strategic focus will be to implement the postponed **Mission on the Frontlines** conference in the context of religion, violence and peace-building with special attention to supporting Middle Eastern and African churches. The event will be planned and implemented with a view to deepening the collaboration between and among the offices of theology, mission and communion (TMC), justice and partnership (J&P) and general secretariat (GS) as per the SP. The event will be held in the last quarter of 2016.

### **Communion**

It is widely acknowledged that there needs to be more specific follow up to the 2014 Communion Consultation. The issue of human sexuality now presents itself more than ever before as both a church-dividing and communion-dividing issue. It is proposed that in the second semester of 2016 WCRC convene a **consultation on communion and human sexuality** to provide an opportunity and the safe space to explore in mutual respect how the WCRC can ensure that we maintain and deepen our unity in the face of our differences while drawing on the gifts and theological and biblical perspectives of our Reformed tradition.

One of the major instruments and working methods in the SP for building communion is regional councils and implementing work regionally. In fact there is considerable concern that regions are not getting the support and clarity need to function well. It is proposed that in the second half of 2016 to hold **a consultation with the members of the officers group and the leadership of the regional councils** to make specific proposals and take next steps to ensure that regional councils are appropriately empowered.

## Justice

In addition to the ongoing work of J&P it is imperative to make a bold move in 2016 to ensure WCRC leadership in **the re-launching of the NIFEA initiative** and begin to make a global impact on the urgent concerns of economic and ecological injustice. It is planned to **have a small and focused meeting in April 2016** to plan and implement next steps. Funds have been secured for the next steps. Collaboration with the WCC is already taking place for two programmes but the strategic focus is to take the NIFEA vision to the next level. In addition there will be a reinvigorating of the justice network to present a vision of WCRC justice work beyond 2017, as well as a consultation about how to strengthen our UN New York office work.

In gender justice the focus will include a very special focus on the full participation of women in the ministry and leadership of the church with a special report from the task group on the **ordination of women**. This includes with the GS and the executive committee concrete and specific steps to ensure the required equity and balances in the delegates to the 2017GC and ensuring full and equitable participation by women, youth and men in all WCRC events, activities and publications.

## Theology

In addition to the ongoing dialogues and *Reformed World*, a key priority will be the GIT in 2017. And there will be two specific strategic foci strongly linked to the 2017GC, with both also following up from previous dialogues and intersecting with ecumenical engagement. A consultation with member churches and decision-making concerning **WCRC association with the JDDJ** will include articulating the WCRC contribution through a signing statement on Justice and Justification which has been a focus of the Reformed-Roman Catholic Dialogue. The second special focus is follow up to the Lutheran-Reformed Dialogue aiming to make a significant contribution towards Lutheran-Reformed communion through a joint declaration to be made in the context of the 2017GC called provisionally the **"Wittenberg Declaration."** A WCRC drafting group has been convened for the end of June to produce our

proposal to the Lutherans for a road map and the content. This involves both the GS and the TMC offices.

## **Ecumenical Engagement**

We are now in a better position to give the kind of leadership ecumenically that the SP imagines. **GS leadership in the WCC Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace (PJP) Reference Group and more emphasis on WCRC participation in the PJP is proposed as a priority, as well as more focus on ecumenical collaboration on key WCRC public witness foci.** In 2016 special attention will be given public witness and advocacy that is important to members of our Communion and in close collaboration with the WCC and the wider ecumenical movement, specifically:

- a. Peace and Reconciliation on the **Korean peninsula**: Working with the PCK, PROK, NCKK and WCC, a WCRC-led delegation to North Korea in 2016. WCRC leadership in peace advocacy.
- b. Supporting member churches and regional leadership in the **Colombia** Peace Process: advocacy, accompaniment, empowerment and behind-the-scenes international ecumenical diplomacy. Delegations, visits, advocacy campaigns.
- c. **Middle East** including Israel-Palestine: support member churches and WCC consensus advocacy.
- d. **South Sudan**: with the ACRC plan a pastoral visit in 2016 as part of a wider Africa visit to areas of protracted violence and conflict.
- e. Strengthening direct relations with other communions: the general secretary will attend the **Anglican Consultative Council** in Zambia in April. On 10 June, a meeting with **Pope Francis and the Pontifical Councils** on Christian Unity and Justice and Peace will take place. An initiative to meet with the **Mennonites** before the 2017GC will be undertaken.

## **Overarching Strategic Foci**

In 2016 special attention and priority must be given to **organisational sustainability**. This includes fundraising and institutional strengthening, and regional empowerment. A meeting for fundraising and fund development strategy is planned before the end of June.

There needs to be overall attention given to regional empowerment and networking in all activities.

The top priority is the effective planning in all dimensions for the 2017GC, and attending to the need to enhance regional / global synergy.

**DOCUMENT 3**  
**REPORT OF THE OFFICE OF THEOLOGY,**  
**MISSION AND COMMUNION**

Rev. Dr. Douwe Visser

The 2011 Strategic Plan sets five key directions:

- Mission
- Communion
- Justice
- Theology
- Ecumenical Engagement

The office of Theology, Mission and Communion (TMC) plays a substantial role in four of these five key directions.

**A. Theology**

Our next *Global Institute of Theology* (GIT) will be in 2017, in conjunction with the general council. The GIT will take place from 9 June to 7 July. I visited and booked the main venue for the GIT because from 9-28 June we will be in Wuppertal, at the *Kirchliche Hochschule* there. Thereafter we will be in Leipzig where the general council is and will stay there until the end of the council meeting.

I am glad that we have a full staff now:

President: Bas Plaisier (q.q.)  
Dean: Musa Dube  
Dean of Students: Aruna Gnanadason  
Worship Leader: Andrew Donaldson  
Secretary: Douwe Visser (q.q.)

A budget for the GIT has been made up. The GIT 2017 will be far more costly than any GIT before but it looks that we can secure finances. Preparation for this GIT is now at full speed. Preparatory meetings have taken place and are further planned and we will now look for faculty, and we will advertise for candidates to apply.

The overall theme of the GIT will be the same as of the general council, but we will especially focus on: "Confession and Confessing Church." This subtheme is inspired by having the GIT near Barmen. Organising a GIT will be of course a major part of my work, but as always I look very much forward to it.

I am involved in the preparation of a *Global Ecumenical Theological Institute* (GETI) as a sort of a follow-up of the GETI that took place at

the WCC assembly in 2013 in Busan. This GETI will take place in May 2017 in conjunction with the German *Kirchentag*. It is however very much a European event and that is why I have asked WCRC Europe to be involved in this, when possible.

One of the activities of the New International Financial and Economic Architecture (NIFEA) programme is a so-called *School on Governance, Economy and Management* (GEM). This GEM school is meant to give insight in the world of finance and what alternatives are possible. This school is, as is the NIFEA, a joint project of WCC and WCRC. As a sort of a pilot project the first event will take place in Hong Kong, 22 August-2 September. I was asked to serve on this in 2013 by the general secretary and my colleague Dora Arce. I have been involved in the preparation so far and will serve as dean of students, also giving a lecture.

Since 2011 a *global WCRC network of theologians* is active. We have had so far three meetings, in 2011, 2013 and 2014. This network also plays a role in the set-up of the curriculum of the GIT. A meeting of representatives of the network is planned for the beginning of 2017. It will not be a full plenary meeting because of all the extra work in light of the general council.

A second network I am involved in is the *WCRC Europe network of theologians*. That network played a role in the preparation of the WCRC Europe area council and acts further as a theological think-tank of WCRC Europe. It has regular meetings and works also through publications.

A third network I am involved in is *NetAct*, a network of (mainly Southern) African theological institutions. I have in the past attended several meetings of NetAct. We have supported several times the work of NetAct with Reformed Partnership Fund money. Unfortunately the Reformed Partnership Fund has not enough room to continue with this support. I have said that it might be better to see whether NetAct could be (also financially) part of the TMC programmes. However, that is not easy, and I want to bring this to further discussion how we can support NetAct in this way.

*Reformed World* had two issues in print in 2015. After the executive committee meeting it was decided that the office of TMC is fully responsible for the content of the journal. The communication office is responsible for layout and printing.

For this year as usual three issues are planned. The first one, actually planned for March, is an issue on human trafficking. My colleague Dora Arce has asked for this and takes care for collecting the articles. The

second issue, planned for September 2016 will be about "mission in secularised contexts." It will have the papers presented at the conference on this theme in Hungary, 22-26 February 2016. So the articles are there. The third issue for December will be themeless issue.

## **B. Mission**

The 2014 Executive Committee asked the TMC office to come with a response to the WCC mission document *Together towards Life*. The first part of this response was a *Reformed World* special with articles from several Reformed authors about this document. This issue appeared last year April.

The second response would be a consultation about a topic related to the document. The choice was made for the theme "mission in secularised contexts." I wanted this consultation to be of a larger group of participants than we normally have. I therefore sought cooperation first with the WCC, and thereafter we looked for cooperation with the CWM and EMW. After a long and not always easy preparation we could finally go ahead with full-scale preparation from the beginning of this year. In the end we had a wonderful consultation 22-26 February 2016, in Berekfürdő, Hungary. Fifty participants attended the conference. The participants were mainly from Europe since we focused very much on secularisation in Europe. It was an ecumenical group with a high variety and there were many young people. I myself had a presentation on "Secularisation and Culture." The papers of the conference will be published in a *Reformed World* issue.

The follow up conference of "*Mission in the Frontline*" is still in the planning. It is scheduled now for November 2016.

## **C. Ecumenical Engagement**

The year 2015 was first of all a year wherein we were involved in more ecumenical dialogues than was the case for a long time. In February 2015 we had the last full meeting of the *Catholic-Reformed* Dialogue. At that time it was clear that we could not finish the report. So an extra meeting was scheduled of a drafters group. That meeting took place beginning of November in Rome, and I myself was part of it. Hard work was done, and I can say that a good report is on its way. In many ways this report develops an ecumenical theology of justice.

The second dialogue was the *Anglican-Reformed* meeting. That one took place at the end of October 2015 in Kochin, India. It was an excellent meeting, according to all participants, and I can say here that in this ecumenical process we will develop a theology of communion.

The third was the *Pentecostal-Reformed* dialogue. This one took place beginning of December, in Antalya, Turkey. This meeting is different than the so-called classical consensus dialogue meetings. It is very much a theological joint consultation, in this case on the topic of mission. We this time talked about mission and salvation. It was by all participants characterised as a very meaningful meeting.

It has been discussed that in the composition of the dialogue teams we try to combine the objective of the formation of future ecumenical leadership by having in the teams young theologians, especially selected among former GIT students. Still I find it of importance, in the run up to the general council, to review critically the way the ecumenical dialogues are conducted.

Two important ecumenical processes have now really started. One is a possible association of the WCRC to the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* (JDDJ). Together with a number of others involved I prepared a lengthy statement that can serve as an attachment to the JDDJ upon our association. I was asked by the general secretary to do this, and together with him I have also set up a process of consulting the member churches and the relevant ecumenical partners.

Another important process is the drafting of a statement that expresses the state of communion between the WCRC and the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), the so-called Wittenberg Statement. This work is in progress, and a small but global working group has been composed to assist, coming together 28 June-2 July 2016 in Hannover.

#### **D. Communion**

First of all I was involved upon request by the general secretary to ask for an *audience* of the general secretary and some others with Pope Francis. This audience will take place 10 June 2016. I will work further on relevant preparation for this audience.

The general secretary has asked for my involvement in a follow up consultation on *the nature of communion*. We have had such a consultation in February 2014 in Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA. It is at this moment not yet known when and where this consultation will take place.

#### **Other work:**

- Two well appreciated presentations at the annual conference of the Mercersburg Society in Lancaster USA, 1-3 June 2015.



- The full organisation of a John Knox Conference about "Religions and State," 11-16 October 2015.
- Attendance of a WCC and United Nations conference on the refugee crisis, 18-19 January 2016.
- General work of preparation for the executive committee and the 2017 General Council.
- Start of preparations for the Lombard Theological Essay Prize 2016.
- Several articles for journals, *festschriften* and books.
- Supervision and involvement in the *Partnership Fund* with visits to *Brot für die Welt* (Berlin) and attendance at meetings of FAP (Geneva).

The work of the office is highly demanding and also requires a lot of fundraising. The pressure of the workload is great but the satisfaction of the work that has been accomplished compensates for it. Thanks to God's grace, the blessing of the work can be daily experienced.

**DOCUMENT 4**  
**REPORT OF THE JUSTICE AND PARTNERSHIP OFFICE**  
Rev. Dora Arce Valentín

## **Introduction**

This report includes the last part of the priorities for our justice agenda approved in 2013 and developed until 2015, although there are themes and issues that will continue as part of our content until the end of this period, 2010-2017.

As part of the evaluation of the status of our strategic plan during the last executive committee meeting, the report also intends to sketch the directions for the year ahead in terms of priorities.

In addition to that, the pattern we present follows our previous reports according to the plans approved.

### **I. 10th Anniversary of the Accra Confession and Accra+10**

The consultations celebrating the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Accra Confession in 2014 led us to the need to follow up the contents raised by our regional meetings and confirmed at the global gathering. As such, we developed what we named Accra+10 bi-regional meetings under the theme: "Gender reading of the signs of the times." The general objective of these gatherings was to reflect together through the lenses of the gender perspective and from different contexts on our challenges as churches facing the global context of violence, injustice and degradation of both human beings and nature. On the specific objectives of them we wanted:

1. To encourage the use of gender analysis within our member churches.
2. To enrich the reflection on current realities through bringing Global North and Global South perspectives together.
3. To bring to the conversation what we have recognized (in last year's consultations) as 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.
4. To support each of the area councils' commitments as part of last year's consultations, within the context of a worldwide family.
5. To empower groups like women and young people as part of our commitment to full participation in our next general council.

We organized two bi-regional consultations in partnership with some of our regional councils. The first one was held in Ghana, November 16 to 21, 2015. It brought together young women, pastors (male and female) and lay leaders from member churches in ACRC and just one participant from NEAAC. Some difficulties to engage the NEAAC leaders in the preparation culminated in just four people registered from the churches in Korea and Taiwan, but just one was present. The second meeting was organized in partnership with CANAAC and AIPRAL, January 20 to 25, 2016, in Matanzas, Cuba. This meeting also brought together young women and men engaged in gender justice issues, leaders of the regional bodies and male and female pastors. Both bi-regional meetings released final documents that are part of this report (appendices 1 and 2). These consultations raised again the need to deepen the gender analysis that brings together many justice issues we have to address as churches such as race, sexuality and disabilities. The need to bring closer the confessions of Accra and Belhar also emerged as an important task in the current context.

Our participation as one of the founders of the Oikotree movement continues to be an opportunity for us to work in partnership with WCC and CWM on justice issues and be closer to social movements with faith inspiration and their struggles for justice around the world. Oikotree is trying to expand the vision and trying to focus around specific themes around the working groups on transformative education, transformative theology, joint struggle, network and communication and resource mobilization. We are hoping to present to the executive committee the last two books published by Oikotree. At Oikotree Global Forum in Johannesburg 2013, we decided to launch a study process on the issue of land. Since then, the Transformative Theology Working Group had carried out the study process and finished its first step at the end of last year and it is now a book: *Listening to Land! Responding to Cries for Life*. In February 2015 in Matanzas, Cuba, the Transformative Education Working Group organized a longstanding workshop on the issue of transformative education in which we were engaged. Participants were asked to present a paper on the topic from their context and these papers are collected and have been published together with a comprehensive report of the Matanzas workshop: *Life-Enhancing Learning Together*. We hope hard copies will be available in our meeting. Nevertheless, electronic copies are available on our website.

## **II. Human Trafficking**

As part of our efforts to create awareness about human trafficking as part of economic systems that transform human beings into commodities, we are continuing to develop the “Broken for You” project. As in years before we continue to expand our networks and get to know better how some of our member churches are already working around

the issue of human trafficking. We also continue our collaboration with our United Nations office in New York.

From July 20 to 25, 2015, the working group met again in El Paso, Texas. We had the opportunity to organize it closely with the PC(USA) Presbytery of Tres Ríos and their co-mission workers for the churches in the borders. In that sense we had the opportunity to visit and engage in conversations with churches, church projects and communities working specially with the theme of trafficking, the pandemic waves of femicide in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, (on the border with the USA), the impact on the communities, how different organizations are working to support the families of the victims and for legal actions against the victimizers.

We developed the working plan for the next two years with a focus on gender violence and violence against sexual minorities, as a result of the previous experiences. Part of the outcome of the meeting was framing our objectives as:

1. Focus on systemic patriarchy with a just life approach and facilitating connections of churches, sharing life stories.
2. Engage churches with systemic injustices, sharing stories of resistance from a theology of just life.
3. Provide materials to focus on gender violence through a contextual approach.
4. Offer the ability to engage with networks in their context giving tools to discern.

We agreed to deepen the theological reflection around all those approaches so among other things we are preparing, in partnership with our theology office, one issue of *Reformed World* focused on human trafficking.

As part of our engagement with some of our regional councils we participated in a consultation on human trafficking organized by WCRC Europe and the *Reformierter Bund* in Germany, October 22-24, 2015, where member churches reported from their own contexts. Prior to that meeting we had the opportunity to share more about our "Broken for You" project in a human trafficking conference in Scotland through one of our working group member located in the UK.

### **III. New International Financial and Economic Architecture**

According to the document produced by the staff involved in this ecumenical project (WCRC, WCC, CWM, LWF), "Working Together Towards a New International Financial and Economic Architecture," (cfr. Document 4: Justice and Partnership, Report to the Executive

Committee, III.1) we affirmed the need to work together the six priorities the ecumenical panel identified. We also convened for 2015 to jointly work on the following two priorities: the Ecumenical School for an Economy of Life and the Interfaith Conference on Alternative Banking.

The Ecumenical School for an Economy of Life arises from the Sao Paulo Statement which called for "*[a]n ecumenical school of Governance, Economics and Management (GEM) [to] be established to develop economic competencies and empowerment within the ecumenical movement.*" Envisaged to take place annually, the school aims to equip churches with the tools to enable them to engage in advocacy for a new international financial and economic order at global and national levels. It will contribute to the larger objective of building movements advocating for an economy of life. To take place in Hong Kong the pilot course will train 30 church leaders and young people selected by the four ecumenical organisations. The WCRC named our executive secretary for theology and communion, Douwe Visser, to represent us in the process of organizing and preparing this initiative. The school will take place during the summer of this 2016 and the WCRC will have the responsibility as a dean of the school.

An interfaith workshop on faith and finance took place in Bangkok, Thailand, November 27 and 28, 2015. It was organized by the WCC with participants from Buddhist, Muslim and Christian faiths. The outcome of this gathering is also attached to this report (appendix 3), and a book is in process and will be published with the support of the WCRC.

At the moment we are preparing this report we are organizing a meeting of a working group to implement next steps to re-launching NIFEA as a joint ecumenical initiative under the leadership of the WCRC with the objective to make a global impact on the current economical systemic injustices and move forward with the priorities proposed by the ecumenical panel.

#### **IV. Gender Justice**

As in previous periods we continue to manage the theological education scholarship for women. At this moment we have five women studying with our financial support, from Myanmar, Ethiopia, Venezuela and India. Although in the last year we have been able to reach more member churches we still need to improve the ways in which we promote this initiative that is part of our commitment to empower women through theological training toward ordination. We are working in cooperation with the communication office in promoting the

scholarship and sharing stories about the women and member churches around the world who benefited from it.

We continue our work in partnership with our UN Office to promote UN campaigns against gender violence through Orange Day, SayNo-Unite and HeforShe. They are all designed to create awareness about violence against women and children, working toward the end of them. As we do every year, we actively participated in the "16 Days of Activism," producing resources for churches, lay people, etc., and engaged each day to learn more about sexual and gender base violence. The 2015 the focus was girls with power and dignity. Our participation on this joint effort includes also our communication office.

The Task Group on Women's Ordination met twice face to face. The first meeting took place October 16-18, 2015, in Hannover, Germany. The second meeting took place January 25-28, 2016, in Havana, Cuba. A summary of both meetings is attached to this report and includes the document named "Toward a Declaration of Faith on Women's Ordination" for your consideration (see appendix 4).

## **V. Other activities**

The executive secretary participated in the meeting of the Oikotree facilitating group in Seoul, July 6-9, 2015.

The executive secretary participated in the workshop organized by the office of the coordinator for the general council, in preparation for the booklet on the conference theme in Hannover, September 28-29, 2015.

The executive secretary participated in the meeting of the planning group preparing the "16 Days of Activism" in Geneva, October 2, 2015.

The executive secretary represented our general secretary in a church leaders consultation on the refugee crisis organized by the WCC and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria (ELKB), in Munich, October 29, 2015.

The executive secretary led Bible studies at the 3rd International Theological Colloquium for Transformative Ecumenism, organized by Korea Institute for Future Ecumenism (KIFE), 11-16 January 2016, in Moshi, Tanzania.

The executive secretary participated in the Migration and Aggression in Europe conference, organized by WCRC Europe and *Reformierter Bund* in cooperation with other partners, 17-20 February 2016, in Emden, Germany.

The executive secretary worked in partnership with our general secretary and the executive for communication in promoting solidarity with member churches at their request or our regional councils' request. Issues related with gender and economic and environmental injustices as communities struggle for peace were the fundamental content of our stands in communion with them.

The executive secretary worked in close partnership with the executive for communication in providing information and support to use in our social media and on our website to promote our work for justice. The executive secretary also worked closely with our theology and mission programme to develop theological support to our commitment for justice and communion.

## **VI. Final considerations**

A spirit of gratitude for the commitment of my colleagues, our officers and the members of our working groups and the core group supporting our work for justice as the heart of our ecumenical engagement.

To God be the glory!

## **JUSTICE AND PARTNERSHIP OFFICE: APPENDIX 1**

### **MESSAGE FROM THE ACRC/NEAAC BI-REGIONAL CONSULTATION, HELD AT APAADE LODGE HOTEL, TESANO, GHANA FROM THE 16<sup>TH</sup> TO 21<sup>ST</sup> NOVEMBER, 2015**

Delegates of the two regions of the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC)—the Africa Communion of Reformed Churches (ACRC) and Northeast Asia Area Council (NEAAC)—met in a bi-regional consultation under the theme “*Gender Reading of the Signs of Times: Bi-regional Conversations, Accra Confession + 10*” in Tesano, Accra, Ghana, 16-21 November 2015.

The general objective of the consultation was to reflect together through the lenses of gender perspective and different contexts on our challenges as churches facing the global situation of violence, injustice and degradation of both human beings and nature.

Opening each day with a Bible study, the consultation set off on quite an engaging mode, with various voices attempting to deconstruct as well as read various texts in the Bible—Esther, Gospel of Mark and Revelation, from a womanist perspective.

In the keynote address, the centrality of the Word of God was reiterated. Drawing from the experience of the 24<sup>th</sup> General Council of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches from which came the Accra Confession, the radical implications of the reading of the signs of times and Scripture to our faith was emphasized; unless we act out of faith against the realities we see, our integrity is at stake. A question worth asking is whether things have changed since the General Council in 2004, and how the church can then continue looking on when there is so much brokenness: human trafficking, enslavement in our very countries, current arrangement of the world’s economy, domestic violence, unemployment, sexual harassment. We heard also from Northeast Asia Area Council about discrimination and violence against diverse sexualities. The conclusion was that the Church needs to put its house in order first and be able to critique itself. Various presentations, which reflected experiences from various contexts helped to emphasize the point above; the struggle continues.

To enable the delegates to have a deeper understanding of the question of justice from the painful history of slavery, the ACRC organized a moving visit to the Elmina Castle in Ghana. The hypocrisy demonstrated in having a Reformed chapel above the female dungeon where human beings were commoditized, maltreated and starved to death when they resisted inhuman actions like rape, and the general treatment of all the slaves demonstrates how the Church can allow itself



to become the cultural guardian of the symbols of domination and subjugation—an apostasy to the mission of the church.

The delegation was honoured to be warmly welcomed by leaders of both the Presbyterian Church of Ghana (PCG) and the Evangelical Presbyterian Church Ghana (EPC) and a host of other local members which included a choir. The week's experiences will remain memorable, as well as serve as a catalyst as we prayerfully engage in working and waiting for the new earth, a context in which righteousness and justice flow like a river.

After a process of discernment and studying the Word of God the delegates committed to work at the following issues and call the attention of all the member churches to the same:

1. Churches to facilitate training and re-training of ministers in order to have life-affirming biblical interpretation.
2. Work at amending policies and constitutional provisions that impede the full participation of all, for instance in the area of women and ordination, so that men, women, youth and children are not only represented but have a voice.
3. Develop a Bible study model for use in local churches to encourage participation.
4. Enhance the network between the member churches, regions and the international Communion and support their work as well as ensure fair representation in the same for all delegations.
5. Create/strengthen justice desks in all our member churches.
6. Break the silence!

## JUSTICE AND PARTNERSHIP OFFICE: APPENDIX 2

25 January 2016  
Matanzas, Cuba

May the grace, mercy and peace of our Lord, Jesus Christ, be with you!

It is with great joy and gratitude to our God that we share the outcomes of the continental consultation, *A Gender Reading of the Times: Bi-regional Conversations with Accra 10+*. We gathered in the *Seminario Evangélico de Teología* in Matanzas, Cuba, to celebrate, consider and evaluate the reality of our countries under the guidance of the Word, around the contemporary implications of the confessions of Belhar and Accra. The breadth and diversity of our Americas and the Caribbean space of our gathering challenged us to contextualize our dialogues.

The Bible studies, lectures and learnings we shared launched our reading of violence throughout our continent and worldwide through six lenses:

1. *gender studies* as an instrument for the empowerment for women and as a space for the articulation of new masculinities towards the encouragement of equity in gender relations and a life of solidarity;
2. the ominous and problematic reality of *discrimination on the basis of race and origin* throughout our region, and the insidious ways in which this discrimination is particularly disenfranchising to indigenous communities, persons of African descent, and peoples who are displaced and migrated;
3. *discrimination based on the socioeconomic status of the individual*, the reality of poverty in our countries, and the relentless increase in the gap between the rich and the rest of the population;
4. the *complex and undeniable correlation between poverty, racism and the undervaluing of women, and their sociocultural, political and religious elements*;
5. the *manifold manifestation of violence, a plague throughout our Americas*, and the ways this violence is primarily present in the lives of women, children and disenfranchised peoples; and
6. *the environment requiring actions of protection and reconstruction from the People of God.*

The conversations that ensued revealed multiple convergences and proposals towards pastoral and missional work that witness and act to justice. We affirm that the work before us challenges us to understand ourselves as members of a great Christian Reformed family that shares mission and ministry in solidarity and collaboration as the Body of Christ

throughout our continents. This level of solidarity requires of us that we reclaim a spirituality that encourages our relationships and Reformed theological thought.

We are called to a mission of justice that requires from us public and political action. We are called to denounce the unjust systems and to work toward justice and equity, to articulate new models of relationship, and to sojourn with the people for and towards peace. In that walking with the people, we are expected to denounce the way mass media continues to create images that encourage discrimination and the commodification of people. This requires a church leadership that is committed to our Reformed faith and mission and to these projects through local, national and regional acting.

We recognize that there is much that lies ahead on our way to live up to the ways the Belhar and Accra confessions call and challenge our global Reformed family. We also affirm how the Gospels challenge our mission, and how they articulate an unavoidable call to denounce the issues mentioned above. And so we call upon the WCRC—the Executive Committee, its secretaries and directors, and the 2017 General Council—to affirm the essential unity of the Christian Reformed family through concerted efforts toward peace, solidarity, human dignity and creation justice throughout our continents and the world.

In the love of Christ,

*Joy Evelyn Abdul-Mohan*, Presbyterian Church of Trinidad and Tobago  
*Dora Arce Valentín*, Presbyterian-Reformed Church in Cuba and World  
Communion of Reformed Churches

*Darío Barolín*, Waldensian Evangelical Church of the Río de la Plata, and  
the Alliance of Presbyterian and Reformed Churches in Latin America  
(AIPRAL)

*Helis Barraza Díaz*, Presbyterian Church of Colombia and vice president  
for Latin America, World Communion of Reformed Churches

*Luis Berner Romero*, Presbyterian Church of Colombia

*Molly Casteel*, Presbyterian Church (USA)

*Yoharlys Cribeiro*, Presbyterian Church of Venezuela

*Loida de Valera*, Presbyterian Church of Venezuela

*Rosa Herández Bustos*, Presbyterian Church of Colombia

*Gaitri-Singh Henry*, Guyana Presbyterian Church

*Shannon Jammal-Hollemans*, Christian Reformed Church in North  
America

*Karen Horst*, Presbyterian Church in Canada

*María Jiménez*, Presbyterian Church of Venezuela

*Kelvin Marte Sena*, Evangelical Dominican Church

Executive Committee 2016

*Yvette Noble Bloomfield*, United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands and vice president for the Caribbean and North America, World Communion of Reformed Churches

*Ofelia Ortega*, Presbyterian-Reformed Church in Cuba

*Gustavo Quintero-Casadiago*, Boriquén Presbyterian Synod of Puerto Rico, coordinator for youth department AIPRAL

*Miguel A. Rosa Morales*, Boriquén Presbyterian Synod of Puerto Rico

*Yilza Saliva*, Boriquén Presbyterian Synod of Puerto Rico

*Amaury Tañón-Santos*, Presbyterian Church (USA), Hispanic/Latino Caucus

*Karen Georgia Thompson*, United Church of Christ

*Edelberto Valdés*, Presbyterian-Reformed Church in Cuba

*Lisa Vander Wal*, Reformed Church in America and convener of Caribbean and North America Area Council (CANAAC)

## JUSTICE AND PARTNERSHIP OFFICE: APPENDIX 3

### **An Interfaith Call for Justice and Compassion in Finance 29 November 2015, Bangkok, Thailand**

We, the participants of the Workshop on Faith and Finance, came together in Bangkok, Thailand from the 28th to 29th of November 2015 to reflect upon the role of money and finance in the current economic and social order from our perspectives as Buddhists, Christians, and Muslims. Building on previous ecumenical initiatives and interreligious discussions, this workshop organized by the World Council of Churches sought to identify common ground for joint engagement and build mutual trust towards developing interfaith initiatives to transform the current international financial architecture which harms people and Earth. What connects us is our shared conviction of the need to revisit the market logic of the global financial system and critically re-think and constructively re-envision the functions of money and finance.

#### **A Framework for Engagement: An Interrelated Narrative of the Self**

A viable and holistic framework for addressing structural greed recognizes it as promoting a delusional narrative of the self as an isolated entity that is rightfully obsessed with its individual interests. Such a fragmented and fictitious understanding undermines and destroys an inter-relational narrative of the self which is at the heart of our faith traditions.

In a globalized context which echoes the belief that "outside the market there is no salvation," financial structures have normalized greed through the dynamic of continual growth. This growth, which is ecologically unsustainable, is driven by usury, indebtedness, fractional reserve banking and speculation. The pervasiveness of this system often elicits our complicity.

Constructing a new international financial architecture for an economy of life requires a counter-narrative based on inter-connectedness and ethics of reciprocity. This is at the core of our spirituality and helps us to rediscover that the source of our well-being lies in our 'inter-being.'

Spiritual precepts found in our faith traditions such as *Kalyana Mitra* (good friendship), *Koinonia* (fellowship/communion), *Ubuntu* ("I am because we are") and *Ummah* (community) refute the current monoculture that "I am what I have," enabling us to regain the essence of our common humanity.

#### **A Search for an Economy of Life driven by Generosity, Community and Solidarity**

Despite using the rhetoric of freedom, our present financial system is highly exploitative and enslaves all. It disenfranchises and impoverishes many while enriching a few. Both rich and poor are dehumanized. The logic of prioritizing profits before people and the Earth reduces human beings and nature into a set of commodities, stripping them and disembodimenting them of their social, cultural and spiritual dimensions.

**JUSTICE AND PARTNERSHIP OFFICE: APPENDIX 4**  
**REPORT OF THE WORKING GROUP ON WOMEN'S ORDINATION**  
Rev. Dora Arce Valentín

The 2015 Executive Committee approved the creation of a task group to work on the issue of women's ordination. We called for the first meeting for this task group with the purpose of:

1. Strategizing about further steps that need to be taken in order to fulfill the mandate of the UGC, taking into consideration the implications that women's ordination has on the nature of communion and in the struggles for gender justice.
2. Studying the issue of ordination (of women and men) so as to critically assess the role of ordained ministry that can play in sharpening the prophetic witness, mission and contribution of the churches in a world of grave injustice and discrimination.
3. Producing resource materials to facilitate dialogue within and among member churches to stay in dialogue on the various implications for their own lives and in their accountability to each other and with the executive committee of the WCRC.
4. Presenting proposals to our next executive committee about specific recommendations they should consider to complete the mandate they gave us as a task group.

From 13-16 October 2015 we met in our offices in Hannover, Germany.

**Participants:** *Dr. Jane Dempsey Douglass, Rev. Dr. HyeRan Kim-Cragg, Rev. Carola Tron, Rev. Dr. Marjorie Lewis, Rev. Dr. Jerry Pillay(WCRC President), Rev. Chris Ferguson(WCRC General Secretary).*  
**Excused:** *Rev. Dr. Mary-Anne Plaatjies van Huffel, Rev. Sandy Horsburgh, Rev. Dr. Septemmy Lakawa.* **WCRC Staff:** *Rev. Dr. Dora Arce Valentín*

During our time together we prayed, we shared experiences and stories of our journey as women and men of faith and in relation with the role of women in our lives; we went through the memories about how our organization reflected and discussed the issue of women's ordination from even before Seoul (WARC, 1989) and to Debrecen (WARC, 1997), from there to Accra (WARC, 2014) and more recently in 2010 at the Uniting General Council.

We identified our tasks as follows:

**Toward our next Executive Committee, May 2016**

- a) To present a report of this task group meetings with specific recommendations including some contents for the justice and partnership office to work with.

- b) To present the first draft of a proposal to the executive committee members for them to agree how to proceed toward the 2017 General Council.

**Toward our coming General Council, June-July 2017**

- a) Offered to the team writing the booklet on preparation for the GC to write about these issues from the perspective of the theme: "Living God, renew and transform us." We will ask Rev. Dr. Ofelia Ortega and Dr. HyeRam Kim-Cragg to be the writers.
- b) Engaged the participants of the both pre-councils for youth and women on the reflections about women's and youth empowerment, women's ordination, etc.
- c) Ask the executive secretary for theology and mission and the faculty of the coming GIT to include as part of the syllabus the theme of women's ordination and leadership, sexism in the church, gender justice, etc.
- d) Develop ways for us to accompany churches that do not yet ordain women to help them move forward. Some of the documents, resources and the booklet we will produce can be used as resources for them.

**About publications and strategies to develop with the communication office, engaging our executive secretary for communication**

- a) Collect and share stories of: women struggling with issues of ordination and leadership within their churches, women in leadership in the past within WARC/REC, ecumenical partners (WCC/CWM/WSCF) and in our own member churches, leaders of member churches who recently move to ordinations (like the Christian Reformed Church, Independent Presbyterian de Brazil, Presbyterian Church in Korea, and others)
- b) Collect and share stories of our current women leaders and their struggles, hopes and visions. Among executive committee members, current female leaders at national or regional levels, etc.
- c) To develop a booklet with the main theological and biblical core issues (rationale) about women's ordination and its role within the frame of gender justice and women empowerment for mission. It will also include some content about a transformative vision of ministry and the ministries within the community (from a Reformed perspective). The introductory document that Rev. Carola Tron is preparing will be part of the booklet.
- d) Collect new research in the Reformed family on gender justice, ordination of women and related issues, for example, recent research by HyeRan and the United Church in Jamaica and the



Cayman Islands research on mainstreaming gender within the denomination.

**Other tasks that will come as part of the working plan for the executive for justice and partnership for the coming years after 2017**

- a) Engage justice networks and key leaders in our regional councils with the discussion about women empowerment, women's ordination, women leadership, gender justice issues including working with our own resources like *From Hegemony to Partnership: A Church Manual on Men as Partners. Promoting Positive Masculinity*.
- b) Study the possibility to develop a gender policy for the WCRC. The process should include a research on member churches policies, synod or general assembly reports about these issues, etc.
- c) Develop workshop within the regional councils promoting our own resources and our gender justice core approaches.
- d) Engaging theological education institutions, seminaries and others on encouraging students to research and support our struggles for gender justice, addressing women's challenges within the churches, their ecclesiological responses to the current structures of the churches that reproduce hegemonic-patriarchal power relations and exclude vocations and gifts within their own communities. Using our scholarship for women grants for these theological students to work on their thesis by doing research on these issues and realities, could be another way to stimulate it.
- e) Working with our theology and mission desk to create a network of women in theological education that could support our work.

From 25-28 January 2016 our group had the second face-to-face meeting in Havana, Cuba.

**Participants:** *Dr. Jane Dempsey Douglass, Rev. Dr. HyeRan Kim-Cragg, Rev. Carola Tron, Rev. Dr. Mary-Anne Plaatjies van Huffel, Rev. Dr. Jerry Pillay(WCRC President), Rev. Chris Ferguson(WCRC General Secretary).* **Excused:** *Rev. Sandy Horsburgh, Rev. Dr. Septemmy Lakawa. Rev. Dr. Marjorie Lewis.* **WCRC Staff:** *Rev. Dr. Dora Arce Valentín*

After sharing the stage of our previous commitments we focused on the draft prepared by Dr. Jane Douglas, its contents and the final purpose. We had a very deep discussion and we enriched the proposal.

After two days of intense work we completed our task with a document we named: "Toward a Declaration of Faith on Women's Ordination," and the document is attached to this report.

We also agreed to present to our coming executive committee meeting, May 2016 in Havana, the following recommendations:

**The executive committee agrees:**

- a. on the formulation of a "Declaration of Faith on Women's Ordination" to be tabled at the 2017 General Council and instructs the executive secretary for justice and partnership, in consultation with the general secretary, to undertake the necessary measures to expedite this.**
- b. that the document "Toward a Declaration of Faith on Women's Ordination" forms the basis for the drafting of this declaration.**

## **TOWARD A DECLARATION OF FAITH ON WOMEN'S ORDINATION**

**A Declaration of Faith:** God, through the Holy Spirit, calls both women and men to participate fully in all the ministries of the church.

This declaration testifies to our belief that women and men were created equally in the image of God and that they therefore should be treated with equal respect and dignity. It testifies to the profound unity of all who have been baptized. It testifies to our experience over centuries that God has been calling both women and men to ministries of spiritual leadership and granting them the gifts and graces to carry out those roles. In some of the cultural contexts in which our churches live today, this declaration goes against the prevailing ethos. Thus faithful Christians are often called to be countercultural. Theological integrity and justice require that the churches of the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) in solidarity courageously declare their commitment to assure that both women and men have equal standing to reflect their common incorporation into the body of Christ in baptism and service.

The churches of the WCRC now pledge that our common practice will be to welcome into ordained ministry women who experience that call and who demonstrate the gifts necessary for leadership and service in church ministries. Their placement and any compensation will be determined on the same basis as for men.

### **The Context**

*Why do we make this declaration now?*

Emerging from the women's pre-assembly at the Uniting General Council in Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA, the issue about commitment to full partnership between women and men led to affirm the need to work toward making ordination of women binding for the Communion in addition to achieve 50% of representation of women on the executive committee.

The Uniting General Council also affirmed the ordination as central to the understanding of communion and state: "True unity cannot be realized in a context where the call of God to women to actualize their gifts in the ministry of Word and Sacrament is not recognized."<sup>1</sup> As part of the recommendations approved the WCRC committed to "...promote the ordination of women and work toward a time when the ordination of women will be binding on communion."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Record of Proceedings, United General Council 2010, Grand Rapids, USA,

<sup>2</sup> Idem

To achieve these mandates, we believe we have to work toward a declaration of faith, and this document attempts to address this issue.

The brutality of the treatment of women across the world today reflects a long-standing view in some cultures that women are by nature inferior to men, born to serve and obey men, that the girl is less valuable than the boy, that women deserve neither respect nor dignity. We see that the girl and the mother are often the last in the family to be fed and are the least educated, so that their life possibilities are limited. We see mass rape of girls and women used as a weapon of war with appalling consequences. We see women forbidden to leave their homes and take part in the wider life of society. Even in highly developed nations, women are paid less for the same work than men, sometimes have restricted access to healthcare and are rarely fully represented in national governing structures.

Churches rightly protest assaults on the human rights of women, but their moral authority is compromised when they demonstrate by their institutional life that they, too, believe in the inferiority of women and their incapacity to serve as ordained church leaders. The churches' refusal to ordain women is experienced by them as painful oppression, robbing them of their proper dignity. Even when the women have been ordained, they often face discrimination and marginalization.

The churches of the Reformed family today, spanning the globe and rooted in diverse cultures, have the opportunity and the obligation to witness before the world that women and men alike are created in the image of God, deserve equal respect and dignity, and can find in the institutional life of the church an affirmation of those beliefs. The ordination of women is a powerful witness to the equality of women and men in the eyes of God. It is also an expression of gratitude for women's rich gifts of leadership that invigorate the life of the churches.

### **The Biblical Foundation: Creation and New Creation**

The Bible, foundation of Reformed belief and practice, has been used to support both the approval and disapproval of women's ordination. The Bible in fact both reflects and challenges the patriarchal world in which it was written, prompting us to define a hermeneutical lens through which to interpret the Bible. The Reformed Christians generally read the Bible in the light of the liberating Gospel of Jesus Christ, aided by critical biblical scholarship and rigorous reflection and discernment in the community of faith, upheld by prayer. This approach discerning

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God's will avoids simply studying and citing isolated texts. God's grace for the whole of creation leads us to approach the Bible embracing mercy, justice and liberation in the face of the fallen world and structures of oppression. Galatians 5:1: "For freedom, Christ has set us free." There has been a fundamental shift in critical scholarship that has supported a renewed understanding of the equality proclaimed in the Gospel. This has guided us in our firm conviction that the ordination of women is a fully biblical imperative. We will sketch the basis of that belief, focusing on two texts: Genesis 1:27 and Galatians 3:28.

**Creation:** Genesis 1:27-28: "So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them, God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth'"(NRSV).

Fundamental to our understanding of the proper role of women is this verse, announcing at the very beginning of the biblical narrative that women and men together are created in God's image. This is a statement of equality and solidarity. Neither here nor in the following verse's charge to be fruitful and multiply and have dominion over the earth is there any suggestion of division of labor by sex or of women's subordination.

Opponents of women's ordination often point to Genesis 2:18: "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner" (NRSV). The term "helper" has been seen as a sign of subordination. In the Hebrew, however, the word carries the opposite connotation. Elsewhere in the Hebrew Scriptures the same word often describes God creating and saving Israel, a source of strong support. The recognition by the man in Genesis 2:23 that the woman is "bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh" is again a declaration of mutuality and solidarity.

We reject theologies that teach that women are by their biological nature inferior to men, or that women reflect the image of God less fully than men, or that women's proper role is limited to procreation and the domestic realm, excluding them from taking public responsibility within creation.

God's intention at creation is equality and solidarity between women and men in harmony with all creation. After the fall both the woman and the man experience distortion of those relationships. In Genesis 3:16, the woman hears that she should be subject to her husband as punishment for sin, and the man is punished by the cursing of the land and his labor. The biblical narrative continues then to portray a patriarchal society. Jewish women in the Hebrew Scriptures rarely

appear in official leadership. We do read of Queen Esther and of Deborah the judge, and of prophets like Miriam, Deborah, Huldah and Nodiah. A rich succession of able women nonetheless pervades the biblical text, such as the clever Hebrew midwives in Egypt, and the beloved Ruth with her own book.

**New Creation:** Galatians 3:27-28: "As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus" (NRSV).

The ministry of Jesus portrays many challenges to the oppressive practices of society, where public contact between women and men was strictly regulated. For example, he intervened against stoning of the woman taken in adultery. He allowed the hemorrhaging woman to touch his garment, and he healed her. He was surrounded by both women and men as disciples and empowered them in life and ministry. He taught about the reign of God that was already beginning among them and that would upend the current way of life. His intimate friendships with Mary and Martha permitted them to engage in theological conversation. He accepted the Syro-Phoenician woman's challenge to his understanding of his mission, and yielded to her plea to heal her daughter. He crossed the conventional boundary by engaging in a conversation with the Samaritan woman at the well, talking with her at length, and enabling her to return to her community and minister by sharing the good news. His interaction with Mary Magdalene transformed her into a faithful disciple who witnessed the resurrection. After his resurrection, he appeared to women disciples and sent them to tell the others that he lived. These examples demonstrate the countercultural nature of Jesus's ministry and indicate the value and significance Jesus gave to women in ministry.

In the band of disciples that gathered in Jerusalem to pray after Jesus' resurrection were "certain women, including Mary, the mother of Jesus" (Acts 1:14, NRSV). All were present at Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came upon them. Peter, addressing the people of Jerusalem to explain how the resurrected Jesus was the Messiah, took his text from the prophet Joel: "In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy...Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my spirit, and they shall prophesy" (Acts 2:17-18, NRSV; cf. Joel 2:28-9). In this new era of the reign of God where the Spirit has been poured out, women will have a far more egalitarian role than before. So it should not surprise us to read in the book of Acts about women prophets like the daughters of Philip, about Priscilla with her husband teaching the preacher Apollos and accompanying Paul on his

journey, risking their necks for him, he says, and about the women hosting house churches. Paul speaks warmly and gratefully about his women colleagues in ministry: among them Junia the apostle; Phoebe, the minister (or deacon) of the church of Cenchreae; Priscilla and Mary. Some had been jailed with him (Romans 16:1-16). The widows who cared for the poor (I Timothy 5) were understood by John Calvin to be part of the office of deacon. There are many records in the early centuries of the ordained women deacons.

It is in the context of the new creation, where the Holy Spirit calls those least expected to give leadership, that we read Galatians 3:27-28 as part of an ancient baptismal rite. All who are called into faith and baptized into Christ's body have become one family where human barriers accepted by society must fall. We know from the book of Acts how difficult a struggle it was for those early Christians to accept that the barrier between Jews and Gentiles, previously sanctioned by religion, had been broken by the work of the Holy Spirit. Yet a clear decision was made that gentiles given the gift of faith must be accepted into the community without circumcision. Some of our churches were still struggling in the late nineteenth century with the implications of that phrase "no longer slave or free," but the teaching of the Bible eventually led them to decide that slavery was morally wrong and that Christians could not be slave-holders. It took another century for some of our churches to understand that the racial barrier has also been broken by the Holy Spirit, and there can be no racially segregated churches. Our Reformed family at the WARC General Council in Ottawa in 1982 declared that apartheid (which had extended to church structures) is sin, and justifying it morally and theologically is "a travesty of the Gospel, and in its persistent disobedience to the Word of God, a theological heresy."

We now are at a moment in history when our churches must declare that among the baptized there is no longer male and female. This means that men can no longer be exclusively privileged with church leadership.

### **Experience in the Life of the Church**

Women lost their equality with men in the Church in the early centuries as the house churches moved out into public spaces, and the Church became institutionalized. Theologians living in the dualistic thought of the Hellenistic world lost the Hebraic belief in the goodness of creation. They adopted from Greek philosophy and Roman law unbiblical views of the subordination and inferiority of women. Thomas Aquinas, for example, adopted Aristotle's view of women as defective males, damaged in the process of gestation. Apart from some women deacons in the East who marched with the clergy in the early middle ages, the

only official role available to medieval women in the church was that of a nun; but some nuns did exercise remarkable influence. Christine de Pisan, a lay woman, set off around 1400 a centuries-long literary debate about the nature of women in which she challenged the theologians' assumptions. Marie Dentiere in the early years of the Reformation in Geneva took up this debate, insisting that the liberating Gospel called on women to speak and write, and she did. She asked, "Are there two gospels, one for men, another for women?" Women writing in this tradition pointed out the varied roles of women in the New Testament, reading the Bible very differently than either Catholic or Protestant male theologians. Attempts were made to silence these women.

Luther's Reformation, honored in 2017 at its 500th anniversary, gave to all of Protestantism the concept of the priesthood of all believers, the right of all the baptized to stand before God to pray for one another and to teach one another divine things, declaring God's gracious love and forgiveness to one another. This priesthood is distinct, however, from public ministry on behalf of a congregation. Both Lutheran and Reformed theologians repudiated the Aristotelian view of women, gave greater dignity to marriage, and even encouraged women to join congregational singing in public worship. Nonetheless they did not understand the priesthood of all believers to undermine the tradition of exclusively male clergy carrying out public ministry. After five hundred years, it is time for us to declare that a full understanding of the priesthood of all believers calls for equality of women and men in public ministry as well.

The ordination of women already has a long-standing tradition in the Reformed family. The Congregationalists have been ordaining women ministers since 1853, when Antoinette Brown became the first woman Congregational minister. The Cumberland Presbyterian Church ordained Louisa Woosley in 1889, but no other Presbyterians followed for many years. There have been women deacons since at least the late 19th century, and women elders since at least the 1930's. Since the middle of the twentieth century, however, increasing numbers of Reformed churches around the world have been regularly ordaining women as ministers, elders and deacons, and today most do so. Therefore, we have abundant evidence that women in diverse cultures on every continent can become fine theologians and have fruitful ministries. Our churches have confirmed through their experience with faithful women leaders that God is indeed calling women to ordained ministries and through them strengthening the churches.

Through history and in the present there is a disturbing recurrent experience in churches that do not ordain women. It is the disjunction of ordination from the practice of functions ordinarily related to ordained ministry. In all our churches women carry out tasks that



churches with Presbyterian governance typically assign to elders and deacons; yet where ordination of women is refused, women carry out those tasks without the authority of office, without the ability to participate in the decision-making of governing bodies, and without the collegial support of ordained colleagues. In unusual situations of flux and transition, where pastors are scarce, where men are at war, on the mission field and in remote locations, able women are also called to exercise pastoral functions. They organize churches, lead public worship, preach, lead and teach in theological schools, and provide pastoral care. Yet even if they are theologically educated, they, too, lack the authority of office, participation in governing bodies, and collegial support, and they cannot offer the sacraments. They are also paid much less than pastors. The Reformed tradition has closely tied ordination to the functions of ministry. If women are trusted to carry out the functions of ministry, they should be ordained. This is a matter of faith and of justice.

When surveyed, most of our member churches that do not ordain women do not cite theology as the reason but culture. Some live in contexts where secular society does not accept women's leadership. Some are minorities in predominantly Roman Catholic or Orthodox countries and feel ecumenical pressure to refrain from actions their neighbors find offensive. These cultural pressures are significant and sometimes life threatening. The Church throughout its history has faced such challenge in its struggle to make a faithful witness in the world. The WCRC needs to accompany these churches in solidarity. In Christ we are called to be a new creation, transcending the oppressive aspects of culture.

Since the Seoul General Council of WARC in 1989, general councils have been calling on the churches to re-examine their practice if they do not ordain women and developing ways to assist them in this process. Those churches that do ordain women have been asked to study whether women ministers have equal access to placement opportunities and equal pay for equal work. The survey made by the office of partnership between women and men in 2009 (WARC) presented not very precise information since all churches did not respond properly. It showed that at least 42 churches do not ordain women to the ministry of Word and Sacrament. Those churches are distributed as follows: Europe 7, Africa 18, Middle East 3, Latin America 5, Asia 9. From 2010 until now we have not been able to articulate a clear response from the member churches, through the regional councils that allow us to update these figures point out that those numbers are still valid.

We now seek to live out our commitment to communion and justice as we make this common Declaration of Faith, praying: Living God, renew and transform us!

## APPENDIX

### Actions of General Councils

23<sup>rd</sup> General Council at Debrecen 1997: "The General Council continues to support the motions passed at the 22<sup>nd</sup> General Council and gives thanks that so much progress has been made since Seoul [1989] in the regional meetings, in the ordination of women, and in training and placement of women in the work of the church. It particularly wishes to lift up two of those recommendations for continuing action...:

- a. 'That all the WARC member churches who do not yet ordain women seriously reconsider their position in the light of the scriptural declaration of the oneness of women and men in Jesus Christ.' It urges that PACT develop materials that would be helpful in the study of scripture passages concerned with this issue;
- b. 'That all WARC member churches ensure that women be afforded equal access to assignment or position and receive equal pay for equal work in all church positions.' It urges that PACT expand its network of women in leadership through training so that they may be equipped and empowered to be fit for places in leadership as appropriate;"

24<sup>th</sup> General Council at Accra 2004 [Insert relevant quotations.]

Uniting General Council at Grand Rapids 2010 [Insert relevant quotations.]

### Reports on women's ministries in WARC

Henny G. Dirks-Blatt, "The Ordination of Women to the Ministry in the Member Churches of the WARC, Part I, *Reformed World* 38 (1985), 434-443. Part II, *Reformed World* 39 (1986), 484-495.

Reports on regional consultations concerning women's ministries in partnership with men:

*Walk, my Sister: The Ordination of Women: Reformed Perspectives*, ed. Ursel Rosenhaeger and Sarah Stephens, WARC 1993.

*Partnership in God's Mission in Africa Today*, ed. Nyambura Njoroge and Paraic Reamonn, WARC 1994.

*Partnership in God's Mission in Asia and the Pacific*, ed. Nyambura Njoroge, WARC 1996.

*The Palm-Tree: A Symbol of Commitment to Justice*, ed. Nyambura Njoroge and Jana Opocenska, WARC 1996. [Concerns Eastern Europe.]

*Partnership in God's Mission in the Middle East*, ed. Jane Dempsey Douglass and Paraic Reamonn, WARC 1998.

*Partnership in God's Mission in Latin America*, ed. Nyambura Njoroge and Paraic Reamonn, WARC 1998.

### **Resource Materials for Gender Justice**

*Created in God's Image: From Hierarchy to Partnership: A Church Manual for Gender Awareness and Leadership Development*, WARC 2003.

*Created in God's Image: From Hegemony to Partnership: A Church Manual on Men as Partners: Promoting Positive Masculinities*, ed. Patricia Sheerattan-Bisnauth and Philip Vinod Peacock, WARC 2010.

*Righting Her-Story: Caribbean Women Encounter the Bible Story*, ed. Patricia Sheerattan-Bisnauth, WARC 2011.

**DOCUMENT 5**  
**REPORT OF THE OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS**

Philip Tanis

Already nearing the halfway point of my initial term, I believe I've settled into the position and have also taken on additional responsibilities that compliment both communication needs and my organizational abilities. I am pleased to be able to present the following report with an overview of the work accomplished in the last year and looking forward to the 2017 General Council.

**Virtual Communications**

The website is now operating in seven of the eight languages that we've been working toward for the last few years. Arabic is the final language that will be brought online, and it is in the final phase of implementation (with delays coming mostly due to an international move by the individual assisting on this project). Articles in each of the seven active languages are being translated on a regular basis.

One new feature of the website in the past year has been the relaunch of the blog. This area features a weekly compilation of news (with links) from member churches (every Thursday), as well as other periodic posts. These other posts have included the series "Reformed Tastes" (short insights into what members of the Communion are doing), essays and opinion pieces from the general secretary and others and brief news pieces from non-WCRC sources. Submissions for blog posts, especially "Reformed Tastes," are very welcome.

Two areas of the website will receive substantial work in the coming year: 1) general council and 2) resources. The general council area ([wcrch.gc2017](http://wcrch.gc2017)) will feature all of the material on the council, as well as be its online registration portal. The resources area will see significant new materials added to it, both free and for purchase and both virtual and printed. The resource area will contribute to achieving the WCRC's strategic goal of the WCRC being "the place to go for theological and practical resources."

Social media continues to be a valuable means to advance the goals of the WCRC and engage people in its work. During the workweek there are daily posts to Facebook and tweets on Twitter (with posts on weekends if necessary). Posts/tweets include calls to prayer and action, 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. The main WCRC Facebook page now has 3252 page "likes" (up 27% from last year). Weekly reach for the WCRC Facebook page averages close to 5000 with 200-300 "engaged." Increasing interactivity

on Twitter with the WCC and other ecumenical partners sees around 3000 "impressions" made every week. It is anticipated that there will be continuing growth on social media in this year leading up to the general council, and it has been decided that the WCRC Facebook page and Twitter account (as well as the website) will be utilized for the council rather than creating separate accounts/pages/sites. This will strengthen Communion communications beyond the council itself.

The WCRC eNews continues to be sent out monthly, highlighting the stories, prayer requests and features posted on the website. It continues to exceed "industry" averages for "opens" and "click throughs." The mass email system is also being used for correspondence to member churches by other WCRC offices.

The WCRC's virtual communication platforms remain the key ways through which the organization makes itself known to its membership and to the world. Original news features and the items chosen to be included in the blog highlight the strategic plan's five key directions, and all that's communicated works to incarnate the organization's values. The goal 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 especially key in selecting stories to develop and share.

### **Print Communications**

Last year the *Reformed Communiqué* began publishing in multiple languages within a single issue but at the rate of three (rather than four) times per year. It is sent to all member churches as well as interested individuals at no charge and acts as a summary of news and features that have appeared on the WCRC website and Facebook page over the previous several months. Chris Ferguson also has a regular column (which is also posted online). The *Communiqué's* primary strategic purpose is to ensure that all member churches receive the essential news of the past several months with the emphases as noted above, undergirding the five key directions, etc. At the same time, partners and donors receive the *Communiqué*. Thus, along with the annual report, the organization is regularly communicating with all these "target audiences" four times a year. With the upgrade and updates to the new database (see below), the *Communiqué's* mailing list will be reviewed in the coming months. It is anticipated that its circulation will increase leading to the general council, after which another review will be undertaken, and the *Communiqué* will be increasingly used to publicize the council and the work leading to it.

Last year the executive committee agreed to the following (Action 42): "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."

An informal group met during the executive committee meeting, and those same people have served as a sounding board over this past year on a few items. As part of the implementation of this action the communications office was asked to assist in the production and distribution of *Reformed World*. A professional designer was hired to give the publication a design refresh and then lay out each issue. A thorough review and update of the mailing list was undertaken. Part of this process included a letter to those receiving the publication who had not paid for their subscription or were not entitled to a complementary subscription, such as member churches. The letter asked for a response that could be a request for a complementary subscription, payment for a subscription or a "thanks but I no longer need to receive *Reformed World*." The letter generated a good number of replies, many of which thanked the WCRC for sending them *Reformed World* over the past years. At the time of writing, replies continue to trickle in, and the mailing list has not yet been fully updated—though it is anticipated, given what's been received so far, that the number of issues printed and mailed will decrease. Final numbers will be available by May. This extensive updating of the mailing list (along with the upgrades to the WCRC's database (see below)) is in preparation to strategically target readers in the future.

## **Marketing**

The introductory WCRC brochure was translated and produced in Korean in time for the anniversary celebrations of the PROK and PCK where both the general secretary and president had significant presences. This was another step in expanding the number of languages commonly used for communications by the WCRC.

After utilizing a variety of items as gifts from the general secretary at various events in 2015, a limited edition print of a specially commissioned painting, based on Romans 12:1-2, was produced. This print will be the designated gift leading to the General Council. It is anticipated that other Communion artists will be commissioned to produce these unique gifts in future years (and suggestions of artists are welcome).

Working with the general council coordinator (and with advice from the general council planning committee) a German marketing firm was

retained for the development of the general council logo (see appendix 1).

This same firm will be used for all general council materials. A poster and introductory brochure have been developed and printed, both of which will be distributed at the executive committee meeting, along with some memorabilia.

At the time of writing, a branding plan for the WCRC is in development. This plan incorporates the usage of multiple logos all within a single corporate identity for the WCRC.

One component of the branding plan is the creation of a brand for the Reformed Partnership Fund, as mandated by last year's executive committee: to "communicate more widely the impact of the Funds and encourage applications." Working with the assistant for the Reformed Partnership Fund, a logo is in development and will be deployed online and through print materials.

## **Development**

The *WCRC Annual Report* was created as usual, along with a brochure to accompany the North American annual appeal. A special meeting in October in Grand Rapids, Michigan, brought together three of the North American trustees to brainstorm possibilities for increasing engagement between supportive church leaders and the WCRC. It was decided that an enhanced visitors programme for the 2017 General Council would be the best project to undertake in the next two years (see below).

The general secretary successfully initiated a process with the Waldensians to create a formal partnership between the WCRC and their *Otto per Mille* (OPM) programme. Along with Werner Joecker, I participated in a series of video conference calls with the OPM staff member charged with managing our partnership agreement. This process included the codification of several internal processes that would comply with OPM requirements and communication with potential beneficiaries to ensure everyone was kept updated on the status of the agreement. The next step in our new partnership with OPM will be to develop a publicity strategy to generate applications from Communion members to utilize the OPM money; thankfully, this dovetails nicely with marketing efforts already in motion with the Reformed Partnership Fund.

Work was also done on the creation of a funds development committee, as mandated at last year's executive committee meeting. This was an at-times frustrating process as many of the concerns we had about creating a global fundraising drive were born out. Discussions with a

number of fundraising professionals reiterated doubts about even the possibility of conducting a global campaign. Thankfully there is enough interest to support the WCRC in the exploration of possibilities that a group is being brought together for an initial meeting, after which some challenging decisions will likely have to be made.

## **General Council**

Communication matters for the 2017 General Council have been ramping up. A team of German journalists has been assembled to initially provide their expertise in council preparations. They will also function as part of the communication team at the council itself, assisting with press relations, especially to the German media.

As noted above, the logo for the general council has been developed, as have several other marketing items—brochure, posters, etc. There will be other communication needs for the council, including the creation of the official reports, an app, memorabilia, etc.

The experience and expertise I've obtained in councils/assemblies/synods, most notably with the discernment process, will continue to be utilized, especially in background materials and the development of council processes/flow.

Given the interest from North America regarding a strong visitors programme to the council, I've been in several meetings discussing the idea and then also drafting plans for it. Marketing responsibilities will undoubtedly follow, and those plans are already in progress for North America.

The online registration system will take a fair share of time over the coming months. It will interface with the new database. The general council is a key opportunity to increase the amount and reliability of the information stored in the database—information that will be valuable for post-council communication and development work—and the registration system has the potential to be used for other purposes, including subscription management and online donations.

I will also give assistance to various publications and other council-related projects as needed over the next year, the first significant one being the preparatory booklet on the council's theme. At the time of writing this report, contributions to this booklet have not yet landed on the communication desk, but it is anticipated that the booklet will be ready for distribution this summer.

## **Administration/Operations**



A variety of factors have seen me more involved in administrative/operational work in the past year. These factors include:

- with our finance coordinator offsite, I assumed daily supervision for all of the work of Anna Krüger, assistant for finance and communication.
- the work on the database, necessary for communications and development, has led to assisting on connected systems for event registration and subscription management.
- necessary editing work on documents, including the staff orientation manual and proposed revisions to the WCRC constitution, prompted deeper involvement in these areas.
- management of the email system and coordination with our contracted IT support added work during several staff transitions.

In addition, I traditionally travel less than the other executives so am more often named as acting general secretary. Additional admin/operations work is required during these spells.

The majority of this work has been a natural outgrowth of my responsibilities in communications and development. There are several items within this area I would like to report:

*Database:* Werner Joecker has done a tremendous job in transitioning from our old system (FileMaker Pro) to the new one (Salesforce). While the new system was relatively simple to configure, modifying the data from the old system to fit into the new one proved more challenging than anticipated. Not only was the data not updated on a consistent basis for the past number of years (beginning in Geneva) but it was not maintained uniformly when it was. In other words, a single data field was used for multiple purposes; and, vice versa, a single type of data could be found in multiple fields. Werner thus had to sift through dozens of fields to consolidate them into a coherent system. I've likened it to giving him a collapsed building and asking him to build a new skyscraper out of the rubble. But he did it, and thanks should be given to him for this accomplishment. Toward the end of this process, administrative assistants and the interns worked to update the contact information on our member churches—via whatever means possible—starting with the (mis)information generated from routine correspondence on membership fees and the general council. We finally now feel that our data is updated sufficiently, although understand that this is an on-going activity. Next steps in this process: importing outlying mailing lists (e.g. *Reformed Communiqué*), setting standards for data maintenance, training staff on the new system and solidifying plans to regularize data upkeep.

*Volunteers:* we were blessed with three short-term volunteers this last year. Duncan MacLean IV, a communications major from Hope College (Holland, Michigan) and member of Central Reformed Church (Grand Rapids, Michigan) was with us in June and July, working on communications projects. He assisted at our *Kirchentag* booth, wrote articles, inventoried our printed resources and attended the Reformed Church in Hungary's summer youth camp (see his article in the September 2015 *Reformed Communiqué*). Randy and Ann Argall were with us from September to mid-November. Randy is pastor and head of staff at First Presbyterian Church in Green Bay, Wisconsin, and was on sabbatical during this time. They continued the resource inventory, adding descriptions of each item, helped box up material to ship to the archives and made significant progress on the book containing policy statements from both the WARC and REC over the last twenty years. Given the work they did, it was only logical that I acted as coordinator/supervisor—though Paul Oppenheim was essential in securing accommodations for and providing orientation to them.

*Interns:* because we wanted to enhance the publicity for the internship programme, I took a lead position in making minor adjustments to the programme and applications for it. We were able to do this thanks to a slight delay in the funding of the internship programme. We were pleased with the wide variety of applications received and are thrilled with the two interns we were able to bring on board (Lin Wan-Jou (PCT) and Chung Doyoung (PROK)), thanks especially to the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan contributing additional funds to the programme. We anticipate a longer application process for the next round that will hopefully generate even more applications.

*NEAAC:* on behalf of the general secretary, I was pleased to be able to attend the Northeast Asia Area Council meeting in Seoul at the beginning of February 2016. Not only was I able to be with and get to know church leaders of the area better, but I also presented an overview of the WCRC's current work and the plans for the 2017 General Council.

There is no doubt that this work has had an impact on the amount of time I devote to communications. Several larger projects have been delayed—the policies book and the expansion of the resource area of the website are the two main examples—but, in consultation with the general secretary, plans have been put in place to ensure necessary work is being accomplished. And there is little doubt that my assumption of these responsibilities has been of benefit to the organization. I thus believe the "costs" to communication are more than offset.

## **Miscellany**

I finally made it to Geneva in October and had a very productive two days at the Ecumenical Centre. Working relationships were reestablished with colleagues in the WCC while connections were also made with the LWF (which has subsequently hired a new communications director), FAP and ACT Alliance. Visits to the John Knox Centre and the archives were also included, with discussion at the latter focused on preparing additional material to move to the archives from Hannover. There was an immediate return on the visit as a joint WCC-LWF-WCRC campaign on the "16 Days of Activism" was successfully conducted later that fall. It is anticipated that visits to Geneva will become routine to ensure strong engagement with our primary, ecumenical, communication partners.

Lessons on German continue. After consulting with the communication core group last year, a new model was adopted: slow but steady. This has resulted in progress on the language without taking too much time away from regular work. Lessons are in two-hour blocks, generally at least once a week combined with increasing forays into the linguistic landscape of Hannover (including watching the latest *Star Wars* in German).

I will be at the halfway point of my initial contract this summer. Working with the general secretary, a plan for a home stay of several weeks has been put in place. This will be a combination of vacation, telecommuting and meeting with member church leaders.

Finally, I am stretching myself by leading the children in a "walk out" experience at the monthly RELISH—Reformed English Language Service Hannover. While my wife Gretchen takes to the pulpit, I take to the Bible storybook and arts and crafts with about a dozen children. I am pleased to report that since beginning last fall, RELISH is attracting a steady 40-50 people for each worship service, with a core group supplemented by newcomers each time.

**OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS: APPENDIX 1**



**LIVING GOD  
RENEW AND  
TRANSFORM US**

26th General Council – 29 June to 7 July 2017  
Leipzig, Germany



World Communion  
of Reformed Churches

[www.wcrc.ch/gc2017](http://www.wcrc.ch/gc2017)

## DOCUMENT 6 REPORT OF THE REFORMED PARTNERSHIP FUND

Werner Joecker

### Introduction

The Reformed Partnership Fund (RPF) is the projects development fund of the WCRC. Beneficiaries are member churches and regional councils of the WCRC located in the Global South. Applications have to comply with certain criteria and be approved by the RPF subcommittee. Funding is possible every second year if previous projects have been formally closed. This includes comprehensive financial receipts, narrative, financial and final reports. Area councils may apply annually under the same conditions. The maximum amount payable is 25,000 euro and 7,500 euro for emergency projects. Since 2009 the RPF is supervised by the executive secretary for theology, mission and communion. The actual work is done by Werner Joecker, assistant for the RPF.

The RPF is divided into five sub-funds:

- Fund A. Specifically related to *Brot für die Welt-EED* (BfdW).
- Fund B. Refers to other donors, diaconal purposes.
- Fund C. Related in the past to projects co-financed with FAP.
- Fund D. Contains grants received from donors for earmarked projects.
- Fund E. Emergency sub-fund.

### Figures for 2015

#### Overview

	A KED 20126841	A 20146842	B	C	D	E	
EUR	2015	2015	2015	2015	2015	2015	
Start saldo	-	0.00	-	8,196.00	-	14,176.62	3,705.55
Previous project	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Donation	67,000.00	206,929.00	26,000.00	-	-	-	
Own resources	-	17,250.00	-	-	-	-	
Other donations	-	19,656.90	-	-	-	-	
Grant	59,150.00	125,058.37	6,400.00	-	-	-	

Executive Committee 2016

Admin costs	7,798.00	17,058.34	2,080.00	-	-	-
Reclassification	-	-	-	-	14,176.62	3,073.38
End saldo	52.00	101,719.19	25,716.00	-	-	632.17

*Projects*

	A KED 20126841	A KED 20146842	B	C	D	E
	2015	2015	2015	2015	2015	2015
Brot für die Welt	6	6				
Ev. Kirche v. Westfalen			1			
Reformed Church in America		1				
Own resources						2
Total	6	7	1			2

1412	UEM EPR for Capacity Building Matilde Umuraza	Eglise presbytérienne de Ruanda	EUR 7,500	Rwanda
1415	Emergency relief flooding landslides Guatemala	Iglesia Evangelica Nacional Presbiteriana de Guatemala	EUR 7,500	Guatemala
1502	Consultation challenges WCRC-SARC India	Presbyterian Church of India	EUR 11,250	India
1505	Biblical values teenagers EECMY	Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus	EUR 6,400	Ethiopia
1507	Relief aid cyclone Pam Vanuatu	Presebyterian Church of Vanuatu	EUR 7,500	Vanuatu
1510	Garissa university survivors relief	Presbyterian Church of East Africa [1070]	EUR 7,100	Kenya
1410	MAJUP Musical instruments and education	Iglesia Presbiteriana de Colombia	EUR 3,800	Colombia
1501	Development rural community San Francisco de Paula Cuba	Iglesia Presbiteriana Reformada Central	EUR 25,000	Cuba
1506	Workshop water and climate justice	Iglesia Evangélica Valdense del Río de La Plata	EUR 24,404	El Salvador
1518	Peace building project	Reformed Church of Christ	EUR 10,960	Nigeria

		in Nigeria		
1519	ASEAN church leadership training workshop 2015	The Church of Christ in Thailand	EUR 1,810	Thailand
1522	Myanmar flooding	Christian Reformed Church of Myanmar	EUR 7,500	Myanmar
1523	Syrian refugee children	National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon [4390]	EUR 25,000	Lebanon
1528	Syrian refugee children	National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon	EUR 19,084	Lebanon
1531	Earthquake 2015	Presbyterian Church of Pakistan	EUR 7,500	Pakistan
1529	Networking Protestant Theological Education in Africa-2014	NetACT	EUR 6,400	South Africa

### *Pending projects*

For the current project with BftW there are 16 projects to be processed with a total amount of roughly 250,000 euro.

The project around *Otto per Mille* contains 11 projects with a total amount of 350,000 euro.

These estimates are subject to approval and corrections.

### **Donors**

*Brot für die Welt*: In 2015 we closed one project and started working with its successor. In the first year, disbursements were made according to plan and cash flow projections.

*Reformed Church in America*: As additional support for the Bekaa Valley project we received a complementary payment of 19,656.90 euro.

*Evangelische Kirche von Westfalen*: Continued with their steady support in 2015. A request for increase was unsuccessful.

*Otto per Mille*: In 2015 an application process was initiated with the funding institution of the Waldensian Church in Turin, *Otto per Mille-Tavola Valdese*. In early 2016 a three-year agreement was signed with an annual amount of 350,000 euro. For funding in the areas of:

- I. Partnership Fund
- II. Regional Empowerment
- III. WCRC Programme work

#### IV. Global Initiatives

Among others, the RPF Emergency fund will be provided with an annual amount of 22.500 euro.

##### **Documents and forms**

Where needed modifications and updates were made. The voting form was replaced with a Google form.

##### **Audit**

By contractual requirement of BftW and starting 18 November 2014 independent firm Curacon audits every half-year period during runtime of current projects.

##### **Budget and planning**

As for every year the budget for 2016 will be made in coordination with the finance office. Modifications considering *Otto per Mille* are pending.

##### **Outlook**

The relationship with *Otto per Mille* will have a positive impact on the work of the RPF.

To further extend the radius of action, exploratory talks with *Kirchen helfen Kirchen* ("Churches Helping Churches") are under way to gradually strengthen mutual ties.

Updating documents, procedural matters and policies remain ongoing processes.

A strategy for a more affirmative marketing policy is in progress and will contribute to improve the awareness about the work of the RPF among the constituents of the Communion.



**DOCUMENT 7**  
**REPORT OF THE FINANCE OFFICE**  
Gerhard Plenter/Anna Krüger

**Year-End Closing 2015**

1. The budget year 2015 was closed very close to plan in all areas, but with a considerable surplus of 229,306.65 euro.
2. Approximately 130,000 euro of this surplus are a result of positive currency fluctuations in the form of unrealized currency gains, while around 100,000 euro can be attributed to careful planning and good stewardship.
3. Compared to the previous budget year, our assets have increased by slightly over 23% to a total of 3,788,198.59 euro.
4. The ordinary budget was balanced by allocating the surplus to the general reserve fund.
5. The UEK fund for the long-term stabilization of the organization was increased by roughly 37% thanks to a final donation given by the United Evangelical Churches in 2015.

**Audit 2015**

1. The finance office is happy to report that for the first time we received a very positive report from the high audit office in which the auditors commended the WCRC office for the work done and for the considerable improvements made since the year-end closing 2014.
2. The high audit office reports no objections against the approval and authorization of the annual accounts by the executive committee and confirms that almost all organizational risks from the previous year have been eliminated, explicitly appreciating the development.
3. All recommendations made by the high audit office will be implemented in a timely manner.

Recommendations to be highlighted (2014/2015)

1. *Liabilities in Switzerland:* It has been determined and confirmed with supporting documentation by our Swiss human resource provider Antex that there are no existing liabilities towards Antex and Axa from previous years. All insurances that existed in 2014 have been cancelled. The pension fund is partially closed, i.e. remains open only as long as there are retired former staff receiving a pension but has no impact for the organization.
2. *Currency fluctuation risks:* As an organization working globally and thus handling different currencies on a now-reduced number

of currency accounts, the WCRC is subject to risks resulting from currency fluctuations.

- I. During the budget year 2015, our accounts showed a total of 80,103.66 euro in FX losses, and a total of 211,615.15 euro of FX gains, resulting in a total gain of 131,511.49 euro.
  - II. It is not possible to plan currency fluctuations, in our case between the euro and Swiss francs (significant) and the euro and US dollars.
  - III. The WCRC can either profit from future currency fluctuations or suffer considerable losses. The existing risk, thus, needs to be evaluated very carefully.
  - IV. While it is possible to eliminate some of the risk by realizing parts of our current currency gains, i.e. by transferring a portion of our Swiss franc funds on the Swiss PostFinance account to Germany, the finance office advises against it at this point as due to current developments it is more likely the euro might become even weaker than the possibility of the Swiss franc losing value.
  - V. The high audit office recommends that an earmarked fund for currency losses be created. The finance office is in agreement with this recommendation and believes it is reasonable to create such an earmarked fund in the amount of 100,000 euro in the budget year 2016.
3. *Pension Fund*: In the budget years 2013-2015, 30% of the gross salary for each executive staff was transferred into a fund held on a trust basis by the Evangelical Reformed Church in Leer. Due to extremely low interest rates and as per a recommendation by the high audit office in the report on the 2014 annual statements, the monthly pension contributions for each staff had to be recalculated. These calculations were carried out by the *Kirchliche Versorgungskasse WaG* (Church Pension Fund) in Berlin.
- I. The results of these calculations confirmed that the monthly contributions had to be adjusted up by a considerable amount (approx. 410%).
  - II. This means an additional financial burden on the organization of approximately 297,200 euro per year.
  - III. The necessary funds were not available in the year 2015, but have been incorporated into the preliminary budget plan for 2016.
  - IV. Systems other than that in place at the moment, in which executive staff is employed as *Beamte* and the pension they will receive determined by German law, need to be explored.

## **Budget Plan 2016**

1. After much hard work, especially due to the increased pension contributions, we were able to draft a balanced budget plan. It was presented to the finance committee at the beginning of the year.
2. While some adjustments based on new input have been made since, the current budget plan is balanced and budgets for an allocation of an expected surplus to reserves to further stabilize the organization.
3. The budget plan is to be approved by the executive committee during the meeting in Havana.
4. The finance office would like to thank all those involved in the special fundraising efforts carried out that allowed us to build a balanced budget plan.

## **Outstanding donations**

We would like to mention two considerable donations for programme work.

1. Bread for the World: 200,000 euro as second installment of the current project supporting the Reformed Partnership Fund
2. *Otto per Mille*: These are funds from the Waldensian Church. We will receive yearly installments of 350,000 euro for three years in support of several programmes.

## **Membership Fees**

1. There was a considerable decrease in membership contributions in Africa and Latin America, while an important increase can be observed in the CANAAC region, and minor ones in Asia and Europe. This increase is not expected to be continued in future years in Europe, unless other churches increase their contribution, as the SEK have announced they will not be able to maintain their contribution at the current level.
2. Membership contributions from Africa were relatively high in 2013 and 2014, and in Latin America in 2014 as several churches paid their arrears. It is surprising that in spite of the upcoming general council, rather than seeing increased contributions due to churches making an effort to contribute according to grid and even pay up their arrears, there was a considerable reduction in membership contributions in Africa and a smaller one in Latin America and the Pacific.
3. In the current year 2016, as of the beginning of April, we have already received about 11,000 euro from Africa and 3,000 euro

from Latin America, and therefore hope to be able to return to a higher level of contributions from these regions.

4. 5% of all European membership contributions including the special contributions from the Swiss Cantonal Churches were allocated to WCRC Europe.
5. 7.5% of all membership contributions were allocated to the general council reserve.

	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>
Membership Africa	EUR 49,292	EUR 35,393	EUR 15,313
Membership Latin America	EUR 4,784	EUR 8,488	EUR 4,149
Membership Canaac	EUR 228,394	EUR 230,028	EUR 275,951
Membership Asia	EUR 60,770	EUR 53,901	EUR 59,909
Membership Pacific	EUR 12,054	EUR 4,720	EUR 3,714
Membership Europe (incl. SCC; 5% WCRC Europe)	EUR 510,646	EUR 467,644	EUR 473,013
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>EUR 865,940</b>	<b>800,174</b>	<b>832,049</b>

### **General Council**

Details will be given in the report of the general council coordinator. We will therefore only mention the technical aspects of handling the general council in our accounting system:

1. A budget separate from the ordinary budget has been created for accounting purposes. This budget is set up as an investment budget, i.e. encompasses several accounting years. The high audit office considered this a very good way to work with an event of such a considerable dimension.

**DOCUMENT 8**  
**REPORT ON THE GENERAL COUNCIL**  
Rev. Dr. Hanns Lessing

**1 The General Council Planning Committee**

Since the executive committee meeting in Lebanon the general council planning committee met two times: 2-4 September 2015 in Hannover and 26-28 April 2016 in Leipzig. On these two meetings the committee engaged with the planning process and is now able to recommend a general planning framework for the general council.

Members of the general council planning committee are: Dora Arce Valentín (staff), Dario Barolin, Doug Chial, Sabine Dressler, Martin Engels, Chris Ferguson (general secretary), Hanns Lessing (general council coordinator), Cheryl Meban, Jerry Pillay (president), Aiko Sumichan, Phil Tanis (staff), Lisa Vander Wal, Douwe Visser (staff).

**2 The General Council**

**2.1 Leipzig, Berlin, Wittenberg**

The general council will be held in Leipzig, Germany, in 2017—the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. The WCRC is returning to the birthplace of the 16th-century Reformation to demonstrate that this event belongs to Christians around the world—and to witness to the world in these times of injustice and violence.

*Leipzig*

The business of the council will be taken up in Leipzig. Leipzig is an appropriate site for such a gathering. It has welcomed visitors to its conference grounds for 1,000 years. The local Reformed congregation is a vibrant cultural centre in a city known for its dedication to the arts. And the candlelit peace prayer vigils of 1989 sparked the reunification of Germany.

*Wittenberg*

In Wittenberg, the birthplace of the Reformation, the general council will affirm its visible support to Christian unity at a worship service close to Martin Luther's church and in acts of agreement with the Lutheran and the Roman Catholic churches. Historic sites will be visited.

*Berlin*

Berlin will see the council engage in the Church's witness to the world. An internationally broadcast worship service will be held in the Berliner Dom. The council will immerse itself in the life of the city—visiting diaconal institutions, historic sites and local congregations. And it will

engage globally at a reception hosted by Germany's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

## 2.2 The general council agenda

*The general council theme "Living God, renew and transform us"*

Discussions at the general council will be guided by the council theme. The motto will be developed in three directions, which build upon the three major texts from the Bible that will guide the deliberations of the council.

<b>"Living God</b>	<b>renew and transform</b>	<b>us"</b>
→ Reformation	→ Justice	→ Communion
→ Jeremiah 10:1-10	→ Romans 12:1-2	→ Luke 4:16-21

While the council conducts its business it is continuously reminded of the interconnectedness of reformation, justice and communion.

### *Worship and Bible study*

The work of the general council shall be based upon the study of God's word. Each plenary day will begin with a worship service (cf. below #5), followed by a Bible study presentation (cf. below #4) that will be discussed in Bible study groups.

The worship committee recommends that each worship should stand under a theme that is based on the verbs in Paul's appeal in Romans 12:1-2:

- "Living God, you formed us." (Genesis 12 (forming of God's people))
- "Living God, help us to discern your will." (Hebrews 4:12ff)
- "Living God, renew us." (2 Corinthians 5:11ff)
- "Living God, reform us." (Matthew 15:21-28)
- "Living God, transform us." (Luke 19:1-10)

The worship and Bible studies will take place in the plenary hall. After the Bible study presentation the delegates will gather in Bible study groups. These groups are composed according to language. The delegates sit around round tables as "buzz groups" of 8 people each.

This special focus of the worship services will make the council theme a palpable presence of each day.

### *The "big five" public worship services*

The "big five" public worship services will be testimonies of the mission of WCRC to the German public and the world at large:

- The opening service on 29 June in St. Nikolas Church in Leipzig will engage with the Christian roots of the peaceful revolution of 1989.
- The worship in the Berlin Dom will be broadcasted by a major German television network. At the Berlin day on 2 July the council will address its message on justice to the political world.
- At the peace prayer on 3 July in St. Nikolas Church the council will pray for peace in those areas of the world that are affected by war and destruction.
- In Wittenberg on 5 July the council will reaffirm central tenets of the Reformation and recommit itself to Christian unity (cf. below #7).
- The closing service on 7 July will give direction for the work of the WCRC in the years to come.

### *The flow of the plenary*

The flow of the plenary shall be organised following the discernment model as it is practised by the Reformed Church in America and the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa. This model is based by the understanding of the Church as a communion: "**Discernment** means a prayerful process by which a common mind of the general council is sought concerning the wisest way forward on a particular issue at that time. There are no winners and losers—we are all seekers and discerners together, affirming through our common loyalty to Jesus Christ that:

- the general council is a community of faith earnestly seeking to understand God's will;
- each participant in the general council has been given unique gifts and insights by God;
- every participant's contribution is worthy of respect;
- our aim is to discern what the Spirit is saying to the churches through the general council; and
- our commitment is to find faithful ways forward on which all can agree" (*Rules of Procedure of the Uniting General Council in Grand Rapids*).

The planning committee recommends that the discernment process on the general council shall follow a "three-step methodology" (cf. below #8):

1. Listening (theme inputs, reports etc.)
2. Dialogue in groups of about 25 people
3. Decision in the plenary.

The churches practicing this model report that by following this methodology they could take the majority of their decisions by consensus.

### **2.3 On the way to the general council**

Material is being prepared that should enable the churches to promote the general council and to engage with its theme:

#### *Logo*

The general council logo was developed by a graphic designer firm in Düsseldorf. It visualises the council theme "*Living God, renew and transform us*" pointing to the life-giving dynamic of the Spirit that renews and transforms the earth.

#### *Promotional material*

The communications desk prepared a brochure in six languages (English, French, Spanish, German, Indonesian and Korean) that introduces the general council and shares basic information about the theme and the sites where the council will take place.

Posters, buttons and other giveaways are also available.

#### *Theme booklet*

A group of theologians prepared a theme booklet with Bible studies, theological reflections, and examples from the life of the churches. These texts are based on the three directions developed from the council theme: reformation, justice and communion.

The booklet will be available in English, French, Spanish, German, Indonesian and Korean and shall also contain educational material that will allow church groups and committees to engage with the texts.

#### *Publications still to come*

The following material will be published prior to the council:

- *From Grand Rapids to Leipzig*, summarising the history of WCRC in the period between the councils.
- The Bible study book with the Bible studies that shall be presented during the general council.
- The worship book.

### **3 Theme inputs**

In the general council agenda there are four slots for theme inputs.

The theme inputs:

- should engage the delegates with the three trajectories reformation, justice and communion



- should be inspiring and thought-provoking
- may address only aspects of the respective theme
- should apply different methods (lectures, dialogue of two speakers, panel discussions, etc.)

The planning committee recommends the following speakers:

- Jürgen Moltmann
- Naomi Klein
- Philip Peacock
- Tinyiko Maluleke
- Navid Kermani

Suggestions from members of the executive committee should consider equity in terms of gender and region, theological as well as rhetorical poignancy, and the thrusts of the three theme trajectories.

### 1. Reformation

**Reformation** is the central mark of the “Reformed Church always reforming.” The discussions on the council should show that “Reformation” is not just a static identity claim but the characteristic of a church that is continuously renewed and transformed by the Word of God.

The theme input on reformation should stress this special character of the Reformed tradition.

Recommended speaker: **Jürgen Moltmann** who recently has written the book *The Living God and the Fullness of Life*.

### 2. Justice

Since Accra **justice** stands in the centre of the work of the WCRC:

- Theologically the WCRC emphasises the connection between justification and justice
- in its witness the WCRC want to proclaim justice as the ultimate objective of God’s presence in this world.

The input should

- engage with pressing issues of economic justice
- demonstrate the relevance of the voice of Reformed theology in the justice debates of our time.

Recommended speakers: social activist **Naomi Klein**, e.g. with her book *This Changes Everything*, in dialogue with the Indian theologian **Philip Peacock**.

### 3. Communion

The call to **communion** addresses several levels of the “us” to which the theme of the council refers:

- “us” as a gathering of individual believers
- “us” as the communion of the Church
- “us” as inhabitants of the planet

The planning committee recommends that the theme inputs should address the aspects “communion of the church” and the “communion of the inhabitants of the planet.”

- The “**communion of the church**”-input could lay the theological foundation for the understanding of community in controversial discussions like human sexuality. Recommended speaker: The South African theologian **Tinyiko Maluleke** could be one of the contributors.
- The “**communion of the inhabitants of the planet**”-input could focus on the collaboration of religions in the care for the survival of the planet. Recommended speaker: The Iranian-German philosopher and scholar of religion **Navid Kermani** could be one of the contributors.

## 4 Bible studies

The planning committee suggests that three Bible study leaders should be called to engage with the three theme trajectories. Two of the leaders are invited to suggest supplementary texts to expand their exegesis.

The committee recommends the following Bible study leaders:

- Walter Brueggemann
- Elsa Tamez
- Mitri Raheb

Additional suggestions from members of the executive committee should consider equity in terms of gender and region, theological as well as rhetorical poignancy, and the thrusts of the three theme trajectories.

<i>No.</i>	<i>Theme trajectory</i>	<i>Text</i>	<i>Recommended leader</i>
1	Reformation	Jeremiah 10:1-10	Walter Brueggemann
2	Justice	Romans 12:1-2	Elsa Tamez
3	Communion	Luke 4:16-21	Mitri Raheb

4 Justice

Elsa Tamez

5 Communion

Mitri Raheb

The worship committee:

- recommends that the Bible study leaders collaborate with the worship committee in order to link worship and Bible studies closely together
- suggests the following supplementary texts for the Bible studies:
  - Psalm 85 (justice)
  - Matthew 15:21-28 (communion)

## **5 Worship**

The worship committee met from March 31 to April 5, 2016 in Leipzig. The members of the committee are Alison Adam (Scotland), André Bartlett (South Africa), Sabine Dressler (Germany – chair), Chineta Goodjoin (USA), Dwight Kelly (Jamaica), Gerardo Oberman (Argentina), Ester Pudjo Widiasih (Indonesia), Kathy Smith (USA) and Maria Cornou (USA). They were accompanied by vicar Nina Ciesielski (Germany) and the musicians Helga Hoogland (brass band leader) and Christiane Bräutigam (choir leader and organist).

On this meeting the committee laid the groundwork for all worship services during the general council. The group will reconvene during the worship symposium at Calvin College in Grand Rapids in January 2017.

The worship committee requests consideration of the following recommendations:

- The group should be mandated to commission theme songs from composers/writers of lyrics in different contexts.
- Worship should take place in an extra place (Hall 1, 5 minutes' walk from the plenary hall). The Planning Committee was concerned that the movement would cost too much time and advises against it.
- During the council chaplains should be present to accompany delegates and visitors pastorally if they want to engage more personally with the theme.
- The ceremonial opening of the general council by the president should take place during the opening service.
- Two communion services should be held: in the closing service and also in the service in Wittenberg in order to testify to the communion with the Lutheran Church.

## **6 Berlin day (2 July 2017)**

The Berlin day will show the WCRC's witness to the world. The following events will take place:

- Worship service in Berlin Dom
- Reception by the German Federal Government in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Visits of historical sites, diaconic institutions and congregations in Berlin

### **6.1 Worship service in Berlin Dom**

The Berlin Dom is the main church of the United Church in Germany (UEK). The building originates from the imperial era and testifies the desire of Prussian kings and German emperors to unite Lutheran and Reformed congregations in one church.

Framework:

- *Preparation:* The service will be prepared by the worship committee in close connection with the leadership of WCRC and in collaboration with representatives of the UEK.
- *Character:* The service shall be distinctly Reformed in character and should show the richness of Reformed worship to German and international TV audience.
- *Scripture:* The text for the sermon should be Luke 4:16-21 that will allow to express the WCRC's mission of justice.
- *Preacher:* The preacher is not yet determined
- *TV Broadcast:* The service shall be broadcasted by ZDF, one major German TV channel, in a programme that is usually watched by more than a million people. Transmissions to other countries are possible.

### **6.2 Words of greeting in Berlin Dom**

Due to the TV transmission the worship is limited to 45 minutes. The engagement with the UEK, the Dom congregation and the church and the city of Berlin can only take place after the service. The following people have been approached:

- Bishop P. Bosse Huber (UEK)
- Bishop M. Dröge, Berlin
- Dr. I. Schwätzer (Berlin Dom)
- Hon. M. Müller (Mayor of Berlin)

### **6.3 Reception by Federal Government**

After the worship service the general council will be received by the Federal Government in the Foreign Affairs Ministry. This reception is an important occasion to express WCRC's witness on social justice to the political world.

Foreign Minister Franz-Walter Steinmeier will receive the delegates on behalf of the government to this occasion also the ambassadors of the countries of the WCRC member churches and dignitaries from church, politics and society shall be invited.

Programme

- Welcome by Foreign Minister Dr Steinmeier
- WCRC member churches addressing injustice world wide— "stories" by GC delegates
- Handing over of WCRC statement on justice (public witness document, drafted with input from core groups, decided upon by the officers)
- Invitation to light meal by Minister Dr. Steinmeier
- Light meal

### **6.4 Visits of historical sites, diaconic institutions and congregations in Berlin**

After the reception, delegates and visitors will embark upon a visitors' programme in Berlin. Groups of 25 people will visit the following sites:

- Solidary visits with diaconic institutions
- Visits to historical sites in Berlin
- Visits of congregations in Berlin

The groups will be composed according to interests indicated with registration.

## **7 Wittenberg day**

Wittenberg is the place where Martin Luther worked throughout most of his life. Today the town is regarded as one of the primary sites of identity in many Protestant churches. The general council will revisit this history and consider its significance for Christian witness today.

Depending on the decision of the executive committee and the results of the discussions with the Lutheran World Federation and the Vatican, the general council at this day will sign and celebrate the following ecumenical agreements:

- The **Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification**. The WCRC will associate to the declaration signed by the Lutheran and the Roman Catholic churches in 1998.
  - The signing statement will express that the consensus reached by LWF and Vatican on the doctrine of justification is also shared by the World Communion of Reformed Churches.
  - At the same time it will introduce the theological link between justification and justice as an important item for the agenda of ecumenical dialogue.
  - To this event also the other associates of the declaration (Methodists, Anglicans, Mennonites) could be invited.
  
- The **Wittenberg Declaration** between LWF and WCRC will, as is hoped for on the WCRC side, be based upon the results of the dialogue that are published on the title *Communion: On being the church* in 2012. This document:
  - points out that remaining theological differences between Lutheran and Reformed doctrine are not church dividing
  - and calls the two churches to “follow the Lund Principle, that is, jointly to carry out whatever we can do together and only work separately there where there is a compelling reason to do so.”

The combination of the two ceremonies could offer the chance to create a powerful symbolism of the unity of the Christian Church.

## 7.1 Worship service

Framework:

- *Site*: Martin Luther’s church, the Schlosskirche, is too small to accommodate all participants. There are three alternative options:
  - Open air stage on Schlossplatz, in front of Schlosskirche (space for up to 5,000 people);
  - Stadtkirche (seats 1,000 people)
  - Tent (seats 1,200 people)
- *Preparation*: The service will be prepared by the worship committee in close connection with the leadership of WCRC and—depending on the decisions on the ecumenical documents—in collaboration with representatives of the EKD, the LWF and the Vatican.
- *Host*: Bishop Bedford-Strohm, chair of the EKD council, has been invited to be the host of the proceedings in Wittenberg. The precise meaning of this function still has to be clarified.

- *Scripture*: The text for the sermon should be Matthew 25:21-36. This will allow for the expression of the Reformed understanding of justification and justice.
- *Preacher*: The preacher is not yet determined

## **7.2 “Reformation: Global, Diverse, and Ongoing.” Voices from the World Communion of Reformed Churches in dialog with Martin Luther**

For many WCRC member churches Wittenberg is not a primary site to commemorate Reformation history. It is a main characteristic of the Reformed church that from the very beginning the tradition was very diverse in theological emphasis and geographical width. The member churches that trace back to the Waldensian and the Hussite movements testify that the Reformation did not begin with Martin Luther but significant insights had been developed considerably earlier.

This diversity shall come to life in contributions from the different traditions.

## **7.3 The “world exhibition,” Wittenberg**

The German churches with support from churches from Europe have developed a huge programme that shall express the continuing relevance of the Reformation tradition in Germany and beyond. The presentation are grouped around seven gates of freedom that shall symbolise the openness of the Protestant tradition:

- “welcome gate”
- “spirituality gate”
- “youth gate
- “gate to justice, freedom and integrity of creation”
- “globalisation gate”
- “ecumenism and religion gate”
- “culture gate”

During the day the participants have the opportunity to visit the different presentations or to see the Luther sites in Wittenberg.

## **7.4 Signing acts**

Depending of the decisions of the executive committee and the result of the negotiations with the LWF and Vatican the day will conclude with the signing of ecumenical agreements and the planting of a tree in the Luther garden.

Site:

- cf. above or the LWF presence at Luther Garden

Programme:

- Association to Joint Declaration of the Doctrine of Justification (WCRC with LWF and Vatican and all the other associates (Anglican, Methodist, Mennonites))
- Presentation of Wittenberg Declaration (WCRC and LWF)
- Tree Planting at Luther Garden
  - Theme: Reformed-Lutheran unity
  - Presentation of Wittenberg Declaration
  - Tree planting

## **8 Discernment and decision-making**

The general council draws together people from different countries, cultures and traditions. It takes time to build the trust and relationships that form a community of faith. That is why a large part of our life together during the general council is dedicated to worship, Bible study and community building.

The planning committee recommends that this communion approach shall be expressed in the process of decision-making of the council:

- The council shall apply a methodology of discernment that is based upon the unique gifts and insights by God that every participant in the general council has been given.
- The discussion of all major questions shall take in dialogue groups that discern the issues on the basis of the information presented in the listening sessions, theme inputs and Bible studies and prepare them for decision-making.
- The work of the dialogue groups shall be focused on the future orientation of the work of the WCRC and its member churches.
- This methodology shall replace the expert committees and specialised sections that traditionally prepared the decisions in the general council.

As already mentioned above the discernment-process on the council shall be conducted in three steps:

### **8.1 Listening**

The general council must be fully resourced with information about an issue, proposal or report. Seeking to discern God's will for a faithful



response presumes participants hold a clear understanding of the rationale and theological basis for possible ways forward.

Prior to the dialogue group meetings in the listening process the delegates shall receive information and insights from the following sources:

- Reports
- Bible study presentations
- theme inputs
- proposals coming from member churches and the core groups through the business committee

Creative presentations (beyond the spoken word) may help stimulate creative solutions for complex matters. Time for questions of clarification is an important part of presenting information.

At the end of the listening sessions draft proposals to be discussed by the dialogue groups shall be introduced.

## **8.2 Dialogue**

The discernment process during the general council is value driven and should respect each individual and her/his voice even as the process unites the delegates through discussion and consensus. No delegate should be marginalised based on any factor especially, in this process, language: "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" (WCRC constitution, Article IV, Section B).

### *Composition of Dialogue Groups*

Thus, while dialogue groups will formally be appointed by the president and approved by the general council, their specific composition will be driven by language. Since participation from all is a foundation for a successful discernment process, delegates need to feel comfortable communicating within the dialogue groups.

Dialogue groups are composed of three to four Bible study groups, creating a total of about 30 groups. Dialogue groups shall be constructed using *language fluency* (rather than primary language) as a criteria. They will be limited to one or two languages to reduce demands on translators (and hence the budget). If this is not possible, then a limited number of multi-lingual dialogue groups would be created.

In the composition of dialogue groups the following factors should be recognized (and sometimes weighed against each other):

1. **Diversity:** Groups should not be geographically driven. The discernment process is designed to unite the council and its decision-making process from the grassroots. It is thus important not to have a group composed solely from a single country or region.
2. **Communication:** All members of a group must be able to communicate effectively with one another. This does not necessarily mean that groups are composed based on primary language, however. Options include grouping those fluent in the same language or providing translators.
3. **Justice:** Besides geographic diversity, each group should be balanced between gender, age and ordained/non-ordained.

### *Leadership*

A critical aspect of each group's composition is the *leadership*. Each group needs at least two pre-selected (and trained) leaders:

- a *chairperson* appointed by the general council to be the moderator of a dialogue group. The main task of the chairperson is to ensure that all delegates can fully participate on the discussion.
- and a *Scribe* appointed by the general council to be the secretary of a dialogue group and to convey its findings to the drafting team. At the end of each session the dialogue group determines which points should be brought to the drafting team.

The chairs and scribes of the dialogue groups will have to arrive in Leipzig prior to the council for *training*. This training will, in essence, run them through the discernment process, including the creation of group reports on each theme (which will be submitted along with the others). This gives the chairs and scribes voice in the process without compromising their roles during the council itself. Professional trainers would serve as the chair and scribe for this, with the scribe also acting as a consultant to the drafting team.

### *Consensus on norms and values*

The introductory session of the dialogue group will introduce the discernment process to the group and set the "norms" (rules, guidelines, etc.) of how the group will operate. Setting the norms also gives the members a first experience of the discernment process and can be used by the leadership to accommodate differing cultural needs, fix any glitches in the system (especially translation), etc. While

structured to produce constructive results that will move the process to the drafting team, the discernment process is geared to hear all voices and invite the movement of the Holy Spirit into all groups.

#### *Drafting of proposals*

After the dialogue groups have finished their work on a theme, the scribes will gather to distill the variety of material produced into a report with specific recommendations. The processes used in the *drafting team* to create the report will also be by consensus and use norms as determined by the group.

### **8.3 Decision**

The final reports of the drafting team will be brought to the plenary. The reports should be presented by at least two scribes, selected by the drafting team. If the process has worked as it is intended, delegates will hear their voices in the report and its recommendations, changing the tenor of the discussion positively. The plenary will then discuss and come to consensus on the reports and recommendations. With discernment procedures in place, there is an expectation that close to unanimity will be reached before discussion moves to the decision.

### **8.4 Issues for further deliberation**

The planning committee recommends the introduction of a discernment model according to the described methodology. The following issues require expert advice:

#### *Introduction of business to the council*

Here a method should be applied that allows delegates to bring business to the council without clogging the system by too many issues.

While the dialogue groups should discern matters on the basis of their gifts, experience and insights, the material given to the dialogue groups should be structured and focused in order to allow a discussion that will lead to proposals that can be decided upon in the plenary.

#### *Consensus model*

The values that guide the discernment model would be contradicted if at the end matters would be decided by majority vote. The consensus model applied in the discussions of the councils in Accra and Grand Rapids should therefore be further developed.

#### *Decision about Committees*

The rules of procedure of the Uniting General Council suggested the calling of the following committees:

- Business Committee (constitutionally prescribed)
- Nominations Committee (constitutionally prescribed)
- Public Issues Committee
- Message Committee
- Constitution & Membership Committee
- Policy Committee
- Finance Committee

The planning committee recommends to revisit the list of committees and to reduce its number. Particularly the *policy committee* seems to be redundant since its work shall be conducted in the dialogue groups.

The planning committee recommends that expert advice shall be called for the formulation of the rules of procedure for the Leipzig council.

## **9 Women and youth pre-councils**

The women und youth pre-councils shall take place prior to the general council on 27-28 June 2017 in the Reformed Church in Leipzig.

The pre-councils have the following objectives:

- Preparing women and youth delegates for the full participation in the General Council
- preparing for leadership
- giving voice to the issues that affect women and youth
- introducing the issues that are discussed in the women and youth networks of the WCRC to the general council.

The planning committee recommends that the pre-councils should be fully integrated in the work of the general council. The messages of the pre-councils shall be introduced into the discernment process.

## **10 Global Institute of Theology**

The Global Institute of Theology (GIT) will take place 19-28 June 2017 in Wuppertal. The GIT is an academic programme. Forty participants, among them 10 from Germany, will discuss the theme "Confession and Confessing Church" with special focus on the Barmen Declaration that was adopted in a church very close to the Kirchliche Hochschule where the GIT will take place.

Staff of the GIT: president: Bas Plaisier; dean: Musa Dube; dean of students: Aruna Gnanadason; worship leader: Andrew Donaldson.

On June 28 the GIT will move from Wuppertal to Leipzig in order to participate in the general council.

The planning committee recommends that students and faculty of the GIT should be fully integrated in the work of the council. The message of the GIT shall be introduced into the discernment process.

**11 Global youth gathering: "Meet the World" (23-28 June 2017)** (see appendices 6 and 7)

The planning committee recommends that prior to the general council a global youth gathering shall take place, where young people can meet each other, experience Christian fellowship and can engage with the council and its theme.

*Target groups*

Youth groups from WCRC member churches, interested stewards and interested youth delegates to the council.

*Place*

The youth gathering will take place at the *Begegnungszentrum Zwochau* outside Leipzig of the Roman Catholic Fokolare Movement.

*Leadership*

The youth gathering will be prepared and facilitated by a working group consisting of members of the WCRC staff and volunteers.

*Time structure*

The youth gathering will take place 23-28 June 2017:

- 23-25 June: Youth groups, stewards and youth delegates will live, work and celebrate together;
- 26 June: The steward training will commence and the stewards will begin with their duties;
- 27-28 June: The youth delegates shall participate in the youth pre-council.

After the youth gathering international youth groups may team up with European counterparts in order to:

- stay in Leipzig and join the visitors' programme of the general council
- plan a joint programme in Germany
- or plan a visit in the home country of the European group

*Finances*

The youth gathering does not have the funds to reimburse international traveling. We call upon churches with financial resources to link up with

their partners in the Global South and support their participation in the youth gathering.

## **12 Steward programme**

The general council steward programme traditionally has the following objectives:

- Support of the general council logistics
- introduction to the ecumenical world
- leadership development

For the general council in Leipzig the planning committee recommends:

- the invitation of 70 stewards (35 from Germany, 35 international)
- the appointment of two chief stewards (1 from Germany, 1 international), who will help in the setting up of the programme and will act as spokes persons of the stewards in discussions with the general council staff
- the appointment of a co-opted staff person to coordinate the steward programme

The Evangelical Reformed Church in Germany has offered Werner Keil to coordinate the steward programme. Rev. Keil is a minister in a parish in Bermerhaven and is very interested in youth and development work. The planning committee is thankful that Rev. Keil is offering his services.

## **13 Visitors' programme**

The planning committee recommends that the visitors' programme will allow people who want to engage with the general council and its theme:

- to take part at the public sessions, particularly the Bible studies and the theme inputs;
- to join the trips to Berlin and to Wittenberg;
- to participate in a seminar programme that will allow further discussion with the main speakers of the assembly (together with students and staff of the GIT);
- to take part in the cultural events that will take place in the programme of the council;
- to have the opportunity for some sightseeing (sites of the Reformation, places famous in the tradition of church music (Bach, Mendelssohn-Bartholdy)).

### *Objectives*

The visitors' programme aims at the following objectives:

- allowing interested people to engage with the general council and the WCRC
- invitation of young people to become part of the ecumenical movement
- strengthening the relationship between the WCRC and its member churches

### *Leadership*

The visitors' programme will be co-ordinated by Sylvia Bukowski and Paul Oppenheim with support of people in the member churches, particularly in the USA. We thank all people who share in the leadership of this programme!

### *Finances*

Visitors will have to carry the costs for travel and accommodation and will have to pay a fee that will cover the administrative costs of the programme. We call upon churches with financial resources to link up with their partners in the Global South and support their participation in the visitors' programme.

## **14 Cultural projects**

The planning committee recommends the following cultural projects:

### **14.1 Psalm concert (4 July 4 2017)**

Leipzig is a city of church music. Johann Sebastian Bach worked here; Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy was even a member of the Reformed congregation!

The planning committee therefore recommends that a concert should be held that engages with this tradition from the perspective of the global communion of the WCRC.

The concert shall:

- relate to the tradition of Reformed worship and gather settings of Psalms
- engage with the Psalms as expressions of pain and hope in difficult situations
- gather music from composers from different continents
- allow the participants to participate by praying and singing
- be disseminated to the WCRC member churches, delegates receive the music that will allow them to bring the concert to their home countries

### *Leadership*

The concert is planned by a working group, which consists of the choir leader of the Reformed Church in Leipzig (Christiane Bräutigam) and professors of the College of Music in Dresden (Elisabeth Holmer and Wolfgang Lessing).

A reference group accompanies the planning process. Its members are: Park Seon-Won (South Korea), Ester Pudjo Widiasih (Indonesia), Jan Luth (Netherlands), Glendon Macaulay (Scotland) and Gerald Hobbs (Scotland).

### *Character*

The concert attempts to give testimony to the expressiveness of the biblical Psalms in the present age. In all parts of the world people inside and outside of organized religious communities have resorted for centuries on the Psalter to express their pain, and to develop a language of hope that allows them to find hope and hold in situations experienced as hopeless. The biblical Psalms are the central reference for the spiritual life of Reformed churches for this reason.

The program juxtaposes commissioned compositions by the composers Geonyong Lee (Korea) and Cord Meijering (Netherlands) and classical works from the 17th, 19th and 20th centuries that engage with the Psalms in the horizon of social conflicts. Compositions from Europe, America and Asia testify in their diversity to the power of the Psalms as a spiritual world language.

### *Global reception*

Following the concert the commissioned compositions shall be disseminated to the delegates in many countries. Delegates to the general council take note material and the performing rights home and thus get the opportunity to perform the composition in their home countries.

### *Finances*

The German Ministry of Culture and the City of Leipzig will sponsor the concert.

## **14.2 Social art project: "Reformation-Transformation"**

The planning committee recommends that a social art project shall be organised in the context of the general council.

### *Objectives*

The social art project shall:



- bring the spirit of transformation and renewal to the city of Leipzig
- explore the significance of spirituality in contemporary art
- express the views of groups and communities in Leipzig on social issues. The communities can be neighbourhoods, day care centres, elderly homes, refugee facilities or others. People from the WCRC youth gathering can also participate in the project.

#### *Leadership*

The exhibition shall be curated by Peter Winkels and Jörg Reckhenrich (Berlin) who have coordinated similar projects (e.g. with the United Nations). A reference group still has to be formed.

#### *Artists*

Five artists from around the world will work and live in Leipzig. They will form partnerships with local artists, working together in an art laboratory. Their task is to develop a series of artworks, performances or interventions which address the ways and needs for social transformation of a specific community in Leipzig.

The international artists should be internationally recognised. Preference should be given to artists who are linked to Christian churches, particularly to member churches of the WCRC.

#### *The project*

The artists will engage with these questions: Does a secular city need spirituality? Does a community need spirituality? Do we need spirituality for the much needed transformation of our global community? How can art help to develop and communicate social transformation? How do contemporary artists approach spirituality in a materialistic world?

#### *Opening of the social art exhibition (1 July 2017)*

The participants of the general council will visit the different art projects in the evening of 1 July.

#### *Finances*

The German Ministry of Culture and the City of Leipzig will sponsor the art project.

## **15 Admission of delegations and reimbursements**

The WCRC constitution stipulates in Article IX:

Where a church sends two or more delegates, no more than half shall be ordained ministers, and the delegation shall be gender-balanced. Where a church sends two delegates, at least one shall

be a woman. Where a church sends four or more delegates, at least one half of the delegates shall be women and at least one delegate shall be thirty years of age or younger on the date the General Council is convened.

This clause affects the policies on the admission of delegates and reimbursements of travelling costs.

### **15.1 Admission of delegations**

The planning committee emphasises that the constitutional regulation should apply. In special circumstances, a member church may apply to the general secretary and try to negotiate exemptions. The planning committee is aware that individual agreements might be necessary in exceptional cases, but stresses that such exceptions should be made in the spirit of the constitution.

### **15.2 Reimbursements**

The planning committee recommends that the attached reimbursement policy should be applied.

Reimbursements shall be provided to ensure fair participation of delegations of WCRC member churches that are composed according to constitutional requirements.

In view of the limited resources available, member churches should first ensure that all other avenues of support have been explored.

There is eligibility for a reimbursement:

- where it is understood that there would be difficulty in financing the full participation of the delegation
- the membership contribution from 2010 to 2015 has been paid
- and a request for a reimbursement has been made to the general secretary by 31 December 2016. In exceptional circumstances this period may be extended.

Reimbursements will be allocated using the following criteria, ensuring equal percentage of reimbursement for delegates of member churches:

- Churches whose delegations conform to the constitutional criteria regarding women, youth and lay persons
- Churches which have paid membership contributions from 2010 to 2015
- Churches, which have paid travel, accommodation and registration fees for at least one delegate

## **16 Finances**

Thanks to generous pledges by the WCRC member churches, the united churches in Germany and the German government the expected expenditure of 6,568,640.00 euro appears to be almost covered. We want to express our appreciation for all the donors.

**DOCUMENT 9.1**  
**REPORT OF AFRICA COMMUNION OF REFORMED CHURCHES**  
**(ACRC)**

Lydia Adajawa, president

**INTRODUCTION**

The ACRC is pleased to give a report on her activities after the 2015 meeting in Dhour Choueir, Lebanon.

**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

President	Mrs. Lydia Adajawah (GHANA)
Vice President	Professor Hendje Toya Jean Samuel (CAMAROON)
Treasurer/Secretary	Rev. Buhle Mpofu (ZIMBABWE)
Rev. Dr Uma Onwunta	Sub-Regional Coordinator for West Africa (NIGERIA)
Rev. Jean Ntita	Sub- Regional Coordinator for Central Africa (DRC)
Rev. Wilberforce Wabulo	Sub- Regional Coordinator for East Africa (UGANDA)

Position for Sub-Regional Coordinator for Southern Africa is vacant, since the former, Ms Thabile Lolo, has left the Uniting Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa on marriage grounds.

**ACTIVITIES**

**1. A Bi-Regional consultation in Accra, Ghana.**

One of the major activities the ACRC carried out was the intended bi-regional consultation of the ACRC and NEAAC. Though the venue was initially Nigeria it had to change to Ghana, and the time also changed to November instead of the stated September.

The bi-regional consultation was the first of its kind, at least for the ACRC. It brought together 27 male and female delegates from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Ghana, Rwanda, Togo, Zambia, South Africa, Mauritius, Niger, Nigeria, South Korea and Germany. It was held between the 16th and 21st November 2015 at the Apaade Lodge Hotel, Tesano, in Accra, Ghana.

The presence of the WCRC staff Rev. Dora Arce Valentín and the general secretary, Rev. Chris Ferguson, was very significant. Since that was the first official visit of the general secretary after he took office, he used that opportunity to pay a courtesy call on the leadership of the two member churches in Ghana, the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Ghana, and the Presbyterian Church, Ghana. Some of the crucial issues

discussed included human sexuality and commitment to the WCRC. The immediate past general secretary of the WCRC, Rev. Dr. Setri Nyomi, was equally present as a strong voice on the theme and in his key note address.

**Below is a summary of the consultation:**

**A MESSAGE FROM THE ACRC/NEAAC BI-REGIONAL CONSULTATION, HELD AT APAADE LODGE HOTEL, TESANO, GHANA FROM THE 16<sup>TH</sup> TO 21<sup>ST</sup> NOVEMBER, 2015**

Delegates of the two regions of the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC)—the Africa Communion of Reformed Churches (ACRC) and Northeast Asia Area Council (NEAAC)—met in a bi-regional consultation under the theme “*Gender Reading of the Signs of Times: Bi-regional Conversations, Accra Confession + 10*” in Tesano, Accra, Ghana, 16-21 November 2015.

The general objective of the consultation was to reflect together through the lenses of gender perspective and different contexts on our challenges as churches facing the global situation of violence, injustice and degradation of both human beings and nature.

Opening each day with a Bible study, the consultation set off on quite an engaging mode, with various voices attempting to deconstruct as well as read various texts in the Bible—Esther, Gospel of Mark and Revelation, from a womanist perspective.

In the keynote address, the centrality of the Word of God was reiterated. Drawing from the experience of the 24<sup>th</sup> General Council of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches from which came the Accra Confession, the radical implications of the reading of the signs of times and Scripture to our faith was emphasized; unless we act out of faith against the realities we see, our integrity is at stake. A question worth asking is whether things have changed since the General Council in 2004, and how the church can then continue looking on when there is so much brokenness: human trafficking, enslavement in our very countries, current arrangement of the world’s economy, domestic violence, unemployment, sexual harassment. We heard also from Northeast Asia Area Council about discrimination and violence against diverse sexualities. The conclusion was that the Church needs to put its house in order first and be able to critique itself. Various presentations, which reflected experiences from various contexts helped to emphasize the point above; the struggle continues.

To enable the delegates to have a deeper understanding of the question of justice from the painful history of slavery, the ACRC

organized a moving visit to the Elmina Castle in Ghana. The hypocrisy demonstrated in having a Reformed chapel above the female dungeon where human beings were commoditized, maltreated and starved to death when they resisted inhuman actions like rape, and the general treatment of all the slaves demonstrates how the Church can allow itself to become the cultural guardian of the symbols of domination and subjugation—an apostasy to the mission of the church.

The delegation was honoured to be warmly welcomed by leaders of both the Presbyterian Church of Ghana (PCG) and the Evangelical Presbyterian Church Ghana (EPC) and a host of other local members which included a choir. The week's experiences will remain memorable, as well as serve as a catalyst as we prayerfully engage in working and waiting for the new earth, a context in which righteousness and justice flow like a river.

After a process of discernment and studying the Word of God the delegates committed to work at the following issues and call the attention of all the member churches to the same:

1. Churches to facilitate training and re-training of ministers in order to have life-affirming biblical interpretation.
2. Work at amending policies and constitutional provisions that impede the full participation of all, for instance in the area of women and ordination, so that men, women, youth and children are not only represented but have a voice.
3. Develop a Bible study model for use in local churches to encourage participation.
4. Enhance the network between the member churches, regions and the international Communion and support their work as well as ensure fair representation in the same for all delegations.
5. Create/strengthen justice desks in all our member churches.
6. Break the silence!

## **SOME CHALLENGES OF THE ACRC**

### **COMMUNICATION**

Poor communication continues to hamper the smooth running of the ACRC. Many member churches scarcely respond to correspondence from the ACRC or WCRC. May I thus commend the local council of WCRC member churches in Mozambique for ownership of the ACRC and WCRC through their meetings, sharing of information and constant feedbacks.

## FINANCE

Financial issues are another crucial area. Many of the ACRC member churches are not able to honour their financial obligations to the two organizations. The ACRC president with the help of the WCRC financial assistant, Ms. Anna Krüger, have been working together to address the issue.

## THE WAY FORWARD

Plans are far advanced for a capacity building workshop to be held in Abuja, Nigeria, between the 1st and the 6th August, 2016. The WCRC staff, Werner Joecker, and the president are working towards it.

## CONCLUSION

The ACRC wishes to thank all organizations, individuals and all other people who have helped her to survive till this moment. She hopes the many crucial needs including a permanent paid staff, an office space and improved finances will soon be met.

**DOCUMENT 9.2**  
**REPORT OF THE ALIANZA DE IGLESIAS PRESBITERIANAS**  
**Y REFORMADAS DE AMÉRICA LATINA (AIPRAL)**

Rev. Dr. Darío Barolin, executive secretary

This period was strongly shaped by three elements:

1. companionship to churches (through both electronic communication and personal visits)
2. building strategic relationships with other ecumenical bodies
3. preparing the assembly

**Companionship to Churches**

- a. It is especially important the process of the Presbyterian Church in **Colombia** nowadays facing the dialogue of peace between the FARC and the government. We had an active participation in the consultation on peace and reconciliation organized by DiPaz Bogotá. Also we stay in constant relationship with the three pastors of this church who have received death threats.
- b. **El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala** are under critical social pressures because of the presence of different armed groups linked to narco-traffic, extortion and other criminal activities. The executive committee met in El Salvador last October. We had the chance to express our solidarity and also to get a better understanding of the social conflict and the role of the churches in it. It is planned a meeting on peace and reconciliation for March 2016, and we will participate in this event assuming also the representation of the WCRC.
- c. Although we did not visit Venezuela and Guatemala, we were close to the Presbyterian Church of **Venezuela** and the Evangelical National Church of **Guatemala** in their complex political processes. In both cases we sent pastoral letters after some dialogues with the authorities of the respective national churches.
- d. Also we are concerned with the situation of Haitian refugees in the **Dominican Republic**.
- e. The executive secretary met the authorities of the National Presbyterian Church of **Mexico**. On this occasion the dialogue was about the different positions of the Protestant churches around the issue of same-sex marriage. This church has a clear opposition to this, but it is understood that AIPRAL cannot and is not willing to impose a position on the national churches. Also in Mexico we had several meetings with the Mexican Communion of Reformed and Presbyterian Churches. They are looking forward to become member of our Alliance and



Communion. We expect to present their request to our coming assembly.

## **Building Strategic Relationships in Latin America**

AIPRAL is an important part in the dialogue with other ecumenical partners such as CLAI, LWF, WSCF, ACT Alliance, CREAS and ALC Noticias, among others. We are working to coordinate our particular agendas and collaborate with each other. This is an uneasy but crucial task, especially facing the shortage of resources and the need to accomplish a more relevant incidence. We are still in this process of dialogue. So far we agree that in the following issues the most critical for our region: peace and reconciliation, economic and climatic justice, migration, agenda 2030, youth and gender, ecumenical theological training.

### **AIPRAL's Assembly**

Aipral will be celebrating its assembly from August 8 to 14 in Sao Paulo, Brazil. The motto of the event is "**Help us to sustain the harmony of your creation.**" It is based on Genesis 8:22. It is our understanding that God's promise to Noah contains the basic elements to ensure the life in our planet, and that climate change is putting this at risk. Also we see that this harmony is cracked but is still there making life possible on the planet (see appendix 1 for the assembly logo).

AIPRAL's event is organized in 4 moments: pre-assembly of Youth and Women (August 8-9); climatic justice and water conference (August 9-12); AIPRAL's assembly (August 12-13); celebration of *AIPRAL's 60th anniversary* and encounter with Brazilian churches and society (August 14).

The goal of this event is to make aware and equip AIPRAL's member churches to have a stronger advocacy on the issue of climatic justice and water in their specific context. This topic it is not new in AIPRAL. We come to this assembly after a long and rich process of dialogue in the different regions of Latin American and the Caribbean. We started in the last assembly (Guatemala 2011) and continued with conferences in the different regions: Costa Rica 2012, Chile 2013 and Cuba 2014. Finally, as a result of this process we had two meetings in El Salvador to systematize, enrich and transform all the processes in a pedagogic guide oriented to local churches and social organizations. We believe that this educational guide will have a positive impact in the churches, helping them to assume a stronger understanding, advocacy and articulation on this issue.

## **WCRC**

- The relationship with the office and staff is in very good shape. In several occasions we coordinated a common vision and action with the general secretary, and we are doing our best to keep improving the coordination and cooperation.
- Unfortunately, the process of decision-making of the executive committee is not so clear for us. Concretely, the formal process of consultation to and dialogue with the region is at least imprecise, and also it is vague who represents the voice of the region in the executive committee.
- On the other hand it is important to mention the bi-regional event organized by the WCRC's office for justice and partnership (Cuba, January 2016). Besides the specificity of this event, it is remarkable the synergy and further possibilities that this bi-regional experience brought to our region, especially to the Caribbean churches and needs to be explored further.

## **Communication**

Communication itself is in a constant process of change. It creates difficulties and also opens new possibilities. AIPRAL's executive committee decided to transform *La Voz* into a publication oriented to the formation of the church leadership and move all the information to the website and newsletter. We also decide to publish one of the issues on paper and digital and one only in digital format. As part of this change we hired a person, with the resources we saved from the paper publication, to update and do a bigger database so we may also strengthen the dialogue and relationship with the churches and people interested in the issues we are working on.

## **Departments**

- The department for **Women** prepared the material for the Latin American Women's day of pray. Last year the material was prepared by women from the Presbyterian Church of Colombia. This department with the **Youth** department were also involved in the event "Gender Reading of Accra Confession" held in Matanzas, Cuba, in January 2016.
- The departments of **Justice and Communion** and **Theology of Mission** coordinated the two meetings held in El Salvador to systematize the material produced in the last five years on the issue of climatic justice. In those events the material was enriched and transformed into pedagogic resource that will be presented to the churches at the coming assembly.

## **Financial remarks**

The necessary economic structure to finance AIPRAL's assembly is a real challenge to us, but at the same time it resulted in the opening of relationships and cooperation with new ecumenical partners. Besides the constant support of FAP, PCUSA (World Mission) and the WCRC we have good support from the Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches, Churches helping Churches and the Waldesian Church. Many of these new contacts were done in dialogue with and help of the WCRC.

However, we are still struggling to establish more long-term agreements that facilitate the task and allow a better planning and more accountable results.

**AIPRAL: APPENDIX**



Redención



Resurrección / vida



Mantener la vida



A-Ω / Equilibrio



Presencia y Testimonio



São Paulo, Brasil 8 - 14 de Agosto de 2016

**DOCUMENT 9.3**  
**REPORT OF THE CARIBBEAN AND**  
**NORTH AMERICAN AREA COUNCIL**

Lisa Vander Wal, steering committee convenor

Since the executive Committee meeting of May 2015 in Lebanon, the steering committee has met via teleconferencing, email, Facebook and in person in Guyana in April 2016.

**Joint Gender Justice Event with AIPRAL in Matanzas, Cuba**

The CANAAC region was well represented at the gender justice event in Cuba in January 2016. Individuals from Trinidad, Guyana, the Dominican Republic, the Cayman Islands, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Canada and the US were among the event participants.

This event highlighted the gender justice challenges facing the churches and individuals in our region as well as the wider global context. As the CANAAC participants met together during the event, intersections between gender, race and economic circumstances were particularly noted as contributing to injustice. We noted the many resources which already exist pertaining to these issues, and our desire is to share them among the member communions in the region.

**Leadership Challenges**

One of the challenges which CANAAC has faced since the general assembly of 2014 has been effective gathering of the steering committee in order to conduct the business of CANAAC. The committee of six persons elected in 2014 is the minimum size allowed by our by-laws. Still, despite the small size, it has been difficult to convene the committee due to scheduling conflicts, technological difficulties, and the reality of several of the members carrying multiple leadership commitments. This has resulted in hampered progress toward the goals set out in 2014 as well as general frustration with this lack of progress.

Other factors are worth noting in this regard. First, CANAAC faces a lack of monetary resources. Member churches have reduced giving to CANAAC or have stopped giving altogether. This is likely due in part to a perception that CANAAC is not performing a helpful function for these member churches. Secondly, CANAAC leaders are trying to do the work of CANAAC without staff support. Each of us on the steering committee are already very committed within our own churches, and with continuing communication challenges and without staff support, it is difficult to move forward toward fulfilling the goals we have set forth. Finally, it has been noted that there is a disconnect between the structures of the WCRC and the regional councils. We hope that this is

an issue which can be discussed among the regional council leadership and the leadership of the WCRC.

### **Meeting of the Steering Committee in Guyana, April 10-12, 2016**

The steering committee convened in Guyana in April with a two-fold agenda: to meet with Guyanese member communions and to plan for the next general assembly. This assembly will be held in Guyana September 23-29, 2016.

It was extremely helpful to meet with leaders from the Guyana Congregational Union, the Guyana Presbyterian Church and the Presbyterian Church of Guyana. We learned of the challenges of these member communions, including a lack of pastoral leadership in the churches, poverty, racial dynamics, suicide within the Guyanese context, to name a few. We were very pleased to discover the readiness of the Guyanese churches to help plan and facilitate the general assembly in September. Finally, it was encouraging to be invited to attend a forum to introduce the Accra Confession that was being held at one of the Guyanese churches. This arose as a follow up to the gender justice event in Cuba.

The agenda of the 2016 General Assembly will largely be focused upon preparing delegates for the WCRC 2017 General Council in Leipzig, Germany. Since attendance at the 2014 General Assembly was low, we will be diligent toward communicating a desire to have full participation from each of the member churches in September. Additionally, we will strongly encourage the member churches to send delegates to the general assembly who will also be delegated to the general council so that they will be well prepared to be strong representatives from the CANAAC region at the general council meeting.

### **Communication**

As already mentioned, communication continues to be a challenge between CANAAC and the churches within the region. Letters sent to heads of churches requesting contact information and information about current initiatives and challenges continue to yield little response, which hampers our ability to communicate to and resource our member churches. We understand that this is due in part to outdated contact information for heads of churches, and we are working to rectify this in cooperation with the WCRC.

The continued lack of a CANAAC website is being addressed through contracting with an outside consultant for website development. We are working with Phil Tanis and Allan Buckingham to determine the most

effective ways to link the website to the WCRC site and to coordinate administration of the website.

### **Building relationships**

Steering committee members have been reaching out to heads of churches in order to gauge the desires and concerns each has with respect to CANAAC. This is a work in progress.

### **Youth**

CANAAC sent representatives to the Young Adults in Mission (YAM) 2015 Work Camp, sponsored by CANACOM, July 9-26, 2015, in Cuba with the theme "God Is Always on Line." This was reported to be a successful event.

### **Justice**

Human trafficking continues to be a justice concern across the region. Several of our churches engaged the "Broken for You" Lenten campaign, and as noted above, our goal is to share resources among the member churches which have already been developed. Additionally, we have noted concerns regarding race ("Black Lives Matter" within the US and the concerns of First Nations people in Canada and Native Americans in the US), suicide, poverty and migration which will be lifted up for future conversation in our justice agenda.

**DOCUMENT 9.4**  
**REPORT OF THE NORTHEAST ASIA AREA COUNCIL**  
Yueh-Wen Lu & Songhee Chai

Since the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Northeast Asia Accra consultation took place in September 2014, NEAAC was supposed to have its administrative committee in November 2015 and yet, due to the tight schedules of each member church, as well as miscommunication problems, the administrative committee was not able to take place. The council meeting as well as a theological consultation was held in February 2016 with the theme of “Living God, renew and transform us,” which is also the 2017 General Council theme of the WCRC.

**The Theological Consultation in February 2016**

Yoon-Jae Chang, professor of Christian studies and systematic theology at Ewha Woman’s University, was invited to deliver the keynote address to the Council. With the title of “A New Reformation: God of the Rainbow and the Transformation of Christianity,” Prof. Chang emphasized the importance of initiating a new Reformation to transform Christianity itself. There is a need to call for a reawakening of the Christian spirit of renewal and the radical transformation of Christianity itself. There is a need for a new vision of Christianity that honors God, values the earth and emphasizes humility and stewardship of humanity. Prof. Chang addressed that God has prepared for us a path toward life and commands us to turn feet away from the path of violence and self-destruction. This God is the God of the rainbow in whom and through whom we can dream and act for a new Reformation as well as a sustainable future. Deeply anchored in God, the rock of our salvation, we will choose life, not death, renewing the church and building a sustainable future. This is the mission, vocation and reason of being of the WCRC today, which is called, at this very critical moment of human and Earth her/history: “To live out the Communion of Reformed Churches, participating in God’s mission, that all may experience the fullness of life in Jesus Christ.” The reason that Korea is the land of rainbow is because of color stripped sleeve. Korean colorful noodle dish, Chap Che—the rainbow noodle. We cannot resist and escape from this grace of God.

Rev. Sungjae Kim, the moderator of the Korean Christian Church in Japan, led the Bible study with the title of “Hospitality that Transcends Animosity: Pilgrim Abraham and the Path of Jesus.”

Ms. Borah Lim from the PROK sharing her participation on behalf of NEAAC to the bi-regional consultation of Accra+10 bi-regional meeting that took place in 16-21 November 2015 and how perspectives and voices from Northeast Asia has been engaged in this bi-regional



consultation. Due to some communication problems as well as visa issues, NEAAC eventually was able to send only one representative to be involved in this bi-regional meeting.

## **Administrative and Council Meeting**

### **1. Rotation of coordination and moderation of host countries**

The question of rotation with Hong Kong now a member of NEAAC was raised as such a question would effect the rotating order of host countries for council meetings, as well as the rotation order for moderatorship and the leadership of NEAAC. The council approved that the rotation order will be Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan and Korea. Based on this new decision, there will be an administrative committee meeting to be hosted by the HKCCCC later in the year of 2016 and an area council meeting in 2018. Names of area secretary and treasurer shall also come from HKCCCC and other vice-moderator need to be given later.

### **2. Member Churches Issues**

Two Korean member churches, PCK-Daeshin and PCK-Baeksuk finalized the process of merger and yet, due to some internal problems with leadership the newly merged Daeshin Presbyterian Church, it is still difficult for this new church to be an active church as expected. Therefore, there is a need to remain patient before being able to re-engage this member church. At the same time, the ecumenical officer of PCK, Rev. Byun Chang-Bae, will continue to be the major liaison from NEAAC to Daeshin Presbyterian Church.

### **3. In relation to the preparation of the 2017 General Council**

The member churches that were present in the council meeting were asked to send the most updated church data information (mainly the major contact window) to the NEAAC moderator as well as the WCRC Hannover office as the preparation for the upcoming 2017 General Council. There is also a request from the vice president of Asia asking member churches that are eligible to send more than 2 delegates, shall seriously consider to send a youth delegate to the 2017 General Council.

### **4. Task Force about job description and responsibilities for officers of NEAAC**

In relation to the newly joined member church from Hong Kong, there was a request to have a thorough and clear document about job descriptions and responsibilities of officers for NEAAC (i.e, moderator, vice-moderator, area secretary and treasurer), the council meeting approved to ask Elder Yoshi Fujimori from CCJ and Rev. Sungjae Kim from KCCJ as a task force team to come up with written document that

Executive Committee 2016

contains job descriptions and responsibilities of NEAAC officers and to be submit to Administrative Committee.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Revenue</b>	<b>Expense</b>	<b>Balance</b>
2014-03-27	Balance	₩210,000 ¥525,000 \$1,000		₩210,000 ¥525,000 \$1,000
2014-04-02	Currency exchange		¥165,000	¥360,000
		₩1,672,143		₩1,882,143
	Travel expense to executive committee		₩1,580,000	₩302,143
2014-04-16	Membership fee	₩3,067,662		₩3,369,805
	Interest	₩526		₩3,370,331
2014-11-24	Travel expense to Accra consultation		₩2,170,904	₩1,199,427
2014-12-20 - 2015-12-19	Interest			
		₩2,706		₩1,202,133
			<i>Total balance \$ (average FX rate)</i>	<b>Total balance</b>
			\$ 1,000	<b>₩1,202,133</b>
			\$ 3,200	<b>¥360,000</b>
			\$ 1,000	<b>\$1,000</b>
			\$ 5,200	

₩ = South-Korean Won  
 ¥ = Japanese Yen  
 \$ = US Dollars

**DOCUMENT 9.5**  
**REPORT OF THE SOUTH ASIA REGION**  
Rev. S.S. Majaw

**Introduction**

Member churches of the WCRC under these four countries—India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh—fall under the WCRC South Asia Region. These countries are facing many problems and challenges, socially, politically, economically, culturally and spiritually. As churches under this region we are striving to fulfill our mission mandate and people’s aspirations. The churches need to be pro-active, alive and constantly aware of their environment to be able to address the various issues arising from time to time.

As mentioned in last year’s report, we would like to state the same that the relationship of the two countries, India and Pakistan, are not healthy at this date. Hence, it is difficult for members from Pakistan to come to India to participate in any programmes organized by the WCRC South Asia Region and vice versa.

The South Asia annual meeting was held on 26 October 2015 at Dhaka, Bangladesh. Hence the report is as follows:

**Opening Devotion**

The opening devotion was led by Rev. Dr. Albert Sundaraj Walters, principal, St. Andrew’s Theological College, Church of Bangladesh, on the topic “stewardship” along with questions for general discussion by the members present. The discussion was thought provoking which enabled members to realize the urgent need to come forward in order to address the issue of ecological destruction by member churches in the South Asia region.

The members present were as follows:

- Bishop Paul Sarkar, Church of Bangladesh
- Rev. S.S. Majaw, Presbyterian Church in India
- Rev. David T. Lhouvum, Presbyterian Church of India
- Rev. B. Sangthanga, Presbyterian Church of India
- Rev. D. Jangkholam, Presbyterian Church of India
- Rev. S. Christopher Vijayan, Church of South India
- Ms. Hanabalahun Kharbuki, Presbyterian Church of India
- Mr. Michael A. Roy, Church of Bangladesh
- Mr. John Torun Mondal, Evangelical Churches Association, Manipur
- Mr. Pradip Bansrior, Church of North India

- Pro. Pastor Vanlal Jubileethang Hrangchal, Presbyterian Church of India

### **By-laws of WCRC SARC**

After a thorough discussion it was resolved to circulate the draft by-laws of the council to all member churches for discussion and at the same time to submit feedback to the secretary by the end of March 2016 for necessary consideration in the next meeting.

### **Resolution of the Meeting**

It was resolved to send a copy of the minutes of the WCRC SARC meetings to all the representatives attending the meeting for necessary follow up with their own member churches.

### **Membership Contributions**

Since the council does not have any funds, it was felt necessary to raise funds from among the member churches as an "annual contribution."

After a threadbare discussion, it was resolved as follows:

- i. That equal membership contributions shall be fixed to all the member churches
- ii. That each member church shall contribute 250 USD annually
- iii. That this contribution shall begin from the year 2016
- iv. That the amount shall be paid on or before 31 December every year

### **Nomination of the Office Bearers of WCRC SARC**

The matter was discussed thoroughly. After a prolonged discussion it was resolved unanimously to extend the existing office bearers up to the end of 2017 as to enable the present leadership to stabilize the body as a council.

### **Office Bearers**

President:	Rev. Dr. Sadananda, general secretary, Church of South India
Vice president:	Rev. Prubal Dutta, Church of North India
Secretary:	Rev. S.S. Majaw, Presbyterian Church of India
Treasurer:	Rev. A.Z. Beirona, Congregational Church of India (Maraland)

## **Participation of the General Secretaries**

The meeting expressed concern about the inability of the general secretaries of member churches to attend the council. After discussion, it was resolved that in the WCRC SARC meeting the general secretary or the concerned person of the member churches should participate and if he/she could not participate he/she should delegate one responsible person for the same.

## **Future Programme**

A two day programme for the WCRC SARC meeting was proposed and after a prolonged discussion it was resolved to hold the same in 2016 at Sri Lanka under the topic "economic and ecological destruction in the context of South Asia and globally." Rev. S.S. Majaw, WCRC SARC secretary, is entrusted to do the necessary write-up for the programme.

## **Operational Funds**

It was resolved to make a request to the WCRC global office for providing operational funds to all the regional councils available.

## **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

**DOCUMENT 9.6**  
**REPORT OF WCRC-INDONESIA**  
**Persekutuan Gereja-gereja Reform di Indonesia**

Rev. Zakaria J. Ngelow, moderator  
Rev. Paulus Wijono, associate secretary

### **Introduction**

The WCRC Indonesia Regional Council (WCRC-Indonesia) was founded in Jakarta on 9 May 2012, at the National Conference on Mission in Indonesia. The conference was sponsored by the WCRC, Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) and the Communion of Churches in Indonesia (PGI). The conference was attended by previous WCRC general secretary, Rev. Dr. Setri Nyomi. He also motivated participants to support formation of a regional WCRC council for Indonesia. Our bylaws (appendix 1) were sent to general secretary to be ratified.

Rev. Zakaria J. Ngelow was appointed as president or moderator of the council. Then he asked Rev. Arliyanus Larosa (general secretary of the Indonesia Christian Church, GKI) and Ms. Olvi Prihutami (of the Java Christian Church, GKJ) to join as secretary and treasurer. For the period of 2016-2019 the executive committee of WCRC-Indonesia is as follows:

Moderator	Rev. Zakaria J. Ngelow
Secretary	Rev. Arliyanus Larosa
Associate Secretary	Rev. Paulus Wijono
Treassurer	Rev. Marlene Joseph

### **Objectives of WCRC-Indonesia**

1. Sharing WCRC information
2. Revitalisation and contextualisation of Reformed traditions
3. Coordinating solidarity and advocacy
4. Cooperation among members
5. Developing wider church ecumenism and interfaith dialogue.

### **Some Activities**

1. WCRC-Indonesia was founded on 9 May 2012 in Jakarta.
2. Since 2012 a simple website of WCRC-Indonesia was provided to share information to member churches. I put them temporarily in my office website at [www.oaseintim.org/wcrc-indonesia](http://www.oaseintim.org/wcrc-indonesia).
3. Our bylaws were approved by member meeting in Kupang, East Nusa Tenggara, on 26 January 2013. The bylaws were then sent to the WCRC general secretary in Geneva. On May 2013 we got information from Ms. Yael Eka Hadiputeri, executive committee

- member of the WCRC, that Indonesia Regional Council of WCRC and its bylaws were approved at the executive committee meeting in Ghana, but ratification will be done by the 2017 General Assembly.
4. On 20 May 2015, we were visited by Rev. Chris Ferguson, the new general secretary of the WCRC, at GKI Gunung Sahari, Jakarta Pusat. He came to Indonesia to attend the 14th General Assembly of CCA, 27-29 May 2015. We shared information about WCRC-Indonesia, and Rev. Ferguson shared about the WCRC. The meeting was attended by some 20 participants representing 14 member churches.
  5. After the CCA general assembly Rev. Chris Ferguson visited some WCRC congregations in Bandung. Pasundan Christian Church (GKP) was host for this meeting.
  6. On 22 July 2015 during the general assembly of Indonesia Protestan Church (GPI) in Palu, Central Sulawesi, there was a meeting of WCRC member churches. The meeting shared information among member churches such as annual dues.
  7. On 21 January 2016, during Communion of Churches in Indonesia's annual meeting in Parapat, North Sumatera, representatives of WCRC member churches had a short meeting. They agree to spend a day meeting on 29 February 2016 in Jakarta, during a celebration of GPI member churches.
  8. The meeting in Jakarta on 29 February 2016 dealt with three main agenda items, namely an introduction to the Accra Confession (WARC, 2004) from an Indonesian perspective; sharing bread among member churches; then appointed the new moderator. The Accra Confession is not familiar to our member churches, although Indonesian translation was available since 2008 and published in our website. Sharing bread is a program to share available program among member churches to other members. Pasundan Church, for example, offers interfaith program or shelter program for the victims of domestic violence. Other churches are invited to come and learn how Pasundan Church runs the programs. I refused to continue as moderator of our regional communion, but the meeting insisted and just added Rev. Paulus Wijono (general secretary of Pasundan Christian Church) as associate secretary and Rev. Marlene Joseph (general secretary of Protestant Church in Western Indonesia) as treasurer.

### **Short information on member churches of WCRC in Indonesia**

1. Indonesia ca. 18,000 tropical islands, 245 million people of about 500 ethnic groups; ca. 250 million population: 87% Muslim population; 10% Christians (of both Roman Catholics and Protestantism). Government recognizes five major world religions, but there are many indigenous religions.

2. Christianity arrived in the country since 7th century (as Nestorianism). Our Indonesian modern Christianity began in 16th century as Roman Catholic communities but converted to Dutch Calvinism in early 17th century.
3. Indonesian Protestantism came from three different backgrounds, namely (1) the Dutch Calvinist congregations under Dutch trade body then in 19th century reorganized under Dutch colonial rule as Protestant Church in Indonesia. This "colonial church" was reorganized into four (now 12) ethnic-regional churches, mostly in Eastern Indonesia. (2) Churches founded by mission boards from Europe (the Netherlands and Germany), eventually organized as "ethnic churches." (3) Churches founded by "American missionaries" of Protestant denominations, such as Pentecost, Christian Alliance, Adventism, etc.
4. WCRC member churches came from the (1) and (2) background. Some confined to a certain region, some other become ethnic churches that spread across the country following their members' migration. Most of our member churches were organized into independent church since the 1930s. Less than a hundred years under Indonesian leadership.
5. Most of our member churches belong to rural or traditional agrarian churches. Some of their congregations are in the towns or big cities. Only Indonesia Christian Church (GKI) and the Protestant Church of Western Indonesia (GPIB) belong to urban churches. As for the size, some churches have only small number of members (less than 10,000) but others have some hundred thousand members. Of course you know when you check their respective annual dues. We do not have the number of Indonesian Christians of our WCRC-Indonesia members yet. Our estimation about 10 million (some 50% of Indonesian Protestantism).
6. All WCRC-Indonesia member churches are also member of our national Communion of Churches in Indonesia (PGI). We take our chance to have a short meeting of WCRC member representatives at the annual meeting of the national Communion.
7. Indonesian churches face some national challenges, such as religious radicalism, ecological crisis, and human rights. Religious radicalism among Muslims was rooted in the past history of Indonesian struggle for independence from colonialism but recently supported by transnational radical movements. Our ecological crisis was caused mainly by big corporations supported by our government. They take over our people's land. They convert our tropical forests into monoculture of palm oil plantations or break the ground for mineral minings. They also convert people's lands in the suburban cities to exclusive real estate. Land grabbing created injustice to our ecology and to our people. They were uprooted from their soil and lost their traditional economic resources. Human rights has become a major issue as some religious minority,



included some Christian communities, are persecuted. Other minorities, such as LGBT and indigenous people are also marginalized.

### **Some Concerns**

1. The executive committee of WCRC–Indonesia has difficulty of communication with member churches. Most of the churches did not reply to emails. It is a contradiction to the nature of the WCRC as a communion of one Christ’s body lives in an era of modern-sophisticated information and communication technology. Therefore it is serious efforts are needed to develop better communication. As an effort we keep updated postal addresses, phones, and identify a contact person of each member churches. Online information is also updated, such as information from Hannover as we read in the WCRC Facebook ([www.facebook.com/worldcommunion](http://www.facebook.com/worldcommunion)) or blog ([wcrc.ch/blog](http://wcrc.ch/blog)). We also share as we get information from member churches. We utilize Facebook group and WhatsApp group and website for sharing information.
2. The second concern is the unpaid annual dues of most of our member churches, which ever increased as churches are leaving their dues unpaid. While waiting for the executive committee’s new policy on this matter, churches are advised to pay their respective dues, begin in year 2015, while the back years can be paid in installments. It seems that the WCRC needs to review the amount of annual dues for some member churches which factually have no resources to pay, such as churches with small number of members (only some thousands) while they are economically poor.
3. Another concern is the financial limitation of most of our churches. Unpaid annual dues are related to this limitation. Indonesia is a big country with relative expensive travel costs. That is the main reason why we schedule our member churches meeting during a gathering of church leaders, such as annual meeting of our national communion of churches or of the Indonesia Protestant Church (12 out of 27 WCRC members belong to this church). Costs for our executive committee administrative needs are paid personally. Our new treasurer is working on a fundraising plan to cover our executive committee administrative needs. I learned recently that an invitation for the moderator to a meeting abroad, such as to this executive committee meeting in Havana, is not paid by the WCRC office in Hannover.
4. We were informed that 2nd General Council of WCRC will be organized in Leipzig, Germany, 27 June - 7 July, 2017, under a theme: “God of Life Renew and Transform Us.” Please send as materials for the general council as soon as available. Some of our member churches need Indonesian translation of the documents (or

their summary). We also wondered whether this time the council committee will provide Indonesian interpretation.

## **DOCUMENT 9.7**

### **REPORT OF THE COUNCIL OF THE WCRC IN EUROPE**

Rev. Jan-Gerd Heetderks, president

In this report I will give an impression of the work the steering committee and the council did last year.

Attached to this report is an extensive newsletter. So it is not necessary to repeat all the items which were named in the newsletter. I will just highlight a few things and elaborate some items which could not make part of the newsletter yet. The newsletter should be read as part of the report.

#### **Solidarity visits**

In recent years, the steering committee has had a policy of making solidarity visits as part of its work. These have taken place alongside regular business meetings of the Committee. We are extremely grateful that the churches visited have received us with open arms. We think that it is a valuable sign to the smaller churches of our communion that our communion looks after them and shares their joys and sorrows. The hospitality is always touching, and we are blessed to share time in prayer with the churches.

As mentioned in the newsletter, we visited the Reformed Christian Church in Croatia and met representatives of the Reformed Christian Church in Slovenia. The steering committee would like to continue the practice of these visits.

#### **Consultation on human trafficking**

Together with the Reformierter Bund, the steering committee organized a consultation on human trafficking. You can read about the content in the newsletter.

Like at the consultation on asylum, we shared stories in this consultation on human trafficking. Many of our member churches are involved in the work against human trafficking. Human trafficking is the third largest sector of organized crime; huge economic interests are at stake. The work of the churches is not always welcome. One of the delegates told about how he and his family had been threatened. The victims need, among others, the work of our churches.

#### **Refugees and asylum**

1. In 2014, the steering committee, together with the Reformierter Bund, organized a consultation about asylum. Many of our member churches were and are involved in the work with refugees. Last year, hundreds of thousands of refugees came to Europe.

We saw that many of our member churches were again involved in work for the refugees in lobbying and practical help. At the other side, it seemed that the governments and institutions were powerless at some stage. And we saw that solutions were boycotted.

As the steering committee, we wrote letters in the autumn of 2015 to Martin Schulz, president of the European Parliament, and to Jean-Claude Juncker, president of the European Commission. We asked them to bring their influence to bear to ensure that the refugees who have come to us are treated with humanity, compassion and dignity, and that, in this time of crisis, political ideology and national self-interest be put aside. We asked them to urge all European Union member states to work together, both to meet the needs of those who have recently arrived, and to formulate a common, humane policy on welcoming refugees and asylum seekers.

2. The steering committee agreed that support for our member churches is needed. It decided to take responsibility for an *Erasmus Project* financed by the European Union. This project will be co-ordinated by the Reformierte Kirche (Leer) in Germany in cooperation with the steering committee. Project partners are the Reformierte Kirche (Leer), the Reformed Church of Hungary and at least one more member church of WCRC Europe. The objectives of the project are the exchange of best practices between the partners and the development of an international concept to support volunteers and institutions in their work with refugees.
3. As decided by the Council of WCRC Europe in Belfast, the steering committee organized, together with the Reformierte Bund, a further conference about migration. The conference was planned because of the importance of the topic of asylum and migration for people in Europe and because of the need for a common vision of our life and community in Europe.

This conference was held in Emden from 17 to 20 February of this year. 75 people from eight European countries and South Africa participated in the conference, which was entitled, "Tolerating Strangeness – Migration and Aggression in Europe." This conference sought to think together about the question of how we can live with the stranger in the midst of our societies on the way to communion. It provided opportunity to learn more about a Reformed "Theology of migration" and to recognize and rebuild our engagement in Europe. The topic was discussed from political, sociological, historical and theological perspectives. There were

lectures from Dr. Achim Detmers, Professor Susanne Lachenicht, Professor Robert Vosloo, Dr. Klaas Dieter Voss, Dr. Andreas Mertin, Professor Gustavàv Bölskei, Professor Herman Selderhuis, Vice-President Martina Strunk and Professor Klaas Huizing. There was also a panel discussion on this item.

In my opinion, it was a very good and fruitful conference. Looking both at the biblical witness and at our own history and theology (especially the Huguenots and Calvin) brought a lot of inspiration for the way we can look at asylum and migration in our times.

### **Meeting of the Council of WCRC Europe**

In March the Council of WCRC Europe met for a 24-hour-meeting in Kloster Kappel (35 km from Zurich, Switzerland).

The main theme of the meeting was the request to all member churches to think about the "Proposal of a Reformed Signing Statement to the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification." The working group on theology of WCRC Europe prepared the discussion and there was a strong debate on this item. The procedure and the time schedule were criticized. Some churches indicated that there is not time enough to discuss this item in the synodal committees of the member churches. There was no clear outcome of the discussion.

The steering committee formulated a few points for the further discussion:

- WCRC Europe is dedicated to the Reformed–Lutheran dialogue. In our bylaws there is a strong relation to the CPCE and the Leuenberg Agreement.
- Some of our member churches are United churches. They were also result of the Reformed–Lutheran dialogue.
- In the ecumenical contacts an affiliation or association is helpful.
- We urge our member churches to react on the letter and statement that was sent. We ask them to react on the process and on the content of the statement. We ask our member churches to give advice to the executive committee and to the general secretary about handling this item.
- We had a broad discussion in the council; we ask the member churches to involve the delegates in the deliberations in the churches.
- We offer the lecture of Professor Zeindler to our member churches.
- We ask the general secretary to give more clarification to the process for our member churches.

Further the council was informed about

- the Reformed church life in Switzerland;
- the involvement of member-churches in the asylum-work.

The steering committee will install a working group that deals with issues related to asylum.

## WCRC EUROPE APPENDIX: NEWSLETTER

W C R C E U R O P E



World  
Communion  
of Reformed  
Churches

# Newsletter

An occasional publication from the Steering Committee of the Council of WCRC Europe

November 2015

<p><b>WCRC Europe in Belfast</b> <i>The Presbyterian Church in Ireland hosted the two-day annual meeting of the Council of the World Communion of Reformed Churches in Europe (WCRC Europe) at Assembly Buildings in Belfast.</i> Page 1</p>	<p><b>Solidarity visit to Croatia</b> <i>The Steering Committee met with Rev Branimir Bučanović, and with Rev Tamás Bódis and Géza Kócán, of the Reformed Christian Church in Slovenia.</i> Page 2</p>	<p><b>2016 WCRC Europe Council meeting</b> <i>This will take place in Kappel Kloster near Zurich from 3rd -5th March and will concentrate on preparation for the 2017 General Council.</i> Page 5</p>	<p><b>Report of the Core Group on Theology</b> <i>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.</i> Page 5</p>	<p><b>European Refugee Crisis</b> <i>At its meeting in Zagreb, having received a request to do so from the Reformierter Bund, the Steering Committee wrote to Martin Schulz and Jean-Claude Juncker.</i> Page 6</p>	<p><b>Conference on Human Trafficking</b> <i>About twenty delegates and experts from European churches and social organizations met from October 22nd to October 24th in Hanover to discuss the difficult topic of human trafficking.</i> Page 7</p>
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### WCRC Europe in Belfast

**The Presbyterian Church in Ireland hosted the two-day annual meeting of the Council of the World Communion of Reformed Churches in Europe (WCRC Europe) at Assembly Buildings in Belfast.**

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.

Reflecting on the two-day meeting, the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, the Rt. Rev. Dr. Michael Barry explained that the World Communion of Reformed Churches is a valuable network of

churches in the reformed tradition that share common roots in the 16th Century Reformation.

"I was delighted to be able to welcome so many church representatives from across Europe to Belfast. It was a privilege to fellowship with ministers and officials from churches as far away as the Uniting Church in Sweden to the north, the Spanish Evangelical Church in the south and the Transylvanian Reformed Church to the east.



"During our time together we were able to demonstrate the work of our own church in Ireland and hear

about the work of our brothers and sisters in Christ in their nations. There were also opportunities to pray together, share Communion and provide our guests with hospitality," Dr. Barry said.

Describing the Council as "very productive and informative" WCRC Europe president Rev. Jan-Gerd Heetderks of Holland's Protestant Church in The Netherlands, explained that at each Council meeting members also discuss a specific theme that is relevant to the place in which it meets, but has a contemporary relevance across Europe.

"We decided that we would discuss 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.

“We were very grateful to Rev. Doug Gay from Trinity College, Glasgow, who has researched and written extensively on this subject. He gave a key note address with insightful inputs from colleagues from Hungary, Switzerland and Italy,” Rev. Heetderks said.



Rev. Trevor Gribben, Clerk of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, gave an overview of the Church’s work across Ireland. Council members were also informed of initial plans to commemorate the 500th anniversary in 2017 of Martin Luther’s Ninety-Five Theses and discussed January’s ‘Solidarity Visit’ by WCRC Europe members to the Reformed Church of Transcarpathia in Ukraine.

The delegation visited Beregszász and Dercen in the southwest of the country close to the Hungarian border. “Part of our role is to encourage and support one another,” explained Martina Wasserloos of Germany’s Reformed Alliance and a vice president of WCRC Europe.

“Listening to the report we noted that though it is a vulnerable community facing immense difficulties and uncertainties, the Church has a vision and practice of a serving faith community,”

“The high level delegation learned about the challenges of being an ethnic and religious minority, both historically and currently, remembering the dozens of Reformed Hungarian pastors who

were exiled, jailed or killed during the Soviet era. They also saw how the church is now working with local governments to plug the many gaps in the social support framework,” she said.

WCRC Europe’s next Council meeting will take place in March 2016 in Zurich.

*Reprinted from the PCI website*

## Solidarity visit to Croatia

**The Steering Committee met with Rev Branimir Bučanović, Synod Secretary of the Reformed Christian Church in Croatia and pastor of congregations in Zagreb, Pleternica and Bleiševac, and with Rev Tamás Bódis and Géza Kócán, Pastor and Lay President respectively of the Reformed Christian Church in Slovenia.**

Tamás Bódis gave a presentation about the Reformed Christian Church in Slovenia. He brought greetings from his church. He placed Slovenia in geographical context. The church is active predominantly in the far north east of the country, next to the Hungarian border. The other

churches present are mostly Lutheran, while the rest of the country is predominantly Roman Catholic. They are not that far away from Zagreb. Many of the people on the other side of the Hungarian border are reformed.

The church has four congregations with a total of 150 members. They have only one church building. The biggest congregation, in Szentlászló-Motvarjevci, numbers 120 people. They find that people who are not members attend services because they like to be able to worship in Hungarian.

The church began to be organised in 1919. This was a response to the drawing of a new border by the Treaty of Trianon. The first pastor was appointed in 1935. He came from Croatia. He left in 1947. Around 1949 he was sent to prison and, after his release, went to Germany. His brother, Póth Lajos and others conducted services, but it is not known how often. During the times when a pastor was not available, Lutheran pastors looked after funerals. Another pastor, Rev Narancsik Pál, served from 1952-1986, travelling around by train and bicycle, visiting for a long





## W C R C E U R O P E

weekend every third month. He lived in Kopačevo in eastern Croatia, right next to the border with Serbia.

The war in 1991 meant that the contact with the Reformed Christian Church in Yugoslavia was broken, but relationships were re-established with the church in Hungary, reflecting the fact that when one border closed, another opened. From 1993-2008 they had a pastor, Rev Nagy Dániel from the neighbouring village in Hungary, Szentgyörgyvölgy, who held services once a month and, since then, Tamás Bódis and Emöke Rozgonyi have served full time, the first time in sixty-one years that the congregation has had a full time pastorate.

Work has been undertaken to renovate the church building. They are working too to strengthen local communities. There was a sense that the church was dying but the possibility of having full time pastors has given new hope. There were nine children in the church when they arrived, all of whom have since taken their confirmation vows. Currently, there are eleven children in the congregation.

The church is active with events such as World Day of Prayer, a children's summer camp, conferences for presbyters, a children's service during the main service, and other initiatives. The work with young people appeals to Reformed children as well as many others from different traditions.

Despite being very close to the Austrian border, there are no direct relationships with the Reformed Church of Austria, mainly because the Austrian church does not have any congregations in the part of Austria adjacent to Slovenia.

There is now not much by the way of ecumenical relations with Lutherans or Roman Catholics.

The church was financed for a while by the Hungarian minority in Slovenia but, some years ago, that stopped. Help is now received from the Reformed Church in Hungary to pay for the salary of the pastor. The church is registered in Slovenia but the pastor comes under the church discipline of the Reformed Church in Hungary. Members also give as generously as they can. There is no support from the state. This is because they have fewer than 1000 members. It took from 1991 to 1993 to be recognised as a church rather than a sect. Membership of WCRC is helpful in proving the bona fides of the church. It is also necessary to be able to show that the church existed in the time of the first Yugoslavia.

Tamás and Emöke decided to live in Slovenia after their theological training. The Bishop asked them to go there, in part because Emöke came from Serbia and had some ability to understand Slovenian. They came for a year but decided to stay so that the church would not die.

Slovenia is a very secular country. Despite this, Reformation Day is a national holiday. This is because a Lutheran Croat, Primož Trubar (1508-1586) helped to establish the Slovenian language.

There is a legacy of trauma from over a century of different conflicts and the forced resettlement of people. The fact that the district has come under the jurisdiction of a variety of countries has hardly helped. A number of people, particularly the older ones, still live with a sense of fear - of the police, of the army, of any kind of authority - as a result of having had bad experiences. Many families had been divided by shifting borders.

Much work is being done now to rebuild connections.

Unemployment in the area served by the Reformed Christian Church in Slovenia is running at 20%. Many people run small farms of under 10 hectares. Most of those who do also have to have other employment. Since the 1960s, many people have emigrated.

Most people, particularly the old, feel that they are poor and getting poorer. Pensions are at a low level or even non-existent. In Slovenia as a whole, there are problems with the quality of political leadership. Corruption is a problem and people fear that it is getting worse and worse. One Prime Minister, Jenez Jansa, has even been jailed.

There are many single people, especially single men, many of whom are now old. Many young people leave the area for employment. There is more social support for people who do not marry, so many couples do not do so. Slovenia is still run by a political class whose origins are in the communist party. They have changed their labels but leopards do not change their spots!

Tamás and Géza Kócán, the Lay President, were warmly thanked for coming to meet with the Steering Committee, and for sharing the story of their church so fully and openly.



### The Reformed Christian Church in Croatia

Branimir Bučanović, the Synod Secretary and pastor of the church in Zagreb, took up the task of telling about his church. The Reformed Christian Church in Croatia has existed since the time of the Reformation. The confessional identity as Calvinist has developed over time. Historically, most congregations were in the east of the country. In 1604 a law was passed in the Croatian parliament against Protestantism and persecution ensued. Previously, the country had been under the control of the Turks, who had provided a measure of freedom of religion but, as the Turks were expelled, the counter reformation took hold and things got distinctly worse for Reformed Croats.

Many of the original churches were, in time, completely destroyed. Freedom of religion was restored in 1781. Congregations were rebuilt, consisting mainly of Hungarians, Germans, Czechs and Slovaks but very few Croats. Freedom of religion was really only for 'foreigners', Croats being required to be Roman Catholic.

By 1918, there were about fifty thousand Protestant believers in Croatia, but that number has been in decline since then. This is in part because the Reformed tradition was considered to be a foreign or imported form of religion. Another reason is that most members remained ethnically isolated, and kept to their own identities. German speaking congregations changed to speaking Croatian, while Hungarians kept to their language, despite the isolation this caused.

There are now twenty three congregations, fewer than half of which are fully functional. There 3500 members. There are 8 men and 4 women pastors. Leadership, such

as being bishop and synod secretary, rotates every 6 years, though individuals may serve more than one consecutive term of office.

About 70% of the church buildings were destroyed in the 1991 war. There was much destruction, especially in the east of the country, where there are still uncleared minefields. Twenty thousand people died. Half a million were internally displaced. The church is still mostly in the east which was the area which suffered most in the war. Some have recently been rebuilt which has required much in the way of resources. Many church are still in bad shape. The government is giving some help, but only if the building is of cultural significance. Some to the buildings are very old, going back to the 16th Century.



From 2003, a small amount of money, though huge for the church, has come from the government. The church has the freedom to decide what to spend this on and has used it to cover some rebuilding costs and the pastors' salaries, cars and travel costs. Local congregations are responsible for care of their buildings, but some weaker ones are receiving help. There is no congregation which could fully pay the salary of the pastor.

Property and land stolen by communists is being restituted. A lot has been given back, especially in rural communities.

The church is looking for ways to be relevant to today's society and how to reach people with the gospel message.

Most of the churches which had been destroyed were Hungarian churches but the damage was done by Yugoslav communist army and Serbian soldiers. Funds for rebuilding have come from a variety of sources, mainly from the Croatian government but with some also coming from the Hungarian government, the Reformed Church in Hungary and from sources in the USA and Germany too. Houses and other buildings were destroyed too. Many people were wounded and lost a great deal. Emotional recovery is very slow. The number who died formed a significant proportion of the population. Hardly any Croat family did not lose at least one member of their family to the communists. There is still bitterness and anger. As the buildings are restored, people are recovering too. People are encouraged by their pastors to repent and forgive. The memory of the war is receding and people are consciously and deliberately living in the present rather than the past. The level of tolerance and forgiveness is surprisingly high. The war was not as bad as in Bosnia and Hercegovina, where over 300,000 people died as a result of conflict. Experience in Bosnia and Serbia has shown that it is much harder to deal with the legacy of the war in these countries.

Branimir felt that the war was a direct result of the existence of Yugoslavia, which was an artificial construct which could not last. The good thing about Yugoslavia was that it was not such a harsh country as those which fell under Soviet domination. People could travel. When Tito realised that his regime was about to collapse, he opened the border. Several million people moved to other countries, many of

whom sent money back to support family left behind.

Things in Croatia are much better now. There is freedom of speech. Stolen private property has been restored. There are still problems about establishing ownership. There was serious corruption in the past, some of which lives on. Many politicians still have an old fashioned communist mentality, and promote a nostalgic view of the old days. Tito was not a typical communist dictator, keeping Yugoslavia outwith the iron curtain, while not being fully westernised. He was, however, a mass murderer.

In the opinion of Branimir, the big challenges being faced by the church are around the sense that a big part of the congregations are living in a past which does not exist. They are not being salt and light to the communities. There is a challenge to be relevant to Croatian society. The country is becoming very secular. There are very good relationships with the Roman Catholics church. There is not that much discussion on freedom of religion, which seems to be reasonably well established.

Mission is a big challenge - how to communicate the core gospel message of fullness of life in Christ. There is a real need to build multi-ethnic congregations, where Hungarians, Germans, Croats, etc mix well.

Recently, there had been problems in the leadership of the church. These problems have largely been solved, not least by cultivating contacts with larger churches abroad and with WCRC. A split was effected about fifteen years ago, when one pastor seceded, taking property with him. There is currently another similar case and a court case is anticipated.

The relationship with the Reformed churches in Europe is greatly valued and the Reformed Christian Church

in Croatia is committed to maintaining and deepening that relationship.

Branimir asked for prayer for Croatia and for this part of the world.

Jan-Gerd offered the thanks of the Steering Committee for the hospitality shown to the Committee by the Reformed Christian Church in Croatia, stressing the commitment of WCRC and its member churches to support one another in solidarity.



On Sunday morning, the President, Jan-Gerd Heetderks, Vice-President Balázs Ódor and Secretary Sandy Horsburgh accompanied Branimir to Bjeleševac, a village in the east of Croatia of some 300 souls, where there is a small but thriving Reformed Congregation. The Secretary preacher on the text, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Yours are the words of eternal life." The sermon was translated into Croatian by Branimir, who also celebrated the Sacrament of Holy Communion. The president brought the greetings of WCRC Europe to the congregation.

## 2016 WCRC Europe Council meeting

**This will take place in Kappel Kloster near Zurich on 3rd -5th March and will concentrate on preparation for the 2017 General Council.**

The theme of Justification will be the main focus. All member churches are going to be asked to affiliate to the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of

Justification, but it is recognised that many will need information upon which to make a decision. Therefore, the Council will include theological reflection to resource member churches to take part in the process of adopting the Joint Declaration and to equip church leaders to undertake discussion and decision making on the joint declaration in their own churches. It is anticipated that this would be both an important and potentially difficult subject.

The WCRC Europe theological group has been asked to lead the discussion. The Steering Committee considers it particularly important that the Reformed should be prepared to make a declaration alongside the Lutheran World Federation and the Roman Catholic in Wittenberg in 2017.

An interesting programme of interaction with the cantonal Church of Zürich, including visits to some historical sites and to current projects is also being planned.

## Report of the Core Group on Theology

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 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.

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.

Martin Junge, secretary LWF, writes:

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.

## European Refugee Crisis

At its meeting in Zagreb, having received an request to do so from the Reformierter Bund, the Steering Committee wrote to Martin Schulz, President of the European Parliament and to Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission.

*As the Council of the World Communion of Reformed Churches in Europe, we are writing to you ask you to take action to defend the human rights of those who are seeking refuge in Europe at this time.*

*For years, we have been concerned about refugee, migration and asylum issues and have taken action to support member churches which are particularly active in this field. We have all been deeply moved by the plight of those who have come to our continent in recent years and months, especially those who are fleeing the war in Syria. Our hearts have been grieved by the stories and images of dead people washed up on*

*beaches in Turkey, Greece, Italy and other countries around the Mediterranean. We have been humbled and inspired by the practical actions taken by many churches, including Reformed churches, both by church leaders and by church members, to offer a welcome and provide essential care for those who have arrived in Europe.*

*We have been disappointed by the lack of effort made over recent years by member states properly to work together, instead treating this as a problem just for the countries on the Mediterranean. We have also been distressed by the attitude shown very recently towards the refugees by some political leaders, who have acted in ways which have not spoken of welcome and used language which has not spoken of humanity.*

*We are writing to you, therefore, as President of the European Parliament/ Commission, to ask you to bring your influence to bear to ensure that the refugees who have come to us are treated with humanity, compassion and dignity, and that, in this time of crisis, political ideology and national self interest be put aside. We ask you to urge all European Union member states to work together, both to meet the needs of those who have recently arrived, and to formulate a common, humane policy on welcoming refugees and asylum seekers. We note with gratitude that the European Parliament has already encouraged member states to do all they can to care for refugees, both here in Europe and in partnership with other countries outwith our continent who are rising to the challenge of so many people seeking sanctuary within their borders.*

*Please be assured that the Reformed churches in Europe stand ready to serve those who have come to our continent. Many, such as in Greece, Italy and Hungary, have been at the forefront of welcoming and caring for new arrivals. Others further north and west have also done much to make refugees welcome, as well as having been generous in sending money and supplies to the countries*

*where refugees first enter Europe, and many have made strong statements to their own national governments.*

*We would like to request a meeting with you to discuss our concerns further and to look together at how the Reformed churches of Europe could work more closely with the political institutions of our continent. In the meantime, please be assured of our prayers for you as you discharge the duties of your office.*

## Consultation on Human Trafficking

**About twenty delegates and experts from European churches and social organizations met from October 22nd to October 24th in Hanover to discuss the difficult topic of human trafficking. The invitation of this consultation came from the European Area of the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) and the Reformierter Bund in Germany.**



Last year the WCRC launched a campaign on Human Trafficking; in this consultation, the situation in Europe was further reviewed. This was done using reports from delegates from the Netherlands, Belgium, Slovakia, Scotland, Hungary, Italy and Spain. There were also delegates from the Evangelisch Reformierte Kirche in Germany, the Lippe Church, from the Vereinigte Evangelische Mission (UEM) and the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME).

Human trafficking is the third largest sector of organized crime,

right after arms and drugs trafficking. It takes place everywhere and is a complex, constantly changing system, in which, by the cooperation of different actors, women, men and children are deprived of their rights, tortured and murdered, for example as child soldiers or slaves for work or sex.

Poverty, lack of prospects and risks related to war and violence are causally at the beginning of the ordeal of people who respond to seemingly tempting job offers, but are then kidnapped or sold. Exploitation and imprisonment, extortion and debt bondage, abuse and rape are part of the ordeal that follows. Very few victims manage to escape. Even if they succeed with the help of a human rights organizations, the question is asked: What alternative is there for the victims?

What can the churches do? This question was intensively discussed. It quickly became clear that it initially becomes simply about perceiving facts: People are turned into a commodity and traded as such, anywhere. Nevertheless, the difficult and unpleasant topic is often ignored, even by the churches. But the churches have the chance to be active where there often is no other adequate social infrastructure left.

Educating the public and supporting victims are genuinely ecclesial tasks, and in youth work in a special way: educating young people about their rights, providing them with education and helping them to convey confidence. Churches must take their hopes and ideas about life seriously. These together are important steps to empower young people and to protect them from possible hazards.

Finally, the situation shows how necessary it is to rethink the theological thinking in the different countries with their own theological traditions and influences: do the victims dare to seek support in the Church or do they meet more mistrust and rejection there? Which understanding of "dignity" and "value" determine everyday ecclesiastical speech and action? How can the church help the victims to overcome their trauma and regain a sense of their own inviolable dignity? How is reconciliation lived in view of destroyed personal stories?

Among the recommendations at the end of the consultation was also the proposal for collaboration between churches in the countries where labour or sex slaves come and those from where people are brought for forced labour.



# Conference on “Tolerating Strangeness – Migration and Aggression in Europe” (*Fremde(s) aushalten – Migration und Aggression in Europa*)

Because of the importance of the topic of Asylum and Migration for people in Europe, and for a common vision of our life and community in Europe, we are planning a conference about this issue in Emden (Germany) from February 17 to 20, 2016.

The conference will hear voices from European countries about difficulties and opportunities in terms of integration and think about the question of how we live with the stranger in the midst of our societies on the way to communion. It is intended

that participants will learn more about and help develop a reformed “Theology of migration” which will assist member churches to gain recognition for the work they are already doing and also to build and strengthen our engagement in Europe. The conference will be organized in coordination with the Reformierter Bund from Germany. A flyer of this conference is attached.

## Social media

Follow WCRC Europe on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/wcreeurope> and on Twitter at @wcreeurope

**Angereicht historische und gegenwärtige**  
Einsichtungen von Flücht, Migration und Asyl  
während die Tagung sich der Erfahrung des  
„Fremde(s)“, der Integration und fragt, inwiefern  
die Theologie Johannes Calvins eine  
„Migrations-theologie“ ist, die reformierten Kirchen  
ein besonderes Erbe hinterlässt.

Konferenz Sprache: Deutsch und Englisch  
Teilnahmegebühr: 35 €  
ermäßig für Studierende: 20 €

**Anmeldung**  
Bitte bis zum 01.12.2015 in der  
**Geschäftsstelle des Reformierten Bundes**  
Kirchenkauser 42  
20159 Hannover  
E-Mail: [info@reformierterbund.de](mailto:info@reformierterbund.de)  
Tel.: 0511 - 4799374

**Weitere Informationen**  
Sabine Dreßler, Theol. Referentin für Ref. Ökumene  
E-Mail: [dreßler@reformierterbund.de](mailto:dreßler@reformierterbund.de)  
Tel.: 0511 - 4799374

**Fremde(s) aushalten –  
Migration und Aggression  
in Europa**

**Tolerating Strangeness –  
Migration and Aggression  
in Europe**

**17. – 20. Februar 2016**  
Johannes a Lasco Bibliothek  
Emden

Eine Tagung des Europäischen Gebietes  
der Weltgemeinschaft Reformierter Kirchen  
und des Reformierten Bundes,  
in Kooperation mit der Ev.-reformierten Kirche  
und der Johannes a Lasco Bibliothek Emden

Logo: **Reformierter Bund**  
Logo: **World Communion of Reformed Churches European Area**  
Logo: **Evangelisch-Reformiert**  
Logo: **Reformierter Bund**  
Logo: **Johannes a Lasco Bibliothek Emden**

Mittwoch, 17.02.	Donnerstag, 18.02.	Freitag, 19.02.
18.00 Uhr Einführung und Grußworte von Gerd Hendrich, Präsident WCRC Europe Thomas Frenzel, Pastor für Ökumene, Ev.-ref. Kirche Brandenburgische Oberlausitzer Diözese Ora vobis - Plakate und Installation in und nach Europa von 1940 bis heute - Perspektiven einer menschwürdigen Migrationspolitik Eintrag von Andrea Zumbach, GdP amtlich, Empfang	15.00 Uhr Migration und Integration: - „Wach! Sucht ihr Feuer, gegenn...“ Emden als Zufluchtsort Siedlungsgeschichte und heutige Stadt Spezialung 18.30 Uhr Abendessen Körner im Erdl / Arts in exile Die Arbeit in der Konrad-Adenauer Aula Alois Dietel, Prof. Emden Andreas Merz, Hagen	15.00 Uhr Aufbruch ohne Wiederkehr – Fremde in der Moderne 16.15 Uhr Kaffeepause Sabine Wackerlin, Diakon, Regensburg 18.30 Uhr Migration trifft auf Protestantismus – Wie entstand die Kirche für die Arbeit? Produktionskulturen mit Martin Dörmann, Berufsbildung als Autor der GdP Dietrich Probst, The Church Commission for Migrants in Europe Günter König, Mitglied des Bundesrates Protestanten, Evaluation of Protestant Churches in Italy Robert Kuhn, Faculty of Theology, Stellenbosch University
Donnerstag, 18.02.	Freitag, 19.02.	
9.00 Uhr Liturgische Tagungseröffnung Sabine Dreßler 9.30 Uhr Einführung in die Tagung Achim Demers / Martin Wackerlin, Diakon	9.00 Uhr Fremdburdenfahrten in den Podium Sitzbereich Gerd Hendrich, Diakon 9.30 Uhr Between Multiculturalism and Ethnocentrism: European experiences of immigration and integra- tion 1. “The Stranger in your midst” – Biblical, historical and legal perspectives and today Herman Seldén-Puls, Apollonia 10.30 Uhr Kaffeepause 11.00 Uhr 2. Immigration and Integration: Old and new dynamics Paula Nova, Rom 12.00 Uhr Pause	18.00 Uhr Abendessen 19.30 Uhr „Ein Europa, das ich mir wünsche...“ Öffentliche Abendbesprechung i.d.R.
9.45 Uhr Wie haben Erfahrungen von erwanderter Migration, von Exil und Asyl Reformierte Theologie geprägt? 1. Calvin's Fluchttheologie in seinem Enchiridion von 1536 Achim Demers, Hannover 10.30 Uhr Kaffeepause 10.45 Uhr 2. Exil, Asyl und die Ausenabstehen – Transnationale Reformierte Theologie und kulturelle Identität im Refugium Sabine Dreßler, Diakon 11.45 Uhr 3. The looking glass of the stranger: De Calvin, “Wie möglich reality” and the gift of immigration Robert Winkler, Südafrika 12.30 Uhr Pause	18.00 Uhr Abendessen 19.30 Uhr „Ein Europa, das ich mir wünsche...“ Öffentliche Abendbesprechung i.d.R.	
		Samstag, 20.02.
		10.00 Uhr Ekklesien zur Orientierung, Gerd Hendrich

**DOCUMENT 10.1**  
**REPORT OF THE PRESBYTERIAN MINISTRY**  
**AT THE UNITED NATIONS**

Mark Koenig and Ryan Smith

The 2016 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.

This report covers the time period from March 2015 through March 2016. Much of the work referenced remains ongoing.

The Presbyterian Church (USA) 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.

The Presbyterian Ministry at the United Nations represents the Presbyterian Church (USA) within the UN community. Policies of the General Assemblies of the Presbyterian Church (USA) 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.

The Presbyterian Ministry at the United Nations represents the World Communion of Reformed Churches at the United Nations.

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 (USA).

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.

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.<sup>3</sup> Together we seek life in all its fullness by:

1. 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, where Ryan sits on the steering committee. Countries of ongoing concern are **Colombia, Syria, South Sudan, Sudan, Israel and Palestine** 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. The protection of civilians, without regard for their religion, race, ethnicity or any other factor, is a central ask in all our advocacy work.
2. Hosting the Rt. Rev. Peter Gai, moderator of the **Presbyterian Church in South Sudan and Sudan**. The Rt. Rev. Gai met with representatives of the Office of Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, staff of the US Mission to the United Nations, and our NGO colleagues. Our work for peace in South Sudan included hosting a meeting of South Sudanese living in diaspora to talk about how they might support efforts toward peace.
3. Working with the NGO working group, **Ecumenical Women**, to pursue gender justice. The Association of Presbyterian Women Aotearoa New Zealand is a member of Ecumenical Women. Our work for gender justice includes encouraging individuals and congregations to observe an Orange Day on the 25th of each month to witness and work for an end to violence against women and girls.
4. Engaging the **60th Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (Commission)**. The main focus of the session was women's empowerment and its link to sustainable development. Our participation takes place in partnership with Ecumenical Women. Ryan co-chaired Ecumenical Women this year. Ecumenical Women's 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 quality education, decent work, and decision-making for women and girls; ensuring full access to reproductive health and informed decision-making. In

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<sup>3</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:18-20.



partnership with Ecumenical Women, and recognizing the historic Reformed emphasis on education, the PC(USA) focused on education as a way to empower women for breaking free from poverty and participating in sustainable development.

Highlights of our presence at this year's CSW include:

- Ms. Veronica Muchiri served as a member of the Presbyterian delegation.
  - A parallel event on *Breaking Cycles of Poverty through Education: Models from Presbyterian Churches*. Speakers were: Ms. Wanda Beauman, vice moderator for justice and peace concerns, churchwide coordinating team, Presbyterian Women Inc., in the Presbyterian Church (USA); the Rev. Carol Grant, United Nations convenor, Presbyterian Women Aotearoa New Zealand; Ms. Veronica Muchiri, National Women's Guild organizer/secretary, Presbyterian Church of East Africa; and Mr. Frank Dimmock, catalyst addressing the root causes of global poverty, Presbyterian World Mission, Presbyterian Mission Agency, Presbyterian Church (USA)
  - The Presbyterian Church (USA) had the opportunity to make a statement during a meeting of the Commission.
5. Taking part in the NGO working group on **Israel-Palestine**. Mark served as co-chair of the working group. The working group partnered with the Permanent Mission of Malaysia and the Permanent Mission of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan to hold an Arria-formula meeting of the Security Council on the situation in Gaza. Arria-formula meetings are informal, confidential gatherings that allow Security Council members to meet on a specific topic and hear from people who normally would not have the opportunity to speak at regular meetings or consultations of the Council. The working group raised concerns with the UN General Assembly over proposed relocations of Bedouin communities both in the Negev and in Area C, specifically Susiya. The working group expressed its concern to the secretary general that the annex to his *14th Annual Report on Children and Armed Conflict* failed to identify Israel's armed forces and armed Palestinian groups for committing grave violations against children in the occupied Palestinian territory. This failure came despite the recommendation of the special representative of the secretary general for children and armed conflict for their inclusion. Special attention was given to the situation of Palestine refugees in Syria and Palestinian children in military detention through educational events and advocacy.
  6. Participating as an NGO observer to the **Committee on the**

**Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.**

7. Advocating for peace on the **Korean peninsula** and for the reunification of the peninsula. During the Commission on the Status of Women, our ministry organized an ecumenical witness at a parallel event that sought to deny that the experience of “comfort women” during World War II involved sexual slavery.
8. Hosting **seminars** for 11 groups on topics such as human trafficking and the refugee crisis.
9. Arranging presentations to the NGO community at the UN by Mr. German Zarate of the **Presbyterian Church of Colombia**; the Rt. Rev. Peter Gai, moderator of the **Presbyterian Church in South Sudan and Sudan**; PC(USA) mission co-workers Dr. Daniel and Ms. Elizabeth Turk on their work with the **Church of Jesus Christ in Madagascar (FJKM)**; the Rev. Sargez Benyamin, synod executive of the **Evangelical Church of Iran**; the Rev. Dr. Ofelia Ortega Suárez of the **Presbyterian-Reformed Church in Cuba** and the Rev. Daniel Izquierdo Hernandez of the **Presbyterian-Reformed Church in Cuba**.
10. Offering worship resources for the **International Day of Peace** (September 21), **United Nations Day** (October 24), and **Human Rights Day** (December 10).
11. 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.
12. Promoting the **Red Hand Campaign** 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. Three member states ratified, and one, Myanmar/Burma, signed the treaty in the time covered by this report.
13. Participating in the UN observance of **World Interfaith Harmony Week**. An interfaith seminar for youth from the Westchester Youth Alliance was held.
14. Promoting the work of the **Nonviolent Peaceforce** as a way to reduce violence and protect civilians in situations of violent conflict.
15. Working on issues of **human trafficking**. We continued to promote the Broken for You resource through social media and directly to groups who come to our office. We partner with

- ECPAT-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 US Department of State, the US Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, the Coalition of Immokalee Workers and the US Fund for UNICEF.
16. Addressing issues related to **international 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.
  17. Participating in the NGO Working Group on **Food & Hunger**, including briefing the chair of the Committee on World Food Security on the food and hunger concerns addressed by our partners. The working group held public events to educate the UN community about the global food policy and how it relates to women.
  18. Advocating that human rights be honored and justice and peace pursued in **Colombia, the Philippines, and Nigeria**, in addition to the countries previously mentioned. Ryan attended the World Council of Churches consultation on the Democratic Republic of the Congo where members of other reformed churches in the DRC were present.
  19. Participating in UN meetings and forums on **environmental justice**, including the 21<sup>st</sup> Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Presbyterian Church (USA) staff colleagues take the lead in this area.
  20. Developing **young adult leaders**. Seven seminary students and four college students served with the ministry during this time period. A young adult volunteer, part of the Presbyterian Church (USA)'s Young Adult Volunteer program, will be with the ministry from August 2015 through July 2016.

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.

A note for the **future**: we held conversations with Veronica Muchiri about the possibility of a representative of the World Communion of Reformed Churches attending each session of the Commission on the Status of Women. This seems an idea worth pursuing.

Presbyterian Ministry at the United Nations social media presence:

- Web page: [www.pcusa.org/un](http://www.pcusa.org/un)
- Blog: [www.pcusa.org/blogs/swords-plowshares](http://www.pcusa.org/blogs/swords-plowshares)

Executive Committee 2016

- Twitter: [twitter.com/#!/PresbyUN](https://twitter.com/#!/PresbyUN) (@PresbyUN)
- Facebook: [www.facebook.com/PresbyterianMinistryUN](https://www.facebook.com/PresbyterianMinistryUN)

Feel free to contact us with any questions:

Mark Koenig ([mark.koenig@pcusa.org](mailto:mark.koenig@pcusa.org))

Ryan Smith ([ryan.smith@pcusa.org](mailto:ryan.smith@pcusa.org))

**DOCUMENT 10.2**  
**REPORT ON THE GLOBAL CHRISTIAN FORUM**  
Rev. Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, WCRC representative

It is a privilege to offer this report to the WCRC executive committee concerning the Global Christian Forum. My only regret is that I am not with you personally to do so. You are trusted ecumenical colleagues, and some are close personal friends as well. However, it makes far more sense for the Global Christian Forum's secretary, Larry Miller, to be with you at this meeting of the executive since he also needs to visit with Cuban church leaders. By far, he is the best single person to share all aspects of the Global Christian Forum's activities, budget, mission, and future plans. I know you will enjoy a fruitful discussion with him.

The guiding purpose statement of the Global Christian Forum, formulated at an initial meeting in 2002, and affirmed by the first Global Gathering in Limuru, Kenya in 2007, is as follows:

To create an open space wherein representatives from a broad range of Christian churches and inter-church organizations, which confess the triune God and Jesus Christ as perfect in His divinity and humanity, can gather to foster mutual respect, to explore and address together common challenges.

The need for the Global Christian Forum was initially articulated most clearly by Dr. Konrad Raiser, then general secretary of the World Council of Churches. Identifying four main global Christian "families" as Catholic, historic Protestant, Orthodox and Pentecostal/evangelical, he proposed a new "ecumenical space" that would draw together leadership from all those traditions into fellowship and an exploration of common witness.

The Global Christian Forum has evolved since that time, first through a series of regional consultations throughout the world to test this initiative, and then in two global gatherings, first, as mentioned, in Limuru, Kenya in 2007 and then in Manado, Indonesia in 2011. An extensive list of smaller meetings, visits, consultations and working groups as well as communication efforts provide an ongoing foundation for this work. The Global Christian Forum committee, comprised of 24 members broadly representative of major supporting bodies (the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, the WCC, the World Evangelical Alliance and the Pentecostal World Fellowship) and of the Christian World Communions provides guidance and oversight to the Global Christian Forum. I serve as the WCRC's representative on this committee.

The Manado Global Gathering directed the GCF to build on its foundation of creating fellowship and trust between divided parts of world Christianity, and address “common challenges.” Extensive consultation with the GCF’s major supporting bodies identified the reality of the church’s suffering and persecution in various parts of the world as a challenge which needed to be addressed ecumenically and convened by the GCF.

This resulted in the global consultation on “Discrimination, Persecution, and Martyrdom: Following Christ Together,” held in Tirana, Albania from November 1-5, 2015. It was the first time that a gathering of leaders and representatives from so broad a range of the global church gathered to hear the voices of churches in situations of serious persecution and suffering. A commitment to fresh expressions of solidarity resulted.

In general, this consultation exceeded the expectations of its planners and was received with strong affirmation by participating bodies. However, since Jerry Pillay was present at this consultation, I’m certain that the executive will want to hear firsthand of his impressions, as well as those of Larry Miller.

By far, the Tirana consultation was the most significant event of the Global Christian Forum in the period since the executive committee last met in Beirut. However, other activities have also been underway. The GCF committee met in Moscow in February, 2016, both to review past activities and approve future plans.

The most noteworthy event on the horizon will be the third global gathering. After extensive dialogue, the GCF committee decided to hold this gathering in Cuba, pending a final investigation of logistics and finances. That is the primary purpose of Larry Miller’s visit to Cuba. This gathering is projected to be held in late 2017 or early 2018. Ongoing consultation with various ecumenical bodies and Christian World Communions are underway in order to finalize the date as soon as possible.

Another initiative undertaken following Manado has been to address the challenging and often divisive issues of mission and proselytism. Although long an ecumenical topic, the GCF was encouraged to address this matter because of its ability to convene Pentecostal, evangelical, Catholic, Orthodox and other churches into a direct and engaging dialogue. Several careful discussions have prepared the way for a meeting of the working group, to be hosted this fall by the Vatican in Rome.

When the GCF was established, the dramatic shift of world Christianity's majority presence to the Global South was also a primary motivation. Since much of the growth of Christianity in these regions is driven by Pentecostal, evangelical and other highly contextualized expressions of the Church which are largely outside of traditional ecumenical vehicles, the GCF has made a priority of engaging such groups in its life and activities.

One recent expression of this commitment has been for the GCF to facilitate a process of bringing together various Pentecostal groups in Latin America. Consultations to do so have proved fruitful and should serve to strengthen Pentecostal participation from this region in GCF activities, including the next global gathering.

A range of other recent activities include meetings, consultations, and visits in the Netherlands, the Middle East, Germany, Bangkok, Jakarta, Switzerland, Poland, South Korea and elsewhere. This also has included representation at various assemblies and gatherings where the voice of the Global Christian Forum has been welcomed. Several more are now planned for 2017, related to the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation. Larry Miller can provide any further specific details desired by the executive.

Finally, Larry Miller's present term of service as secretary for the Global Christian Forum is scheduled to end at the middle of 2018, and he intends to retire. With this in mind, the GCF committee authorized measures to establish a search process for a new secretary. Initial letters have been sent to major participating organizations sharing this information, and the next steps will be finalized when the committee's facilitation group meets this June in Trondheim, Norway.

Detailed information about the GCF's history, purpose, activities and plans, including its newsletters, may be found at its website: [www.globalchristianforum.org](http://www.globalchristianforum.org)

All this effort is carried out with a meager budget of about \$200,000 per year. The GCF deeply appreciates the support of WCRC and welcomes its input as future plans evolve.

Let me close by expressing my personal gratitude for the opportunity to continue serving as WCRC's representative to the Global Christian Forum, strengthening our partnership.

**DOCUMENT 11: WRITTEN ECUMENICAL GREETINGS**



PONTIFICIUM CONSILIUM  
AD CHRISTIANORUM UNITATEM FOVENDAM

*E Civitate Vaticana, die*

7 May 2016

PROT. N. *Y00* /2016/c

TO THE REVEREND DR CHRIS FERGUSON  
*General Secretary, World Communion of Reformed Churches*

On the occasion of the Executive Committee of the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC), I send warm greetings and prayerful good wishes to you, and the assembled officers and Executive Committee members gathered in Havana, Cuba.

Since the Second Vatican Council, Catholics and Reformed have traveled together a path of mutual understanding and reconciliation. I am pleased to say that just this past year 2015, we completed a fourth phase of international Reformed-Catholic dialogue, the first phase having taken place from 1970-1977. The overall theme of this most recent dialogue, "*Justification and Sacramentality: The Christian Community as an Agent for Justice*", could not be more relevant in a world where justice seems to be so distant and fragile.

Our dialogues always give us the opportunity to reflect honestly on our common history and give witness to our mutual desire and mission to create a new relationship based on respect and sincerity. For our part, we remain committed to continue the good work that the Lord has begun in us hoping that according to his will and schedule he will bring it to perfection (Philippians 1:6).

We also are encouraged by the continued discernment of the WCRC with regards to your desire to be affiliated with the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification. Undoubtedly, such an affiliation would be a great sign and witness of significant ecumenical progress and commitment toward Christian unity.

Finally, it is with great joy that I anticipate your trip to Rome and meeting with His Holiness, Pope Francis, on June 10 of this year; as well as your visit to the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity.

I join you in giving thanks to Almighty God for the ecumenical progress that has already been made through the grace of the Holy Spirit, and I pray that your gathering in Havana will be a fruitful sign of hope and encouragement to all those who strive for justice and peace in Christ. Upon all, I cordially invoke the Holy Spirit's gifts of wisdom, knowledge and counsel.

With my personal prayers and best wishes, I am

Sincerely yours,

Cardinal Kurt Koch  
*President*





World Association for  
Christian Communication

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President: The Rev. Dr. Samuel W. Meshack

General Secretary: The Rev Karin Achelstetter DD(hc)

May 8, 2016

**To the Members and Participants of the Executive Committee Meeting of the World  
Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC)  
Havana, Cuba, 7 -13 May 2015**

Warm greetings in the name of the members and partners of the World Association for Christian Communication (WACC), who wish you success in your deliberations and decision-making during the Executive Committee Meeting.

WACC is an international non-governmental organisation that builds on communication rights in order to promote social justice. As such WACC works with all those denied the right to communicate because of status, identity, or gender. And it strengthens networks of communicators whose mission is to advance peace, understanding and justice.

WACC has members and partners in more than 120 countries. Working with them at local, national, and regional levels, we address communication needs, strengthen capacities, advocate for communication rights, and tackle ongoing challenges such as the need for gender-sensitive reporting, peace-building, and participatory communication for development.

WACC has a programme of activities which is currently focused on strengthening the communication rights of marginalised and dispossessed people and communities in many countries of the global South. WACC is also known for its internationally recognised Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) which studies the representation of women in the world's news media.

Recently, WACC has been exploring two new programmes: Media Monitoring of Religion and Voices for Peace. Together with interfaith partners, the one will examine how religion is represented in the media and the other how youth can promote peace journalism using digital platforms.

We are happy to participate in this Executive Committee Meeting. We are particularly interested in exploring the ways in which communication, a social process that creates community and communion, can serve to advance the efforts of the WCRC in the area of gender, economic, and environmental justice – as outlined in the Accra Declaration.

WACC is registered in Canada as a not-for-profit corporation (438311-7) and an incorporated charitable organisation (89970 9524 RR0001) with its global secretariat at 308 Main St., Toronto, ON, M4C 4X7, Canada. WACC is also a UK Registered Charity (296073) and a Company registered in England and Wales (2082273) with its Registered Office at 16 Tavistock Crescent, London W11 1AP, United Kingdom.

WACC is a member of the  
**actalliance**

**WACC Page 2**

On behalf of WACC's Board of Directors, and in the spirit of the wider ecumenism of which both WACC and WCRC are part, we invoke God's blessing on your work now and in future and we look forward to closer cooperation in areas of common concern.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Karin Achtelstetter". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "K".

Rev. Dr. Karin Achtelstetter General Secretary

FÉDÉRATION UNIVERSALLE DES ASSOCIATION CHRÉTIENNES D'ÉTUDIANTS  
**WORLD STUDENT CHRISTIAN FEDERATION**  
 FEDERACION UNIVERSAL DE MOVIMIENTOS ESTUDIANTILES CRISTIANOS



**Greeting to the WCRC Executive Committee  
 from the World Student Christian Federation (WSCF)**

On behalf of the World Student Christian Federation (WSCF), I would like extend our appreciation to the General Secretary and members of the Executive Committee for the invitation to be part of this important meeting in the life of WCRC. We are very grateful for privilege and the opportunity to listen and learn from your experiences as you deliberate, discern, pray and listen to where God is calling the Communion as you prepare for your General Council Meeting and beyond.

The theme of this meeting and your GC, “Living God, Renew and Transform Us” resonates very well with the current situation of WSCF. We are an organization in transition. We are in the process of transforming ourselves and renewing our commitment to the building of God’s Kingdom and affirming the Lordship of Christ in our lives today. The past one year, we prepared the organization for transition since our General Assembly in Bogota and we are thankful for the invaluable contribution of your Chris Ferguson, who accompanied us in our difficult journey as part of the Transition Team, giving advice and pointing out the most fundamental issues in our transformation and the framework from which we needed to focus our efforts with practically no financial resources to even begin the task of transforming the organization. While others dismiss our capacity to overcome our situation, Chris, is one among the few who believed in the transformative power of young people, not as a rhetorical commitment or a token expression by giving them nominal representation within structures that make it appear that are included in decision-making, but by respecting the space they themselves has designated for themselves, the many voices and the languages that they have chosen to express themselves.

This is ecumenical partnership in words and deed in a deeply spiritual sense. We view partnership essentially as the sharing of God’s gifts and blessings that enabled us to do our ministries together, but also, people accompanying people, individuals making connections and sharing in our spiritual journey, our joys and our pain of transformation. Essentially, mentoring the next generation of ecumenical leaders who serve and will serve the churches and its mission faithfully in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

This year, we are a little stronger and wiser, as we continue to stabilize the organization, our work for justice and peace increases. With very limited resources, we chose to focus our efforts towards strategic work on issues of Ecological Justice, on Identity, Diversity and Dialogue (IDD) on Sexuality, Peace Building and Reconciliation in Palestine and Colombia, and rights to Higher Education. We are also responding to the urgent critical calls for justice issues of Migration and Trafficking in Europe, Indigenous Rights and Interfaith Dialogue.

Unlike other organization, we have no infrastructure to offer in making this commitment, what we bring on this table is an assurance that we will carry on. Using the strength of who

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 PO Box 2100  
 CH-1211, Geneva 2, Switzerland

FUMEC Oficina Inter-Regional  
 Centro Ecuemínico  
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 CH-1211, Ginebra 2, Suiza

FÉDÉRATION UNIVERSALLE DES ASSOCIATION CHRÉTIENNES D'ÉTUDIANTS  
**WORLD STUDENT CHRISTIAN FEDERATION**  
FEDERACIÓN UNIVERSAL DE MOVIMIENTOS ESTUDIANTILES CRISTIANOS



are as an ecumenical youth movement present in 94 countries, working with 101 movements, we offer our lived experience ecumenical diversity, our commitment to work for God's justice and peace, and to contribute new and creative ways and to adapt to this changing nature of doing mission to the world, for example the use of the ICT in organizing our forthcoming global Online General Assembly.

By being here with you, we want to demonstrate our commitment and intention to concretize our partnerships in building youth participation, identifying how we can compliment the work of WCRC in matters that affect our common ecumenical witness and service. We are particularly hoping for example that the Global Institute of Theology (GIT) would be an opportunity for our young students to learn and engage in alternative and transformative theologies. We also hope to take part and learn as you engage in a dialogue process on Sexuality.

Finally, I thank you for the opportunity to learn in this meeting how best we can cooperate and work with you within the framework of strategic plan and forthcoming General Council Meetings.

Our prayers, well wishes are with you as you walk humbly towards the path of renewal and transformation.

In Christ,

Necta Montes  
General Secretary

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## 1 WCRC –Executive Committee – EKD Greetings

*¡Hola, encantada hermanos y hermanas in Christo!*

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,  
Dear president,  
Dear general secretary,

First of all thank you to be with you again this year. It is my pleasure.

When I started my new position at the EKD as an ecumenical officer I certainly didn't think that I would get so much involved with this WCRC in particular. Wherever I go, I am meeting people of this Reformed church and I can say it is very nice.

I am delighted to send heartfelt greetings to all participants of the WCRC committee meeting on behalf of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) and especially from Bishop Petra Bosse-Huber. She wishes us a pleasant and blessed togetherness, intensive and gainful discussions, looking forward to encounter you next year in Germany during your General Council.

Let me tell you for myself, it was an inspiring experience to be with you in Lebanon last year. It was special to get in touch with the people there, to listen to the churches concern there, to hear about their experiences concerning the Syria conflict, and to realize what it meant to them talking about the "other neighbor" – I kept that in my mind and heart throughout the year.

It shows me that peace and understanding needs more than sophisticated political and theological talks. It needs the possibility of encounter, the place of meeting people and sharing with one another. And I am sure **churches can enable people** to come together and to do so. Certainly this would change a lot of peoples mind anywhere if they would allow themselves to do so. I am watching the news differently after having been to Lebanon.

**And now Cuba** – it is good to be back, not only to the Executive Committee but coming back to Cuba.

*¡Hola Cuba! He visitado cuba el año pasado. Me gusta el pais mucho.*

Last October I made this **time travel to Cuba** for the first time biking throughout the western part: Soroa, Vinales over to Cienfuegos, Trinidad and Varadero. At some points I experienced a country which was familiar in a way without having been here before because of my country's own history – of East and West Germany.

The city's slightly **morbid charm** is special. There is a kind of sustainability looking at the cars – like the Moskwitsch, the car the Russian politicians drove in East Berlin, the Polish Fiat 126 constructed by Lada or the Lada which looks like the former Wartburg car in the GDR – and on the countryside there were a lot of former military trucks of the big socialist brother from the east which are now used as buses.

**It is a fascinating country:** motorways with no traffic or horse drawn wagons and bicycles on it, farmers who are tilling their fields using an oxplough and so on. And political appeals by Che anywhere you go.

**It is a country on the edge of changes, of big transformations now.**

*Sí se puede*, yes we can as one probably would say.

And there are places that show already how to do it. **They make the difference in this society, this secular world.** And of course where would you expect such a place?

During my last visit I had the fantastic opportunity to meet folks at Dora's former congregation at the service. Well this offered me a special tour through church life in Havanna the following day with Osvaldo, a former professor for English/American literature. So I visited places which tourists will never get to and I met people who have a vision of human dignity and the openness to strangers as well as the vision to be able to make a slight difference to their community by opening their doors by presenting them education and by offering a personal counseling hotline for already 25 years now. The place, well it is one of yours – it is at the 1<sup>st</sup> Presbyterian Church of course.

1. Mai 2016

2 WCRC –Executive Committee – EKD Greetings

They really have a library with books about different subjects of life and not more or less only books on Che's social, political ideas as well as on his or Fidel Castros'.

This library is special because it already made changes possible. Why do I say so? You will not only find books there but people who take their time for others. **People who know that education** and especially a warm hearted and not restricted education is the key for more. This is a place which will **enable people**. They have classes and sport groups for the youth, never seen so many baseball trophies in one room. **And they relate to anyone who needs them without looking on the baptism record.**

As Christians we are asked to make a difference, to create changes, to enable people. **And yes, we can.**

To be here, is a journey through time but it is **also a journey about Reformation**. One of the key messages of the Reformation 500 years ago was **freedom**. At that time but even today it is the freedom of allowing changes, transformation, freedom to self realization, of living our lives as we love to do with all our potentials that God has given to us.

**It is a special time for Cuba**, not to forget where you come from but to know where you are heading to. And it's a **big challenge for the church** here too.

It is actually a challenge for all of us, the EKD as well as for the WCRC, I suppose, it is a time to reflect on what we are here for in this world, what our tasks as churches are, as Christians in this world in order to work for justice and peace. En este momento last areas de la iglesia en Cuba son inmensas.

It is good to come here at this turning point for Cuba's people.

This is a country of people who have high creative potential. For all of us, it is sometimes easier once somebody sets an example, or you can relate to some place or something which will inspire you for more.

In Cuba you will find places of reforms here and there and **they are inspiring** (me). They show it is possible to set up reforms, to renew us.

One of these special places is a **tiny Café** here in Havana. It is a symbol for the possibility to change your little world step by step. It's on **Concordia Road and called Arcangel**. What do you expect? A charming place. Concordia – harmony, peace, unity needs a country in order to change, any church needs that on their way to changes.

In 2017 you will come to Germany, to **Leipzig for the General Council** asking/praying to the **living God: Renew and transform us.**

**2017** will become a special year of celebrations, a time for reflection, a time of transformation, a time of renewal.

The Reformation anniversary is not just about one person, or one specific date. It is a time to look at a reformation movement that had preceding events, and that had other reformation moments and movements afterwards.

**The Reformation**, this is what we have been stressing as we journey towards the anniversary, does not belong to one nation or one confession. It is a movement that took place and **continues to take place within the body of Christ and in this world. That's the reason for celebrating it ecumenically.**

Reformation is about an idea to reform church and society. It is about reflection – about transformation. And it needs people in church who are eager enough to allow and to motivate themselves and others for renewal and transformation **without forgetting who is leading** our ways while doing so. Renewal and transformation starts within each one of us.

**We, as EKD are delighted that you choose Germany for the General Council next year.**

||| 1. Mai 2016

## 3 WCRC –Executive Committee – EKD Greetings

We appreciate to support the Reformed Churches by doing so.

Bishop Petra Bosse-Huber as well as the chairman of Council of the EKD, Bishop Heinrich Bedford – Strohm are looking forward to be with you in Berlin and in Lutherstadt Wittenberg.

And coming to the **city of Leipzig** is coming to a place of renewal and transformation itself.

Leipzig was a city just like Havana at one time with morbid charm. Nevertheless it had always been a big fair town.

In our days this city stands for a **non violent protest during time of renewal**. Before reunification in Germany, every Monday night people came together at the Nikolai – Church, praying to God to renew and transform their lives as well as the state of Eastern Germany.

And after the devotions they went on the street **using candles** as a sign/a weapon of non-violent protest. **Referring to the light of the World** that strengthens them doing so.

The demonstrations surrounded by military were successful as we know. A lot of church people were threatened during that time but they kept on going. So Church can be the place where transformation starts. So Church needs to be the place where transformation starts. We have got a message to share. **It is the place because people in church never walk alone.**

**Leipzig will be such an inspiring place** for a General Council in the summer of 2017. **Coming in the summer of 2017 was a good choice.**

The summer of 2017 will be special **and maybe**: somebody of us will sing or say years from now – looking back at the general council and everything which is related to it in any Reformed church he or she will say:

*Standin´ on the streets of Leipzig, Wittenberg, Berlin*

*You told me that it´d last forever  
Oh when you prayed and sang with me,  
celebrating this union in faith,  
and God held my hand.*

*I knew that it was now or never  
Those were the best days of my life, oh yeah  
it was the start of some reforms  
which our world changed to a better place  
with no harm to anyone*

*Back in the summer of 2017, uh-huh  
It was the summer of 2017*

*oh yeah, me n my folks in church in 2017  
It was the summer, the summer, summer of 2017*

En nombre de la Iglesia Evangélica en Alemania yo les deseo a Cuba a la iglesia cubana y a todo los habitantes de la isla la bendición de Dios para este camino.

God renew and transform us.  
God bless you.

||| 1. Mai 2016

*NB: Several ecumenical greetings were presented orally.*

**DOCUMENT 12.1**  
**REPORT OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE**

**I. Finance Office report**

Anna Krüger and Gerhard Plenter led the committee through the report. The committee gives thanks that the financial position of WCRC is more secure this year.

**II. 2015 Annual Statement**

The committee reviewed the financial statement.

**RECOMMENDATION 1**

*That the Executive Committee approve the 2015 financial statement.*

**III. 2016 and 2017 Budget**

The committee reviewed the budgets.

**RECOMMENDATION 2**

*That the Executive Committee approve the 2016 budget.*

**RECOMMENDATION 3**

*That the officers be given authority to give preliminary approval to a balanced 2017 budget subject to final approval at the next meeting of the Executive Committee prior to the General Council..*

**IV. Pension Plan**

The committee reviewed WCRC's pension obligations and considered various options for addressing the issue.

**RECOMMENDATION 4**

*That when hiring new executive staff, the possibility of engaging staff on special assignment from their home churches be explored.*

**V. Geneva Office**

**RECOMMENDATION 5**

*The committee recommends that the Executive Committee direct the General Secretary to cancel the lease of the office in Geneva if the way be clear.*

**VI. Auditor's Report**

The committee reviewed the auditor's report. It was noted that all the corrections from the 2014 report have been made and that the 2015 report found no problems.

**RECOMMENDATION 6**



*That the Executive Committee accept the 2015 auditor's report, including the responses prepared by the Finance Office, and offer thanks to the Finance Office for their work.*

**RECOMMENDATION 7**

*That the Executive committee approve the EKD audit office to do the 2016 audit.*

**VII. Support from Evangelical Reformed Church in Germany**

**RECOMMENDATION 8**

*That the Executive Committee thank the Evangelical Reformed Church in Germany for the services of Gerhard Plenter and for providing payroll services.*

**RECOMMENDATION 9**

*That the General Secretary, in consultation with the General Treasurer and the Finance Committee, draft a new job description for the Financial Secretary.*

**RECOMMENDATION 5**

*The committee recommends that the Executive Committee direct the General Secretary to cancel the lease of the office in Geneva if the way be clear.*

**VIII. Membership fees**

The committee received the membership fee grid. The General Secretary continues to follow up with churches in arrears and encourage them to pay their dues.

**RECOMMENDATION 10**

*That the rule on regional balance of fees be waived.*

**IX. General Council**

Hans Lessing reviewed the General Council budget.

**RECOMMENDATION 11**

*That the Executive Committee approve the General Council budget.*

**DOCUMENT 12.2**  
**CONSTITUTION AND MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE**

Cheryl Meban (Convenor), Gradye Parsons, Lydia Adajawah, Peter Borgdorff Chris Ferguson (ex officio)  
In attendance: Katrina Mertz

1. Membership Applications
  - a. Congo CBFA – Baptist Reformed. Incomplete application, due to absence of letters of recommendation.  
**Recommendation: Affiliate membership status (Constitution V, d) as they deepen their understanding of our communion.**
  - b. Congo EBC – Awaiting further communication via Kobus Gerber.  
**Recommendation: Defer until further communication, and encourage Kobus to remain in communication on our behalf.**
  - c. India, ECA 2015 GS reported that, following our request for further information on their position regarding the ordination of women that we had confirmation of formal decision to affirm women’s ministry in 2015. The content of this information is not sufficiently clear.  
**Recommendation: GS continue to seek clarification on the theological and constitutional situation for ordination for women and women’s roles as officers, elders or deaconesses.**
  - d. Mozambique, IRM – GS reports that this has been difficult to follow up. There are no recommendation letters as yet.  
**Recommendation: Request Kobus to continue to follow up.**
  - e. Incomplete Applications - Pakistan, ECHD – Ecumenical NGO in character.  
**Recommendation: GS to explore the possibilities for affiliate membership and to complete application.**  
**Recommendation : Constitution and Membership committee should consider clearer constitutional categories for affiliate and associate membership.**
  - f. Malawi DWCC– Application is not yet complete. **Action: Await further documents.**

- g. Mali – **Action: Lydia Adajawah continue to follow up and liaise with office**
  
- h. Togo – Lydia Adajawah visited **Reformed Church of Assemblies of God in Togo**. 150 people in chapel, including about 30 children. Broken away from Assemblies of God. 5 other branches scattered, 11 ministers, 3 trained by Assemblies of God, others trained by main leader, Rev. Kapora Tena. No women’s ordination, but two women in church council. Not yet ready for membership of WCRC. **Recommendation:** that the Executive Committee thank Lydia Adajawah for the considerable investment of time, energy and personal risk that she undertook to investigate this church.

**Further Proposed Recommendation:** that CMC be mindful of potential risks involved in personal visits to as yet unknown churches. Such visits should be avoided or carefully planned in consultation with colleagues.

- 1. **Other Applications** GS following up on other applications.
  
- 2. Constitutional Revisions – See separate Proposed Constitutional Revisions Document below.

In the last six years it has become clear that certain provisions of the Constitution were unclear, inadequate for our needs or not fit for purpose. In order to equip future executive committees, officers and staff of WCRC, we propose to ask General Council when it meets to agree a number of constitutional improvements. We are mindful that the Council’s main role is to build and experience Communion, and we do not want the Council to become bogged down in institutional details. Therefore any constitutional amendments agreed by the Executive Committee, we hope to present to member churches in advance of General Council as constructively as possible.

Questions for Dialogue Groups:

Are there constitution and bylaw changes that we should simply avoid, as unnecessary/unhelpful?

Are there explanations and methods that will assist in presenting the task in order to be constructive of communion?

- 2. Membership status, defaults, reconnections etc. – no data to report.

Nominations Task Group – See separate document below.

**CONSTITUTION & MEMBERSHIP: APPENDIX 1  
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE  
GENERAL COUNCIL NOMINATION PROCESS**

The constitution and bylaws revision taskforce met in Hannover, Germany, on 20-21 January 2016. In addition to our revision task we were asked to do some thinking about how to improve the nomination process at the 2017 General Council. We have done so, and here is our advice and recommendations:

1. That the process starts in May at the executive committee meeting with some of the executive committee members who cannot or will not serve another term serving as a pre-general council nominations work group.
2. The work group, working with the general secretary, to communicate with all of our regional councils as soon as possible:
  - a. The need to discern names for the next set of officers and executive committee members before the general council
  - b. That the regional councils seek to bring a diverse set of nominees of gender and age
  - c. That names for officers be suggested as early as possible
3. The work group will collect the names recommended and present the names to the general council nominations committee.
4. That at the 2017 General Council the nominations committee be committed to:
  - a. Transparency
  - b. Focus on gifts, skills and talents

Gradye Parsons, chair  
Cheryl Meban  
Peter Borgdorff  
Henning Becker

**CONSTITUTION & MEMBERSHIP: APPENDIX 2  
CONSTITUTION & BYLAWS WITH PROPOSED AMENDMENTS**

*WCRC Constitution and Bylaws with proposed amendments  
Changes and new text underlined thus*

**WORLD COMMUNION OF REFORMED CHURCHES  
CONSTITUTION  
AND  
BY-LAWS  
[Adopted 2010, Amended 2016]**

Knochenhauerstrasse 42  
30159 Hannover,  
Germany

**WORLD COMMUNION OF REFORMED CHURCHES (WCRC)**

**THE CONSTITUTION**

**PREAMBLE**

Jesus Christ is the foundation and head of the Christian church.

It is in Jesus Christ that the Word became flesh and the gospel is embodied.

It is to God in Christ that the Holy Scriptures, inspired by the Holy Spirit, bear witness.

It is through Christ that God gives abundant life and spiritual vitality to the members of the church in the power of the Holy Spirit.

The churches in the World Communion of Reformed Churches are called together in the name of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Under the sovereign God, with Christ's followers across the globe, sharing one baptism, the members of the communion belong to the one holy catholic and apostolic church.

**ARTICLE I – NAME AND SUCCESSION**

The name of this organization shall be the World Communion of Reformed Churches. The following constitute the name of the organization in French, German and Spanish:

Communion Mondiale des Églises Réformées (CMER)

Weltgemeinschaft Reformierter Kirchen (WGRK)

Comuni3n Mundial de Iglesias Reformadas (CMIR)

The World Communion of Reformed Churches is an international non-governmental and non-profit organization, registered as a corporation under public law in Germany and as a 519(c)3 corporate entity in the State of Michigan in the United States of America. The membership of the registered entities is the same.

As of the 2010 Uniting General Council, the World Communion of Reformed Churches succeeds the Reformed Ecumenical Council and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and its antecedents, as a united ecumenical body for Reformed churches.

## **ARTICLE II – BASIS**

The basis of the World Communion of Reformed Churches shall be the Word of the triune God, incarnate in Jesus Christ and revealed in the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments through the power of the Holy Spirit. It is to this triune God that the church bears witness. The World Communion of Reformed Churches is committed to embody a Reformed identity as articulated in the historic Reformed confessions and the Ecumenical Creeds of the early church, and as continued in the life and witness of the broader family of Reformed, United and Uniting churches.

## **ARTICLE III – VALUES**

A. The World Communion of Reformed Churches is called 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 good of all and 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.

#### **ARTICLE IV – IDENTITY, MISSION AND PURPOSES**

A. 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 a communion of churches which shall foster communion among its member churches by:

1. affirming the gifts of unity in Christ and promoting unity in and among churches through the mutual recognition of baptism and membership, pulpit and table fellowship, ministry and witness;
2. interpreting Reformed theology for contemporary Christian witness;
3. encouraging the renewal of Christian worship and spiritual life within the Reformed tradition;
4. renewing a commitment to partnership in God's mission through worship, witness, diaconal service and work for justice, so as to foster mission in unity, mission renewal, and mission empowerment;
5. encouraging leadership development and nurture of the covenant community;
6. engaging with other ecumenical organizations and churches of other traditions in the ecumenical movement through dialogue and cooperation in ministry;
7. expressing unity and solidarity with those minorities living in the context of marginalization and violence.

B. The World Communion of Reformed Churches shall assist its member churches by

1. widening and deepening understanding and community among the member churches and helping them to fulfil their own responsibilities in the service of Christ;
2. facilitating the transformation of the member churches into interdependent missional communities that support, empower and challenge each other as partners in the one mission of God;
3. promoting the full and just participation of all members, of all ages, in all aspects of the church's life and its public witness;
4. promoting the full and just partnership of women and men in church and society;
5. encouraging and promoting diaconal service in the church and society;
6. expressing unity and solidarity with those of its members who are persecuted or marginalized.

B. The World Communion of Reformed Churches shall also contribute to the ecumenical movement and the transformation of the world by

1. promoting economic and ecological justice, global peace, and reconciliation in the world;
2. promoting and defending religious, civil, and all other human rights wherever threatened throughout the world;
3. encouraging and promoting relief and sustainable development in the world and focusing on the eradication of poverty;
4. providing Reformed perspectives on church unity.

### **ARTICLE V – MEMBERSHIP**

A. Any church of the Reformed, Presbyterian, Congregational, Waldensian, other First Reformation, United, and Uniting traditions is eligible to apply for membership, if such a church affirms this constitution.

B. Member churches are expected to join in achieving the Mission and Purposes of the World Communion of Reformed Churches by, among other things, participating in meetings, financially supporting its existence, taking seriously its actions and decisions, and engaging in its collective work.

C. Fellowships and associations of churches that affirm a Reformed identity and include in their membership World Communion of Reformed Churches' members are eligible for associate membership. Such associate members shall share in the fellowship and programmes of the World Communion of Reformed Churches, participate on a reciprocal basis without a vote in governance, and thereby strengthen the broader Reformed family's participation in the church ecumenical.

D. An institution established by one or more member churches or whose faith basis and operation are in agreement with that of the historic Reformed confessions are eligible for affiliate membership, without voting privileges.

E. Membership in the World Communion of Reformed Churches does not limit the autonomy of any member church or restrict its relationships with other churches or with other ecumenical organizations.

F. Members in the World Communion of Reformed Churches shall support the work of the World Communion of Reformed Churches through an annual financial contribution reflecting the resources and membership of that church. The General Council or the Executive Committee shall set a minimum contribution requirement for all member churches, associate and affiliate members.



G. Application for membership shall be made to the office of the General Secretary not later than six months before a General Council meeting. Admission to membership shall be by decision of the Executive Committee following consultation with other member churches in the region. The General Council shall ratify new members by a two-thirds majority of ballots cast. A new member shall not vote on the ratification of its own membership.

H. A member church may terminate its membership by giving notice in writing to the office of the General Secretary. It will be encouraged to give reasons for this action.

### **ARTICLE VI – SUSPENSION OF MEMBERSHIP**

The Executive Committee may suspend the membership of a member church for actions in violation of Article II - Basis, Article III - Values, or Article IV - Identity, Mission and Purposes of this Constitution or for persistent failure to support or communicate with the organization, subject to the conditions stated in the Bylaws.

### **ARTICLE VII – GENERAL COUNCIL**

A. The General Council is the main governing body of the World Communion of Reformed Churches. The General Council is legally constituted to transact the business of the World Communion of Reformed Churches when representatives of one-half plus one of its member churches are present when the General Council convenes to establish a quorum.

B. The General Council ~~shall~~

- 1 ~~provides~~ leadership for the World Communion of Reformed Churches in achieving the aims and purposes of the organization;
- 2 ~~may~~ adopt and ~~may~~ amend the Constitution and the Bylaws;
- 3 ~~makes~~ and ~~adopts~~ policies and programmes for the World Communion of Reformed Churches;
- 4 ~~elects~~ officers and members of the Executive Committee;
- 5 ~~considers~~ matters brought before it by member churches;
- 6 ~~receives~~ decisions of the Executive Committee for ratification.

C. Decisions of the General Council concerning its organization and institutional activities shall be binding.

D. Decisions of the General Council involving the life and witness of the member churches are advisory in character.

## **ARTICLE VIII – MEETINGS OF GENERAL COUNCIL**

- A. The General Council shall ordinarily meet once in every seven years.
- B. At the request of at least one-fifth of the member churches, the Executive Committee shall convene the General Council into special session.
- C. The time, place, and programme of a General Council meeting shall be determined by the Executive Committee.
- D. The General Council, upon recommendation of the Executive Committee, shall adopt rules of procedure for the conduct of its business.

## **ARTICLE IX – COMPOSITION OF GENERAL COUNCIL**

A. Participants at the General Council are voting delegates, associate and affiliate delegates, ecumenical delegates, consultants, observers, guests, and visitors.

B. Member churches shall be entitled to appoint voting delegates on the basis of their membership. The World Communion of Reformed Churches will accept the information each member church submits based on its normal counting procedure. The same numbers will be used for attendance at the General Council meeting and for the basis used to determine membership contributions.

Member churches with up to 300,000 members are entitled to appoint up to four voting delegates.

Member churches with between 300,001 and 1,000,000 members are entitled to appoint up to six voting delegates.

Member churches with 1,000,001 members or more are entitled to appoint up to eight voting delegates.

Each delegation shall be gender balanced and no more than half shall be clergy. At least one voting delegate shall be thirty years of age or younger on the date the General Council is convened.

C. Each of the officers of the World Communion of Reformed Churches shall be an ex-officio delegate (with vote) to any General Council that meets during the officer's term of office.

D. Only delegates from member churches and Officers of the World Communion of Reformed Churches shall have the right to vote and to move or second motions in all sessions of the General Council.

## **ARTICLE X – EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

A. The Executive Committee shall have twenty two (22) members elected by the General Council (including six (6) officers). ~~The Moderator, President or Convener of each Regional Council shall be members.~~ The General Secretary shall be a member ex-officio (without vote). The Executive Committee is legally constituted to transact the business of the World Communion of Reformed Churches when a majority of its members is present to establish a quorum. ~~The officers and members of the Executive Committee shall hold office from the time of their installation until their successors are elected and installed in office.~~

~~B. Either the moderator, president, convener or secretary of each Regional Council shall be a full member of the Executive Committee.~~

~~C. The Executive Committee may invite Executive Secretaries to participate in its meetings in an advisory capacity.~~

D. If any member of the Executive Committee is unable to attend a particular meeting of the Committee, an alternate may be appointed under the provisions in the Bylaws.

E. The Executive Committee shall meet annually.

F. When the President and the General Secretary deem it necessary to secure a decision of the Executive Committee between its meetings, a vote by mail, email, telephone conference, or other electronic means may be taken. In such cases the required majority (one-half plus one) is based on all the members of the Executive Committee.

G. The Executive Committee ~~shall~~:

1. ~~exercises~~ general oversight of the work of the World Communion of Reformed Churches between meetings of the General Council including, but not limited to, the formation of departments, committees, and commissions to carry out the work of the World Communion of Reformed Churches.

2. ~~authorizes~~ the President and/or the General Secretary to speak for the World Communion of Reformed Churches between meetings of the General Council. The Executive Committee may, by way of exception and if needed, appoint one or more additional persons to speak for the World Communion of Reformed Churches.

3. ~~performs~~ all duties specified elsewhere in this Constitution and in the Bylaws or committed to it by the General Council.

4. ~~has authority to approve~~ the annual financial reports and adopt the annual budget.

5. ~~fills~~ vacancies among the officers and in its own membership, as specified in the Bylaws, which may occur between meetings of the General Council.
6. ~~elects~~ a General Secretary and appoints Executive Secretaries.
7. ~~decides~~ on admission to and suspension of membership in the World Communion of Reformed Churches ~~in consultation with local member churches~~ subject to ratification by the next General Council.

## **ARTICLE XI – OFFICERS OF THE WORLD COMMUNION OF REFORMED CHURCHES**

A. The General Council shall ~~elect the following officers from among those present at the General Council, to hold office from the time of their installation until their successors are elected and installed in office.~~

1. ~~one~~ president
2. four (4) vice-presidents

B. ~~The General Treasurer is elected by the Executive Committee and serves as a member of the officers, and serves until a successor is elected~~

C. The officers of the World Communion of Reformed Churches shall ~~be formed into an officers' committee with power to act to perform their responsibilities as stated in the Bylaws.~~

1. ~~Approve the agendas for Executive Committee meetings.~~
2. ~~Ensure coherence in the interdepartmental work of the World Communion of Reformed Churches.~~
3. ~~Provide advice and direction to the General Secretary.~~
4. ~~Report for review to the Executive Committee concerning the actions they have taken.~~
5. ~~Oversee the assets of the World Communion of Reformed Churches.~~

D. Any two of the following: the President (or one of the Vice-Presidents if substituting for the President), the General Secretary, and the General Treasurer, are authorized to sign jointly for all legally required registrations, opening of bank accounts, and other legal transactions of the World Communion of Reformed Churches.

## **ARTICLE XII – GENERAL SECRETARY**

A. The General Secretary shall be the chief executive officer of the World Communion of Reformed Churches and shall be responsible to the General Council and to the Executive Committee to direct and coordinate the work of the World Communion of Reformed Churches. The General Secretary is responsible for advising the Executive Committee and the officers of risks and potential liabilities that may pertain.

B. The General Secretary shall serve a term of seven years and shall be eligible for one renewal for another seven-year term. A comprehensive performance review will be scheduled at the midpoint of each seven-year term and prior to the decision to appoint the General Secretary to a second seven-year term. The performance review shall be conducted by persons appointed by the Executive Committee.

### **ARTICLE XIII – EXECUTIVE SECRETARIES**

A. Executive Secretaries shall be appointed for the operations of the World Communion of Reformed Churches.

B. The number of Executive Secretaries serving at any one time, and the scope of their responsibilities, is determined by the Executive Committee upon recommendation of the General Secretary.

C. Executive Secretaries shall serve a term of five years and shall be eligible for one renewal for another five-year term. A comprehensive performance review will be scheduled at the midpoint of each five-year term and prior to the decision to appoint an Executive Secretary to a second five-year term. The performance review is conducted by the General Secretary.

### **ARTICLE XIV – FINANCE**

A. The World Communion of Reformed Churches shall be financed by contributions from member churches, associate and affiliate members, and gifts from individuals, congregations, organizations, and other sources.

B. The General Treasurer and the General Secretary shall be responsible for the preparation of the annual budget, which shall be presented to the Executive Committee for approval.

C. The financial accounts of the World Communion of Reformed Churches shall be audited annually by auditors approved by the Executive Committee. The audited accounts shall be presented annually to the Executive Committee for adoption.

### **ARTICLE XV – DEPARTMENTS, COMMITTEES, OFFICES, AND COMMISSIONS**

A. The General Council or the Executive Committee may form departments, committees, and commissions to carry out the work of the World Communion of Reformed Churches.

B. All committees or commissions shall be accountable to the General Council and the Executive Committee.

C. Departments and offices shall be accountable to the General Council and the Executive Committee, through the General Secretary. They shall function in a manner that promotes the coherence of the

programmes of the World Communion of Reformed Churches. To this end they are not independent entities but function interdependently.

## **ARTICLE XVI – ORGANIZATION OF REGIONAL COUNCILS**

To promote the closest possible community and cooperation among member churches in a particular area of the world, and the effectiveness of the total work of the World Communion of Reformed Churches, the General Council may authorize the organization of a Regional Council composed of the member churches in that defined geographical area. Such a Regional Council shall be accountable to the General Council of the World Communion of Reformed Churches through its appointed administrative structures.

A. The number, boundaries, and names of the Regional Councils shall be determined by the General Council or by the Executive Committee in consultation with the member churches of the region.

B. The organization of a Regional Council shall be effected by the member churches within the area, in conformity with the Constitution and Bylaws of the World Communion of Reformed Churches. Each Regional Council shall adopt its own Bylaws subject to ratification by the Executive Committee.

C. Each Regional Council shall meet from time to time within the geographic area, provide for an Administrative Committee, and elect officers, including a Moderator (or President or Convener), a Secretary and a Treasurer, pursuant to its Bylaws, subject to confirmation by the Executive Committee.

~~D. Each Regional Council shall elect a President, a Moderator or a Convener.~~

~~E. Each Regional Council shall elect a Secretary and a Treasurer to serve the Regional Council, subject to confirmation by the Executive Committee.~~

~~D. A Vice-President, or another member of the Executive Committee, shall be appointed by the Executive Committee to be a corresponding member of each Regional Council.~~

## **ARTICLE XVII – DISSOLUTION**

In the event that the World Communion of Reformed Churches ceases to exist as a corporate entity, any remaining assets or liabilities shall be distributed pro-rata to the member churches.

## **ARTICLE XVIII – AMENDMENTS**

A. This Constitution may be amended by a two-thirds affirmative vote of the delegates in attendance at any meeting of the General Council, provided the proposed amendment has been transmitted to each member church, to members of the Executive Committee, and to the Regional Councils at least six months before it is submitted for approval.

B. The Bylaws may be amended by a majority vote of the delegates in attendance at a meeting of the General Council, provided notice of at least 24 hours has been given to the delegates attending that meeting.

C. Between meetings of the General Council, the Bylaws may be amended by a two thirds majority of the Executive Committee. Such changes shall be submitted to the next General Council for ratification.

## **ARTICLE XIX – OFFICIAL LANGUAGE VERSION**

The English version of this document is the definitive document for interpretation purposes.

## **WORLD COMMUNION OF REFORMED CHURCHES (WCRC)**

### **THE BYLAWS**

#### **I. GENERAL COUNCIL**

A. The Executive Committee shall serve as the Business Committee of the General Council.

B. The President, with the advice of the Executive Committee, shall appoint from among the delegates such Standing Committees and Task Groups as may be necessary for the efficient operation of the General Council when in session.

C. The status and classification of participants at a General Council meeting shall be as follows:

1. Each member church shall have a formula-specified number of voting delegates.
2. An associate delegate is one who represents an associate-member organization. Associate delegates have the right to speak but may not vote.
3. An affiliate delegate is one who represents an affiliated organization. Affiliate delegates have the right to speak but may not vote.

4. An ecumenical delegate is one who represents a recognized ecumenical fraternal organization. Ecumenical delegates have the right to speak but may not vote.
5. Guests are those individuals who have been invited to attend the General Council meeting. Guests have the right to speak but may not vote.
6. Observers are representatives from member churches or other communions who are considering becoming members of the World Communion of Reformed churches. Observers may participate in the activities of the General Council but do not have the right to vote.
7. Consultants may be present at the General Council or Executive Committee meeting upon invitation by the officers. A consultant may be asked to address the assembly on the issue for which the consultant is present. A consultant's right to speak is limited to that specific matter, and the consultant may not vote.
8. Visitors are those individuals who attend the public sessions of the General Council for personal reasons. Visitors do not have the right to speak, make motions, or vote.

## II. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

### A. Elections

1. The General Council shall elect officers from among the voting delegates appointed to that General Council, taking into consideration geographical distribution, cultural and denominational diversity, gender, age, and experience.
2. The General Council shall elect an Executive Committee from among the voting delegates appointed to that General Council, taking into consideration geographical distribution, cultural and denominational diversity, gender, age, experience, and the advice of regional councils.
3. The Executive Committee members shall hold office from their installation until their successors are elected and installed in office.
4. Officers and members of the Executive Committee shall be eligible to serve for not more than two consecutive terms.
5. The General Council, upon recommendation of the Executive Committee, shall elect a Nominating Committee of not more than ten persons, two of whom must be under 30 years of age, one of them female and one male. The nomination procedure shall take into consideration geographical distribution, cultural and denominational diversity, and gender.
6. Members of the Nominating Committee are not eligible for election as officers or as members of the Executive Committee. The Nominating Committee shall receive and consider proposed nominations from delegates and from Regional Councils and shall make its own proposals.
7. The Nominating Committee shall present to the General Council a slate of nominations for officers and for members of the Executive Committee. When the proposal of the Nominating Committee has been



presented, nominations from the floor may be proposed as an alternative to any of the nominees recommended by the Nominating Committee.

8. The election of General Council Officers and Executive Committee members shall take place no sooner than twenty-four hours after the presentation of all candidates.

9. Each member of the Executive Committee shall be required to disclose potential and real conflict of interest issues. A signed form for such disclosure shall be retained in the office of the General Secretary.

10. Delegates elected to the Executive Committee are ordinarily expected to represent the interests of the General Council.

#### B. Alternates and advisers

1. If any member of the Executive Committee is unable to attend a particular meeting of the Executive Committee, the President and the General Secretary, after due consultation, may appoint an alternate from the same region, to serve for that particular meeting as a member of the Executive Committee.

2. The Executive Committee may invite churches or organizations to appoint a representative to attend meetings of the Executive Committee. Such an invited representative shall be able to participate in the meeting without the right to vote.

#### C. Removal from office

1. When an officer or member of the Executive Committee is deemed by another officer or member to have failed to perform his or her duties, a hearing or hearings shall be conducted.

2. The member shall be offered the opportunity to make a response in writing or in person to the Executive Committee.

3. Having heard the accusations, having considered the appropriate evidence and having heard the response the accused person chooses to make, the Executive Committee may reprimand, suspend, or remove the accused person, or declare that the person's service will continue. The seriousness of the offence will determine the action to be taken—not necessarily the number of occasions of transgression.

4. When an officer or member of the Executive Committee has been found guilty of an offence by the ecclesiastical procedures of his or her church, the Executive Committee may declare the office or membership vacant after having taken note of the official statement of the charges (formal accusation), decision, and censure (judgment, sentence). The member shall be offered the opportunity to make a response in writing or in person (at her or his own expense) to the Executive Committee.

~~4.~~ Whether or not there is a response, the Executive Committee may remove or suspend the person, or take no action.

#### D. Vacant positions

When the position of a member of the Executive Committee becomes vacant through death, resignation in writing to the General Secretary, removal from office by action of the Executive Committee, or non-attendance over an extended period, the Executive Committee may fill such vacancy in the following manner:

1. If the office of President becomes vacant between meetings of the General Council, the Executive Committee shall fill the office of President by election from among the Vice-Presidents or the elected members of the Executive Committee.
2. If the office of a Vice-President becomes vacant between meetings of the General Council, the Executive Committee shall fill the office by election from among the members of the Executive Committee.
3. If the office of General Treasurer becomes vacant between meetings of the General Council, the Executive Committee shall select a person to fill the position.
4. If a general position on the Executive Committee becomes vacant between meetings of the General Council, the Executive Committee may fill the vacancy by election from among those who were delegates to the previous General Council, taking into consideration geographical distribution, cultural and denominational diversity, gender, age, and experience.

#### E. Meetings

1. The Executive Committee shall meet once a year, the specific time and place to be set by the Executive Committee or by the President and General Secretary at its previous meeting or by way of circular decision as provided for in article X.E of the Constitution. Failing this, the President and the General Secretary decide as to the time and place of the Executive Committee's meeting. If they cannot come to an agreement, the President decides.
2. The President and the General Secretary may call special meetings of the Executive Committee, and shall do so at the request of a majority of the members of the Executive Committee.
3. A quorum shall be a majority of the total voting membership of the Executive Committee in attendance.

### III – SUSPENSION OF MEMBERSHIP

The Executive Committee may suspend the membership of a member church for actions in violation of the Basis, Values, Mission and Purposes of the Constitution or for persistent failure to support or communicate with the organization, subject to the following conditions: The following procedure shall be followed:

1. Such action may be proposed to the Executive Committee by one or more member churches, after such church or churches have previously presented their concerns to the church in question. A proposal to

suspend a member church shall be presented to the Executive Committee at least six months prior to its meeting.

2. The Executive Committee that has received a proposal for suspension shall conduct an investigation. The officers shall develop an investigative process for the specific charges. The process shall be approved by the Executive Committee.

3. The Executive Committee shall take final action only after the church in question has been given sufficient opportunity to defend itself.

4. After such an investigation has been completed, the Executive Committee may decide by a two-thirds vote of members present to suspend the membership of the member church in question or refer the case to the next General Council. When an Executive Committee decides suspension, it may be lifted at any subsequent Executive Committee meeting.

5. When a member church is suspended at a General Council meeting, that suspension may be lifted at any subsequent General Council meeting upon recommendation of the then current Executive Committee. The Executive Committee shall, therefore, maintain communication with that member church about the matters related to the cause for suspension.

6. A suspended member church may send observers to plenary sessions of the General Council but shall not have the right to vote or address plenary sessions of the General Council except by extraordinary permission of the President. A suspended member church shall not have any financial obligations to the World Communion of Reformed Churches during the suspension, nor shall a suspended member church be entitled to financial support.

7. Any member church that fails to make membership contributions and does not communicate the reason to the secretariat for three consecutive years shall have the privileges of membership withdrawn by the Executive Committee until the requirements of membership are fulfilled. A member church whose membership privileges are withdrawn shall be considered an inactive member. An inactive member church may attend a General Council meeting as an observer but will not have the right to speak or vote. Inactive members do not qualify for financial support from the World Communion of Reformed Churches.

8. Any member church that fails to make membership contributions and does not communicate the reason with the secretariat for three consecutive years may not participate in the Executive Committee. Such a member church may be reinstated by the Executive Committee upon resumption of contact and fulfillment of its obligations.

#### **IV-OFFICERS' COMMITTEE**

The elected officers, the General Secretary and the General Treasurer shall form themselves into an officers' committee (chaired by the President) to perform the following functions:

1. approve the agendas for Executive Committee meetings;
2. ensure coherence in the interdepartmental work of the World Communion of Reformed Churches;
3. provide advice and direction to the General Secretary
4. report for review to the Executive Committee concerning the actions they have taken;
5. oversee the assets of the World Communion of Reformed Churches;
6. along with the General Secretary, conduct risk assessments as needed and report conclusions reached to the Executive Committee.

## **V – GENERAL SECRETARY**

A. The General Secretary shall make all necessary arrangements for the convening, reporting, and proper conduct of the General Council.

B. The General Secretary shall supervise the personnel of the World Communion of Reformed Churches and be responsible for the proper functioning of the secretariat.

C. ~~All~~ WCRC publications (excluding those from Regional Councils) shall be under the supervision of the General Secretary. The General Secretary shall be the official spokesperson for the policies and statements of the World Communion of Reformed Churches.

## **VI – FINANCES**

A. The Executive Committee may propose to the member churches proportional financial contributions to the World Communion of Reformed Churches.

B. Any proposals for the disbursement of any funds relating to the World Communion of Reformed Churches, other than disbursements included in the annual budget, shall be approved by the Executive Committee.

C. In exceptional cases, the General Secretary shall be permitted to initiate an action with financial consequences, within the parameters of the purposes and aims of the World Communion of Reformed Churches, after consultation with and the approval of the President and the General Treasurer.

D. If necessary for timely consideration, the Executive Committee may vote on the adoption of the budget by mail ballot, teleconference, or other electronic means upon the recommendation of the officers.

E. The General Treasurer and the finance coordinator shall report regularly to the Executive Committee.

F. The expenses of the President, the General Secretary, the General Treasurer, and other members of the staff will be met from the funds of the World Communion of Reformed Churches when they attend meetings of the General Council and the Executive Committee.

G. The expenses of delegates to the General Council and of members of the Executive Committee attending the General Council shall be paid by the churches of which they are members unless a prior agreement for support has been negotiated.

H. The World Communion of Reformed Churches shall pay for the expenses of the Executive Committee in accordance with established administrative guidelines.

I. Each Regional Council shall submit to the General Secretary a copy of its annual audited financial statements.

**DOCUMENT 12.3**  
**REPORT OF THE OFFICERS**

The officers bring the following proposals to the executive committee for consideration:

1. To affirm the final phase of the strategic plan (as presented in the general secretary's report) for implementation leading to the 2017 General Council.
2. To graciously accept the invitation of the Zurich Cantonal Church to host the 2019 executive committee meeting, upon confirmation of the new executive.
3. To accept the early retirement request of Douwe Visser, to ask the general secretary to expedite the process of finalizing said retirement, and to express thanks to Douwe for his many years of service to the organization.

## **DOCUMENT 12.4 COMMUNICATIONS CORE GROUP REPORT**

Present: Yvette Noble Bloomfield, Phil Tanis, Allan Buckingham, Paul Oppenheim, Peter Borgdorff, Cheh Liang Mok, Stephens Lytch, Cheryl Meban, Wan-Jou Lin

In attendance: Sandy Horsburgh (Minute Secretary)

The minutes of the previous meeting were reviewed.

Phil noted that there were interesting challenges ahead around communicating the visit to the Pope in June, the proposed consultation on human sexuality and the possibility of a delegation visiting North Korea. He reiterated that communication was a key part of building communion.

The core group agreed the following be remitted to the Dialogue Groups:

1. To acknowledge, with profound thanks, the work of Phil, Paul and Anna in the field of communications;
2. To discuss the opportunities for communicating good news about WCRC arising from the visit to the Vatican in June, the proposed Consultation on Communion and Human Sexuality, and the possibility of a delegation visiting North Korea;
3. To affirm that effective communications is an integral part of the process leading up to and through all these events;
4. To recognize the need effectively and efficiently to communicate all the relevant information for the General Council. This will include a re-crafting of key parts of the WCRC website in order to point towards the General Council;
5. To raise awareness about the potential public relations impact of the process of associating with the JDDJ, recognising that the Communications office is committed effectively to communicating this issue;
6. To remind all relevant persons of the importance of involving the Executive Secretary for Communications and the staff of the office at the earliest possible stages of planning any events or visits;
7. To affirm the commitment of the communications team to the highest standards of professionalism.

**DOCUMENT 12.5**  
**THEOLOGY, MISSION AND COMMUNION**  
**CORE GROUP REPORT**

**I. Core group members present:** Peter Bukowski, Kobus Gerber, Najla Kassab, William Koopmans (reporter), Gradye Parsons, Bas Plaisier (moderator), Lisa Vander Wal

Guests present for one or both of our core group meetings

1. Aruna Gnanadason—consultant for TMC
2. Hans Lessing – General Council Coordinator for the WCRC
3. Chris Ferguson – General Secretary of the WCRC
4. Robina Winbush – director of ecumenical relations PCUSA
5. Alain Gonzalez – Cuban national, here as a steward
6. Suzanne Erlecke – on hosting committee with EKD

**II. Staff participation**

It is with disappointment that we note that the TMC secretary Douwe Visser is not able to be with us due to health related issues. We are grateful that Aruna Gnanadason and Hanns Lessing are able to be present in Douwe's absence. Their input in our discussion was of great value as they are directly involved in carrying forward the work of the TMC office.

**III. We take note of the following items with regard to activities and sectors of work that fall under the core group TMC:**

1. Planning is underway for the next Global Institute of Theology (GIT) to take place in 2017 in conjunction with the general council of WCRC. The location will be at Wuppertal (June 9-28) and Leipzig (June 29-July 7). There is a desire to have the GIT strongly connected with what happens in the General Council and not seen as an auxiliary program. The theme will coalesce with that of the general council, with a particular focus upon a sub-theme of "Confession and the Confessing Church." This theme is of immediate relevance for many churches for whom issues of the role of confessions is a very practical issue.
2. *Plans for a global WCRC network of theologians are being put on hold until after the General Council.* But the question is raised whether that leaves members of the network left out of the planning for the General Council. If there is not a formal meeting, the members must at least be consulted and involved in some way.
3. WCRC Europe Network of theologians. Of particular noteworthiness for our present circumstances leading up to the



General Council 2017 is the ongoing involvement of the WCRC Europe Network of Theologians regarding the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* (JDDJ).

4. Two issues of the *Reformed World* were produced in 2015, with the office of TMC responsible for content. There is a proposal presently being developed to have the General Secretary serving as the primary editor, the details of publication and distribution are taken care of by the communications secretary, and there will be staff members assigned as theme editors for individual issues with a particular focus. The core group notes that when a matter pertaining to one of the member churches is addressed in the *Reformed World*, that denomination should be aware of that in advance and should be given the opportunity to have their perspective heard as well. This is a matter of ethical protocol.
5. The TMC office responded to the WCC mission document *Together towards Life*, via articles in an issue of *Reformed World* and with a consultation that was held Feb. 22-26, 2016 in Berekfürdő, Hungary.
6. The TMC office was engaged in the following three dialogues: (1) *Catholic – Reformed* (final meeting Nov. 2015, report forthcoming); (2) *Anglican – Reformed* (October 2015, Kochin, India); (3) *Pentecostal – Reformed* (December 2015, Antalya, Turkey). Regarding the *Catholic – Reformed*, while the report is now officially in the office of the Vatican, pending their approval, questions arise in terms of the process of approval from our side, not just with regard to what the Roman Catholic side might propose, but also already now with respect to the report that we have before us at present.

#### Proposal

- to continue the dialogue with the Roman Catholics.
  - to begin a process to decide how to keep the Roman Catholic Church informed regarding our intended manner of reception of the report.
7. Work has continued with respect to the possible affiliation of the WCRC with the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* (JDDJ). Previous correspondence has indicated that if the WCRC were to associate with the JDDJ that would be viewed as a significant development from the side of the Lutherans and Roman Catholics. This would also join a broader ecumenical movement expressing affirmation of the JDDJ. For that to happen, an acceptable process from the side of WCRC

needs to be determined. Correspondence in this regard has already been conducted with member churches by the TMC secretary. Efforts are being made to enact a timeline by means of which this process could be completed by the time of the General Council.

It is anticipated that a final draft of a *Reformed Signing Statement to the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* will be available for distribution to the member churches this summer. They will be asked to agree with the content of the signing document and to concur with the proposal to associate with JDDJ on the basis of the attached signing document and in anticipation of a celebrative signing by the WCRC at the General Council in 2017.

We recommend 4 issues for the dialogue groups to consider in this regard:

- A suggestion for the ExCom to affirm the decision of last year with regard to JDDJ
- How to deal with the timeline and strategy for involvement from the member churches with regard to the JDDJ signing document
- How to plan for a major celebration of unity with respect to association with JDDJ in 2017
- How to take proper note of the importance of the connection between justification and justice that is raised in this regard by the WCRC association with the JDDJ

## 8. Wittenberg Declaration

The theologians meeting that will be held in conjunction with the JDDJ will also be asked to address the matter of a proposed Wittenberg Declaration. The LWF is inviting us to draft a proposed declaration, after which they will evaluate whether they will concur with it.

Proposal:

We affirm the result of the Reformed and Lutheran dialogue and propose that we proceed with a draft in the expectation that the LWF will concur.

## 9. Human Sexuality

The question we wrestled with is how we structure discussion of this topic within the communion. The suggestion is to begin the

discussion among members of our own communion but also inviting other communions to accompany us in the conversation. We would do well to accept the offer of resources produced by the WCC.

The ultimate question is how we sustain communion in the context of disagreement.

**DOCUMENT 12.6**  
**JUSTICE AND PARTNERSHIP CORE GROUP REPORT**

Present: Helis Barraza Díaz, Yueh-Wen Lu, Clifton Kirkpatrick, Veronica Muchiri, Lydia Adajawah, Gabriela Lucía Mulder, Jan-Gerd Heetderks, Johan Weismann, Mary Fontaine, Clayton Leal Da Silva, Milton Mijia, Bishop Medardo Gomez Soto, Dora Arce Valentín

Apologies: Robyn Goodhill

The Core Group met with staff, and reviewed the reports of the work that the Department of Justice and Partnership has done since June 2015 up to now, which mainly based on the strategic plan during last executive committee meeting, but also include the directions for the year ahead.

The report of the Justice and Partnership and the report of the working group on women's ordination were received.

Here are highlights of discussion and highlights that the Justice Core Group will like to recommend to the Executive Committee:

- I. 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Accra Confession and Accra+10  
Following the decisions from previous Core Group meeting as future working plans, the office of Justice and Partnership organized the bi-regional consultations regarding to the Accra Confession and Accra+10. Questions about how themes and issues of Justice relates in our time can be brought into General Council in relation to the Reformation 500 years Anniversary and for the future been brought up. We recognized there is necessity to identify some current critical justice issues/themes that need to be addressed during the General Council. Those themes can be the framework for the public issues and also be part of presentation at the reception of the minister of foreign affairs in Berlin with the consideration that those issues need to be presented in a creative way. The Core Group also agreed that there shall be a working plan for the future in which the General Council has to decided. A guidance of such plan could be the following points:
  - a. Welcoming the stranger amidst of a global refugee crisis
  - b. A strong and firm commitment to Economic and Ecological justice
  - c. Overcoming racism and upholding the rights of indigenous people
  - d. Active peacemaking in the society and among the religions
  - e. Gender justice in church and society

**Recommendation 1:**

The Justice Core Group recommends that the Executive Committee ask the General Council Planning Committee

- II. New International Financial Economic Architecture, NIFEA  
The Executive Secretary explained the reason to re-launching the NIFEA as both the General Secretary and the Executive Secretary mentioned in their report.

**Recommendation 2:**

The Justice Core Group recommend that the Executive Committee agree the department of Justice and Partnership

**Recommendation 3:**

The Justice Core Group recommend that the Executive Committee agree the justice network to be formed as to present a vision and priorities of WCRC justice work beyond 2017.

- III. Women Ordination

The Core Group review the document "Toward A Declaration of Faith On Women's Ordination" presented by the Task Force on Women Ordination. Biblical reflections in the document were highly acknowledged. Questions in terms of criteria of having a declaration of faith has been raised and the concerns of reaction from member churches that currently does not practice women ordination or, member churches reject to practice women ordination have been raised and discussed.

**Recommendation 4:**

The Justice Core Group recommends to the Executive Committee that the document "Toward A Declaration of Faith On Women's Ordination" shall be presented to the General Council with the reminder that the criteria of having a declaration of faith and the implication follow b the adoption of this faith declaration to member churches that does not accept and practice women ordination.

- IV. Gender Justice in relation to collaboration with the PCUSA United Nation New York Office

The Core Group discussed about the participation of campaign on Women Status, questions were raised regarding to send a representative of WCRC each year in the UN commission, especially to the "Women Status Commission" through the Presbyterian Church, PCUSA. And yet, concerns of financial implications came up by sending one delegate to New York City for such event.

However, the core group also recognized the importance of having the WCRC's voices in U.N. in relations to the work of justice.

**Recommendation 5:**

The Justice Core Group recommends the Executive Committee to urge the General Secretary to proceed further consultation with PCUSA U.N. office in relation to strengthen our work within the U.N.

The Justice Core Group expressed their gratitude to the programme staff, Rev. Dora Arce-Velentine for her dedication and commitment.

## **DOCUMENT 12.7 REPORTS OF THE DRAFTING COMMITTEE**

### **REPORT 1**

This report collates and distils the proposals formulated by the Dialogue Groups at their meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> May.

#### **Regional Councils**

##### Observations

The groups considered a proposal to gather regional leaders in a consultation to share concerns and to assist Regional Councils in defining a common vision for carrying out the work of the WCRC. It was affirmed that this was necessary.

Proposal 1: that Executive Committee affirms the need to gather regional leaders in a consultation to share concerns and to assist regional councils in defining a common vision for carrying out the work of the WCRC.

A proposal was made to use the Partnership Fund to provide resources for the Regional Councils.

A common theme: need expressed for staff and resource support. To the extent that it has funds available for such a purpose, we encourage the Partnership Fund to provide resources to Regional Councils.

South Asia Regional Council: The participation is all men, no youth. Not officially constituted. Should Pakistan be part of another region than India?

Recommendation for South Asia: to be approved as a Regional Council, bylaws they will need to be developed and a council must be created in consultation with the member churches in the region and the general secretary. The bylaws (gender and age inclusion) must be consistent with the constitution of WCRC.

Indonesia has not been formed. The required timelines have not been observed for approval at this meeting. Indonesia is on schedule to be considered for approval next year at the GC meeting.

Recommendation: We propose that the Executive Committee recommend to the General Council that an Indonesia Regional Council be created. Grounds: This is warranted by the unique situation of many (27) member WCRC churches on many islands in Indonesia. (Note:

member churches in Singapore and Malaysia, Philippines etc. may need to be included in the regional council).

Note: Additional questions concerning regional councils:

- Roles and purposes?
- How to understand how regional vice-presidents and regional council leaders relate?
- Who speaks for the regions?
- Is it necessary to have one system of regional councils?

## **UN Office**

1. That the Executive Committee notes that in the UN office Ryan Smith is now the sole staff person, and Mark Koenig has been re-assigned. *Noted.*

2. Recommendation on the UN Commission on the Status of Women: that WCRC send a delegation to the meeting of this UN Commission the next time it gathers. *Remitted to Justice and Partnership office and General Secretary*

## **General Council Planning Committee**

### *Theme Input recommendations*

- Executive Committee approved the Theme Input recommendations, with following considerations:
- To affirm the theme trajectories and encourage that attention be given to the interconnections between them.
- To expand the justice theme beyond economic justice to incorporate the global crisis of religious conflict and growing fundamentalism and its effect on member churches.
- To affirm different methodologies of theme explorations.
- To encourage more creativity, and not getting stuck in common practices. (i.e. not just have a lecture in theology.) e.g. a Conversation for Justice. Perhaps feature/host a conversation with Moltmann about theology (lay person, young person, person asking views on specific issues in their lives)

### *Suggestions for speakers*

The Executive Committee approved the recommendations with the following being referred to Planning Committee for consideration:

- Several specific names were suggested and/or affirmed for the various themes/sections



- Take another look at diversity: Age, contemporary. Ideas. Marginalized, not well known.
- We support the notion of an activist and a theologian reflecting together on the Accra Confession for the Justice Presentation. A well-qualified moderator would be essential for this session.
- Propose that the concern about refugees be a major theme at the General Council, paying attention to the different dynamics creating migration in various parts of the world.
- Speaker on Calvin's refugee theology (WCRC Europe?)
- Variety of methods - story-telling, panels, drama, small groups
- Theme speakers could be invited to remain for a forum discussion at the conclusion of the presentations

### *Bible Studies*

Executive Committee approved proposals for the Bible studies with the following comments:

- Several specific names were suggested and/or affirmed to lead Bible studies.
- To propose who can integrate scripture, theology, and pastoral and practical concerns.
- Other voices, maybe 5 rather than 3
- Small groups vs large. Small better. No more than 13. Recognize that logistics are difficult. What's the process for training facilitators, etc. (recommend Some online in advance)
- Worship is pre-bible study then small groups?
- Study leaders write and present.
- Small group discussion more important than hearing presenters
- Biblical text – about aliens / refugees
- Acts 2 for Communion
- More varied bible study voices instead of only 3 persons
- To determine whether any of the texts have been used in the last two or three General Councils.
- To seek leaders who are knowledgeable in the WCRC and who are able to speak to renewal and
- Gender balance in public presentations is an important principle.

Johann made a plea that the Executive Committee simply pass on these views, not requiring the Planning Committee to implement them, bearing in mind that what is desired may not prove to be possible.

### *Berlin: Reception by Federal Government*

Referred suggestions and comments to the GC Planning Committee:

- To engage a professional to format the message; this person should meet with members of the executive (or leaders of churches) to communicate stories of transformation already occurring in our member churches.
- We propose that someone be found to choreograph how our delegates might engage the German and other government leaders to make our presentation creative and engaging to the international media.
- We suggest that a few justice themes (climate change, migration, human and child trafficking, etc.) be identified to shape what we do in the Berlin day and to be arenas around which public issues will be presented.
- To caution against placing too many issues before the media and the politicians.
- Proposed Issues for WCRC statement
- Migration in all parts of the world because of war, economic injustice, ecological disasters.
- Gender justice and gender violence are issues the communion is already addressing. Highlight Thursdays in Black as a way to point to issues of violence against women.
- Child soldiers and Arms exportation, as indicated in the Accra Confession.
- Federal Government
- Not sure about current proposals. Needs a rethink. Not just statements. Like Johann's suggestions.
- Possible stories, following different format
- UN decade for African descendent people 2015-2024. Multiple ways to get at it.
- Aboriginal people, Declaration on rights of indigenous people
- Praise Germany (Merkel) for response to refugee response
- Will there actually be space to make a presentation at the reception hosted by the German government?
- What is the WCRC's core message?
- Refugees
- Climate change/ climate justice
- Child soldiers /Arms sales
- We must show that as churches we are connected around the world on these issues
- Share stories of how member churches are actually solving issues
- No new Justice statement should be written, just lift up Accra statement – maybe presented with comments by young people (GIT?)

### *Youth Gathering*

Referred observations to Planning Committee, especially group working on pre-youth assembly:

- To affirm the proposal (little time to discuss)
- Ask youth how they want to put together their program
- Financial resources: Will this really work?
- Use mission networks and congregational partnerships, sister relations and let youth contribute a share.
- Who will it benefit? Is it worth it?
- Fear of representation disparities
- Feels like purpose of pre-assembly. Feels redundant.
- Clarification may help in understanding, right now we don't. It does though sound like too much, and too confusing.
- Not worth the energy. Remember working young people can't take so much time off. Already over a week is a lot and may be all vacation time for the year. If youth pre-assembly items are covered in pre-pre-assembly, what happens to those that can't make it to the first part?
- Our dialogue group supports strongly the proposals for youth and visitors programs that can give empowerment to the future of the ecumenical and Reformed movements.

*Visitors Programme, admission of delegates, reimbursement policy*

All proposals were affirmed while noting that there was little time to discuss any of them.

*Other topics/suggestions regarding GC2017:*

- The ExCom also wants to make sure churches have clear communications about process and understand what will transpire at GC2017.
- Recognize that not all member churches are confessional.
- ExCom must make sure that member churches understand definitions of whatever words we use (associate, affiliate, etc.)
- Put the JDDJ on website so people can find it.
- Remember diversity across all roles on the stage, not just presenters, but those who are introducing, etc. Diversity means diversity of all kinds (Physical, hearing, sight, abnormal formations). Space and program needs to permit access.
- Planning committee needs to take concern for self-care. Program intentional downtime.
- Schedule as is may be impossible to keep, we'll be constantly behind. A half-hour break (impossible for that many people anyway) that you'll have to rush through is not a really a break, especially when it gets cut back as we're behind.

- Evening prayers and committees meetings are scheduled too late in the day. It is suggested that alternative scheduling be explored.
- Recommend that plan takes great care over inclusion of those who are differently abled.

## **REPORT 2**

### **Communications**

Observation: The office is reminded of the digital divide that exists among the membership churches of the WCRC. It is recommended that attachments be kept small.

Proposal: That the ExCom acknowledge and affirm the report and proposals of the Communication Core Group as they were presented.

### **Theology**

*Re: Association with JDDJ*

#### Observations

1. It may be advisable to use regions to bring people together to discuss the JDDJ document as well as the signing document. Regional council meetings may wish to add this to their agendas.
2. It may also be helpful to provide a summary of contents in popular/common language.
3. The public celebration should take place in Wittenberg, and it must be clear that the association is being made by the WCRC; nevertheless in Wittenberg the hosting church (EKD) must also be invited to have an appropriate role.
4. In Wittenberg the ceremony should concentrate on the signing of the "Wittenberg Declaration" (and tree planting) with LWF.
5. A follow-up process is needed after GC and JDDJ signing to advise member churches and congregations on the significance of WCRC's association with JDDJ (How does it affect our teaching about Roman Catholic doctrine in our seminaries, etc.)

#### Proposals

1. To concur with the ExCom 2015 decision to have a process to associate with JDDJ to be ready for the General Council in 2017
2. That the ExCom affirm its own consensus of 2015 with regard to the JDDJ.

Grounds: We say consensus because no specific decision was made or recorded in the minutes. The best recollection available is that the Theology, Mission and Communion Core

- Group made such a suggestion and that the ExCom referred it to the General Council Planning Committee. That appears to be the situation the ExCom is in today. No recorded decision by the planning committee could be located.
3. That the ExCom take note that the discussion of association with JDDJ does not involve theological changes to our Reformed understanding of justification.
  4. That the ExCom declared that the intended association procedure in 2017 is essentially a public affirmation of what has already been concluded in the dialogue processes of WCRC.
  5. That the ExCom provide a clear definition of what it means for the WCRC to 'associate' with JDDJ.
  6. That the ExCom emphasize that association with the JDDJ document would be a tremendous act of witness for the Reformed family, with strong implications for the local church context as well as for the communion.
  7. That the ExCom send a letter to churches admitting that the process to date has fallen short of what it should have been. However, in spite of this, the ExCom wishes this to be pursued in order to meet the 2017 celebration, and request churches' responses as quickly as possible.
  8. That the ExCom provide resources for local congregations to study the JDDJ document after 2017.
  9. That ExCom commit to a timeline by means of which:
    - (a) The revised Reformed Signing Statement to the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification will be made available to the WCRC membership churches by August 2016.
    - (b) The cover letter will advise the churches that they have opportunity to provide feedback by the end of November.
    - (c) The cover letter will summarize the intended celebrative nature of the public signing ceremony and its valuable implications for ecumenical relations with not only Lutheran but also Roman Catholic and other denominations with respect to the doctrine of justification.
  10. That WCRC member churches be requested to express their concurrence for WCRC to associate with the JDDJ.
  11. That, for the sake of the integrity of the process, the ExCom consider the possibility of ExCom meeting in the end 2016 or early 2017 to discuss and explore JDDJ and the signing document so that we are comfortable and familiar with the contents of documents (JDDJ plus signing document as well as Wittenberg) we're commending.
  12. That the General Secretary be instructed to plan an appropriate ceremony for the association with JDDJ preferable with the participation of both Lutheran and Roman Catholic representatives.

13. That the ExCom strongly encourage the GC Planning Committee to schedule the signing to take place in an outdoor venue in front of the Castle Church so as to attract the maximum crowd and take advantage of the fitting symbolism of the location.
14. That the ExCom encourage the GC Planning Committee to find another place and time during the GC in Leipzig for a celebration around the WCRC association with JDDJ in the presence of representatives from Roman Catholic, Methodist, Lutheran and other churches.
15. That the signing ceremony will highlight the importance of the connection between justification and justice.

*Re: "Wittenberg Declaration"*

#### Observations

1. One dialogue group wonders why the proposed Wittenberg Declaration would not be drafted jointly with the Lutherans. The dialogue group is still very hesitant about the process suggested for the drafting of a declaration. Could the proposed declaration be circulated among ExCom members prior to final approval?
2. The dialogue group is concerned that our public pronouncements affirm our reformation-relationship from the beginning and our pronouncements must recognize that we were partners in the reformation from the beginning and not the product of a schism.

#### Proposals

1. That ExCom affirm the result of the Reformed and Lutheran dialogue and support the intention to proceed with a draft document in the expectation that the LWF will concur.
2. To concur with the proposal to draft the document, pursue its adoption, and prepare an appropriate celebration of it in Wittenberg for the General Council.

### **REPORT 3**

#### **Theology, Mission and Communion Core Group**

##### *Staff*

#### Proposals:

1. That the ExCom acknowledge with gratitude Douwe Visser's service as Secretary for Theology, Mission and Communion and offer the assurance of our prayers for his good health.

2. That the ExCom express gratitude to Aruna and Hanns for providing staff support in the meantime.
3. That in the event of Douwe's retirement, the search for an executive secretary successor be commenced as quickly as possible to ensure continuity in our TMC engagements.

### *GIT*

Observation: In the planning of the GIT, endeavour to ensure that all the regions will be represented and that there is a balance of staff to represent more global voices.

### *Publications*

Observations: past Reformed publications on JDDJ and publish articles about a signing document from various contexts.

### *Dialogues*

Observations:

1. We support continuation of dialogue with the Roman Catholics with the initiation of a fifth phase in our current dialogue with a focus on the prophetic, priestly and royal shepherd nature of the church.
2. We would hope that a major focus would also be on justice as flowing out of the previous dialogues using both Accra and the encyclical *Laudato Si* as resources.
3. The reception of the most recent report of the Catholic-Reformed Dialogue could follow the same process as was used for the JDDJ.
4. Consider a dialogue with Muslims and others post GC.

Proposals:

1. Affirm the proposal to continue with the Catholic - Reformed dialogue.
2. Request the General Secretary to prepare a plan to keep the Roman Catholic Church informed regarding our intended manner of reception of the Catholic-Reformed dialogue report.

### *Human Sexuality*

Observations:

1. We support the proposal of the President and General Secretary to deal with matter of human sexuality as there are varying perspectives that need a place to be expressed in a wholesome dialogue context in the context of communion.

2. This is not just a matter LGBTQ orientation and how the churches can deal with it pastorally. The human sexuality subject is inclusive of broader life issues such as human trafficking, child marriage, polygamy and the like.
3. The consultation sponsored by the Christaller Institute in Ghana and Columbia Theological Seminary on this theme might have helpful resources to share on this consultation as would those of the WCC. The WCC resources referenced are recommended for how to have the conversation and not resources for a particular outcome.
4. The primary goal of this consultation will be how we can continue to live together in communion when we have deep differences on issues of human sexuality.
5. It might be helpful to have a pre-conference planning process to deal with how this consultation might best be carried out.

Proposal: That the ExCom affirm the General Secretary's proposal to convene a consultation on Human Sexuality and Communion, taking into account the concerns that are raised in the report of the core group.

#### *Miscellaneous*

Observations: It is important during the GC planning stage not to lose sight of the importance of Mission in the Frontline.

### **REPORT 4**

#### **Justice Core Group Proposals and Report of the Officers**

##### *Critical justice issues and themes*

Observations:

1. WCRC should develop a justice focus that really creates impact (refugees, ecology, gender).
2. Global viewpoint of Indigenous Peoples is needed – including those from Asian countries (please note the preferred spelling of "Indigenous Peoples" with capitalization and plural).
3. There is a concern with how the GC will adequately address all five issues.

Proposal: To affirm the recommendation of the core group to direct the General Council Planning Committee to cluster public justice issues around the five themes of refugees, economic and ecological justice, overcoming racism and affirming the rights of Indigenous Peoples, peace-making, and gender justice, both in the General Council and in our public witness in Berlin.



## *NIFEA*

### Observations:

1. Based on our Accra Confession, we should find resources to support NIFEA as a priority.
2. It necessary to find ways to empower and celebrate regions in addressing justice issues in their respective contexts. WCRC should share models of regional justice engagement.

### Proposals:

1. That ExCom affirm the recommendations of the core group regarding the relaunching of NIFEA.
2. That prior to the General Council the Justice core group and the TMC core group be kept informed and given the opportunity for input to both the work of WCRC and related networks in their areas of concern and in the introduction of business for the General Council.
3. That the officers (in consultation with the ExCom) clarify the accountability, communication, and relationships between the ExCom, the core groups, the networks, the Regional Councils, and the staff in order to equip WCRC for effective ministry for the next seven years.

## *Women's ordination*

### Observations:

1. We offer great appreciation for a good piece of theology and encourage the new ExCom to strongly support the accompaniment process talked about in the document.
2. We encourage better language, formatting and presentation of the whole paper. While the content is good, the presentation needs refinement as the character of the work is a bit confusing. Take out the word 'Toward' as a first step in editing.
3. The title ("Declaration of Faith") is too strong and misleading.
4. Look for the highest standard of acceptance for this paper's 'adoption'.
5. What are the implications for member churches who will not sign on? Is it really WCRC's intention to exclude member churches that do not ordain women?
6. Equal representation at GC and ordination should not be presented as one issue. The declaration should describe the journey of our communion until today and say how we will accompany churches towards the goal (Ordination of women). Where are the resources to do this?

### Proposals:

1. That ExCom affirm the recommendation of the core group that the document "Toward a Declaration of Faith on Women's Ordination" be presented to the 2017 General Council, recommending its adoption and referencing criteria and implications of adopting such a declaration.
2. That the title of the document be changed to "Toward a Testimony of Faith on Women's Ordination."
3. To instruct the General Secretary and staff to prepare a clear introductory presentation defining and explaining terms in the document (such as Declaration of Faith), including constitutional support.
4. To instruct the General Secretary and staff to provide supporting documentation and a process for guided discussions on the document at the 2017 General Council.
5. Recommendation that WCRC commit resources to accompany churches in achieving the goal of women's ordination in the spirit of communion.

#### *UN Office on the Status of Women*

Proposal: that the ExCom affirm the value of strengthening our work with and through the UN office, especially on matters related to the Status of Women.

#### **Report of the Officers**

##### Observations:

1. One of the dialogue groups concurs in general with the recommendation regarding the strategic plan but is concerned about the amount of work anticipated, especially in the light of the current staff situation. The priority of preparation for the GC must be clearly in focus.
2. Acceptance of the invitation from the Zurich Cantonal Church should not replace our commitment to hold ExCom meetings in various parts of the world during the seven year cycle of the next Executive Committee.

##### Proposals:

1. That ExCom endorse the final phase of the strategic plan (as presented in the general secretary's report) for implementation leading to the 2017 General Council.
2. That ExCom accept the gracious invitation of the Zurich Cantonal Church to host the 2019 ExCom meeting, upon confirmation by the new executive.
3. That ExCom accept the early retirement of Douwe Visser, ask the general secretary to expedite the process of finalizing said

retirement, and express thanks to Douwe for his many years of service to the organizations that he has served.

**DOCUMENT 13.1**  
**STATEMENT ON WCC DETENTIONS BY ISRAELI SECURITY**

13 May 2016

To General Secretary Olav Fykse Tveit and our sisters and brothers in the World Council of Churches,

We, the Executive Committee of the World Communion of Reformed Churches, meeting in Havana, Cuba, were distressed to hear about the detention and deportation of numerous members of the World Council of Churches' Working Group on Climate Change by Israeli security forces as they attempted to enter the country for a conference.

We join with you, Rev. Dr. Tveit, in protesting the "excessive, unreasonable and wholly unwarranted treatment by the Israeli authorities" and join in the call on the government of Israel to:

- enter into a discussion with the WCC about this incident
- apologize to those detained and to the WCC
- address these incidents meaningfully
- ensure they are not repeated in the future

We also join with you—and everyone in the WCC—to lift up those sisters and brothers who were wrongly detained and deported. We pray for their comfort and renewal of their hearts after this inexcusable and traumatic experience. And we lift this Scripture up for all:

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me" (Matthew 5:9-11).

In Christ,

Jerry Pillay  
Chris Ferguson

**DOCUMENT 13.2**  
**MESSAGE FROM CUBA**

We, the Executive Committee of the World Communion of Reformed Churches, have gathered here in Havana, Cuba, 8–13 May 2016, under the theme "Living God, renew and transform us."

Following the words of the Apostle Paul, God calls us not to conform to this world but be transformed by the renewing of our minds (Romans 12:2).

The story of the church in Cuba is an inspiration to us. The church taught us that faith is not a fragile enterprise but a resilient force.

The church transformed the experience of difficult times into a greater dependency on God with the realization of miracles happening around them every day.

Even while governments attempted to separate, erecting walls between nations and peoples, the broader Reformed church still built relationships and partnerships. This solidarity contributed to the new life between Cuba and the United States.

The Presbyterian Reformed Church in Cuba provided the ecumenical world with strong leaders, opened global doors for the other churches in Cuba and provided a theological foundation for understanding mission in the struggles of the Cuban context.

We pray that this tradition of contributing to the social fabric of Cuban society will only continue to grow and that the government will equally respect all religions and churches and their unique gifts to their communities.

We respect the role Cuba has played in the Colombia peace talks. Many people in Latin America owe their health to the medical workers Cuba has trained in the region.

We also heard about the larger Latin American context with struggles for justice, specifically guaranteeing human rights and overcoming poverty. So we pray that democracy be respected, as it nurtures peace as a fruit of justice.

We pledge our continuing solidary and support to the Cuban church and call upon the Communion:

To our member churches in the United States, we encourage them to continue their work to end the economic blockade/embargo

To the Presbyterian Reformed Church in Cuba, we encourage them to hold fast to their identity and faith while encouraging the development of young leaders

To all of our members, we encourage relationships to be newly built or renewed and call upon all to pray:

*Living God,*

*Do not let us conform to the world's view of power but let us always be dependent upon you.*

*Transform our uncertain faith with a resilient grace that faces each new day.*

*Renew in us a commitment to our sisters and brothers everywhere that face challenges in their lives as a church.*

*Thank you for making us braver than we are.*

*In Christ's name we pray,*

*Amen.*

There is still much to be done and much to learn. We will continue to journey together. The Cuban churches' struggles are the Communion's struggles. Their successes are our celebrations.

**DOCUMENT 14**  
**AUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENT**

*The EKD Report on the audit of the WCRC financial statement for 2015 follows with its own page numbering.*



EVANGELISCHE KIRCHE IN DEUTSCHLAND

(EVANGELICAL CHURCH IN GERMANY)

OBERRECHNUNGSAMT

(HIGH AUDIT OFFICE)

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(English Version)

# REPORT

ON THE AUDIT OF

THE FINANCIAL STATEMENT FOR 2015

**WORLD COMMUNION OF REFORMED CHURCHES**

**(WCRC)**

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HANNOVER





## INHALTSVERZEICHNIS

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**Annex1 - WCRC statement on the report on the audit of the financial statement for 2014**

## LIST OF IMPORTANT ABBREVIATIONS

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BSt.	Buchungsstelle (Booking account, classification level in the finance software KFM)
CHF	Swiss Francs (Currency code according to ISO 4217 for the Swiss zone)
EKD	Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland (Evangelical Church in Germany)
EUR	Euro (Currency code according to ISO 4217 for the Euro zone)
Ev.-ref. church	evangelic-reformed churche
GG	Grundgesetz für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland (Constitution for the Federal Republic of Germany)
GLD	Gliederung (Booking account, classification level in the finance software KFM)
GRP	Gruppierung (Booking account, classification level in the finance software KFM)
HHSt.	Buchungsstelle (Booking account, classification level in the finance software KFM)
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 <sup>th</sup> November 1993 (ABl. EKD page 513)
SB	Sachbuchteil (Booking account, classification level in the finance software KFM)
SGB VI	Sozialgesetzbuch / Sechstes Buch (VI) - Gesetzliche Rentenversicherung - (Social Security Code / Book Six (VI) - Social pension fund)
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 US zone)
VERKA	Kirchliche Versorgungskasse VVaG, Berlin
WRV	Weimarer Reichsverfassung (Weimar Constitution)

## **I. AUDIT BASICS**

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### **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 10<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> December 2014. The Standing Budget Committee of the EKD synod approved the acceptance of this audit assignment in its conference on 12<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup> 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 2015 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 2015.

For this, it was precisely audited

- whether the budget and economic management as well as the asset administration in the accounting year 2015 took place correctly and according to applicable law and
- whether the annual accounts 2015 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 for 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 to 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 any 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),
- employment process for new employees and
- inspection of single fields of high significance.

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.

The audit was carried out by Ms. Miriam Böhnke and Mr. Ralph Schönemeier in the period from February to March 2016 – 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 among others:

- a) a) the 2015 budget for the WCRC,
- b) 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 2015 of 11th February 2016 (ZB closure no. 0377).

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 – if available - 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 11<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> 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 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 2015 from the WCRC. It was given by the General Secretary within the scope of this audit

### **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 11<sup>th</sup> March 2016.

The WCRC participants were the General Secretary Chris Ferguson, the Finance Co-ordinator, Mr Gerhard Plenter and the Assistant for Finances and Communication, Ms Anna Krüger as well as Mr Ralph Schönemeier and Ms Miriam Böhnke for the ORA.

## II. ORGANIZATIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES

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The World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) is a non-profit-oriented, international, non-governmental organization representing 225 member churches from over 100 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 page 2 WRV, awarded by the Federal Government of Lower Saxony, order issued on 11<sup>th</sup> December 2012<sup>1</sup>. 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 11<sup>th</sup>/14<sup>th</sup> April 2014. It was ratified by Federal Law on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2014.

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<sup>1</sup> see announcement of the Ministry of Culture of Lower Saxony of 16<sup>th</sup> January 2013 (Nds. MBl 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 1<sup>st</sup> September 2014, Rev. Chris Ferguson (United Church of Canada) became the current office holder.

The current 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

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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:

<b>WGRK Annual accounts 2015</b>	<b>Revenues</b>	<b>Expenses</b>
	<b>EUR</b>	<b>EUR</b>
Budget appropriation according to budget	2.477.000,00	2.477.000,00
<b>TARGET COSTS 2015</b> (plan valuation)	<b>2.477.000,00</b>	<b>2.477.000,00</b>
According to the annual financial statement the following amount to:		
The actual receipts	2.097.630,62	
The transfers from program reserves	513.448,26	
The transfers from other reserves	0,00	
The actual expenditures		1.393.451,49
The allocations to program reserves		599.796,04
The allocations to other reserves		388.524,70
The surplus 2015 (allocation to General Reserve)		229.306,65
<b>ACTUAL COSTS 2015</b> (result)	<b>2.611.078,88</b>	<b>2.611.078,88</b>

## **Handling of the General Assembly**

The investment budget (SB 02) has been created for the accounting execution of the handling of the General Assembly taking place in the year 2017. There was need for manual correction within the frame of the computer-technical year-end closing bookings in SB 02. Meanwhile, the problem has been solved by the WCRC in cooperation with the software user. Therefore, some last corrective bookings were carried out in the accounting year 2016.

## **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 3,788,198.59 EUR for the year-end closing as of 31<sup>st</sup> December 2015. Compared with the previous year (modified final stock 2014: 3,075,524.89 EUR), this stock has increased net by 712,673.70 EUR (+23.17 %).

The asset accounting of the WCRC (SB 92) according to the documents presented for the audit are as follows as of 31<sup>st</sup> December 2015:

Reserve assets (including trust assets, according to SB 92)	opening balance	closing balance	annual percentage change
	EUR	EUR	
<b>WCRC Capital</b>			
Reserve Fund	64.320,97	323.731,14	403,31%
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%
21st century reformation fund	3.964,36	3.964,36	0,00%
Alliance for life fund	2.973,51	2.973,51	0,00%
Regional Communication Support	0,00	2.185,16	100,00%
<b>Specific asset items</b>			
UEK special donation	496.089,12	683.056,08	37,69%
Member church sp. donations 2016	0,00	93.317,52	100,00%
Member church sp. donations 2017	0,00	20.000,00	100,00%
General Council Fund	461.871,82	533.278,13	15,46%
CWM Endowment Reserve	1.211.500,00	1.211.500,00	0,00%
<b>Theology &amp; Mission office programs</b>			
Global Institute of Theology (GIT)	2.581,11	28.998,90	1023,51%
Theological Dialogs	20.797,37	6.572,03	-68,40%
Mission	17.805,90	25.272,99	41,94%
Madip	27.965,33	27.965,33	0,00%
Georges Lombard Prize	17.014,65	14.429,47	-15,19%

continuation to the tabel reserve assets			
Reserve assets (including trust assets, according to SB 92)	opening balance	closing balance	annual percentage change
	EUR	EUR	
<b>Justice &amp; Partnership offices programs</b>			
Covenanting for justice	12.078,90	2.750,97	-77,22%
Gender ustice	76.836,33	68.137,76	-11,32%
Theological Education for Women	174.649,38	155.841,17	-10,77%
New econ. & financial Archit. (NEFA)	43.379,59	43.367,04	-0,03%
Oikotree (KCTE)	15.144,01	5.063,77	-66,56%
Accra + 10	0,00	7.908,79	100,00%
<b>Partnership Funds</b>			
Partnership Fund A	0,00	101.823,19	100,00%
Partnership Fund B	8.196,00	25.716,00	213,76%
Partnership Fund D	14.176,62	0,00	-100,00%
Partnership Fund E	3.705,55	632,17	-82,94%
<b>General Programs</b>			
WCRC regional support	39.954,00	44.000,00	10,13%
Global South Intership support	38.074,23	38.963,50	2,34%
North American Intership support	1.255,73	0,00	-100,00%
Native American project	3.164,33	3.164,33	0,00%
<b>Custodian funds</b>			
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%
Provision la pensee economique	16.858,47	16.858,47	0,00%
Equatorial Guinea	4.218,09	4.218,09	0,00%
<b>Zwischenergebnis</b>	<b>2.887.490,19</b>	<b>3.604.604,69</b>	<b>24,84%</b>
<b>Trust assets</b>			
WCRC Europe	188.034,70	183.593,90	-2,36%
<b>total</b>	<b>3.075.524,89</b>	<b>3.788.198,59</b>	<b>23,17%</b>

## **IV. AUDIT STATEMENTS**

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### **1. General statements**

#### **1.1 Applicability of the budget code**

At the latest meeting of the Executive Committee, which took place in Hanover from 11<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> May 2014, the budget code of the WCRC was formally put into effect by resolution. The regulations of the budget code have not yet been entirely implemented, as was already the case within accounting for the years 2013 and 2014.

For instance, 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 also mainly based this year's audit on the general principles of correct accounting with special focus on the continuity of accounting.

#### **1.2 Correctness of the accounting / documentation**

The WCRC disposes of a significant accounting. The documents were randomly audited, their presentation is orderly and clearly laid out. The traceability of the audited business transactions was given. Upon request, further differentiated analyses apart from the compulsory annual financial statements were presented within the frame of the audit.

Considering the entire accounting year 2015, it was possible to eliminate almost all the organizational risks from the previous year. For example, an additional employee has been incorporated into accounting to cover substitution in cases of absences due to holiday and illness. The ORA explicitly appreciates the development in accounting.

#### **1.3 Accounting directives**

Within the frame of the audit, the ORA pointed out that the required two signatures are always to be carried out on the order for payment in view of compliance with the four-eyes principle.

## 2. Statements about the year-end closing

### 2.1 Correctness and completeness of the annual financial statement

The 2015 year-end closing of the WCRC was compiled dated 11<sup>th</sup> February 2016 (ZB closing no. 0377). It shows a volume of 2,611.078.88 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 2015 show no fundamental breaches.

Finally, it is to be determined that the year-end closing for the accounting year 2015 shows no significant gaps according to the ORA findings.

### 2.2 Job chart

The job chart presented by the WCRC within the frame of this audit is as follows:

Nr.	function	compensation	plan	result
1	General Secretary	B 3	1,0	1,0
2	Exec. Secretary for Communications	A 15	1,0	1,0
3	Exec. Secretary for Justice and Partnership	A 15	1,0	1,0
4	Exec. Secretary for Theology and Communion	A 15	1,0	1,0
5	Asst. for Finance and Communication	EG 9	1,0	1,0
6	Asst. for Justice and Theology (representation for parental leave)	EG 9	1,0	0,9
7	Asst. for Justice and Theology (parental leave)	EG 9	1,0	1,0
8	Asst. for the Reformed Partnership Fund	EG 9	1,0	1,0
9	Asst. to the General Secretary	EG 9	1,0	1,0
			<b>9,0</b>	<b>8,9</b>
10	Volunteer Assistant	gf. Besch.	450 EUR	50 Std. monthly
11	Intern - Praktikant/in	§ 8 TVPÖD	1,0	1,0
12	Intern - Praktikant/in	§ 8 TVPÖD	1,0	1,0
*	<i>General Council Coordinator</i>	---	1,0	1,0

\* Mr. Lessing is employed by the Ev. Church of Westphalia

The job chart is an indispensable staff planning instrument and a corner post of financial controlling. It is to reflect the whole extent of the positions required to fulfill the WCRC tasks. A job chart always bears a so-called target character since it is irrelevant whether positions are staffed or not. To do justice to its function as a controlling instrument, it is necessary to implement regulations ensuring a complete reproduction of the situation of positions, which is also correct concerning the ranking. Supervision of the compliance with the job chart also has to be ensured.

The ORA was provided with the required job descriptions for all positions. Concerning the evaluation of the positions the ORA has stated that all staff members employed according to tariff are uniformly assigned to pay group 9 pay level 3. The employees are not assigned to a level according to their individual qualifications, however. The public servant employees are also uniformly assigned to salary group A15 level 10. There is no determination of levels according to the actual, individual circumstances in this case either.

The ORA raises concerns over the fact that such a generalized assignment of levels is not consistent with the applicable regulations. An individual calculation of the pay or salary level ought to take place, at least for future employments.

### **2.3 Budget balancing / utilization of the 2015 profit**

The balancing of the ordinary budget was induced by an allocation of the profit remaining after execution of all necessary bookings amounting to 229,306.65 EUR to the General Reserve Fund (SB 92, BSt. 5110.00 UK 1).

### **2.4 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 statements have resulted.

### **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 to the SB 92 balance sheet, where the solvent capital is assigned to the assets).

### **3. Single statements**

#### **3.1 Employment process for new staff**

Within the frame of its audit, the ORA examined the employment process for new staff. For this purpose, the WCRC first provided the ORA with a process description (target situation), with the title "Narrative of WCRC Hiring Procedures". These regulations are to be applied for each freely staffable position. The process structures the employment procedure into five phases.

- Evaluation of responsibilities
- Adaptation of the job description
- Advertisement
- Selection process and interviews
- Decision

The ORA appreciates that the WCRC holds a process description concerning this matter available, which reproduces the essential requirements for action.

Subsequently, the ORA checked the described process using concrete particular cases and examined two employment procedures from the recent past.

After this, the ORA came to the conclusion that the essential procedure steps of the "Narrative of WCRC Hiring Procedures" are observed and complied with. The ORA suggests regulating the financial aspects to be observed concerning new employment, e. g. job evaluation, possible assumption of travel expenses to interviews, etc. and adding them to the process description. In addition, a thorough documentation of the entire employment process is to be ensured. No further noteworthy conclusions resulted in this context.

#### **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.

So far, for the coverage of the agreed supply claims in the form of old-age allowance 30 % of the gross personnel costs per month for each personnel case have been transferred to a supply reserve administered on trust by the Ev.-ref. Church based on a contract concluded for this purpose.

Within the frame of the previous audit, the ORA had advised the WCRC to revise possible pension expectancies from former employments as well as a calculation



(insurance-mathematical expertise or similar) concerning the expected amount of the payments to be effected in future.

On behalf of the WCRC, a corresponding calculation of the amount of the actually to be effected payments was commissioned with the Kirchliche Versorgungskasse VVaG (church pension fund), Berlin (VERKA) and carried out by the latter:

staff name	calculation Verka	so far a total saved up	so far saved monthly	total difference	remaining time to work	prospective pension reserves monthly
	EUR	EUR	EUR	EUR	month	EUR
employee 1	193.778,45	38.237,85	1.820,85	155.540,60	27	5.760,76
employee 2	250.081,61	40.313,91	1.919,71	209.767,70	51	7.769,17
employee 3	193.595,86	27.092,10	1.935,15	166.503,76	41	6.166,81
employee 4	380.433,28	27.788,76	2.315,73	352.644,52	72	13.060,91
<b>Gesamt</b>	<b>1.017.889,20</b>	<b>133.432,62</b>	<b>7.991,44</b>	<b>884.456,58</b>		<b>32.757,65</b>

The scheme clearly shows that the amount of 7,991.44 EUR, which has so far been put aside every month for the four employees, immediately has to be adjusted upwards by 24,766.21 EUR (approx. 410 %) to 32,757.65 EUR per month.

According to the WCRC, the significant increase is due to the extremely modified basis of calculation of the VERKA. The first model was calculated with a supply fee of 30 % based on various pension funds, the new calculation of the VERKA reaches a supply fee of approx. 60 %, in the case of one executive secretary even 90 %.

This means a cost expansion of approx. 297,200.00 EUR per year and thus represents a significant additional expense position for the WCRC. The associated significant cost increases were not available in the year 2015 according to the WCRC. To the knowledge of the ORA, the additional costs have meanwhile been communicated to the membership partners and taken into account in the preliminary budgeting for the year 2016.

### 3.3 Development of the program budgets

The program budgets which 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 2015, the program budgets are as follows (all amounts in EUR):

name	opening balance EUR	revenues EUR	expenses EUR	closing balance EUR
<b>Theology &amp; Mission office programs</b>				
Global Institute of Theology (GIT)	2.581,11	29.482,30	3.064,51	28.998,90
Theological Dialogs	20.797,37	6.447,40	20.672,74	6.572,03
Mission	17.805,90	23.561,48	16.094,39	25.272,99
Madip	27.965,33	keine Aktivitäten		27.965,33
Georges Lombard Prize	13.683,88	0,00	65,78	13.618,10
<b>Justice &amp; Partnership offices programs</b>				
Covenanting for Justice	12.078,90	0,00	9.327,93	2.750,97
Gender Justice	76.836,33	13.021,63	21.720,10	68.137,86
Theological Education for Women	174.649,38	-8.992,46	9.815,75	155.841,17
New economic & financial Architecture (NEFA)	43.379,59	720,00	732,55	43.367,04
Oikotree (KCTE)	15.144,01	4.301,08	14.381,32	5.063,77
human dealer	0,00	16.116,89	16.116,89	0,00
Follow Up Accra 10th Anni versary	0,00	38.000,00	30.091,21	7.908,79
<b>Partnership Funds</b>				
Partnership Fund A	0,00	310.887,90	209.064,71	101.823,19
Partnership Fund B	8.196,00	26.000,00	8.480,00	25.716,00
Partnership Fund D	14.176,62	keine Aktivitäten		14.176,62
Partnership Fund E	3.705,55	14.176,62	17.250,00	632,17

continuation to the table				
name	opening balance EUR	revenues EUR	expenses EUR	closing balance EUR
<b>General Programs</b>				
WCRC regional support	39.954,00	37.000,00	32.954,00	44.000,00
Justice and partnership office support	0,00	keine Aktivitäten		0,00
General secretary programs	0,00	keine Aktivitäten		0,00
Youth program	0,00	keine Aktivitäten		0,00
Global South Intership support	38.074,23	24.459,30	23.570,03	38.963,50
North American Intership support	1.255,73	11.660,30	12.916,03	0,00
Native American project	3.164,33	keine Aktivitäten		3.164,33
<b>total</b>	<b>513.448,26</b>	<b>546.842,44</b>	<b>446.317,94</b>	<b>613.972,76</b>

The following statements concerning the program budgets resulted within the scope of the audit:

- Six of the twenty-three programs showed no financial activities in the year 2015.
- 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 2015, the program means were transferred back promptly at the beginning of the accounting year at the beginning of February. Thus, the previously described procedure is given with the original intention of transparency.
- The finance committee of the WCRC had decided that a global administrative cost allocation of 8 % is to be paid from the program budgets to the core budget so as to finance the administrative overhead expenses resulting in the Hanover office.

- The program earnings available (including the means from program reserves) originate from the following sources:

<b>Composition program revenue</b>	<b>EUR</b>	<b>%</b>
removal from program reserves	431.822,99	81,85
donate	74.619,16	14,14
other revenue	21.137,97	4,01
<b>total</b>	<b>527.580,12</b>	<b>100,00</b>

A cursory revision of the program costs has given no indication for misappropriated use resp. assignment of the means.

### 3.4 Membership fees

The development of the WCRC membership fees within the audited period based on the documents presented shows the following absolute figures:

<b>regional membership fees</b>	<b>plan EUR</b>	<b>result EUR</b>	<b>difference EUR</b>
Africa	20.000,00	15.312,95	-4.687,05
Latin America	3.000,00	4.159,13	1.159,13
Caribbean and North America	222.000,00	275.950,75	53.950,75
Asia	40.000,00	59.909,42	19.909,42
Pacific	2.000,00	3.741,19	1.741,19
Europe	380.000,00	392.744,77	12.744,77
<b>total</b>	<b>667.000,00</b>	<b>751.818,21</b>	<b>84.818,21</b>

Currently, the WCRC office is busy processing the development of the membership fees of the last years so as to obtain an overview of the existing payment obligations and fee backlogs of the member churches. Further new findings concerning the existing payment obligations were achieved in 2015 by means of better communication with the member churches. At the time of the audit, no final results were available on this matter, they are to be expected for the year 2016.

Concerning the inquiry about the handling of differences, the ORA received the confirmation that, according to protocol, active membership is not to be withdrawn from any church (according to minutes of the Executive Committee 2015).

Relating to the planning of WCRC membership fees, it was explained to the ORA upon inquiry that planning is to be based on actual earnings of the previous years in future (according to minutes of the Executive Committee 2014).

### 3.5 Expat Expenses

The so-called “Expat expenses” are benefits for the WCRC employees. The right to payment complies with the WCRC internal regulations of the “personnel policies and practices“. These are especially benefits concerning the costs of children’s school fees, rent and meals of children studying outside Hanover, language courses for spouses and children as well travel to the employee’s home country every two years.

The costs spent for this by the WCRC in 2015 can be summarized as follows:

Expat Expenses	plan EUR	result EUR	offsetting EUR
<b>1110. General Secretary</b>	5.000,00	175,00	<b>-4.825,00</b>
<b>1111. Executive Secretaries</b>	7.000,00	14.149,34	7.149,34
<b>total</b>	<b>12.000,00</b>	<b>14.324,34</b>	<b>2.324,34</b>

According to the WCRC, not all presumable costs had been considered in the planning of the year 2015. In the year 2016, the planning was adapted to the actual costs.

For the rest, the ORA carried out a random revision of singular cases and confirms agreement with the regulations of the “personnel policies and practices“.

### 3.6 Bonus miles

While revising the year-end closing documents, the ORA noticed that a significant proportion of the WCRC costs results from travel expenses, the largest part for air and rail travel. In this context, the airlines and the Deutsche Bahn offer so-called frequent flyer or bonus programs. These bonuses are generally in-kind bonuses, which are taxable in the sense of benefits in kind under certain circumstances. Therefore, the ORA checked the orderly handling of these bonuses.

The large airlines' frequent flyer programs or the Deutsche Bahn bonus program are meant to strengthen customer loyalty by rewarding the customer for the frequent use of the same company with discounts in the form of free flights or bonuses. The participation in such a program means that the travelled miles resp. booked trips with one airline are registered and recompensed with bonuses after having reached a certain amount. These could be free flights, price-reduced flights, a booking class upgrade, access permits to lounges, etc. or non-cash benefits. From a certain turnover onwards, some companies grant a higher membership status, such as "silver", "gold", "senator" or "executive", which grant further advantages to the customer.

So far, the WCRC has not regulated the handling of bonus miles in a mandatory and concrete way. According to the WCRC, the bonus miles are rather left to the employees based on trust. The ORA assesses that this procedure does not entirely comply with Wage Tax Guidelines and, in addition, is not in accordance with the principles of economic and thrifty handling of the budget means provided.

Here, the ORA notes that according to a verdict of the Federal Labor Court of 11th April 2006<sup>2</sup>, the company is generally entitled to the bonus miles collected during business travel. According to ORA assessment, based on its right to give directives the WCRC ought to dispose that the bonuses obtained are to be used exclusively for business purposes. This also refers to bonuses already obtained and credits from the past. In addition, the ORA recommends fixing this in writing in the labor contract for future new hire.

From a tax-based point of view, the following is to be observed. If bonuses obtained in business are employed in business, this has no fiscal consequences. If they are used privately, the situation is different. In this case – from a tax-based point of view – a non-cash advantage occurs as a non-cash income, which is to be taxed. The taxation begins when the bonus is claimed, not when the bonus is credited to the mile account.

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<sup>2</sup> Federal Labor Court, 11.04.2006 - 9 AZR 500/05

Due to its tax obligations towards the staff, the WCRC should inform them that they are obligated to notify the employer about these bonuses. The employer then has to pay the corresponding taxes. This notification has to refer to the month the bonus was claimed in. If the employer does not make the notification at all or not correctly, the employer has to inform the business tax and revenue office.

Within the frame of this audit, the WCRC made the following statement concerning the question of handling bonus miles:

- So far, the handling of bonus miles has been dealt with based on trust.
- The General Secretary and the executive secretaries are currently discussing the finding of a general and universal decision to no longer let this occur merely based on trust.
- According to the current knowledge of the finance department, all bonus miles have been used for business flights. Therefore, there has been no necessity to tax these as a non-cash advantage.

The ORA appreciates the WCRC's intention to come to a corresponding universal decision and recommends considering the procedure and tax issues previously presented by the ORA.

### 3.7 Risks resulting from currency fluctuations

Within the frame of this audit, the ORA determined that the WCRC realized earnings from currency conversions amounting to 131,511.49 EUR in the accounting year 2015.

<b>Fx gain/ Fx lost</b>	<b>plan EUR</b>	<b>result EUR</b>
Fx gain	0,00	211.615,15
Fx lost	0,00	80.103,66
<b>total</b>	<b>0,00</b>	<b>131.511,49</b>

These gains resp. losses from currency fluctuations had not been planned by the WCRC.

Upon inquiry by the ORA, the WCRC explained that it was not possible to plan currency fluctuations between EUR, CHF and USD. The accordance between accounting and the account balances requires calculating and booking the currency gains and losses continuously because, otherwise, it is not possible to balance the cash accounts. Predicting the rate development is impossible in the process.

The ORA registers the statement. The WCRC can profit from future currency fluctuations or be negatively affected by them. The existing risk resp. chance of these unpredictable developments of the exchange rates is to be considered. To safeguard a negative currency the ORA recommends creating an earmarked reserve, for example.

### **3.8 Earmarked means**

When checking the reserve assets, the ORA noticed that six donation positions from previous years are being kept in the scope of earmarked means. The ORA estimates that they are unused means of donation. These positions have shown no more changes in their assets for several years. The ORA recommends deciding about the further use and assignment of these means promptly.

### **3.9 Statements from previous audits**

Within the current audit, the ORA requested the status of the statements from previous audits. The WCRC office made a detailed comment concerning these statements. The comment is attached to this report as Enclosure 1. The ORA summarizes the results regarding the essential points as follows:

- **Emission of business credit cards to WCRC employees**

The ORA registers the statement concerning the further use of several credit cards. However, the ORA renews its reference to the risks connected.

- **Relocation of the WCRC office to Hanover**

The WCRC was able to hand over a full settlement for the relocation costs to the ORA in the budget year 2015. The UEK grant to finance the relocation costs of the office from Geneva to Hanover amounting to 200,000 EUR was used up to its full extent.



- **Review personnel costs accounting Antex**

Within the frame of the WCRC office relocation and the connected re-organization of its administration, the accounting and revision of the payroll accounting outsourced to a service provider in Switzerland had to be postponed initially. This step was especially necessary in view of some specifics of Swiss social security systems and the duty of supply (safeguarded under private law) concerning which there was an ample need for clarification.

During the audit the High Audit Office was informed that there are no more existing liabilities towards Antex and Axa Winterthur from previous years.

### **3.10 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:

- Implementation of the Bundesreisekostengesetz (federal travel expense law) when carrying out business travel against the background of tax relevance,
- avoiding manual bookings on technical budget posts,
- introduction of an inventory register and
- completion of the personnel and remuneration files (personnel master data sheets).

## V. FINAL REMARK

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### **Audit result**

#### **Audit of the financial statements 2015**

Subject of the audit was the annual financial statement submitted by the WCRC for the year 2015. After the result of this audit, the ORA can confirm that

- the accounting in the accounting year 2015 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 2015 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.

## **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 2015 can be recommended.

Hannover, the 17<sup>th</sup> March 2016



IN REPRESENTATION

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a large, stylized initial 'K' followed by a cursive name.

(KVR SCHÖNEMEIER)

OBERRECHNUNGSAMT DER  
EVANGELISCHEN KIRCHE IN DEUTSCHLAND



## World Communion of Reformed Churches

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### ON THE REPORT ON THE AUDIT OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENT FOR 2014

#### 1.2 Correctness of the accounting/documentation

In the year 2015, the accounting was carried out in a continuous manner. All payments were made on the basis of payment-justifying documents. A substitute in accounting is being trained.

#### 1.3 Accounting directives

The accounting directives were adjusted in accordance with the recommendations of the High Audit Office. An order is created prior to every entry. A confirmation of factual and calculative correctness of each payment is documented as well.

#### 2.4 Development of reserves

Changes in the reserves will be booked via the ordinary budget (SB 00) from the financial year 2016 onward. The appropriate grouping figures (withdrawals from reserves: GRP 31xx, allocation to reserves: GRP 91xx) are used.

#### 2.5 Advance and transit accounts

Due to the introduction of credit cards, project advances are given only in exceptional cases, e.g. when staff is travelling to a country where trouble-free use of credit cards is unlikely.

The WCRC office works towards the presentation of significant proof and a prompt settlement of said advances.

On December 31, 2015, one advance to the president remained open, and will be settled promptly. This advance was given for a specific flight the president was supposed to book. After the advance had been issued, it turned out that the flight had been booked at a considerably lower price through the WCRC office. In order to save transfer fees, it was decided to use this advance in a timely manner for other WCRC-related expenses.

#### 3.1 Personnel administration/payroll (Germany)

The decision to give a monthly unlimited bridging bonus as well as an employer's contribution to the voluntary health and care insurance to both theological employees, who had initiated their employment in Geneva, was made by the Personnel Committee after consulting with different experts and a Swiss lawyer. Please refer to 3.1 "Response of Former GS Setri Nyomi" and to the "Relocation Officers Report".



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### **3.2 Granting claims of old-age allowance**

A calculation of the actual payments to be effected was carried out by the *Verka* (church pension fund), and the payments into the pension reserve were incorporated into the budget plan for the year 2016. An excel sheet with the corresponding calculations is provided as an annex.

### **3.3 Development of the program budgets**

In the accounting year 2015, the designated program funds were transferred back at the beginning of the year. Some significant programs were restructured. A transfer will be made as soon as the program executives can be consulted.

#### Development of the program budget “Georges Lombard Prize”

Please refer to separate statement

#### Program “Regional Communication Support”

An earmarking of the 2014 funds (4,075.54 EUR) was confirmed. In the budget year 2015, projects that were in accordance with the earmarking were financed with Core funds (1,890.29 EUR). Funds in the corresponding amount (2,185.16 EUR) were allocated to a newly created reserve. Projects in accordance with the earmarking are anticipated in the budget year 2016.

### **3.4 Membership fees**

The WCRC office is processing the development of the membership fees over the past years. New insights into existing obligations have been obtained thanks to an improved communication with member churches. A final result is expected in the budget year 2016.

### **3.5 Emission of official credit cards to WCRC staff**

A basic decision concerning the use of credit cards was made by the Executive Committee. Credit cards are to replace advances, with the exception of project advances under exceptional circumstances, as far as possible (Minutes of the Executive Committee Meeting 2015, page 1, action 21).

### **3.5 Relocation of the WCRC office to Hannover**

A full settlement for the relocation costs was compiled. Please refer to separate statement

### **3.7 Payment of a rent deposit**

The rent deposit was paid as part of a moving allowance of 7,500.00 EUR that Rev. Christopher Ferguson was entitled to as per the “Personnel Policies and Practices” of the WCRC.



## World Communion of Reformed Churches

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### 3.8 Performance of the financial assets

The investment of assets was restructured. Self-managed shares were sold; in return, financial assets were invested in funds. A short-term financial investment was made in the form of a savings account. For the financial statement of 2015, bank account and investment statements in foreign currencies were converted to EUR at the end of the year.

#### 3.8 Correction Barnabas Foundation

After consulting with the US donors, it was determined that the original Barnabas means are not earmarked.

#### 3.8 Review personnel costs accounting (Antex)

There are no existing liabilities towards Antex and Axa Winterthur from previous years. All insurances that existed in 2014 have been cancelled. An inquiry with the former provider CBI determined that the payment of 5,000.00 CHF into the pension fund of the former accountant did not involve WCRC funds but was made with personal means of the employee in question.

### 3.9 General notes

Currency fluctuations on foreign currency accounts are calculated and booked for each bookkeeping entry date so as to be able to carry out a cash reconciliation between the accounting and the account statements so that the accounting shows the actual amount in EUR at all times.

The software provider (KIGST-GmbH) has confirmed that no foreign currency payment module is available for KFM at this time.

KD-Bank has confirmed by phone that the WCRC has been registered as a resident entity since January 1, 2014.

The necessity for setting up separate bank accounts for third-party funded projects has been confirmed by Bread for the World.

The status of the WCRC Michigan Corporation is determined in the "Articles of Incorporation". The resident agent of the corporation is Rev. Dr. Peter Borgdorff, member of the WCRC executive committee. Signatories for the 5<sup>th</sup> 3rd Bank account are Rev. Dr. Peter Borgdorff and Rev. Dr. Clifton Kirkpatrick, also member of the executive committee. The power of attorney for the investments made in 2015 with the Barnabas Foundation and the Presbyterian Foundation is with Rev. Christopher Ferguson (General Secretary) and Dr. Johann Weusmann (General Treasurer).