



World Communion  
of Reformed Churches

# Executive Committee Minutes 2018

FROM LIFE, FOR LIFE:  
TRANSFORMING, RECONCILING AND RENEWING



**World Communion of Reformed Churches**  
**Executive Committee**  
**10-16 May 2018**  
**Seoul, Republic of Korea**

**Theme: From Life, For Life: Transforming, Reconciling and Renewing**

*All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to Godself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. —2 Corinthians 5:18-19*

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## **PARTICIPANTS**

### **Officers**

#### **President**

Rev. Najla Kassab, National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon

#### **Vice-Presidents**

Rev. Dr. Samuel Ayete-Nyampong, Presbyterian Church of Ghana

Rev. Dr. Lisa Vander-Wal, Reformed Church in America

Raissa Vieira Brasil, United Presbyterian Church of Brazil

#### **General Secretary**

Rev. Dr. Christopher Ferguson, United Church of Canada

#### **Treasurer**

Dr. Johann Weusmann, Evangelical Church in the Rhineland

### **Members**

Rev. Clayton Da Silva Leal, Independent Presbyterian Church in Brazil

Diana Erdélyi, Reformed Church in Hungary

Rev. Agnaldo P. Gomes, AIPRAL

Hillary Hagar, Presbyterian Church of Canada

Martina Wasserloos-Strunk, WCRC Europe

Dr. Hefin Jones, Union of Welsh Independents

Rt. Rev. Annabell Lalla-Ramkelawan, Church in Trinidad and Tobago

Rev. Dr. Hong Jung Lee, Presbyterian Church in Korea

Rev. Joshua Lian, NEAAC

Coutinho Maravilhoso Moma, Evangelical Congregational Church in Angola

Veronica Muchiri, Presbyterian Church of East Africa

Tibonge Ng'ambi, United Church in Zambia

Hannah North, Presbyterian Church Aotearoa New Zealand

Dr. Claudio Pasquet, Waldensian Evangelical Church

Dr. Khid-arn Prawate, Church of Christ in Thailand

Rev. Milciades Pua, Presbyterian Church of Colombia

Rev. Mary Ekinde Salle, Presbyterian Church in Cameroon

Dr. Susan Thomas, Church of South India

Rev. Karen Georgia Thompson, United Church of Christ (USA), CANAAC proxy

Rev. Robina Winbush, Presbyterian Church (USA), proxy

#### **Consultant**

Tara Tautari, Methodist Church of Aotearoa New Zealand

**Guests****WCRC UN Representative**

Ryan Smith, Presbyterian Church (USA)

**Strategic Planning Committee Moderator**

Rev. Dr. D. Rathnakara Sadananda, Church of South India

**Observers**

Rev. Michael Blair, The United Church of Canada

Rev. Refat Fathy, Evangelical Church of Egypt, Synod of the Nile

Rev. Paul Tche, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

**Ecumenical Guests**

Fr. Avelino Gonzalez-Ferrer, Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity

Rev. Dr. Peniel Rajkumar, World Council of Churches

**Staff**

Anna Krüger, Assistant to Finance and Communications

Rev. Dr. Hanns Lessing, Executive Secretary for Communion and Theology

Katrina Mertz, Assistant to the General Secretary

Rev. Philip Vinod Peacock, Executive Secretary for Justice and Witness

Gerhard Plenter, Finance Coordinator

Phil Tanis, Executive Secretary for Communications

**Minute Taker**

Pauline Weibye, Church of Scotland

**Hosts****PCK Staff**

Rev. Kyoung-gyun Han, Ecumenical Officer

Rev. Kandula Dileep Kumar, Ecumenical Relations and Planning

**PROK Staff**

Rev. Park Sungkook, Ecumenical Officer

**Stewards**

Jang Sungsik, PCK

Jung Binghwa, PCK

Kim Eon, PROK

## 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.*

### **Wednesday, 9 May**

All day Arrival of officers and some members  
18:00 Dinner and Prayer Service at Han Shin Church

### **Thursday, 10 May**

All day Arrival of all other Executive Committee members  
9:00 Officers' Meeting  
12:30 Executive Committee Members: Local Orientation/Lunch  
16:30 Gather for travel to church  
17:00 Opening Worship  
18:30 Dinner

### **Friday, 11 May**

09:00 Morning Worship  
09:20 Plenary: Welcome, Opening and Orientation  
10:45 Coffee Break  
11:15 Report of the President, and questions  
12:15 Lunch/Officers' Meeting  
14:00 Report of the General Secretary, and questions  
17:00 Discernment Groups: Reports  
18:00 Dinner  
19:30 Discernment Groups: Reports  
20:30 Drafting Team: Reports

### **Saturday, 12 May**

08:00 Visit to Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) and Prayer Vigil  
15:30 Plenary: Reports from the Regional Councils  
16.45 Listening Session 1: Strategic Plan 1  
18:00 Dinner  
19:30 Discernment Groups: Strategic Plan 1

### **Sunday, 13 May**

Morning: Worship and lunch with local congregations  
Afternoon: Free time  
17:00 Dinner  
Evening: Message Committee and Drafting Team: Strategic Plan 1

**Monday, 14 May**

- 09:00 Morning Worship
- 09:30 Decision Session 1: Strategic Plan 1
- 10:45 Coffee break
- 11:00 Listening Session 3: Strategic Plan 2
- 12:00 Ecumenical Greetings
- 12:15 Committee membership
- 12:30 Lunch
- 14:00 Committee meetings
- 15:30 Coffee break
- 16:00 Discernment Groups: Strategic Plan: 2
- 18:00 Dinner
- 19:30 Message Committee and Drafting Team: Strategic Plan 2

**Tuesday, 15 May**

- 09:00 Morning Worship
- 09:20 Plenary: General Council Review and Reflection
- 10:30 Coffee break
- 11:00 Decision Session 2: Strategic Plan 1 & 2
- 12:45 Lunch
- 14:00 Listening Session 4: Message
- 15:30 Coffee break
- 16:00 Ecumenical Greetings
- 16:30 Sharing stories from Cameroon
- 16:45 Ecumenical Greetings
- 17:00 Other Reports
- 17:10 Greetings from Presbyterian Church of Korea
- 18:00 Dinner
- 19:30 Regional Meetings and Message Committee

**Wednesday, 16 May**

- 09:00. Decision Session 3: Finance
- 10:30 Coffee break
- 11:00 Decision Session 4: Personnel (closed session)
- 11:30 Decision Session 5: Creating Safer and Respectful Spaces
- 12:00 Decision Session 6: Message
- 12:30 Decision Session 7: Michigan Corporation
- 12:45 Closing Worship with Holy Communion
- 13:30 Lunch
- 14:30 Press Conference

Departures begin (and continue on Thursday, 17 May)

## **ACTIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

The Executive Committee:

### **Rules of Procedure for the Executive Committee (Discernment Procedures)**

1. Approved the Rules of Procedure for use in the Executive Committee.

### **Agenda**

2. Approved the agenda for the meeting.

### **Appointments**

3. Appointed Martina Wasserloos-Strunk, WCRC Europe; Hong Jung Lee, Presbyterian Church in Korea; Milciades Pua, Presbyterian Church of Colombia, and Hilary Hagar, Presbyterian Church of Canada, to serve as the Message Committee.
4. Appointed Clayton Da Silva Leal, Independent Presbyterian Church in Brazil; Hefin Jones, Union of Welsh Independents; Annabell Lalla-Ramkelawan, Church in Trinidad and Tobago; Tibonge Ng'ambi, United Church in Zambia, and Dr. Susan Thomas, Church of South India, to serve as the Drafting Team.
5. Appointed the following as members and officials of Discernment Groups:  
*Discernment Group 1*  
Samuel Ayete-Nyampong (moderator), Hefin Jones (scribe), Clayton Da Silva Leal, Diana Erdélyi, Hillary Hagar, Hong Jung Lee, Michael Blair, Peniel Rajkumar  
*Discernment Group 2*  
Lisa VanderWal (moderator), Annabell Lalla-Ramkelawan (scribe), Agnaldo P. Gomes, Martina Wasserloos-Strunk, Joshua Lian, Coutinho Maravilhoso Moma, Refat Fathy  
*Discernment Group 3*  
Raissa Vieira Brasil (moderator), Tibonge Ng'ambi (scribe), Hannah North, Claudio Pasquet, Khid-arn Prawate, Robina Winbush, Avelino Gonzalez-Ferrer  
*Discernment Group 4*  
Johann Weusmann (moderator), Susan Thomas (scribe), Veronica Muchiri, Milciades Pua, Mary Ekinde Salle, Karen Georgia Thompson, Paul Tche

### **Address of the President**

6. Received the Address of the President and referred it to Discernment Groups.



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

7. Received the Report of the General Secretary and referred it to Discernment Groups.

### **Regional Councils**

8. Received the report of the Africa Communion of Reformed Churches (ACRC).
9. Received the report of the Northeast Asia Area Council (NEAAC).
10. Received the report of the Asociación de Iglesias Presbiterianas y Reformadas en América Latin (AIPRAL).
11. Received the report of the Caribbean and North American Area Council (CANAAC).
12. Received the report of the Council of WCRC Europe.

### **Strategic Plan**

13. Approved the following Vision Statement to be contained within the Strategic Plan:

The World Communion of Reformed Churches is called to communion and is committed to justice.

Through robust engagement with the Word of God and the call of the Holy Spirit, the World Communion of Reformed Churches is always being transformed as it strives for the full and just participation of all. In our diversity, we seek to be a living expression of “unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:3).

We work to renew and restore the economy and the earth, so that all humanity and the whole of creation might live life in its fullness (Deuteronomy 30:19; John 10:10).

14. Agreed to amend the phrase “reforming together” in the modified Overarching Goal to “being reformed together”.
15. Agreed to add a footnote to the first use of the term “justice” to explain its context of Psalm 85: 10.
16. Agreed to add to the end of the second paragraph of the modified Overarching Goal the words “so loved by God but still trapped by multiple injustices and death, having fallen among thieves (John 10:10).”
17. Agreed to accept the Drafting Team’s modified text for the Overarching Goal, as further amended by Actions 14, 15 and 16.

18. Agreed to amend the Strategic Plan by using the phrase “youth/young adults” in place of “youth”.
19. Agreed to retain the heading “Differently Abled People” on page 6 of the Strategic Plan.
20. Agreed that the objective on page 6 of the Strategic Plan, under the heading Differently Abled People, should be amended to read: “The WCRC will intentionally address the call by the Ecumenical Disability Advocates Network (EDAN) and differently abled people in member churches for their full and just participation in programmes and structures of the WCRC, including the protection of vulnerable adults in church and society.”
21. Agreed that section 1. of the objective on page 23 of the Strategic Plan, under the heading Sustainability, should be amended to read: “1. Expanding WCRC membership (as per criteria in WCRC Constitution Article V.G.) by inviting churches into the Communion;”
22. Agreed to add the words “and regional” to two sentences in the Strategic Plan as follows:
  - a. Page 24, third paragraph under heading Capacity to read: “In addition, as capacities are considered, it must be noted that the current staffing does not properly reflect the membership of the Communion, most notably in gender and regional balances on the executive level.”
  - b. Page 25, first sentence of objective under heading Expand Capacities to read: “By 2024, staff capacities will be expanded and gender and regional representation balanced.”
23. Agreed to change the heading of the objective Expand Capacities on page 25 to Gender and Regional Balance within WCRC Staff.
24. Agreed to change the last sentence of section 3 of the objective on page 25 headed Gender and Regional Balance within WCRC Staff to “The advisers will be compensated for their time and have all expenses covered.”
25. Agreed to amend section 1. of the objective headed Participation on page 26 to read: “By 2024, participation in global and regional governing bodies, reference groups, working groups, networks and in events will reflect the diversity of our family.”
26. Agreed to change the word “inclusion” in section 2 of the objective headed Participation on page 26 to “participation”.
27. Agreed to delete the words “its 2018 meeting” at the end of section 1 of the objective on page 28 headed Governance and to substitute the words “all its meetings”.
28. Agreed to amend the final clause of section 3 of the objective on page 28 headed Governance to read: “... and present options, and take decisions, at the 2019 Executive Committee, including a planning timeline.”
29. Agreed to add two paragraphs to the section headed Implementation and Monitoring on page 29, to read:

## Actions

- a. The General Secretary will prepare a Strategic Plan Implementation Plan, with budget, by no later than the date of the 2019 Executive Committee meeting.
  - b. The Executive Committee will conduct a mid-term evaluation of the Communion's progress towards implementation of the Strategic Plan.
30. Agreed to amend the paragraph under the heading Full and Just Participation on page 5 to read: "We seek to live out a vision to become a just communion where those in power relinquish their authority and consciously embrace the bodies and the voices of those who have been excluded from full participation in the community. The WCRC has not yet reached consensus on the meaning of full participation."
31. Approved the WCRC Strategic Plan: 2018-2024 as amended by Actions 13-30.

## **Report of the Presbyterian Ministry at the United Nations**

32. Noted the report of the Presbyterian Ministry at the United Nations

## **Report of WCRC Indonesia**

33. Noted the report of WCRC Indonesia.

## **Report from the Global Christian Forum**

34. Noted the report from the Global Christian Forum.

## **Greetings from Presbyterian Church of Korea**

35. Received the greetings of the General Secretary of the Presbyterian Church of Korea.

## **Finance Committee Report**

36. Agreed that future finance reports would include details of the membership contributions of individual member churches.
37. Approved the 2017 financial statement.
38. Approved the Finance Committee's intention to draft an investment policy.
39. Accepted the auditor's 2017 report, including the responses prepared by the Finance Office, and offered thanks to the Finance Office for its work.
40. Agreed that the General Secretary and the General Treasurer be exonerated for the budget and economic management as well as the asset administration of the WCRC for the accounting year 2017.
41. Approved the 2018 budget.

42. Gave approval to the officers to devise a balanced budget for 2019 subject to final approval at the 2019 Executive Committee meeting.
43. Approved the revised General Council budget plan.

### **Staffing**

44. Resolved to renew, for a further five-year term to 31 January 2024, the contract of employment of Philip Tanis as Executive Secretary for Communications and Operations.
45. Resolved to consider at a future meeting the need for an intentional plan to address regional and gender balance in the executive staff group.

### **Creating Safer and Respectful Spaces**

46. Noted the policy document Creating Safer and Respectful Spaces.

### **Message from South Korea**

47. Received a paper entitled “No Other Way than Peace” prepared by Dr. Hong Jung Lee.
48. Approved the text of the Message from South Korea.

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

49. Approved the minutes of the 2017 meeting of the Executive Committee of the Michigan Foundation of WCRC, held in Leipzig, Germany, 29 June -7 July 2017.
50. Agreed that all the actions of the Executive Committee during its meeting in Seoul, South Korea, 10-16 May 2018, be fully concurred with and entered into the permanent record of the WCRC Michigan Foundation as constituting the decisions of 2018.

**NARRATIVE RECORD  
of the meeting of the Executive Committee  
Seoul, Republic of Korea, 9-16 May 2018**

**WEDNESDAY, 9 MAY**

**Prayer Service**

Participants gathered in Han Shin Church for dinner and a prayer service led by Yong-Kyu Kang, executive minister. Najla Kassab preached on Jesus' message of peace, calling on the WCRC and all Christians to be brave in advocating for peace and justice. Chris Ferguson reported on the hopeful and uplifting joint visit of the WCRC and World Council of Churches (WCC) to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea) in the days immediately preceding the meeting of the Executive Committee.

**THURSDAY, 10 MAY**

**Opening Worship**

The Executive Committee convened in the Presbyterian Church of Korea Centennial Building at 17:00 pm for opening worship.

The Executive Committee was welcomed by Samuel Ayete-Nyampong, who led worship. Najla Kassab, Chris Ferguson and Hanns Lessing all participated in worship. Greetings were brought from Chang-bae Byun, general secretary of the Presbyterian Church in Korea (PCK) and from Park Sungkook, ecumenical officer of the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea (PROK), on behalf of the general secretary and moderator of PROK.

Najla Kassab preached on the theme, "From Life, For Life: Transforming, Reconciling and Renewing." She spoke of the need for the Communion to lift up its voice on the subject of reconciliation, reminding delegates and visitors that reconciliation does not happen without pain but urging people to see others "beyond the flesh" as Paul urged in his Second Epistle to the Corinthians. She conveyed the prayers and good wishes of the WCRC to Korean churches at this time of significant hope for the peace process in the Korean peninsula.

After opening worship, participants moved to dinner at the BayTree Restaurant, hosted by the PCK.

**FRIDAY, 11 MAY**

## **Morning Worship**

The Executive Committee began the day in worship. Clayton Da Silva Leal led worship, giving a meditation on Colossians 3:23.

## **Plenary Session: Seating and Formation**

The President welcomed members to the first full meeting of this Executive Committee, expressing the joy of the WCRC that it was able to be in the Korean peninsula at this time of hope. She reminded members that communion was about people and relationships and that members of the Committee were there to encounter each other and to grow together.

The General Secretary informed the Executive Committee that apologies had been received from Executive Committee members: Lydia Aku Adajawah, president of the African Communion of Reformed Churches (Ghana), J. Herbert Nelson (Presbyterian Church (USA)) and vice-president Sylvana Maria Apituley (Gereja Protestant Indonesia Bagian Barat). Robina Winbush (Presbyterian Church (USA)) was in attendance as a proxy for Nelson. Karen Georgia Thomson (United Church of Christ (USA)) was in attendance as a proxy for Lisa Vander Wal in her role as convener of the Steering Committee of CANAAC. The General Secretary noted also that Susan Thomas (Church of South India) was expected to arrive that afternoon. He declared the meeting to be quorate.

The General Secretary introduced and welcomed guests and ecumenical delegates. He also welcomed Pauline Weibye, Church of Scotland, as Minute Secretary, Ryan Smith, WCRC UN Representative, and Tara Tautari, Methodist Church of Aotearoa New Zealand, as consultants and advisers. The WCRC staff stood to be recognized.

The General Secretary made a presentation, explaining the history of the WCRC and its mission and purpose. He reminded the Executive Committee of its duty to act in the name of the WCRC and noted that all Executive Committee decisions would require to be accounted for at the next General Council.

Tara Tautari presented the proposed Rules of Procedure and explained the mechanics of the discernment and consensus model of decision-making.

## **ACTION 1**

**The Executive Committee approved the Rules of Procedure for use in the Executive Committee.**

The General Secretary then presented the proposed agenda for the Executive Committee meeting, reminding members that it could be changed in the course of

the meeting if circumstances required it. He asked participants to consider, in the course of the meeting, if future meetings could be shorter.

**ACTION 2**

**The Executive Committee approved the agenda for the meeting.**

**ACTION 3**

**The Executive Committee appointed Martina Wasserloos-Strunk, WCRC Europe; Hong Jung Lee, Presbyterian Church in Korea; Milciades Pua, Presbyterian Church of Colombia, and Hilary Hagar, Presbyterian Church of Canada, to serve as the Message Committee.**

**ACTION 4**

**The Executive Committee appointed Clayton Da Silva Leal, Independent Presbyterian Church in Brazil; Hefin Jones, Union of Welsh Independents; Annabell Lalla-Ramkelawan, Church in Trinidad and Tobago; Tibonge Ng'ambi, United Church in Zambia, and Susan Thomas, Church of South India, to serve as the Drafting Team.**

**ACTION 5**

**Appointed the following as members and officials of Discernment Groups:**

***Discernment Group 1***

**Samuel Ayete-Nyampong (moderator), Hefin Jones (scribe), Clayton Da Silva Leal, Diana Erdélyi, Hillary Hagar, Hong Jung Lee, Michael Blair, Peniel Rajkumar**

***Discernment Group 2***

**Lisa VanderWal (moderator), Annabell Lalla-Ramkelawan (scribe), Agnaldo P. Gomes, Martina Wasserloos-Strunk, Joshua Lian, Coutinho Maravillhoso Moma, Refat Fathy**

***Discernment Group 3***

**Raissa Vieira Brasil (moderator), Tibonge Ng'ambi (scribe), Hannah North, Claudio Pasquet, Khid-arn Prawate, Robina Winbush, Avelino Gonzalez-Ferrer**

***Discernment Group 4***

**Johann Weusmann (moderator), Susan Thomas (scribe), Veronica Muchiri, Milciades Pua, Mary Ekinde Salle, Karen Georgia Thompson, Paul Tche**

**Listening Session: Address of the President** (see page 49)

Vice-President Raissa Vieira Brasil took the chair and invited the President to address the Executive Committee.

The President presented her address.

Raissa Vieira Brasil invited clarifying questions. Questions covered: communication with member churches, use of consensus techniques in member churches to ensure better involvement of the marginalized, WCRC's accompaniment of the Reformed Church of East Africa as it reached its decision to ordain women, the need not just to ordain women but to empower them to take up positions of influence in their churches, support of regional networks and support of the policy to hold Executive Committee meetings in the different regions.

The address of the President was referred to Discernment Groups. Raissa Vieira Brasil thanked the President for her informative and encouraging report, and led the Committee in prayer.

#### **ACTION 6**

**The Executive Committee received the Address of the President and referred it to Discernment Groups.**

Kyoung Gyuan Han, ecumenical officer (PCK), explained arrangements for the visit of the Executive Committee to the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) on Saturday, 12 May.

The Executive Committee broke for lunch.

#### **Listening Session: Report of the General Secretary** (see page 56)

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

The General Secretary apologized for having been unable, through pressure of work, to circulate his report in advance. He presented the report.

The President invited clarifying questions.

Questions were asked about: involvement of the Regions in strategy planning work, the existence of a business plan to support the proposed strategy and the need to pay tribute to outgoing officers and Executive Committee members.

#### **ACTION 7**

**The Executive Committee received the Report of the General Secretary and referred it to Discernment Groups.**

Hanns Lessing described the practical arrangements for Discernment Group meetings and for that evening's dinner.



The Executive Committee then broke into Discernment Groups for the rest of the day.

The Executive Committee was generously entertained to dinner by the National Korean Presbyterian Women and was welcomed by Elder Soonmie Kim, moderator, and other senior officials. Najla Kassab responded on behalf of the WCRC, and gifts were exchanged.

### **SATURDAY, 12 MAY**

The Executive Committee travelled to the Paju Dora Observatory in the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) and viewed a presentation by a representative of the Republic of Korea Army. The Executive Committee was welcomed to the army chapel in the DMZ where they met military chaplains and took part in a service of prayer for peace and reconciliation in the Korean peninsula. Gifts were exchanged.

#### **Listening Session: Reports of the Regions**

Vice-President Samuel Ayete-Nyampong took the chair, and the Executive Committee turned to consideration of the reports from the Regional Councils.

##### *Africa Communion of Reformed Churches*

Veronica Muchiri presented the report of the Africa Communion of Reformed Churches (ACRC).

The Vice-President called for questions.

#### **Action 8**

**The Executive Committee received the report of the Africa Communion of Reformed Churches.**

##### *Northeast Asia Area Council*

Joshua Lian presented the report of the Northeast Asia Area Council (NEAAC).

The Vice-President called for questions.

#### **Action 9**

**The Executive Committee received the report of the Northeast Asia Area Council.**

##### *Asociación de Iglesias Presbiterianos y Reformadas en América Latina*

Agnaldo Gomes presented the report of the *Asociación de Iglesias Presbiterianas y Reformadas en América Latin* (AIPRAL).

The Vice-President called for questions. A question was raised about the reason for the withdrawal of the *Iglesia Nacional Presbiteriana de México* from AIPRAL. Agnaldo explained that the church felt discriminated against because it did not ordain women. The General Secretary explained that he was shortly due to meet representatives of that church and he hoped that the matter could be amicably resolved.

**Action 10**

**The Executive Committee received the report of the *Asociación de Iglesias Presbiterianas y Reformadas en América Latin*.**

*Caribbean and North American Area Council*

Karen Georgia Thompson presented the report of the Caribbean and North American Area Council (CANAAAC).

The Vice-President called for questions.

**Action 11**

**The Executive Committee received the report of the Caribbean and North American Area Council.**

*Council of WCRC Europe*

Martina Wasserloos-Strunk presented the report of the Council of WCRC Europe.

The Vice-President called for questions.

**Action 12**

**The Executive Committee received the report of the Council of WCRC Europe.**

In response to a concern that some areas within WCRC were not currently represented by a regional council, the Committee noted that the proposed strategic plan, to be considered later in the meeting, contained provision for this matter to be addressed. The Vice-President also explained that reports from regional councils were merely received by the Executive Committee and did not need to be approved. Any item from regional councils which did require Executive approval should be submitted separately as a deliverance.

**Report of the Drafting Team** (Report 1, see page 187)

The Executive Committee moved to consideration of a report from the Drafting Team on discernment group discussions on the reports of the President and General Secretary. The Vice-President ruled that no decisions were needed on the recommendations contained in the report but that he would seek the mood of the Committee, using the consensus method, in order to ensure that the points raised were further considered during the strategic plan discussions.

Hefin Jones presented the report. He highlighted six areas of concern which had featured in all of the discernment group discussions and commended them to the Executive Committee for future consideration. The six areas were:

1. regional activities
2. communication
3. economic justice and reconciliation
4. gender justice
5. human sexuality
6. sustainability

All six areas were agreed by consensus as deserving of further consideration. The General Secretary noted and welcomed the concern expressed by discernment groups for the workload and wellbeing of staff but reminded the Committee that staff matters were the responsibility of the General Secretary and not of the Executive Committee.

### **Listening Session: Proposed Strategic Plan**

Vice-President Lisa Vander Wal took the chair and the Executive Committee moved to consideration of the proposed Strategic Plan. The Vice-President led the Committee in prayer.

Rathnakara Sadananda, Strategic Planning Committee moderator, presented the plan, explaining that this session would consider only the first section, pages 1-22, with the second section to be considered at a later session of the Executive Committee.

Dr. Sadananda reminded the Committee that the 2017 General Council had agreed 72 actions and that it remained a considerable challenge to devise a plan that would enable all to be delivered. He explained that the proposed strategic plan was not a work plan but was instead designed to bring focus to the many tasks of the WCRC and to assist with resource allocation: it was based on *kairos* and context.

The structure of the document was explained. The WCRC is called to communion and committed to justice, and the proposed plan therefore places mission and justice at the centre of the Communion's life. There is a revised vision statement and an overarching goal (page 4) leading to two strategic trajectories:

1. Strengthening and deepening the *koinonia*
2. Growing and expanding the work of the WCRC for a greater global impact

Delivery of the trajectories would be achieved through five interlocking dimensions:

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

Each dimension had its own overarching objective and a number of further objectives; Dr. Sadananda gave examples of particular significance as he explained the proposed plan to the Committee.

He suggested three questions for consideration by discernment groups:

1. How does the Vision Statement capture the spirit of the General Council's decisions?
2. In what ways do the overarching objectives speak to members' own contexts?
3. Will the overarching objectives be effective in achieving the WCRC's goals?

The Vice-President invited clarifying questions.

A member asked if there could be a fourth question: "Is there anything missing from the proposed plan?" The General Secretary suggested that amending the wording of the first question to read "How well does the Vision Statement capture the spirit of the General Council's decisions?" would cover that point.

A question was raised about the inclusion at several points of the words "fallen among thieves" (John 10:10). Vice-President Vander Wal explained that this passage had been used in the General Council Bible study and it had been thought important to continue that theme.

A question was asked about the use of the phrase "discerning the signs of the times" (page 11). The questioner asked if this had an eschatological connotation. Vice-President Vander Wal pointed out that the phrase was included in the Accra Confession and had been included for that reason.

The General Secretary observed that Dr. Sadananda had mentioned "child-friendly churches" when referring to projects of the World Council of Churches and

suggested that this should be formally added to the appropriate paragraph on page 20.

A member asked if the work on the world's refugee and migrant crises should include examination of the source of such problems. The General Secretary confirmed that such was the intent of that section (page 19).

An observer asked if the impact on associated organizations had been taken into account. The General Secretary expressed the hope that the presence of observers from associated members at the Executive Committee meeting would ensure that impacts were considered.

An observer asked if the use of the phrase "differently-abled people" (page 6) was appropriate. It was explained that both that phrase and the phrase "people with disabilities" were used, in order to accommodate varying linguistic preferences.

A member noted the five areas of conflict which were to be the particular focus of the WCRC's peace and reconciliation work (page 12) and asked if it would be sensible to leave scope for other areas to be added as new conflict situations emerge. This is to be further considered.

A question was raised on the meaning of the word "empire" (page 11). It was confirmed that the word was taken from the Accra Confession and is defined in that document.

The Executive Committee adjourned and was generously entertained to dinner by Rev. Kang Kyoung-Shin at a local restaurant, Keum-Maru, and was welcomed by Rev. Park Sungkook, PROK ecumenical officer, on behalf of Rev. Gyeong Shik Gang.

After dinner, the Executive Committee broke into Discernment Groups for an evening session.

### **SUNDAY, 13 MAY**

The Executive Committee was distributed among twelve churches within Seoul for morning worship and fellowship. The congregations visited were:

Namdae Moon Church (PCK)  
Young Aham Church (PCK)  
An Dong Church (PCK)  
Jang Seok Church (PCK)  
Bethel Church (PCK)  
Nasom Church (PCK)

Galilee Church (PCK)  
Beauty & Cross Church (PCK)  
Outside Church (PROK)  
Neung Dong Church (PROK)  
Seongbok Church (PROK)  
Seoul Seongnam Church (PROK)

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

The Executive Committee adjourned for the afternoon, enjoying free time in Seoul.

The Executive Committee was entertained to dinner at Sumoon Church and was welcomed by its pastor, Rev. Dalik Son. President Kassab spoke words of thanks and blessing. Before eating, the Committee was led in prayer by the General Secretary for those affected by that day's suicide bombings in the town of Surabaya, Indonesia. The Committee noted with sorrow that one of the targeted churches, Diponegoro Indonesian Christian Church, was a member of the WCRC.

## **MONDAY, 14 MAY**

### **Morning Worship**

The Executive Committee began the day in worship. Vice-President Raissa Vieira Brasil led worship, giving a meditation on Acts 2:1-8.

### **Morning Plenary**

The President introduced the first business session of the day. She started by thanking the churches in Seoul for the warm welcome extended to Executive Committee members at Sunday worship. She referred to the tragic loss of life at churches in Indonesia affected by suicide bombings and in an apparent terror attack in France. Robina Winbush led the Committee in prayer.

Changes to the day's agenda were announced.

### **Decision Session: Proposed Strategic Plan**

Vice-President Lisa Vander Wal assumed the chair, moved the meeting into a Decision Session and thanked the members of the Drafting Team for their work in preparing the report arising from Discernment Groups.

### **Report of the Drafting Team (Report 2, see page 189)**

Hefin Jones, presenting the Drafting Team's report, explained the process by which the team had considered comments from Discernment Groups and had identified the points to be brought to the Executive Committee for decision. He noted that other points had been made and would be reintroduced for further consideration as appropriate. He expressed the thanks of the Drafting Team to Hanns Lessing for his support.

Question 1: How well does the Vision Statement capture the spirit of the 2017 General Council?

Discernment Groups had agreed that the Vision Statement did capture the spirit of the General Council but wished to suggest some modifications to the text to simplify its language and structure. The main change was to suggest the use of the words “all humanity” rather than “we with our descendants”.

The Committee approved the amended text of the Vision Statement by consensus.

### **ACTION 13**

**The Executive Committee approved the following Vision Statement to be contained within the Strategic Plan:**

**The World Communion of Reformed Churches is called to communion and is committed to justice.**

**Through robust engagement with the Word of God and the call of the Holy Spirit, the World Communion of Reformed Churches is always being transformed as it strives for the full and just participation of all. In our diversity, we seek to be a living expression of “unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:3).**

**We work to renew and restore the economy and the earth, so that all humanity and the whole of creation might live life in its fullness (Deuteronomy 30:19; John 10:10).**

Question 2: In what ways does the Overarching Goal speak to your own context?

There was overall agreement that the Overarching Goal was speaking to context but, taking account of the comments from Discernment Groups, the Drafting Team offered modified wording which incorporated a re-ordering of the elements in order to aid understanding. The main substantive changes were the addition of interreligious cooperation to ecumenical engagement as one of the five interlocking dimensions; and the removal of the reference to “fallen among thieves” because of concerns that it was incompletely contextualized.

The Executive Committee debated the proposed modifications. It was suggested that “interreligious dialogue” should be used instead of “interreligious cooperation”. Hanns Lessing explained that the Communion had not expressed a view on such dialogue and that the phrase should therefore not be used; interreligious cooperation was, however, an acceptable term.

It was suggested that the phrase “reforming together” did not fully take into account our Reformed understanding that the churches stood in need for being reformed by God.

**ACTION 14**

**The Executive Committee agreed by consensus to amend the phrase “reforming together” in the modified Overarching Goal to “being reformed together”.**

The Committee discussed adding the word “peace” to “justice” in the second of the interlocking dimensions. It was agreed by consensus that an appropriate footnote should be added to explain the context for this use of the word “justice”.

**ACTION 15**

**The Executive Committee agreed to add a footnote to the first use of the term “justice” to explain its context of Psalm 85:10.**

The Committee discussed the suggestion that the words “fallen among thieves” should be removed with some expressing a strong view that they remained entirely appropriate. Dr. Sadananda reminded the Committee that the document was designed to be a prophetic call to action and suggested that the language in this section was indeed appropriate. After debate, it was agreed by consensus that the wording should be amended.

**ACTION 16**

**The Executive Committee agreed to add to the end of the second paragraph of the modified Overarching Goal the words “so loved by God but still trapped by multiple injustices and death, having fallen among thieves (John 10:10).”**

With the above amendments, the Executive Committee agreed by consensus to accept the modified text for the Overarching Goal as presented in the Report of the Drafting Team.

**ACTION 17**

**The Executive Committee agreed to accept the Drafting Team’s modified text for the Overarching Goal, as further amended by Actions 14, 15 and 16.**

The President ruled that the Executive Committee would now move into a Listening Session in order to ensure that Dr. Sadananda’s voice could be heard before his departure from the meeting. The Committee would return to the Decision Session in due course in order to complete its consideration of the Drafting Team’s report.

**Listening Session: Proposed Strategic Plan**



The President assumed the chair and invited Dr. Sadananda to introduce the second section of the Proposed Strategic Plan, pages 23-29.

He explained that in addition to the five interlocking dimensions, there were eight organizational issues that required to be addressed. He reminded the Executive Committee that effective implementation of these issues, and the associated objectives, would require their active engagement. He summarized each issue for the benefit of the Committee, drawing attention in particular to sustainability and capacity issues and to the concluding paragraph on page 29 on implementation and monitoring. He paid tribute to all those involved in the preparation of the document and called for it now to be implemented for the glory of God and the benefit of God's people.

The President invited questions for clarification.

A member asked if there was in existence a specific and detailed plan for the financial sustainability of the WCRC and if it was intended that the core budget would be increased over the planning period. Dr. Sadananda commented that the planned expansion of the membership would assist but that member churches had to take ownership of the financial problem. The General Secretary pointed to the objective to increase the contributions and special donations from member churches, encouraged by the development of region-led programmes. It was agreed that good communication was vital in building support for the work of the WCRC.

A member expressed serious concern at the apparent delaying to 2024 of the need to ensure gender balance in the executive staff of WCRC, and at the unjust proposal to address it meanwhile by asking women to work as volunteers rather than as paid staff. The General Secretary explained that 2024 was simply a final deadline and not the target date for implementation; it was fully intended that there would be gender balance as soon as could be contrived. He further added that the proposal to engage female volunteer advisers was an interim measure to ensure that the voices of women would meantime be heard.

It was suggested that there should be provision in the plan for a mid-term evaluation of progress towards the objectives and also that an organisation structure chart should be included.

Clarification was sought and given on budgeting issues for regional councils. It was noted that interns in the Hannover office receive a stipend but not a salary.

Concern was expressed at the additional burden of work arising from the proposed formation of Reference Groups.

In relation to financial contributions, the Committee was reminded that member churches often belonged and contributed to a number of representative bodies. Efficiencies and financial savings were to be commended.

A member pointed out the absence of any reference in the document to work with children and young people and asked that this be addressed.

Discernment Groups were asked to consider two questions:

1. In what ways will the organizational objectives be effective?
2. Is the document missing anything or are there any other questions which should be considered?

The President brought the Listening Session to a close and expressed the thanks of the Committee to Dr. Sadananda for his commitment to the work of preparing the Strategic Plan.

### **Ecumenical Greetings**

The Executive Committee received ecumenical greetings from Fr. Avelino González-Ferrer, representing the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity.

President Kassab thanked Fr. Avelino for his words of greeting and for the commitment of the Roman Catholic Church to journeying together.

### **Committee Membership**

The General Secretary presented the officers' recommendation that there should be three committees of the Executive Committee: Finance, Constitution and Membership; and Reformed Partnership Fund. The suggested membership was as follows:

#### *Finance Committee*

Johann Weusmann (moderator), Sylvana Apituley, Annabel Lalla-Ramkelawan, Hong Jung Lee, J. Herbert Nelson, Khid-Arn Prawate, Mary Salle

#### *Constitution and Membership Committee*

Veronica Muchiri (moderator), Clayton Da Silva Leal, Hilary Hagar, Hefin Jones, Tibonge Ng'ambi, Susan Thomas, Lisa Vander Wal

#### *Reformed Partnership Fund Committee*

Diana Erdélyi (moderator), Samuel Ayete-Nyampong, Raissa Vieira Brasil, Hannah North, Coutinho Moma, Claudio Pasquet, Milciades Pua

The General Secretary asked the committees to spend time discussing how they intended to work. He also asked them to consider if the membership was appropriately balanced. Executive Committee members who had not been allocated to a committee were asked to contact the General Secretary so that this could be addressed.

The President invited Tara Tautari to share her insights into the meeting so far. Tara pointed out that the Executive Committee was being upheld in prayer by sisters and brothers throughout the world and reminded members of the need to uphold each other in prayer and love as the business of the Committee progressed.

Joshua Lian closed the session in prayer and the Executive Committee adjourned for lunch, generously hosted by the National Council of Churches of Korea.

After lunch, the Executive Committee broke into Committee Meetings followed by Discernment Group meetings.

## **TUESDAY, 15 MAY**

### **Morning Worship**

The Executive Committee began the day in worship. Claudio Pasquet led worship, giving a meditation on 2 Corinthians 3:17-18.

### **Morning Plenary: General Council Review and Reflection**

The President opened the first business session of the day. She confirmed that the timetable for the day was as printed with the addition of greetings from ecumenical groups to be heard in the afternoon.

Hanns Lessing led a session in which the Executive Committee was invited to reflect on the General Council held in Leipzig in 2017 in order to identify learning points for future General Council meetings.

Several questions were posed.

Question 1: What suggestions do you have to attract more member churches to attend the General Council?

1. Earlier and better communication, including follow-up personal telephone calls after the issue of the initial invitation, a clear explanation of the financial support which is available and a description of the purposes of the WCRC.
2. Offer of help from the WCRC on visa issues.
3. Affordable and accessible venues.

4. Encourage a sense of belonging through the regional structure, including the presence of WCRC senior staff/officers at Regional Council meetings and offering General Council preparation at regional level.
5. Keep in touch with individual delegates after General Council.
6. Consider shortening the programme.
7. Early issue of preparation materials, including a prayer resource and, possibly, webinars.

Question 2: In the General Council evaluation, several respondents felt that the time for sharing in groups was too short. The same people, however, criticized the General Council for being too long. What suggestions do you have to deal with this dilemma?

1. Cut the number/length of civic and other non-business events.
2. Cut the length of listening sessions.
3. Manage the agenda efficiently, ensuring speakers and sessions run to time.
4. Ensure agenda only has items that require General Council approval.
5. Reduce the number of speakers and/or ensure that speakers do not simply read speeches and papers that have already been circulated.
6. Reduce the size of discernment groups to 10-15 people, have fewer topics for discernment and do not send them too much material.
7. Keep delegates together in the same accommodation.
8. Special events such as the Reformation 500 anniversary made the 2017 General Council long but this need not always be the case.
9. Always necessary to keep the two in balance.

Question 3: The General Council in Leipzig produced a vision for the work of the WCRC in the next seven years. What suggestions do you have for inputs that will help to build a vision at future General Councils?

1. Include an evaluation of the strategic plan.
2. Consult people on their needs and wishes, for example Indigenous peoples.
3. The WCRC should be connected, seeking spiritual discernment towards efforts with global organizations such as the United Nations on sustainable development goals and with faith-based organizations.
4. Include Regional Councils in the planning of the vision. Executive Committee should not present a draft vision.
5. Prepare people for discernment and consensus processes before General Council, perhaps through Regional Groups.

Question 4: At the General Council in Leipzig it was possible to pay travel and accommodation subsidies to the delegations of all member churches from the Global South. In times of shrinking finances, what suggestions do you have to deal with the issue of subsidies at future General Councils?

1. Reconsider the number of delegates. Should it be fewer?

2. The question is offensive—this is a communion issue.
3. The WCRC should help member churches “save” for the cost. A “savings account” could be set up by the WCRC and annual contributions could be made by members.
4. Consider the location carefully and leverage the WCRC’s purchasing power.
5. Plan costs well in advance so that churches can prepare early, perhaps with local partners. Perhaps the WCRC could pay 50% of costs and the local churches could meet the remaining 50%.
6. Ask member churches to pay all the costs of their “head of delegation” so that more of any subsidy is available for young people and women.

Question 5: What suggestions do you have to improve the discernment and consensus process at future General Councils?

1. Arrange advance training, including webinars and videos.
2. Allow enough time for these sessions.
3. Use the experience of those churches which use consensus to assist in training/leading sessions.
4. Avoid the impression that consensus is a “contrived process” with the desired outcome being decided in advance.
5. Use a smaller room.
6. Use good leaders for these sessions.
7. Allow for cultural and language issues.

Question 6: What suggestions do you have to improve the communications in future General Council meetings?

1. A good database is essential.
2. Allow more time for informal communications during General Council.
3. More communication from and to member churches.
4. Papers should all be ready well in advance and not issued at the last minute.
5. Try to have more engaging visual aids—do not let presenters just read a speech.
6. Use a well-lit venue.
7. Use Regional Councils as a channel for communications if there are difficulties.
8. Send invitations to all prior attendees and not simply to church leaders.

Question 7: Are there other points that the planning of future councils should consider?

1. A General Council is not just a business meeting but an event for inspiration—that takes longer.
2. Work with the non-attending churches now to find out why they did not attend (already in hand).

3. Regular interaction with local churches so that, even with leadership changes, there is effective communication.
4. Delegates were over-extended—we should promote self-care.
5. Ensure transparency between the business committee and the floor, for example do not pull a paper at the last minute with no explanation.
6. Do not “problematize” the Global South in finance matters.
7. Consider an international “WCRC Sunday” before the General Council, with suitable prayer and worship resources to support it.
8. Try to find a way for Regional Councils to share information and activities between General Councils.

Hanns Lessing thanked Executive Committee members for their feedback, which would be invaluable in starting preparations for the 2024 General Council. The President thanked him for his leadership of the feedback session.

### **Decision Session: Proposed Strategic Plan**

Vice-President Lisa Vander Wal assumed the chair and opened the session in prayer.

Hefin Jones presented the third report of the Drafting Team (Report 3, see page 192) and thanked his colleagues on the team for their commitment and hard work; he also acknowledged with gratitude the contribution of Hanns Lessing, who acted as adviser to the team.

Dr. Jones turned first to the third question on section 1 of the Proposed Strategic Plan, carried forward from Decision Session 1 because of lack of time. For convenience, the Drafting Team had repeated the points in question at the end of the third report and asked Executive Committee members now to turn to those paragraphs.

Dr. Jones explained that the Drafting Team was suggesting the use of the phrase “youth/young adults” in the text of the strategic plan rather than simply “youth”; this was to ensure that all members of the WCRC correctly interpret the reference to include people aged 30 or under, as in the constitution. It was suggested that a footnote should be added to explain that constitutional point. A suggestion was made that the phrase should be “youth/young people” but this was not approved. It was agreed by consensus that the strategic Pplan should be so amended.

### **ACTION 18**

**The Executive Committee agreed to amend the Strategic Plan by using the phrase “youth/young adults” in place of “youth”.**

Dr. Jones presented a suggested additional sentence to the Objective on page 6 entitled Differently Abled People. Before considering the text of that proposed new

sentence, the Committee considered whether the Plan should use the term “people with disabilities” rather than “differently abled people”. The General Secretary confirmed that he had sought the advice of the Ecumenical Disability Advocates Network (EDAN). EDAN had confirmed that both terms were used and that people should be able to choose which suited them best; both terms were therefore used in the strategic plan. The Committee agreed by consensus to retain the heading “Differently Abled People” on page 6.

#### **ACTION 19**

**The Executive Committee agreed to retain the heading “Differently Abled People” on page 6 of the Strategic Plan.**

The Committee moved to consider the new sentence as proposed: “The WCRC will encourage programmes to promote the protection of differently abled people in church and society.” Concern was expressed that it was demeaning to differently abled people to assume that all needed “protection”; a representative from a discernment group explained that the intention had been to ensure protection for vulnerable adults. It was suggested instead that the previous sentence should have a final clause which would read: “(...programmes and structures of the WCRC) including the protection of vulnerable adults in church and society”. This was agreed by consensus.

#### **ACTION 20**

**The Executive Committee agreed that the objective on page 6 of the Strategic Plan, under the heading Differently Abled People, should be amended to read: “The WCRC will intentionally address the call by the Ecumenical Disability Advocates Network (EDAN) and differently abled people in member churches for their full and just participation in programmes and structures of the WCRC, including the protection of vulnerable adults in church and society.”**

The Committee turned its attention to the main body of the third report of the Drafting Team, with reference to pages 23-29 of the proposed strategic plan. Discernment Groups had recognized an ambitious plan with an aspirational set of objectives and were concerned to ensure that the aspirations were grounded. The Drafting Team had considered two questions. There were some recommendations for amendment of the plan and other points were listed and commended to the Executive Committee and executive staff for consideration when appropriate.

Question 1: In what ways do you believe the Organizational Objectives will be effective in achieving the overarching goal?

Sustainability. Points for noting were listed in the report. The Drafting Team suggested an amendment to the objective headed Sustainability on page 23 by the addition of “as per criteria in WCRC Constitution Article 5G” in parenthesis. While

this suggestion met with approval, it sparked a debate about the wisdom of including a reference in that sentence to “United/Uniting Churches”. The General Secretary wanted to ensure that the expansion of the membership was for reasons of *koinonia* and not for financial reasons. The Committee agreed by consensus to remove the reference to United/Uniting churches but to add the text in parenthesis suggested by the Drafting Team.

#### **ACTION 21**

**The Executive Committee agreed that section 1 of the objective on page 23 of the Strategic Plan, under the heading Sustainability, should be amended to read: “1. Expanding WCRC membership (as per criteria in WCRC Constitution Article V.G.) by inviting churches into the Communion;”**

Capacity. All Discernment Groups had voiced strong concern that the text of this section could be read as demonstrating a lack of real commitment to gender balance. Groups had also expressed a desire for the objective to include a reference to the need for regional balance. The Drafting Team suggested adding the words “and regional” to the paragraph on page 24 beginning “In addition, as capacities are considered...”. It further suggested adding the words “and regional” to the first line of the text of the objective on page 25 under the heading Expand Capacities. These changes were agreed by consensus.

#### **ACTION 22**

**The Executive Committee agreed to add the words “and regional” to two sentences in the Strategic Plan as follows:**

- a. **page 24, third paragraph under heading Capacity to read: “In addition, as capacities are considered, it must be noted that the current staffing does not properly reflect the membership of the Communion, most notably in gender and regional balances on the executive level.”**
- b. **page 25, first sentence of objective under heading Expand Capacities to read: “By 2024, staff capacities will be expanded and gender and regional representation balanced.”**

The Drafting Team had also suggested amending the title of the objective on page 25 from Expand Capacities to Gender Balance within WCRC Staff. In the light of addition of reference to regional balance, the Committee agreed by consensus to change the heading of the objective to Gender and Regional Balance within WCRC Staff.

#### **ACTION 23**

**The Executive Committee agreed to change the heading of the objective Expand Capacities on page 25 to Gender and Regional Balance within WCRC Staff.**

Groups had expressed a strong wish that the proposed female advisers should not be expected to work as volunteers. The Drafting Team suggested changing the last



sentence of section 3 of the objective on page 25 headed (as previously agreed) Gender and Regional Balance within WCRC Staff, to “The advisers will be compensated for their time and have all expenses covered.” This was agreed by consensus.

#### **ACTION 24**

**The Executive Committee agreed to change the last sentence of section 3 of the objective on page 25 headed Gender and Regional Balance within WCRC Staff to “The advisers will be compensated for their time and have all expenses covered.”**

Participation. Discernment Groups felt that the regional dimension had been ignored in this section. The Drafting Team suggested the inclusion of the words “in global and regional” in the first section of the objective headed Participation on page 26. The General Secretary pointed out that the WCRC had no governance responsibility for regional groups but agreed that the aspiration was nonetheless appropriate. The change was agreed by consensus.

#### **ACTION 25**

**The Executive Committee agreed to amend section 1 of the objective headed Participation on page 26 to read: “By 2024, participation in global and regional governing bodies, reference groups, working groups, networks and in events will reflect the diversity of our family.”**

The Drafting Team had been informed that the word “inclusion” in section 2 of that objective should have been changed before publication to “participation”. It recommended that this editorial change should be formally agreed by the Committee. The Committee agreed by consensus.

#### **ACTION 26**

**The Executive Committee agreed to change the word “inclusion” in section 2 of the objective headed Participation on page 26 to “participation”.**

The points raised under the headings of Location, Alliances and Communications were noted but did not require changes to the strategic plan.

Governance. Discernment Groups had expressed a wish to highlight the need for better accountability. Two changes were suggested to the plan to achieve that end and both were agreed by consensus.

#### **ACTION 27**

**The Executive Committee agreed to delete the words “its 2018 meeting” at the end of section 1 of the objective on page 28 headed Governance and to substitute the words “all its meetings”.**

### **ACTION 28**

**The Executive Committee agreed to amend the final clause of section 3 of the objective on page 28 headed Governance to read: "... and present options, and take decisions, at the 2019 Executive Committee, including a planning timeline."**

The points raised under the heading Empowering Regions were noted but did not require changes to the strategic plan.

Question 2: Are we missing anything?

Discernment Groups had expressed the need for a clear implementation plan to be prepared, with timelines and an associated budget plan. There was also a suggestion that the Executive Committee should conduct a mid-term evaluation of progress towards implementation of the strategic plan. The General Secretary suggested that both these points could be added to the section headed Implementation and Monitoring on page 29. This was agreed.

### **ACTION 29**

**The Executive Committee agreed to add two paragraphs to the section headed Implementation and Monitoring on page 29, to read:**

**The General Secretary will prepare a Strategic Plan Implementation Plan, with budget, by no later than the date of the 2019 Executive Committee meeting.**

**The Executive Committee will conduct a mid-term evaluation of the Communion's progress towards implementation of the Strategic Plan.**

The Executive engaged in a debate about the meaning of the phrase "those who have been excluded from full participation in the community" used under the heading Full and Just Participation on page 5. It was noted that the WCRC had not yet reached consensus on the meaning of full participation and that there might be some unease among member churches about this commitment. The Committee agreed by consensus to amend the text.

### **ACTION 30**

**The Executive Committee agreed to amend the paragraph under the heading Full and Just Participation on page 5 to read: "We seek to live out a vision to become a just communion where those in power relinquish their authority and consciously embrace the bodies and the voices of those who have been excluded from full participation in the community. The WCRC has not yet reached consensus on the meaning of full participation."**

The Vice-President asked the Executive Committee if, with the changes agreed, it was willing to approve the strategic plan as a whole. The Committee agreed by consensus.

### **ACTION 31**

#### **The Executive Committee approved the WCRC Strategic Plan: 2018-2024 as amended by Actions 13-30.**

The Committee expressed its thanks to those who worked to prepare the strategic plan, to Discernment Groups and to the Drafting Team for their commitment to the process. The Committee noted again, with thanks, the contribution of Rathnakara Sadananda.

The President welcomed Chang-bae Byun, general secretary of the PCK. He led the Committee in prayer before they adjourned for lunch.

#### **Listening Session: Message from South Korea**

Vice-President Samuel Ayete-Nyampong assumed the chair.

Hilary Hagar presented the first draft of a message from the Executive Committee meeting in Seoul. The Vice-President invited questions for clarification and reminded members that the draft would be discussed fully by Discernment Groups. The President asked members to consider whether anything had been overlooked.

A suggestion was made that it would be appropriate to include a reference to unhelpful statements from some Christian churches in relation to the current violence against Palestinians in Gaza. Another member suggested that the message should not focus on current examples of violence in the world but instead concentrate on that week's work at the Executive Committee. A member sought clarification on the intended audience for the document; the General Secretary explained that it was aimed at both member churches and the general public and was intended to be a public witness of the work and concerns of the WCRC. The President asked what the Korean churches would like to see in the document; Hong Jung Lee expressed some concern at inaccuracies in the draft and offered to provide revised wording. It was agreed that all the points made should be considered further in discernment.

#### **Plenary Session: Ecumenical Greetings**

After coffee, the Executive reconvened in plenary.

Greetings were received from the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), brought by Paul Tche on behalf of the moderator. Rev. Tche expressed the gratitude of the Disciples of Christ for the close working relationship enjoyed with the WCRC.

Peniel Rajkumar brought the greetings of the World Council of Churches on behalf of its general secretary. He acknowledged the importance of the Executive Committee meeting and of the fruitful partnership between the WCC and the WCRC.

The General Secretary reported to the meeting that ecumenical greetings had been received from the World Student Christian Federation, the Lutheran World Federation and the Council for World Mission.

(For all ecumenical greetings presented in writing, please see page 176.)

### **Report of the Presbyterian Ministry at the United Nations**

Ryan Smith, director of the Presbyterian Ministry at the United Nations and WCRC UN representative, made a presentation on the work of his office and answered questions from members.

### **ACTION 32**

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

### **Cameroon**

Mary Ekinde Salle addressed the meeting to explain the current situation in Cameroon. She gave the history of the country since colonial times and explained the origins of the civil disturbances which are now dividing the country and leading to demands from the Anglophone areas for secession. The disturbances, although originally peaceful, were met with violence from government forces and more violence has ensued, leading to many deaths, displacement and a refugee crisis. Schools in the affected areas are closed, there is economic stagnation and hunger is rife. Church schools and buildings have been targeted and some have been destroyed. The Church in Cameroon has called for prayer and is actively raising funds for refugees. Ms. Salle reminded the Committee that in the midst of such distress there remains hope since God is with us.

The Executive Committee stood while Vice-President Ayete-Nyampong offered up prayer on behalf of Cameroon and other areas of conflict.

### **Reports**

The Committee noted receipt of a written report from WCRC Indonesia. The Committee was reminded that this was not a formally recognized regional council;

the report was received with thanks and was commended to members for further study.

### **ACTION 33**

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

The Committee received a written report from the Global Christian Forum and noted that some of the points made in the report were picked up in the new strategic plan. The report was received with thanks and was commended to members for further study.

### **ACTION 34**

**The Executive Committee noted the report from the Global Christian Forum.**

**Greetings from Presbyterian Church of Korea** (see page 180)

Chang-bae Byun, general secretary of the PCK, brought greetings to the Executive Committee. He gave a history of the denomination and described its current scope. Rev. Byun talked of the hopes of the people of Korea that the current peace initiatives would lead to a peace treaty, bringing an end to division and confrontation on the Korean peninsula. PCK has prayed for the persecutors and will to continue to love enemies and to call for repentance and forgiveness.

Hong Jung Lee added that Korean churches are conscious of a “Cold War consciousness” and of a conflict between capitalism and Korean spirituality. Some members have left as a consequence and also some women have left because of patriarchy in the church. The churches pray about these matters, and he invited the WCRC and individual member churches to join in these prayers.

The President asked how the churches were preparing for reconciliation in the Korean peninsula. Rev. Byun explained that there had been revolutions in Korean society over the last few decades, and that the churches were therefore well-used to change. They had real hope that the current situation offered an escape from conflict. He talked too of the need for reconciliation not only between north and south but between rich and poor, young and old and east and west.

Veronica Muchiri offered the thanks of the churches in Kenya for the support so generously offered by the churches of South Korea. She asked if women in ministry were still experiencing problems and how many were in positions of senior leadership in the church. Rev. Byun said in response that there were 2,500 female pastors out of 20,000 in PCK but that women were under-represented at both General Assembly and in senior staff positions. He acknowledged that women formed the majority of members of the church, some 70%, and explained that the PCK had introduced programmes to empower women leaders.

The President thanked Rev. Byun for his address and offered the prayers of WCRC for the ministry of the PCK.

### **ACTION 35**

**The Executive Committee received the greetings of the General Secretary of the Presbyterian Church of Korea.**

Hilary Hagar led the Executive Committee in prayer before it adjourned for dinner generously hosted by the General Secretary of the PCK, Chang-Bae Byun.

After dinner, Executive Committee members met in Regional Groups. The Message Committee also met.

## **WEDNESDAY, 16 MAY**

### **Morning Worship**

The Executive Committee began the day with prayer led by Hannah North and Michael Blair.

### **Decision Session: Finance**

The President assumed the chair and declared the meeting quorate.

Johann Weusmann, 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.

The General Treasurer took the Executive Committee through the financial statements. He pointed out that core costs are met from the membership contributions with all project costs having to be met through specific targeted fundraising, the majority coming from Council for World Mission (CWM), *Evangelisches Missionswerk* (EWM) and *Otto Per Mille* (OPM). He explained that WCRC Europe had taken advantage of the freedom to levy an extra 5% on its member churches' contributions and to use those funds for its own costs and programmes; he encouraged other regional councils to consider whether such a scheme would suit their needs. He also pointed out that, of membership contributions, 7.5% is placed in a reserve fund to help pay for the costs of General Council meetings.

Executive Committee members noted the level of membership contributions from each region and asked if, in future finance reports, figures could be provided by member church. It was agreed that this would be done for the next Executive

Committee meeting. The General Treasurer confirmed that WCRC was basically carried by the substantial contributions of just seven of its member churches and that this led to fragility; he noted that there had been a decrease in contributions from some European churches in recent years, particularly from the Dutch Reformed Church, which had experienced a significant membership decline, and the Swiss churches, since the WCRC's move from Geneva to Hannover.

**ACTION 36**

**The Executive Committee agreed that future finance reports would include details of the membership contributions of individual member churches.**

Turning to the financial statements, the General Treasurer told the Executive Committee that 2017 had ended with a surplus, mainly because of generous contributions from donors for the General Council. This had been accepted by the auditors. He warned that he did not expect a surplus in 2018 and also asked Executive Committee members to note that currency fluctuations made accurate forecasting more difficult. He invited questions.

A member asked what was done with any surplus funds. The General Treasurer answered that any surpluses were reinvested for growth, the current endowment fund sitting at some 2 million euro. He stressed that the current financial position was much stronger than at the time of the move from Switzerland to Germany.

The Committee sought clarification on the status of the John Knox International Reformed Center in Geneva. The General Treasurer explained that the WCRC, as the succeeding agency to WARC, were founding members of the Center's board and worked closely with the Center, but that it was not WCRC property. The two organizations were currently in discussion over the determinative role both WCRC and PC(USA) hold on the Center's assets on dissolution, under review because of Swiss tax arrangements. The WCRC would also have to decide, in due course, if it wished to play a more active role in the board of the Center.

The General Treasurer confirmed that the WCRC's investments were all held in ethical funds. However, the Finance Committee had asked for an investment policy to be drafted and this would be presented to the Executive Committee in due course for approval.

The Executive Committee moved to vote on several recommendations dealing with the General Treasurer's report on finance.

**ACTION 37**

**The Executive Committee approved the 2017 financial statement.**

**ACTION 38**

**The Executive Committee approved the Finance Committee’s intention to draft an investment policy.**

**ACTION 39**

**The Executive Committee accepted the auditor’s 2017 report, including the responses prepared by the Finance Office, and offered thanks to the Finance Office for its work.**

**ACTION 40**

**The Executive Committee agreed that the General Secretary and the General Treasurer be exonerated for the budget and economic management as well as the asset administration of the WCRC for the accounting year 2017.**

The Committee turned to consideration of the 2018 Budget Plan. The General Treasurer explained the diagrams which had been circulated and confirmed that the detailed breakdown of the figures could be circulated to Executive Committee members.

**ACTION 41**

**The Executive Committee approved the 2018 budget.**

The General Treasurer confirmed that the Finance Committee meets four times a year and would be responsible for overseeing the work of the officers in preparing a provisional budget for 2019 for approval by the Executive Committee.

**ACTION 42**

**The Executive Committee gave approval to the officers to devise a balanced budget for 2019 subject to final approval at the 2019 Executive Committee meeting.**

The Committee turned to consideration of the General Council financial statement and revised budget, details of which were included in the Finance Report. The General Treasurer stressed that the auditing of this statement was not yet complete and that the final figures might be different; provision has been made for any such changes.

**ACTION 43**

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

The President invited general questions on financial matters.

A member asked how the value of “in kind” contributions could be included in the accounts, pointing out that if this is not done, the full extent of member church commitments is not recognized. The General Treasurer explained that it was not possible to include the value of such donations in financial statements but that a



footnote could be added to the accompanying commentary. The General Secretary endorsed the need for some such solution, pointing to the theological imperative to recognize such commitment.

A member asked if the German government would be willing to offer financial support for the 2024 General Council even although it would not be held in Germany. The General Treasurer replied that, although he would try to secure such support, it was likely that the German government would expect the host country to contribute generously.

The President closed the session by thanking the General Treasurer, Gerhard Plenter and Anna Krüger not just for their hard work on financial matters but for the values of transparency, vision and spiritual guidance that they bring to that work.

### **Decision Session: Staffing**

The Executive Committee moved, after a coffee break, into a closed session to discuss a staffing matter. The General Secretary was in attendance as was the minute taker.

After discussion, the Executive Committee resolved in a vote to renew, for a further five-year term, the contract of employment of Philip Tanis with some slight changes to the job description and job title to reflect the current balance of his duties. The Executive Committee also resolved to consider at a future meeting how best to move intentionally towards regional and gender balance in the executive staff group.

#### **ACTION 44**

**The Executive Committee resolved to renew, for a further five-year term to 31 January 2024, the contract of employment of Philip Tanis as Executive Secretary for Communications and Operations.**

#### **ACTION 45**

**The Executive Committee resolved to consider at a future meeting the need for an intentional plan to address regional and gender balance in the executive staff group.**

Mr. Tanis was invited to rejoin the meeting and told of its decision. The President thanked him for his dedication to his duties and blessings and prayers were offered. Mr. Tanis thanked the Executive Committee and expressed his sense of privilege at the trust and confidence placed in him by WCRC.

**Decision Session: Creating Safer and Respectful Spaces** (see page 122)

The paper, *Creating Safer and Respectful Spaces*, was received. Philip Peacock explained that the need for such a policy had emerged from the growing awareness of the extent of sexual harassment in many walks of life. The document made it clear that the WCRC would not tolerate sexual harassment and set out procedures for dealing with any instances of such behaviour at WCRC events. The 2017 General Council had asked for a gender policy, and this current document would form part of that. It had been approved by the officers and was presented to the Executive Committee for information.

Comments and questions were invited.

One suggestion was that the word “victim” should not be used and that “survivor” should be used in its place.

A member asked for terms to be explained clearly, for example “serious consequences”.

It was suggested that the intent of the document would be better highlighted by a change of title to “sexual harassment policy”. The President said that this would be considered further.

A member pointed out that sexual harassment is frequently unreported and asked how the WCRC would deal with this.

A member raised a concern that the document had not been circulated in advance and that the Executive Committee was unable to have any real input. The President acknowledged that this would have been desirable.

#### **ACTION 46**

**The Executive Committee noted the policy document *Creating Safer and Respectful Spaces*.**

#### **Decision Session: Message from South Korea** (see page 229)

Vice-President Samuel Ayete-Nyampong assumed the chair. Hilary Hagar presented the second draft of the Message from South Korea, explaining that it had been decided that the document should be a prophetic statement of vision. The length had been cut to allow for that new focus. The General Secretary confirmed that a short pithy statement would normally be preferred for such a message, to increase the chances of its being read and reported. Comments and questions were invited.

It was noted that there was less about Israel-Palestine in this version than in the first, and it was suggested that there should be a separate statement from the WCRC about the current situation in those lands. The General Secretary confirmed that

such a statement was being prepared for issue. A member pointed out that there had been no loss of life in Israel, as implied in the draft message. An observer commented that there had been injustice in Gaza on the part of the United States and Israel and that he could not agree to a message which made no acknowledgement of that.

An observer asked that it be made clear that the recent deaths in Indonesia had been as a result of suicide bombs.

It was suggested that the dates of the meeting should be included. This was agreed. Some textual inaccuracies were pointed out.

A suggestion was made that the document should open with an explanation of the WCRC. Phil Tanis explained that this would be unhelpful in a document designed for issue to the media. It was necessary to attract media attention with the substance of the message and not with background information.

A member made a strong plea that the Executive Committee add into the last paragraph a commitment to action and not just to prayer.

A member asked that the situation in Brazil be mentioned in the document.

Hong Jung Lee asked that, in future, guidance and instructions for the message be given out well in advance. He expressed concern that he had spent some considerable time preparing material about Korea for inclusion in the message and that this had then not been used. The President apologized to Dr. Lee and also to the Message Committee for the confusion. Dr. Lee graciously accepted the apology and it was agreed that a paper on the Korean situation, prepared by Dr. Lee, would be received by the Committee.

#### **ACTION 47**

**The Executive Committee received a paper entitled “No Other Way than Peace” prepared by Dr. Hong Jung Lee. (See page 132.)**

#### **ACTION 48**

**The Executive Committee approved the text of the Message from South Korea.**

The meeting was joined by Ki Hak Choi, moderator of the PCK. He extended a welcome to the Executive Committee and invited members to continue to pray for peace in the Korean peninsula.

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 Joshua Lian. The President took the chair.

**ACTION 49**

**The Executive Committee of the WCRC Michigan Foundation approved the minutes of the 2017 meeting of the Executive Committee of the Michigan Foundation of WCRC, held in Leipzig, Germany, 29 June -7 July 2017.**

**ACTION 50**

**The Executive Committee agreed that all the actions of the Executive Committee during its meeting in Seoul, South Korea, 10-16 May 2018, be fully concurred with and entered into the permanent record of the WCRC Michigan Foundation as constituting the decisions of 2018.**

The meeting of the Executive Committee of the Michigan Foundation was closed with prayer by the General Secretary.

**Closing Worship**

The Executive Committee and all participants in the meeting sat together around the Lord's Table for a celebration of Holy Communion led by Lisa Vander Wal. The General Secretary preached.

The session was closed by the President pronouncing the benediction.

Participants were generously entertained to a closing lunch at a local restaurant, Keum-Maru, by PCK Moderator Ki Hak Choi.

## **RULES OF PROCEDURE FOR THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE** **Guidelines for Discernment Procedures**

### **Background**

The 2017 General Council successfully utilized a discernment/consensus model of decision-making, allowing more voices to be heard throughout the entirety of the process and coming together on decisions through consensus. Voices from the participants emphasize the strengths of this process:

“Discernment truly is more about listening than speaking. It is important to listen to what others are saying. It is important to listen to what God is saying. And it’s important to consider your own thoughts with regard to the issue and in light of what you have heard.”

“Church decision-making should look like church, not politics. And the process should make community, not fracture it.”

“Consensus-building does not solve every issue. But the important thing is that we all journey in the same direction. And that we journey together.”

## **I. DISCERNMENT AND THE CONDUCT OF BUSINESS**

### **1. Theological Basis**

At the heart of discernment procedures is a commitment to worship, work, listen and pray together as a community of faith, seeking to discern God’s will for the way forward on issues under consideration.

As the Body of Christ, the church is always searching for the mind of Christ, seeking to “understand what the will of the Lord is” (Ephesians 5:17). Our common commitment to seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit in our deliberations is confirmed by the experience of the fruit of the Spirit amongst us as we work: “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control” (Galatians 5:22).

The World Communion of Reformed Churches is intentionally a communion built around a common table for both worship and decision making. The table symbolizes the centrality of Christ and our mutual dependence on the Holy Spirit for our life together. We sit equally before God as sisters and brothers.

The WCRC is a communion that is committed to justice. It is therefore imperative that in its shared life together it operates in a way that fosters communion among its

members and which allows them to live justly in relation to one another. All conversations should be edifying and all efforts build *koinonia*.

Our developing *koinonia*, our intentional spiritual fellowship, is dedicated to the prophetic calling to bring God's justice like a mighty river and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream to a world thirsty for hope and the grace of the Gospel.

**Discernment** means a prayerful process that builds community and by which a common mind of the Executive Committee 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 Executive Committee is a community of faith earnestly seeking to understand God's will;
- each member of the Executive Committee has been given unique gifts and insights by God;
- everyone's contribution is worthy of respect;
- our aim is to discern what the Spirit is saying to the organization through the Executive Committee;
- our commitment is to find faithful ways forward on which all can agree.

Adopting these Rules of Procedure, business processes and techniques ensures that the Executive Committee of the WCRC will:

- foster deep **listening** and respect;
- make space for the influence of the Holy Spirit and different perspectives through **dialogue** and **discernment**;
- take the time to **build consensus** in decision making.

## 2. Building Community

The Executive Committee draws together people from different countries, cultures and traditions. It takes time to build the trust and relationships that form a community of faith. This is why significant time will be spent in worship and community building.

As we acknowledge the Lordship of Christ and listen for the Word of God in worship together the bonds of community are strengthened. Our diversity and unity in Jesus Christ is also celebrated informally as we live, work and pray together.

## II. RULES OF PROCEDURE FOR THE CONDUCT OF BUSINESS

### 1. Definitions

**Committee** means a group appointed by the Executive Committee to bring reports and proposals on particular business through the general secretariat. The following committees are proposed to be constituted:

- Finance Committee
- Membership and Constitution Committee
- Reformed Partnership Fund Committee
- Message Committee (to report directly to the Executive Committee)

**Discernment Group** means a small group of Executive Committee members (with guests and observers brought together in their own discernment group(s)). Discernment Groups are composed according to the values of empowerment and diversity: Each member shall be given the chance to fully contribute to the discussion in dialogue with voices expressing themselves from different perspectives (see part 10 of these rules).

**Discernment Procedures Consultant** is the person(s) assisting with the use of discernment procedures (see part 6 of these rules).

**Drafting Team** means the committee of the Scribes of the Discernment Groups that amend the proposals coming from the Discernment Groups in the light of the discussions in the groups (see part 10 of these rules).

**Facilitator** means the person who facilitates the work of a Discernment Group. The main task of the facilitator is to ensure that all delegates can fully participate in the discussion (see part 10 of these rules).

### **Participants**

- *Members* of the Executive Committee have full vote and voice throughout the meeting.
- *Guests* are those individuals who have been invited to attend the Executive Committee meeting. Guests have the right to speak but may not vote.
- *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 Executive Committee, but do not have the right to voice or vote.
- *Consultants* may be present at the Executive Committee meeting upon invitation by the officers. A consultant may be asked to address the Executive Committee 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.

- *Visitors* are those individuals who attend the public sessions of the Executive Committee for personal reasons. Visitors do not have the right to speak, make motions or vote.
- *Officers* are the following elected officials of the WCRC: president, vice president, general secretary and general treasurer. The general secretary, by virtue of his office, has the right to speak but may not vote.
- *Staff* of the WCRC may act as resources in the work of the Executive Committee. When requested by the chair, they have voice but they may not vote.

**Scribe** means a person appointed to be the secretary of a Discernment Group and to convey its findings to the Drafting Team. At the end of each session the Discernment Group determines which points should be brought to the Drafting Team (see part 10 of these rules).

## **2. Role of the Officers Group**

The Officers Group shall oversee the business coming to the Executive Committee and set its proposed agenda, taking on any of the following tasks as necessary:

- initiate proposals on any matter relating to the efficient working of the Executive Committee;
- consider how matters may best be grouped for consideration, so none is disadvantaged;
- ensure that the Executive Committee is resourced with information from a range of perspectives about each matter, so that an informed way forward may be discerned;
- review the agenda regularly, prioritizing items needing deeper deliberation and more time;
- alter the agenda as needed.

## **3. Matters for Consideration**

Matters for consideration shall be presented through the address of the president, the report of the general secretary or other means as decided upon by the officers and ratified by the Executive Committee when approving the agenda of the meeting.

## **4. Interpretation**

The Executive Committee conducts its work in English. If a member of the Executive Committee needs translation, that request must come with sufficient notice to obtain translators.

## **5. Moderator**



The officers of the WCRC (president or one of the vice-presidents) shall be Moderator of the plenary sessions of the Executive Committee.

The role of the Moderator is to preside in a manner which assists the Executive Committee in seeking to understand the will of God as far as possible and which meets the needs and purposes of the Executive Committee and its participants.

In so doing, the Moderator:

- ensures that the Rules of Procedure for the Conduct of Business are observed;
- watches with the participants for the guidance of the Holy Spirit and for the wisdom of Scripture throughout all contributions;
- is prepared to pause for prayer or silent reflection as appropriate;
- may invite participants to turn to others nearby for small group discussion or prayer;
- encourages trust and integrity in contributions;
- ensures care and support for those whose honesty may leave them vulnerable;
- invites members to indicate their response to speeches and reflects that mood back to the Executive Committee as it becomes apparent;
- looks for creative modifications of a proposal, incorporating insights expressed by speakers;
- summarizes discussion from time to time to assist in focusing the direction;
- does not participate in discussion (if a Moderator wishes to speak to an issue someone else will act as Moderator during consideration of that particular issue until it is resolved);
- acknowledges those who wish to speak during the meeting. Speakers should address the Executive Committee through the Moderator;
- ensures that different voices are included during plenary sessions.

Participants will respect requests or directions from the Moderator. Out of respect for the office of Moderator, when she or he speaks, all remain silent so the Moderator is heard without interruption.

## **6. Discernment Procedures Consultant**

The Discernment Procedures consultant is present to assist with resourcing the Rules of Procedure for the Conduct of Business.

The responsibilities of the Discernment Procedures Consultant are:

- to be resources for the Rules of Procedure for the Conduct of Business and the discernment principles on which they are based;
- to clarify any uncertainties about procedures in plenary sessions if called

- upon by the Moderator or the General Secretary;
- to be available to support the Moderator and General Secretary in chairing each session;
- to be available to assist the Moderator in ensuring that all insights are considered as the Executive Committee seeks to discern a way forward for any issue;
- to attend officers meetings to advise on procedures as necessary;
- to advise participants about procedures as necessary.

## **7. Use of Discernment Procedures**

The Executive Committee will use the discernment process to make all decisions except for: approval or changes in procedures, elections and constitutional and bylaws changes. If a resubmitted matter does not receive approval through the discernment process, and the Executive Committee takes the view that a decision must be made on this item of business at this meeting of the Executive Committee then a vote will be taken.

## **8. Building Blocks of the Discernment Process**

The basic building blocks of the discernment process are:

- Introduce and clarify the issue (listening sessions)
- Explore the issue and look for ideas (Discernment Groups)
- Look for emerging proposals (decision sessions)
- Discuss, clarify and offer proposals (decision sessions)
- Test for agreement (decision sessions)
- Implement the decision (staff)

## **9. Listening Sessions to Introduce and Clarify the Issue**

The Executive Committee 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.

Listening sessions shall be prepared in conjunction with the officers group.

During the listening sessions the reports and matters are received. A number of speakers may be invited to present varying aspects of a particular issue before clarification questions and discussion.

*Reception of a report* means agreement to consider the substance of a report. This is approved in the listening sessions after the report is presented and any clarifying

questions are answered. Reception means that the proposals in the report are now before the Executive Committee for consideration. A report as a whole must be adopted if its substance is to become policy, or specific proposals arising from a report must be considered before agreement to act can be assumed.

At the end of each listening session draft proposals to be discussed by the Discernment Groups shall be introduced.

## **10. Discernment Groups to Look for Emerging Consensus**

### *Composition of Discernment Groups*

The Discernment Groups will formally be appointed by the president and approved by the Executive Committee. Factors that need to be included (and sometimes weighed against each other) when composing the Discernment Groups:

1. **Diversity:** Groups should not be geographically driven. It is important not to have a group composed solely from a single country or region.
2. **Balances:** Besides geographic diversity, each group should be balanced between gender, age, ordained/non-ordained and abilities.
3. **Communication:** All members of a group must be able to communicate effectively with one another. Those Executive Committee members who do not speak fluent English will be grouped with those of like language abilities.

Another critical aspect of each group's composition is the *leadership*. Each group needs at least two leaders: one to *facilitate* the group and another one to act as *Scribe*, not only recording the decisions of the group but also taking those decisions to the Drafting Team. The *Facilitator* will need to be able to facilitate a process that respects all members' voices while striving at reaching consensus on the issues within the time allotted.

### *Process in Discernment Groups*

The introductory session of the Discernment 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.

The Discernment Groups are guided by materials they receive; they discuss and amend the proposals that were introduced during the listening session. Decisions within each group should be made through consensus. If consensus cannot be reached the group defines the point of disagreement and requests the Scribe to take the different opinions to the Drafting Team.

The discernment process during the Executive Committee is value driven and should respect each individual and her/his voice even as the process unites the delegates through discussion and consensus. No member should be marginalized based on any factor: “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 III, Section B).

At the end of each Discernment Group session, the Scribes will gather to distil 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.

## **11. Decision Sessions to Discuss, Clarify and Test for Agreement**

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. Delegates will hear the voice of their Discernment Group 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.

### *Procedures in Decision Sessions*

Orange and blue indicator cards are provided for voting members. At the end of each speech, voting delegates may choose to indicate their response to the content of the speech, by showing their orange or blue card. The cards provide a quick and visible indication of the mood of the Executive Committee.<sup>1</sup>

- Showing an orange card indicates warmth and appreciation towards a point of view.
- Showing a blue card indicates coolness and hesitation towards a point of view, or that more discussion is needed.

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<sup>1</sup> Orange and blue are used because they can be clearly distinguished even by people who are colour-blind.

Cards may also be used to indicate to the Moderator that it is time to move on; a speaker may be getting repetitious, or the points may have been well made already. In this case, a member can hold the two indicator cards crossed in front of her/his chest, as a silent indication that pursuing debate is not likely to be helpful.

The Moderator alerts the Executive Committee to the strength of feeling expressed through the indicator cards as appropriate. The members may express their thoughts and offer proposals.

Possible outcomes of discernment process:

- All in agreement (unanimous);
- Most are in agreement (minority give consent to move forward);
- Consideration on matter postponed;
- Agree no decision can be reached;
- Refer an issue to another body, either to bring advice to the Executive Committee on how to proceed or to determine the referred issue on behalf of the Executive Committee;
- Issue brought to a vote, if this is agreed by a two-thirds majority of voting delegates present (see below).

The Moderator may determine that a proposal be referred to a small group of participants nominated by the Moderator, with a view to the small group bringing an amended proposal likely to receive greater support. The matter is resubmitted to the Executive Committee for decision when the Officers Group determines.

In the event that:

- the resubmitted matter does not receive support, and
- if the Officers group takes the view that a decision must be made on this item of business at this meeting of the Executive Committee,
- then the Executive Committee may determine that a two thirds majority of delegates present and voting is sufficient to determine this item of business.

## **12. When Voting is Required**

Only voting members may vote. The Moderator declares the method of voting (show of hands, standing, written ballot, etc).

A majority of members present and voting is required for approval of the proposal.

After the vote, the Moderator declares the proposal approved or not approved.

All participants are encouraged to return to their churches advocating the decisions

of the Executive Committee, even if they would have preferred different outcomes. It is the responsibility of those privileged to participate to explain to those who were not present why particular decisions were taken.

### **13. Recording Dissension**

The basis of discernment procedures is that the community of faith listens, prays, discusses and works together towards discerning God's will for a faithful response. Resolutions are made in that light.

Voting members may record their dissent or abstention on any particular resolution by lodging it in writing with the recording secretary or executive secretary for communications before the next session commences.

### **14. Procedural Proposals**

Procedural proposals may be raised by delegates (not by other participants) and relate to how or when the Executive Committee deals with a particular agenda item. When making a procedural proposal a member may not interrupt a speaker but seeks recognition from the Moderator to speak. Procedural proposals must be seconded, may be debated and are determined by discernment procedures or a simple majority vote (50 percent plus one of those present).

Procedural proposals include:

- *Fixed order*: proposes that the Executive Committee deals with business previously set for that time. It may be linked to a procedural proposal for the adjournment of the current discussion.
- *Adjournment*: may be proposed by a member who has not spoken in the current discussion. If approved, any person whose speech was interrupted may speak first when discussion resumes.
- *Closed Session*: all who are not members leave the session while the Executive Committee considers an issue in private. If approved, it requires a subsequent procedural proposal ("that the Executive Committee cease sitting in closed session") to return to an open plenary session.
- *Closure of the debate*: may be proposed ("that the vote be now taken") by a member who has not spoken in the current discussion. The Moderator may also propose closure.

### **15. Points of Concern**

*"...the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control..."* (Galatians 5:22-23).

The Executive Committee will engage in its business and corporate life in a way that ensures that the fruits of the Spirit are supported and expressed:

- prayerful listening respect for all participants;
- compassion with one another;
- trust;
- encouraging shared goals;
- exhibiting an openness/vulnerability to one another.

A member may raise a concern at any time by gaining the attention of the Moderator and stating, "I have a point of concern." The Moderator asks the delegate to state the concern.

Concerns that may be raised are:

- A speaker is thought to be digressing from the matter under discussion.
- A member may claim the right to make personal explanation if a subsequent speaker grossly misrepresents her/his remarks.
- A member may raise objection if remarks are thought to be offensive or derogatory.

The Moderator may without debate:

- rule on it immediately;
- ask advice from selected participants and then rule on the point;
- ask the Executive Committee to decide the matter by discussion and discernment.

If the Moderator's ruling on a point of concern is challenged, the challenging delegate may speak, and the Moderator may reply before putting it to a vote to sustain or disallow the ruling, without further discussion. The decision is resolved by simple majority.

## **16. Adoption of the Rules of Procedure for the Conduct of Business**

The Executive Committee in its first business session determines by simple majority vote whether to adopt or modify these Rules of Procedure for the Conduct of Business. During the course of the meeting, suspension or amendment of all or part of the procedures may be agreed by discernment procedures or a two-thirds majority of delegates present and voting.

## Address of the President

Rev. Najla Kassab

### Introduction

1. I am happy to be addressing the new Executive Committee for the first time and thank you for your trust in me to be the president of the WCRC. I look forward to working together as a communion who strives for building stronger relations among churches and strategizes to lift up justice as a lens through which we evaluate what we do, how we view the world around us and how we reach out in mission.
2. “Called to Communion, committed to justice” is a challenging theme that the World Communion had lifted up clearly, summarizing our identity and concerns. In the last nine months as WCRC president, I came to discover how challenging it is to reflect this in our work and structures. We are called as a committee to scrutinize how we live as a communion and how we seek justice in our work. Communion starts with our life together as people from different churches and how justice is lived among us here in this Executive Committee. Communion starts in our encounter with each other as an Executive Committee.
3. We gather today empowered with the way God led us in the 26th General Council in Leipzig, Germany, 29 June to 7 July 2017 under the theme “Living God, renew and transform us.” If we look back we can recognize the several steps on the way to renewal and transformation that God bestowed on us, whether in the representation of women and men in the General Council, or electing a youth among our officers, or the number of women and men in the Executive Committee, or adopting the consensus model in our decision making, or electing a woman as president and many other decisions that were an affirmation that the WCRC is moving forward towards renewal and transformation and is centered around the “God of life.” I mention this to affirm that God is leading us and reforming us for all that reflects a life of *koinonia* that is rooted in living up to God’s call for justice.
4. The world is overwhelmed today with lots of pain, divisions, hatred and enmity. Just as I am preparing my report, the war in Syria continues and the threat of continual bombing of Syria from leading countries in the West is a daily reality, pushing more refugees outside Syria. Also, the struggle in Israel-Palestine continues and the voice of the suffering of the Palestinian Christians is raised daily, or the threat to the Christian church in Egypt by radical groups, or the growth of radical Islam which has succeeded in making the language of fear and threat a worldwide language that is used with ease by several world leaders. Not to forget the struggle in Colombia and the need for a culture of nonviolence and peaceful resolution for a historic conflict or struggle in South Sudan, or the struggles of Indigenous people and their rights, or the issue of migration that deprive many people their dignity and lead the receiving countries to new realities that could



lead to more tension and enmity. I have counted very few of the many challenges that the world is going through, and the actions of our last General Councils reflect that hard reality and challenges us to see the urgency of reconciliation for the world.

5. All this leads us to gather here in South Korea around the theme of reconciliation in a country that has long been struggling for peace and reconciliation. As we read the signs of the time we are called to live as ambassadors for reconciliation **“From Life, For Life: Transforming, Reconciling and Renewing.”**
6. One wonders what would bring this world to healing and wholeness. **Paul in 2 Corinthians 5:16-21** speaks about reconciliation; it seems after having a good experience in the city of Corinth, after the church was flourishing and growing, Paul left them to find later that lots of problems appeared there. Not merely problems among the Corinthians but there were even problems with Paul himself. Paul was questioned and suspected concerning his validity as an apostle; his motives were questioned, and his gospel was considered as heresy. So, in the second letter to the Corinthians, Paul, sometimes with gritted teeth and through tears other times, defends himself. In the fifth chapter, Paul's desire to clear his name combines with his effort to repeat the true gospel, resulting in a sublime passage of great power where the centrepiece is reconciliation. Paul shares his story of the pain that he experienced in Corinth. He opens our eyes to a new way on how to solve divisions, since many times we tend to deal with temporal solutions that relate to consequences and forget to tackle the main cause for divisions. Without reconciliation healing is not achieved.
7. The result of this cosmic reconciliation is that we now look at everything differently. Therefore, we know no one after the flesh (*kata sarx*—according to the flesh) from now on because Christ “died for all, that those who live should no longer live to themselves, but to him who for their sake died and rose again” (v. 15), Paul calls us to no longer regards others “after the flesh” or “according to the flesh” (v. 16) but to see God in every person around us. Paul calls us to look at everything and everyone through the lens of reconciliation. We are ambassadors of reconciliation as we call others to believe in Jesus and be in a good relationship with God. But it's not just about the vertical dimension between God and us, it's also that God's love changes everything on the human, horizontal level, as well.
8. Paul writes, “Once upon a time we regarded Jesus only from a human point of view and when we did, we didn't understand Jesus well. But now we see Jesus and everyone in a divine perspective and it changes everything.” Paul talks about regarding Jesus and each other *kata sarx*, “according to the flesh,” and the call of reconciliation is a step towards looking to people

beyond the flesh recognizing the image of God in them and the power of reconciliation through Jesus Christ.

### **Context**

9. **We meet in South Korea** where the Korean peninsula has been struggling for peace and reconciliation since the war started in June 1950. In July 1953 a ceasefire agreement was signed. The Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) was created to separate the two countries. In October 1966 the Korean DMZ conflict began as troops from both countries invaded the demilitarized zone and engaged in skirmishes. The threat for resuming war was ever since. The two countries engaged in tense talks before agreeing to reduce tensions.
10. In January 2018, the Seoul–Pyongyang hotline was re-connected. In February, North Korea sent an unprecedented high-level delegation to the Winter Olympics in South Korea, headed by Kim Yo-jong, sister of Kim Jong-un, and she passed on an invitation from her brother to President Moon Jae-in to visit the North. The two Korean leaders met at the Joint Security Area on the 27th of April where they announced their governments would work towards a denuclearized Korean peninsula and formalize peace between the two states. Furthermore, it was announced that President Moon would visit North Korea this fall.
11. With this positivity and the move towards reconciliation we are challenged as the church to be fully involved in reconciliation on the local and international level. The church in Korea has been playing a vital role side by side other ecumenical organizations to push peace forward and the WCRC was fully involved to advocate for peace talks. On 5 October 2016 a visit to North Korea promoting dialogue was arranged by the WCRC and efforts were made through fostering dialogue between North and South on 4 of July 2017. Also, the issue related to Korean peace was voiced at the 2017 General Council where the Korean Christian Federation (of North Korea) sent a delegation. The General Council in Leipzig instructed the WCRC to bring together the many ecumenical initiatives working for peace to create an “Ecumenical Accompaniment Process for Healing, Reconciliation and Peaceful Reunification of the Korean Peninsula.” The Korean peninsula has become one of several areas of focus for the WCRC in its Global Peace Initiatives program.
12. We are grateful for God who brought us here in Seoul at this time where all efforts towards peace have started to bear fruits. The World Communion of Reformed Churches welcomed the progress toward peace made at the summit in Panmunjom between Kim Jong-un and Moon Jae-in. It is a significant step in a long journey of reconciliation. We are here to rejoice together and to discover together as churches of the Communion how we will be renewed together as we imagine how the Lord will send us to live peace and reconciliation where the shalom for the people in the Korean peninsula is lived. Through the work of the Holy Spirit we will be challenged

to live as ambassadors for reconciliation and will strive to be healed from a past full of pain and division to a new community transformed, reconciled and renewed.

### **WCRC after the General Council**

13. After the General Council in July in Leipzig, the WCRC continued its work through a “Bridge Plan” that was carried out between July 2017 and May 2018. The plan placed a strategic emphasis on five key directions for the work and witness of the WCRC:
  - 1) Mission
  - 2) Communion
  - 3) Justice
  - 4) Theology
  - 5) Ecumenical Engagement
14. The work in the bridge plan was in line with the goals and objectives that are developed in the proposed strategic plan. Several activities were held in the above areas (the General Secretary will explain more on those). During this time officers took additional responsibilities for the governance of the organization. Several Skype calls were conducted, besides a face-to-face meeting in December 2017. The officers acted as interim committees when needed, were the core of the Strategic Planning Committee and took their role as the Personnel Committee.
15. **Strategic planning:** Since December WCRC leadership, partners and members in the Communion and staff joined efforts toward developing a strategic plan that will guide the organization in the coming years until 2024. In the spirit of discernment and the involvement of different working groups and core groups who took part in the process of defining the “Vision and Mission” besides “Context Analysis” and “Strategic Goals and Tactics” a strategic plan came to birth. The fruits of this work will be presented to us in this Executive meeting, and we look forward to be involved in receiving the work done and contributing together to a strategic plan that will lead us to echo in practical ways what we heard in our last General Council and what the Spirit will lead us to as a Communion. I believe a great work was done and I hope by the end of this meeting we will embrace the work with confidence, joy and thankfulness to our God who will lead us through this strategic plan.
16. **Strengthening the Communion:** One of the key tasks that I find it empowering to our Communion, as president, is building relations among our churches of the Communion and with partners. I have received in the last months several invitations from our churches to attend their gatherings and even from partners and new partners. Unfortunately, due to conflicting schedules I could not meet all the requests, but I hope that with earlier notifications, I will be visiting all the regions, if possible, and will be able to attend the regional councils. Below are some of my

involvements with churches and partners in visitations and conferences that I attended since July 2018:

- 26 November – 2 December:** Consultation on “Strengthening the Communion: Communion and Human Sexuality,” Chennai, India
- 1-4 September:** Speaker at the General Assembly of Danmission, Denmark
- 5 September:** Reformed Church in Copenhagen visit
- 26-29 September:** Participating as a speaker in a conference prepared by the Lutheran Church in the Middle East inviting leaders of Reformed churches in Middle East as part of celebrations for 500 years of Reformation
- 8-13 March:** Presenting the opening sermon at the Conference on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME), Arusha, Tanzania
- 21-24 March:** Council for World Mission-WCRC Summit, Hannover, Germany
- 12-14 April:** WCRC Europe meeting, Budapest, Hungary
- 14-15 April:** Reformed Church in Hungary visit

### **Concerns and Insights**

17. Dear friends, despite the fact that some of my concerns and insights are dealt with in the proposed strategic plan, still I hope to shed the light on them as one way of helping us grow together as a communion.
18. Building communion starts with our work together in the Executive meeting. We hope there will be space in our executive meeting to come to know more about our churches and regional ministries. We come from different cultures where relations are valued differently. We hope that in our planning our schedule we will create a space for sharing where we come to know each other and to journey together.
19. Our Communion is strengthened by empowering the work in the regions. I hope we can strategize to hold our Executive meetings in different regions that are part of our Communion. I know the financial and organizational challenges toward such a decision but our presence in the regions will bring real empowerment to the regions and will shape us in a better way as a Communion.
20. Communication among ourselves as Executive Committee members is vital and necessary. I hope we can develop a stronger network between us as members in the Executive Committee, benefitting from the new ways in media to bring us closer together as a committee.
21. Regular written reporting is vital in keeping us informed on what is happening in our life as a Communion. It could also be a shared video among the Executive Committee. I believe one year is a long time where we are informed about the

progress of our strategic plan. I hope that we will be more informed besides what the communication office is posting on media.

22. One of the main concerns that lies ahead of us is how we can promote the WCRC to the world. As our general secretary put it one day, “We are 100,000,000 individuals around the world and hardly people know us.” We are called to put our efforts in preparing visual material that could be used in speaking about the WCRC and used to inform people on the pews about who we are. I believe our role as Executive members is vital in that.
23. One of our strengths as WCRC is our relation with our partners, whether the World Council of Churches, Council for World Mission, Lutheran World Federation or other organizations. We are called to make sure that these partnerships are growing, healthy and are empowering to us and to our partners. Regular summits, just as the one we had lately with CWM, encourages us to evaluate and move forward with our partners.
24. The General Council entrusted us with a big number of actions, concerns and challenges. Prioritizing and setting a timetable is vital for our success and progress. I believe the strategic plan will help us in that, and a timetable for our activities will help us to stand accountable to fulfilling our plan and in securing balanced involvement among the regions.
25. Sustainability of the WCRC is an important aspect that we ought to keep our eyes on. Although sustainability is not merely centered on finances, still financial contribution is a sign of commitment to the vision and mission of the WCRC, even when that meant giving the least coin. Contributions from member churches in funding the core budget is an important sign of belonging, commitment and empowerment to the WCRC. This is a challenge that requests our involvement, efforts and attention as Executive members.
26. Last but not least, the WCRC in electing a women president made a strong statement for the world; still, this does not mean that we reached gender justice. This is step toward gender justice. Changing minds and prejudices are the difficult part of the journey. I believe we will strive together as women and men to work together in living up to justice. Having women among the leading staff of WCRC is urgent in proclaiming and living justice. I want to confess that empowering women and all those who are marginalized will be at the centre of my attention. We will walk the journey with those who are suffering and with those who are rejoicing. Let me share with you the encouraging story from the Reformed Church of East Africa, who decided to start ordaining women. “Being at the General Council inspired us further and led the General Synod to pass the resolution to okay ordination of women,” said RCEA Moderator Rev. Musa Kipkorir Kapkong Maina. Our commitment for accompanying change on gender justice will remain a call central to our Communion.

## Conclusion

27. Dear friends, we are here as a Communion who are “committed to worship, work, listen and pray together as a community of faith, seeking to discern God’s will around a common table for both worship and decision making.” We are here to learn together how we live justice, and the context of the Korean peninsula urges us to spell justice in practical steps of crossing borders and meeting others and hearing stories from the other side of the grass. We indeed chose a motto that challenges our faith—“From Life, For Life: Transforming, Reconciling and Renewing”—and every time we are silent or we distance ourselves from the suffering we contribute to injustice. May the Lord guide us and teach us how to be a Communion committed to justice.
28. I end with the words of Paul to the Corinthians: “So we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We beseech you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God” (2 Corinthians 5:20).
29. May we be those ambassadors and may we be a voice for reconciliation.
30. To God be all glory!

## Report of the General Secretary

Rev. Dr. Chris Ferguson

1. I begin my report giving thanks to the Living God for the rich and deep witness and work of our member churches, our officers group, our staff and our many networks and working groups who have sought in the past year to live out our identity as a global *koinonia*, “called to communion and committed to justice” in a world fallen among thieves.
2. We gather in Seoul, South Korea, sharply aware of the places in God’s creation and among all God’s creatures where life is under threat at every conceivable level, and no place more volatile, with a greater impact on the whole world than the Korean Peninsula.
3. At the same time an unexpected and dramatic miracle of peace is bursting forth, showing the fruit of God’s grace and persistent love in the work and witness of those who have struggled for democracy, human rights, justice, peace and reconciliation—foremost among them the Korean churches and ecumenical movement in both North and South.
4. The Inter-Korean Summit and the Panmunjom Declaration of 27 April 2018 has been embraced by the political leadership in both Koreas, and the churches in the South and North have whole-heartedly assumed the hard but hope-filled imperative to “affirm, support and encourage” the path to peace and reconciliation for the Korean peninsula, the Northeast Asia region and the world which this Korean-led, courageous initiative embodies. The World Council of Church (WCC) and our own Communion have redoubled all efforts in action and prayer to mobilize the global Christian family to respond vigorously and faithfully to this God-given and Spirit-filled historical opening for peace, justice and reconciliation in obedience to the gospel imperative of peace with justice.
5. Our Communion at the Leipzig General Council witnessed the presence of the Korean Christian Federation (KCF), National Council of Churches of Korea (NCCK) and our Korean member churches praying for peace and holding high the cross as the sign of unity and the justice the God of Life wills to us. We have sought in this past year to accompany them in the spirit of our communion.
6. Only a few days ago our joint WCC-WCRC delegation to Pyongyang heard the affirmations of the Minister of Unification of South Korea, H.E. Cho Myoung-Gyon, and then directly from the President of the People’s Assembly of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, H.E. Kim Yong-Nam, how the religious communities in North and South have played a key and determining role in shaping this moment. Unexpectedly both emphasized the role played by the WCC and specifically the WCRC in accompanying our member churches.

7. My journey to Pyongyang started with a visit to Lebanon to encourage the National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon (NESSL)—our president’s own denomination—in their courageous ministry and witness in Syria and Lebanon, a situation where solutions for peace, justice and reconciliation are not easy to detect. From there I went to meet with an ecumenical panel to reinvigorate our joint efforts for economic and ecological justice and transformation of an economic and financial system that fuels militarization and conflict and makes very few very wealthy at the expense of the very many. And then I traveled from New York to Bogotá, Colombia, where a global gathering of a large sector of world Christianity met to reflect and celebrate together in the context of a peace process under threat and at the edge of collapse. Again acting ecumenically, the WCRC accompanied our member church in concrete actions to bolster the system of transitional justice and encourage the special court to remain firm to their mandate at the same time: an attempted pastoral visit to the jailed FARC peace negotiator who is on hunger strike against the illegal attempts to extradite him to the USA rather than allow the agreed upon justice process to work.
8. In the face of desperate situations where hope is fading or fragile our churches are present, discerning, confessing, witnessing and reforming. In the span of a week I was able to see the embodiment of a global *koinonia* “called to communion and committed to justice” and to see the vision and challenges set out in Leipzig come to life.
9. I am making this report on the life and work of the WCRC since the General Council under the theme, “From Life, For Life: Transforming, Reconciling, Renewing” and am humbled to affirm that our Communion, although beset with many challenges, is emerging as a *koinonia* witnessing to the strong words of Paul: “All of this from God who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation” (2 Corinthians 5:18-19).
10. In the face of a grim and deteriorating global situation our Communion joins with others in our frailty and see in the example of the unexpected surge towards peace in the Korean Peninsula the transforming work of the God of Life—grace writ large—and we see the years upon years of the sacrifice and justice-seeking witness of the faithful in our member churches who against all odds—hope against all hope, witnessed to the God of Life, confessing Jesus Christ in the power of the Spirit, and today I am therefore bold to say the words of Paul, “Therefore we have this ministry through God’s mercy and we are not discouraged.”

### **The Bridge Plan**

11. The Address of the President has lifted up the highlights of the General Council and some of its positive impact and has underlined key challenges and concerns. In this



report I will make a condensed summary of the activities and situation of the WCRC since Leipzig in light of the “Bridge Plan between Strategic Plans, July 2017 – May 2018” adopted by the officers to guide our work in this period.

12. As indicated in the Bridge Plan the officers and the secretariat focused on three streams of activities and actions in this last year:
13. First, closing the General Council, which is to say ensuring that all details of the highly successful but very complex General Council are properly wrapped up and reported. This has been an extensive and intense process on all levels. We have given priority to this as reflected below in the General Council report and the financial report. It has gone well. We end with great impact, many learnings and no financial burden.
14. Second, continuing and following up on the programmatic priorities under the final chapter of the 2011-2017 Strategic Plan on each of the five basic directions. The WCRC has continued to focus on selected priority areas of the last plan to ensure continuity and impact in the spirit of our calling and mandate. Overall the programmatic activities outlined in the Bridge Plan have all been successfully implemented, most with significant impact; the exceptions and mid-course adjustments are detailed below in the relevant sections of the report. An example of an adjustment to the Bridge Plan was the decision under Mission to move the so-called “Mission in the Frontlines” from late 2018 to early 2019 and place it in the context of the proposed strategic plan to allow for better planning, implementation, integration and impact.
15. And third, the strategic planning process: The Bridge Plan not only served to guide us until the new strategic plan was in place, in fact, the strategic planning process was itself one of the three streams of the plan itself! The strategic planning process and proposed strategic plan is at the center of our discernment and decision-making in this Executive meeting. At this point I want to report that the “process” as outlined in the Bridge Plan has been successfully completed with a well-structured, well-thought-out, highly participative consultative process guided by the officers and a very effective Strategic Planning Committee chaired by the general secretary of the Church of South India and including in addition to the WCRC officers, general secretaries of our key ecumenical and mission partners and other noted leaders and experts within the Communion. A wide variety of working groups and consultations provided extensive input in a short period of time, all focused on harvesting and implementing the vision, direction and mandates of the General Council in light of the core mission of the WCRC. The proposed plan seeks to set out a path for the next six years that is faithful but strategic.
  - a. It is not simply a wise list of activities. It is not a work plan (yet). It is an exercise in discernment that sets out how we can proceed to live out the call and commitments that God has given us.

- b. The approach of the strategic planning process was to plan so that the vision and values of the General Council mandates were embodied in the process itself. So the process itself was an exercise in communion strengthening and commitment to justice. The Widening the Circle Consultation already pushed us forward with our tasks of critical theological reflection and “reforming” our life as a communion so that all voices are heard and power imbalances are redressed.
  - c. Staff, officers and many, many others have worked hard to prepare this plan for your consideration, and I believe that that process alone has already had a positive impact in our maturing as a global *koinonia*.
16. My report and the details that follow are to be read as accounting for and giving specifics of our implementation of the Bridge Plan. All our activities and programmes have been carried out to fulfill the objectives of one or more of the three streams of the plan: 1) closing, 2) continuing, 3) planning. We have done this so that each of the three streams complement the other so that no one stream overwhelms the other. The results have been extremely positive, but it has been very intense and for the staff at times stressful and exhausting. The energy within the Communion and staff is high and commitment great. The results reported below show that we have emerged from the General Council motivated and inspired yet well aware of challenges, limitations and weaknesses.
17. A significant challenge is the intersection of sustainability and capacity. As the Address of the President and the proposed strategic plan emphasize we still struggle to financially sustain our secretariat and governance life from membership contributions. Although our reserves are growing, and we are relatively stable with a good and growing capacity to raise programme funds, we still are not able to fund our core budget for salaries, governance and secretariat without additional last-minute fundraising every year. This has many implications: 1) We are constantly preoccupied in the course of every year with raising money for that year itself and are distracted from our core mission. 2) It means we remain limited in our capacity to a very small staff. I will expand on this below but one of the most frequent observations is that for such a large Communion with such a tiny global staff who perform and deliver well above what could be reasonably be expected of only four full time executives. 3) Our values as a Communion are undermined when we don't have sufficient funds for governance activities; we can't get to the point where only those churches who can afford to pay for the expenses of Executive Committee members can participate in governance. We are not currently in a sustainable place with our core budget. This needs our urgent attention as an Executive, and it is taken up in the proposed strategic plan.

### **Staff Transitions and Thanks**

18. Since General Council 2017 there have been significant staff changes. But now our team is in place! Immediately following General Council, Rev. Dr. Douwe Visser took early retirement following an extended health leave. Allow me to reiterate our gratitude to Douwe as reflected in my report to the General Council for his long list of contributions.
19. At the end of 2017, Rev. Dora Arce Valentin completed her term of service and returned to Cuba and her work within the Presbyterian Reformed Church of Cuba. Again, deepest thanks and profound gratitude to Dora for her significant contributions and great impact on the justice and gender justice work.
20. For 2017, although it was an extraordinarily intense year with many activities beyond the intensity of the General Council itself, we were under-staffed during the entire year, especially in the area of theology, mission and communion.
21. As noted in my report to the General Council, Dr. Aruna Gnanadason served as a consultant and directed the Global Institute of Theology. We are extremely grateful to Aruna and could not have accomplished what we did without her. At the same time and after the then-General Council Coordinator Rev. Dr. Hanns Lessing took on the extra task of attending to the ecumenical dialogues, Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ) and Wittenberg Witness follow-up among other things including accompanying me on an important visit to China at the same time as giving attention to the priorities of "closing General Council." Hanns truly rose to service beyond the call of duty, and we are so thankful to him and for the high quality of his contributions.
22. As announced at the General Council, Rev. Dr. Hanns Lessing and Rev. Philip Vinod Peacock were appointed as Executive Secretaries for Communion & Theology and Justice & Witness respectively, beginning in these positions in January 2018.
23. With the faithful and highly effective leadership of Phil Tanis as executive secretary for communications, for the first time for several years we now have a well-functioning, highly effective executive staff team free from the disruptions of transitions, relocation of the office and major illnesses. The team in the few months has come together well and are highly motivated and extremely effective as the strategic planning proposal gives ample testimony.
24. Rev. Philip Peacock streamed in on several events last year including in our planning week, and it can be said he truly hit the ground running and we are so grateful.
25. The executive staff team has, however, been put in place with a very critical challenge of having four men form the team. This is a serious contradiction of our values even as we affirm the talents and effectiveness of the team. The concrete steps to redress this are addressed in the proposed strategic plan.

26. We continue to enjoy and benefit from the contribution of Gerhard Plenter who serves on a volunteer basis as our Consultant Financial Executive. He works tirelessly for us on top of his other duties and we owe him a great vote of appreciation, not least for his work at and following the General Council.
27. Anna Krüger continues to offer extraordinary service as our financial administrative assistant who has shouldered in an exemplary way the double challenge of General Council accounting and our already challenging financial work. She works closely with member churches in terms of membership contributions where her sensitivity and experience has helped strengthen our relationships. Anna contributes also as able to the communications work. Greatest appreciation to Anna! The finance desk has been supported by many additional volunteers and with special assistance from the Evangelical Reformed Church in Germany for the General Council work.
28. Werner Joecker continued as administrative assistant for the work of the Reformed Partnership Fund and the *Otto per Mille* funds of the *Tavola Valdense*. In addition, Werner plays a major role in the management of the database system. Werner's determined and efficient work has been most appreciated.
29. Amritha Permulla Bosi, the administrative assistant for the programme team, has been on maternity leave. We have rejoiced in the birth of her second child and hope she will be back with us in the coming year. In the meantime, we are delighted to have Emelda Ndiwah replacing Amritha during her leave. Many will know Emelda for her helpful contributions planning and arranging travel for special events.
30. Katrina Mertz is the assistant for the general secretary and has made a very significant contribution in helping rebuild the administrative and office systems and structures after the move, plus the daunting task of organizing the general secretary and his travels. Katrina works as well in the coordination and support of governance structures and the Constitution and Membership Committee, as well as attending to the administrative aspects of human resources. She is tireless and fully committed to the WCRC. Greatest thanks to Katrina. She holds together the many complex strands of our work and relationships.
31. We are grateful for the work of Paul Oppenheim who has served as our senior volunteer and helped us mightily in our transition to Hannover and during the General Council. Paul is now "retired" for the second time.
32. Other staff support is offered by the *Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland* (EKD), and we would like to make special reference to the work of Elfriede Abrams, who is a church lawyer who supports our human resources work.

33. We have received the report from the United Nations office and want to make special mention of Ryan Smith, the director of that ministry at the UN in New York City who is part of our greater staff family for all his faithful service.
34. In a special category we have our WCRC interns who are on the one hand full members of our team during their year of service and at the same time they have a special focus on leadership development.
35. In 2017, Miguel Rosa of the PC(USA) and Wan-Jou Lin of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan were our two interns. Wan-Jou stayed on from 2016 in order to help with the General Council in addition to a third intern, Grenna Kaiya, who was supported by the Council for World Mission (CWM), to add capacity during the General Council year.
36. Currently we have two interns, Eri Yoon from the Presbyterian Church in Korea, and Anam Gill of the Presbyterian Church in Pakistan. With funds available from *Evangelisches Missionswerk in Deutschland* (EMW) and the Swiss Cantonal Churches of Bern, we will have a third intern starting this coming fall.
37. We are extremely grateful to the interns who make such a significant contribution. We are committed, as reflected in the proposed strategic plan, to strengthening and expanding the internship programme as possible.

### **Visits and Activities**

38. In addition to the sections of the report below, the general secretary has carried out visits and activities with our member churches through the Communion in the last year. This has included attending and speaking at special events and assemblies as was the case with the Church of North India Reformation General Assembly, a special Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of India, the Presbyterian Church of Colombia Reformation 500 activities, the Synod of the Nile and churches in Egypt, partner consultations of the NESSL, visit to Damascus, a pastoral visit to our churches in South Sudan accompanied by PC(USA), visits to member churches in South Korea and North Korea, visit to the China Christian Council, the United Church of Zambia, the Presbyterian Church of Iran in Exile, the Church of South India, the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, and accompanying a mediation process with ECO and PC(USA) in the United States. I have participated in regional council gatherings and supported the work of AIPRAL, NEAAC, WCRC Europe and ACRC.
39. These have been intense and rewarding encounters of communion building and theological learning. Many challenges which are reflected and have been taken up in the proposed strategic plan.

40. As part of the Bridge Plan, the general secretary has focused on supporting key global peace and reconciliation initiatives. The significant work on the Korean peninsula has already been mentioned.
41. The Middle East, Israel/Palestine and Syria have received attention through visits, the Palestinian organizations through a meeting in Jordan (see the proposed strategic plan for follow-up), to Lebanon, Egypt and participation in global interfaith peace events.
42. Direct involvement in the Colombia peace process, supporting the work of the Presbyterian Church of Colombia (IPC), DiPaz and supporting broader ecumenical initiatives including speaking at a panel with Colombia President Santos and meeting with the High Commissioner for Peace and supporting the demobilizing former guerillas and the IPC's Peace Diakonia Programme.
43. South Sudan has been mentioned as a special focus, and more can be found in the proposed strategic plan.
44. Ecumenical work on the global level is noted below but to briefly highlight participation in the Reference Group for the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace of the WCC where I serve as co-rapporteur.
45. The ecumenical global dimension of my WCRC role has meant special attention has been given to our participation in WCC, Global Christian Forum, Conference of Secretaries of World Christian Communion and in partnerships with the Council for World Mission, the World Student Christian Federation and the World Alliance of Christian Communicators.
46. The double work of accompanying the churches of the Communion and providing leadership and support for wider ecumenical family has been significantly advanced in the last year in part due to the General Council and in part due to strategic investment in global processes of justice, peace and reconciliation and ecumenical dialogue.

### **The General Council**

#### *Figures*

47. In the perception of the participants, the General Council 2017 was a very successful event. 74% of those participating in the evaluation described the Council as "exciting" or "very exciting" and 74% commended the good atmosphere in particular.
48. A large majority also agreed that the constitutional objective of just participation was reached. 70% concurred that men and women participated equally. This mirrors

the fact that gender balance was almost achieved: 48% of the delegates attending the Council were women and 52% men. The aim of increasing the voice of the youth was also largely accomplished. The decision to invite the GIT students and to grant them voice in the discernment process allowed for much stronger youth participation as provided for under the Constitution. The survey reflects this achievement: Not fewer than 64% of the participants agreed with the statement that the youth could fully take part at the General Council.

49. The participation of the regions, however, was apparently an issue. Only 45% of the participants of the evaluation agreed that participants from all regions participated equally. This observation is significant. The next General Council planning process should develop methodologies that will allow people from all different cultural backgrounds to contribute fully to the proceedings.
50. While the overwhelming majority of participants personally regarded the Council as a significant and rewarding experience, several contributors flagged the relationship between the WCRC and the member churches as an area that needed attention: Only 47% agreed that the General Council had improved relationships between the Communion and the member churches.
51. The evaluation did not explore the relationship between the WCRC and its member churches in more depth. This observation therefore might therefore be not more than a snapshot that does not carry much validity. At the same time, the number of member churches attending the General Council in Leipzig was considerably smaller than in Grand Rapids. Grand Rapids gathered 183 delegations, in Leipzig the number declined to 136 (cf. appendix 1).
52. There are several reasons for this decrease. Some have to do with priorities in the member churches; others were rather of administrative nature. After the move from Geneva, the WCRC's database was in a very poor shape. We did not have current contact data of more than a third of the membership. For this reason, we could send invitations to several churches only quite late in the process. We are glad that after the Council we are now in contact with almost all members and ask the members of the Executive Committee to share changes in leadership that they discover with the secretariat in Hannover.
53. We are very grateful that we were able to support travel and accommodation of all delegations from the Global South. This assistance was made possible by large donations by the German Ministry and Foreign Affairs and of Bread for the World that explicitly offered funds to allow the full participation of delegates of the Global South. We observed, however, that the stipulation of the subsidy policy that every member church should pay the registration fees and the travel and accommodation for at least one delegate discouraged several churches from attending the assembly. Even if the General Council office engaged with the churches to overcome these

obstacles several churches decided to rather stay at home. This experience should be taken into consideration in the formulation of upcoming subsidy policies. With the perspective of decreasing funds in the future, intensive communication with the member churches will be necessary to find alternative ways of fundraising.

54. Like in Grand Rapids, a number of potential participants were not granted visas which would have allowed them to travel to Germany. The WCRC enjoys a special relationship with the German government that includes preferential access to visas for attendants of WCRC programmes. Despite the enormous efforts by the visa coordinator, Paul Oppenheim, and the support by the German embassies and consulates all over the world the application of 50 potential participants were turned down.
55. Some visas were refused because delegates registered in the very last minutes. Some processes need time and require the cooperation of everyone. The organization of future events would be much easier if participants will abide more carefully to the timelines. Generally, however, the participants of the Council cooperated very well in the registration process. All co-workers of the General Council office agree that even if the work was often stressful the communication with the participants was a real joy.

#### *Finances*

56. The General Council would not have been possible without the generous support by member churches and other donors. We say thank you to the member churches that paid their General Council contributions; several gave even more than the required amount. And we are grateful for the donations of the German member churches, of churches and church institutions in Germany that are not members and of the German government. Without this support, the Council would have to be organized in a very different way. The assembly benefitted from the rich resources that churches and the government provided for the quincentennial of the Reformation. The General Council was the most significant international event of the commemoration and therefore received generous support. We particularly thank General Treasurer Johann Weusmann for his tireless efforts in fundraising.
57. Thanks to these contributions, the books of the Council could be closed without a deficit. The final audits are currently under way and the WCRC's finance team receives praise for the meticulous bookkeeping. We thank the German churches that seconded highly professional staff to the finance team! The good stewardship has improved the WCRC's standing with important donor agencies particularly in Germany.
58. At the same time, the final figures also point to the financial challenges of future General Councils. The contributions of member churches and the General Council reserve of the WCRC did not even cover a third of the total expenses. Even if one



subtracts the budgets of the cultural programmes and the Global Institute of Theology the income of 900,000 euros raised by the Communion fell short of expenses of 2.7 million for the actual assembly (cf. appendix 2). The next General Council in 2024 will depend on substantial fundraising. If it will not be possible to raise the necessary funds, the Council will have to be redesigned to match the available resources.

*Administration and Logistics*

59. We are very glad that the evaluation of the General Council administration in the survey is quite favourable. 64% of the participants rated the travel assistance as good or very good, 63% appreciated the travel assistance and still 58% gave a positive feedback to the assistance in subsidy matters. Even the registration process where we experienced substantial problems received a positive feedback by 60% of the participants.
60. We appreciate this assessment because we are aware of the challenges of the administrative process. In the planning process and the actual arrangements, we encountered a number of difficulties and worked hard to deal with them. For the benefit of future planning teams, I want to point to some of these challenges:
- In the secretariat, there was no institutional memory of the preparation of General Councils. No staff member had ever participated in the planning. We are therefore particularly thankful for the organizers of the Grand Rapids Council and the staff of the WCC for their support.
  - Because of the move to Germany and of changes in the WCRC staff, the administrative preparation only started two years prior to the Council. In the future, a General Council coordinator should be employed three years before the event.
  - The German member churches of the WCRC are comparably small; the Reformed congregation in Leipzig is numerically marginal in the city. The organization of the Council therefore brought everyone who was involved to the limits of the possible. The situation in Leipzig was very different to that in Grand Rapids where the organization was supported by two offices of much larger member churches and by the staff of a church-owned college. We are extremely thankful for the support that the German churches and the Leipzig congregation provided under these challenging circumstances!
  - The Leipzig Messe offered a very professional environment, which was very helpful for the organization of the Council. At the same time however, the rent was much more expensive than in a church-owned place and the sheer amount of options required enormous capacity for proper planning and implementation.
  - The General Council office was mainly staffed with interns and volunteers without professional experience in event management. Everyone worked with incredible effort and much enthusiasm and we are extremely grateful for their wonderful work! However, the task would have been much easier if we had had

the same professional support as in the area of finance also with database development and travel and accommodation management.

- Because of the small staff, the WCRC secretariat could only provide limited management capacity for detail planning and the recruitment and accompaniment of volunteers. This was particularly noticeable in the organization of the Leipzig back office, the workflow in the plenary and in the work of the Nomination and the Public Issues committees. For the future, it would be very helpful if member churches could second skilled people for management tasks already before the Council. This would contribute to much smoother and professional proceedings particularly during the first days of the assembly.
- The lack of management capacity also affected the communication prior to the General Council. Several participants of the survey complained that information had arrived late, which caused some anxiety for some. Many people also pointed out that the delays in communication did not allow them to prepare properly for the event. This feedback should also be taken up in the planning of future councils.

61. Many of these obstacles were compensated, however, by the enormous engagement of volunteers and staff during the Council itself. Their presence and enthusiasm contributed to the general sense of togetherness that was characteristic for the assembly. Participants were willing to accept logistical shortcomings because they realized that members of the Communion were working hard for the best of the Communion. This experience of joint responsibility gives us great confidence that also future councils can be carried out successfully.

#### *Discernment and Consensus*

62. The feedback to the discernment and consensus model applied at the Council was quite positive. More than 50% of the responses described the different elements of the process as a success. Only a minority responded negatively. Many individual comments in the survey praised the Discernment Groups as a particularly enriching experience. It was pointed out that in these groups everyone had the chance to contribute to the decisions of the Council. Many respondents had preferred if there was more time for the discussions because they offered the opportunity to deeply converse with other participants of the assembly. Several participants suggested that in the future more emphasis should be laid on the training of the moderators and scribes of the groups. People saw also some room for improvement in the discernment training, which only 51% evaluated positively.
63. The Listening Sessions were also received good feedback (56%). In the individual comments however, we also found some critical remarks. People complained that the General Council Workbook with the proposals arrived too late to allow proper discussion of the issues in the member churches. Others indicated that the background papers were too long to be discussed in detail. The responses indicate

that these people had preferred, if the traditional section model had been used again, because they were of the opinion that the formation of interest specific groups had allowed a more professional discussion.

64. The survey participants also gave a general positive feedback to the decision-making in the plenary (55%). At the same time however, some individual remarks were particularly critical. Serious concern was expressed how the proceedings dealt with minority opinions. Critique was raised from two different directions: Some comments stated that minority positions received much too much attention. On the other hand, other contributors complained that the pressure to give in to the view of the majority had been enormous. These people also criticized that in their perception the orange and blue cards had been used at times in a manner of voting in order to suppress dissenting minorities.
65. Despite these criticism, the majority of responses agreed that the discernment and consensus model should also be employed in the future. Several people pointed out that changes like the introduction of the discernment model needed time to mature and develop. We therefore think that the discernment and consensus procedures were applied successfully during the assembly and want to express our gratitude to the Discernment Team that developed and refined the discernment model.

#### *Worship and Bible Studies*

66. The worship and Bible studies received the most positive feedback in the survey. People praised the spiritual atmosphere (68%) and the music (77%) and expressed their appreciation for the worship in the Berlin Cathedral (66%) and particularly in Wittenberg (78%). We would like to thank the Worship Team for their wonderful work!
67. The Bible studies were generally appreciated. Many people indicated that the sessions would have worked even better if there had been more time for the Bible study groups. It appears that for many participants the encounter with other delegates and the sharing in small groups were the most significant experiences during the Council.

#### *Content and Vision*

68. 60% of the participants agreed that the General Council produced a vision for the work of the WCRC. A strong majority gave a positive feedback about the selection of themes (63%), the choice of speakers (68%) and the quality of the inputs (65%). Many people individually registered their appreciation of the Wittenberg event, of the adoption of the Faith Declaration on Women's Ordination and of the emphasis on justice.
69. At the same time, a substantial number of people registered complains about the excessive weight, the one-sidedness and the quality of the input sessions. These

responses indicate that the justice agenda of the WCRC is still not yet fully embraced by parts of the Communion.

70. In answer to the question where the WCRC will be in the future, most of the responses pointed to communion and to justice. The participants hope that the WCRC will develop into a Communion where women and youth will participate even more fully. In addition, they want the WCRC to become an even stronger instrument of change in church and society. Some participants, however, used this question as an opportunity to register their concern about the future of the organization and pointed to the tensions in the Communion and its fragile financial sustainability.

#### *Thanks and Gratitude*

71. The Proceedings of the 2017 General Council lists the names of 165 volunteers and 67 stewards that contributed to the success of the General Council. Many of them had offered their time for months. During the assembly, they worked day and night. We particularly want to thank the General Council Planning Committee that supervised the planning and implementation of this big project.
72. The WCRC is blessed by so many people who offer their gifts to the work of the organization. Their joyful and wholehearted engagement is proof that the WCRC is able to inspire people and bring the good news of the living God who renews and transforms humanity and all creation to the whole world.

#### **Communion**

73. In its section on communion the Bridge Plan took up the invitation of General Council Action 50 to set an “atmosphere for dialogue and discernment on communion diversity” that would allow the discussion of the controversial matters of human sexuality “in a spirit of consensus building where there are no winners or losers, where no one is excluded, where all are protected and where mutual challenge, mutual accountability and grace become key values.”
74. The General Council was very much aware that currently not all member churches are ready to engage in this conversation. It therefore encouraged those churches who are prepared to begin this difficult journey to embrace our diversity and our differences and to discern together the resources of Scripture and our Reformed tradition. Moreover, it called upon the WCRC to accompany also those member churches and regional councils who still hesitate to join into this discussion.
75. In the spirit of this decision the WCRC convened the consultation “Strengthening the Communion: Communion and Human Sexuality” in November in Chennai, India, and invited representatives of churches with different views on human sexuality to engage with each other by sharing experiences and by joint discernment of Scripture.

76. Many of the participants expressed their appreciation for the atmosphere of the consultation. They welcomed the approach not to strive for decisions on matters of human sexuality, but rather to attempt to open a space for a meaningful conversation. At the end, the participants adopted a statement in which they committed themselves to continued conversation in the spirit of respect, love, trust and listening to a variety of voices including those most affected.
77. This commitment was included into the draft of the proposed strategic plan and, if finally adopted, will guide the WCRC's approach to the conversation about human sexuality in the current period of its work.

## **Justice**

### *New International Financial and Economic Architecture*

78. In 2010, as part of the vision to live out the Accra Confession, the Uniting General Council called upon its member churches, in partnership with other ecumenical bodies, to prepare an international ecumenical conference to propose a financial and economic architecture that is based on the principles of economic, social and climate justice, serves the real economy; accounts for social and economic tasks and sets clear limits to greed.
79. This call resonated with the WCC Central Committee's "Statement on Just Finance and Economy of Life and the Council for World Mission's theological statement, "Mission in the Context of Empire."
80. It is against this background that the WCRC, WCC and CWM jointly convened the Conference on New International Financial and Economic Architecture (NIFEA) in São Paulo, Brazil, in September-October 2012. The conference produced the São Paulo Statement that lamented the present economic crisis and called for a rejection of empire and complicity with systems of death. At the same time it called for an affirmation of movements and radical traditions that seek to build life in community outside the logic of hierarchy and discrimination.
81. Based on this mandate a panel of thirteen experts were convened as the Global Ecumenical Panel on a New International Financial and Economic Architecture to give "legs" to the São Paulo Statement and to recommend areas of action to the WCRC, WCC, CWM and the LWF. This panel worked to produce a document entitled "Economy of Life for All Now: An Ecumenical Action Plan for a New International Financial and Economic Architecture."
82. This document made a series of recommendations and proposals for actions for the ecumenical collective. Among the concrete actions proposed, the ecumenical school

of Governance, Economics and Management (GEM School) was identified as the first among six priorities.

#### *GEM School*

83. Realizing that our churches' ethical, moral and theological perspectives on the global economy have a minimal impact on financial and economic policies, business practices and ways of thinking, the GEM School was initiated as an attempt to build competencies in global economics in the churches. The aim of the GEM School is to build economic literacy within churches by equipping participants with the tools and language to effectively advocate for urgent transformation in the global financial and economic realm. The primary objective of the GEM School is to develop economic empowerment for transformation within the ecumenical movement.
84. The School is held with the following objectives in mind:
- a. To identify theological starting points for economic justice and to understand the nature and logic of the relationship between theology, ethics and economics
  - b. To provide a basic understanding of mainstream economic thinking
  - c. To identify, relativize and contextualize methodologies and normative fundamentals of economics
  - d. To widen the horizon of economics by introducing ecological, feminist and other pluralistic approaches
85. The second GEM school was held in Lusaka, Zambia between the 21 August and 1 September bringing together 15 participants for a ten-day programme. I attended along with Rev. Dora Arce-Valentin.

#### *Coordination of Regional Activities*

86. As part of the ongoing process of NIFEA the WCRC is committed to strengthening the work in the regions around economic and financial architecture. To this end the WCRC supported a process on Ethics, Economics and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean along with the regional ecumenical centre, CREAS.<sup>1</sup>

#### *Second Ethics and Economy Dialogue*

87. CREAS, in partnership with the Secretariat for Latin America and the Caribbean of the Social Pastoral – Caritas (SELACC), the Department of Justice and the Solidarity of the Latin American Episcopal Advisory Board (DEJUSOL- CELAM) the International

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<sup>1</sup> CREAS is a multidisciplinary ecumenical organization of Christian professionals whose mission is to strengthen the capacity of the ecumenical movement, churches and social organizations in the promotion of human, civil, political, economic, social, cultural and environmental rights. It contributes to the scope of this mission through collaborative actions, capacity development and knowledge production to generate and sustain processes of change in the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean.

Program on Democracy, Society and New Economics of the University of Buenos Aires (PIDESONE – UBA/Seube) and World Network of Ethics (Globethics) organized a high level dialogue in preparation for advocacy leading up to and during the G20 meeting in Buenos Aires, Argentina in 2018. The goal of the consultation was to contribute to the multidisciplinary, ethical-economic reflection from a human rights perspective with the presence and active leadership of AIPRAL.

88. The objectives of the consultation were to:
- a. Create spaces for inter-institutional and inter-disciplinary reflection and analysis
  - b. Promote inter-institutional dialogue among organizations, academia, social and religious leaders with public bodies and governments at the national, regional and international levels within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals 2030 and the road to the G20 meeting in Argentina in 2018
  - c. Form a group of experts in Latin America and the Caribbean who will provide advice and recommendations to the different social and religious leaders from human rights-based perspective

*Buenos Aires Meeting*

89. The second Ethics and Economy Dialogue was held in Buenos Aires, Argentina, on 2-3 November. The consultation was held to debate the three core topics that are at the centre of the G20 meeting: sustainable finances, dignified labour and inclusive development. Along with me, attending were Dora Arce-Valentin and Rev. Carola Tron Urban, president of the Waldensian Evangelical Church of the River Plate and former Executive Committee member.

*NIFEA Core Committee Meeting*

90. In preparation for the meeting of the Global Ecumenical Panel on a New International Financial and Economic Architecture which was held in New York on 21-22 April 2018 an ad hoc panel was put into place.
91. The Objective of the Ad Hoc Panel were:
- a. To evaluate the NIFEA process and specific programmes
  - b. To prepare directions and perspectives that should be pursued at New York
  - c. To discern programmatic directions for the WCRC NIFEA work which may also inform the strategic planning process of the WCRC
92. The Proposed Outcomes were:
- a. A clear direction for WCRC work
  - b. A NIFEA working document in preparation for New York and beyond. It is envisaged that this document will both evaluate the NIFEA process so far as well as propose future programmatic directions.
93. The meeting was held in Hannover on 2-3 April 2018 and brought together five persons (one absentee due to illness) to discuss and deliberate NIFEA processes and

enable the WCRC to strategically plan for the NIFEA Panel meeting to be held in New York as well as to incorporate these insights into WCRC's own strategic planning process.

*The 3rd Meeting of the NIFEA Panel*

94. The third meeting of the Ecumenical Panel on a NIFEA took place in New York to connect with the third United Nations Economic and Social Council Forum on Financing for Development (FfD) which took place 23-26 April at the UN headquarters.
95. Following two meetings in August 2013 and January 2014, the Ecumenical Panel on a NIFEA produced the report titled, "Economy of Life for All Now: An Ecumenical Action Plan for a New International Financial and Economic Architecture." The NIFEA plan maps out areas for advocacy and engagement by churches in the areas of financial sector regulation, public finance and debt and global economic governance, with a view to transforming the international financial architecture by relinking finance to the real economy, countering greed and embedding economy in society and ecology.
96. Since it was drawn up in January 2014, there have been significant and interconnected developments in global economic, political, social and ecological landscapes that bear on the NIFEA Plan. The NIFEA Ecumenical Panel met with the following objectives:
  - a. To analyze the signs of the times for the economy and the earth
  - b. To identify emerging and persisting elements of economic and climate injustice and the key issues ahead
  - c. To set up a process to update the NIFEA plan, especially the priority actions, in light of the above and our findings so far
  - d. To strategize new actions and partnerships as we advocate the analysis and transformation of NIFEA
97. In addition to the NIFEA Panel members, also present were the general secretaries of the WCRC, CWM and LWF. As the general secretary of the WCC was unable to be present due to personal reasons he sent his representative. Also present were representatives from the Roman Catholic Church and non-governmental agencies and social movements. The meeting produced future directions and programmatic trajectories. It also discussed and came to agreements on the following:
  - a. The importance of creating a culture of accountability, putting financial observatories in place, and developing new, just financial structures
  - b. Forgiveness as the starting point to pave the way for reconciliation, restitution and recovery
  - c. Strengthening the coalitions of different movements (economical, ecological, social) and not compartmentalizing them; linking poverty, ecology, and inequality as a single issue



- d. Encouraging governments to invest in ecological advancements
- e. Mobilizing by informing communities, bringing shocking data to the fore to stir people into action
- f. Working on taxation issues at the national and global level; joining with other civil society groups like Oxfam
- g. Changing the narrative by working together with the sciences and other faiths, with a sense of humility and openness, and joining forces with particular social movements which are our allies
- h. Changing our own lifestyles by examining gender justice and ecological living within the church
- i. Continuing to rally against things that obscure the gospel

## Theology

98. The theology work of the WCRC during the Bridge Plan was mainly determined by the preparation of the strategic plan. The General Council yielded a new framework for the programme work of the WCRC. The desks of Communion and Theology and of Justice and Witness should cooperate and develop an integrated approach that will express the cross-sectionality of the WCRC's vision as it is expressed in the tag line "called to communion, committed to justice." According to the biblical witness, justice is an integral expression of God's living presence in the creation. The justice work therefore cannot be reduced to an ethical addendum to a theological core. At the same time, theology cannot be pursued in an isolated sphere but should be conducted in a way that it can lead the Communion to processes of confessing to address the present reality. In these processes, the theology work should draw from the Reformed tradition and contextual theologies.
99. The General Council Actions 20 and 21 defined the direction of this new approach:
- The theology work shall take up the "unfinished agenda" of the Reformation and lead to justice, peace, reconciliation, care and unity among Christians, people of different religions and the whole earth.
  - Theological engagement shall be based upon the *sola scriptura* principle, the Barmen Declaration and confessions of Belhar and Accra.
  - The theological work shall represent the diversity of the Communion and shall be carried by the commitment to give voice to the faith experiences of people from all continents, giving preference to the voices of women and young people.
100. This new direction stimulated several highly productive conversations in the strategic planning process. In the draft of the strategic plan, you find an exploration of possible themes for theological engagement in the fields of "Identity, mission and purposes of the WCRC," "Learning from theologies that liberate and affirm life," "Embodied justice" and "Confronting rising authoritarianisms."

101. The extraordinary level of engagement and the quality that characterized these discussions bode well for the future of the theology work of the WCRC. The planned interaction between the different programme dimensions has the potential to open up a new horizon for theology work.

### **Mission**

102. At the General Council, the Executive Committee engaged in a critical discussion on mission. At the day of the mission plenary, the Business Committee withdrew the mission proposal that was already published in the workbook and should be referred to the discernment process because some members criticized what they called a one-sided emphasis on justice at the expense of an understanding of mission as evangelization that aims at individual conversion.

103. The Conference on World Mission and Evangelism that was held in March in Arusha, Tanzania, had to deal with the same question. But unlike the proposal of the mission planning group at the General Council, the Arusha Conference did not take sides but tried to accommodate both perspectives by offering justice and evangelism the same level of attention. The emphasis of the conference was directed to sharing and celebrating rather than on strategic direction. This decision allowed the conference to proceed with a high level of harmony.

104. Many Reformed participants at the conference cherished the sense of ecumenical unity that allowed many positive encounters, which would not have happened a few years ago. At the same time, there was also agreement that compiling different perspectives does not really engage with the challenges at hand.

105. In the strategic planning process, we therefore decided that the WCRC should make the clarifying of the foundation and goals of mission one of the central objectives of the work of the organization in the coming six years. We hope that this process to a consolidated understanding of mission that will be supported by the whole Communion.

### **Ecumenical Engagement**

106. The ecumenical activities of the WCRC have continued the processes that had culminated at the Wittenberg day during the General Council.

#### *The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*

107. In Wittenberg, the WCRC associated with the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ). Lutherans and Catholics signed this document in 1999 and afterwards offered it to other Christian communions for association. The association of the WCRC was the conclusion of a discussion that lasted for more than 15 years. Several points had to be clarified before the association could take place:

- Associating is different from signing: If the WCRC had been asked to sign the JDDJ it would have been obliged to fully own a document that clearly speaks the languages of the Lutheran and the Catholic churches and does not acknowledge the Reformed tradition at all. Such a step would have been impossible for the WCRC. An association on the other hand allowed the Reformed to add their voice to the bilateral conversation about the understanding of justification between Lutherans, Catholics and Methodists who had already associated in 2006. This methodology made it possible to contribute a particular Reformed emphasis to the ecumenical discussion. The WCRC's statement of association therefore particularly stressed the link between justification and justice.
- A communion is founded upon a deeper sense of unity than an alliance: Traditionally the WCRC and its predecessors had been reluctant to engage in doctrinal matters, because confession and doctrine were seen as the prerogative of the member churches. This approach began to change with the condemnation of apartheid as a heresy 1982 at the Ottawa General Council and finally with the adoption of the Accra Confession in 2004. The WCRC understands itself more and more as a confessing communion that—after thorough consultation with the member churches—can engage with other Christian communions also in matters that touch the area of confessions and doctrine. Member churches are invited to adopt these decisions, but they are not obliged to do so. This procedure was applied in the process of drafting of the statement of association to the JDDJ: The Executive Committee adopted the statement of association after an intensive process of consultation of the member churches and the association was celebrated in Wittenberg during the General Council. In the meantime, one of the churches that was quite critical about the association has started its own dialogue process with the Catholic Church based on the JDDJ. This a good example for our Communion at work!

108. After the General Council, the Anglican Communion has celebrated its decision to welcome and approve the substance of the JDDJ in an ecumenical ceremony on Reformation Day 2017 in Westminster Cathedral.

109. This vibrant ecumenical activity has led to the revival of the proposal to use this momentum to develop the JDDJ format into a multilateral ecumenical forum. The five communions are currently defining the terms of reference of this process. First results shall be presented at a conference in March 2019 at Notre Dame University in the United States.

110. The draft strategic plan welcomes these developments wholeheartedly because they converge with the WCRC's conviction that in the future ecumenical relationships between Christian world communions should be discussed in a multilateral format and should find expression in acts of common witness.

*The Wittenberg Witness*

111. The Wittenberg Witness that was celebrated during the General Council is a prominent example for this emphasis on joint witness. The Witness was based on a dialogue report that stated that there are no theological obstacles that would prevent communion between Lutherans and Reformed. The Wittenberg Witness was a first step to live out this theological unity. Both communions are committed to explore steps that would allow them to move more closely together.

*Dialogue with the Mennonite World Conference*

112. During the Wittenberg day, the Mennonite World Conference had invited the WCRC for a dialogue process. In the meantime, preliminary talks have begun to frame the project in more detail. It was agreed that the dialogue should lead to an act of reconciliation that should address the history of 500 years of conflict where Mennonites were victims of persecution by other Christian churches including the Reformed. A first important step on this way will be the 2019 Executive Committee meeting in Zürich, Switzerland, where Mennonites and Reformed will visit the locations of the first persecutions and start a process of “right remembering” that will allow them to tell their difficult history together in a way that does justice to the sentiments of both sides. This emerging reconciliation shall be lived out in steps of common witness conducted jointly by the two communions.

*The International Reformed-Anglican Dialogue (IRAD)*

113. The current phase of the Reformed-Anglican dialogue focuses on the understanding of communion and takes up the challenges that both communions currently experience. The Anglican Communion is challenged by tensions about human sexuality that have the potential to threaten the unity of the Communion. The WCRC has its own experiences with topics that challenge the cohesion of the Communion. In response to these developments the dialogue attempts to develop the understanding of communion by exploring ways on which diversity can be lived out and conflicts be conducted in a way that differences will not be church dividing. In September 2017, the dialogue group met in Durban, South Africa. In this year, the IRAD will convene in Vancouver, Canada. The dialogue will conclude in 2019.

*Reformed-Pentecostal Dialogue*

114. The Reformed-Pentecostal dialogue will also present its report in 2019. In December 2017, the group met in Sydney, Australia. In December 2018, the dialogue will convene in Accra, Ghana. The theme of this dialogue is mission.

*Reception of the Catholic-Reformed Dialogue report “Justification and Sacramentality: The Christian Community as an Agent for Justice”*

115. At this point, the WCRC does not have an adopted procedure to receive the reports of ecumenical dialogues. In the past, it had been criticized that the members of the Executive Committee had been asked to receive reports without the opportunity to engage properly with the documents.

116. For the reception of the Catholic-Reformed Dialogue report, I therefore want to suggest the following procedure: I propose to refer the dialogue report to the executive staff to prepare an extensive recommendation that we will discuss during the 2019 Executive Committee meeting in Zürich. Based on this recommendation the Executive Committee will be able to take an informed decision to receive the report.

*The Third Gathering of the Global Christian Forum in Bogotá, Colombia*

117. The Global Christian Forum (GCF) attempts to convene all the different streams of world Christianity. Besides the churches and communions that are members of the WCC, the GCF gathers also Roman Catholics, Evangelicals and Pentecostals. The WCRC attended the 2018 gathering with a delegation of four people. As at the Conference on World Mission and Evangelism in Arusha it was also possible to bring together the members of other Reformed delegations.
118. Like the Arusha meeting, the GCF gathering was characterized by great harmony. Members of different Christian groups that a few years ago would not have looked into each other's eyes engaged in processes of profound sharing. We were positively surprised that in Bogotá, many delegates explicitly embraced diversity, called for gender balance and youth representation and emphasized the significance of justice. However, like in Tanzania, this rhetoric did not go very deep and was not applied to engage with problematic understandings of mission. Several delegates openly called for crusades and promoted an understanding of mission that strives for numbers without respect of the cultural and religious integrity of those to whom the gospel is proclaimed.
119. Taking note of these discussions, the harmony and the fellowship appear quite problematic. The impressive outreach of the meetings in Arusha and Bogotá could only be achieved because they did not allow a critical discussion. From a Reformed perspective, the price of such unity appears to be quite high. It is problematic that both meetings did not offer the space to engage seriously with the understanding of mission and of Christian unity from a justice perspective. The WCRC delegates to the two meetings therefore agreed that the Reformed have a calling in these two bodies. Without the contributions from the WCRC and its allies in the CWM and WSCF several important discussions will not take place.

**Communications**

120. Over the past two years the work of the office of communications has focused on utilizing the General Council to expand the scope of communications for the WCRC. An event of this size and importance naturally brings increased attention and interest not only to the Council itself but also to the WCRC. Thus, besides the Council-specific work that was engaged in, there was always this secondary objective, and the post-Council work has focused on consolidating the gains made leading up to and through the Council.

121. Social media has been a special focus of the office for the last several years. The boost given by the General Council has continued, as those “liking” or “following” the WCRC Facebook page has grown 65% from March 2016 to March 2018 while the weekly average “reach” has grown 248% and those “engaged” by 385%. The substantial growth in the “reach” and “engagement” over the “likes/follows” indicates that those interested in the WCRC are even more committed than previously, as they interact with the posts, whether through comments, reacting or sharing.
122. In addition to the main WCRC Facebook page (which is primarily English), a Council-specific page in German was utilized for the Council, and a French-language CMER page was launched. Pages for the GIT and Theology office are also maintained.
123. Twitter, which is multi-lingual, has seen slower growth, but an ongoing usage of it, especially sharing and liking posts from members and partners has seen an increase in interactions and engagement. Both Twitter and Facebook are posted to at least daily (except on the weekends).
124. The WCRC’s Instagram account was used during the Council but has not been utilized since. Ways in which to use it effectively are currently being mulled. Similarly, the WCRC’s YouTube channel, effectively launched during the Council, is awaiting proper engagement. It is currently being reworked to better display the videos it currently has even as plans to ensure a steady stream of content are developed.
125. The monthly WCRC eNewsletter has also increased its reach significantly, purposefully adding the Council attendees to the list. The eNewsletter features articles posted to the WCRC website from the previous month; the website itself is maintained in eight languages (Arabic, Bahasa Indonesia, English, French, German, Korean, Mandarin and Spanish). A redesign of the website is planned to begin later this year, based on the new strategic plan.
126. *Reformed Communiqué*, the WCRC’s thrice-yearly print newsletter, contains the best articles posted to the website in each edition, along with an original message from the general secretary and several pieces about member churches. The *Communiqué* contains articles in the eight languages of the website, and its circulation has also increased post-Council. A special Council-only issue was printed and distributed to attendees at the close of the meeting. To mark the start of a new phase in the life of the WCRC, the *Communiqué* was given a design refresh for its first 2018 issue.
127. *Reformed World*, the WCRC’s theological journal, is a joint effort between the offices of theology and communication, with the latter handling the production and distribution of the publication. Two special issues featuring content from the General

Council were produced last fall with a third, featuring essays from the Global Institute of Theology, is nearing completion.

128. The English Minutes for the General Council were completed and posted to the website in March. Both the English Minutes and those of the other three constitutional languages (French, German and Spanish) are online and will be distributed in print to member churches in May. This process has taken longer than anticipated.
129. The communications office is also engaged in oversight of the database. The Council was of great help in bringing in new and updated information. However, the ongoing challenge is to keep this information up-to-date. Processes to do so are still being refined (as data can come in a variety of ways), but an important step was taken in training administrative staff to assist in this upkeep, as well as being able to use the data. Several projects are also planned for later this year to expand the use of the database.

## **Finance**

### *Year-end closing 2017*

130. The budget year 2017 was closed with a considerable surplus of 136,612.56 euros. This surplus was achieved in spite of considerable unrealized currency losses:
- As an organization working globally and thus handling different currencies on several currency accounts, the WCRC is subject to risks resulting in currency fluctuations.
  - Given that it is not possible to plan currency fluctuations, an earmarked fund for currency losses in the amount of 100,000.00 euros was created in the budget year 2016.
131. Contrary to previous years, in 2017 our accounts only showed a total of 36,759.18 euros in FX gains while the FX losses amounted to 118,533.00 euros, resulting in a total of 81,773.82 euros in unrealized currency loss.
132. Given the significant surplus in the ordinary budget, we were able to maintain a balanced budget while keeping the earmarked fund for FX losses at 100,000.00 euros. The surplus in the ordinary budget is a direct result of the allocation of salaries to the General Council budget. Staff costs were thus reduced by a total of 156,679.00 euros, thus not only balancing the ordinary budget but achieving a significant surplus.
133. The ordinary budget was balanced by allocating the surplus to the general reserve fund that, as a result, was increased from 345,766.06 euros at the end of the budget year 2016 to 409,467.14 euros. Compared to the previous budget year, our assets have decreased by roughly 6% to a total of 3,994,134.27 euros.

*Audit 2017*

134. The finance office is happy to report that we received a very positive report from the EKD high audit office. The high audit office reports no objections against the approval and authorization of the annual accounts by the executive committee.

*Budget Plan 2018*

135. After much hard work and special fundraising efforts, especially due to high pension contributions, a balanced budget has been drafted. Contrary to previous years, it only budgets for the allocation of a minimal expected surplus to the general reserve fund. The budget plan is to be approved by the Executive Committee during the meeting in Seoul.

*Outstanding donations 2017*

136. We would like to mention three considerable donations for programme work:
- Council for World Mission (CWM): 83,584.09 euros as support for the Justice and Witness Desk.
  - Evangelisches Missionswerk* (EMW): 180,000.00 euros as support for our missionary activities. This was increased to 200,000.00 euros in the budget year 2018.
  - Otto per Mille* (OPM): These are funds from the Waldensian Church. We received 175,000.00 euros in our budget year 2017. Our budget year and OPM's budget year do not coincide. We receive yearly installments of 350,000.00 euros in support of several programmes. 350,000.00 euros have been received in the budget year 2018.

*Membership Contributions*

137. Items to note regarding membership contributions are:
- 5 % of all European membership contributions were allocated to WCRC Europe.
  - 7.5% of all membership contributions were allocated to a newly-created General Council Fund for 2024.
  - Development of membership contributions in euros:

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Budget Plan 2018
Africa	49,292	35,393	15,313	47,787	20,424	20,000
Latin America	4,784	8,488	4,149	5,521	8,441	6,000
CANAAC	228,394	230,028	275,951	265,268	290,047	255,000
Asia	60,770	53,901	59,909	56,378	68,230	65,000
Pacific	12,054	4,720	3,714	3,844	2,847	3,500
Europe	510,646	467,644	473,013	401,522	396,492	420,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>865,940</b>	<b>800,174</b>	<b>832,049</b>	<b>780,320</b>	<b>786,481</b>	<b>769,500</b>



- d. There was a considerable increase in contributions from CANAAC and Asia, and a smaller increase from Latin America.
- e. The contributions from CANAAC and Asia were at their highest since at least 2013, contributions from Latin America were significantly higher than most years.
- f. There was a considerable decrease in membership contributions from Africa. Contributions from this region were relatively high in 2013, 2014 and 2016 as several churches paid their arrears.
- g. There was a small decrease in membership contributions from Europe compared to the budget year 2016. The decrease, however, is considerable compared to previous budget year and clearly shows a downward trend.
- h. Within the frame of the General Council, intense conversations took place with many members about the payment of membership dues, the data available in our database was revised and updated to achieve an improved communication with our members.
- i. A decision by the executive committee on how to handle member churches that have been in arrears for several consecutive years needs to be made.

#### *General Council*

138. We offer some key aspects from a financial perspective:

- a. A budget separate from the ordinary budget was created for accounting purposes. This budget was set up as an investment budget, i.e. encompasses several accounting years.
- b. The actual expenses incurred in the frame of the General Council were 3,516,446.69 euros, and thus significantly lower than what had been anticipated at the time the first budget plan draft was made and submitted to our main donors, such as the UEK (Union of Evangelical Churches, Germany) and EKD (Evangelical Church in Germany), with 3,825,940.00 euros.
- c. As per donor requirements, the complete General Council reserve was used in the budget.
- d. Most General Council projects incurred less expenses than expected as per budget plan.
- e. This is mainly due to the need to draw up the initial budget plan very early on, when information on actual expenses was not yet available, as well as due to the fact that the number of General Council participants, especially those from the Global South that we received subsidies for, was considerably lower than expected.
- f. As most subsidies were given based on a percentage of actual costs or to cover the difference between our funds and actual expenses, we expect donors such as the EKD, UEK, Bread for the World and German ministries to reclaim a significant amount of funds. A number of reclaimed funds provisions have thus been created in the total amount of 335,142.81 euros.
- g. Nevertheless, we intend to submit a revised financial plan to enter into negotiations with these donors.

- h. A surplus of 69,245.97 euros was achieved and allocated to a provision for miscellaneous General Council-related costs, such as unexpected reclaimed funds.
- i. While most General Council projects have been audited, some audits are still ongoing and we are awaiting the result of internal audits and revisions carried out by donors after receiving our audited reports.

### **Reformed Partnership Fund and *Otto per Mille***

139. The Reformed Partnership Fund (RPF) is the projects development fund of the WCRC. The Partnership Fund is an important aspect of the commitment of the WCRC to mission. It is rooted in the understanding of the Communion as a family of interdependent churches: “Bear one another’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ” (Galatians 6:2).
140. Its name reflects the ecumenical principle of resource-sharing: “working towards self-reliance and self-determination; committing ourselves to a common discipline of sharing among God’s people; participating in the decision-making process between north and south; and promoting through words and deeds the holistic mission of the church.” It is a people-centred fund, giving preference to human resource development. Grants are awarded to projects supported by WCRC member churches.
141. The Partnership Fund was created at the 22nd General Council (Seoul 1989). In 1990, after the collapse of communism throughout central and eastern Europe, the Executive Committee launched a separate fund to help churches in that region strengthen and rebuild their life. In 1997, the Debrecen General Council approved the merger of the two funds, so that the RPF now serves the four-fifths of our churches that are located in the southern hemisphere and in central, eastern and southern Europe. Applications have to comply with certain criteria, and be approved by the RPF Committee or, in its absence, an interim decision body. The maximum amount payable is 25,000 euros and 7,500 euros for emergency projects.
142. In early 2017 the WCRC’s main donors agreed to a moratorium in the project work of the RPF during the General Council. This was motivated by the temporarily redirecting every available resource to the organization of the event.
143. In relation with the donor *Brot für die Welt* (BfdW) and in parallel to the Council the continuation contract with BfdW expired and a new one was signed. Because of the moratorium and the actual dates under the expiring contract no new projects could be initiated until its formal closing. This resulted in a substantial balance to be decided upon and paying back unexpended funds is likely. The next contract could not be initiated due to the same reasons. Ending contracts and the beginning ones usually have an overlap of one year.

144. With *Otto per Mille* (OPM) from the Waldensian Church, the programme work continued mainly with programme activities such as Global Peace Initiatives, NIFEA, Korea peace and reconciliation process and ecumenical peace initiatives, and RPF emergency support to Mexico and Cuba. At the end of the year the WCRC still maintained a substantial positive balance.
145. With the donations of the *Evangelische Kirche von Westfalen* the WCRC supported three projects of a different, more theological nature. At the end of the year the WCRC still also maintained a positive balance with this donor.

### **Conclusion**

146. Special thanks to the vision and leadership of President Najla Kassab who inspires and builds relations of trust and vision. To the officers for their dedication and leadership. To those significant partners, EMW, *Brot für die Welt*, *Otto per Mille*, the Church of Westphalia, the Evangelical Reformed Church, the EKD, the Council for World Mission and many other partners. Again to the staff. To this Executive Committee, for your efforts, support and prayers. To the member churches for vision and ministry. To all we generously offer our support and prayer.
147. "By God's mercy we have this ministry and we are not discouraged."

**Appendix 1: General Council Participation Numbers**

Figures:

	Leipzig	<i>Grand Rapids</i>
Members:	136 churches (of 230)	183
Delegates:	386 48% women	
Africa:	125 44% women 43 churches (of 69)	<i>51 churches</i>
Asia:	113 43% women 38 churches (of 61)	<i>46 churches</i>
Caribbean:	9 89% women 4 churches (of 9)	<i>8 churches</i>
Europe:	62 52% women 25 churches (of 40)	<i>37 churches</i>
Latin America:	29 45% women 11 churches (of 20)	<i>14 churches</i>
Middle East:	6 33% women 4 churches (of 4)	<i>4 churches</i>
N, America:	31 55% women 7 churches (of 13)	<i>12 churches</i>
Pacific:	11 46% women 4 churches (of 14)	<i>11 churches</i>

## Other Participants

Ecumenical delegates:	20
Observers:	10
Guests:	9
Speakers:	14
WCRC Staff:	17
Staff and Consultants:	165
Stewards:	67
GIT Staff and Faculty:	12
GIT Students:	39

## Appendix 2: General Council Finances

<b>Income:</b>	<b>3.516.446,69 euro</b>
Registration etc.	183.484,89 euro
Member churches	164.171,29 euro
WCRC GC Reserve	579.012,70 euro
<i>Subtotal:</i>	<i>926.668,88 euro</i>
Grants German churches etc.	2.163.900,00 euro
Grants European churches etc.	71.088,69 euro
Grants Global institutions	20.000,00 euro
<i>Subtotal:</i>	<i>2.254.988,69 euro</i>
Grants German Government	434.050,00 euro
<i>Subtotal:</i>	<i>434.050,00 euro</i>
[Some grants will have to be partially repaid]	
<b>Expenditure:</b>	<b>3.516.446,69 euro</b>
Personnel	376.679,00 euro
GC Planning	82.860,94 euro
Subsidies (travel&accom.)	541.254,41 euro
Pre-Councils	13.969,76 euro
Leipzig Event	1.277.174,70 euro
Berlin Visit	89.605,89 euro
Wittenberg	45.868,00 euro
Communication	292.746,76 euro
<i>Subtotal:</i>	<i>2.720.159,46 euro</i>
GIT	545.686,53 euro
Youth Gathering	110.926,26 euro
<i>Subtotal:</i>	<i>656.612,79 euro</i>
Art & Culture	139.674,44 euro
<i>Subtotal:</i>	<i>139.674,44 euro</i>

## **Report of the Africa Communion of Reformed Churches (ACRC)**

Lydia Adajawah, president

### **INTRODUCTION**

The ACRC reports on activities carried out after the 2016 meeting in Havana, Cuba.

### **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

President:	Mrs. Lydia Adajawah (Ghana)
Vice-President:	Prof. Hendje Toya Jean Samuel (Cameroon)
Treasurer/Secretary:	Rev. Dr. Buhle Mpofu (Zimbabwe)
Sub-Regional Coordinator for West Africa:	Rev. Dr. Uma Onwunta (Nigeria)
Sub-Regional Coordinator for Central Africa:	Rev. Jean Ntita (DR Congo)
Sub-Regional Coordinator for East Africa:	Rev. Wilberforce Wabulo (Uganda)
Sub-Regional Coordinator for Southern Africa:	Rev. Lungile Mpestheni (South Africa)

### **ACTIVITIES**

#### **1. REGIONAL EMPOWERMENT/CAPACITY BUILDING WORSHIP & ACRC EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING, 17-22 OCTOBER 2016, KIGALI, RWANDA**

Participants came from Nigeria, Togo, Uganda, Rwanda, South Africa, Madagascar, Kenya, Zambia, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ghana, Angola, Ethiopia and Zimbabwe.

Each church gave brief reports about their activities and raised the following as some of their concerns—lack of training and skills developments, migration, youth unemployment, lack of leadership development, religious insurgency—Islam and Boko Haram, gender violence, child marriages, corruption in the countries and Churches, ecumenical challenges, human trafficking and prosperity gospel.

The five priority areas of WCRC—namely mission, communion, justice, theology and ecumenical engagement—were also explained by the WCRC General Secretary Chris Ferguson and the President Jerry Pillay.

Group work centred on three main questions: 1) What can we do to build the ACRC; 2) How can we improve upon African Ecumenism; 3) What concerns does the ACRC present to 26th General Council?

The meeting was taken through activities that would take place at the General Council in 2017.

One of the most important events that took place was a visit to the genocide centre, the Kigali Genocide Memorial and Remara congregation where victims of genocide live in forgiving relationship with those who hurt their loved ones, a challenge to our commitment to justice.

The ACRC donated five hundred dollars (\$500) to the Light Group in the Remara Congregation.

#### EXECUTIVE MEETING

ACRC Executive Committee meeting was held on the 19th of October 2016 alongside the Regional Empowerment workshop.

Major decisions included

- a. Improving communication and implementation of the programmes the meeting resolved to draw up a budget to include laptops for the ACRC president and secretary so that they could work from home and not rely on unavailable office space to do the work of ACRC.
- b. Planning for the General Council and identifying activities to precede the General Council, which could include organizing a pre-council consultation to prepare and finalize contributions to the General Council.
- c. Contacting CCAP Church in Malawi; and Network of African Theologians.
- d. Meeting in Nigeria to coincide with visit to DRC with global officers.

## 2. SOLIDARITY VISIT TO NIGERIA

The ACRC paid a solidarity visit to the Churches in Nigeria between 28th February and 3rd March 2017 in Abuja. Present were six member churches and their leaders.

#### SOME ACTIVITIES THE CHURCHES CARRY OUT

1. Peace and reconciliation Programmes some of which get support from the WCRC Partnership Fund.
2. Support maternal health and family planning.
3. Support HIV/AIDS project and help integrate PLWAI DS into society.
4. Provide lay and theological education.
5. Promote ecumenical and inter-church relations.
6. Work on youth development skills/ projects.

#### SOME CHALLENGES

1. Incursion of Islam leading to devastating conflicts and loss of life and property.
2. Conflicts of Fulani herdsmen and farmers lead to hunger, destruction of life and property.

3. Ecological problems leading to deforestation, global warming and its attendant problems.
4. Lack of enthusiasm in ordination of female ministers; some women are prohibited by the cultural setting.
5. Kidnapping and demand of huge amounts of money as ransom.
6. Government maintains a nonchalant attitude to resolving conflicts even if formal complaints are made.
7. Lack of funds is creating difficulty in managing many well-meaning projects including theological institutions.
8. The current wave of Pentecostalism puts pressure on ministers to try and match up with charismatism, which is posing a great threat to doctrinal standards.

EXECUTIVE MEETING WAS HELD JUST AFTER MEETING THE MCs.

Salient points:

1. Unresponsive member churches identified were assigned Executive members for follow ups.
2. Sub-Regional coordinators urged to make the sub-regions operational through constant communication with member churches and reporting to the president and general secretary for action.
3. Executive Committee members were tasked with accompaniment plans to churches in distress—Nigeria, South Sudan DRC and CCAP in Malawi.
4. Issues to be tabled at the General Council in Germany were identified.
5. To observe the 500 years Reformation, leading Reformed African women theologians were to be approached to put together contributions which may lead to a publication on women, tradition, Reformation and the future.

### **3. ACRC AT THE 26TH GENERAL COUNCIL OF WCRC**

ACRC Member Churches attended the 26th General Council of the world body in Leipzig, Germany in June/July 2017 under the theme, " Living God, renew and transform us." Many female delegates were at the Women's Pre- Council Meeting. Concerns from Africa were submitted to the Public Issues Committee.

New members elected onto the WCRC Executive are:

- Rev. Dr. Samuel Ayite Nyampong from Ghana
- Rev. Dr. Moma Continho Maravilhoso from Angola
- Rev. Mary Mbole Ekinde Espe Salle from Cameroun
- Ms. Tibonge Namwayi Ngambi from Zambia
- Mrs. Veronica Muchiri from Kenya



Mrs. Lydia Adajawah remains an old Executive member because of her position as the president of the ACRC.

#### **4. ACRC WOMEN'S CAPACITY BUILDING WORKSHOP HELD AT KAPINGILA HOUSE, LUSAKA, ZAMBIA, 20-22 NOVEMBER 2017**

##### **THEME: Being Church in Africa Today: Challenges and Opportunities for Women.**

Delegates in addition to ACRC/WCRC Executive Committee members were about 35 people. In attendances were Rev. Chris Ferguson, WCRC general secretary, Rev. Prof. Jerry Pillay, immediate past president of WCRC, Prof. Jurgens Hendricks, NetAct, and Dr. Maggie Modimbo, NetAct.

Major activities covered:

1. Briefs on ACRC and WCRC.
2. Key Note Address: The key note address under the theme "Being Church in Africa Today: Challenges and Opportunities for Women" was delivered by the Rev. Fundiswa Kobo. The address was presented as a reflection exploring the liberating of African women from domination and subjugation; that African women were in the majority in the church, but that they cried a lot as a result of spiritualising issues, also that pastors and other church leaders were justifying the oppression.
3. Other presenters were Rev. Lucy Waweri who touched on reasons why some churches do not ordain women; Rev Mary Ekinde: absence of women voices in most decision making spaces; Rev Dr Mercy Akpama: self-built capacity; Chief Magistrate E Uma Onwunta: child adoption as a panacea for childless induced domestic violence.
4. An impact of the General Council outcomes on gender justice work in the ACRC is the resolve to set up an ACRC Gender Desk to coordinate issues pertaining to gender in all member churches for emancipation of humanity.
5. LGBT: As to what was the stand of the WCRC concerning the matter of lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgenders (LGBT), it was noted that the WCRC recognized that on the issue of human sexuality members of the WCRC have differing views and opinions and discussion was therefore commencing based on the critical issue of unity, peace and justice.
6. An 11-point communique was issued at the end of the workshop which is urging all to live up to the pledge of "Called to Communion, Committed to Justice and Gender Equality."

#### **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING**

This was held 23-24 November 2017.

Present were ACRC Executives and the new WCRC Executive Committee members, in attendance were Rev. Chris Ferguson, Rev. Dr. Maggie Madimbo and Prof. Jurgens Hendriks both representing NetAct.

Issues discussed covered:

1. Goals for 2018-2019 to provide answers to ACRC contributions to WCRC vision.
2. Planning for ACRC General Assembly.
3. A Task Force to set up an ACRC Administrative Office to improve upon communication and implementation of programmes. NetAct offers an office facility in Stellenbosch University, South Africa, for ACRC administrative secretariat, which requires ACRC to pay 50 % of the salary.
4. ACRC should open a bank account, the president and the secretary be signatories.
5. Proposal on creation of ACRC Gender Desk to be tabled for adoption at the 2018 General Assembly.
6. Suggested annual membership dues of \$500 be tabled for approval at the General Assembly.
7. A list of nominations to 2018 WCRC Strategic Plan Consultative meeting in March, 2018 was compiled.

## **6. CONSULTATION BY SOUTH AFRICAN SUB-REGION**

This was organized by the South African Sub-regional Coordinator, Rev. Lungile Mpetsheni, in Benoni, Gauteng, South Africa from March 22-24, 2018, and the consultation was to set up a structure that would guide the sub-region, and also help them deal with the outcomes of the 26th General Council.

### **WAY FORWARD**

There will be an ACRC General Assembly in Kigali, Rwanda, between June 27th and 30th, 2018, under the theme "Living God, Renew and Transform All Life."

Preparations are ongoing for a successful Assembly.

### **CONCLUSION**

The ACRC is grateful to all who have helped in diverse ways to keep ACRC alive despite the existing challenges. We are particularly grateful to the global office for all forms of support and guidance. God bless us all as we struggle to maintain our Reformed identity.

**Report of AIPRAL**  
**(Asociación de Iglesias Presbiterianas y Reformadas en América Latina)**  
Rev. Dr. Darío Barolin, executive secretary

## **I. Introduction**

This report is structured in two main points. First, it presents the main concepts of our strategic plan approved by the Executive Committee on November 2016. Second, there is a brief report of our task in the period 2017-2018. This is divided in the following points:

- Companionship to church member
- AIPRAL's programmes
- Communications
- AIPRAL's Legal Entity
- Ecumenism and Partnership
- WCRC

## **II. Strategic Plan 2016-2021**

### **IDENTIFIED CENTRAL PROBLEM**

The mission strategies currently developed by the churches have limitations to transform the realities of violence, poverty and inequality of the vulnerable and affected populations, and to be an evangelical voice of hope and transformation.

### **PRIORITIES**

- Link reflection on mission within the framework of the 500 years of the Reformation, the Accra Confession, the global agenda on development, with sensitive topics for the member churches.
- Build platforms of dialogue for Reformed theology, to produce knowledge that influences the churches, the ecumenical movement and public-political advocacy.
- Accompany the churches in their diaconal efforts, work for peace, and advocacy.
- Strengthen the networks of young people and women in their work with justice, seeking a greater territorial impact to overcome violence.
- Strengthen the institutional structure of AIPRAL: legal status, accounting system and financial sustainability.

### **THEORY OF CHANGE**

The theory of change that sustains our strategic plan articulates:

- AIPRAL as a platform for the production of knowledge in Reformed theology, focused on the mission, within the framework of the 500 years of

the Reformation, the Accra Confession and the global development agenda.

- A strategy to strengthen the mission of the churches in their territorial insertion, to help overcome poverty, inequality and violence, through training and accompaniment.
- Serve as a bridge between the churches, developing and strengthening networks and platforms for mutual learning, dialogue and solidarity, through the intensive use of information and communications technology.
- Develop alliances to allow advocacy in favour of equitable and inclusive development and a sustainable peace in the region, connecting the diaconal experience of the churches with the participation of AIPRAL in regional and global forums.

### STRATEGIC PURPOSES



### VISION

Being a visible reference of the Reformed Latin American and Caribbean faith that expresses the unity, communion and solidarity of its member churches, which contributes from its identity to the renewal of the ecumenical movement and which cooperates with other social actors.

### MISSION

In obedience to the mission of God, contributes to the encounter, to the theological thought and formation, to the solidarity and impact of the Reformed family in Latin America and the Caribbean, to promote the full life of all creation and to reaffirm the commitment with the values of the kingdom of God and his justice from Reformed spirituality.

## VALUES

- Respect and appreciation of diversity, understanding it as a gift from God that enriches us.
- Equity and Inclusion of all people without distinction of race, ethnicity, gender, age, disability, social status or political thought.
- Solidarity, all the churches of the Reformed family are partners in the service of God.
- Transparency, acting and communicating in a truthful, honest and reliable way.
- Humility, our Reformed family tradition calls us to serve with humility for the sole glory of God.

## GENERAL OBJECTIVE

To equip and empower the churches in the mission of God in contexts of inequality, poverty and violence, in Latin America and the Caribbean.

### III. AIPRAL's Report: 2017-2018

#### 1. Companionship to member churches

AIPRAL has a very active role of companionship to member churches in their different processes. We contact during the year all the member churches through email and/or Skype and sometimes with personal visits and coordinating activities in the region. The celebration of the 500th anniversary of Reformation specially created a very active participation in many of the events organized by the churches and in some cases supported by AIPRAL and its programme of theology.

We also took seriously the declarations of the WCRC's General Council 2017 regarding specific situations in our continent, namely: Venezuela, Cuba, Colombia and the "Northern Triangle" (El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala). Therefore, AIPRAL made a special effort to be close to the churches in these countries.

Having said that, we would like to underline the following situations:

During this period, we visited and accompanied the situation of Venezuela in this difficult time. This is done together with PC(USA) and its Venezuelan network. We visited the church there and worked with the church to design a concrete plan of action that AIPRAL and PC(USA) will cooperate on for its accomplishment.

Similarly, The *Iglesia Reformada Calvinista de El Salvador*, PC(USA) and AIPRAL are working together on a programme to empower young leadership to build communities of peace. The Church of Scotland also cooperates in this effort by financially supporting AIPRAL.

Regarding Cuba, the executive secretary met the moderator and general secretary of the *Iglesia Presbiteriana y Reformada de Cuba* last December where we got a personal approach to present challenges of this church and the situation of Cuba.

The executive secretary had a meeting with the authorities of the Evangelical Dominican Church. This meeting was highly positive as it allowed sharing information about AIPRAL and the incorporation of such a church as a united church and not only the "Presbyterian" part of it.

The Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Chile was the only active church of AIPRAL that did not participate in the last assembly of AIPRAL (neither at the General Council of the WCRC), so it was very pleasant to receive an invitation from them to their central act of celebration of the 500 years of the Reformation. There is an excellent disposition towards AIPRAL/WCRC and a desire to strengthen links and tasks together.

The executive secretary visited *Iglesia Evangélica del Peru* and *Iglesias Evangélica Presbiteriana Reformada del Perú*. These churches are not members of AIPRAL but some part of their leadership sees as necessary to establish a relationship with AIPRAL and some area of cooperation. We are working on these issues trying to identify how to relate with them.

The executive secretary met with the moderator and some of the leadership of the *Sinodo Boriquen (PC(USA))*. The encounter had a strong pastoral accent after the catastrophic consequences of Hurricane María. The political status of Puerto Rico is very particular and we see as very important to empower the relationship with Latin America.

Together with PC(USA) we accompanied the meeting of the different communities of the *Comunión Mexicana de Iglesias Reformadas y Presbiterianas* last January. WCRC's general secretariat is organizing a meeting with them in May to address the issue of their membership to WCRC.

After our General Assambly in 2016, the *Iglesia Nacional Presbiteriana de México* withdrew from the regional council but continued to be member of the WCRC. In May the WCRC general secretary and the delegation from AIPRAL will discuss this issue with them in Mexico, as well as the incorporation of *Comunión Mexicana de Iglesias Reformadas y Presbiterianas*.

## 2. AIPRAL's programme

After a period of evaluation we decided that the different departments of AIPRAL should work together having women and young people as key elements of all their activities. Moreover, the issue of justice and communion should be key to the

theological and mission department as well as the other way. The results are promising so far. We are having a better and stronger participation of women and youth in our activities, as well as a better understanding of the different issues when we approach them with a transdisciplinary approach.

*Paz en tu territorio (Peace in your territory)*

This programme started last year in Central America. It brought people from our church members and partners to produce a material and training to address the issue of peace in complex situations, especially in the context of the “Northern Triangle.” This year will continue with national events in this region and, with the same scheme, it will move to the southern cone. In 2019 it will start in the Caribbean region.

*Caminando sobre las aguas (Walking on the waters)*

AIPRAL and CWM with the cooperation of *Comunidad de Educacion Teologica Ecumenica Latinoamericana y Caribe (CETELA)* and the Evangelical Seminary of Matanzas celebrated last December an encounter in Matanzas, Cuba. We brought together 35 young theologians, pastors and leaders of the churches in the “big Caribbean” creating an intercultural space to study and engage in dialogue and discernment with issues such as empire, interculturality and mission. Additional goals were: 1) creating a communitarian environment to know one another and create bonds for further relationship and walking together that may overcome the present isolationism of the “big Caribbean;” 2) facilitating the relationship between teachers and theological institutions for future common activities.

*Justicia de Cristo, paz para ellas, paz para el mundo (Justice of Christ, peace for women, peace for the world)*

Addressing the issue of violence against women in their different aspects, AIPRAL empowered the celebration of the Day of Prayer for Latin American women. The women’s department organizes every year in a different country a workshop to produce material for worship around different issues regarding women that is used for our church members on the second Friday of September ([aipral.net/es/recursos/category/9-dia-oracion-mujer](http://aipral.net/es/recursos/category/9-dia-oracion-mujer)). In addition, we produce materials and different resources from a Reformed perspective for specific dates to make visible the situation of women and ways to stop violence against women and empowerment of women.

*Renovados y transformados por la gracia de Dios (Renewed and transformed by God’s grace)*

We produced a very simple digital booklet to accompany at a local level the celebration and thanksgiving for the 500 years of the Protestant Reformation for use in October. This material was produced by the Department of Theology with the collaboration of sisters and brothers of Presbyterian and Reformed churches in Latin

America and the Caribbean. We have included resources in the form of prayers, songs and orientations for this celebration: [aipral.net/es/recursos/file/98-caderno-500-reforma](http://aipral.net/es/recursos/file/98-caderno-500-reforma)

### 3. Communications

AIPRAL's new logo

AIPRAL invited people from our member churches to produce a new logo for our regional council. As a result of this process we have a new logo:



### *La Voz*

Since the last General Assembly we moved to digital what used to be our printed magazine. Now it is published quarterly. It intends to inform and also to bring some theological reflections on different issues relevant for the membership of our member churches.

### 4. AIPRAL's legal entity

As a direct resolution from our last General Assembly, we are working to get AIPRAL's legal entity. It will be a legal entity of first degree and composed by the actual members of the Executive Committee elected in the last Assembly. This entity will be renewed in their membership after every Assembly of AIPRAL.

### 5. Empower ecumenical relationships in the region and beyond

We constantly make efforts to empower ecumenical relationships, including these of note:

- Participation in the regional event on mission organized by WCC last year.
- Active participation in the launching of a Platform of Evangelical and Protestant Universities in Latin America, Qonakuy.
- The relationship with the World Student Christian Federation (WSCF) in the region is close and we cooperate in different instances. Together with the WCRC, we are part of the effort of many Christian institutions to build a high level platform of dialogue on ethics and economy. This is the third year we have come together and we expect to resume the discussions in a document and submit it to the meeting of the G20 in Buenos Aires, Argentina.
- Active membership in ALCnoticias: [alc-noticias.net/es/](http://alc-noticias.net/es/)



- We started some relationships and partnerships with the Council for World Mission (CWM). Together we organized "*Caminando sobre las aguas*" in Cuba last year and this year we are facilitating their event on mission and empire to be held in Mexico in May.
- PC(USA): as we mentioned before our relationship with this church is very close and even more promising for the future.
- Church of Scotland: we participated in last General Assembly of this church and recently received the visit of the convener of world mission to visualize a future relationship.
- We are an active member of Religions for Peace and participate as much as possible in their activities. Our former president, Gabriela Mulder, coordinates the women's area of this organization.

Unfortunately, the situation of the Latin American Council of Churches (CLAI) is still critical and besides the many intents to find a solution and overcome its deadlock, we do not see a possible solution yet.

#### 6. WCRC

The relationship and dialogue with the general secretariat and staff is fluent and very positive. We address many of the issues together but we still need to improve it. Still it is necessary to find better ways to coordinate the different levels: global, regional (inter-regional, too) and member churches. In addition, the cooperation of this different level is something that we need to promote.

## **Report of the Caribbean and North American Area Council (CANAAC)**

Rev. Dr. Lisa Vander Wal, steering committee convener

Since the Executive Committee meeting of May 2016 in Cuba, the Steering Committee has met via teleconferencing, email and Facebook. Members of the Steering Committee include Lisa Vander Wal (convener), Reformed Church in America; Valeska Austin (vice convener), Guyana Congregational Union; Karen Georgia Thompson (secretary/treasurer), United Church of Christ; Kelvin Marte, *Iglesia Evangélica Dominicana*; Bill Thomas, United Church of Canada; and Robina Winbush, Presbyterian Church (USA). Lisa Vander Wal was elected vice president for the region at the 2017 WCRC General Council.

### **Leadership Challenges**

One of the challenges CANAAC has faced has been an 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 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 (although we are grateful for staff support the PC(USA) provided for the webinars we held prior to the WCRC General Council). Each of the steering committee members are already heavily committed within their own churches, and with continuing communication challenges and without staff support, it is difficult to move forward toward fulfilling the goals CANAAC has 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 partially alleviated through the WCRC's new strategic plan.

### **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. We are grateful to now have an active website,

although it is not as functional as we hope it will be to assist with communication and resourcing. Finally, the webinars which were held prior to the WCRC General Council did provide helpful orientation and a greater sense of shared involvement at the General Council itself.

### **General Assembly to be held in Guyana, October 26-31, 2018**

The steering committee convened in Guyana in April 2016 with a two-fold agenda: 1) to meet with Guyanese member communions and 2) to plan for the next General Assembly. Due to the challenges of communication and convening the Steering Committee, the assembly will be held in Guyana October 26-31, 2018.

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 churches, including a lack of ordained 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 October.

The agenda of the 2018 General Assembly will be focused around the theme “Living Faithfully—Building Relationships.” Our goal is to address some of the aforementioned leadership and communication concerns, as well as to assist churches in strengthening a commitment to the relationships and justice work that we have striven to forge within the region. Additionally, a theological institute for lay leaders is being planned to help offset the challenges of insufficient ordained pastoral leadership in the region. We are grateful for the leadership that three leaders in the Guyanese churches are providing to facilitate the local arrangements.

## **Report of the Northeast Asia Area Council (NEAAC)**

Rev. Joshua Lian, moderator

1. The first ever NEAAC meeting in Hong Kong was held from 22-24 January 2018.
2. Last year, NEAAC took advantage of the General Council and only met briefly during the General Council without a full administrative meeting in Hongkong.
3. Participants comprise of 4 delegates from PCT, 3 delegates each from HKCCCC, PCK, PROK and CCJ, and 2 delegates from KCCJ. PCT, PCK and CCJ were able to sent a youth delegate. As for gender balance, we were 13 men and 5 women.
4. WCRC General Secretary Chris Ferguson was present throughout the whole meeting to care for the region and provided important guidance on works of the WCRC.
5. The theme of the NEAAC meeting was taken directly from the General Council in Leipzig, except to reflect on it in Northeast Asian context. Dr. Jason T. S. Lam from the HKCCCC was invited to give the theological keynote which while based on Hongkong context, but easily find consonance in other parts of the region.
6. Reports were heard from each member church. Some issues noted include peace in the region, economic justice, migrant workers, LGBT, youth poverty, elderly care, low birthrate, suicide rate, indigenous people's transitional justice, Confucius-Christian dialogue, interreligious dialogue and cooperation, reformation of church polity, youth participation, among others.
7. Issues concerning empowering the regions were raised by the General Secretary. It's also mentioned that NEAAC meeting can engage with Southeast Asian member churches as well. This will continue to be an important topic for discussion next year during the administrative meeting.
8. Stronger financial support from the NEAAC member churches to the WCRC was also proposed. However, it was noted that member churches usually participate in more than one ecumenical body, many of which engage in similar tasks, but all are meeting financial crises. It will be important for WCRC to find focus for its work.
9. NEAAC presidency has been by rotation among regions. 2016 was in Korea, 2018 Hongkong, 2020 Taiwan, 2022 Japan. An issue about rotation was raised by the Korean churches since there are two member churches in Korea and Japan. Japan expressed that they have no issue with rotation. And since Taiwan only has one member church, the issue will be taken up again only in future meetings.
10. PCT has nominated Joshua Lian to be NEAAC moderator from 2018-2020. Lu En-hsuan will be secretary. And Lin Wan-Jou will be treasurer. Joshua is the youngest

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NEAAC moderator ever and will focus on empowering youth. There will first be an administrative meeting in 2019 and then a full council in 2020.

## The Council of the World Communion of Reformed Churches in Europe

Rev. Jan-Gerd Heetderks, president

We are happy to present this report to the meeting of the Council of WCRC Europe in Budapest. We are grateful to the Reformed Church of Hungary and the leadership of this church for hosting this Council and also for arranging the dinner on the Danube tomorrow evening.

### Looking back

This report marks the end of an intensive period of seven years of collaboration in the current Steering Committee. In this period, we tried to serve the European Area by setting some priorities in our work:

- **Solidarity Visits.** The Steering Committee visited several small Reformed churches in Europe and shared the faith and hope and the concerns of these churches. These visits have taken place alongside regular business meeting of the Committee. Our impression is that these visits were important for living out the communion in our European area. We could talk to the representatives of the churches in their own contexts. We saw that often the small churches are struggling hard with different difficulties. This was explicitly stated in the conversations that we held. Not only did we come to know and appreciate the diversity of the Reformed churches in Europe, we also experienced the richness of the Reformed confession. The opportunity to talk to each other in a confidential setting gave the opportunity to address sometimes sensitive issues, like the post-communist reality in some countries, ordination of women, the struggle with the past. We also saw a great vitality in congregations, such as those engaged in missionary and diaconal work and the extraordinary commitment to refugees. These visits, as we have seen in recent years, have positively influenced the life of Reformed churches in Europe.
- Our area has many small churches. The different languages mean that it is not easy to live out the communion with the other churches. It is not easy to share experiences and material. And many of our churches don't have the resources to translate material of other churches or to offer their own material in other languages. So it is a vulnerable communion in Europe.
- **Theology.** A group of several European theologians served the communion by preparing several themes of our council meetings and gave theological input to several discussions. For example, the reflection of the churches on the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification drew upon the work of this theological working group. We are very grateful for their work. The group has not been active since the council in Kloster Kappel, Switzerland.

- **Refugees and asylum/migration.** The work on the theme of refugees and asylum has been another focus point of our work. We organized several regional conferences ("Migration and Asylum" in 2014, "Tolerating Strangeness – Migration and Aggression in Europe" in 2016). We visited churches which are involved in work with asylum seekers and we have seen what the effect of that involvement is in building community. In talking to these churches, we have learned that the biblical requirement of protection of refugees is not only a blessing for the refugees, but also that the churches and congregations are evolving and changing and often find a new spirituality. With partners, we organized theological reflection on this theme and we took part in a European educational programme training of volunteers (the Erasmus-programme). Of course, we didn't do this work apart from the other churches and church organizations which are involved in this work. But we saw that it is also helpful to offer a Reformed vision and to stay, as a communion, side by side with the small Reformed churches in the countries where the effect of the coming migrants is more tangible than elsewhere. In this report you will find more information about this focus-point.

The Steering Committee is grateful for all the support and for all the encouraging signals we got from the European member churches and from the Council of WCRC Europe during these years. This was helpful for us in doing our work. However, in the light of the difficulties which Europe has to overcome on many levels, it has also been shown that the importance of the Reformed community (and also the Protestant community) should not be underestimated. As a European Council, we have the great opportunity to live out what sometimes is very hard to develop at the political level: community, sensitivity to different traditions and stories, openness to "the other" and, if necessary, co-operation and holding one another to account on things that the community does not do well.

Of course, more work could and perhaps should have been done. But all the members of the Steering Committee did this work besides their 'normal' jobs, without the support of an administrative organization. So, one of our working areas, the communication with the member churches by newsletter or website, did not get the necessary attention.

Looking back after these years, I am grateful for the work we could do and for the support we got. In this context it is good to mention that the collaboration with the *Reformierte Bund* and with its former ecumenical officer was very helpful and constructive.

As the European Area, we are also involved in the work of **WCRC global**. In the last period, one vice-president of the WCRC, the treasurer and three members of the Executive Committee came from Europe and were strongly involved in the global

work. All these people were not just delegates but worked hard in several committees of the WCRC global and they contributed to the global work.

However, our feeling is that the concerns of the European Churches are not a priority on the agenda of the global office. This is, of course, good. It is good to realize that the centre of the churches is in the Global South and not any more in the Global North. But sometimes we have felt that there is perhaps too little emphasis on 'European' issues like, for example, secularization, and on the question what European churches could bring to the communion except the money.

Perhaps you could say: the whole communion is not challenging the European churches enough. I mention this feeling because it is a danger that the churches of our area become less interested in the WCRC if there is not enough connection to the Communion. And vulnerable churches are not just in the Global South. It has to be said that there are also very small and poor European churches, which struggle every day to survive and to witness to the gospel in their context.

## **Work since 2016**

### **Steering Committee**

The members of the Steering Committee contacted each other by mail, phone, Skype and face-to-face meetings. The Steering Committee gathered several times in the past two years, since the last full meeting of the Council of WCRC Europe. Two meetings were combined with a visit to a member church.

The Steering Committee gathered in January 2017 and also visited the Uniting Church in Sweden. You will find a short report about this visit attached to this report.

The Steering Committee met prior to the meeting of the delegates of European member churches in Düsseldorf in April 2017.

The Steering Committee also met in November 2017 in Edinburgh. The president was invited to preach on Sunday in the St. Nicholas Buccleuch Parish Church, Dalkeith, the congregation served by Sandy Horsburgh, the secretary of WCRC Europe.

Because the period as the WCRC global European vice-president of Rev. Bas Plaisier ended in 2017, and there was no European delegate chosen as vice-president, the Steering Committee invited Rev. Claudio Pasquet (a member of the Executive Committee elected in Leipzig) to take part in the deliberations of the Steering Committee.



The Steering Committee gathered in January 2018 in Copenhagen and visited the Reformed Church of Denmark. You will find a short report about this visit under this report.

Because of illness and several treatments, our treasurer Kerstin Koch was not able to share in some meetings, but she was involved by e-mail and phone in the work of the Steering Committee and we hope that, in the future, her health will improve.

### **Meeting of the delegates of the European Member churches**

On March 24, 2017, delegates from European member churches met in Düsseldorf to prepare for the WCRC General Council. An important point on the agenda was the procedure for the nomination of European delegates to the Executive Committee and the approval of candidates from the European region. The European area offered four names to the General Council and three of them were chosen. For the first time, there is no vice-president (or president) coming from our area.

### **WCRC global**

The president attended the meeting of the Executive Committee in Havana, Cuba, in May 2016. In Havana, the preparation of the General Council was focus of the gathering. The strategic goals were identified and worked out. The European delegates pointed out more than once that it was necessary that the material for the General Council should be ready at an early stage. Unfortunately, there was almost no material ready so that even the Executive Committee was not very well involved in the preparations for the General Council. The impression was that the small staff team in the Hannover office was involved in a lot of developments in the regions but that there was not enough concentration on the upcoming General Council.

The President was invited to the Regional Empowerment Consultation in Hannover in February 2017. The consultation, which brought together WCRC officers, regional leaders and staff over three days, agreed on ways to improve work in the following areas:

- Communication
- Relationships of member churches within regions
- Relationships with other ecumenical bodies
- Reformed identity within broader contexts
- Initiating and facilitating programmes
- Role of officers in regions

Looking broadly at the existence of regions in the organization, the consultation reviewed the ways in which geographic regions have been organized and recognized as formal Regional Councils. Participants noted that several organized regions are not yet recognized. There are also several geographic areas yet awaiting organization.

In July 2017, the president attended the meeting in Leipzig of the **Executive Committee** prior to the General Council. Because of the late preparation of the General Council, and because of the choices that were made by the office of the general secretary, the Executive Committee was, in the opinion of several members of the Executive Committee, not involved enough in the preparation of the General Council and in the choices which were made relating to the programme. At some points, there was disagreement between a part of the Executive Committee and the leadership of the Council because of the content of the programme.

In July 2017, the president took part in the **General Council** of the WCRC in Leipzig as a representative of WCRC Europe and as a member of the Executive Committee. The other members of the Steering Committee were also present, either as delegates or as members of the staff involved in the work of the General Council.

At this point, it has to be said that the financial, organizational and administrative commitment of the German Churches to the General Council was enormous.

After the assembly, it was intended that every member of the General Council should get an evaluation form soon, but the evaluation form was not sent until February 2018, too late to get a good overview over the experiences.

The Steering Committee evaluated the work of the General Council at its meeting in November 2017 and wrote a letter to the general secretary of the WCRC. In this letter, the Steering Committee expressed its gratitude for all the work the staff had done. But the Steering Committee also expressed its concerns:

*While we agreed that there had been much that was positive about it [the General Council], such as the fellowship, the possibility to participate in some memorable worship services and the work of the discernment groups, members of the Steering Committee also shared some of the reservations and concerns they had and resolved that we should write to you to share them. Members of the Steering Committee agreed that the decision process used by the General Council was deeply flawed. For a start, the preparation of the meeting was poor, owing to the late publication of material, the authorship and origin of which was never made entirely clear, and this undoubtedly hindered a full engagement by all delegates with the issues before the Council. While we recognise the theory behind and the good intention of the consensus decision making model, we felt that it had not lived up to its intended aims in practice. Many of us had heard positive reports or had good experience of group discussions in the discernment groups but frustration was felt that these had not had enough time given to them within the overall programme, and that too much time had been given to invited speakers, many of whom lacked the discipline to keep to their allotted time. Overall, the timetabling and time keeping of the General Council was very poor.*

*Those who had attended the session with representatives of Korean Churches were deeply disturbed that a platform had been given to representatives of the North Korean regime and that their propaganda had gone unchallenged. We shared the now familiar sense of dismay that, once again, a General Council had passed a huge range of mandates but that few, realistically, could be followed up by the secretariat and the new Executive Committee. Finally, despite a request being made during the WCRC Europe preparatory meeting in Düsseldorf and an undertaking being given both then by the General Council co-ordinator and again in a plenary session at the General Council itself by the outgoing president, no evaluation form has yet been made available. We write in a spirit of solidarity, aware of the great pressures you and all the staff are under, and thankful for the extraordinary work which enabled the General Council to happen at all, but in the hope that our observations may help with future planning.*

### **Task Force on Migration**

After the discussion on the Council in Kloster Kappel 2016, the Steering Committee set up a Task Force on Migration. This group worked hard over the past two years. Under this report, you will find the report of the Task Force and, during the meeting in Budapest, the Council will discuss another, more substantive report and will also have the opportunity to discuss a proposal regarding this work.

### **Erasmus-project**

*“Train the unknown trainer”* is a European Union financed project with actors in Estonia, Italy, Hungary, Germany and the Czech Republic. The aim of the project is to find out the needs of the volunteers working with ecumenical organizations which are working for refugees and to support them. A questionnaire was developed to try to identify their motivation, best practices and so on and a number of volunteers completed it. The project is administrated by the Reformed Church in Germany on behalf of WCRC Europe.

In 2017 Vice-President Martina Wasserloos-Strunk, who is head of one of the Erasmus partners, met with the other Erasmus partners in Italy (Rovigo) and the Czech Republic (Brno) to visit national projects and to interview volunteers and employees. In Italy, as in the Czech Republic, there is a very deep engagement with refugees but there are very different requirements. A first evaluation of the questionnaire replies shows that our target group, the *“Unknown trainer,”* is very different with very different needs. While in Hungary especially students are engaged as volunteers, in Germany, for example, the target group is mostly people older than 50. In Germany, volunteers need support for their social work – education in questions of asylum rights and support to develop their own position (closeness and distance), while in Hungary, for example, student volunteers asked to get *“credits”* which would count towards their studies in recognition of their engagement. In addition to that, it was encouraging for us to see that a number of

volunteers are Muslim people working with both Muslim and Christian refugees, but outside the usual structures and mostly unknown by wider society.

The contact and common discussion about the European response to refugees and migration is a great opportunity to learn more about the situation of churches in Europe and about the political situation they have to live with. The motivation to give help to people in need may be different, but the basis is the conviction we should all be on a common spiritual ground. Sharing our faith and the motives of our work was an important part of the meetings.

### **European Protestant Ecumenism**

During the meeting of representatives of the European member churches in Düsseldorf, the proposal was made to talk at the next Council about the ecumenical organizations in Europe and look for possibilities to integrate more of the work.

Because of the fullness of the agenda, but also because of substantive reasons, the Steering Committee has not put this on the agenda of the meeting of the Council in Budapest.

One of the goals of WCRC Europe is to strengthen the involvement of WCRC member churches in the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE). Most of the member churches of WCRC Europe are member churches of the CPCE. The two bodies work in a different way and there is no question of a double structure where two bodies do the same work. The work areas are different so there is no loss of efficiency. By coincidence, during the last few years, the president was also member of the Council of the CPCE and constantly sought ways of strengthening the involvement of WCRC member churches in the work of CPCE.

The work areas of the CPCE and the CEC are closer together. There is good coordination with each other, not least because a representative of the CPCE is working at the office of the CEC in Brussels. In March 2018, the CPCE also organized a meeting in Vienna for the Protestant churches to prepare themselves for the General Assembly of the CEC in 2018. The president attended this meeting in his capacity as a member of the council of the CPCE.

This year, the CEC and the CPCE will both hold their general assemblies and will determine their strategic goals for the coming years. It would therefore seem more appropriate to look at the future of the European ecumenism in the coming years, and the outgoing Steering Committee encourages the incoming Steering Committee to discuss this item at a suitable time.

### **Representation**

The president attended the synod of the *Evangelische Kirche im Rheinland* in January 2017. He spoke to the members of the synod and invited them to feel connected to

the work of the WCRC and the coming General Council ([www.ekir.de/www/service/heetderks27524.php](http://www.ekir.de/www/service/heetderks27524.php)).

On the 31st of October 2017, the president attended the commemoration of 500 years of the Reformation in Wittenberg. Many international and national church leaders and politicians were guests of the EKD that day.

Representing the general secretary of the WCRC, in November 2017 the president was a guest at the gathering of the Union of *Evangelischer Kirchen* in the *Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland*. He brought the greetings of the WCRC global and WCRC Europe to this body, from which just a few churches are member churches of the WCRC but support the work of our Communion in an extraordinary way.

### **End of an era**

As I started this report: This report marks the end of an intensive period of seven years of collaboration in the current Steering Committee. Personally, I have been involved in the European work of WARC and the WCRC since 2006 (as vice-president and later as president). I am very grateful for the trust and for the friendship of the churches and all their delegates I received in all these years. Sometimes it was hard work but most of the time it was also very rewarding. The churches which shared their faith, their hope, their vision and their concerns with me and my colleagues made us also richer. I learned a lot and I am grateful that I got the chance to do this work.

I am also grateful for the comradeship of my colleagues of the last years – Sandy Horsburgh, Kerstin Koch, Balázs Ódor and Martina Wasserloos-Strunk. It was a great experience to work with them and to share our thoughts, insights and views. We had a great time together. The composition of this group made it possible to complement each other. We had great discussions and lots of fun.

May God bless the work of our churches and of our communion.

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### **Visit of the Steering Committee to the Uniting Church in Sweden (January 2017)**

The Steering Committee visited the Uniting Church in Sweden in January 2017. The Steering Committee were hosted by Anette Brand, chaplain at the University of Uppsala.

#### ***Meeting with representatives of the Uniting Church in Sweden***

Our host at this meeting was Rev. Olle Alkholm, vice-president of the church.

### *History*

In 1876, P. P. Walldenström, a priest in the Church of Sweden, had a vision to draw together different Protestant denominations in a new union. Eventually, this led, in 1918, to the formation of the Free Church Cooperation Committee. By the 1970s the Baptist, Methodist and Mission Covenant churches began talking with a view to formal union. This was achieved in 2011.

### *Current situation*

The Uniting Church in Sweden has 700 congregations, 70,000 members, and 130,000 people involved in church activities. It is headquartered in Stockholm, in the ecumenical centre, though Uppsala is considered the ecclesial centre of Sweden. Individual congregations are free to continue to use their old name, but many are choosing to adopt the new Uniting identity. They maintain close links with world Baptist, Methodist and Reformed organizations and with the WCC, the Conference of European Churches and are active in the Christian Council in Sweden. The UCS is not part of CPCE. It struggles to keep up with membership of all these organizations but feels that it is important to do so to keep up with heritage of the churches which came together.

### *Challenges*

There are currently many vacancies for ministers in congregations in the Uniting Church in Sweden. In recent years, quite a number of pastors have left the UCS either for ministry in the Church of Sweden or for secular employment. The UCS is working to recruit more pastors.

The representatives spoke about the difficulty of maintaining a sense of unity across such a diverse denomination. They also spoke about financial challenges facing the church, contrasting the situation of the UCS with the Church of Sweden which receives state funding.

### *Visit to Nyby Vision*

The Steering Committee paid a visit to Nyby Vision, a project working for refugee integration which is run as a partnership between the churches and the Uppsala municipality. It has been in operation for 25 years and focuses on promoting integration between Swedes and immigrants and between different immigrant groups. Much of the work consists of teaching but there are also literacy programmes, cultural programmes, arts, community and sporting events. Subjects taught include Swedish language, computing, sewing and woodworking, and the committee saw some of the excellent facilities in which people are taught. It was emphasized, though, that it is a diaconal activity and not a school.

The Steering Committee was deeply impressed by what it saw and heard about but was made aware that the Swedish churches are facing a big challenge to maintain what has been established.

*Sunday*

Those members of the Committee who were able to stay for the Sunday worshipped with the congregation of the Missionskyrkan in Uppsala, the service being ably and generously translated into English by one of the church members.

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**Meeting with representatives of the Reformed Church of Denmark (January 2018)**

The Steering Committee was hosted by Rev. Axel Bargheer.

The Steering Committee was invited for Evening Prayer with representatives of the German speaking, French speaking and Ghanaian congregations of the Reformed Church of Denmark from Copenhagen. The service was followed by dinner and conversation. Unfortunately, no one was available from the Korean congregation, which also shares the Reformed Church building in Copenhagen. A representative had also travelled from the congregation in Fredericia.

We heard about the history of the church and could exchange experiences.

The Reformed Church in Denmark is a small church, mostly a church of immigrants. Recently, though some Danish people are becoming interested in this form of church life.

The German-Reformed and the French-Reformed Church in Copenhagen belong to the first non-Lutheran communities which were allowed to form congregations in Denmark after the Reformation. The church building in Copenhagen was built between 1688 and 1699 and is owned by the German Reformed congregation and the French Reformed congregation. These congregations have their services in German, Danish and French. A Korean Presbyterian congregation and a Ghanaian Presbyterian congregation also have services on Sunday in this church, so that you can visit four different reformed services in this church. The congregations of the Reformed Church are members of the *Danske Kirkers Råd*.

On the Sunday, the president and secretary attended the German speaking service, and the president preached.

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**WCRC EUROPE TASK FORCE ON MIGRATION AND REFUGEE  
FINAL REPORT  
2016-2017**

**BALÁZS ÓDOR**

At its meeting in March 2016, the Council of the World Communion of Reformed Churches in Europe (WCRC Europe) mandated the Steering Committee to establish a Task Force on Migration and Refugee. In April 2016, the Task Force on Migration and Refugee was established and has since convened three times.

It is not the intention of the Task Force on Migration and Refugee to duplicate the work of organizations like CCME or to create a double structure. The Task Force's work in the field is based on creating and maintaining good relationships with other organizations on the issue, like CCME. In recent years, the Task Force has developed strong and solid partnerships in cooperation with such organizations.

We are aware that member churches' representatives need sensitive and safe spaces to hear from each other and engage in discussion in an open manner. So we use our structure and sense as a "Reformed family" to encourage and provide the safe space.

Members in the Task Force cover the regions of the European Area. The members of the group were appointed by the Steering Committee, while Balázs Ódor and Martina Wasserloos-Strunk were 'ex officio' members of the TF as vice-presidents of the region.

In the first meeting in Budapest in June 2016, coordinated and hosted by the Reformed Church in Hungary, the group decided to commit itself to five tasks in support of church leaders of WCRC European member churches. The Task Force committed itself to:

1. Encourage theological discussion about what the roots for our concerns are for refugees
2. Reflect on Christian-Muslim Relations
3. Include Middle-East relations as part of the theological reflection
4. Communicate and share best practices
5. Show solidarity with churches active in ministry toward refugees

*"We hope that this consultation can provide a safe space for churches around the region to engage in meaningful dialogue about common responsibility on the issue of migration. Almost thirty participants from across the continent will attend, representing over a dozen denominations, many different faith-based organizations, as well as more than fifteen different countries. Nations from all over Europe will be represented at the consultation, including Slovakia, Ukraine, Romania, Poland, Sweden, Italy, Germany, Austria, United Kingdom, Spain, Greece, Netherlands, Czech Republic, and Hungary. Also in attendance will be Doris Peschke, the General Secretary of the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME), Martina Wasserloos-Strunk,*



*Vice-President of the European Council of the World Communion of Reformed Churches in Europe, and Martin Engels, Moderator of the Reformed Alliance in Germany.”*

*Participants from all over the world talked about the need to find a more unified way to discuss the crisis; for instance, is this crisis a European one or a Global one? Many of those in attendance also stressed that statistics are essential in this line of discussion, but that the way in which they are presented is often done with a slant to increase fear, and so the wider church should work towards a way of communicating that is both honest and clear about the challenges posed by the current situation.*

The second meeting was a partnership consultation in Greece in October 2016. During the meeting, hosted by the Evangelical Church in Greece, the Task Force was called to formulate its position on Migration and Refugees, which was then sent out as an official statement to churches for reactions.

*“The arrival of hundreds of thousands of refugees in Europe since the summer of 2015 has created a situation that confronts the Churches across Europe. We see women and children, men and elderly fleeing from war, poverty and persecution. Every day people put their lives at stake as they seek life, peace and justice in Europe. The daily news of people drowning in the Mediterranean Sea, women and children being trafficked, terror attacks in Europe, fearful rhetoric used for political gain and pictures of war crimes and devastation in Syria seem to have become part of our accepted reality.”*

*“At its first meeting the task force has committed itself to support member churches in deepening theological reflection on migration, engaging in Christian-Muslim relations, partnering with Middle East churches, sharing best practices, and showing solidarity with member churches. As part of WCRC global, in view to the upcoming General Council we seek to learn from Middle East member churches about their perspectives on migration, and its causes, and how we can support one another. We will also work to improve our understanding of Islam and advance new paradigms for Christian-Muslim encounter in Europe, and provide resources for member churches. In each local and national context, we urge churches and congregations to continue to engage faithfully and act creatively with our neighbours and to advocate for just political actions that protect the rights and dignity of all. To advance our shared mission, we invite member churches to share with the Task Force their theological reflections on migration.”*

The Task Force is committed to supporting member churches in deepening their theological reflections on migration, engaging in a dialogue about Christian-Muslim relations, partnering with Middle East churches, sharing best practices from various

contexts, and doing all of these things through concrete actions of solidarity. The Task Force invited member churches to participate in a process of in-depth reflection on the theological questions raised by migration in general and the current Middle Eastern and European Refugee Crisis in particular. This process was designed to help member churches to deepen understanding and formulate a joint theological position in Europe, which will in turn inform joint actions that could be taken.

*“The Lord has touched our lives through these people, and we feel honoured,” says Yiannis Yfantidis, the church’s pastor, who is also engaged in the work. “They become part of our families, and I hope they will remember that.”*

During the WCRC Europe Steering Committee meeting in Uppsala, Sweden in January 2017, a new budget was proposed for the Task Force to continue its work in 2017. It was reiterated that the main job of the group was to encourage WCRC member churches to join in the conversations on migration. Member churches submitted very few theological reflections, which was of concern and troublesome evidence for the Task Force. Nevertheless, the Task Force decided, at a special meeting of some of its members in Cologne, that the feedback, along with conversations with churches and experiences of the work, be drawn together in a comprehensive reflection. The Committee also decided to consider the extension of the service time of the Task Force, encouraging a solidarity visit to Italy, as well as a completed formal report on the work of the Task Force to be presented at the 2018 WCRC Europe Council meeting. A decision would then be made on whether to continue or to close the work of the Task Force.

It was also discussed that the new and increasing patterns of migration into Europe have altered the religious makeup of the continent. Islam is now the second largest religion in Europe, and many migrants currently seeking refuge are Muslims. These changes have escalated ongoing social, ethical, and political discussion and debate, and have demanded creative and faithful theological, scriptural, missiological, and practical engagement from Christians. In order to assist churches in engaging with the growing inter-religious context, the WCRC Europe is offering an intensive continuing education course on Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations in cooperation with New College of Edinburgh. The Task Force hopes to draw together ministers and lay leaders from across the continent to offer an advanced introduction to Islamic thought and practice; explore theological, scriptural, and ethical frameworks for Christian-Muslim exchange; and consider practical and pastoral models for engagement. This week-long course will run in the spring of 2018.

The third meeting of the Task Force took place 2-5 October 2017 in Sicily, and was once again a combination of expressing solidarity, networking, getting an in-depth insight into the exemplary work of a member church, and engaging in deep discussions with experts and senior staff. The Federation of Protestant Churches in

Italy organized a Conference, titled, “Living and Witnessing the Border,” to collect the fruits and reflect on the work we carried out, together with our partners, in Italy and abroad, of the last three years, on borders, reception and integration. The Conference brought together experts from different churches, international organizations, and NGOs, and more than 120 participants from different European countries, the USA and Canada, underlining the importance of the role of churches, civil society, and NGOs in the reception and integration of refugees with a special reference to the “Humanitarian Corridors” Project, an ecumenical “good practice” put in place by FCEI, the Waldensian Board and the Community of Sant’Egidio. Members of the Task Force also had the chance to visit Lampedusa and experience first-hand one of the regions of the Mediterranean most affected by the influx of migrants and refugees. As the moderator of the Task Force, I gave a presentation at the meeting, providing a chance to look back at the progress with the General Secretary of CCME, Doris Peschke.

The participants of the Conference issued a statement and reminder of the victims of the 3 October 2013 shipwreck, where 368 migrants perished a few nautical miles from the coast of Lampedusa:

*“On 3 October, we will go to Lampedusa to remember the victims of the 3 October 2013 shipwreck where 368 migrants perished a few nautical miles from the coast. After the conclusion of these meetings and commemoration, we will return to our churches and ecumenical entities in which we are engaged and make the following plea:*

*Sisters and brothers, we should always remember that protecting and welcoming migrants and refugees is at the centre of our faith in Christ, and these values are the core Christian message that we are being called upon to proclaim. We should remember that according to the gospel message that nourishes our faith, migrants and refugees who live among us have fundamental rights that cannot be restricted or denied for our benefit or in the name of our national interests.”*

In Palermo, the Task Force looked back at the work completed and the results achieved. It also recalled the mandate and identified the upcoming meeting of the European church leaders, the European Area Council of WCRC which took place on 12-14 April 2018 in Budapest. The meeting presented the different results of the work in a comprehensive, comparative study combining theological reflection based on member churches’ statements and contextual reflections on realities and best practices, drafted by Task Force members, and a conclusion highlighting the commonalities and critical divergences in the European churches’ position, with the clear aim of provoking discussion at the EAC in Budapest.

It was agreed to organize the workshop mentioned above for a maximal capacity of 50 participants on April 17-19, most possibly in Rome. The meeting also decided to suggest the Steering Committee to delegate Martina Wasserloos-Strunk to the Conference, "Migration in the Middle-East," at the beginning of December in Cyprus.

The WCRC Europe Steering Committee, at its meeting in Edinburgh, 24-25 November 2017, listened to and discussed the plans and suggestions presented by the moderator of the Task Force, based on the outcomes of the Palermo meeting. The Steering Committee also had the chance to hear a report from Dr. Joshua Ralston, member of the Task Force and responsible for editing the draft of the final report.

It was agreed that the Steering Committee shall invite Task Force members to the Area Council in Budapest to present the results of their work, encourage member church leaders to a discussion and formally close the work of the Task Force. It is the WCRC European Area Council who is entitled to make a decision regarding the mandate of the Task Force.

### **Financial implications**

A detailed summary of the expenditures will be presented by the Treasurer of the EAC in her yearly financial report.

Budapest, 26.11.2017

Balázs Ódor  
Co-Moderator of Task Force

### *Members of the Task Force*

Rev. Martin Engels, Reformed Alliance in Germany  
Rev. Emanuel Furbacken, Uniting Church in Sweden  
Dóra Kanizsai, Reformed Church in Hungary  
Alexandra Nikolara, Greek Evangelical Church  
Dr. Joshua Ralston, Church of Scotland  
Rev. Francesco Sciotto, Waldensian Evangelical Church

### *Co-Moderators*

Martina Wasserloos-Strunk, WCRC Europe Vice-President  
Rev. Balázs Ódor, WCRC Europe Vice-President

**Report of WCRC-Indonesia**  
Rev. Zakaria J. Ngelow, moderator

## Introduction

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 Communion of Churches in Indonesia (PGI). The conference was attended by the previous WCRC General Secretary, Rev. Dr. Setri Nyomi. He also motivated participants to support formation of a regional WCRC council for Indonesia.

## Some Activities

1. WCRC-Indonesia 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 at a member meeting in Kupang, East Nusa Tenggara, on 26 January 2013. The bylaws were then sent to the General Secretariat in Geneva. On May 2013 we got information from Ms. Yael Eka Hadiputeri, Executive Committee member of WCRC from Indonesia, that Indonesia Regional Council of WCRC and its bylaws were approved by the Executive Committee meeting in Ghana, but ratification will be done by General Council in 2017. I learned from our general secretary in Leipzig that there has been no ratification yet for Indonesia as a regional council.
4. On 20 May 2015, we met Rev. Chris Ferguson, the new general secretary of WCRC, at GKI Gunung Sahari, Jakarta Pusat. He came to Indonesia to attend 14th General Assembly of CCA, on 27-29 May 2015. We shared information about WCRC-Indonesia and Rev. Ferguson shared about 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 member congregations in Bandung. Pasundan Christian Church (GKP) was hosted him for the visit.
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, namely an introduction to Accra Confession (WARC, 2004) from 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 on our website. Sharing bread is a programme to share available programmes among member churches to other members. Pasundan Church, for example, offers interfaith program or shelter programme for the victims of domestic violence. Other churches are invited to come and learn how Pasundan Church runs the programmes. I was reelected as moderator of our regional communion, and Rev. Arliyanus Larosa as secretary. 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 reasurer.

9. As preparation to attend the WCRC General Council in Leipzig, we had a consultation on the theme of the General Council—"Living God, renew and transform us"—and on the document "Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification" (JDDJ). The consultation was hosted by presbytery of GPIB (the Protestant Church in Western Indonesia) in Makassar, South Sulawesi, on 21-22 October 2016, attended by 40 participants from 12 member churches.

#### **Short information of member churches of WCRC in Indonesia**

1. Indonesia, ca. 18,000 tropical islands, 265 million people of about 600 ethnic groups. The country is the biggest Muslim population (87%); 10% Christians (of both Roman Catholics and Protestantism). The government recognizes six major world religions, but there are many indigenous religions.
2. Christianity arrived in the country since 7th century (of Nestorian church). Our Indonesian modern Christians began in mid-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) backgrounds. Some were confined to a certain region, some others became ethnic churches that spread across the country following their members' migration. While its history from 16th century, most of our member churches were organized

- into independent churches 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, but our estimation is about 10 million (about 50% of Indonesian Protestantism).
  6. All WCRC-Indonesia member churches are also members 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 board 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 is caused mainly by big corporations supported by our government. They take over our people's land. They convert our tropical forest into monoculture of palm oil plantation or break the ground for mineral minings. They also convert people's lands in the suburban cities to exclusive real estates. Land grabbing created injustice to our ecology and to our people. They are uprooted from their soil and have lost their traditional economic resources. Many of them have become migrant workers and victims of human trafficking syndicates. Human rights has become a major issue as some religious minorities, including some Christian communities, are discriminated against. Other minorities, such as LGBT and indigenous people are also marginalized.
  8. Toward the General Council in Leipzig, we organized some meetings and distributed information to our member churches. We were proud that some Indonesian young theologians—Septemmy Lakawa, Isabella Sinulingga—were asked to contribute their insights to the General Council. We were also happy that one of our delegation, Sylvana Apituley, was elected as one of the vice presidents of WCRC in Leipzig. And we were thankful that our language, Bahasa Indonesia, was one of the official languages in the General Council.

### **Some Concerns**

1. Executive Committee of WCRC-Indonesia has difficulty of communication with member churches. Most of the churches do not reply to emails. It is a contradiction to the nature of WCRC as a communion of one Christ's body

lives in an era of modern-sophisticated information and communication technology. Therefore serious efforts are needed to develop better communication. As an effort we keep update postal addresses, phones, and identify a contact person of each member church (enclosed). Online information is also updated, such as information from Hannover as we read in 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 leaving their dues unpaid. While waiting for the Executive Committee's new policy on this matter, churches are advised to pay their respective dues, beginning 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 financial limitation of most of our churches. Unpaid annual dues 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).
4. After the last General Assembly we did not have any programmes. Personally I thought that it seems that the effort to establish a regional council of WCRC for churches in Indonesia is failed. There is no support both from member churches and WCRC Executive Committee.



## Creating Safer and Respectful Spaces

This document is not intended to be legalistic or punitive. It is meant to serve as a covenant for how, as a community, we deal with sexual harassment, seeking care, compassion and justice for all parties involved. It is our hope that the situation necessitating these guidelines will not arise.

### 1. Introduction

The Gospel affirms the basic dignity of all humankind, created in the image of God. This statement challenges the Christian community to act and respect all humankind regardless of their differences such as sex, age, race, ethnicity, class and religion. Human sexuality is a gift from God and it is to be celebrated. The roots of sexual harassment and abuse are not in human sexuality but in the abuse of power. Care must be taken that power is not used to violate, harass or intimidate. Although offenders may believe their behaviour is innocent or unintended, sexual harassment is defined by the perception and experience of the victim.

The World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) affirms its commitment to the basic dignity and human rights of all people. We believe that we must strive to be a community, which challenges all forms of violence and disrespect and expresses the faith and principles of the gospel in appropriate action. A fundamental respect for each human being includes a commitment to the rights and dignity of all regardless of sex, race, age, class, caste or tribe. Sexual harassment is not exclusively a sexual issue but must be understood as an exploitation of power relationships.

It is a global reality that the human family is broken. One such form of brokenness is violence against the human person. This violence expresses itself in ways such as sexual abuse, child abuse and sexual harassment, and is directed predominantly towards women. The WCRC acknowledges that it has not only played a role in healing and restoring but that it also shares responsibility for this brokenness. Therefore, we commit ourselves to continue to work for the healing and restoration of the human family.

Furthermore, the WCRC made its formal move from its seat in Geneva, Switzerland to Hanover, Germany in 2014. As a publicly registered entity in the Federal Republic of Germany, the WCRC is bound to abide by strict anti-discrimination laws for all WCRC employees, event, meeting, and consultation participants. Under German law, sexual harassment is illegal.

**It is expected, in light of these contexts, that ALL WCRC employees, consultants, members and participants at any WCRC-hosted events have been known of the illegality of any such actions and the Communion's no-tolerance of sexual harassment.**

## 2. Definition of sexual harassment

Sexual harassment is defined as any form of sexual advance that is uninvited, unwanted and unwelcome. Sexual harassment may involve a wide range of behaviour, from verbal innuendo and subtle suggestions to offensive and any forms of unwelcome touching, such as but not limited to hugs, squeezes, pinches, kisses, overt demands and physical abuse or assault. Unwelcome acts will be considered as violations of an acceptable code of conduct especially when the accuser has in some way made her/his feelings of what is “unwelcome” known in advance. The World Communion of Reformed Churches acknowledges that even within its gatherings, our families and churches, sexual harassment does occur.

## 3. Sexual harassment includes but is not limited to one or more of the following:

- ◆ Overt or covert sexual advances or contact.
- ◆ Mental abuse (which may include obscene jokes, innuendoes, unacceptable visual contact, seduction).
- ◆ Physical abuse or assault (which may include fondling, unwelcome hugs and kisses, and genital contact).
- ◆ Any intentional touching or fondling (either directly or through the clothing) of such areas of the body that are sensitive and personal.

## 4. What are some of the things you can do if you are being sexually harassed?

- ◆ Refuse any inappropriate gesture or contact.
- ◆ Make it clear to the aggressor by words or gestures that such behaviour is unwelcome.
- ◆ Draw public attention when or if harassment persists in public places.
- ◆ Share your concern with someone you trust.
- ◆ If you are sexually harassed or falsely accused, make a report to the Redressal Committee via the WCRC’s complaint desk.

## 5. Procedures to be followed for Formal Complaints at WCRC events

To begin the process, complaint or accusation of sexual harassment shall be brought to the attention of the WCRC staff leader of an event, or directly to the WCRC’s Redressal Committee via the complaint desk. Currently, the interim Redressal committee consists of several select members, among them staff. The legal head of the WCRC will not serve on this committee.

- ◆ The accusation / complaint may be verbal or written. Please submit the accusation / complaint to the complaint desk: [confidential@wrc.eu](mailto:confidential@wrc.eu).
- ◆ The WCRC staff leader will coordinate privately with the WCRC complaint desk as needed, such as to conduct interviews with the complainant who may choose a friend to accompany him/her and to provide moral support within 5 business days of the submission of the accusation / complaint.

- ◆ The WCRC staff leader will coordinate privately with the WCRC complaint desk to schedule and conduct private interviews with the accused with the purpose of investigating the accusation within 5 business days of the submission of the accusation / complaint.
- ◆ The accused shall be informed of the charge and advised that he/she may also choose an appropriate friend to accompany him/her and to provide moral support.
- ◆ After initial interviews, the WCRC staff leader in coordination with the WCRC complaint desk whether or not to proceed with the investigation and follow up with appropriate action.

#### **6. Actions to be considered by the WCRC Redressal Committee**

After the facts are gathered by the complaint desk, they will be passed on to the entire Redressal Committee within Issues to be considered by the WCRC Redressal Committee in making recommendations may include the intent of the accused, awareness of the appropriateness of the behaviour in question, awareness of why the behaviour is or is not appropriate, and willingness to take responsibility for the behaviour and its consequences. The WCRC Redressal Committee will have 30 business days to conduct this process.

**The WCRC Redressal Committee may recommend the following actions to be taken in relation to:**

##### **a) Care for the victim:**

1. The members of the WCRC Redressal Committee shall respond with sensitivity and care to the victim.
2. Counselling and protection are offered to the victim.

##### **b) The accused:**

1. **Education/awareness:** In cases where the situation is not necessarily sexual harassment but shows poor judgement. Clear guidance needs to be given and counselling may be recommended.
2. **Educative warning:** In cases where the situation is unquestionably inappropriate and unwise behaviour, but is not clearly sexual harassment. A clear warning states why the behaviour is inappropriate, and calls for an immediate cessation of the behaviour.
3. **Disciplinary measures:** In cases where the situation involves sexual harassment and has resulted in relatively serious consequences. The following actions will be taken as deemed appropriate:
  - ◆ Restrictions to be placed on the participation of the accused during the meeting and the individual may be asked to leave the meeting and the premises at his/her own expense.

- ◆ Restrictions to be placed on the accused from having contact with the victim.
- ◆ In consultation with the victim, recommendations may include that an apology from the accused appropriate to the situation be made to the victim.
- ◆ Restrictions may be placed on the participation of the accused during future events of the WCRC. The Redressal Committee may decide whether the accused may not be asked back to take part in future events or programmes of the WCRC.

It should also be noted that the victim may also choose to take legal action at any time beyond action by the WCRC Redressal Committee if chosen. Particularly if the actions exerted by the accused are considered by the victim to constitute sexual abuse, the WCRC would automatically encourage victims to take their case to legal authorities. In such a case, the WCRC would recuse itself from any further actions in the case as it would become a legal process where the WCRC cannot exert any jurisdiction. The WCRC would nevertheless remain accessible for any follow up with both the victim and the accused, if needed.

## The WCRC Redressal Committee

### 1. Composition

A redressal committee consisting of four to five persons has been established to deal with cases of sexual harassment.

#### The team brings the following principles and skills:

1. Ability to maintain **confidentiality** within the team.
2. Awareness of the implications and ramifications of the dynamics of power in social and human relations.
3. Experience in pastoral counselling for such cases.
4. Commitment to give of their time, to respond with care for the victim and to give assistance as is needed.
5. Ability to give independent and balanced evaluation of the concerns of both accuser and accused.

### 2. Guidelines

1. It is the aim of the WCRC Redressal Committee to act with fairness, justice, and discretion and it will seek to extend appropriate pastoral care in every situation.
2. Persons accused of sexual harassment will be considered innocent until the accusation has been substantiated by careful examination of the evidence provided.
3. The charges will be taken seriously. The team will be responsible for investigations and carrying out appropriate action.
4. The investigation must not be discussed with anyone except those whom the team has officially decided to speak to and/or include during the investigation process.
5. The WCRC Redressal Committee will be in touch with the appropriate legal authorities if deemed necessary in more severe cases.

## **Report on the Global Christian Forum (GCF)**

Rev. Dr. Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, WCRC representative

The most significant event of the Global Christian Forum, prior to the meeting of the Executive, will be the GCF's Third Global Gathering, to take place in Bogota, Colombia, from April 24-27, 2018. 250 to 300 participants are expected, all sent from various denominations, Christian world communions, global organizations and similar groups. As is the practice of the Global Christian Forum, about one-half will be from Pentecostal and evangelical communities, and the other half will be from Roman Catholic, historic Protestant and Orthodox communities. The senior leadership of the World Council of Churches (WCC), the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA), the Pentecostal World Fellowship (PWF) and the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU) will all participate, along with the leadership of most Christian world communions, including the WCRC. In this way, it is the most inclusive and diverse global Christian gathering with delegated leaders of all Christian traditions to take place at any point within ecumenical life.

The "results" of the Bogota world gathering will certainly be shared at the WCRC Executive by Chris Ferguson and others who will have been part of the WCRC's delegation. The design of the programme intends to have the participants identify broad future directions for the GCF's work in the coming period. Those activities will then be finalized by the GCF Committee, in much the same way that the WCRC Executive takes the directions of the Leipzig General Council and formulates them into activities. In the previous period, since the GCF's global gathering in Manado, Indonesia, in 2011, two major initiatives have been undertaken. First is the process and world meeting on "Discrimination, Persecution, and Martyrdom," held in Tirana, Albania, in 2015. Second is an initiative on "Call to Mission, Perceptions of Proselytism." After several times of careful preparation, a consultation was held last June in Ghana to set forth a draft statement. The report is expected to be finalized in Bogota. The WCC, WEA, PWF and the Vatican's PCPCU have all been officially involved in this effort over the last several years. Thus, the final report will be an important ecumenical step forward.

In May of 2017, the Global Christian Forum met together with the top executive leadership of the WCC, the WEA, the PWF and the Vatican's PCPCU, along with members of respective governing bodies, at Bossey, Switzerland. The purpose was to clarify the governance of the GCF in relationship to these four primary bodies and to find common points of focus and cooperation in the coming period. This was the first time that the leadership of these four bodies had ever met together, and this precedent will be continued.

Finally, Casely Essamuah has been selected as the next Secretary of the Global Christian Forum. He will begin his service on July 1, 2018, when our present secretary, Larry Miller, retires. Rev. Dr. Essamuah is a Methodist from Ghana who

has spent the last several years as a pastor with a large church in Annapolis, Maryland, USA. He has extensive global experience, received an M.Div. from Harvard Divinity School and a doctorate in missiology from the Boston School of Theology.

I was privileged to serve as co-chair of the search committee with Nicta Lubaale. We received applications for 27 highly qualified persons and interviewed seven finalists in Rome during January 2017. Casely Essamuah was our unanimous choice, and he was approved by the GCF Committee at its meeting in Taize, France, in February 2017. A copy of the announcement of his appointment is attached to this report.

It is an honour to serve as the World Communion of Reformed Churches' representative on the Global Christian Forum Committee. My hope is that WCRC's engagement with the Global Christian Forum will deepen, and that the Bogota world gathering may present further opportunities for such future collaboration.

## Report of the United Nations Ministry

Ryan D. Smith, director and representative to the United Nations

1. The report of the Ministry at the United Nations to the 2018 Executive Committee meeting of the World Communion of Reformed Churches highlights aspects of the ongoing witness that a presence at the UN in New York makes possible. This report is not exhaustive. It suggests places and points to moments where the ministry has been engaged.
2. The past year, 2017-2018, was a time of transition for the Ministry at the United Nations. Following a period of discernment, the vision for the ministry was reaffirmed and rearticulated. The work of the ministry remains in two broad areas: 1) to equip individuals and communities to engage in global discipleship and 2) to advocate for justice and peace in the name of Jesus Christ.
3. The ministry's staffing pattern was reconfigured to include a Director/Representative to the United Nations, a Mission Specialist for International Advocacy and a Young Adult Volunteer.
4. 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 ambassadors for Christ seeking God's peace and reconciliation in a world where humanity and creation are wounded, broken, and in need of healing (2 Corinthians 5:18-20). Together we seek life in all its fullness by:
5. Addressing the issue of **Environmental Justice** through participation in the process to implement recommendations of the UN climate change conference.
6. Advocating for a just and lasting peace in **Syria**. The Director/Representative to the United Nations visited WCRC member church, the National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon with the co-moderator of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) as well as other Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) leadership. We continue to advocate with the United Nations Security Council and are a founding member of the Syria Working Group within the United Nations civil society community.
7. Traveling with a Presbyterian delegation to meet ecumenical and interfaith partners to discuss the issue of boycott, divestment and sanctions as a peaceful means of resistance in **Palestine and Israel**.
8. Engaging the **UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)**. This year's priority theme was "Challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls" Over twenty women from the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) participated in formal sessions, side events and advocacy on the



agreed conclusions document. The women worked in partnership with ecumenical women and faith and feminism. We hope to welcome partners from the World Communion of Reformed Churches in future CSW events.

9. Hosted an event with the Rev. Dr. Liz Theo Harris and the **“Poor Peoples Campaign”** on the role of women in faith-based leadership.
10. Participating in the Red Hands Campaign to end the use of **child soldiers**. The Red Hand Campaign advocates with governments to sign or ratify the Optional Protocol on the Use of Children in Armed Conflict.
11. Resourcing the World Communion of Reformed Churches Justice Committee at the General Council in Leipzig, Germany.
12. Expressing concern for the protection of religious minorities in **Iraq and Syria** with special attention to Christians.
13. Co-hosting a regional conference on the plight of **lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender refugee and asylum seekers** with First Presbyterian Church in the City of New York, Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, the Office of Immigration Issues and the Office of Public Witness. The Office for the High Commissioner of Human Rights sent a representative speaker to the event at the invitation of the Presbyterian Ministry at the United Nations.
14. Expressing support for the United Nations General Assembly Resolution calling for lifting the US Embargo on **Cuba**.
15. Participating in the NGO Working Group on **Israel-Palestine**. This group is in the process of reforming. It advocated for the Security Council to adopt the proposed resolution on the settlements and is monitoring the discussions around the question of statehood for Palestine.
16. Participating in the ecumenical relations with the World Council of Churches events **“Leading by Example: Faith and HIV Testing”** and **“Fourth Annual Symposium on the Role of Religion and Faith.”**
17. Participating in the **NGO Working Group on Religious NGOs** who host multiple events about the role and engagement of the faith community in civil society and sustainability.
18. Providing a forum to call attention to the ongoing political crisis on the **Korean peninsula**. Rev. Kurt Esslinger, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) mission co-worker in Korea, spoke to the NGO community and met with the Republic of Korea Mission to the United Nations.

19. Providing a forum to call attention to the ongoing political and humanitarian crisis in South Sudan. The Revs Shelvis and Nancy Smith-Mather, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) mission co-workers in South Sudan, spoke to the NGO community and met with UN representatives.
20. Providing a forum to call attention to the ongoing political and humanitarian crisis in **Syria and Lebanon**. Rev. Elmarie Parker, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) regional liaison in Syria, Lebanon and Iraq, spoke to the NGO community and met with UN representatives.
21. Rev. Douglas Leonard, from the Reformed Church in America, has accepted the role of Director of the World Council of Churches Ecumenical Office in New York. The director of the Presbyterian Ministry at the United Nations has begun working on ways our two offices can coordinate more together. We maintain relationships with ACT Alliance and the Lutheran World Federation as well.
22. Created congregation resources on the **United Nations Sustainable Development Goals**.
23. There continue to be needs and opportunities for the Reformed family to work and witness for peace and justice within the context of the UN.
24. I give thanks for all who have been partners in the work described above and who support the ministry through prayer, participation and financial gifts. I am particularly grateful for my colleagues Sue Rheem and Simon Doong and the ecumenical community at the United Nations.

**No Other Way than Peace**  
**Enhancing People's Life Security by Developing Positive Peace**  
Rev. Dr. Lee Hong Jung  
General Secretary of National Council of Churches in Korea

**“Queen of Suffering” in “Arduous March”**

1. In the history of North East Asia, the Korean people have been destined to suffer the violent vortex of hegemonic struggle among imperial superpowers with a series of foreign invasions and colonial dominations which have eventually led the Korean people into the tragic national division. In this historical unfolding the Korean people have “innocently” suffered as refugees, as forced migrants, as direct war victims, and as the geometrically and ideologically divided people. In the context of post-World War II and Korean War, the world order of the Cold War Era in the Asia-Pacific region has been firmly established by the San Francisco System regarding Japan in 1952 and the Panmunjom System regarding Korea in 1953, which have been dominantly designed and managed by USA until now. The San Francisco-Panmunjom System as a “negative” peace system with the absence of overt violent conflict such as war has in fact institutionalized various structural violence in each side of the Cold War system, violating people's life security. Today in the course of globalization of neo-liberal market economy system both North and South Korean people have been doubly and triply suffering because of the division caused geo-political and geo-economic dynamics under the San Francisco-Panmunjom System, as seen in the current affairs of the sanctions against the North, of the deployment of THAAD, and of FTA with the “America First” Trump Administration in the South. In this history, the Korean people have been characterized as a “Queen of Suffering” in an “arduous march” as shackled in the chain of the Cold War-division system.

**Historical Unfolding of Japanese Imperial Domination over Korea**

2. Being successful in the Meiji Restoration of 1868, Japan intended to block any other power from annexing or dominating Korea, resolving to end the centuries-old Chinese suzerainty. The Meiji reformers developed the *Seikanron*, i.e., the advocacy of a punitive expedition against Korea, recognizing Korea as a strategic foothold toward the Asian continent.
3. Using the Tonghak Revolution in 1894 in Korea as an excuse to intervene in the Korean affairs, the First Sino-Japanese War was brought out from July 1894, and in the end the Treaty of Shimonoseki, mediated and drafted with the former American Secretary of State, was signed on 17 April 1895. The Treaty recognized the full and complete independence and autonomy of Korea from China. For the first time regional dominance in East Asia shifted from China to Japan.
4. Since the end of the First Sino-Japanese War, Japan feared Russian encroachment on

its plan to create a sphere of domination in Korea and Manchuria. Russia demanded Korea north of the 39th parallel to be a neutral buffer zone between Russia and Japan, though Japan proposed the 38th parallel. After negotiations broke down in 1904, Japan issued a declaration of war, and the war concluded with the Treaty of Portsmouth, mediated by the USA President Theodore Roosevelt. It was the first major military victory in the modern era of an Asian power over a European one, transforming the balance of power in East Asia. Japan also expressed her special interest in Korea by the Anglo-Japanese Alliance signed in 1902.

5. In the aftermath of Japan's victory in the Russo-Japanese War, the Taft–Katsura Memorandum on 27 July 1905 created a basis agreement regarding the status of Korea and Philippines. The Japanese Prime Minister Katsura Tarō stated Japan's reasons for its making a protectorate of Korea, and the USA Secretary of War William Howard Taft had acquired the Philippines following its victory over Spain in the Spanish–American War of 1898. As the result of all these Japan- and USA-involved foreign affairs, Korea became a nominal protectorate of Japan in 1905, and was completely annexed by Japan in 1910, opening a 36-year Japanese colonialism until the end of World War II in 1945.

#### **Cold War-Division of Korean Peninsula with Two Koreas**

6. In November 1943, Franklin Roosevelt, Winston Churchill and Chiang Kai-shek met at the Cairo Conference, and being mindful of the enslavement of the Korean people, they determined that in due course Korea shall become free and independent. Roosevelt raised the idea of a trusteeship over Korea with Joseph Stalin, and Stalin did not disagree but advocated that the period of trusteeship be short.
7. On 8 August 1945, two days after the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, the Soviet Union declared war on Japan. Soviet troops advanced rapidly, and the USA became anxious that they would occupy the whole of Korea. On 10 August 1945 two young officers, Dean Rusk and Charles Bonesteel, were assigned to define an American occupation zone. Working on extremely short notice and completely unprepared, they used a map of National Geography to decide on the 38th parallel. They chose it because it divided the country approximately in half but would place the capital Seoul under American control. They might be unaware of that Japan and Russia had once discussed sharing Korea along the same parallel. The USA and Soviet Union occupied two parts of Korea, placing sixteen million Koreans in the American zone and nine million in the Soviet zone.
8. In December 1945 at the Moscow Conference, the Allies agreed to take part in a trusteeship over Korea for up to five years in the lead-up to independence. A Soviet-USA Joint Commission failed to make progress of a unified administration due to increasing Cold War antagonism and to Korean opposition to the trusteeship. Already

in May 1946 it was made illegal to cross the 38th parallel without a permit. The UN's decision to proceed with separate elections was unpopular among many Koreans because it could be a prelude to a permanent division of the country. On 10 May 1948, the UN-supervised elections were held in the US-occupied South only. This led to the establishment of the Republic of Korea (ROK) in the South on 15 August, which was promptly followed by the establishment of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) in the North on 9 September. On 12 December 1948, the UN General Assembly declared ROK to be the "only lawful government in Korea." The USA supported ROK, Soviet Union supported DPRK, and each government claimed sovereignty over the whole Korean Peninsula.

### **Korean Peninsula Shackled in the Chain of the San Francisco-Panmunjom System**

9. From 1948, seeing the division as controversial and temporary, the armed forces of each side engaged in a series of bloody conflicts along the border. These conflicts escalated dramatically when the North invaded the South on 25 June 1950, triggering the Korean War. The UN intervened to protect the South, sending a USA-led force. While UN intervention was conceived as restoring the border at the 38th parallel, Syngman Rhee of ROK and UN Commander in Chief, General Douglas MacArthur, stated their intention to unify Korea. Despite of the warnings from People's Republic of China the South Korean and USA-led UN forces crossed the 38th parallel, and China unleashed a counter-attack which drove them back into the South.
10. In 1951, the front line stabilized near the 38th parallel, and both sides began to consider an armistice. Because Syngman Rhee of ROK refused to accept the armistice and continued to urge the reunification by force, the Armistice Agreement was signed on 27 July 1953 by the three powers; USA-UN Command, North Korean People's Army, and Chinese People's Volunteer Army. In the course of negotiating an armistice line, the two sides agreed to create a four-kilometer-wide Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). The war perpetuated the division of Korea and led to a permanent alliance between ROK and USA and a permanent USA garrison in the South, irreversibly fixing the Cold War division system. No final peaceful settlement has been so far achieved.
11. Soon after the signing of the Korean Armistice Agreement, the Mutual Defense Treaty between the USA and ROK was signed on 1 October 1953. The Treaty commits the two nations to provide mutual aid and allows the USA military stations in ROK. The Treaty strengthens their efforts for collective defense for the preservation of peace and security pending the development of a more comprehensive and effective system of regional security in the Pacific area. The Treaty states that ROK grants, and the USA accepts, the right to deploy the USA land, air and sea forces in and around the territory of ROK. The Armistice Agreement along with the Mutual Defense Treaty is said to mark the beginning of the Panmunjom System.

12. During the Korean War, the San Francisco Peace Treaty was officially signed mostly between Japan and the Allied Powers, and came into force on 28 April 1952, officially ending the American-led Allied Occupation of Japan and Japan's position as an imperial power. Immediately following the signing of the San Francisco Peace Treaty, the Security Treaty between USA and Japan was first signed. It permitted the USA to act for the sake of maintaining peace in East Asia, providing for the continued presence of US military bases in Japan. The San Francisco Peace Treaty along with the Security Treaty is said to mark the beginning of the San Francisco System.

### **USA's Abrogation of Armistice Agreement Paragraph 13(d) and Konanüi Haenggun in North Korea**

13. The USA has tried to synchronize the San Francisco-Panmunjom System both as the backbone and frontline of the USA-led Cold War rivalry. In September 1956, the USA's military intention to introduce atomic weapons into ROK was agreed by the USA National Security Council and President Eisenhower. The USA unilaterally abrogated the paragraph 13(d) of the Dean Rusk which prevented the introduction of nuclear weapons and missiles into the Korean Peninsula. In January 1958 nuclear armed Honest John missiles and 280mm atomic cannons were deployed to ROK, followed within a year by atomic demolition munitions and nuclear armed Matador cruise missiles with the range to reach China and Soviet Union. DPRK responded militarily by digging massive underground fortifications resistant to nuclear attack and forward deployment of its conventional forces so that the use of nuclear weapons against it would endanger ROK and USA forces as well. Further in 1963 DPRK asked Soviet Union and China for help in developing nuclear weapons but was refused.
14. When the North Korean great famine occurred from 1993 to 1998, DPRK officially mandated to phrase it as *Konanüi Haenggun*, meaning the Arduous March. By using the term *Konanüi Haenggun*, they brought the archetypal memory of the young Kim Il-Sung's legendary anti-Japanese armed struggle for the evasion and escape from the Japanese army's suppression operation from November 1938 to March 1939 in China, which was for the first time referred to *Konanüi Haenggun*. DPRK and its centrally planned system proved too inflexible to curtail the repetitive natural disasters and its exogenous shocks. Consequently DPRK had to accept food and humanitarian aid from international societies including ROK and USA.
15. To overcome this tragic crisis, on the one hand, they further militarized their economy by using the collective labor system in the spirit of *Konanüi Haenggun*, and on the other hand, allowed the spread of people's limited market activities through Dean Rusk, meaning market grounds. In recent years, DPRK has become more lenient on the existence of *Jangmadang*, trying to regulate growth of a market economy in the North.

16. One of the notable facts was that even during the period of the *Konanŭi Haenggun* DPRK eagerly maintained a military-first policy, which might be more desperate and cheaper than an economy-first policy, for strengthening its national security. In order to protect its sovereignty from the USA's on-going nuclear military threats DPRK has to painfully develop various nuclear missile devices which now reach at the inland of the USA. Kim Jong-Un has declared DPRK as a nuclear missile-possessed normalized state which has been ready to use nuclear armed missiles to protect its sovereignty. China and Russia as border sharing neighbors do not want the collapse of DPRK, an influx of refugees over the border, and the USA to meddle in the region. They consistently speak up for the denuclearization and the protection of the peace and stability of the Korean Peninsula, insisting that the relevant issues be resolved through dialogue. Reacting against DPRK, however, the USA has developed an "apocalyptic scenario" on the Korean Peninsula which includes a possible nuclear war. A peaceful solution to exclude such negative scenario could be found on the basis of a cosmopolitan common sense of humanity, peaceful pragmatism and an instinct of self-preservation. The USA should not use any military might against DPRK instead of seeking a peaceful solution. People want no war but peace! People know no other way than peace!

### **People's Life Security in Crisis under the Cold War-Division System**

17. The 1945 division of the Korean nation was the most undesirable historical consequence of the end of World War II. It was the most reckless compromise between the USA and Soviet Union based on a short term tactical expediency rather than a long term strategic vision for the suffering people under the Japanese colonialism. It embodies the most painful remnant of the ignominious ideological political turbulence of the Cold War era. Painfully analyzing its historical root-causes, Korean churches have prophetically denounced the division as a social and geopolitical "original sin" of the Korean nation, i.e., the structural violence and fundamental stumbling block against enhancing people's life security.
18. During the last 65 years of maintaining the San Francisco-Panmunjom System as a Cold War-division system, i.e., a "negative" peace system, the Cold War-oriented two Korean regimes and the superpowers surrounding the Korean Peninsula have escalated the inter-Korean tension for their own hegemony sake. They have devised various forms of structural violence, strengthening the government-centered nation state security system and policy at the expense of people's life security. People in the North and South have become antagonistic strangers against each other and ideologically distorted and collectively marginalized in the world system. As a result the Korean Peninsula has been now sunk into the quagmire of the global military weapon regimes of mass destruction on an apocalyptic scale. It has been proved that the San Francisco-Panmunjom System as an antagonistic symbiosis system cannot sustain the Korean people's life security web. Without reconstructing the Cold War-

division structure, there will be no fulfillment of the liberation of the Korean nation and the full enhancement of people's life security. It is now crucial for people in Korea to transform the Armistice Agreement into a peace treaty and to reconstruct the San Francisco-Panmunjom System into a North East Asian common peace and security system, so that we may enhance a people- and life-centric security system as a "positive" peace system.

19. People's life security is the essential parameter for sustaining peace with justice, upholding human dignity and rights of all God's people, and cultivating nature abundantly in the whole *oikoumene*. People need to critically consider the existing gap between people's life security and the central role of state and its institutions in the maintenance of national security and its actual impacts on people's life security. During the last 70 years, people in Korea have found themselves in the structurally subordinated situation devised and enforced by the Cold War-division system and its regimes. In the Cold War-division situation, both the North and South Korean state regimes not only fail to fulfill its security obligations for people, but also become the principal perpetrator of violence against their own people using the protection of their system as a pretext.
20. People should no longer be seen as passive victims of the Cold War-division system and its insecurity and as its tamed establishmentarians. Peace is too important to leave to the generals and nation states. People both North and South must play inter-subjectively a crucial role in stabilizing inflammatory situations and in preserving the foundation of justice and peace, and healing and reconciliation.

### **Enhancing Positive Peace as the Way of Overcoming the Cold War-Division Violence**

21. As seen in the theme of the WCC 10th Busan Assembly, "God of Life, Lead us to Justice and Peace," justice and peace are the two inseparably interdependent axes that sustain the whole web of life. Without an ongoing process of healing and reconciliation, there will be no integration between justice and peace, no life giving and no life abundant, and therefore no people's life security. Healing and reconciliation is the core of God's economy of life and the spirituality and strategy of God's ministry. Consequently, healing and reconciliation is the foundational process for enhancing people's life security and its fullness, and the way of overcoming negative peace and of developing positive peace.
22. For enhancing people's life security it is crucial to weave people's web of nonviolent communication and encounter. People's ecology and economy of life must not be divided and confined by any particularly absolutized political ideology and socio-economic system. People's web of nonviolent communication and encounter can be restored by accumulating many small steps for peace such as reunion of dispersed families, civilian interchanges in various sectors, media communication by social



networking service, etc. By doing so people may stabilize and harmonize psychological and ideological identity conflict between North and South and restore a common historical and communal identity as one Korean nation.

23. On the basis of people's web-weaving of nonviolent communication and encounter, even prior to a geopolitical environment, people's life security can be strengthened by developing a free, open, geo-economic environment in alternative energy production, ecological agriculture, forestation, fish farming etc. From a people's geo-economic perspective, due to the physical division across the DMZ, the South has been an isolated island from the continent, and the North strategically assimilated into the continent, losing its peninsula identity as a geographically strategic bridge between the continent and the ocean. Both North and South should transform the role of the DMZ from a division wall to a cell membrane, so that people can penetrate into each other's life. People can strategically co-operate for enlarging Special Economic Zones, connecting them through Eurasia railroad transportation from *Pusan* to *Berlin* through the DMZ. This historic railroad reconnection will open a new era of Eurasian people's interdependent life.
24. To enhance people's life security, overcoming Cold War consciousness and living out peace as social solidarity in people's daily life should be recognized as the essential way toward healing, reconciliation and peaceful reunification. By constantly affirming and practicing a spiritual-ethical stance which goes beyond the Cold War-oriented ideological boundaries, people can be an indispensable moving force of leading the two Koreas to a peaceful co-existence. In order to reinforce people's power and capability to engage in healing and reconciliation of the broken and wounded nation, we need to develop people's own contextualized peace pedagogy using people's socio-political and religio-cultural biographies and wisdoms as resources, and people's peace charter as an integral knot of people's solidarity for peace in North East Asia.
25. As a mandatory action for enhancing people's life security, we may creatively design a realistic roadmap of reformulating an inter-Korean North East Asian people's geopolitics. The current geopolitical environment of denuclearization requests us to give a top priority to replace the Armistice Agreement with a peace treaty. The peace treaty can set up in it a peaceful process of normalizing the relations between North and South, North and the USA, and North and Japan, and a realistic process of denuclearization such as nuclear freeze, nuclear disarmament, nuclear abolition etc. Envisioning a North East Asian *oikoumene*, we must be aware of the strategic reality in which the inter-state geopolitics of peace-making is attached to the strategic interests of global empires other than the two Koreas. The global empires controlling the San Francisco-Panmunjom System do not actually support any decisively inter-subjective initiatives between the two Koreas, and the North and South regimes cannot easily overcome the geopolitical influence of global empires. People must take an initiative of leading a process of peace-building.

26. In a peace treaty, we must make clear the cessation of the state of war, a means of peace building and management including mutual respect for each others' sovereignty and the nonaggression pact, process of denuclearization, provision for contribution to ensure people's life security in North East Asia, and full actual support for the Korean people's efforts for healing, reconciliation and peaceful reunification of the Korean nation. On the basis of the peace treaty we may start from neutralizing literally the Demilitarized Zone as a permanent eco-peace zone and as a cell membrane between North and South. Gradually extending it to the whole Korean peninsula, we further engage in cultivating a Nuclear Free North East Asian *Oikoumene* in a post-Fukushima apocalyptic context in which the Korean Peninsula is located at the center of a nuclear ring.
27. For cultivating a peaceful geopolitical and geo-economic environment, we have to engage in humanitarian and sustainable development for the North; it requests of advocating the international societies to lift all the existing sanctions imposed against DPRK, to halt all military exercises in and around the Korean Peninsula, to withdraw foreign troops, to radically reduce military expenditures, and to mandate the UN Security Council to initiate new efforts for peace-building across the Korean Peninsula. Sharing the responsibility of peace-building in a "glocally" interdependent world, we require full support from international ecumenical communities to ensure that their nation states' diligent efforts toward the two Koreas are, at least, not detrimental to people's life security.

### **A Prophetic Calling for Peace: No Other Way than Peace**

28. For the prophetic ecumenical pilgrimage of healing, reconciliation and peaceful reunification of the Korean Peninsula, the coming years will be the most crucial period for changing the social and geopolitical economy of the Korean Peninsula from a nation state-centered, division-oriented structure into a people- and life-centric, reunification-oriented structure. On the basis of the WCC 10th Busan Assembly Statement on Peace and Reunification of the Korean Peninsula, we need to strengthen a North East Asian People's Solidarity for Peace which will advocate a process of converting the prevailing Armistice System into a concrete peace system and the Cold War-oriented San Francisco-Panmunjom System into a North East Asian common peace and security system. We may regard it as a regional geo-political ecumenical people's frontline and, like the Kairos Palestine, as a prophetic ecumenical calling for peace. In the context of the Olympic Games in North East Asia, i.e., Pyeong Chang Winter Olympic Games in 2018, Tokyo Summer Olympic Games in 2020 and Beijing Winter Olympic Games in 2022, the North East Asian People's Solidarity for Peace may design and realize an ecumenical peace process for the Korean peninsula, advocating a North East Asian common peace and security system. We may dream together of making a peace treaty by 2025, the 80th anniversary of

the 1945 division, and of achieving peaceful reunification by 2045, the centennial anniversary of the 1945 unfulfilled liberation, going through a 20-year period of peaceful co-existence between North and South not as commensalism but as mutualism.

29. If we see a history of the Korean people from a perspective of the whole story of God's salvific action in the world and of what God wants for the world, the division of the Korean Peninsula is not the end of the history of the Korean people. As the death of Jesus was not the end of the story, but a key transition to allow the story to come to its genuine fulfillment, i.e., resurrection, the division of the Korean Peninsula is an omega point of springing up all the will to achieve renewal and transformation, in which God's people are called to engage in healing and reconciliation, justice and peace, and life-abundant reunification of the Korean nation.
30. Dear faithful friends in Christ, we, the people of God, cannot compromise our faith in Jesus Christ with any attempt to make any kinds of war, particularly nuclear war, which totally destroys God's face as seen in the faces of people and nature. No other way than peace! We, the people of God living in the Korean Peninsula, desperately implore your compassionate eucharistic solidarity for accompanying us for the prophetic witness to the truth and light in Korea, which will break the chain of the Cold War-division system. We, the healing and reconciling faith community, may strengthen our role and capacity as peace mediator, and mutually offer our eucharistic solidarity based on the mutual trust, willingly taking the risk of believing in one another. Being filled with hope and new purpose for the Ezekiel's vision of being associated as one nation, we pray, "Oh, Living God, by developing positive peace, by enhancing people's life security, and by breaking the chain of the Cold War-division system, renew and transform the people of North and South from the victims of division into the new creation of Jubilee in which the truth reign. Amen!"

*Please note: page number references in the proposed strategic plan referred to the original document and have not been updated for publication in these minutes.*

**Proposed  
WCRC Strategic Plan: 2018-2024**

**Introduction**

The World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) at its 2017 General Council confirmed its call to communion and commitment to justice. The Council met in Leipzig under the theme “Living God, renew and transform us” and described the WCRC as a communion of churches that receives its unity from God as a gift and is called to act for justice. In the struggles of this world the WCRC affirms its faith in the living God, so that we, our descendants and the whole of creation might live life in fullness (Deuteronomy 30:19, John 10:10).

The General Council did its work through a discernment process and consensus decision-making so that all voices might be heard and all people present might participate in seeking the call of God. Together we resolved that the WCRC will not conform to this world but will stand with those who work to heal the wounds of our broken communities and pursue justice in the economy and the earth.

At the heart of discernment is a commitment to worship, work, listen and pray together as a community of faith, seeking to discern God’s will for the way forward. In discerning, the WCRC is intentionally building a communion around a common table for both worship and decision making. The table symbolizes the centrality of Christ and our mutual dependence on the Holy Spirit for our life together. We sit equally before God as sisters and brothers.

Renewed and transformed by the Holy Spirit and drawing from the wellsprings of our heritage of *ecclesia semper reformanda secundum verbum dei*—a church always being reformed according to the Word of God—the WCRC understands itself as a communion that refutes the logic of exclusion that marks social and political institutions, the economic order and sometimes even the church itself. Where this communion is lived out those in power relinquish their authority, lay aside their power and privilege and consciously embrace the bodies and the voices of those who have been excluded from full participation in the community.

Bringing the resources of the Reformed theological and confessing tradition into the present tense means listening to the suffering and cries of humanity and all of creation. The whole of creation is the “theatre of God’s glory.” This tenet of John Calvin must lead us to follow both the imperatives and the approach of confessing moments as represented by the Barmen Declaration and the confessions of Belhar

and Accra. We confess that the “Earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it” (Psalm 24:1). We are bold to say “Jesus is Lord” (Romans 10:9). Now we must act.

Jesus did not locate his ministry in the centres of power. He challenged the authority of political, economic, familial and religious authorities and enabled his followers to see the emerging Kingdom of God in the liberating, healing, feeding, cleansing, raising, reconciling and empowering of those who were excluded from full participation in communal life. The WCRC is in the position to intensify the prophetic traditions of public witness as a confessing communion in a world fallen among thieves (John 10:10). Our vocation as a family of churches called to communion and committed to justice requires us to take firm steps to make our Reformed witness known to our own family on the global level; to put mission at the centre of our Communion’s life; and to live out our identity as a confessing, ecumenical communion in the spirit of the Barmen Declaration and confessions of Belhar and Accra.

The work of the WCRC is built upon our Reformed traditions, the actions of the General Councils and upon its constitution. Articles II: Basis, III: Values and IV: Identity, Mission and Purposes describe important concepts in which the WCRC defines, grounds and commits itself. Articles III and IV seem particularly apt in a strategic plan:

#### 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 to 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.
- C. 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.

In this coming period, through the next General Council, the aspirations of the WCRC can be summarized in this vision statement and put to work in this overarching goal:

### **Vision Statement**

Called to communion and committed to justice, the World Communion of Reformed Churches, through robust engagement with the Word of God and the call of the Holy Spirit, is always being transformed as it strives for the full and just participation of all. In our diversity, we seek to be a living expression of “unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:3) and work to renew and restore the economy and the earth, choosing life, so that we with our descendants and the whole of creation might live life in its fullness (Deuteronomy 30:19, John 10:10).

### **Overarching Goal**

By 2024, the World Communion of Reformed Churches will strive to be significantly strengthened and increasingly effective in living out God’s call to communion and commitment to justice as a global *koinonia* marked by discerning, confessing<sup>1</sup>, witnessing and Reforming together. The WCRC will work with all the partners God provides through five interlocking dimensions—

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

—for the transformation of the economy and the earth, so loved by God but fallen among thieves (John 10:10).

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<sup>1</sup> In the spirit of the confessions of Belhar and Accra and the Barmen Declaration.

The WCRC serves its member churches and also works for the transformation of the whole world. As it strives to fulfil its vision, the WCRC thus works through these two **strategic trajectories**:

1. Strengthening and deepening the *koinonia*
2. Growing and expanding its work for a greater global impact

These two strategic trajectories are applied through the five **interlocking dimensions** (derived from the constitution) listed in the overarching goal in all of the WCRC's witness and work.

## **Communion**

### **Overarching Objective for Communion**

The work on communion will be lived out through acts of justice that refute the logic of exclusion that marks social and political institutions, the economic order and sometimes even the church itself (General Council Actions 20, 21, 41).

The communion that the WCRC seeks to become will embody the radical hospitality of the gospel of Jesus, which demonstrates respect, trust, love and willingness to listen to a variety of voices seeking fullness of life.

In the commitment to discerning God's will together, the Communion therefore embraces the challenges of linguistic and cultural divergences, as well as differences in theological and hermeneutical perspectives as positive building blocks that set the atmosphere for dialogue, discernment and engagement on communion with justice.

The WCRC will work toward all of this through the objectives below:

### **Full and Just Participation**

In living out its vision to become a just communion where those in power relinquish their authority and consciously embrace the bodies and the voices of those who have been excluded from full participation in the community the WCRC shall run programmes that strive for the full and just participation of women, youth, children and differently abled people (General Council Actions 43 and 48).

(See also Justice, Confessing Our Commitment to Full and Just Participation, page 13, and Reforming: Gender Justice, page 12.<sup>2</sup>)

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<sup>2</sup> To demonstrate the cross-sectional connections between the different programme dimensions, important objectives are listed in several programme sections.



**Objective: Biblical and Liturgical Foundations of Just Communion**

The WCRC will facilitate programmes that point to the biblical and liturgical foundations of communion and thus deepen the understanding of the WCRC as a just communion in the world today. The programme will recognize the Holy Communion as God’s divine gift that strengthens believers individually and reminds of Jesus’ invitations to share this gift with the world—not only in word but also in action aimed at far reaching changes for the flourishing of all life.

**Objective: Becoming a Just Communion**

The inseparability of justice and communion has been a guiding principle of the communion since 2010. It is a vision yet to be realized in its fullness. The WCRC will organize a series of workshops that intentionally include youth, women, Indigenous Peoples, persons discriminated against because of race, Dalits, migrants and ethnic minorities, people with disabilities and of the LGBTQ community. These workshops will advise the Communion Reference Group in its task to propose strategies for the full inclusion of all and redress the unjust power relationships within the Communion.

(See also Participation Objectives, page 25.)

**Objectives: Youth Engagement**

1. Youth engagement will become a launching pad for a deeper involvement of younger generations in the work of the WCRC (General Council Action 40). The reestablishment of a WCRC youth network will be a priority.
2. The WCRC will connect more readily with youth/student ecumenical organizations such as the WSCF, EYCE, etc.
3. The WCRC youth internship programme will be expanded as a leadership-training tool. Youth from marginalized communities shall be given preference.
4. The WCRC will make accessible the history of the radical contributions of young people and students of the ecumenical movement.

(See also Alliances, Objective: Partner with WSCF, page 26; Capacity, Objective: Expand Capacities, page 25; and Justice, Objectives: Accompanying Young People, page 14.)

**Objective: Children**

The WCRC will encourage the regions to develop programmes to:

1. promote child protection in church and society;

2. assure meaningful participation of children and adolescents in church and communal life.<sup>3</sup>

**Objective: Differently Abled People**

The WCRC will intentionally address the call by the Ecumenical Disability Advocates Network (EDAN) and differently abled people in member churches for their full and just participation in programmes and structures of the WCRC.

(See also Justice, Objective: Witnessing, 3. Engaging Churches on Disability, page 12.)

**Objective: Empowering Regions**

Taking up the reaffirmation of the importance of the regions by the General Council (Action 44) the WCRC shall plan its programme work with a strong focus on regional empowerment. The secretariat and the regions will collaborate in the selection of issues, based on the priorities identified in the strategic plan.

(See also Empowering Regions, page 28.)

**Lifting up the Accra Confession**

The Barmen Declaration and Belhar and Accra confessions should be the basic documents in the reflection on the inseparability of communion and justice (General Council Actions 20 and 25). However, at this point the Accra Confession is not yet well known by all member churches, though the time is ripe for an in-depth analysis of the realignments in economic and political power and the changes in the socio-cultural situation where the empire/Babylon is taking on new forms.

**Objective: Lifting up the Accra Confession**

The WCRC will facilitate a process that will call member churches to engage with the Accra Confession in the present tense by using the confession as a lens to read the signs of the times and a call to prophetic action. A part of this work will include the state of the churches and their engagement/implication in sustaining the empire in the political, economic and social realms, as well as in their own life.

(See also Justice, Objective: Critical Reflections on Empire, page 10.)

**Leadership Development**

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<sup>3</sup> For instance, in cooperation with the WCC's Child Friendly Churches programme.

**Objective: Leadership Audit**

In the changing global landscape where many persons are questioning the ethical formation and integrity of ecclesial leadership, the WCRC will encourage churches to engage in a missional audit of their clergy leaders (General Council Action 43). Such an audit will survey the state of theological, spiritual, political and economic ethics of the leadership and will provide the necessary resources to test the ways in which transparency, accountability and reform operating in the church shall be developed.

**Objective: Training Material**

The WCRC will develop resources and curricula for member churches to train a new generation of leaders that are not enticed by riches or bribes while being competent, compassionate, committed and consistent to the example of Jesus in his ministry and mission.

(See also Justice, Objective: Critical Reflections on Empire, page 10.)

**Community among Member Churches**

**Objective: Continuation of Processes of Joint Discernment on Issues of Human Sexuality**

1. In taking up General Council Action 50, the WCRC will carry on to “set the atmosphere for dialogue and discernment on communion and diversity” by:
  - a. continuing the process of joint discernment as it was started with the Chennai Consultation of November 2017. This process attempts to open a space for a hermeneutical and theological conversation on human sexuality across different theological positions and moral convictions and on the missional implications of such joint discernment (General Council Action 42);
  - b. inviting those member churches who are not yet ready to engage.
2. In taking up General Council Action 56 that “condemns all acts of violence against LGBTQ persons, regardless of our theological views, around the globe” and commits to “working for justice, freedom and a safe world for all persons to flourish” the WCRC will:
  - a. continue to work at theological and missional foundations that will substantiate the condemnation of violence and the commitment to the flourishing of all persons;
  - b. engage in advocacy work in situations where sexual minorities are threatened.

The goal of these processes is to facilitate listening and learning with and from one another in our diversity while holding before us both our call to communion and

our commitment to justice, which will be shown in solidarity with those most affected.

The processes and resources gathered on this journey shall be shared with the regional councils and the member churches to encourage and accompany them to facilitate dialogues on communion and sexuality at all levels of our communion.

(See also Justice, Objective: Cross-Cutting Dimensions, 2. Strengthening Communion, page 9.)

## **Justice**

The WCRC seeks to do justice in the context of a world groaning in travail (Romans 8:19-24) and fallen among thieves (John 10:10), yet we continue to affirm that we are gripped with the power of the resurrection, gifted by the God of life.

### **Overarching Objective for Justice**

The WCRC will seek to engage the whole Communion to discern the signs of the times in order to effectively witness to transformative reformation in the areas of economic, social, gender and ecological justice so that member churches will be able to faithfully confess to the God of life in a world fallen among thieves (John 10:10).

The WCRC will seek to deepen and strengthen its existing commitments to justice while at the same time expanding and growing in accordance with the vision of the General Council 2017.

The overarching objective for justice will be achieved by implementing a series of objectives in these areas:

### **Crossing Dimensions through the WCRC Programme Desk**

The programme desk consists of the offices of the executive secretaries for theology & communion and justice & witness working together. While the two desks work cooperatively in numerous areas, an annual event will purposefully cut across several of the interlocking dimensions in an integrated way that focuses the Communion on critical issues. This event will particularly seek to foreground the regions, youth and women.

### **Objective: Cross-Cutting Dimensions**

The WCRC programme desk will hold an annual event beginning in 2018 that highlights an issue that cuts across several of the interlocking dimensions. The first three topics will be:

1. Race, Authoritarianism, Nationalism (RAN)
  - a) In response to the rise of systems and structures that threaten human beings and the whole creation and in the midst of rising authoritarian and populist ideologies the WCRC will seek to critically engage with the issue of nationalism, rising fundamentalism and authoritarianism and how these are perceived from below. It will particularly consider how these are being played out in the Middle East, South Asia and the North American contexts and how this impacts other regions of the world.
  - b) The WCRC will seek to conscientize its membership through naming and understanding the new systemic and ideological formulations of the new political economy.
  - c) It will seek to strategically link as well as work towards creating networks of church leaders, theologians, activists, children, youth and the elderly so as to be able build resistance movements.

(See also the Theology theme “Confronting rising authoritarianisms,” page 15, and Mission Objective: Redeeming Religion, page 18.)

2. Strengthening Communion
  - a) At the core of the identity of the WCRC is our self-understanding of being a communion and that division and separation is scandal. In this context we seek to address all that threatens to divide us particularly the issue of human sexuality by creating covenantal spaces for constructive dialogue.
  - b) To develop a method of talking about human sexuality that is respectful, just and able to bring everyone to the table.

(See also Communion, Objective: Continuation of Processes of Joint Discernment on Issues of Human Sexuality, page 7.)

3. Mission in the Context of Crisis and Marginalization
  - a) Many of our member churches live and witness in a context where they are minorities and suffer persecution. The WCRC is committed to working to establish a framework for the peaceful co-existence and protection of the rights of the minorities.
  - b) We acknowledge that many of our member churches are on the frontlines of peace processes and we therefore seek to strengthen the activities of our member churches around peace building, reconciliation and mission.
  - c) To express solidarity with our member churches and other communities who live in contexts of religious violence.

(See also Mission, Objective: Mission in the Context of Crisis and Marginalization, page 18.)

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

In response to the Uniting General Council in Grand Rapids 2010, the WCRC initiated a joint process along with the World Council of Churches (WCC), Council for World Mission (CWM) and the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) to address the global economic crisis. For the WCRC this was a means of implementing and living out the Accra Confession. The ecumenical alliance developed a joint action plan that sought to address the global economic and financial architecture by seeking to address the financial system, the debt crisis and global economic governance.

The WCRC recognizes, through the most effective social analysis, that the means for a more just and equitable world is to address the structural and systemic injustice that plagues our world. It is important for the WCRC to be able to broaden the scope and breadth of NIFEA to include macro-economic and ecological questions and work towards imagining alternatives to the current dominant economic system (General Council Action 24). Creating a global impact requires the mobilization of our communities and the need to develop strategies at all levels that can work to restore the economy and the earth according to the plan of God.

#### **Objectives: NIFEA**

1. The WCRC will advocate for a democratic global system of economic governance through partnerships with like-minded ecumenical organizations, people's movements and civil society networks. This will be done through building resistance movements by coordinated campaigns and with participation at the local, national, regional and international levels.
2. By 2024 the WCRC will have equipped its congregations for worship, study, political and economic action by specifically working in the regions.
3. The WCRC will continue to support, strengthen and deepen the curriculum and participation in the Governance, Economics and Management (GEM) School.

### **Discerning the Signs of the Times**

To discern the signs of the times was the imperative that was offered by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. A discerning of the signs of the times is crucial for our witness and confession: "The signs of the times have become more alarming and must be interpreted. The root causes of massive threats to life are above all the product of an unjust economic system defended and protected by political and

military might. Economic systems are a matter of life or death” (Accra Confession, paragraph 6).

**Objective: Critical Reflections on Empire**

It is strategically significant for all the programmatic work of the WCRC to use the lens of empire as a means for understanding the context. The WCRC will therefore strengthen and deepen a critical theological study process of engaging empire in the present context. This will be undertaken through an intersectional lens by organizing consultations and conferences, particularly in the regions. These will be done with a view to the establishing of resources which foreground voices from the Global South on empire and:

1. to enhance regional critical thinking on empire and encourage cross fertilization among the regions;
2. to engage in campaigns that highlight the continuing legacy of empire in our societies and congregations. The WCRC will seek to live out the Accra Confession by concentrating on the specific ways in which empire changes who we are and the contexts in which we live. It will also seek to work with alternatives and seek to lift up those areas and contexts in which alternatives are being worked out;
3. to grow and expand our continuing work around economic justice by engaging in study processes in which the interconnections between macroeconomic processes and everyday lived reality are exposed. This will particularly seek to engage with the issues of land, labour, unemployment, the economic underpinnings of race, wages, etc.

(See also Communion, Objective: Lifting up the Accra Confession, page 7.)

**Witnessing for Justice and Peace**

The church is called to prophetically witness for transformation. This is central to its missiological imperative. Witnessing for transformation is essential to the vision of the WCRC. The WCRC will therefore seek to increase its witness through specifically-directed advocacy work with a particular focus on the global dimensions of this work. This will involve the strengthening of the WCRC’s work with the United Nations. It also specifically means working with other ecumenical bodies and associations that are involved in advocacy work.

**Objective: Witnessing**

The WCRC will strengthen its advocacy work with the United Nations and ecumenical bodies and associations. The WCRC will also specifically focus on the following areas of advocacy:

1. Ecological Justice

Working with our member churches on the issue of ecological justice to care for God's creation through worship, study and ecumenical and political advocacy. (General Council Action 68)

2. Gender-Based Violence

Advocacy work directed towards churches to engage with the issue of gender-based discrimination and gender-based violence through consultations, production of resources and directed campaigns by member churches. This will directly feed into and draw from our mandate for a gender policy by 2019 (General Council Action 31). This work will seek to address the issue of sexual violence in our churches, as well as strengthen the existing work of our member churches on this issue. It will also seek to engage with the entire burden of the problem and include women, men, children and the family and work with other faith groups that are working on the same issue.

3. Engaging Churches on Disability

Regionally based advocacy work on disability so as to ensure that all our churches are safer and more accessible spaces for people with disabilities.

(See also Communion, Objective: Differently Abled People, page 6.)

**Objective: Seeking Peace and Reconciliation**

The WCRC will strengthen and deepen peace and reconciliation work through partnership, pastoral visits, engaging with other ecumenical institutions and advocacy in these regions:

1. Korean Peninsula, working with member churches, the National Council of Churches in Korea and WCC, as well as the Korean Christian Federation, focused on strong advocacy for dialogue instead of posturing and military provocations.
2. Colombia, supporting member churches and regional leadership in the peace process, including advocacy, accompaniment, empowerment and behind-the-scenes international ecumenical diplomacy.
3. South Sudan, working with member churches in South Sudan, Sudan and internationally to deepen advocacy and education efforts.
4. Middle East, including Israel-Palestine, supporting member churches and WCC consensus advocacy.

**Reforming: Gender Justice**

The WCRC is committed to continue the unfinished agenda of the Reformation by working to transform the world according to the Word of God. One way in which it will do this is by working with women to engage with and dismantle patriarchy through specifically-directed work on the empowerment of women in church and society.



The WCRC will work towards an integrating role in engaging the whole communion in resisting patriarchy. It will work towards the allocation and creation of resources to equip women into leadership and power. This will include both lay and ordained women. It will work to place the question of ordination of women within the larger theological context of the priesthood of all believers (see also Theology, page 15, and Communion, page 5), as well as within the larger context of women in leadership and decision making.

**Objective: The Declaration of Faith on the Ordination of Women**

1. By 2019, the WCRC will ensure that all member churches have received, been made aware of and studied the Faith Declaration on the Ordination of Women.
2. The WCRC will strengthen and deepen the work around the Faith Declaration on the Ordination of Women particularly through both deepening and expanding the theological and Biblical insights in the document.

**Objective: Gender Leadership and Power**

By 2024, the WCRC will create a process to ensure that all member churches are theologically equipped to ordain women and to specifically concentrate on those churches that do not ordain women. By this time the WCRC will have contacted, engaged and dialogued with the churches that do not ordain women (General Council Action 48). This will be done by:

1. Initiating a participatory study process of the status of women in member churches through regional consultations. This will be particularly directed towards studying the number of churches that ordain women and those which do not. At the same time, it will seek to study the status of ordained women in those churches that do ordain women.
2. Encouraging a process of intercultural learning between regions particularly to address the cultural, social and theological reasons women are not ordained.

**Objectives: Accompaniment of Women in Theology**

1. The WCRC will strengthen and deepen the existing Theological Education Scholarship Fund for Women in the South so as to be able to accompany young women in theology through scholarships and education and training programmes.
2. The WCRC will explore ways in which to connect women theologians with each other through a network and with the Global Institute of Theology (GIT).
3. Through a series of publications, both existing (e.g. *Reformed World*) and new, the WCRC will make space for theological reflections from

Reformed women theologians. This will particularly emphasize and work with and within the regions.

4. The WCRC will work with theological institutions of its member churches in all of the above work, as well as explore additional ways in which to empower women theologians.

**Objective: Gender Policy**

By 2019 a gender policy for the WCRC and its constituency will be created. This will involve a review of existing policies, as well as the preparation of a strategy for implementation. It is necessary that the creation and implementation of such a policy will involve a high degree of participation of all the regions (General Council Action 31).

**Confessing Our Commitment to Full and Just Participation**

To be a confessing church implies affirming our faith in the living God by disrupting life-denying powers and principalities. One way we seek to disrupt these is by concretely aligning ourselves with young people and Indigenous Peoples to whom we look to for the courage and vision for transformation (see also Communion, Full and Just Participation, page 5).

**Objectives: Accompanying Young People**

1. By 2022, the WCRC will make necessary changes for fuller youth membership in its governing and programme life.
2. Starting immediately the WCRC will ensure youth participation at every level of the WCRC while paying attention to full gender diversities and gender dimensions.
3. The WCRC will work with all young people, not just those studying theology. The WCRC will engage young people on political and theological issues to increase radical and critical political awareness among the youth in our member churches. Two aspects of these engagement will be through the GEM School and the GIT.

**Objectives: Accompanying Indigenous Persons**

1. The WCRC will create an Indigenous Peoples Working Group that will focus on completing the tasks as assigned in General Council Action 57.
2. The WCRC will focus its advocacy work around the doctrine of discovery with member churches through the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous People (General Council Action 57).

**Theology**

**Overarching Objective for Theology**

Hearing the cries of wounded communities and engaging with them (General Council Action 21) the theological work of the WCRC shall lead the whole Communion in theologically-rooted processes of confessing the faith, drawing on the Reformed tradition and contextual theologies to address the present reality.

To further this mission the General Council (General Council Action 20) and the subsequent planning process have identified the following items of the unfinished agenda of the Reformation that shall receive attention in the theology work of the WCRC:

*Identity, mission and purposes of the WCRC:*

- Giving focused attention to what it means to be always reforming according to the Word of God. What do key insights of the Reformation mean for us now (e.g. *sola scriptura*, the priesthood of all believers)? What new reforms are needed in our church and our world today? How has the Reformed tradition to be transformed?
- Considering what being “called to communion and committed to justice” must mean in our life together and in our witness in the wider world.
- Exploring the continuing relevance of important confessions in the Reformed family (i.e. the Barmen Declaration and the confessions of Belhar and Accra). In this connection, we suggest the translation into the languages of our member churches as well as the “vernacularization” (Kwame Bediako) of these documents in different contexts.

*Learning from theologies that liberate and affirm life*

- Liberating the Reformed tradition from its historical arrest in the Constantinian captivity with the empire through programmes and actions that highlight the contribution of those persons and processes that broke through the domesticating and silencing forces of our identity.
- Drawing and learning from theologies that have appropriated the tradition to liberate and affirm life. Affirming, incorporating and internalizing the perspectives of new Reformers and theologians (e.g. Alan Boesak, etc.)
- Finding adequate approaches to describe the Reformed church as a global movement with histories on all continents. How can we harvest the learnings from historical persons, like Zwingli and Calvin, and events that are traditionally regarded as significant for the formation of Reformed identity without perpetuating the male focused and Eurocentric domestication of the tradition?

*Embodied justice*

- Developing the theme of “embodied justice” to a touchstone of projects and dialogues. It is essential that justice be embodied, attentive to issues

of the human body, the body of the church and the body of creation. Special attention should be given to the situations of the impoverished, women, sexual minorities, persons with disabilities and indigenous peoples. We should also ask where is creation wounded and how may we live out our calling to justice ecologically?

- Developing a theology of the wounded body that discerns the body as object of victimization and resister of oppression. Such a theology should lead from a theology of patience to a theology of passion.

#### *Confronting rising authoritarianisms*

- Engaging with rising authoritarianisms over the world and in particular how they engage with religion, nationality, race and caste to disenfranchise and pauperize the most vulnerable. This is to be done through a series of consultations on the question of nationalism, religion, and race/caste (see also Justice, Objective: Cross-Cutting Dimensions, 1. Race, Authoritarianism, Nationalism, page 9).
- Consulting with churches in all regions to discern whether authoritarian and populist ideologies shall be denounced in the form of a confession.
- Developing a theology of a sanctuary (General Council Action 51) that offers radical hospitality, solidarity and ethical accountability to all our neighbors and, particularly, the most vulnerable communities.

#### **Objective: Full and Just Representation**

In accordance with the Operating Principles (General Council Action 21) theological programmes of the WCRC will:

1. include persons from marginalized communities and recognize different contexts, diverse voices and multiple languages;
2. ensure that the composition of participants in and contributors to consultations will be gender balanced and include young people.

#### **Objective: Global Network of Theologians**

The WCRC will form a Global Network of Theologians that will engage the leadership and the membership of member churches and the theological communities within the Communion to pursue the “unfinished agenda” of the Reformation by organizing consultations and conferences, theological publications, exhibitions and other resources.

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

The Global Institute for Theology will continue to nurture and encourage the work of young theologians and scholars.

(See also Justice, Objectives: Accompanying Young People, page 14.)

**Objective: Reformed World**

*Reformed World* will be further developed as a vehicle for incorporating and sharing widely the best work done in these areas of our committed conversation.

**Objectives: Theological Institutions of Member Churches**

1. The WCRC will link the contributions of theological institutions to the confessing life of the member churches in different regions by creating networks of theological institutions and partner organizations and engage them with the transforming and decolonizing vision of the WCRC. The programme will first focus upon Africa and then be extended to other regions.
2. The WCRC will facilitate coordination and communication among the regional agencies engaged in the theology work of the WCRC and support cooperative work with seminaries in the regions.

**Objective: Christian Worship and Spiritual Life**

Taking up the constitutional mandate to encourage “renewal of Christian worship and spiritual life within the Reformed tradition” (Art. IV.A.3.) the WCRC will:

1. Promote approaches that include aesthetic dimensions of expression (art, music and dance) in its theological work and in its resources for worship and spiritual life. This should include artistic opportunities for ecumenical engagements based on techniques of the Theater of the Oppressed (Augusto Boal).
2. Facilitate the exchange of worship resources and spiritual life between the regions of the WCRC.
3. Develop resources for worship based on the Barmen Declaration and the Belhar and Accra confessions to enable member churches to make these documents part of their worship life and be enriched by the confession element embedded in the documents as they reaffirm their commitment to be a communion present in the world. This will include:
  - a. preparing accompanying resource material, workbooks etc. to make the three texts accessible and user friendly to constituencies in different contexts;
  - b. translating Barmen, Belhar and Accra and other important documents into the languages of member churches as these confessions are guiding documents for the current work on communion and justice.

(See also Communion, Objective: Lifting up the Accra Confession, page 7.)

**Mission**

### **Overarching Objective for Mission**

In witnessing its call to communion and its commitment to justice, the WCRC will articulate afresh a vision of liberating discipleship that rejoices in God's renewing presence in individual conversion and in social transformation and embraces the call to live out God's mission in the face of idolatries of power and privilege.

### **Clarifying the Foundations and Goals of Mission**

The WCRC does not yet have an agreed consensus on foundations and goals of its missional witness. Faith convictions that discern the *missio dei* in processes of social transformation and those that see God's presence in acts of individual conversion coexist side by side. While both positions will usually accept the validity of the respective other there is no agreement about a comprehensive understanding of mission.

#### **Objective: Clarifying Missional Foundations**

The WCRC will facilitate a process of consultation to clarify the foundations and goals of mission. This process will value the richness of the different foci on the missional goals that we find in the Communion and explore if the concept of "liberating discipleship" may provide a reliable bridge between the two emphases.

The following principles should guide this process:

- Mission is *contextual*: The understanding of liberating discipleship ought to be explored by reflecting with those in the heart and heat of God's liberating encounter with the world. This exploration involves the personal experience of faith and invites the participation of those our systems sacrifice.
- Mission is *relational*: Mission binds believers to God and to one another and calls them to proclaim the good news of liberation over all the earth. This belief in God's sovereignty over all creation allows and mandates to relate to all whom the Spirit empowers in seeking liberation and reconciliation.
- Mission is *ideological*: The living out of liberating discipleship leads to a renewal of language and praxis of mission that reforms the mission of the Communion and revitalizes the language and praxis of transformation that can be shared in partnerships with movements of resistance and change as they develop.
- Mission is *transformational*: Programmes that strive to live out liberating discipleship shall point in directions for tangible change.

**Objective: Mission in the Context of Crisis and Marginalization**

The “Mission in the Context of Crisis and Marginalization” programme will accompany member churches in situations of religious tensions (General Council Action 53. Initial target regions will be the Middle East, West Africa and Indonesia.

The programme will consist of the following:

- Solidarity visits;
- Engagement with religious actors in the conflict;
- Engagement with political actors;
- Consultations and conferences that engage with the following:
  - analysis of the tensions and the strategies of conflict resolution;
  - joint development of mission strategies for conflict resolution, justice and peace;
  - formulation of a message on the role of the church in conflict resolution in religious tensions;
- Publications on the situation in the respective regions and the results of the consultations.

(See also Justice, Objective: Cross-Cutting Dimensions, 3. Mission in the Context of Crisis and Marginalization, page 9.)

**Objective: Migrants, Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Trafficked People**

The WCRC recognizes the urgency of the global issues of human trafficking and migration and the need for a clear common response from the church on behalf of migrants, refugees, asylum seekers and trafficked people.

In taking up General Council Action 51 the WCRC will work in cooperation with its regions, member churches and other bodies:

1. to analyze what happens to trafficked people, migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in the countries they leave, pass through, and settle in;
2. to promote networking among regions and local churches to share best practices;
3. to consider, together, how to address governments, media and citizens in the countries involved so that all that is necessary is done and people receive the help they need and deserve as our fellow human beings;
4. to consider the theological, spiritual and pastoral challenges confronting member churches.

**Objective: Redeeming Religion**

The WCRC will continue the programme of the “Racism, Authoritarianism, Nationalism” consultation in 2018 and will explore strategies for redeeming religion from the idolatry of power and privilege. The programme will be

conducted in close cooperation with the activities on interfaith cooperation, Mission in the Context of Crisis and Marginalization and on living out of the Accra Confession. The WCRC will facilitate a series of consultations with the theme “Redeeming Religion.”<sup>4</sup>

(See also Justice, Objective: Cross-Cutting Dimensions, 1. Race, Authoritarianism, Nationalism (RAN) and 3. Mission in the Context of Crisis and Marginalization, both on page 9.)

## **Ecumenical Engagement**

### **Ecumenical Forums**

#### **Overarching Objective for Participation in Ecumenical Forums**

The WCRC understands itself as an integral part of the ecumenical movement. Taking up the constitutional mandate to “contribute to the ecumenical movement and the transformation of the world” (Art. IV. C.) the WCRC will promote economic and ecological justice, global peace and reconciliation and provide Reformed perspectives on church unity.

(See also Organizational Objectives, Alliances, page 26.)

#### **Objective: World Council of Churches**

The WCRC will continue to contribute to the work of the World Council of Churches and will engage particularly with the following programmes:

- Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace,
- ACT Alliance,
- faith and order
- mission and evangelism,
- interreligious dialogue and cooperation,
- international affairs/United Nations (in particular with regard to the following: Middle East, Korean peninsula, Colombia, South Sudan),
- Indigenous people,
- people living with disabilities.

#### **Objective: Conference of Secretaries of Christian World Communions**

The WCRC will play an active role in the Conference of Secretaries and will continue to promote its basic ecumenical objectives among the different Christian communions.

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<sup>4</sup> Like these other programmes, the “Redeeming Religion” project will focus on developments in those regions that are of particular relevance to the member churches and are focus areas of ecumenical engagement.



**Objective: Global Christian Forum**

The WCRC supports the attempt to gather all main Christian churches and church families around one table and will continue to engage in the Global Christian Forum.

**Objective: Religions for Peace**

The WCRC promotes common action for peace among the world's religious communities and will continue to support and work with Religions for Peace.

**Ecumenical Dialogues and Cooperation**

**Overarching Objective for Ecumenical Dialogues and Cooperation**

The ecumenical engagement of the WCRC with other Christian communions aims to promote the visible unity of the larger church in its common witness to the world. In dialogues and other programmes, the WCRC will emphasize the interconnectedness of theology, communion, mission and justice and will foreground voices and perspectives of Christians in the Global South.

**Objective: Ecumenical Relationships**

To promote Christian unity in a world marked by increasing fragmentation the WCRC will engage in the following relationships:

- Dialogue sessions to be concluded: Anglican Communion, Pentecostal churches.
- Dialogues to begin: Mennonite World Conference, World Methodist Council, Ecumenical Patriarchate (Orthodox).

**Objective: Deepen the Communion with the Lutheran World Federation**

Based upon the dialogue report *Communion: On Being the Church* and the Wittenberg Witness the WCRC will continue to intensify the collaboration with the LWF and deepen the communion between LWF and WCRC.

**Objective: Strengthen the Relationship with the Roman Catholic Church**

Guided by the papal encyclical *Laudato si'* and the Accra Confession, as well as by the dialogue report *Justification and Sacramentality: The Christian Community as an Agent for Justice*, the WCRC will continue to strengthen its relationship with the Roman Catholic Church and focus particularly on church unity and justice.

(See also Communion, Objective: Lifting up the Accra Confession, page 7.)

**Objective: Play an Active Role in the JDDJ Process**

Five Christians communions (Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Methodist, Reformed and Anglican) have approved the content of the Joint Declaration

on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ) and are prepared to journey together on the way to Christian unity. The WCRC will play an active role in this process to use the JDDJ format to develop a joint ecumenical agenda between the five communions.

**Objective: Transforming Ecumenical Dialogues**

The following strategic considerations will guide the WCRC's ecumenical engagement:

- joint witness,
- multilateral approach,
- post-colonial critique of the current ecumenical discourse,
- focus on the Lord's Supper,
- common bond between the churches of the Reformation.

**Objective: Relationship to Evangelical and (Neo-)Pentecostal Movements**

At the conclusion of the current Reformed-Pentecostal dialogue, the WCRC will employ new forms of engagement with Evangelical and (Neo-)Pentecostal movements. These programmes will be developed in collaboration with the WCRC's regions and address themes relevant to the member churches.

The engagement will be guided by the following principles:

- strong emphasis on evangelism and discipleship,
- appreciation of religious agency particularly in the Global South,
- critical engagement with forms of religion that justify economic exploitation and individual domination (e.g. prosperity religion and deliverance),
- striving for joint witness and ecumenical cooperation with regard to the challenges of our time,
- ecumenical dialogues to explore ways to Christian unity.

**Interreligious Dialogue and Cooperation**

**Overarching Objective for Interreligious Dialogue and Cooperation**

The interreligious work of the WCRC strives for interreligious cooperation based on trust, respect and the commitment to life, engages with the question of Christian witness in a multi-religious world and accompanies churches in conflict situations (General Council Actions 20 and 63).

**Objective: Clarifying Theological Foundations**

The WCRC will prepare the following documents that will lead to a common consensus on interfaith cooperation, collaborating with other ecumenical

bodies (such as WCC, Christian Conference of Asia, LWF, etc.) and building upon the resources they have found helpful for this work:

- statement on the WCRC's theological and social positioning on inter-religious dialogue and cooperation,
- resources for inter-religious dialogue and cooperation in member churches,
- documents on particular issues: minorities, religious rights, justice and peace, friendship, etc.

**Objective: “Dialogues for Life”**

The WCRC will engage in “Dialogues for Life” with those groups of other religions where the interaction will have a constructive impact on situations that are relevant for its member churches. The situation in the following countries will receive particular attention: Middle East, Nigeria and Indonesia. The activities will be conducted in cooperation with partners within the regions that have experiences in programmes of interreligious cooperation (e.g. Programme for Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa) and will be coordinated with the Mission in the Context of Crisis and Marginalization programme.

(See also Mission, Objective: Mission in the Context of Crisis and Marginalization , page 18, and Justice, Objective: Cross-Cutting Dimensions, 3. Mission in the Context of Crisis and Marginalization, page 9.)

**Objective: Accompanying Member Churches and Training of Interreligious Bridge Builders**

The WCRC will accompany member churches that live in challenging religious situations. Accompaniment will be facilitated by the global institutions and the regions. To train people for this kind of accompaniment the WCRC will prepare a training programme and will train interfaith interreligious bridge builders and activists (following the example of the Peace Provocateurs in Indonesia).

**Objective: Curriculum Development**

The WCRC will call a working group to make proposals for the development of theological curricula with an interreligious perspective for seminaries that belong to or are related to member churches.

**Organizational Issues**

In addition to the five interlocking dimensions there are eight organizational issues that must be strategically addressed to meet the overarching goal:

1. Sustainability

2. Capacity
3. Participation
4. Location
5. Alliances
6. Communications
7. Governance
8. Empowering Regions

Even as these concerns work through the interlocking dimensions in varying degrees, the two strategic foundations also apply to each of them.

### **Sustainability**

Sustainability should not be defined narrowly in financial terms. We are sustained in all things by the Lord Jesus Christ, who brings our communion into being and nurtures it according to God's will. While organizational sustainability, including financial stability, is one important part of the faithful living out of our communion, we also recognize and celebrate that we have much to share that sustains us in time and space. We take seriously the sharing of prayer, time, friendship, goodwill, and all the gifts of the Spirit as we carry out our ministry. All this is integral to the sustainability of the WCRC.

Despite this acknowledgement, the reality of this world is that there must be sufficient funds for the organization's core operations and programmatic work. Since its inception, the WCRC has been committed to funding its core budget through contributions from its membership while its programmatic work has been funded through additional donations. The goal of a membership-sustained core budget has never been achieved, and the current core budget is only balanced through support from ecumenical partners and special donations, including individuals.

#### **Objectives: Sustainability**

The WCRC will fund its core budget through contributions by its member churches and key partners by 2021 while continuing to fund its programmes through additional fundraising.

The WCRC will seek to expand the number of member churches and the amounts contributed to the entire organization. This will be done through:

1. Expanding WCRC membership by inviting churches into the Communion, especially United/Uniting churches;
2. Encouraging an increase in the level of contributions and special donations to the core budget from those member churches who have

- the potential to do so by developing Executive Committee-led work groups in each region;
3. Pursuing mutually beneficial partnerships with like-minded organizations, from which the WCRC could obtain not only administration fees but increases in funding for core, programme and regional council budgets;
  4. Extending the annual appeal to the whole of the English-speaking world while developing contextual fundraising appeals in other areas;
  5. Exploring contextual and creative fundraising methods, including possibilities for an endowment fund;
  6. Continuing other fundraising work to ensure the annual core budget is balanced.

## Capacity

The WCRC has a small staff with a large agenda, and it is not immune from funding trends in the ecumenical world. Despite the decrease in staff over the years, the goals of the organization have not diminished accordingly. This points to the question of capacity: through what means can the goals of the organization be accomplished?

Currently the WCRC has four executive staff (a general secretary and three executive secretaries: communications, communion and theology, justice and witness), four administrative staff (assistants to/for: general secretary, finance and communications, justice and theology and Reformed Partnership Fund) and two interns (who provide support throughout the organization even as they learn from their experiences). Additional assistance (including payroll and financial oversight) is provided by the Evangelical Reformed Church in Leer, Germany.<sup>5</sup>

In addition, as capacities are considered, it must be noted that the current staffing does not properly reflect the membership of the Communion, most notably in gender balances on the executive level.

There are two primary means to ensure that capacity needs are met: 1) maximize current staff capacities (on all levels) and 2) expand the number of staff through a variety of means.

### *Maximize Current Staff Capacities (strengthening and deepening)*

On the executive level, the areas of work for the two programme secretaries are well defined, given their recent appointments and especially when tied to the goals of the

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<sup>5</sup> Previously, the WCRC could also rely on a semi-retired, local German pastor for assistance on a variety of visa and German-specific needs; however, he has now fully retired since the General Council.

strategic plan. Much of the work of the general secretary also falls within these areas. However, the work of the executive secretary for communications has naturally grown to encompass aspects of the responsibilities of the general secretariat; this has happened through strategic moves to maximize capacities, including supervising assignments, and especially given the demands placed on the general secretary.

On the administrative/support level, it has become apparent that work loads are not always equally distributed throughout the year. It has also been long acknowledged that the assistant for finance and communications can devote hardly more than 5% of her time to actual communication work. Finally, the amount of time needed to tend to the Reformed Partnership Fund (on both the administrative and executive levels) has never been evaluated against its benefits for the Communion.

**Objective: Maximize Current Capacities**

The WCRC will maximize current staff capacities by making the necessary adjustments to job responsibilities on both executive and administrative levels—after study and review—by February 2019.

*Increase Capacities through Additional Staff (growing and expanding)*

Maximizing current staff capacities will not meet all the needs of the organization, especially if additional projects are taken on to complete strategic objectives, nor will it improve gender balances.

**Objective: Expand Capacities**

By 2024, staff capacities will be expanded and gender representation balanced. Additional projects taken on by the WCRC will include sufficient increases in capacity. This will be done in the following ways:<sup>6</sup>

1. The WCRC will pursue partnerships to expand staff capacities through seconded staff, co-opted staff and/or mission partners/missionaries.
2. Two new female executive staff members, along with sufficient administrative support, will be added, either through secondment or with guaranteed financial support to cover the duration of their contracts.
3. Two female executive advisors will be added to create the Extended Executive Staff Team, which also comprises the general secretary and

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<sup>6</sup> A Hannover-based German will be recruited to assist on the German/Germany-specific needs of the staff and organization on a part time basis, replacing the German volunteer who fully retired in late 2017.

executive secretaries. The advisors will volunteer their time but have all expenses covered.

4. The internship programme will be further developed to increase the number of interns serving. While it is primarily a leadership development programme it does have a positive impact on capacity.

## **Participation**

The Communion is dedicated to broadening and deepening involvement in its staff, event and decision-making structures in order to better reflect its diversity and commitment to justice. The following goals will address imbalances, including in power-relationships.

### **Objectives: Participation**

1. By 2024, participation in governing bodies, reference groups, working groups, networks and in events will reflect the diversity of our family.
2. The Reference Group on Communion will make visible and propose strategies for the full inclusion of all and redress the unjust power relationships within the Communion (from an empire-critical perspective).

(See also Communion, Full and Just Participation, page 5; Justice, Confessing Our Commitment to Full and Just Participation, page 13; and Reforming: Gender Justice, page 12.)

## **Location**

The move from Geneva to Hannover achieved a certain number of strategic goals, most notably sustainability. This came at a significant cost to stability—with a large turn-over in staff, new accounting systems and a database update that required significant resources, among other changes.

The move, however, did not satisfy those goals related to the WCRC's identity, especially as the majority of its member churches are in the Global South, and projections show this is where the growth of Christianity will continue. Thus, the question of "location" remains important.

### **Objective: Location**

Organizational stability will remain the priority in the short-term. By 2023, however, the organization will return to the question of its physical location.

## **Alliances**

Given the pressures apparent in the ecumenical world, it is important for the WCRC to enter into conversations with other ecumenical bodies seeking common and/or mutually supportive models of ecumenical sustainability. The WCRC must continue to deepen alliances with current partners and seek new alliances. While the focus is likely not on organic unity, it should be on coming together to demonstrate Christian unity and prophetic witness on particular issues.

The *Council for World Mission (CWM)* is an important strategic partner for the WCRC. The two organizations have had a long history of alliance and partnership. This has been marked by regular cooperation and meetings between staff, through summits of leadership and through an agreement that sees CWM and the WCRC partnering on common mission goals. These two organizations share many of the same member churches, and much of their work is in alignment. Some have even expressed a hope that the two would one day become a single organization.

**Objective: Work and Witness with CWM**

The WCRC commits with CWM to a common mission partnership to journey together on issues of justice and prophetic witness, including resource sharing, joint staff planning and programming and common visioning and strategizing.

The *World Student Christian Federation (WSCF)* is uniquely positioned to partner with the WCRC in its work on developing young leaders. Like CWM it shares many of the justice and mission-oriented priorities of the WCRC. Unlike the WCRC, it has a global network of young leaders.

**Objective: Partner with WSCF**

The WCRC will seek to develop a programme with WSCF for youth involvement in all aspects of the WCRC's mission and work.

The WCRC also has other significant partners, several of whom provide resources on more specific projects (such as *Evangelisches Missionswerk in Deutschland (EMW)*, *Otto per Mille (OPM)*, *Brot für die Welt* and the Evangelical Church of Westphalia). These partnerships will continue and new partners may be added within the purview of strategic objectives. This is the same for relationships with the World Council of Churches, Lutheran World Federation, and other ecumenical partners (see Ecumenical Engagement, page 19). The WCRC will also work to develop and strengthen relationships with civil society groups and social movements, including inter-religious and interfaith organizations, such as Religions for Peace (see Ecumenical Engagement, Objective: Religions for Peace, page 20).

**Communications**



Communications is an integral part of the work of the Communion. Utilized well communications can strengthen both the Communion itself and also its public witness. This is especially true if communications include voices from the whole of the Communion, including member churches, intentionally attending to those who are not always heard. Building right relationships through communication is key not only for strengthening the Communion but for creating a just and inclusive organization and for being able to effectively witness to the world.

**Objectives: Communication**

1. The WCRC will communicate its vision and work, doing so in such a way as to strengthen the Communion and witness to the world.
2. The WCRC will partner with other global, ecumenical organizations (such as CWM, WCC, LWF, CEC and ACT Alliance) to share resources and coordinate when appropriate.
3. The WCRC will enter into a global, strategic partnership with the World Alliance of Christian Communicators (WACC) to challenge injustice and stimulate critical awareness of empire and the realities that the media construct.

**Governance**

The 2017 General Council adopted numerous amendments to the WCRC constitution and by-laws, elected a new Executive Committee and adopted a consensus/discernment model through which to make its decisions.

The primary role of the Executive Committee is to exercise “general oversight of the work of the WCRC between meetings of the General Council.” Specifically, this includes adopting the budget, electing the general secretary, appointing executive secretaries and overseeing membership (see WCRC Constitution, Article X), as well as preparing for the next General Council.

**Objectives: Governance**

1. In order to strengthen the WCRC’s character as a discerning organization, the Executive Committee will organize itself, constituting necessary committees and adopting a consensus/discernment model of decision-making at its 2018 meeting.
2. In order to address sustainability, capacity and gender equity (General Council Action 39), the Personnel Committee will track all executive terms of service and bring recommendations in a timely manner to the Executive Committee to ensure transitions are carried out smoothly.
3. In order to ensure that the planning of the next General Council carries out the objectives of this strategic plan, the officers will explore possibilities for the next General Council and present options to the 2019 Executive Committee, including a planning timeline.

## **Empowering Regions**

The General Council (in Action 44) reaffirmed the importance of the regions within the WCRC, resolving to:

- a. reaffirm the pivotal role the regions play in strengthening communion between the churches by providing spaces for dialogue and action;
- b. reaffirm the participation of regional representatives in the decision-making structures of the WCRC and in programmatic work to enhance the participation of the churches from all regions; and
- c. affirm working styles that strengthen the synergy between the local, regional and global levels.

There are a number of challenges to achieve the resolution of the Council. Two of the more important ones are: 1) the varying levels of capacity and effectiveness at which the current regional councils operate, and 2) the lack of officially recognized regions in several areas.

Because each region has its own particular challenges, specific objectives will be employed within each area (as noted in objective 4). However, there are three broader objectives that will be incorporated into the whole of the WCRC's work in relationship to regions.

### **Objectives: Empowering Regions**

1. The Communion will be strengthened by empowering active and practical relationships among all levels—secretariat-regions-members—and by making the regions a necessary point of relationship between the secretariat and member churches.
2. All programmatic activities will strengthen the regions, engaging member churches with their regional councils and engaging regional councils both with each other and the secretariat. Thus, the secretariat and the regions will partner in the selection and development of issues, based on the priorities identified elsewhere in the strategic plan.
3. Additional regional councils will not be recognized by the Executive Committee prior to 2020. Nevertheless, in the interim, regional liaisons will be invited to the Executive Committee meeting from those areas that do not have official representatives so that their voices can be heard. Consideration will be given to funding their expenses.
4. By 2021 the secretariat will partner in new ways with each region (whether a recognized council or not) on projects that will benefit both the region and the entire Communion (see Appendix 1, page 30).

(See also Communion, Objective: Empowering Regions, page 6.)

## **Implementation and Monitoring**

Reference Groups will be formed along the interlocking dimensions, combinations thereof and/or other strategic needs (e.g. communication). They will be approved by the officers, as will the membership in each. Members of each Reference Group will bring their expertise while also reflecting the WCRC's diversity.

The Reference Groups will coordinate the implementation of the objectives within their portfolios, including monitoring, evaluating and reporting to the Executive Committee through the WCRC staff. They will meet virtually unless capacity and funding can be found through programme budgets. Reference Groups will collaborate on those objectives which cut across the dimensions.

Each Reference Group will have a moderator and a scribe. The moderators will make up the *Strategic Plan Programme Group*, which will meet virtually to coordinate the WCRC's programme work.

Each Reference Group, in consultation with pertinent executive staff, may appoint *Networks* and *Working Groups* for more focused projects envisioned by the Reference Group.

The Networks will be Communion-wide resource groups of people available to carry out and/or advise upon the work of the WCRC. It is from the Networks that many of the Working Groups will be drawn.

The Working Groups will be responsible for the implementation (including resource production) of specific programmes to accomplish objective(s). The number of Working Groups will vary depending on the current needs.

## Appendix 1: Empowering Regions

Each area has its own particular contexts and thus its own challenges. The following are *examples of points to begin discussions* with each area to determine the best ways in which to partner between the global and regional levels to create synergies that help not only the specific area but the entire Communion.

### *AIPRAL (La Alianza de Iglesias Presbiterianas y Reformadas de América Latina)*

Several specific actions from the General Council will be taken up between the secretariat and AIPRAL (e.g. Venezuela, the Northern Triangle). With the agreement of AIPRAL, a joint mission plan will be developed with the secretariat that will include priorities around NIFEA and strengthening theological networks. The NIFEA work will specifically be built in and around the G20 meeting in 2018 in Argentina but could also be a regional entry point that expands to the global level.

### *ACRC (Africa Council of Reformed Churches)*

New leaders will be elected at the ACRC Council in summer 2018. The secretariat will engage with these new leaders in a strategic planning process that 1) develops synergies with ecumenical organizations in Africa, 2) foregrounds questions of mutual support around theology and networking, 3) places a priority on the ordination of women and 4) has programme foci for each of the next three years.

### *Asia*

Given that the only recognized council in Asia is the Northeast Asia Area Council—which represents only a specific part of Asia—a series of goals will be used within each more specific region within Asia, all of which will be employed by 2020.

### *NEAAC (Northeast Asia Area Council)*

Issues identified both by NEAAC and by its member churches will be engaged with, especially as they intersect with the goals found within the strategic plan (e.g. peace on the Korean peninsula).

*South and Southeast Asia, including Indonesia*—encompassing Bangladesh, East Timor, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam—will be brought together through a relevant consultation (topic to be determined), during which future cooperation between countries and churches will be explored.

### *CANAAC (Caribbean and North American Area Council)*

New leadership will be elected in fall 2018, and a new strategy will be used in a partnership between the secretariat and CANAAC, including common programming, based around the upcoming CANAAC Assembly's theme, "Living Faithfully: Building Relationships." Partnerships with CWM and the Caribbean and North America

Council for Mission (CANACOM) will also be pursued, and a goal of having a major consultation on the issues of race, authoritarianism and nationalism will be explored.

The *Middle East* will be engaged on a variety of fronts. This will include deepening support for member churches' refugee relief work in and around Syria, providing solidarity with and exploring WCRC membership for churches in Iraq, partnering with Fellowship of Middle East Evangelical Churches (FMEEC) in support of Christians in the region and working ecumenically to bring peace, justice and reconciliation to Israel/Palestine.

In the *Pacific* area, partnerships will be created between the Council for World Mission, the Pacific Council of Churches, the Pacific School of Theology and WCRC member churches to create a consultation focused on ecological threats and realities faced in the Pacific with the intention of increasing consciousness on this topic throughout the Communion.

#### *WCRC Europe*

A consultative process will be embarked upon between the secretariat and WCRC Europe (which elected new leaders in April 2018) to determine in which ways more effective engagement on specific issues (within the themes of identity, theology and migration) could be undertaken—and in what ways this could be done. A special emphasis on engaging the next generation of theologians, using the Global Institute of Theology, will be a part of this work.

## Appendix 2: Contributors

The Strategic Plan was crafted with the participation of the following people:

**Strategic Planning Committee:** D. R. Sadananda (convener), Sylvana Maria Apituley, Samuel Ayete-Nyampong, Raissa Vieira Brasil, Collin Cowan, Chris Ferguson, Peggy Kabonde, Najla Kassab, Necta Montes, Patricia Sheerattan-Bisnauth, Lisa Vander Wal, Johann Weusmann, Anna Case-Winters

**Working Groups:** Joas Adiprasetya, Christoph Anders, Samuel Ayete-Nyampong, Dario Barolin, Michael Blair, Debbie Braaksma, Omega Bula, Charlene Burns, Russel Burns, Anna Case-Winters, Peter Cruchley, Peter Gai, Aruna Gnanadason, Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, Ruby Hembrom, Roderick Hewitt, Lynn Kandel, Sharon Kandel, Dustyn Keepers, Stephen Kendall, HyeRan Kim Craig, Cliff Kirkpatrick, Yueh-Wen Lu, Cheryl Meban, Isabella Novsima, Athena Peralta, Milciades Pua, Janet Sigurdson, Ranjan Solomon, Lucy Thaljah, Wai Ching Wong, Philip Woods

**Vision and Mission Consultation:** Charlene Burns, Russel Burns, Priscille Djomhoué, Farid Esack, Refat Fateh, Cowans Gordon, Ruby Hembrom, Luciano Kovacs, Tafue Lusama, Shanea D. Leonard, Dawn Gikandi, Celine Hoiore, Puleng Lenka Bula, Katie Mulligan, Dan González Ortega, Rex Reyes, Jonatan Abad Ruiz, Reginald Smith, Aiko Sumichan, Vuyani Vellem, Ashathala Zechariah

**Core Staff Team:** Chris Ferguson, Drea Fröchtling, Hanns Lessing, Philip Peacock, Humberto Shikiya, Sudipta Singh, Phil Tanis, Tara Tautari

Greetings

## **Greetings from the Council for World Mission**

Rev. Dr. Collin I. Cowan

General Secretary

President of the WCRC, Rev Najla Kassab, General Secretary, Rev Christopher Ferguson, Officers and members of the Executive Committee, members of the Secretariat, friends and colleagues: in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and on behalf of our Moderator, Rev Darchonhaia Darnei, directors, trustees and my colleagues on the Secretariat of Council for World Mission (CWM), I greet you at this the commencement of your Executive Committee meeting.

You are meeting in South Korea at a very historic moment in time. The much prayed for and long-awaited move across borders of entrenched pain and dislocation happened when the leaders of North Korea, Kim Jong-un, and South Korea, Moon Jae-in, held hands and walked across the divide into each other's territory. Having been part of the negotiating team that is paving the way for reunification, peace and reconciliation between North and South Korea, you should be rejoicing at this time. In the eyes of many, this may be too small a step for enthusiastic responses; but we know that every step towards peace is one step taken in the right direction. CWM joins you in this time of celebration of answered prayers; and hopes that your deliberations will also give space to consider what part churches can play in bringing peace and overcoming division.

In mid- March a summit between WCRC and CWM was held in Hannover, where we had the opportunity to review the partnership between these two organisations. If the only outcome of our gathering were the affirmation that we must continue to commit ourselves to working together for the common cause of justice, in a world where communion is being threatened because of the infestation of injustice, it would be worth the time, effort and money. However, the summit produced more. We reaffirmed our oneness in Christ and agreed that indeed, "there are more things that unite us than they are that divide us"; we acknowledged our common heritage as part of the reformed family committed to the principle of *ecclesia semper reformanda secundum verbum dei*—a church always being reformed according to the Word of God; and we recommitted ourselves to active partnership in doing God's mission, which means, among other things, divesting ourselves of whatever hindrances there are that would obstruct our shared vision of fullness of life through Christ for all creation. This way of working will demand much from both organisations from the early stage of conceptualising an idea to the final stage of action and reflection. We certainly have much to give and to receive from each other but such acts of mutual sharing call for grace, humility and awareness.

I am aware that during this meeting the Executive will be looking at the strategic plan to guide the work of WCRC for the next seven years. This is a moment pregnant with opportunities and buoyant with hope for something different in this ecumenical

organisation with influence across the globe. I am grateful that CWM was invited to participate in this process and we believe that there is much in the plan to take this organisation forward. Your president, general secretary and key leaders from both the Executive and the Secretariat have worked assiduously to bring this plan to where it now is; and in affirming them for their outstanding leadership, I am also commending the plan for the Executive's further engagement and acceptance. There is a great deal of synergy in this proposed strategic plan that resonates with the direction of CWM. As such we can see great opportunities for collaboration and cooperation.

Your General Secretary and I have just returned from the 3rd meeting of the ecumenical panel of NIFEA, where economists, ecologists, theologians and social activists helped us to examine the emerging signs of the times and to name concrete ways of confronting and combatting the forces of systemic and structural injustice, on the one hand; and, on the other hand, to explore what alternative ways of living and being in community may look like should we have the courage and the discipline to act. Kindly allow me to invite this Executive meeting to signal your commitment to this process once again and to declare war on every expression of empire at work, however subtle. CWM is committed to this agenda, but we contend that we can not/must not go alone because there is far too much at stake.

I pray with you that the God of life will renew and transform you as you gather for this important meeting around the many challenging and complex issues to do with your sense of call to communion and commitment to justice. May the God of life inspire you with the gift of discernment and may you be filled with the Spirit of hope, where the spirituality of resistance defines and informs the content and nature of your engagement.

On behalf of the entire CWM family, I salute you and wish you every blessing in your deliberations, discernment and decision-making. Shalom.

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**Greetings from the Lutheran World Federation**

Rev. Dr. Martin Junge  
General Secretary

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

It is a joy to be invited to greet you on behalf of the Lutheran World Federation now when the WCRC Executive Committee is meeting for the first time after the Reformation anniversary 2017. Remembering the 500 years of the Reformation, naming the failures of the history but also the gifts of the liberating power of God's



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grace and Christ's presence in our midst, has brought us Reformed and Lutheran closer with many of our ecumenical partners.

As we were preparing for the Reformation anniversary we knew that this would be the first anniversary celebrated in the spirit of ecumenical accountability. Now, when we look back to the year 2017, we can feel nothing but grateful. For our two global communions, there are two particular reasons for the gratitude: the association of the WCRC into the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification, and the signing of the Wittenberg Witness. In this bilateral document we are giving thanks and celebrating the gifts of unity we have already received, and committing together to follow God's call to witness together to the abundant love and grace we have in Christ in this suffering and fragmented world. In this, we are able to continue building on the long history of theological dialogue between our two global bodies as well as for the gift of communion lived out by many of our member churches already now in regional and local level.

One of the renewing gifts of the Reformation anniversary was the fact that the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification has now become a multilateral document bringing five Christian World Communions in an agreement on the very core of our Christian faith, justification. By associating to the Declaration, the WCRC has in a valuable way contributed to our understanding of justification with your emphasis. You have been reminding us how Christians are called to serve together so that justice and peace will become reality in this world groaning under the burden of oppression and inequality. We are only about beginning to understand what the Joint Declaration might mean in the life of our churches and for the unity of the entire body of Christ. It is my hope and prayer that we will be inspired by the Holy Spirit when we continue following Christ's call to on our journey of reconciliation and renewal witnessing to the transforming power of God's grace.

It is most fitting that you are gathering during these days under the theme *From Life For Life, Transforming, Reconciling, Renewing*, on Korean peninsula where the God's transforming love and reconciliation are so painfully needed also today. As we see glimpses of hope of renewal in relationships, we continue to pray together with you and the whole ecumenical family for peace in the world, I pray that your meeting will be inspired and encouraged by the promises of God.

*"See, I am making all things new."* (Revelations 21:5)

In Christ,

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## Greetings from the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity

Cardinal Kurt Koch  
President

On the occasion of the 2018 Executive Committee meeting, I send warm greetings and prayerful good wishes to you, the assembled officers and members of the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) gathered in Seoul, South Korea.

Just one year ago, Catholics and those churches tracing their origins to the Reformation, undertook an unprecedented common journey of reconciliation as we commemorated together the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. It was a new opportunity to strengthen our commitment to pave a common towards Christian unity. Today, more than ever, we recognize that as Christians we live in a critical moment of history where the controversies and disagreements of the past have given way to the greater horizon of Christian unity, following the paradigm of “from conflict to communion.”

The WCRC’s historic association with the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification, on July 5 of the commemoration year, was also a significant step taken in the trajectory towards unity. The emphasis on sanctification, which according to the Reformed understanding cannot be separated from justification, provides an added dimension to the discussion of justification which will no doubt bear fruit in future conversations.

Pope Francis has recently highlighted the great need for holiness of life (the fruit of sanctification) in his more recent Apostolic Exhortation, entitled *On the Call to Holiness in Today’s World*, stating – “A Christian cannot think of this or her mission on earth without seeing it as a path of holiness, for ‘this is the will of God, your sanctification’ (1 Thess 4:3)” [*Gaudete et Exsultate*, 19]. Holiness therefore, as the “will of God”, becomes the key by which the Church, the Body of Christ, patterns her life on the life of her divine Savior and head, and fulfills his solemn mandate to proclaim the saving truth of the Gospel to the very ends of the earth (cf. Acts 1:8) [cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 17].

The context of your present meeting in Seoul, South Korea, is a good example of how proclamation through holiness of life, indeed through martyrdom, produces good fruit for the world. Today, the Korean Church is the second larger Christian community in Asia, and one of the most vital and dynamic. Korean churches work to relieve the sufferings of countless people caught up in natural disasters or conflicts. This should not surprise us, since the love of God and the joy of the Gospel, naturally spill over into love of neighbor, even love of our enemies. The Lord himself told us: “*I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing*” (John 15:5).

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I pray that your meeting in Seoul will be a fruitful sign of hope to all those who strive for justice and peace in Christ. May the Holy Spirit's gifts of wisdom, knowledge and counsel sustain you and encourage you.

With my person prayers and best wishes,

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**Greetings from the Presbyterian Church of Korea General Secretary  
God Leads Us to be a Missional Church**

Rev. Chang-Bae Byun

**1. Introduction**

The name of our Church is the Presbyterian Church of Korea (PCK). We are the oldest denomination in the history of Korean Christianity. Our church operates seven theological seminaries throughout the country, producing hundreds of ministers and missionaries yearly that serve the Korean Church and the world. There are 2.73 million members of 8,989 congregations with 67 Presbyteries in the PCK. We are a member of the World Council of Churches (WCC), and its 10th Assembly was held in Busan in 2013. Also we are a member of ecumenical institutes as the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) and the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA), and are working together as a member of missional bodies as the Council of World Mission (CWM), the Evangelical Mission in Solidarity (EMS) and the Mission 21.

**2. Brief History**

The Presbyterian Church of Korea is based in Seoul, South Korea. However, its inception took place in Hwanghae Province, currently North Korea. There, Sang-Ryun Suh founded the first protestant church of Korea, the Sorae Church in 1884. In the same year, Mr. Horace N. Allen from the Presbyterian Church of North America arrived in Korea and started medical ministry. Rev. Horace G. Underwood came to Korea the next year to carry out his mission work, which was the beginning of the Presbyterian Mission in Korea. In 1901 the Pyong-Yang Theological Seminary (which is currently the Presbyterian University and Theological Seminary, PUTS) was established, and its first seven graduates were ordained as the first Korean pastors at the Daehan Presbytery in 1907.

The General Assembly of the PCK was established on September 1, 1912, under the name of "The Chosun Presbyterian Church." In 1934, the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the Presbyterian Church was celebrated. Soon after the liberation from Japanese occupation, the General Assembly experienced divisions of the "Koshin" group in 1951, "Kijang" group in 1953 and the "Hapdong" group in 1959 due to issues such as the forced Japanese shrine worship and related theological disputes,

and the General Assembly reidentified itself since then with the current name, “The Presbyterian Church of Korea” as the “Tonghap” group.

In 1998, the 83rd General Assembly adopted a new statement on policy—“For the Glory of God, towards the Life Community in which All Creations Live Together in Harmony,” establishing the foundation of the long-term direction and policy of the PCK. Our largest seminary, the PUTS is operated under the motto of “*Pietas et Scientia*,” the famous phrase of Calvin which can be translated as “Piety and Scholarship.” Indeed the hope of the PCK is to reveal the glory of God as all of His creation living together in harmony.

### **3. Peace Comes True by Healing and Reconciling**

The North-South Korean summit was held at the House of Peace in the Southern Joint Security Area of Panmunjom. For the first time in history after the Korean War, the leader of North Korea stepped on the land of South Korea. It was impressive to see the two leaders shaking hands while crossing the Military Demarcation Line of the Panmunjom. Particularly, the scenes where the two leaders share a chat on the Foot Bridge were the most impressive. They talked each other without any attendant. No sound was heard on the TV live screen except songs of birds. It was a historical scene that symbolized the slogan of the 2018 inter-Korean summit, “Peace, New Start.”

Through the 2018 inter-Korean summit, the two leaders announced the Panmunjom Declaration for Peace, Prosperity and Reunification on the Korean Peninsula, declaring that the era of peace arrived after the war. The Declaration says, in 2018, the year of the 65th anniversary of the armistice, the end of the war should be declared and a peace treaty should be established to bring a peace regime. To this end, the South and the North have confirmed their goal of achieving a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula through complete denuclearization. When the Panmunjom Declaration is fully realized, the division and confrontation will end on the Korean Peninsula.

We are moving toward peace beyond war. The Korean people have suffered from seven international wars (1894-1953), colonization by Japanese Imperialists (1910-1945), and the division of the Peninsula (1945- ). In 1894, soon after the beginning of Christian mission in the Peninsula in 1884, the first Sino-Japanese War broke out on and around the Peninsula. Several hundreds of thousands of people were killed and the Pyeongyang Castle was burnt out by Japanese troops during the war. In 1904, the Russo-Japanese War took place around the Korean Peninsula as the main battleground. Russia and Japan fought to take hegemony on the Korean Peninsula (1904-05). The Japanese Empire demanded a protectorate treaty to the Joseon Dynasty by coercion after they won the Russo-Japanese War. As soon as the treaty was established, Korean people raised an army in the cause of loyalty and fought against Japanese Imperialists until 1912 in order to resist the Japanese colonization.

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Thereafter, the Manchuria Incident (1931-32), the 2nd Sino-Japanese War (1937-45), the Pacific War (1941-45), and the Korean War (1950-53) continued. After finishing of the Korean War, the North and the South have never replaced the armistice treaty by a peace treaty until now.

It was the darkest period in the history of our nation. If the Panmunjom Declaration opens the peace era, Korean people will escape the pain of long warfare. Moreover, if we have another war in the Peninsula, that would be the last of human history in the Peninsula. Definitely we have to avoid any wars in the Peninsula. We need peace.

Peace needs healing of wounds of the wars and the division, and reconciling between people of two Koreas. Before the division of the Peninsula, more than 70 percent of Presbyterians lived in North Korea, almost all of them had to escape from the North to the South for their lives to abandon their houses and land. However, the Korean Church has worked hard for healing and reconciling since the 1980s with ecumenical friends of overseas. It has endeavored to provide humanitarian aid to North Korea in the 1990s when North Koreans suffered from famine and floods. Korean Christians built noodle factories in North Korea. Overseas Koreans have worked hard to build an orphanage, to operate a midwifery service center, and to build a poultry farm, et cetera. South Korean Christians supported building a chapel and a seminary building with Korean Christian Federation in North Korea. I can say that those helping hands were repentance of our sins of hatred. We have obeyed the call to pray for the persecutors, and experienced that it is the way to live in peace and harmony. In order to live in the new age of peace in the Peninsula, we have to keep loving enemies and praying for the persecutors. In the future, Korean churches should pay attention to healing wounds of division. True reconciliation can only be achieved through repentance and forgiveness beyond hatred. Peace will come into our lives when we reach out for healing and reconciliation.

#### **4. Plans for the Future**

Korean society changes rapidly in many dimensions. It became industrialized and democratized since the 20th century. After 1998, when we suffered from an economic crisis, so called IMF crisis, it becomes a society of low birth rate, a society of longer longevity, and multi-cultural society. For instance, we have less babies every year since 2000. The birth rate is extremely low of 1.07 in 2017. It is a historical record of Korea and in the world. Those social changes affect a lot on Christian life in Korea. Almost all denominations of the Reformed tradition are reducing members after 2010. I believe that main cause of the change comes from the social changes. We, the PCK, lose about 5 percent, 120,000 members for last 7 years. That kind of social changes brings a great challenge on Korean Christianity and churches in East Asia. In Japan, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Kuala Lumpur, societies change toward the same direction. Even Peking, Shanghai, and Nanjing of mainland China, the societies show

the same changes after economic development. I can say, churches in East Asia are following the churches in England, Switzerland, the Netherlands, and Germany.

In order to deal with the challenges from outside, the PCK has been developing “the 2nd Ecumenical Decade of Healing and Reconciling Life-Community Movement” from 2012 to 2022, following “the 1st Ecumenical Decade of Life Saving Movement (2002-2012)” which was moving toward the life mission ministry. The 2nd ecumenical decade is the fundamental life mission ministry which fulfills justice and peace for life saving. God’s churches participate in God’s salvation and liberation ministry which is progressing here and now. Nowadays we are focusing “Ministry for Ma-eul.” We encourage local congregations to serve for local societies. For this, we develop and fulfill the various programs and tasks of “theological reflection on healing and reconciliation,” “healing and reconciling evangelical mission programs” and “healing and reconciling of the people’s community”.

## **5. Conclusion**

The PCK has grown up as a church of 2.7 million members in 130 some years, and becomes a missional church sending over 1,500 ordained and trained missionaries to the world. We have served the nation and people in the Korean Peninsula and the world for justice and peace following the voice of God of Life as well. We confess that all results of growth, and mission and ministry of the PCK are gifts of our Lord. God leads us to be grown up as a missional church.

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### **Greetings from the Presbyterian Church of Korea Moderator**

Rev. Choi Ki Hak

On behalf of the 2,730,000 members of the Presbyterian Church of Korea, we welcome the Executive Committee members of the World Communion of Reformed Churches. It is my great honor to have you all for the committee here at the PCK.

The PCK and the WCRC have a history of more than 100 years. When PCK had its inaugural General Assembly in 1912, we received a special celebration from The World Alliance of Reformed Churches throughout the World holding the Presbyterian System. At that time, it was two years after Korea had become colonized by Japan. Imagine how inspired the delegates must have been! While the country became a colony, the Presbyterian Churches of the world celebrated the formation of the General Assembly in Korea! The celebration gave great pride and joy not only to the PCK, but also to all the Korean churches and Korean people.

Since then, PCK has continued to join the then WARC and current WCRC in its life and witness. I would say that the growth of the Korean church is a fruit resulting from our journey together throughout all these years.

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Since the Winter Olympic Games in February, the Korean peninsula is moving towards peace at a rapid pace. The inter-Korean summit has also been successful, and there will be a North Korea and United States summit soon. It is because you have been together with us for the peace and reunification of the Korean peninsula since 1980s. In particular, WCRC invited North Korean Christian representatives to the General Council of WCRC in Leipzig last year and also visited North Korea this year. Our special thanks to Rev. Dr. Chris Ferguson, the general secretary of the WCRC, and Rev. Najla Kassab, the president, and all the leaders and Executive Committee members for all your efforts and prayers for the peace and reunification of the Korean peninsula. PCK will also faithfully fulfill all its obligations and responsibilities as a member church of the WCRC.

Thank you and God bless you.

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**Greetings from the World Council of Churches**

Rev. Dr. Peniel Rajkumar

On behalf of General Secretary Olav Fykse Tveit

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

I send you greetings of peace and goodwill from the World Council of Churches, as you meet as the executive committee of the World Communion of Reformed Churches. As the first meeting of the committee following your General Council held last year in Leipzig this meeting marks an important milestone in the faith journey of the WCRC. Even as you pray and deliberate on the life and witness of the WCRC may God's wisdom and grace be with you in abundance.

This meeting is also a significant moment of discernment as you chart out the road map for the next phase of your journey in the form of a newly proposed strategic plan. As a communion of churches who seek to be constantly reformed in response to the Word and the world, may this plan draw you, as a communion, more fully into the "unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3) and enable you to reflect the transforming, reconciling and renewing grace of God in fresh and fruitful ways.

The WCRC finds its identity and meaning not in self-seeking preservation but through constant transformation. As you open yourselves to renewal and transformation through dialogue and discernment may you be blessed with the spirit of patience and perseverance. The WCC values its fellowship with the WCRC and our partnership in the pilgrimage of justice and peace, the most recent fruits of which were manifested in the recent joint visit to Korea last week. I hope and pray that this

collaboration will be strengthened and sustained in meaningful ways in the days to come.

This executive committee is an opportune time for the WCRC to embrace the mandate that Leipzig offered with fresh vision and in response to the demands of the Kingdom of God which is justice, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. As you embark on the next phase of your journey of witness may our Triune God – The God who is with and within us, before, beside and behind us be your companion and guide. May the words of 2 Peter 1:2 “May grace and peace be yours in abundance” become all the more true in your lives for the journey ahead and may the God of life continue to lead you the journey ahead.

With every blessing,

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**Greetings from the World Student Christian Federation**

Necta Montes  
General Secretary

To the WCRC Executive Committee,

Dear brothers and sisters in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ!

It is indeed a pleasure for me to send this message of warm greetings to the Executive Committee members gathering in Korea. It is with regret that I am unable to be with you in person, as I lead preparations for our WSCF Executive Committee in Jakarta.

I also extend a special greetings to guests and partners from Korean churches at this inspiring time of hope for reconciliation and reunification. We join you as we celebrate, pray and work towards promoting peace within us, with nations in the world and the Korean Peninsula. God’s peace and justice be with us all.

Your Executive Committee meets at the threshold of history, challenging us to make peace a reality today. Our community of faith has the responsibility to live out in our time the challenges of Jesus in the Beatitudes, “to seek justice, to become peacemakers.” We face these tasks with faith and hope, asking God to protect and guide us as we seek to live out the Gospel of Jesus Christ in these days of seeking the path towards the peaceful reunification of Korea.

In John 14:27 Jesus says: “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives, do not be afraid”. We have assurance and faith that God’s peace is with us. As believers and peacemakers, hope is the indispensable virtue



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which will guide us in our actions.

As partners in the ecumenical journey, we continue to join you in our common vision towards building God's Reign on Earth. I'm praying for the success of the Executive Committee Meeting.

Yours in Christ,

## **Drafting Team Report 1: Address of President, Report of General Secretary**

The four members of the Drafting Group—Annabell Lalla-Ramkelawan, Tibonge Ng’ambi, Clayton Da Silva Leal and Hefin Jones—reported positively on the nature and direction of discussions in their respective Discernment Groups. All felt that the Moderators had given every opportunity to all participants to convey their views and felt confident in being able to report back on those discussions to the Drafting Team. After an initial period of hearing the themes considered by each Discernment Group it was decided to highlight six areas, common across the four discussions, that the Drafting Group felt should be “lifted up” and highlighted to the Executive Committee meeting as being areas particularly worthy of development and further discussion. It is acknowledged that some of these issues are already raised in the Proposed Strategic Plan; that they were raised in discussion highlights their importance and relevance. It should also be noted that other specific points were raised by individual Groups. These were noted and will be retained for further consideration in Executive Committee discussions as and when appropriate.

1. **Regional Activities.** It was acknowledged that there is considerable variation in the degree of organization and activity of WCRC Regional Groups / Councils. This needs to be standardized, and a baseline of expectation and activity should be decided upon by discussion and mutual consent. This will have many benefits. Many member churches may find activity at regional level more attractive than at global level. Regions can act as catalytic agents to encourage activity of and amongst member churches, whilst also providing a pathway for contact with WCRC (and *vice versa*). Development of effective Regional Groups / Councils could provide a conduit for numerous activities including encouraging payment of membership contributions, dealing with visa applications for General Council, and organization of inter-regional gatherings.
2. **Communication.** Following on from 1. above, an improved and effective regional framework would, almost by definition, increase the potential of more frequent and timely communication with the member churches. This is essential as lack of knowledge can easily lead to loss of interest. Information flow enhancement would enhance WCRC identity, as well as strengthening the feeling of “belonging” among member churches. The Executive Committee should give this priority consideration as developing the current communication strategy will have financial as well as staff workload implications. Improving communication with Executive Committee members is also of paramount importance. All four Discernment Groups concluded that this was an urgent point of action.
3. **Economic Justice and Reconciliation.** Very simply, the Belhar and Accra Confessions of 1982 and 2004, respectively, provide bases for theological engagement on issues of reconciliation, and economic and ecological

justice. It is now 2018. Discernment Groups were convinced by the viewpoint that it is time to revisit these Confessions in the context of the world's current economic, ecological, social and political situation. Consideration of such a development is "lifted up" for Executive Committee consideration as being a potential theme for the next General Council in 2024.

4. **Gender Justice.** In being encouraged by member churches showing positive and confirmatory action in their attitudes to the ordination of women, and accepting of the fact that a long distance has been travelled, Discernment Groups heard the voices of Executive Committee members reminding us that the journey was yet to be completed. Discernment Groups "lift up" the need for the WCRC Executive Committee to keep journeying on this route until not only do all member churches ordain women but also support, encourage and appoint women at senior and executive church and denominational levels.
5. **Human Sexuality.** Discernment Groups commended the action taken up in activating General Council Action 50 in setting-up an "atmosphere for dialogue and discernment on communion diversity ... where no one is excluded ... all are protected and where mutual challenge, mutual accountability and grace become key values." While this "safe space discussion" is already happening the Discernment Groups wished to "lift up" the necessity of ensuring not only that the dialogue continue but that the endpoint includes the preparation and production of resources that provide specific guidelines to assist member churches that are in the process of, or yet to embark, on how to proceed with this discussion.
6. **Sustainability.** Noted in the General's Secretary's report as a priority concern, Discernment Groups considered this in various contexts. It is "lifted up" for Executive Committee's attention as discussing and analysing the sustainability of WCRC's activities must be seen as a matter of due care and diligence. Aspects raised by various groups in discussion included: ensuring adequate fund availability to carry out core and project activities agreed in the Strategic Plan; assessing WCRC staff workload realizing that Executive Committee members have a "duty of care" towards WCRC employees and that this assessment may necessitate prioritizing of, for example, travel expectations; and ensuring continued member church support and commitment (related to 1. and 2. above).

We present these six areas as common themes from the Discernment Groups that were felt to have been emphasized as ideas / issues / concerns / opportunities worthy of "lifting up" for Executive Committee meeting consideration.

Drafted by Hefin Jones on behalf, and following discussion, of the Drafting Team.

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## **Drafting Team Report 2: Strategic Plan, Part 1**

As previously described (Report 1) the Drafting Team initiates its discussion by each member (Annabell Lalla-Ramkelawan, Tibonge Ng'ambi, Susan Thomas and Hefin Jones) reporting on individual Discernment Group deliberations. Responses to each of the three questions were then considered and a synopsis answer formulated. Where appropriate, attempts have been made to suggest alternative wording to drafted text, taking heed of Executive Committee Members' viewpoints. Unfortunately, it was not possible to ensure that all points raised were incorporated. These, however, have been noted and will be retained for further consideration in Executive Committee discussions as and when appropriate.

### **How well does the Vision Statement capture the spirit of the General Council?**

There was a general consensus across the four Discernment Groups that the Vision Statement had much in its favour. In particular, it was considered to convey the identity of the Reformed Community as well as capturing not only the spirit of General Council 2017 ("engagement with the Word of God"), but also General Council 2010 ("unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace"). There were, however, a series of concerns raised on issues of language and content. Specifically, these concerns centred on how understandable the text would be to a general and diverse audience; its occasionally complex structure and phraseology; and the use of easily understood terminology. It was also felt that as a readable piece of prose, some disaggregation of clauses would be beneficial.

Taking the various comments made in the Discerning Groups into consideration, the Drafting Team decided to "work" on the draft Vision Statement as presented, and offer the following edited version for consideration by the WCRC Officers and Executive Committee. In presenting this modified version we highlight that all changes made are in response to generic and common comments made across the Discerning Groups.

The World Communion of Reformed Churches is called to communion and is committed to justice.

Through robust engagement with the Word of God and the call of the Holy Spirit, it is always being transformed as it strives for the full and just participation of all. In our diversity, we seek to be a living expression of "unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3).

We work to renew and restore the economy and the earth, so that all humanity and the whole of creation might live in its fullness (Deuteronomy 30:19; John 10:10).

### **In what ways does the overarching goal speak to your own context?**

Reflecting on Discernment Group discussions it became obvious that Groups had not only considered the specific question asked, but also the general format and content of the Overarching Goal. Many of the comments made in response to the Vision Statement above were also applied to the Overarching Goal text. There were also specific comments received from the Discernment Group of unexplained / undefined terminology; mistaken ordering of clauses; and incompletely contextualized Scripture references.

Taking these comments into account, assessing their validity and frequency of mention across the Groups, as for the Vision Statement, the Drafting Group revisited the draft Overarching Goal presented and offer a modified version for further consideration:

By 2024, the World Communion of Reformed Churches will strive to be significantly strengthened and increasingly effective in living out God's call to communion and commitment to justice.<sup>1</sup> As a global *Koinonia*<sup>2</sup>, we are marked by discerning, confessing<sup>3</sup>, witnessing and being reformed together.

The World Communion of Reformed Churches, with all the partners God provides, serves its member churches and also works for the transformation of the whole world, which is so loved by God but still trapped by multiple injustices and death, having fallen among thieves (John 10:10).

As it strives to fulfil its vision, the World Communion of Reformed Churches works through two **strategic trajectories**:

- Strengthening and deepening the *Koinonia*.
- Growing and expanding its work for a greater global impact.

These strategic trajectories are applied through **five interlocking dimensions**:

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<sup>1</sup> "Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet; righteousness and peace will kiss each other" (Psalm 85:10).

<sup>2</sup> The Greek word *Koinonia* means joint participation in a communion, in which one has a share in anything. According to Acts 2:42 it identifies the state of fellowship and unity that should exist within the Christian congregation.

<sup>3</sup> In the spirit of the Barmen Declaration and the confessions of Belhar and Accra.

- Communion
- Justice
- Theology
- Mission
- Ecumenical Engagement and Inter-religious Cooperation.

(N.B. two footnotes are required for clarification)

Overall, there was a general expression of satisfaction and agreement that the Overarching Goal was speaking to context. Numerous examples that this was the case were provided from various Discernment Groups.

A few areas of possible weaknesses were raised. For example, the “lifting up” of the Accra and Belhar Confessions was again (see also Report 1) raised as an essential condition for ensuring adequate and appropriate contextualisation (but note pages 6/7 Draft Strategic Plan). Similarly, questions were raised regarding the definition of “empire” in various contextual settings; for example, what does “empire” mean in the European context? Again, although highlighted in the Draft Strategic Report (page 11), this is an issue that requires “lifting up” if contextualization is to be successful.

### **In what ways do you believe the overarching objectives will be effective in achieving the overarching goal?**

There was detailed discussion of the Overarching Objectives across most of the Discernment Groups. Reflection on these comments by the Drafting Team indicated that the majority of the comments proffered were in fact dealing with the implementation of the Objectives instead of their effectiveness in achieving the Overarching Goal. The Drafting Team decided to list the most frequently recorded comments in this report for record and reference in future Discernment Group discussions.

Of the remaining comments, and to answer Question 3, there was a general consensus that there was considerable potential for the Objectives to be effective in attaining the stated Goal. One concern raised by the Groups was the possible lack of World Communion of Reformed Churches identity on some of the objectives listed—what is it about a particular objective that demands the attention of the Reformed Community?

(Note that the limited number of specific issues raised on Overarching Objective effectiveness did lead the Drafting Team members to query whether the Discernment Groups had been given sufficient time to discuss all questions in detail.)

From an implementation perspective, issues raised included:

- Whether the Overarching Objectives are effective, and whether potential is achieved, will be totally dependent on what timeline will be created, organized and actioned. There will need to be prioritization of Objectives; actions and deliverables should be placed along a short-, mid- and long- term timeline.
- Global versus Regional context. Are some Objectives appropriate for a more regional, rather than global, focus? What should the relationship be between Global and Regional Strategic Plans; how will any desired relationship be encouraged?
- Associated with Overarching Objectives of these nature is the realization that there are multiple global participating “bodies” involved in very similar work. How will unnecessary overlap be avoided? Is there sufficiently clear sense of Reformed Community reasoning behind each objective?

Drafted by Hefin Jones on behalf, and following discussion of, the Drafting Team.

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### **Draft Team Report 3: Strategic Plan, Part 2**

Two questions were set as catalyst for Discernment Group discussion, both relating to Part 2 of the Proposed Strategic Plan (pages 22-29):

1. In what ways do you believe the Organizational Objectives will be effective in achieving the overarching goal?
2. According to the mandates of the General Council, are we missing anything here or are there any other questions we need to be addressing?

Collation of the reports from the four Discernment Groups indicated recognition of an ambitious Strategic Plan with an aspirational set of Organizational Objectives. It was acknowledged that grounding these aspirations may prove very challenging. Areas of lack of clarity, missing detail and editorial amendments were reported from the Groups; these are listed below for consideration by the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) Officers and Executive Committee members.

### **Sustainability**

***Sustainability:*** note that there is more to sustainability than financial sustainability. Little attention is given in the text to staff and organizational sustainability, or to sustaining membership levels.

**Member churches' contributions:** numerous comments were received on this issue. These included: (i) some churches are wealthier than others; (ii) rather than “equal giving,” “equal sacrifice” should be the *modus operandi*; (iii) some member churches contribute in other ways than financially; (iv) WCRC needs to “reach out” to member churches experiencing subscription challenges; (v) improved subscription engagement will only occur if an effective communication strategy is in place; (vi) improved communication will increase member church motivation to involve themselves actively with WCRC.

**Editorial:** one Group proposed the need to clarify and emphasize that there were guidelines / criteria to be met prior to membership. Cautiously the Drafting Team suggest the following editorial amendment to meet this request:

Page 23: Objectives: Sustainability

1. Expanding WCRC membership (**as per criteria in WCRC Constitution Article 5G**) by inviting churches into the Communion ...

### Capacity

Issues related to the Section sub-headed “Objective: Expand Capacities,” previously raised at Plenary were voiced by numerous Executive Committee members across the four Groups. In particular, reference to the timeline of “By 2024” and references to the “advisors” as volunteers were considered as indicative of a lack of commitment to ensuring balanced staff capacities. There was strong objection to the advisors not being paid for their time and only covered for expenses (see editorial suggestions below). The Drafting Group recalled the General Secretary’s response to similar comments at Plenary but note that this issue, more than any other, had catalysed a strong response from the Discernment Groups.

**Editorial:** there was a strong suggestion that “regional” as well as “gender” balance be included in the text of this section. The following changes are suggested:

Page 24; second complete paragraph. “In addition, as capacities ... Communion, most notably in gender **and regional** balances on the executive level.”

Page 25; first line “Objective: Expand Capacities.” “By 2024, staff capacities ... and gender **and regional** representation balanced.”

To clarify that the sub-heading “Objective: Expand Capacities” is dealing specifically with gender balance it is recommended that the subheading be changed to “**Objective: Gender Balance within WCRC Staff.**”



Bearing in mind the strength of feeling amongst the Groups re. the non-payment of the advisor volunteers we request that WCRC Officers and Executive Committee members re-consider this strategy with the aim of being able to insert in place of “The advisors will volunteer their time but have all expenses covered.” the phrase **“The advisors will be compensated for their time and have all expenses covered.”**

## **Participation**

The Discernment Groups felt that the “regional” had been ignored in this Section.

**Editorial:** page 25; Objectives: Participation.

1. “By 2024, participation in **global and regional** governing bodies, reference groups ... the diversity of our family.”

We were also advised of an already identified editorial misprint in the same sub-section:

2. “The Reference Group on Communion ... for the full **participation** of all and redress the unjust ... (from an empire-critical perspective).”

## **Location**

Three main concerns were raised by the Groups. Firstly, that recalling all the upheaval that “moving” can result in, changing physical location to the Global South, or elsewhere, should not be the main concern as we approach 2023. Instead, consideration should be given to establishing administrative support at a regional level. Secondly, concerns were raised of whether there were “appropriate and sufficient technology and digital facilities and resources available in the Global South.” Finally, while there is no questioning of the size of the Christian community in the Global South, “there are also Christians in the Global North.”

## **Alliances**

Queries were raised of our involvement with the World Student Christian Federation (WSCF) and concern was expressed of our cooperation with the Council of World Mission (CWM). In the case of the latter, concern stemmed from the risk of the WCRC losing its identity.

The Drafting Team did not consider these concerns to require editing of the Strategic Plan but note them for reference.

## **Communication**

Concern was expressed by the Groups of “missing databases,” “lost e-mails” and “failure to communicate.” This highlights the need to ensure a rigorous review of WCRC communication strategy and a “way forward” established that encourages full use of a diverse set of communication tools.

Comment was made that the text under “Communication” makes no connection with developing interaction with inter-religious groups. The Drafting Team note this comment and present to the WCRC Officers and Executive Committee for consideration.

### **Governance**

The Drafting Team note a call from the Discernment Groups for “accountability” to be highlighted more specifically in the text of this Section.

It was noted that the consensus/discernment model of decision-making is not appropriate for every decision. Further, if unsuitable, what alternative process is to be used?

#### ***Editorial:***

Page 27; Objectives: Governance.

1. “In order to strengthen the WCRC’s ... model of decision making at **all its meetings.**”

Page 28; Objectives: Governance.

3. In order to ensure that the planning ... next General Council and present option, **and take decisions**, at the 2019 Executive Committee, including a planning timeline.”

### **Empowering Regions**

A call was noted from the Discernment Groups for specific recognition in the text of this Section to the need for the General Secretariat to support “priorities identified by the regions, as laid out in the Strategic Plan.” Following discussion, the Drafting Team felt that this was duly covered in the sub-section “Objectives: Empowering Regions” but present the concern for consideration of WCRC Officers and Executive Committee.

#### **Are we missing anything?**

There were few responses to the second question placed in front of the Discernment Groups. The following list summarizes the main suggestions:

- No clear indication of how objectives will be prioritized. Should there not be short-, mid- and long-term objectives, with an associated timeline of delivery? Without this, budgeting is made considerably more difficult.
- A mid-term evaluation of Strategic Plan implementation should be carried out to assess what progress is being made. This would also be an opportunity to re-assess priorities. This should be included in the Section on “Implementation and Monitoring.”
- The Reformed identity does not always come across clearly in the various Sections of the Strategic Plan.
- Following on from this “identity” issue, there are similar bodies and agencies to WCRC carrying out similar work. How does the WCRC maintain its uniqueness.

Other issues raised included organizational structure (page 29; Implementation and Monitoring; paragraph 2) and “the priesthood of all believers” (pages 12; Reforming: Gender Balance, paragraph 2 and 14; Identity, mission and purposes of WCRC; first bullet point). The Drafting Team suggest that these are duly covered within the Plan—see reference in parentheses. It was asked whether the Plan was too “people-centred” rather than “God-centered;” the Drafting Team respectfully suggests that the nature of any Strategic Plan defines the document as such.

### **Remaining issues from Strategic Plan, Part 1**

There has been a concern expressed by Discernment Group members regarding the use of only “youth” as a descriptor when referring to “young adults.” For the WCRC (and CWM), it is recognized that “youth” can refer to both late teenagers and young adults (to late 20s); for a number of Discernment Group members this is not how “youth” is defined. The suggestion that has been presented is that for clarity the term “youth/young people” is adopted in the text of the Strategic Plan. The Drafting Team bring this to the attention of WCRC Officers and Executive Committee.

**Editorial:** In response to Discernment Group comment, the Drafting Team recommends the following editorial change (page 6, “Objective: Differently Abled People”):

Following the sentence: “The WCRC will intentionally address the call ... structures of the WCRC.” add the sentence “The WCRC will encourage programmes to promote the protection of differently abled people in church and society.”

Drafted by Hefin Jones on behalf, and after discussion with, Drafting Team members.

**Adopted**  
**WCRC Strategic Plan: 2018-2024**

**Introduction**

The World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) at its 2017 General Council confirmed its call to communion and commitment to justice. The Council met in Leipzig under the theme “Living God, renew and transform us” and described the WCRC as a communion of churches that receives its unity from God as a gift and is called to act for justice. In the struggles of this world the WCRC affirms its faith in the living God, so that we, our descendants and the whole of creation might live life in fullness (Deuteronomy 30:19, John 10:10).

The General Council did its work through a discernment process and consensus decision-making so that all voices might be heard and all people present might participate in seeking the call of God. Together we resolved that the WCRC will not conform to this world but will stand with those who work to heal the wounds of our broken communities and pursue justice in the economy and the earth.

At the heart of discernment is a commitment to worship, work, listen and pray together as a community of faith, seeking to discern God’s will for the way forward. In discerning, the WCRC is intentionally building a communion around a common table for both worship and decision making. The table symbolizes the centrality of Christ and our mutual dependence on the Holy Spirit for our life together. We sit equally before God as sisters and brothers.

Renewed and transformed by the Holy Spirit and drawing from the wellsprings of our heritage of *ecclesia semper reformanda secundum verbum dei*—a church always being reformed according to the Word of God—the WCRC understands itself as a communion that refutes the logic of exclusion that marks social and political institutions, the economic order and sometimes even the church itself. Where this communion is lived out those in power relinquish their authority, lay aside their power and privilege and consciously embrace the bodies and the voices of those who have been excluded from full participation in the community.

Bringing the resources of the Reformed theological and confessing tradition into the present tense means listening to the suffering and cries of humanity and all of creation. The whole of creation is the “theatre of God’s glory.” This tenet of John Calvin must lead us to follow both the imperatives and the approach of confessing moments as represented by the Barmen Declaration and the confessions of Belhar and Accra. We confess that the “Earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it” (Psalm 24:1). We are bold to say “Jesus is Lord” (Romans 10:9). Now we must act.

Jesus did not locate his ministry in the centres of power. He challenged the authority of political, economic, familial and religious authorities and enabled his followers to see the emerging Kingdom of God in the liberating, healing, feeding, cleansing, raising, reconciling and empowering of those who were excluded from full participation in communal life. The WCRC is in the position to intensify the prophetic traditions of public witness as a confessing communion in a world fallen among thieves (John 10:10). Our vocation as a family of churches called to communion and committed to justice requires us to take firm steps to make our Reformed witness known to our own family on the global level; to put mission at the centre of our Communion's life; and to live out our identity as a confessing, ecumenical communion in the spirit of the Barmen Declaration and confessions of Belhar and Accra.

The work of the WCRC is built upon our Reformed traditions, the actions of the General Councils and upon its constitution. Articles II: Basis, III: Values and IV: Identity, Mission and Purposes describe important concepts in which the WCRC defines, grounds and commits itself. Articles III and IV seem particularly apt in a strategic plan:

#### 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 to 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.

- C. 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.

In this coming period, through the next General Council, the aspirations of the WCRC can be summarized in this vision statement and put to work in this overarching goal:

### **Vision Statement**

The World Communion of Reformed Churches is called to communion and is committed to justice.

Through robust engagement with the Word of God and the call of the Holy Spirit, the World Communion of Reformed Churches is always being transformed as it strives for the full and just participation of all. In our diversity, we seek to be a living expression of “unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:3).

We work to renew and restore the economy and the earth, so that all humanity and the whole of creation might live life in its fullness (Deuteronomy 30:19; John 10:10).

### **Overarching Goal**

By 2024, the World Communion of Reformed Churches will strive to be significantly strengthened and increasingly effective in living out God’s call to communion and commitment to justice.<sup>1</sup> As a global *Koinonia*<sup>2</sup>, we are marked by discerning, confessing<sup>3</sup>, witnessing and being reformed together.

The World Communion of Reformed Churches, with all the partners God provides, serves its member churches and also works for the transformation of the whole world, which is so loved by God but still trapped by multiple injustices and death, having fallen among thieves (John 10:10).

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<sup>1</sup> “Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet; righteousness and peace will kiss each other (Psalm 85:10).

<sup>2</sup> The Greek word *Koinonia* means joint participation in a communion, in which one has a share in anything. According to Acts 2:42 it identifies the state of fellowship and unity that should exist within the Christian congregation.

<sup>3</sup> In the spirit of the Barmen Declaration and the confessions of Belhar and Accra.

As it strives to fulfil its vision, the World Communion of Reformed Churches works through two **strategic trajectories**:

- Strengthening and deepening the *Koinonia*.
- Growing and expanding its work for a greater global impact.

These strategic trajectories are applied through **five interlocking dimensions**:

- Communion
- Justice
- Theology
- Mission
- Ecumenical Engagement and Interreligious Cooperation

### **Communion**

#### **Overarching Objective for Communion**

The work on communion will be lived out through acts of justice that refute the logic of exclusion that marks social and political institutions, the economic order and sometimes even the church itself (General Council Actions 20, 21, 41).

The communion that the WCRC seeks to become will embody the radical hospitality of the gospel of Jesus, which demonstrates respect, trust, love and willingness to listen to a variety of voices seeking fullness of life.

In the commitment to discerning God's will together, the Communion therefore embraces the challenges of linguistic and cultural divergences, as well as differences in theological and hermeneutical perspectives as positive building blocks that set the atmosphere for dialogue, discernment and engagement on communion with justice.

The WCRC will work toward all of this through the objectives below:

#### **Full and Just Participation**

We seek to live out a vision to become a just communion where those in power relinquish their authority and consciously embrace the bodies and the voices of those who have been excluded from full participation in the community. The WCRC has not yet reached consensus on the meaning of full participation.



(See also Justice, Confessing Our Commitment to Full and Just Participation and Reforming: Gender Justice.<sup>4</sup>)

**Objective: Biblical and Liturgical Foundations of Just Communion**

The WCRC will facilitate programmes that point to the biblical and liturgical foundations of communion and thus deepen the understanding of the WCRC as a just communion in the world today. The programme will recognize the Holy Communion as God’s divine gift that strengthens believers individually and reminds of Jesus’ invitations to share this gift with the world—not only in word but also in action aimed at far reaching changes for the flourishing of all life.

**Objective: Becoming a Just Communion**

The inseparability of justice and communion has been a guiding principle of the communion since 2010. It is a vision yet to be realized in its fullness. The WCRC will organize a series of workshops that intentionally include youth/young adults, women, Indigenous Peoples, persons discriminated against because of race, Dalits, migrants and ethnic minorities, people with disabilities and of the LGBTQ community. These workshops will advise the Communion Reference Group in its task to propose strategies for the full inclusion of all and redress the unjust power relationships within the Communion.

(See also Participation Objectives.)

**Objectives: Youth/Young Adult Engagement**

1. Youth/young adult engagement will become a launching pad for a deeper involvement of younger generations in the work of the WCRC (General Council Action 40). The reestablishment of a WCRC youth/young adult network will be a priority.
2. The WCRC will connect more readily with youth/student ecumenical organizations such as the WSCF, EYCE, etc.
3. The WCRC internship programme will be expanded as a leadership-training tool. Youth/young adults from marginalized communities shall be given preference.
4. The WCRC will make accessible the history of the radical contributions of young people and students of the ecumenical movement.

(See also Alliances, Objective: Partner with WSCF; Capacity, Objective: Gender and Regional Balance within WCRC Staff; and Justice, Objectives: Accompanying Young People.)

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<sup>4</sup> To demonstrate the cross-sectional connections between the different programme dimensions, important objectives are listed in several programme sections.

**Objective: Children**

The WCRC will encourage the regions to develop programmes to:

1. promote child protection in church and society;
2. assure meaningful participation of children and adolescents in church and communal life.<sup>5</sup>

**Objective: Differently Abled People**

The WCRC will intentionally address the call by the Ecumenical Disability Advocates Network (EDAN) and differently abled people in member churches for their full and just participation in programmes and structures of the WCRC, including the protection of vulnerable adults in church and society.

(See also Justice, Objective: Witnessing, 3. Engaging Churches on Disability.)

**Objective: Empowering Regions**

Taking up the reaffirmation of the importance of the regions by the General Council (Action 44) the WCRC shall plan its programme work with a strong focus on regional empowerment. The secretariat and the regions will collaborate in the selection of issues, based on the priorities identified in the strategic plan.

(See also Empowering Regions.)

**Lifting Up the Accra Confession**

The Barmen Declaration and Belhar and Accra confessions should be the basic documents in the reflection on the inseparability of communion and justice (General Council Actions 20 and 25). However, at this point the Accra Confession is not yet well known by all member churches, though the time is ripe for an in-depth analysis of the realignments in economic and political power and the changes in the socio-cultural situation where the empire/Babylon is taking on new forms.

**Objective: Lifting Up the Accra Confession**

The WCRC will facilitate a process that will call member churches to engage with the Accra Confession in the present tense by using the confession as a lens to read the signs of the times and a call to prophetic action. A part of this work will include the state of the churches and their engagement/implication in sustaining the empire in the political, economic and social realms, as well as in their own life.

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<sup>5</sup> For instance, in cooperation with the WCC's Child Friendly Churches programme.

(See also Justice, Objective: Critical Reflections on Empire.)

### **Leadership Development**

#### **Objective: Leadership Audit**

In the changing global landscape where many persons are questioning the ethical formation and integrity of ecclesial leadership, the WCRC will encourage churches to engage in a missional audit of their clergy leaders (General Council Action 43). Such an audit will survey the state of theological, spiritual, political and economic ethics of the leadership and will provide the necessary resources to test the ways in which transparency, accountability and reform operating in the church shall be developed.

#### **Objective: Training Material**

The WCRC will develop resources and curricula for member churches to train a new generation of leaders that are not enticed by riches or bribes while being competent, compassionate, committed and consistent to the example of Jesus in his ministry and mission.

(See also Justice, Objective: Critical Reflections on Empire.)

### **Community among Member Churches**

#### **Objective: Continuation of Processes of Joint Discernment on Issues of Human Sexuality**

1. In taking up General Council Action 50, the WCRC will carry on to “set the atmosphere for dialogue and discernment on communion and diversity” by:
  - a. continuing the process of joint discernment as it was started with the Chennai Consultation of November 2017. This process attempts to open a space for a hermeneutical and theological conversation on human sexuality across different theological positions and moral convictions and on the missional implications of such joint discernment (General Council Action 42);
  - b. inviting those member churches who are not yet ready to engage.
2. In taking up General Council Action 56 that “condemns all acts of violence against LGBTQ persons, regardless of our theological views, around the globe” and commits to “working for justice, freedom and a safe world for all persons to flourish” the WCRC will:
  - a. continue to work at theological and missional foundations that will substantiate the condemnation of violence and the commitment to the flourishing of all persons;
  - b. engage in advocacy work in situations where sexual minorities are threatened.

The goal of these processes is to facilitate listening and learning with and from one another in our diversity while holding before us both our call to communion and our commitment to justice, which will be shown in solidarity with those most affected.

The processes and resources gathered on this journey shall be shared with the regional councils and the member churches to encourage and accompany them to facilitate dialogues on communion and sexuality at all levels of our communion.

(See also Justice, Objective: Cross-Cutting Dimensions, 2. Strengthening Communion)

## **Justice**

The WCRC seeks to do justice in the context of a world groaning in travail (Romans 8:19-24) and fallen among thieves (John 10:10), yet we continue to affirm that we are gripped with the power of the resurrection, gifted by the God of life.

### **Overarching Objective for Justice**

The WCRC will seek to engage the whole Communion to discern the signs of the times in order to effectively witness to transformative reformation in the areas of economic, social, gender and ecological justice so that member churches will be able to faithfully confess to the God of life in a world fallen among thieves (John 10:10).

The WCRC will seek to deepen and strengthen its existing commitments to justice while at the same time expanding and growing in accordance with the vision of the General Council 2017.

The overarching objective for justice will be achieved by implementing a series of objectives in these areas:

### **Crossing Dimensions through the WCRC Programme Desk**

The programme desk consists of the offices of the executive secretaries for theology & communion and justice & witness working together. While the two desks work cooperatively in numerous areas, an annual event will purposefully cut across several of the interlocking dimensions in an integrated way that focuses the Communion on critical issues. This event will particularly seek to foreground the regions, youth/young adults and women.

### **Objective: Cross-Cutting Dimensions**

The WCRC programme desk will hold an annual event beginning in 2018 that highlights an issue that cuts across several of the interlocking dimensions. The first three topics will be:

1. Race, Authoritarianism, Nationalism (RAN)
  - a) In response to the rise of systems and structures that threaten human beings and the whole creation and in the midst of rising authoritarian and populist ideologies the WCRC will seek to critically engage with the issue of nationalism, rising fundamentalism and authoritarianism and how these are perceived from below. It will particularly consider how these are being played out in the Middle East, South Asia and the North American contexts and how this impacts other regions of the world.
  - b) The WCRC will seek to conscientize its membership through naming and understanding the new systemic and ideological formulations of the new political economy.
  - c) It will seek to strategically link as well as work towards creating networks of church leaders, theologians, activists, children, youth/young adults and the elderly so as to be able build resistance movements.

(See also the Theology theme “Confronting rising authoritarianisms” and Mission Objective: Redeeming Religion.)

2. Strengthening Communion
  - a) At the core of the identity of the WCRC is our self-understanding of being a communion and that division and separation is scandal. In this context we seek to address all that threatens to divide us particularly the issue of human sexuality by creating covenantal spaces for constructive dialogue.
  - b) To develop a method of talking about human sexuality that is respectful, just and able to bring everyone to the table.

(See also Communion, Objective: Continuation of Processes of Joint Discernment on Issues of Human Sexuality.)

3. Mission in the Context of Crisis and Marginalization
  - a) Many of our member churches live and witness in a context where they are minorities and suffer persecution. The WCRC is committed to working to establish a framework for the peaceful co-existence and protection of the rights of the minorities.
  - b) We acknowledge that many of our member churches are on the frontlines of peace processes and we therefore seek to strengthen the

activities of our member churches around peace building, reconciliation and mission.

- c) To express solidarity with our member churches and other communities who live in contexts of religious violence.

(See also Mission, Objective: Mission in the Context of Crisis and Marginalization.)

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

In response to the Uniting General Council in Grand Rapids 2010, the WCRC initiated a joint process along with the World Council of Churches (WCC), Council for World Mission (CWM) and the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) to address the global economic crisis. For the WCRC this was a means of implementing and living out the Accra Confession. The ecumenical alliance developed a joint action plan that sought to address the global economic and financial architecture by seeking to address the financial system, the debt crisis and global economic governance.

The WCRC recognizes, through the most effective social analysis, that the means for a more just and equitable world is to address the structural and systemic injustice that plagues our world. It is important for the WCRC to be able to broaden the scope and breadth of NIFEA to include macro-economic and ecological questions and work towards imagining alternatives to the current dominant economic system (General Council Action 24). Creating a global impact requires the mobilization of our communities and the need to develop strategies at all levels that can work to restore the economy and the earth according to the plan of God.

#### **Objectives: NIFEA**

1. The WCRC will advocate for a democratic global system of economic governance through partnerships with like-minded ecumenical organizations, people's movements and civil society networks. This will be done through building resistance movements by coordinated campaigns and with participation at the local, national, regional and international levels.
2. By 2024 the WCRC will have equipped its congregations for worship, study, political and economic action by specifically working in the regions.
3. The WCRC will continue to support, strengthen and deepen the curriculum and participation in the Governance, Economics and Management (GEM) School.

### **Discerning the Signs of the Times**

To discern the signs of the times was the imperative that was offered by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. A discerning of the signs of the times is crucial for our

witness and confession: “The signs of the times have become more alarming and must be interpreted. The root causes of massive threats to life are above all the product of an unjust economic system defended and protected by political and military might. Economic systems are a matter of life or death” (Accra Confession, paragraph 6).

**Objective: Critical Reflections on Empire**

It is strategically significant for all the programmatic work of the WCRC to use the lens of empire as a means for understanding the context. The WCRC will therefore strengthen and deepen a critical theological study process of engaging empire in the present context. This will be undertaken through an intersectional lens by organizing consultations and conferences, particularly in the regions. These will be done with a view to the establishing of resources which foreground voices from the Global South on empire and:

1. to enhance regional critical thinking on empire and encourage cross fertilization among the regions;
2. to engage in campaigns that highlight the continuing legacy of empire in our societies and congregations. The WCRC will seek to live out the Accra Confession by concentrating on the specific ways in which empire changes who we are and the contexts in which we live. It will also seek to work with alternatives and seek to lift up those areas and contexts in which alternatives are being worked out;
3. to grow and expand our continuing work around economic justice by engaging in study processes in which the interconnections between macroeconomic processes and everyday lived reality are exposed. This will particularly seek to engage with the issues of land, labour, unemployment, the economic underpinnings of race, wages, etc.

(See also Communion, Objective: Lifting Up the Accra Confession.)

**Witnessing for Justice and Peace**

The church is called to prophetically witness for transformation. This is central to its missiological imperative. Witnessing for transformation is essential to the vision of the WCRC. The WCRC will therefore seek to increase its witness through specifically-directed advocacy work with a particular focus on the global dimensions of this work. This will involve the strengthening of the WCRC’s work with the United Nations. It also specifically means working with other ecumenical bodies and associations that are involved in advocacy work.

**Objective: Witnessing**

The WCRC will strengthen its advocacy work with the United Nations and ecumenical bodies and associations. The WCRC will also specifically focus on the following areas of advocacy:

1. Ecological Justice  
Working with our member churches on the issue of ecological justice to care for God's creation through worship, study and ecumenical and political advocacy. (General Council Action 68)
2. Gender-Based Violence  
Advocacy work directed towards churches to engage with the issue of gender-based discrimination and gender-based violence through consultations, production of resources and directed campaigns by member churches. This will directly feed into and draw from our mandate for a gender policy by 2019 (General Council Action 31). This work will seek to address the issue of sexual violence in our churches, as well as strengthen the existing work of our member churches on this issue. It will also seek to engage with the entire burden of the problem and include women, men, children and the family and work with other faith groups that are working on the same issue.
3. Engaging Churches on Disability  
Regionally based advocacy work on disability so as to ensure that all our churches are safer and more accessible spaces for people with disabilities.

(See also Communion, Objective: Differently Abled People.)

**Objective: Seeking Peace and Reconciliation**

The WCRC will strengthen and deepen peace and reconciliation work through partnership, pastoral visits, engaging with other ecumenical institutions and advocacy in these regions:

1. Korean Peninsula, working with member churches, the National Council of Churches in Korea and WCC, as well as the Korean Christian Federation, focused on strong advocacy for dialogue instead of posturing and military provocations.
2. Colombia, supporting member churches and regional leadership in the peace process, including advocacy, accompaniment, empowerment and behind-the-scenes international ecumenical diplomacy.
3. South Sudan, working with member churches in South Sudan, Sudan and internationally to deepen advocacy and education efforts.
4. Middle East, including Israel-Palestine, supporting member churches and WCC consensus advocacy.

**Reforming: Gender Justice**

The WCRC is committed to continue the unfinished agenda of the Reformation by working to transform the world according to the Word of God. One way in which it will do this is by working with women to engage with and dismantle patriarchy through specifically-directed work on the empowerment of women in church and society.



The WCRC will work towards an integrating role in engaging the whole communion in resisting patriarchy. It will work towards the allocation and creation of resources to equip women into leadership and power. This will include both lay and ordained women. It will work to place the question of ordination of women within the larger theological context of the priesthood of all believers (see also Theology and Communion), as well as within the larger context of women in leadership and decision making.

**Objective: The Declaration of Faith on the Ordination of Women**

1. By 2019, the WCRC will ensure that all member churches have received, been made aware of and studied the Faith Declaration on the Ordination of Women.
2. The WCRC will strengthen and deepen the work around the Faith Declaration on the Ordination of Women particularly through both deepening and expanding the theological and Biblical insights in the document.

**Objective: Gender Leadership and Power**

By 2024, the WCRC will create a process to ensure that all member churches are theologically equipped to ordain women and to specifically concentrate on those churches that do not ordain women. By this time the WCRC will have contacted, engaged and dialogued with the churches that do not ordain women (General Council Action 48). This will be done by:

1. Initiating a participatory study process of the status of women in member churches through regional consultations. This will be particularly directed towards studying the number of churches that ordain women and those which do not. At the same time, it will seek to study the status of ordained women in those churches that do ordain women.
2. Encouraging a process of intercultural learning between regions particularly to address the cultural, social and theological reasons women are not ordained.

**Objectives: Accompaniment of Women in Theology**

1. The WCRC will strengthen and deepen the existing Theological Education Scholarship Fund for Women in the South so as to be able to accompany young women in theology through scholarships and education and training programmes.
2. The WCRC will explore ways in which to connect women theologians with each other through a network and with the Global Institute of Theology (GIT).
3. Through a series of publications, both existing (e.g. *Reformed World*) and new, the WCRC will make space for theological reflections from

Reformed women theologians. This will particularly emphasize and work with and within the regions.

4. The WCRC will work with theological institutions of its member churches in all of the above work, as well as explore additional ways in which to empower women theologians.

**Objective: Gender Policy**

By 2019 a gender policy for the WCRC and its constituency will be created. This will involve a review of existing policies, as well as the preparation of a strategy for implementation. It is necessary that the creation and implementation of such a policy will involve a high degree of participation of all the regions (General Council Action 31).

**Confessing Our Commitment to Full and Just Participation**

To be a confessing church implies affirming our faith in the living God by disrupting life-denying powers and principalities. One way we seek to disrupt these is by concretely aligning ourselves with young people and Indigenous Peoples to whom we look to for the courage and vision for transformation (see also Communion, Full and Just Participation).

**Objectives: Accompanying Young People**

1. By 2022, the WCRC will make necessary changes for fuller youth/young adult membership in its governing and programme life.
2. Starting immediately the WCRC will ensure youth/young adult participation at every level of the WCRC while paying attention to full gender diversities and gender dimensions.
3. The WCRC will work with all young people, not just those studying theology. The WCRC will engage young people on political and theological issues to increase radical and critical political awareness among the youth/young adults in our member churches. Two aspects of these engagement will be through the GEM School and the GIT.

**Objectives: Accompanying Indigenous Persons**

1. The WCRC will create an Indigenous Peoples Working Group that will focus on completing the tasks as assigned in General Council Action 57.
2. The WCRC will focus its advocacy work around the doctrine of discovery with member churches through the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous People (General Council Action 57).

**Theology**

**Overarching Objective for Theology**

Hearing the cries of wounded communities and engaging with them (General Council Action 21) the theological work of the WCRC shall lead the whole Communion in theologically-rooted processes of confessing the faith, drawing on the Reformed tradition and contextual theologies to address the present reality.

To further this mission the General Council (General Council Action 20) and the subsequent planning process have identified the following items of the unfinished agenda of the Reformation that shall receive attention in the theology work of the WCRC:

*Identity, mission and purposes of the WCRC:*

- Giving focused attention to what it means to be always reforming according to the Word of God. What do key insights of the Reformation mean for us now (e.g. *sola scriptura*, the priesthood of all believers)? What new reforms are needed in our church and our world today? How has the Reformed tradition to be transformed?
- Considering what being “called to communion and committed to justice” must mean in our life together and in our witness in the wider world.
- Exploring the continuing relevance of important confessions in the Reformed family (i.e. the Barmen Declaration and the confessions of Belhar and Accra). In this connection, we suggest the translation into the languages of our member churches as well as the “vernacularization” (Kwame Bediako) of these documents in different contexts.

*Learning from theologies that liberate and affirm life*

- Liberating the Reformed tradition from its historical arrest in the Constantinian captivity with the empire through programmes and actions that highlight the contribution of those persons and processes that broke through the domesticating and silencing forces of our identity.
- Drawing and learning from theologies that have appropriated the tradition to liberate and affirm life. Affirming, incorporating and internalizing the perspectives of new Reformers and theologians (e.g. Alan Boesak, etc.)
- Finding adequate approaches to describe the Reformed church as a global movement with histories on all continents. How can we harvest the learnings from historical persons, like Zwingli and Calvin, and events that are traditionally regarded as significant for the formation of Reformed identity without perpetuating the male focused and Eurocentric domestication of the tradition?

*Embodied justice*

- Developing the theme of “embodied justice” to a touchstone of projects and dialogues. It is essential that justice be embodied, attentive to issues of the human body, the body of the church and the body of creation.

Special attention should be given to the situations of the impoverished, women, sexual minorities, persons with disabilities and indigenous peoples. We should also ask where is creation wounded and how may we live out our calling to justice ecologically?

- Developing a theology of the wounded body that discerns the body as object of victimization and resister of oppression. Such a theology should lead from a theology of patience to a theology of passion.

#### *Confronting rising authoritarianisms*

- Engaging with rising authoritarianisms over the world and in particular how they engage with religion, nationality, race and caste to disenfranchise and pauperize the most vulnerable. This is to be done through a series of consultations on the question of nationalism, religion, and race/caste (see also Justice, Objective: Cross-Cutting Dimensions, 1. Race, Authoritarianism, Nationalism).
- Consulting with churches in all regions to discern whether authoritarian and populist ideologies shall be denounced in the form of a confession.
- Developing a theology of a sanctuary (General Council Action 51) that offers radical hospitality, solidarity and ethical accountability to all our neighbors and, particularly, the most vulnerable communities.

#### **Objective: Full and Just Representation**

In accordance with the Operating Principles (General Council Action 21) theological programmes of the WCRC will:

1. include persons from marginalized communities and recognize different contexts, diverse voices and multiple languages;
2. ensure that the composition of participants in and contributors to consultations will be gender balanced and include young people.

#### **Objective: Global Network of Theologians**

The WCRC will form a Global Network of Theologians that will engage the leadership and the membership of member churches and the theological communities within the Communion to pursue the “unfinished agenda” of the Reformation by organizing consultations and conferences, theological publications, exhibitions and other resources.

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

The Global Institute for Theology will continue to nurture and encourage the work of young theologians and scholars.

(See also Justice, Objectives: Accompanying Young People.)

**Objective: Reformed World**

*Reformed World* will be further developed as a vehicle for incorporating and sharing widely the best work done in these areas of our committed conversation.

**Objectives: Theological Institutions of Member Churches**

1. The WCRC will link the contributions of theological institutions to the confessing life of the member churches in different regions by creating networks of theological institutions and partner organizations and engage them with the transforming and decolonizing vision of the WCRC. The programme will first focus upon Africa and then be extended to other regions.
2. The WCRC will facilitate coordination and communication among the regional agencies engaged in the theology work of the WCRC and support cooperative work with seminaries in the regions.

**Objective: Christian Worship and Spiritual Life**

Taking up the constitutional mandate to encourage “renewal of Christian worship and spiritual life within the Reformed tradition” (Art. IV.A.3.) the WCRC will:

1. Promote approaches that include aesthetic dimensions of expression (art, music and dance) in its theological work and in its resources for worship and spiritual life. This should include artistic opportunities for ecumenical engagements based on techniques of the Theater of the Oppressed (Augusto Boal).
2. Facilitate the exchange of worship resources and spiritual life between the regions of the WCRC.
3. Develop resources for worship based on the Barmen Declaration and the Belhar and Accra confessions to enable member churches to make these documents part of their worship life and be enriched by the confession element embedded in the documents as they reaffirm their commitment to be a communion present in the world. This will include:
  - a. preparing accompanying resource material, workbooks etc. to make the three texts accessible and user friendly to constituencies in different contexts;
  - b. translating Barmen, Belhar and Accra and other important documents into the languages of member churches as these confessions are guiding documents for the current work on communion and justice.

(See also Communion, Objective: Lifting Up the Accra Confession.)

**Mission**

### **Overarching Objective for Mission**

In witnessing its call to communion and its commitment to justice, the WCRC will articulate afresh a vision of liberating discipleship that rejoices in God's renewing presence in individual conversion and in social transformation and embraces the call to live out God's mission in the face of idolatries of power and privilege.

### **Clarifying the Foundations and Goals of Mission**

The WCRC does not yet have an agreed consensus on foundations and goals of its missional witness. Faith convictions that discern the *missio dei* in processes of social transformation and those that see God's presence in acts of individual conversion coexist side by side. While both positions will usually accept the validity of the respective other there is no agreement about a comprehensive understanding of mission.

#### **Objective: Clarifying Missional Foundations**

The WCRC will facilitate a process of consultation to clarify the foundations and goals of mission. This process will value the richness of the different foci on the missional goals that we find in the Communion and explore if the concept of "liberating discipleship" may provide a reliable bridge between the two emphases.

The following principles should guide this process:

- Mission is *contextual*: The understanding of liberating discipleship ought to be explored by reflecting with those in the heart and heat of God's liberating encounter with the world. This exploration involves the personal experience of faith and invites the participation of those our systems sacrifice.
- Mission is *relational*: Mission binds believers to God and to one another and calls them to proclaim the good news of liberation over all the earth. This belief in God's sovereignty over all creation allows and mandates to relate to all whom the Spirit empowers in seeking liberation and reconciliation.
- Mission is *ideological*: The living out of liberating discipleship leads to a renewal of language and praxis of mission that reforms the mission of the Communion and revitalizes the language and praxis of transformation that can be shared in partnerships with movements of resistance and change as they develop.
- Mission is *transformational*: Programmes that strive to live out liberating discipleship shall point in directions for tangible change.

**Objective: Mission in the Context of Crisis and Marginalization**

The “Mission in the Context of Crisis and Marginalization” programme will accompany member churches in situations of religious tensions (General Council Action 53). Initial target regions will be the Middle East, West Africa and Indonesia.

The programme will consist of the following:

- Solidarity visits;
- Engagement with religious actors in the conflict;
- Engagement with political actors;
- Consultations and conferences that engage with the following:
  - analysis of the tensions and the strategies of conflict resolution;
  - joint development of mission strategies for conflict resolution, justice and peace;
  - formulation of a message on the role of the church in conflict resolution in religious tensions;
- Publications on the situation in the respective regions and the results of the consultations.

(See also Justice, Objective: Cross-Cutting Dimensions, 3. Mission in the Context of Crisis and Marginalization.)

**Objective: Migrants, Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Trafficked People**

The WCRC recognizes the urgency of the global issues of human trafficking and migration and the need for a clear common response from the church on behalf of migrants, refugees, asylum seekers and trafficked people.

In taking up General Council Action 51 the WCRC will work in cooperation with its regions, member churches and other bodies:

1. to analyze what happens to trafficked people, migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in the countries they leave, pass through, and settle in;
2. to promote networking among regions and local churches to share best practices;
3. to consider, together, how to address governments, media and citizens in the countries involved so that all that is necessary is done and people receive the help they need and deserve as our fellow human beings;
4. to consider the theological, spiritual and pastoral challenges confronting member churches.

**Objective: Redeeming Religion**

The WCRC will continue the programme of the “Racism, Authoritarianism, Nationalism” consultation in 2018 and will explore strategies for redeeming religion from the idolatry of power and privilege. The programme will be

conducted in close cooperation with the activities on interfaith cooperation, Mission in the Context of Crisis and Marginalization and on living out of the Accra Confession. The WCRC will facilitate a series of consultations with the theme “Redeeming Religion.”<sup>6</sup>

(See also Justice, Objective: Cross-Cutting Dimensions, 1. Race, Authoritarianism, Nationalism (RAN) and 3. Mission in the Context of Crisis and Marginalization.)

## **Ecumenical Engagement & Interreligious Cooperation**

### **Ecumenical Forums**

#### **Overarching Objective for Participation in Ecumenical Forums**

The WCRC understands itself as an integral part of the ecumenical movement. Taking up the constitutional mandate to “contribute to the ecumenical movement and the transformation of the world” (Art. IV. C.) the WCRC will promote economic and ecological justice, global peace and reconciliation and provide Reformed perspectives on church unity.

(See also Organizational Objectives, Alliances.)

#### **Objective: World Council of Churches**

The WCRC will continue to contribute to the work of the World Council of Churches and will engage particularly with the following programmes:

- Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace,
- ACT Alliance,
- faith and order,
- mission and evangelism,
- interreligious dialogue and cooperation,
- international affairs/United Nations (in particular with regard to the following: Middle East, Korean Peninsula, Colombia, South Sudan),
- Indigenous people,
- people living with disabilities.

#### **Objective: Conference of Secretaries of Christian World Communions**

The WCRC will play an active role in the Conference of Secretaries and will continue to promote its basic ecumenical objectives among the different Christian communions.

#### **Objective: Global Christian Forum**

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<sup>6</sup> Like these other programmes, the “Redeeming Religion” project will focus on developments in those regions that are of particular relevance to the member churches and are focus areas of ecumenical engagement.



The WCRC supports the attempt to gather all main Christian churches and church families around one table and will continue to engage in the Global Christian Forum.

**Objective: Religions for Peace**

The WCRC promotes common action for peace among the world's religious communities and will continue to support and work with Religions for Peace.

**Ecumenical Dialogues and Cooperation**

**Overarching Objective for Ecumenical Dialogues and Cooperation**

The ecumenical engagement of the WCRC with other Christian communions aims to promote the visible unity of the larger church in its common witness to the world. In dialogues and other programmes, the WCRC will emphasize the interconnectedness of theology, communion, mission and justice and will foreground voices and perspectives of Christians in the Global South.

**Objective: Ecumenical Relationships**

To promote Christian unity in a world marked by increasing fragmentation the WCRC will engage in the following relationships:

- Dialogue sessions to be concluded: Anglican Communion, Pentecostal churches.
- Dialogues to begin: Mennonite World Conference, World Methodist Council, Ecumenical Patriarchate (Orthodox).

**Objective: Deepen the Communion with the Lutheran World Federation**

Based upon the dialogue report *Communion: On Being the Church* and the Wittenberg Witness the WCRC will continue to intensify the collaboration with the LWF and deepen the communion between LWF and WCRC.

**Objective: Strengthen the Relationship with the Roman Catholic Church**

Guided by the papal encyclical *Laudato si'* and the Accra Confession, as well as by the dialogue report *Justification and Sacramentality: The Christian Community as an Agent for Justice*, the WCRC will continue to strengthen its relationship with the Roman Catholic Church and focus particularly on church unity and justice.

(See also Communion, Objective: Lifting Up the Accra Confession.)

**Objective: Play an Active Role in the JDDJ Process**

Five Christians communions (Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Methodist, Reformed and Anglican) have approved the content of the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ) and are prepared to journey together

on the way to Christian unity. The WCRC will play an active role in this process to use the JDDJ format to develop a joint ecumenical agenda between the five communions.

**Objective: Transforming Ecumenical Dialogues**

The following strategic considerations will guide the WCRC's ecumenical engagement:

- joint witness,
- multilateral approach,
- post-colonial critique of the current ecumenical discourse,
- focus on the Lord's Supper,
- common bond between the churches of the Reformation.

**Objective: Relationship to Evangelical and (Neo-)Pentecostal Movements**

At the conclusion of the current Reformed-Pentecostal dialogue, the WCRC will employ new forms of engagement with Evangelical and (Neo-)Pentecostal movements. These programmes will be developed in collaboration with the WCRC's regions and address themes relevant to the member churches.

The engagement will be guided by the following principles:

- strong emphasis on evangelism and discipleship,
- appreciation of religious agency particularly in the Global South,
- critical engagement with forms of religion that justify economic exploitation and individual domination (e.g. prosperity religion and deliverance),
- striving for joint witness and ecumenical cooperation with regard to the challenges of our time,
- ecumenical dialogues to explore ways to Christian unity.

**Interreligious Dialogue and Cooperation**

**Overarching Objective for Interreligious Dialogue and Cooperation**

The interreligious work of the WCRC strives for interreligious cooperation based on trust, respect and the commitment to life, engages with the question of Christian witness in a multi-religious world and accompanies churches in conflict situations (General Council Actions 20 and 63).

**Objective: Clarifying Theological Foundations**

The WCRC will prepare the following documents that will lead to a common consensus on interfaith cooperation, collaborating with other ecumenical bodies (such as WCC, Christian Conference of Asia, LWF, etc.) and building upon the resources they have found helpful for this work:

- statement on the WCRC's theological and social positioning on inter-religious dialogue and cooperation,
- resources for inter-religious dialogue and cooperation in member churches,
- documents on particular issues: minorities, religious rights, justice and peace, friendship, etc.

**Objective: “Dialogues for Life”**

The WCRC will engage in “Dialogues for Life” with those groups of other religions where the interaction will have a constructive impact on situations that are relevant for its member churches. The situation in the following countries will receive particular attention: Middle East, Nigeria and Indonesia. The activities will be conducted in cooperation with partners within the regions that have experiences in programmes of interreligious cooperation (e.g. Programme for Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa) and will be coordinated with the Mission in the Context of Crisis and Marginalization programme.

(See also Mission, Objective: Mission in the Context of Crisis and Marginalization and Justice, Objective: Cross-Cutting Dimensions, 3. Mission in the Context of Crisis and Marginalization.)

**Objective: Accompanying Member Churches and Training of Interreligious Bridge Builders**

The WCRC will accompany member churches that live in challenging religious situations. Accompaniment will be facilitated by the global institutions and the regions. To train people for this kind of accompaniment the WCRC will prepare a training programme and will train interfaith interreligious bridge builders and activists (following the example of the Peace Provocateurs in Indonesia).

**Objective: Curriculum Development**

The WCRC will call a working group to make proposals for the development of theological curricula with an interreligious perspective for seminaries that belong to or are related to member churches.

**Organizational Issues**

In addition to the five interlocking dimensions there are eight organizational issues that must be strategically addressed to meet the overarching goal:

1. Sustainability
2. Capacity
3. Participation

4. Location
5. Alliances
6. Communications
7. Governance
8. Empowering Regions

Even as these concerns work through the interlocking dimensions in varying degrees, the two strategic foundations also apply to each of them.

### **Sustainability**

Sustainability should not be defined narrowly in financial terms. We are sustained in all things by the Lord Jesus Christ, who brings our communion into being and nurtures it according to God's will. While organizational sustainability, including financial stability, is one important part of the faithful living out of our communion, we also recognize and celebrate that we have much to share that sustains us in time and space. We take seriously the sharing of prayer, time, friendship, goodwill, and all the gifts of the Spirit as we carry out our ministry. All this is integral to the sustainability of the WCRC.

Despite this acknowledgement, the reality of this world is that there must be sufficient funds for the organization's core operations and programmatic work. Since its inception, the WCRC has been committed to funding its core budget through contributions from its membership while its programmatic work has been funded through additional donations. The goal of a membership-sustained core budget has never been achieved, and the current core budget is only balanced through support from ecumenical partners and special donations, including individuals.

#### **Objectives: Sustainability**

The WCRC will fund its core budget through contributions by its member churches and key partners by 2021 while continuing to fund its programmes through additional fundraising.

The WCRC will seek to expand the number of member churches and the amounts contributed to the entire organization. This will be done through:

1. Expanding WCRC membership (as per criteria in WCRC constitution article V.G.) by inviting churches into the Communion;
2. Encouraging an increase in the level of contributions and special donations to the core budget from those member churches who have the potential to do so by developing Executive Committee-led work groups in each region;
3. Pursuing mutually beneficial partnerships with like-minded organizations, from which the WCRC could obtain not only

- administration fees but increases in funding for core, programme and regional council budgets;
4. Extending the annual appeal to the whole of the English-speaking world while developing contextual fundraising appeals in other areas;
  5. Exploring contextual and creative fundraising methods, including possibilities for an endowment fund;
  6. Continuing other fundraising work to ensure the annual core budget is balanced.

## Capacity

The WCRC has a small staff with a large agenda, and it is not immune from funding trends in the ecumenical world. Despite the decrease in staff over the years, the goals of the organization have not diminished accordingly. This points to the question of capacity: through what means can the goals of the organization be accomplished?

Currently the WCRC has four executive staff (a general secretary and three executive secretaries: communications, communion and theology, justice and witness), four administrative staff (assistants to/for: general secretary, finance and communications, justice and theology and Reformed Partnership Fund) and two interns (who provide support throughout the organization even as they learn from their experiences). Additional assistance (including payroll and financial oversight) is provided by the Evangelical Reformed Church in Leer, Germany.<sup>7</sup>

In addition, as capacities are considered, it must be noted that the current staffing does not properly reflect the membership of the Communion, most notably in gender and regional balances on the executive level.

There are two primary means to ensure that capacity needs are met: 1) maximize current staff capacities (on all levels) and 2) expand the number of staff through a variety of means.

### *Maximize Current Staff Capacities (strengthening and deepening)*

On the executive level, the areas of work for the two programme secretaries are well defined, given their recent appointments and especially when tied to the goals of the strategic plan. Much of the work of the general secretary also falls within these areas. However, the work of the executive secretary for communications has naturally grown to encompass aspects of the responsibilities of the general secretariat; this has happened through strategic moves to maximize capacities,

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<sup>7</sup> Previously, the WCRC could also rely on a semi-retired, local German pastor for assistance on a variety of visa and German-specific needs; however, he has now fully retired since the General Council.

including supervising assignments, and especially given the demands placed on the general secretary.

On the administrative/support level, it has become apparent that work loads are not always equally distributed throughout the year. It has also been long acknowledged that the assistant for finance and communications can devote hardly more than 5% of her time to actual communication work. Finally, the amount of time needed to tend to the Reformed Partnership Fund (on both the administrative and executive levels) has never been evaluated against its benefits for the Communion.

**Objective: Maximize Current Capacities**

The WCRC will maximize current staff capacities by making the necessary adjustments to job responsibilities on both executive and administrative levels—after study and review—by February 2019.

*Increase Capacities through Additional Staff (growing and expanding)*

Maximizing current staff capacities will not meet all the needs of the organization, especially if additional projects are taken on to complete strategic objectives, nor will it improve gender balances.

**Objective: Gender and Regional Balance within WCRC Staff**

By 2024, staff capacities will be expanded and gender and regional representation balanced. Additional projects taken on by the WCRC will include sufficient increases in capacity. This will be done in the following ways:<sup>8</sup>

1. The WCRC will pursue partnerships to expand staff capacities through seconded staff, co-opted staff and/or mission partners/missionaries.
2. Two new female executive staff members, along with sufficient administrative support, will be added, either through secondment or with guaranteed financial support to cover the duration of their contracts.
3. Two female executive advisors will be added to create the Extended Executive Staff Team, which also comprises the general secretary and executive secretaries. The advisors will be compensated for their time and have all expenses covered.
4. The internship programme will be further developed to increase the number of interns serving. While it is primarily a leadership development programme it does have a positive impact on capacity.

**Participation**

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<sup>8</sup> A Hannover-based German will be recruited to assist on the German/Germany-specific needs of the staff and organization on a part time basis, replacing the German volunteer who fully retired in late 2017.

The Communion is dedicated to broadening and deepening involvement in its staff, event and decision-making structures in order to better reflect its diversity and commitment to justice. The following goals will address imbalances, including in power-relationships.

**Objectives: Participation**

1. By 2024, participation in global and regional governing bodies, reference groups, working groups, networks and in events will reflect the diversity of our family.
2. The Reference Group on Communion will make visible and propose strategies for the full participation of all and redress the unjust power relationships within the Communion (from an empire-critical perspective).

(See also Communion, Full and Just Participation; Justice, Confessing Our Commitment to Full and Just Participation and Reforming: Gender Justice.)

**Location**

The move from Geneva to Hannover achieved a certain number of strategic goals, most notably sustainability. This came at a significant cost to stability—with a large turn-over in staff, new accounting systems and a database update that required significant resources, among other changes.

The move, however, did not satisfy those goals related to the WCRC’s identity, especially as the majority of its member churches are in the Global South, and projections show this is where the growth of Christianity will continue. Thus, the question of “location” remains important.

**Objective: Location**

Organizational stability will remain the priority in the short-term. By 2023, however, the organization will return to the question of its physical location.

**Alliances**

Given the pressures apparent in the ecumenical world, it is important for the WCRC to enter into conversations with other ecumenical bodies seeking common and/or mutually supportive models of ecumenical sustainability. The WCRC must continue to deepen alliances with current partners and seek new alliances. While the focus is likely not on organic unity, it should be on coming together to demonstrate Christian unity and prophetic witness on particular issues.

The *Council for World Mission* (CWM) is an important strategic partner for the WCRC. The two organizations have had a long history of alliance and partnership. This has been marked by regular cooperation and meetings between staff, through summits of leadership and through an agreement that sees CWM and the WCRC partnering on common mission goals. These two organizations share many of the same member churches, and much of their work is in alignment. Some have even expressed a hope that the two would one day become a single organization.

**Objective: Work and Witness with CWM**

The WCRC commits with CWM to a common mission partnership to journey together on issues of justice and prophetic witness, including resource sharing, joint staff planning and programming and common visioning and strategizing.

The *World Student Christian Federation* (WSCF) is uniquely positioned to partner with the WCRC in its work on developing young leaders. Like CWM it shares many of the justice and mission-oriented priorities of the WCRC. Unlike the WCRC, it has a global network of young leaders.

**Objective: Partner with WSCF**

The WCRC will seek to develop a programme with WSCF for youth/young adult involvement in all aspects of the WCRC's mission and work.

The WCRC also has other significant partners, several of whom provide resources on more specific projects (such as *Evangelisches Missionswerk in Deutschland* (EMW), *Otto per Mille* (OPM), *Brot für die Welt* and the Evangelical Church of Westphalia). These partnerships will continue and new partners may be added within the purview of strategic objectives. This is the same for relationships with the World Council of Churches, Lutheran World Federation, and other ecumenical partners (see Ecumenical Engagement and Interreligious Cooperation). The WCRC will also work to develop and strengthen relationships with civil society groups and social movements, including inter-religious and interfaith organizations, such as Religions for Peace (see Ecumenical Engagement and Interreligious Cooperation, Objective: Religions for Peace).

**Communications**

Communications is an integral part of the work of the Communion. Utilized well communications can strengthen both the Communion itself and also its public witness. This is especially true if communications include voices from the whole of the Communion, including member churches, intentionally attending to those who are not always heard. Building right relationships through communication is key not only for strengthening the Communion but for creating a just and inclusive organization and for being able to effectively witness to the world.



**Objectives: Communication**

1. The WCRC will communicate its vision and work, doing so in such a way as to strengthen the Communion and witness to the world.
2. The WCRC will partner with other global, ecumenical organizations (such as CWM, WCC, LWF, CEC and ACT Alliance) to share resources and coordinate when appropriate.
3. The WCRC will enter into a global, strategic partnership with the World Alliance of Christian Communicators (WACC) to challenge injustice and stimulate critical awareness of empire and the realities that the media construct.

**Governance**

The 2017 General Council adopted numerous amendments to the WCRC constitution and by-laws, elected a new Executive Committee and adopted a consensus/discernment model through which to make its decisions.

The primary role of the Executive Committee is to exercise “general oversight of the work of the WCRC between meetings of the General Council.” Specifically, this includes adopting the budget, electing the general secretary, appointing executive secretaries and overseeing membership (see WCRC Constitution, Article X), as well as preparing for the next General Council.

**Objectives: Governance**

1. In order to strengthen the WCRC’s character as a discerning organization, the Executive Committee will organize itself, constituting necessary committees and adopting a consensus/discernment model of decision-making at all its meetings.
2. In order to address sustainability, capacity and gender equity (General Council Action 39), the Personnel Committee will track all executive terms of service and bring recommendations in a timely manner to the Executive Committee to ensure transitions are carried out smoothly.
3. In order to ensure that the planning of the next General Council carries out the objectives of this strategic plan, the officers will explore possibilities for the next General Council and present options, and take decisions, to the 2019 Executive Committee, including a planning timeline.

**Empowering Regions**

The General Council (in Action 44) reaffirmed the importance of the regions within the WCRC, resolving to:

- a. reaffirm the pivotal role the regions play in strengthening communion between the churches by providing spaces for dialogue and action;
- b. reaffirm the participation of regional representatives in the decision-making structures of the WCRC and in programmatic work to enhance the participation of the churches from all regions; and
- c. affirm working styles that strengthen the synergy between the local, regional and global levels.

There are a number of challenges to achieve the resolution of the Council. Two of the more important ones are: 1) the varying levels of capacity and effectiveness at which the current regional councils operate, and 2) the lack of officially recognized regions in several areas.

Because each region has its own particular challenges, specific objectives will be employed within each area (as noted in objective 4). However, there are three broader objectives that will be incorporated into the whole of the WCRC's work in relationship to regions.

#### **Objectives: Empowering Regions**

1. The Communion will be strengthened by empowering active and practical relationships among all levels—secretariat-regions-members—and by making the regions a necessary point of relationship between the secretariat and member churches.
2. All programmatic activities will strengthen the regions, engaging member churches with their regional councils and engaging regional councils both with each other and the secretariat. Thus, the secretariat and the regions will partner in the selection and development of issues, based on the priorities identified elsewhere in the strategic plan.
3. Additional regional councils will not be recognized by the Executive Committee prior to 2020. Nevertheless, in the interim, regional liaisons will be invited to the Executive Committee meeting from those areas that do not have official representatives so that their voices can be heard. Consideration will be given to funding their expenses.
4. By 2021 the secretariat will partner in new ways with each region (whether a recognized council or not) on projects that will benefit both the region and the entire Communion.

(See also Communion, Objective: Empowering Regions.)

#### **Implementation and Monitoring**

Reference Groups will be formed along the interlocking dimensions, combinations thereof and/or other strategic needs (e.g. communication). They will be approved by

the officers, as will the membership in each. Members of each Reference Group will bring their expertise while also reflecting the WCRC's diversity.

The Reference Groups will coordinate the implementation of the objectives within their portfolios, including monitoring, evaluating and reporting to the Executive Committee through the WCRC staff. They will meet virtually unless capacity and funding can be found through programme budgets. Reference Groups will collaborate on those objectives which cut across the dimensions.

Each Reference Group will have a moderator and a scribe. The moderators will make up the *Strategic Plan Programme Group*, which will meet virtually to coordinate the WCRC's programme work.

Each Reference Group, in consultation with pertinent executive staff, may appoint *Networks* and *Working Groups* for more focused projects envisioned by the Reference Group.

The Networks will be Communion-wide resource groups of people available to carry out and/or advise upon the work of the WCRC. It is from the Networks that many of the Working Groups will be drawn.

The Working Groups will be responsible for the implementation (including resource production) of specific programmes to accomplish objective(s). The number of Working Groups will vary depending on the current needs.

The General Secretary will prepare a Strategic Plan Implementation Plan, with budget, by no later than the date of the 2019 Executive Committee meeting.

The Executive Committee will conduct a mid-term evaluation of the Communion's progress towards implementation of the Strategic Plan.

**Message from the Executive Committee  
of the World Communion of Reformed Churches  
May 2018 in Seoul, South Korea**

*He will judge between many peoples  
and will settle disputes for strong nations far and wide.  
They will beat their swords into plowshares  
and their spears into pruning hooks.  
Nation will not take up sword against nation,  
nor will they train for war anymore.*  
—Micah 4:3

The Executive Committee of the World Communion of Reformed Churches,<sup>1</sup> met in Seoul, South Korea, along with ecumenical partners, under the theme: “From Life, For Life: Transforming, Reconciling, and Renewing between the 10th and 16th of May 2018. During the Executive Committee meeting, we experienced the hospitality of our Korean member churches and were enriched by their wonderful and rich spirituality.

We met in Korea at a momentous time in history when attempts towards peace, reconciliation and reunification loomed large on the horizon. Our two member churches, the Presbyterian Church of Korea (PCK) and the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea (PROK), along with the National Council of Churches in Korea and the Korean Christian Federation in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea have made sacrificial efforts for peace in the peninsula for which we now see much hope. The 1945 division of the Korean nation represented a compromise between the USA and the Soviet Union for short term tactical expediency rather than long term strategic vision for those suffering under Japanese occupation.

However, the Panmunjom Declaration for Peace, Prosperity and Unification of the Korean Peninsula (of 27 April 2018) opened the possibility of a peace treaty replacing the presently existing armistice, demilitarization of the DMZ, denuclearization and steps towards peaceful coexistence and reunification in the Korean peninsula. From the perspective of God’s saving work in the world it clear that the division of the Korean Peninsula is not the end of the history for the Korean people. The experience of the Korean Peninsula shows us that war, violence and militarization can be overcome and that vested interests that sow the seeds of conflict will not win.

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<sup>1</sup> *The World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC), called to communion and committed to justice, is comprised of 100 million Christians from 233 Congregational, Presbyterian, Reformed, United, Uniting and Waldensian churches in 109 countries.*

## Message

The journey for peace in the Korean context is an inspiration. While we met we took notice of what was happening in the wider world. We invite the Communion to prayer and advocacy for these situations particularly for a successful summit meeting between North Korea and the USA.

As an ecumenical body of Christians, we extend our deepest condolences to the congregations affected by the multiple bomb blasts in Surabaya in Indonesia, including Diponegoro Indonesian Christian Church of WCRC member church *Gereja Kristen Indonesia* (GKI). It is with great concern we heard of the loss of life in Palestine following the relocation of the United States Embassy to Jerusalem. We look forward to a global engagement, that will deal with this painful reality and to work towards just peace. We pray for communities around the world that are living with violence, fear, and hopelessness. Specifically, we think of Cameroon, Kenya, Syria, Brazil, Venezuela, and Colombia. Our prayers are with all God's children who are suffering.

We commit to pray and act in concrete solidarity for all who are affected by war and injustice, so that hatred is abandoned, and so that polarization and violence do not grow. We understand that it is a long road to justice and that the paths of peace are not easy to tread, but we as the Executive Committee of the WCRC call on all our member churches to live in obedience to a God of life and commit to the transformation of the world for the fullness of life for all. We commit to move From Life, For Life: Transforming, Reconciling and Renewing.



EVANGELISCHE KIRCHE IN DEUTSCHLAND

OBERRECHNUNGSAMT

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(English version)

# REPORT

ON THE AUDIT OF THE

FINANCIAL STATEMENT 2017

# WORLD COMMUNION OF REFORMED CHURCHES (WCRC)

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HANOVER

## LIST OF IMPORTANT ABBREVIATIONS

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BS.	Buchungsstelle (Booking account, classification level in the finance software KFM)
DVO.EKD	Dienstvertragsordnung der EKD (compensation regulation), new version from 25th August 2008 (ABl. EKD p. 341), last change on 29th September 2014 (ABl. EKD 2015 p. 2)
EKD	Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland (Evangelical Church in Germany)
EUR	Euro (Currency code according to ISO 4217 for the Euro zone)
Ev.-ref. church	Evangelical Reformed Church
GG	Grundgesetz für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland (Constitution for the Federal Republic of Germany)
KFM	Kirchliches-Finanz-Management (finance software of KIGST GmbH, Offenbach am Main)
Nds. MBl.	Niedersächsisches Ministerialblatt (ministerial law gazette of Lower Saxony, official public announcement gazette)
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)
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)
WGRK	Weltgemeinschaft Reformierter Kirchen (World Communion of Reformed Churches)
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 2017 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 2017.

For this, it was precisely audited:

- whether the budget and economic management as well as the asset administration in the accounting year 2017 took place correctly and according to applicable law and
- whether the annual accounts 2017 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



## Audited Financial Report

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 elected leadership and organs of the WCRC 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 organization.

### **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 incorrectness 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 foci. 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 any action was taken against existing regulations 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. Tanja Küster and Mr. Ralph Schönemeier in the period from April to May 2018 – with interruptions. An on-site audit took place in the WCRC office in the Calvin Centre in Hanover (Knochenhauerstr. 42) on 19<sup>th</sup> April 2018.

The following documents were available for the audit among others:

- a) the 2017 budget for the WCRC,
- 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 2017 of 9<sup>th</sup> April 2018 (ZB closure no. 0409).

In addition, further WCRC files, especially the accounting documents (invoice documents and bank statements), were available. The records requested within the audit were submitted and/or 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 Ms Anna Krueger (Assistant for Finance and Communication) as well as Mr. Gerhard Plenter (Evangelical Reformed Church, Leer). In addition, other staff members were available for further enquiries.

### **Completeness statement**

To ensure the audit basics, the ORA has requested a representation letter for the financial statement 2017 from the WCRC. It was given by the General Secretary within the scope of this audit.

### **Final discussion**

On the occasion of the on-site audit, a conversation informing about the substantial results of the audit took place on 19<sup>th</sup> April 2018. The participants were Ms. Krüger for

## Audited Financial Report

the WCRC and Ms. Küster as well as Mr. Schönemeier for the ORA. Furthermore, additional statements were discussed via telephone between the participants.

## II. ORGANIZATIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES

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The World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) is a non-profit, international, non-governmental organization representing 233 member churches from over 100 countries with a total of approx. 100 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 mission of 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 for economic and ecological justice, world-wide peace and reconciliation, 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. MBI 4/2013, page 67)

## Audited Financial Report

The organs of the WCRC are:

- the General Council (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 Rev. Najla Kassab (Lebanon). 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.

The accounting year (budget year) is the calendar year.

### III. ACCOUNTING / PRESENTATION OF THE ACCOUNTING RESULTS

As before, 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).

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:

#### General budget

WCRC Annual Statement 2017	Revenues	Expenses
	EUR	EUR
Budget appropriation according to budget	2.741.300,00	2.741.300,00
<b>TARGET COSTS 2017</b> (plan valuation)	<b>2.741.300,00</b>	<b>2.741.300,00</b>
According to the annual financial statement the following amount to:		
The actual receipts	2.009.421,93	
The transfers from program reserves	596.157,20	
The transfers from other reserves	86.088,02	
The actual expenditures		1.886.000,58
The allocations to program reserves		590.243,36
The allocations to other reserves		78.810,65
The surplus 2017 (allocation to General Reserve)		136.612,56
<b>ACTUAL COSTS 2017</b> (result)	<b>2.691.667,15</b>	<b>2.691.667,15</b>

## Handling of the General Council

The investment budget (SB 02) was created for the accounting execution of the handling of the General Council which took place in the year 2017.

According to the documents for the year 2017 presented for the audit, the budget of the General Council shows a balanced general volume of revenues and expenses of 5,092,063.71 EUR.

Concerning the accounting of the General Council, the ORA refers to the references on Tz. 13 of this report.

## Advances and transit accounts

The advances and transit accounts (SB 52) of the WCRC of the audit period according to the documents presented for the audit are as follows:

<b>Advance payment</b>				
<b>Identification</b>	<b>Opening balance from 2016 EUR</b>	<b>Expense 2017 EUR</b>	<b>Revenue 2017 EUR</b>	<b>Closing balance 2017 carried forward to 2018 EUR</b>
General Advances	1.437,94	6.252,25	6.150,60	1.336,29
General Advances Sparkasse	-	-	-	-
Permanent Advance AIPRAL	- 3.306,74	2.710,39	7.010,13	993,00
Project Advances - GC	-	21.228,54	21.228,54	-
ARCR Membership	- 1.236,51	450,00	-	1.686,51
Honorarium	- 2.313,00	3.500,00	5.813,00	-
Opening balance from projects	1.242.201,41	1.247.642,79	1.179.588,08	1.174.146,70
<b>Total:</b>	<b>1.236.783,10</b>	<b>1.281.783,97</b>	<b>1.219.790,35</b>	<b>1.174.789,48</b>

  

<b>Holding ledger</b>				
<b>Identification</b>	<b>Opening balance from 2016 EUR</b>	<b>Revenue 2017 EUR</b>	<b>Expense 2017 EUR</b>	<b>Closing balance 2017 carried forward to 2018 EUR</b>
Transitory Items	-	884.971,55	889.017,66	- 4.046,11
Transitory Items Endowment USA	-	-	-	-
Deposit	- 3.417,00	2.605,00	2.632,00	- 3.390,00
Transitory Items - ExCom	-	-	-	-
Transitory items - downpayments	-	662.020,81	662.020,81	-
Reclaimed Funds Provision	-	-	404.388,78	404.388,78
Interests	-	8.395,28	8.395,28	-
Asset	1.240.200,10	1.277.843,98	815.480,69	777.836,81
Balancing Accounts	-	223.731,83	223.731,83	-
<b>Total:</b>	<b>1.236.783,10</b>	<b>3.059.568,45</b>	<b>3.005.667,05</b>	<b>1.174.789,48</b>

The advances and transit accounts 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 and/or spoken about during the audit statements.

The position “accounting balance carried forward from projects” displayed under “advance payment“ amounting to 1,174,146.70 EUR and the position “asset“ displayed under “transitory items“ amounting to 777,836.81 EUR correspond to the reserve stock in ledger 92 (asset stock).

Within the frame of the audit, the ORA recommended no bookings to be required under transits or advances. This process will be clarified between the ORA and the WCRC after the audit.

**Advances and transit accounts for the General Council**

A separate advance and transit accounts calculation (SB 53) of the WCRC was created for the General Council. It was randomly audited by the ORA.

According to the documents presented for the audit, the advances and transit accounts of the period audited show a volume of 1,363,723.31 EUR. It was balanced within the frame of the General Council.



**Presentation of the asset situation**

The asset accounting of the WCRC (SB 92) according to the documents presented for the audit is as follows:

<b>Reserve assets (including trust assets, according to SB 92)</b>	<b>Opening Balance EUR</b>	<b>Closing Balance EUR</b>	<b>Annual Percentage Change</b>
<b>WCRC Capital</b>			
Reserve Fund	345.766,06	409.467,14	18,42%
IT Provision	12.063,59	12.063,59	0,00%
Fundraising Fund	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	0,00	-100,00%
Regional Communication Support	132,14	0,00	-100,00%
Reserve for FX Fluctuations	100.000,00	100.000,00	0,00%
Pension Contributions Reserve	389.820,91	596.491,08	53,02%
<b>Specific Asset Items</b>			
UEK special donation	683.056,08	683.056,08	0,00%
Member Church Sp. Donations 2017	20.000,00	0,00	-100,00%
PCK Peace and Reconciliation	2.381,11	0,00	-100,00%
Justice & Partnership Office Support	50.902,07	50.902,07	0,00%
General Council Fund	549.182,27	0,00	-100,00%
General Council 2024 Fund	0,00	58.986,06	100,00%
CWM Endowment Reserve	1.211.500,00	1.211.500,00	0,00%
<b>Theology &amp; Mission Office Programmes</b>			
Global Institute of Theology (GIT)	0,00	4.110,36	100,00%
Theological Dialogues	4.869,26	-3.416,78	-170,17%
Anglican Dialogue	1.269,45	0,00	-100,00%
Pentecostal Dialogue	4.950,78	0,00	-100,00%
Catholic Dialogue	249,04	249,04	0,00%
Mission	31.592,03	11.295,53	-64,25%
Madip	27.965,33	27.965,33	0,00%
Georges Lombard Prize	14.382,81	13.205,30	-8,19%
Network/Reference Group	0,00	4.595,32	100,00%
<b>Justice &amp; Partnership Offices Programmes</b>			
Covenanting for Justice	582,06	582,06	0,00%
Gender Justice	51.645,15	41.530,88	-19,58%
Theological Education for Women	146.983,47	106.510,58	-27,54%
New Econ. & Financial Archit. (NIFEA)	5.371,02	5.343,37	-0,51%
NIFEA - GEM School	3.743,82	0,00	-100,00%
Oikotree	4.768,09	4.768,09	0,00%

<b>Continuation to the table reserve assets</b>			
<b>Partnership Funds</b>			
Partnership Fund A - BfW Funds	88.906,83	85.574,83	-3,75%
Partnership Fund B	49.636,00	30.556,00	-38,44%
Partnership Fund D	100,00	0,00	-100,00%
Partnership Fund E	632,17	632,17	0,00%
<b>General Programmes</b>			
WCRC Regional Support	0,00	0,00	0,00%
Regional Support - AIPRAL	27.000,00	0,00	-100,00%
Regional Support - ACRC	45.998,50	9.523,62	-79,30%
Global Internship Programme	58.112,39	55.773,22	-4,03%
Global Internship Programme - GC	27.399,00	1.771,48	-93,53%
<b>Key Initiatives</b>			
EMW	0,00	126.154,44	100,00%
OPM	0,00	64.212,10	100,00%
<b>Custodian Funds</b>			
Mission Fund	18.016,30	18.016,30	0,00%
Publications Fund	49.700,75	47.200,75	-5,03%
UCC Death Penalty Consultation	5.175,70	5.175,70	0,00%
Equatorial Guinea	4.218,09	4.218,09	0,00%
Native American Project	3.164,33	3.164,33	0,00%
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>4.059.186,91</b>	<b>3.806.154,93</b>	<b>-6,23%</b>
<b>Trust Assets</b>			
WCRC Europe	180.157,44	187.979,34	4,34%
<b>Total</b>	<b>4.239.344,35</b>	<b>3.994.134,27</b>	<b>-5,78%</b>

The total asset stock of the WCRC amounted to 3,994,134.27 EUR for the year-end closing as of 31<sup>st</sup> December 2017. Compared with the previous year (4,239,344.35 EUR), this stock has decreased by 245,210.08 EUR (5.78 %) according to the accounting balance.

Within the frame of the year-end closing 2017, the withdrawal from the reserve for "Global Institute of Theology (GIT)" amounting to 3,416.78 EUR was mistakenly booked from the reserve "Theological Dialogs." A correction will be carried out in the budget year 2018.

## IV. AUDIT STATEMENTS

### 1. General statements

#### 1.1 Correctness of the accounting/documentation

The WCRC has 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.

#### 1.2 Job chart

The job chart presented is as follows:

Nr.	function	Tarif- werk	compensation	plan	result
1	General Secretary	NBesG	B 3	1.0	1.0
2	Exec. Secretary for Communications	NBesG	A 15	1.0	1.0
3	Exec. Secretary for Justice and Partnership	NBesG	A 15	1.0	1.0
4	Exec. Secretary for Theology and Communion	NBesG	A 15	1.0	1.0
5	Asst. for Finance and Communication	DVO.EKD	EG 9	1.0	1.0
6	Asst. for Justice and Theology	DVO.EKD	EG 9	1.0	1.0
7	Asst. for the Reformed Partnership	DVO.EKD	EG 9	1.0	1.0
8	Asst. to the General Secretary	DVO.EKD	EG 9	1.0	1.0
<b>Subtotal:</b>				<b>7.0</b>	<b>7.0</b>
9	Programme Coordinator for Peace and Development		Fixed compensation	5,300 EUR	1.0
10	Volunteer Assistant	DVO.EKD	Minor employment	300 EUR	1,0
11	Cleaning personnel		EG 2	0.18	0.18
12	Managing Director of the Exhibition "Living (the) Reformation Worldwide"		E 13	0.41	0.41
13	Service Provider		Fixed payment	1,000 EUR	1,0
14	Consultant		Fixed payment	1,500 EUR	1,0
15	Intern	TVPÖD	Fixed payment	1,700,00 EUR based on § 8 TVPÖD	1,0
16*	Intern	TVPÖD	Fixed payment	1,700,00 EUR based on § 8 TVPÖD	1,0
17**	Intern	TVPÖD	Fixed payment	1,647.05 EUR based on § 8 TVPÖD	1,0
8***	General Council Coordinator	---	---	1,0	1,0
20	Project Assistant		Fixed payment	500 EUR based on §20 Para. 2 SGB IV	1,0
21	Project Assistant		Without Pay	1,0	1,0
22	Service Provider		Fixed payment	180 EUR	1,0
23	Service Provider		Fixed payment	1050,00 EUR	1,0

\* The position of the intern is funded by the Council for World Mission

\*\* The position of the intern is funded by her church (Presbyterian Church of Taiwan)

\*\*\* The employee is seconded by the Evangelical Church of Westphalia

No objections concerning the job chart have arisen.

## **2. Statements about the year-end closing**

### **2.1. Correctness and completeness of the year-end closing**

The 2017 year-end closing of the WCRC was compiled dated 9th April 2018 (ZB closing no. 0302). It shows a volume of 2,691,667.15 EUR.

For the audit, the documentation from accounting (SB) was provided as annual accounting document. Close inspection and checking of the contained proven year-end closing results gave no indication for differences of relevant significance.

Finally, it is determined that the year-end closing for the accounting year 2017 shows no significant gaps according to the ORA findings.

### **2.2. Budget balance/Utilization of the 2017 surplus**

The balancing of the ordinary budget was induced by an allocation of the profit remaining after execution of all necessary bookings amounting to 136,612.56 EUR to the General Reserve Fund (SB 92, BSt. 5110.00 UK 1).

### **2.3. Balancing of payment methods**

For the audit, account and investment 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.

### **2.4 Advances and transit accounts**

The advances and transit accounts (SB 52) were balanced and plausible with few permitted exceptions (among others the booking accounts that correspond to the asset calculation – SB 92 – where the solvent resources are proven that are attributed to the assets).

### 3. General Council

#### 3.1 Accounting of the General Council

As previously mentioned, the investment budget (accounting book 02) was created – especially for the accounting execution – for the processing of the General Council which took place in the year 2017.

According to the documents presented for the years 2015 to 2017, the budget of the General Council shows a balanced general volume of revenues and expenses of 5,133,104.28 EUR.

According to the documents presented, the complete **expenses** of the General Council are as follows:

<b>General Council Name</b>	<b>Expenses EUR</b>
General Council	3.025.746,12
Planning Committee	65.194,24
Worship Committee	17.666,70
Communication	292.746,76
Youth Council	12.759,70
Womens Council	1.210,06
Wittenberg Day	45.868,00
Berlin Visit	70.485,34
Berlin Visit Performance	19.120,55
Towards a Global Community of Life	252.016,36
Indaba	0,00
Psalm Concert	45.542,34
Social Art Project Leipzig	50.477,46
Youth Cathering "Meet the World"	110.926,26
Global Players Exhibition	43.654,64
Reception by Lord Mayer	23.821,24
GIT Core	331.013,33
GIT Preparatory Meetings	9.886,65
GIT Wuppertal and Leipzig	204.786,55
Leipzig Event	510.181,98
<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>5.133.104,28</b>
less Project Subsidies	1.212.268,81
less Reserves	404.388,78
<b>Total (without Project Subsidies and Reserves)</b>	<b>3.516.446,69</b>

## Executive Committee 2018

According to the documents presented, the complete **revenues** of the General Council are as follows:

<b>General Council Name</b>	<b>Revenues EUR</b>
Contribution Foreign Ministry (Auswärtiges Amt) in Germany	300.000,00
Registration fees	110.949,83
Fees	23.365,00
Participation fees	19.335,04
Student fees	29.835,02
Further revenues	9.452,95
Membership fees	164.171,29
Contribution Evangelisch-reformierte Kirche Leer	150.000,00
Contribution Lippische Landeskirche	150.000,00
Contribution Evangelische Kirche im Rheinland	220.000,00
Contribution Union Evangelischer Kirchen in der EKD	510.000,00
Contribution Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland	600.000,00
Contribution Evangelische Kirche von Westfalen	220.000,00
Contribution Evangelisches Missionswerk Deutschland	160.000,00
Grant Gustav-Adolf-Werk	5.000,00
Contribution Bread for the World	148.900,00
Contribution City of Leipzig	93.650,00
Contribution of the Federal Ministry for Culture and Media(BKM)	46.296,00
Contribution Federal Ministry for Family, Seniors, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ)	40.400,00
Ev.-ref. Synodalverband Bern	16.088,69
Ev.-ref. Landeskirche Zürich	5.000,00
Fondation pour l'aide au protestantisme réformé	40.000,00
Kerk in Actie	10.000,00
Reserve withdrawal Global Institute of Theology (GIT)	25.535,41
Council for World Mission	20.000,00
Project Subsidies	1.455.447,93
Refunds	6.199,83
Own fee WCRC	553.477,29
<b>Total revenues</b>	<b>5.133.104,28</b>

A comparison of the target and actual figures could not be presented due to the fact that, as agreed, the current target figures were not mentioned in the accounting in accounting book 02.

In total, the financing of the General Council has resulted in a surplus of 69,245.97 EUR – from the current perspective. Initially, it was booked as a reserve in the transit accounts and carried forward into the budget year 2018.

### 3.2 Reserves

Within the frame of the General Council, the WCRC did not need a part of the contributions granted. Reserves were generated for these unutilized funds:

Reserves for Donors	Reserve EUR
BfW - Towards a Global Community of Life - Travel costs Global	22.723,77
KhK - GIT	7.194,06
Contribution Evangelisches Missionswerk Deutschland (GIT)	50.000,00
Contribution Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland (EKD)	116.233,04
Contribution Union Evangelischer Kirchen in der EKD (UEK)	138.063,95
Federal Ministry for Culture and Media (BKM)	927,99
Surplus General Council (unutilized funds)	69.245,97
<b>Total amount</b>	<b>404.388,78</b>

These reserves amounting to 404,388.78 EUR were booked in the transit accounts as holdings and transferred into the budget year 2018.

According to the assessment of the ORA, the contribution notices and their incidental provisions of the contributors (especially the EKD and UEK) mandatorily stipulate that contribution funds which are not required are to be repaid immediately. The ORA has pointed out this obligation and the risk of additional interest payments to the representatives of the WCRC promptly and repeatedly.

Concerning the unutilized funds of the Evangelisches Missionswerk (EMW) amounting to 50,000.00 EUR, the WCRC representatives claim to have been informed by the EMW that up to 50,000 EUR of unutilized funds from this contribution by the EMW should be put aside for the next GIT. The WCRC will return these funds to the EMW first.

Less the above created reserves, a surplus of 69,245.97 EUR has resulted from the financing of the General Council. In this respect, the ORA also points out the existing risk that these funds will have to be repaid (proportionally) to the contributors.

### 3.3 Consideration of staff expenses toward EKD and UEK

Within the audit of the expenses of the General Council, the ORA established that staff expenses amounting to 156,679 EUR were billed. These are regular staff members of the WCRC who were not additionally employed for the General Council. The application with the contributors EKD and UEK had not contained these expenses. Moreover, since it is not about staff additionally employed for the General Council but rather about a billing of the original costs of the permanent WCRC staff it is to be expected that these staff expenses will not be eligible by the EKD and UEK. The consequence would be that these funds have to be repaid.

According to the WCRC representatives, a final audit of the usage list as well as the decision of the contributors EKD and UEK, respectively to be expected in 2018, will be waited for. The ORA has pointed out the possible risk of a repayment obligation to the WCRC representatives.

#### 4. Single statements

##### 4.1. Development of the program budgets

The program budgets that earmarked reserves exist for and that 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 2017, the program budgets are as follows:

Programme Budgets 2017	Opening Balance	Revenues	Expenses	Closing Balance
	EUR	EUR	EUR	EUR
<b>Communion &amp; Theology Office Programmes</b>				
Global Institute of Theology (GIT)	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00
Theological Dialogs	4.869,26	0	4.869,26	0,00
Anglican Dialogue	1.269,45	5.719,15	6.988,60	0,00
Pentecostal Dialogue	4.950,78	7.464,77	12.415,55	0,00
Catholic Dialogie	249,04	0,00	0,00	249,04
	0,00	4.606,82	11,50	4.595,32
Mission	31.592,03	0,00	0,00	31.592,03
Mission - Mission on the Frontline	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00
Vision and Mission	0,00	1.406,65	1.406,65	0,00
Madip	27.965,33	0,00	0,00	27.965,33
Georges Lombard Prize	14.382,81	0,00	1.177,51	13.205,30
Communion - Regional Consultation	0,00	20.229,34	20.229,34	0,00
Strengthening Communion	0,00	46.845,95	46.845,95	0,00



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Continuation to the table				
<b>Justice &amp; Witness Office Programmes</b>				
Covenanting for Justice	582,06	0,00	0,00	582,06
Coktree	4.768,09	0,00	0,00	4.768,09
New Economic & Financial Architecture (NIFEA)	5.371,02	0,00	27,65	5.343,37
NIFEA - GEM School	3.743,82	17.823,31	21.567,13	0,00
NIFEA - Panel	0,00	8.701,26	8.701,26	0,00
NIFEA - Advocacy	0,00	2.995,09	2.995,09	0,00
Gender Justice	51.645,15	0,00	10.114,27	41.530,88
Theological Education for Women	146.983,47	0,00	40.472,89	106.510,58
Human Trafficking	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00
Working Group on Women Ordination	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00
<b>Partnership Funds</b>				
Partnership Fund A	88.906,83	0,00	3.332,00	85.574,83
Partnership Fund A - OPM	0,00	24.494,40	24.494,40	0,00
Partnership Fund B	49.636,00	26.000,00	45.080,00	30.556,00
Partnership Fund D	100,00	937,30	1.037,30	0,00
Partnership Fund E	632,17	16.200,00	16.200,00	632,17
<b>General Programmes</b>				
Regional Support - Capacity-Building	0,00	7.947,52	7.947,52	0,00
Regional Support - AIPRAL	27.000,00	15.000,00	42.000,00	0,00
Regional Support - ACRC	45.998,50	0,00	36.474,88	9.523,62
Youth Programme	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00
Global Internship Programme	48.747,26	10.780,08	3.754,12	55.773,22
Global Internship Programme - EMW	8.243,89	24.356,71	32.600,60	0,00
Global Internship Programme- PCT	1.121,24	18.436,65	19.557,89	0,00
Global Internship Programme - GC	27.399,00	5.955,78	31.583,30	1.771,48
Globale Initiatives - Korea Reunification Process	0,00	760,48	760,48	0,00
Global Initiatives - Peace and Reconciliation Colombia WRCRC	0,00	4.386,08	4.386,08	0,00
Global Initiatives - Accompaniment Peace Talks ELN/Col. Government	0,00	15.827,72	15.827,72	0,00
Global Initiatives - Middle East Peace Process	0,00	831,52	831,52	0,00
Global Initiatives - South Sudan Project	0,00	1.902,60	1.902,60	0,00
<b>Key Initiatives</b>				
Otto per Mille	0,00	178.363,90	114.151,80	64.212,10
EMW	0,00	207.000,00	101.142,06	105.857,94
<b>Total</b>	<b>596.157,20</b>	<b>674.973,08</b>	<b>680.886,92</b>	<b>590.243,36</b>

The following statements concerning the program budgets resulted within the scope of the audit:

- 10 of the 43 programs showed no financial activities in the year 2017.
- 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 2017, the program means were transferred back at the beginning of the accounting year at the beginning of March – insofar promptly. Thus, the previously described procedure is given with the original intention of transparency.

- The finance committee of the WCRC 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. They are applied when other administrative costs rates are indicated.

A cursory review of the program costs showed no indications for a misappropriated utilization and/or classification of the funds.

#### **4.2 Certification of the contribution funds**

The revenues from contributors shown in the year-end closing of the year 2017 amount to a total of 458,584.09 EUR. The opening balance from remaining funds from the previous year (2016) amounts to 222,396.50 EUR. Thus, the total revenues for the year 2017 for projects amounted to 680,980.59 EUR. Concerning the funds of the Evangelisches Missionswerk it is to be noted that of the total funds (313,489.67 EUR), including the means transferred from the year 2016 (133,489.67 EUR) only 177,811.61 EUR were utilized. Of these, 76,669.55 EUR corresponded to funds transferred from the year 2016. The difference of 135,678.06 EUR of EMW funds has been temporarily assigned to earmarked project reserves.

The following shows an overview of the different contributors for the year 2017:

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Donor	Remaining funds 2016 EUR	Revenues 2017 EUR	Transfer 2016 EUR	Expenses 2017 EUR	Carry-over 2018 EUR
Council for World Mission	0,00	83.584,09	0,00	83.584,09	0,00
ICCO - Kerk in Actie	0,00	20.000,00	0,00	20.000,00	0,00
Otto per Mille	0,00	175.000,00	0,00	110.787,90	64.212,10
Evangelisches Missionswerk	133.489,67	180.000,00		177.811,61	135.678,06
Brot für die Welt	88.906,83	0,00	0,00	3.332,00	85.574,83
<b>Total:</b>	<b>222.396,50</b>	<b>458.584,09</b>	<b>0,00</b>	<b>395.515,60</b>	<b>285.464,99</b>

After discounting the accounting-relevant expenses of 395.515.60 EUR, a revenue surplus of 285,464.99 EUR remains, which was transferred as earmarked into the budget year 2018.

Concerning the unutilized contribution funds of the Evangelisches Missionswerk, it has been agreed that the funds have to be repaid at the end of the budget year 2018.

### 4.3. Membership fees

The development of the WCRC membership fees within the audited period shows the following figures:

Regional Membership Fees	Budgeted EUR	Actuals EUR	Difference EUR
Africa	17.000,00	20.424,20	3.424,20
Latin America	7.000,00	8.440,78	1.440,78
Caribbean and North America	255.000,00	290.046,96	35.046,96
Asia	54.000,00	68.230,15	14.230,15
Pacific	3.500,00	2.846,97	-653,03
Europe	436.000,00	396.491,80	-39.508,20
<b>total</b>	<b>772.500,00</b>	<b>786.480,86</b>	<b>13.980,86</b>

Currently, the WCRC office is still 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. Within the frame of the General Council, intensive consultations have been led with the member churches. The aim is to achieve the reliable payment of membership fees in the future.

According to the WCRC, the newly elected Executive Committee will decide how contributions in arrears are to be dealt with in the future.

### 4.4 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 as travel to the employees' home countries every two years.

The costs spent for this by the WCRC in 2017 can be summarized as follows.

<b>Expat Expenses</b>	<b>Plan EUR</b>	<b>Ergebnis EUR</b>	<b>Saldo EUR</b>
<b>Executive Secretaries</b>	50.000,00	38.517,51	11.482,49
<b>total</b>	<b>50.000,00</b>	<b>38.517,51</b>	<b>11.482,49</b>

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".

#### **4.5 Risks resulting from currency fluctuations**

Within the frame of this audit, the ORA determined that the WCRC realized a loss from currency conversions amounting to 81,773.82 EUR (previous year 14,294.56 earnings EUR) in the accounting year 2017.

<b>Fx Gain and Fx Loss</b>	<b>Budgeted EUR</b>	<b>Actuals EUR</b>	<b>Difference EUR</b>
Fx gain	0,00	36.759,18	36.759,18
Fx loss	0,00	118.533,00	-118.533,00
<b>total</b>	<b>0,00</b>	<b>-81.773,82</b>	<b>-81.773,82</b>

To safeguard against the risks resulting from currency fluctuations, an earmarked reserve of currently 100,000.00 EUR is being maintained. Within the frame of the year-end closing, the loss amounting to 81,773.82 EUR was first withdrawn from the reserve. To enable the stability of the reserve of 100,000.00 EUR again in the future the difference was balanced from the "General WCRC reserve" so that the reserve for the balancing of currency fluctuations again amounts to 100,000.00 EUR as of 31st December 2017.

#### **5. Further statements**

Various questions and problems were discussed orally during the course of the audit. Further dealing with these points within the frame of this report is superfluous since these questions have already been clarified and future attention is to be expected.

## **V. FINAL REMARK**

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### **Audit result**

#### **Audit of the year-end closing 2017**

Subject of the audit was the annual financial statement submitted by the WCRC for the year 2017. According to the result of this audit, the ORA can confirm that:

- the accounting in the accounting year 2017 occurred in due form and 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 2017 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 2017 can be recommended.

Hanover, 8<sup>th</sup> Mai 2018



AS REPRESENTATIVE

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "Schönemeier", written over a faint horizontal line.

(SCHÖNEMEIER)

DEPUTY HEAD OF THE  
HIGH AUDIT OFFICE OF THE  
EVANGELISCHEN KIRCHE IN DEUTSCHLANDT



## World Communion of Reformed Churches

Knochenhauerstr. 42  
30159 Hannover, Germany  
[wrc.ch](http://wrc.ch)

