



World Communion
of Reformed Churches

Executive Committee Minutes 2019

LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE FORTH:
SEEKING SHALOM IN THE MIDST OF EMPIRE



**World Communion of Reformed Churches
Executive Committee
9-15 May 2019
Kappel am Albis, Zürich, Switzerland**

**Theme: Let your Light Shine Forth:
Seeking Shalom in the Midst of Empire**

You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hidden.
—Matthew 5:14

But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.
—Jeremiah 29:7

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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

Raissa Vieira Brasil, United Presbyterian Church of Brazil

Rev. Sylvana Maria Apituley, Protestant Church in West Indonesia (GPB)

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

Treasurer

Dr. Johann Weusmann, Evangelical Church in the Rheinland

General Secretary

Rev. Dr. Christopher Ferguson, United Church of Canada

Members

Rev. Dr. Uma Agwu Onmunta, ACRC

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

Diana Erdélyi, Reformed Church in Hungary

Rev. Agnaldo P. Gomes, AIPRAL

Hilary Hagar, Presbyterian Church in Canada

Dr. Hefin Jones, Union of Welsh Independents

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

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

Rev. Chin-Siong (Joshua) Lian, NEAAC

Angela Martins, CANAAC

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

Ecumenical Guests

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

Wayne Hawkins, Council for World Mission

Rev. Dr. Martin Junge, Lutheran World Federation

Rev. Dr. Nelson Kraybill, Mennonite World Conference

Dr. Jean-Daniel Pluess, Global Christian Forum

Rev. Dr. Simone Sinn, World Council of Churches

Mennonite Dialogue Launch Guests

Cesar Garcia, Mennonite World Conference
Tom Yoder Neufeld, Mennonite World Conference
Prof. John Roth, Mennonite World Conference

Observers

Rev. Michael Blair, The United Church of Canada
Rev. Refat Fathy, Evangelical Church of Egypt, Synod of the Nile
Rev. Dr. Michael Jagessar, The United Reformed Church (UK)
Rev. Paul Tche, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Consultants

Dr. Karen Bassler, Finance and Investments Consultant
Rev. Dr. Ester Pudjo Widiasih, Worship Consultant

WCRC Staff

Anna Krüger, Assistant to Finance and Communications
Katrina Mertz, Assistant to the General Secretary
Rev. Philip Peacock, Executive Secretary for Justice and Witness
Gerhard Plenter, Finance Coordinator
Abigail Scarlett, Intern
Ryan Smith, Presbyterian Church (USA)
Hon. Phil Tanis, Executive Secretary for Communications and Operations

Minute Taker

Pauline Weibye, Church of Scotland

Interpreter

Carlos Tamayo Arce

Host Representatives

Rev. Bettina Lichtler, Reformed Church of the Canton of Zürich
Rev. Serge Fornerod, Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches

Stewards

Alina Ring
Tobias Adam

Visitors

Enyidiya Kalu-Odo Uma Barr

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, 8 May

All day Arrival of officers and some members
18:00 Dinner and reception in Zug

Thursday, 9 May

All day Arrival of all other Executive Committee members
09:00 Officers' Meeting
12:15 Lunch
13:30 Officers' Meeting
17:00 Opening Worship, Kloster Church
18:30 Dinner
20:00 Plenary: Welcome, Orientation and Assignments

Friday, 10 May

07:45 Officers' Meeting
09:00 Morning Worship
09:30 Plenary: Report of the President
10:45 Coffee Break
11:15 Discernment Groups: Report of the President
12:30 Lunch
14:00 Plenary: Report of the General Secretary
15:30 Coffee Break
16:00 Discernment Groups: Report of the General Secretary
17:15 Plenary: Gender Policy Report
18:00 Dinner for Executive Committee members
18:15 Dinner for Officers and Visiting Ecumenical Officers of the Swiss Cantonal Churches
19:30 Evening Prayers
20:00 Discernment Drafting Team; Message Team

Saturday, 11 May

08:45 Departure by coach to Horgen
09:30 Conference: Church, State and Politics: Cooperation or Protest?
17:00 Plenary: Introduction to WCRC/Mennonite Dialogue
18:30 Dinner
19:30 Discernment Groups: Gender Policy
20:30 Evening Prayers
21:00 Discernment Drafting Team; Message Team

Sunday 12 May

08:45 a.m.	Departure by coach to Horgen
10:00 a.m.	Worship in the Grossmünster, Zürich
11:30 a.m.	Informal lunch with congregation of the Grossmünster
13:15 p.m.	Reformation walking tours of Zürich
16:45 p.m.	Committee meetings
18:00 p.m.	Dinner
19:30 p.m.	Screening of <i>Zwingli</i> , followed by a question and answer session with director Stefan Haupt

Monday 13 May

07:45	Officers' Meeting
09:00	Morning Worship
09:30	Plenary: Ecumenical Greetings, Regional Reports, UN Ministry Report
11:30	Decision Session 1: Finance
12:45	Lunch
14:00	Plenary: Ecumenical Greetings
14:15	Decision Session 2: Report of the General Secretary
15:00	Decision Session 3: Gender Policy
16:00	Regional Meetings
18:00	Dinner
20:00	Evening Worship with remembrance of Robina Winbush and Peter Borgdoff
20:30	Message Team

Tuesday 14 May

07:45	Officers' Meeting
09:00	Morning Worship
09:30	Decision Session 4: Constitution and Membership Committee Listening session: Message Team
11:00	Walk to Zwingli monument, Kappel, and worship
11:30	Discernment Groups: Message
12:30	Lunch
14:00	Listening Session: Ethical Investment Guidelines
16:00	Discernment Groups: Ethical Investment Guidelines
18:00	Dinner
19:30	Evening Worship
20:00	Drafting Team, Message Team

Wednesday 15 May

07:45	Officers' Meeting
09:00	Morning Worship

09:15 Decision Session 5: Ethical Investment Guidelines; Strategic Plan
Programme Group; Message; Officers' Report on staffing matter;
WCRC Michigan Corporation
11:00 Closing Worship with Holy Communion
12:15 Lunch
P.M. Departures

Thursday 16 May

Departures continued

ACTIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 2019

The Executive Committee:

Agenda

1. Approved the agenda for the meeting

Executive Committee Minutes 2018

2. Approved the minutes of the Executive Committee 2018 as a correct record of the meeting.

Rules of Procedure for the Executive Committee (Discernment Procedures)

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

Appointments

4. Appointed Raissa Vieira Brasil, United Presbyterian Church of Brazil; Hong Jung Lee, Presbyterian Church of Korea; Hilary Hagar, Presbyterian Church of Canada; Uma Agwu Onmunta, ACRC; and Claudio Pasquet, Waldensian Evangelical Church, to serve as the Message Committee. Rev. Michael Blair would act as resource person and the committee have the staff support of Philip Peacock and Ryan Smith.
5. Appointed Clayton Da Silva Leal, Independent Presbyterian Church in Brazil; Hefin Jones, Union of Welsh Independents; Tibonge Ng'ambi, United Church in Zambia; Diana Erdélyi, Reformed Church in Hungary; and Hannah North, Presbyterian Church Aotearoa New Zealand, to serve as the Drafting Team. The committee would have the staff support of Phil Tanis.
6. Appointed the following as members and officials of Discernment Groups:
Discernment Group 1
Samuel Ayete-Nyampong (moderator), Hefin Jones (scribe), Agnaldo P. Gomes, Veronica Muchiri, Milciades Pua, Michael Blair, Avelino Gonzalez-Ferrer, Simone Sinn.
Discernment Group 2
Lisa Vander-Wal (moderator), Hannah North (scribe), Hilary Hagar, Uma Agwu Onmunta, Hong Jung Lee, J. Herbert Nelson II (with Ryan Smith as alternate), Refat Fathy, Nelson Kraybill, Meehyun Chung.
Discernment Group 3
Raissa Vieira Brasil (moderator), Tibonge Ng'ambi (scribe), Annabell Lalla-Ramkelawan, Chin-Siong Lian, Claudio Pasquet, Mary Ekinde Salle, Michael Jagessar, Paul Tche.
Discernment Group 4

Actions

Johann Weusmann (moderator), Diana Erdélyi (scribe), Clayton Da Silva Leal, Angela Martins, Coutinho Maravillhoso Moma, Khid-arn Prawate, Karen Georgia Thompson, Jean-Daniel Pluess, Wayne Hawkins.

Membership

7. Appointed Ryan Smith as an alternate member of the Executive Committee in place of J. Herbert Nelson II (PC (USA)) until the arrival of Dr Nelson.

Address of the President

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

Report of the General Secretary

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

Gender Policy

10. Received the draft of a Gender Policy and referred it to Discernment Groups.

Regional Councils

11. Received the report of the Africa Communion of Reformed Churches (ACRC).
12. Received the report of the Northeast Asia Area Council (NEAAC).
13. Received the report of the *Asociación de Iglesias Presbiterianos y Reformadas en América Latina* (AIPRAL).
14. Received the report of the Caribbean and North American Area Council (CANAAC).
15. Received the report of the Council of WCRC Europe.

Report of WCRC Indonesia

16. Noted the report of WCRC Indonesia.

Report of the Presbyterian Ministry at the United Nations

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

Finance Committee Report

18. Agreed that follow-up notices be sent to every member church that fails to respond to their membership dues invoice, that the relevant executive committee members be blind-copied into the correspondence, and that regional councils be asked to report on the follow up efforts.
19. Agreed that at each Executive Committee meeting each regional council discuss follow up efforts and additional strategies on the collection of membership dues.
20. Approved the 2018 financial statement.
21. Accepted the auditor's 2018 report.
22. Agreed that the General Secretary and the General Treasurer be exonerated for the budget, economic management and asset administration of the WCRC for the accounting year 2018.
23. Thanked the WCRC finance office staff for their hard work.
24. Agreed that the Executive Committee commission an independent church auditing institution to carry out the audits of the financial accounts of the WCRC until the next General Council.
25. Agreed that the audit of the 2019 financial statement be carried out by the High Audit Office of the Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland.
26. Agreed that the General Secretary be asked to carry out additional fundraising efforts so that the 2019 budget can be balanced without drawing from reserves.
27. Approved the 2019 budget.
28. Gave approval to the officers to devise a balanced budget for 2020 subject to final approval at the 2020 Executive Committee meeting.

Report of the General Secretary

29. Agreed that the officers would review the points made in the Drafting Team report and in the discussion, and would take account of them in regular reviews of the performance of the General Secretary.
30. Agreed that the officers should review the agenda of this meeting to identify time for groups to review the report of the SPPG.

Gender Policy

31. Agreed by consensus that the draft Gender Policy, the Drafting Team report and the minute of this discussion should be remitted to the WCRC Secretariat and then to the Gender Policy Working Group for revision, with an amended draft policy being brought to the 2020 Executive Committee for approval.

Constitution and Membership Committee

32. Agreed to accept the *Comunion Mexicana de Iglesias Reformadas y Presbiterianas*/the Mexican Communion of Reformed and Presbyterian Churches (CMIRP) into the WCRC as a member after having found that the church meets full constitutional requirements.
33. Agreed to accept *Iglesia Morava en Cuba*/the Moravian Church in Cuba into the WCRC as a member after having found that the church meets full constitutional requirements.
34. The Executive Committee agreed to accept the Baraka Presbyterian Church in Palestine into the WCRC as a member after having found that the church meets full constitutional requirements, while noting the exceptional circumstances of the application of this church and that it is not setting a precedent for the future for other applicants, in light of its particularly small size as a single congregation.
35. Agreed that the WCRC accompany the Evangelical Church Association, India, in light of its difficult context and accept the ECA as a member of the WCRC after having found that the church meets full constitutional requirements.
36. Agreed that the WCRC accept Trinity Theological Seminary, Ghana, as an affiliate member of the WCRC after having found that the seminary meets full constitutional requirements.
37. Agreed that the Constitution and Membership Committee and the African Communion of Reformed Churches be asked to reflect further on the application for associate membership of the *Eglise Baptiste au Congo*/Baptist Church in the Congo (EBC), Democratic Republic of the Congo, and that, if satisfied, to resubmit the application to the 2020 Executive Committee.

Ethical Investment Guidelines

38. Commended the work carried out in preparing the draft Ethical Investment Guidelines, and through a process of discernment concluded that the document provides the basis of ethically responsible investment guidelines on which the WCRC can act. The Executive Committee directed the Finance Committee, prior to finalizing, to heed and give due consideration to the comments arising from the discernment process.

Strategic Plan Programme Group

39. Agreed that the Strategic Plan Programme Group be asked to consider the comments in the relevant section of the Drafting Team's third report and bring to the 2020 Executive Committee meeting a more optimal approach to SPPG review, discussion and planning.

Message from Switzerland

40. Agreed to remove the second sentence of the fifth paragraph of the draft Message, and to add the words “and the disruption of Shalom” to the end of the first sentence of that paragraph.
41. Agreed to add the words “forced migration” after the word “violence” in the single sentence in paragraph four.
42. Agreed to amend the second sentence of the seventh paragraph to read “We recognize how theological understanding and spirituality can be abused to foster hostility and violence.”
43. With these amendments, approved the text of the Message from Kappel am Albis, Zürich, Switzerland.

Staffing

44. Accepted the verbal report of the Officers on a confidential staffing matter and noted the suggestions for action and ongoing review.

Executive Committee of the WCRC Michigan Corporation

45. Approved the minutes of the 2018 meeting of the Executive Committee of the Michigan Corporation of WCRC, held in Seoul, South Korea, 10-16 May 2018.
46. Agreed that all the actions of the Executive Committee during its meeting in Kappel, Switzerland, 9-15 May 2019, be fully concurred with and entered into the permanent record of the WCRC Michigan Corporation as constituting the decisions of 2019.

NARRATIVE RECORD
of the meeting of the Executive Committee
9-15 May 2019
Kappel am Albis, Zürich, Switzerland

WEDNESDAY, 8 MAY

Dinner and Reception

Officers, regional representatives and executive staff gathered in Zug for a reception graciously hosted by the Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches. Federation President Gottfried Locher welcomed the delegates. WCRC President Najla Kassab thanked the Federation for its warm hospitality.

THURSDAY, 9 MAY

Opening Worship

The Executive Committee convened in Kloster Church at 17:00 pm for opening worship.

The Executive Committee was welcomed by Serge Fornerod (Director of External Relations, Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches). He led the Executive Committee in a period of silence in remembrance of Robina Winbush and Peter Borgdoff, both longstanding and much valued members of the WCRC community who had died since the last Executive Committee meeting. General Secretary Chris Ferguson, and Vice-Presidents Samuel Ayete-Nyampong, Raissa Vieira Brasil and Lisa Vander Wal, and General Treasurer Johann Weusmann all participated in worship. Ester Pudjo Widiasih led the praise.

President Najla Kassab preached on the theme, "Let your light shine forth: seeking Shalom in the midst of Empire." She reminded the Communion that to let your light shine is to be in covenant with God. She spoke of the need for that light to be shone in dark places and for Communion members to work towards preserving the wellbeing and dignity of all God's people.

After opening worship, participants moved to dinner at Kloster Kappel.

Plenary Session

The President opened the first session of the Executive Committee in prayer. The General Secretary introduced Committee members to the meeting, noting that some were still in transit.

The General Secretary informed the Executive Committee that apologies had been received from Executive Committee members Susan Thomas (Church of South India), Sylvana Apituley (Gereja Protestant Indonesia Bagian Barat) and Martina Wasserloos-Strunk (WCRC Europe); Hanns Lessing, a member of staff, was absent due to illness. The President declared the meeting to be quorate.

Guests, ecumenical delegates, observers, consultants and staff briefly introduced themselves.

Bettina Lichtler (Coordinator for Ecumenical Relations, Reformed Church of the Canton of Zürich) welcomed the WCRC Executive Committee to Zürich, noting the appropriateness of its visit as the area celebrates the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in Zürich in 2019. Regula Eschle Wyler (Course Director, Kloster Kappel) gave a short history of the monastery buildings in Kappel and extended the hospitality of the house to participants together with the loan of a wooden cross for use during the meeting.

The General Secretary presented the proposed agenda for the Executive Committee meeting, noting that some minor changes would be made in the course of the meeting as circumstances changed.

ACTION 1

The Executive Committee approved the agenda for the meeting.

The General Secretary introduced the minutes of the Executive Committee 2018 and sought approval for them as a correct record.

ACTION 2

The Executive Committee approved the minutes of the Executive Committee 2018 as a correct record of the meeting.

Philip Peacock reminded the Committee that it had approved, in 2018, the document Creating Safer and Respectful Spaces. He drew attention to the need to respect all humanity, made in God's image, and to ensure that sexual harassment had no place in WCRC meetings. He described the procedures to be followed if any such incident were to happen.

The General Secretary presented the Rules of Procedure and reminded members of the mechanics of the discernment and consensus model of decision-making.

ACTION 3

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

ACTION 4

The Executive Committee appointed Raissa Vieira Brasil, United Presbyterian Church of Brazil; Hong Jung Lee, Presbyterian Church of Korea; Hilary Hagar, Presbyterian Church of Canada; Uma Agwu Onmunta, ACRC; and Claudio Pasquet, Waldensian Evangelical Church, to serve as the Message Committee. Michael Blair would act as resource person and the committee would have the staff support of Philip Peacock and Ryan Smith.

ACTION 5

The Executive Committee appointed Clayton Da Silva Leal, Independent Presbyterian Church in Brazil; Hefin Jones, Union of Welsh Independents; Tibonge Ng'ambi, United Church in Zambia; Diana Erdélyi, Reformed Church in Hungary; and Hannah North, Presbyterian Church Aotearoa New Zealand, to serve as the Drafting Team. The committee would have the staff support of Phil Tanis.

ACTION 6

The Executive Committee appointed the following as members and officials of Discernment Groups:

Discernment Group 1

Samuel Ayete-Nyampong (moderator), Hefin Jones (scribe), Agnaldo P. Gomes, Veronica Muchiri, Milciades Pua, Michael Blair, Avelino Gonzalez-Ferrer, Simone Sinn.

Discernment Group 2

Lisa Vander Wal (moderator), Hannah North (scribe), Hilary Hagar, Uma Agwu Onmunta, Hong Jung Lee, J. Herbert Nelson II (with Ryan Smith as alternate), Refat Fathy, Nelson Kraybill, Meehyun Chung.

Discernment Group 3

Raissa Vieira Brasil (moderator), Tibonge Ng'ambi (scribe), Annabell Lalla-Ramkelawan, Chin-Siong Lian, Claudio Pasquet, Mary Ekinde Salle, Michael Jagessar, Paul Tche.

Discernment Group 4

Johann Weusmann (moderator), Diana Erdélyi (scribe), Clayton Da Silva Leal, Angela Martins, Coutinho Maravilhoso Moma, Khid-arn Prawate, Karen Georgia Thompson, Jean-Daniel Pluess, Wayne Hawkins.

The meeting ended in prayer led by Veronica Muchiri.

FRIDAY, 10 MAY

Morning Worship

Members of the Executive Committee led worship. Annabell Lalla-Ramkelawan gave a meditation on Daniel 6:1-15.

Plenary Session

The General Secretary explained that the Rules of Procedure provided that an alternate could take the place of a Committee member who could not attend. The officers were recommending that Ryan Smith, attending the meeting as the WCRC UN Representative, should take the place of J. Herbert Nelson II, (Presbyterian Church (USA)) until Dr. Nelson arrives in Switzerland later in the week. The Executive Committee approved this and Mr. Smith took his place with the Committee.

ACTION 7

The Executive Committee appointed Ryan Smith as an alternate member of the Executive Committee in place of J. Herbert Nelson II (PC (USA)) until the arrival of Dr. Nelson.

Listening Session: Address of the President

Vice-President Samuel Ayete-Nyampong took the chair and invited the President to address the Executive Committee.

The President presented her address.

The Vice-President invited clarifying questions. Questions covered: the role of WCRC in combating human trafficking; strengthening of regional groups; the role of WCRC in considering the growing refugee problem in South America, and other political pressures in that area of the world; capacity challenges for the staff group and the need also to develop the capacity of Executive Committee members; issues of human dignity and justice; the urgent need to address gender balance issues among the WCRC staff; and the need to note the daily worsening of the political situation in Cameroon.

The President thanked members for raising these issues and reassured the Committee that all would be addressed.

The address of the President was referred to Discernment Groups. The Vice-President thanked the President for her informative and passionate report.

ACTION 8

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

Ecumenical Greetings

The Vice-President welcomed Simone Sinn, World Council of Churches, and invited her to address the Executive Committee. Dr. Sinn brought the greetings of the WCC on behalf of its general secretary. She commended the theme of the Committee's meeting, acknowledging that in the midst of a world disfigured by hostility and hate, racism and rage, discrimination and destruction, Christ's love is that subversive power that radiates God's Shalom. She called for the WCRC and the WCC to accompany one another on the journey to reconciliation and unity, and to seek Shalom.

The Vice-President thanked Dr. Sinn for her words of greeting. She was later presented with a gift from WCRC.

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

The Executive Committee broke for lunch.

Plenary Session

The afternoon session opened in praise.

Serge Fornerod described the arrangements for the Committee's participation in a conference in Horgen on Saturday, 11 May, pointing out that it presented an opportunity to engage with people from churches in the area. He briefly explained church membership statistics for Switzerland, emphasizing the need to deal with the challenge of growing numbers of people who had no faith allegiances.

Listening Session: Report of the General Secretary

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 and apologized to the Committee and to his colleagues; he undertook to prepare and circulate subsequent annual reports in good time. He presented the report.

The President invited clarifying questions. Questions were asked about: the relationship between Executive Committee membership and Regional Councils; the current views of the National Presbyterian Church of Mexico to WCRC membership.

ACTION 9

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

The Executive Committee broke for coffee and for Discernment Group meetings.

Plenary Session

Listening Session: Gender Policy

The session opened in praise.

Vice-President Samuel Ayete-Nyampong took the chair. He introduced Hannah North and invited her to present the draft Gender Policy.

Ms. North introduced the committee which had prepared the draft policy, following a direction from the 2017 General Council, and thanked her colleagues. She described the committee's wish to produce a policy which was accessible to congregations within member churches and which addressed not only the issue of the ordination of women but also core problems of gender injustice, including injustice towards men. She paid tribute to the work done by WCRC and WARC on this issue over many years and drew attention to the call to action within the policy to WCRC and to member churches.

The Vice-President invited questions for clarification. Questions were asked about: the apparent absence of a specific commitment to gender equality in the membership of the Executive Committee; the need to include reference to Article 3 of the WCRC Constitution approved at the Uniting General Council in 2010; and the need to include more equitable mention of violence against men. The committee agreed to look further at these issues.

ACTION 10

The Executive Committee received the draft of a Gender Policy and referred it to Discernment Groups.

Ecumenical Greetings

The Vice-President welcomed Wayne Hawkins, Council for World Mission (CWM), and invited him to address the Executive Committee. Mr. Hawkins brought the greetings of CWM. He pointed out that rising political tensions in Europe arose, at

least in part, from the growing gap between rich and poor and commented that the partnership in mission of CWM and WCRC, valued by both organizations, could help to address this inequality. He said that CWM was about to embark on the preparation of a new strategic plan and was also facing some other challenges; he sought the prayers of Executive Committee members over a period of change.

The Vice-President thanked Mr. Hawkins for his words of greeting. He was presented with a gift from WCRC.

The Executive Committee adjourned for dinner. Officers were joined for dinner by visiting ecumenical officers of several Swiss Cantonal Churches.

Evening Session

Evening prayers in the Kloster Church were led by members of the Committee.

After worship, the Drafting Team and the Message Team met.

Committee members enjoyed a time of fellowship and relaxation.

SATURDAY, 11 MAY

The Executive Committee travelled to Horgen for a conference on the theme of "Church, State and Politics: Cooperation or Protest?"

Members were welcomed by Catherine McMillan, Ambassador for the Reformation in Zürich, who led the opening worship. A formal welcome was extended by Daniel Reuter, Vice-President of the Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches and Vice-President of the Church Council of Zürich. WCRC President Najla Kassab responded by introducing the WCRC, explaining that it is called to communion and committed to justice. She thanked the hosts for their generous hospitality.

Meehyun Chung, Professor of Theology at the Yonsei University of Seoul, South Korea, delivered the keynote address on "Church and State: today's challenges in the light of the Zürich Reformation." Responses were made by Hanspeter Jecker, Conference of the Mennonites in Switzerland, and by Odair Pedroso Mateus, World Council of Churches.

A panel of speakers discussed criteria for the political action of churches, drawing from Jeremiah's injunction, in Jeremiah 29:7, to "Seek the welfare of the city." The speakers were Christoph Weber-Berg, President of the Reformed Church in Aarau, Switzerland; Chris Ferguson, General Secretary of the WCRC; and Uma Agwu Onmunta, President of the African Communion of Reformed Churches. The

conference then broke into small groups to consider case studies from South Korea, Syria, Hungary, Colombia, Brazil and Cameroon.

The conference ended in worship and prayer and members travelled back to Kloster Kappel.

Plenary Session

Listening Session: Introduction to WCRC/Mennonite Dialogue

President Najla Kassab took the chair for a plenary session introducing the planned Reformed-Mennonite Dialogue. The President opened the session in praise and prayer. New arrivals to the meeting introduced themselves and were welcomed.

The General Secretary described the journey towards the launch of the dialogue, highlighting three key factors: his informal relationship with César Garcia, General Secretary of the Mennonite World Conference (MWC), when both were based in Colombia; their realization of a tragic and broken past which required healing; and the need for “right remembering.” César Garcia, MWC general secretary, introduced his colleagues from the MWC: Nelson Kraybill, MWC president; Tom Yoder Neufeld, member of the MWC Faith and Life Commission; and John Roth, secretary of the MWC Faith and Life Commission. Mr. Garcia described the history of Mennonite community, with its roots as Anabaptists in the Protestant Reformation although some differences in values had emerged early in the sixteenth century, and persecution and violence had followed. Anabaptists had chosen to respond to this persecution with pacifism and non-violence, qualities which remained a key marker of the modern Mennonite community. It is now a global and diverse community, with 2 million members in 58 countries, with 66.5% of its membership being people of colour.

Tom Yoder Neufeld explained that the working title for the dialogue was “seeking a common witness, restoring our family to wholeness.” He pointed out that the Reformed churches and the Mennonite community shared a common parentage in God the Father as well as aspects of our history and identity. He likened the dialogue to the reconvening of a Bible study started 500 years ago but cautioned against using the Bible as a weapon. He urged the common pursuit of peace as a Biblical imperative.

John Roth gave a powerful personal testimony, confessing that Mennonites had traditionally held themselves aloof from ecumenical movements, in essence believing that “being right” was more important than the unity of the church. He now recognized the urgent imperative to restore the broken body of Christ and to work towards reconciliation and a joint global witness.

General Secretary Chris Ferguson added that he hoped that the dialogue would be helped by the experience of the Lutheran World Federation; the Lutheran-Mennonite International Study Commission of 2002-2010 had already resulted in reconciliation.

Philip Peacock described the three objectives for the first stage of the dialogue: right remembering; intentional collaboration; and mutual reconciliation. The theme would be: Christian witness to unity.

Questions were asked and answered. The General Secretary presented the guests with gifts from the WCRC.

The session ended in prayer led by Martin Junge (General Secretary, Lutheran World Federation).

The Executive Committee adjourned for dinner.

Evening Session

After dinner, Discernment Groups met, followed by meetings of the Drafting Team and the Message Team.

Evening Prayers

Evening prayers were led by members of the Executive Committee.

A time of fellowship followed.

SUNDAY, 12 MAY

The Executive Committee visited Zürich for morning worship in the Grossmünster, as guests of the Evangelical Reformed Church of Canton Zürich and of the congregation of the Grossmünster. Worship was led by Pastor Martin Rüschi, Pastor Catherine McMillan and Pastor Bettina Lichtler. President Najla Kassab preached on Psalm 96, taking as her text "Sing a new song to the Lord." She reminded the congregation that the ordination of women in Zürich, the 100th anniversary of which falls in 2019, could be seen as part of the "new song" that Zwingli introduced but was also at the heart of the Gospel and a continuation of the old song. She called for Reformed people to include the marginalized, as Zwingli did, and to be rooted in worship in order to discern the voice of God and his wishes for today's world. She spoke compellingly of the need to preserve shalom and to give women their dignity. She welcomed the celebration of our great heritage of faith but called also for the singing of a new song, for justice and peace.

Greetings, thanks and a gift from the WCRC were brought to the Grossmünster.

The Executive Committee enjoyed a time of fellowship over lunch with the congregation. The afternoon was devoted to walking tours of Zürich, with a description of the life of Zwingli and the history of the Reformation in Switzerland.

Afternoon Session

On its return to Kloster Kappel, the Executive Committee broke into meetings of the Constitution and Membership Committee, the Finance Committee and the Reformed Partnership Committee.

The Executive Committee adjourned for dinner.

Evening Session

The Executive Committee enjoyed a screening of *The Reformer. Zwingli: A Life's Portrait*, presented by its director Stefan Haupt. A question and answer session followed.

MONDAY, 13 MAY

Morning Worship

Members of the Executive Committee led worship. Mary Ekinde Salle gave a meditation on Jeremiah 30:1-9.

Plenary Session

Listening Session: Ecumenical Greetings, Reports of the Regions and Report from the United Nations Ministry

Vice-President Lisa Vander Wal took the chair. It was noted that J. Herbert Nelson II was unable to travel to the Executive Committee owing to illness; the Executive's sympathies were extended. Ryan Smith was confirmed as an alternate member in his place for the duration of the Executive Committee. The Vice-President reported some minor changes to the agenda, including the cancellation of the Discernment Group meetings planned for the latter part of the morning.

Ecumenical Greetings

The Vice-President welcomed Dr. Jean-Daniel Pluess, Global Christian Forum (GCF), and invited him to address the Executive Committee.

Dr. Pluess thanked the WCRC warmly for its invitation to attend the Executive Committee meeting. He described the unique nature of the Global Christian Forum with its representation from all Christian families worldwide, all proclaiming Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. He described the GCF's plan to focus over the next few years on the involvement of churches in regional meetings; on the involvement of young people; and on the sharing of resources. He thanked the WCRC for its membership of GCF and for its support.

The Vice-President welcomed Rev. Dr. Nelson Kraybill, president, Mennonite World Conference, and invited him to address the Executive Committee.

Dr. Kraybill thanked the WCRC for its warm welcome to the Executive Committee meeting. He relished the opportunity to return to Switzerland, the homeland of the Mennonite faith, and to be with Reformed brothers and sisters in this place of tumultuous shared history. He expressed his personal pleasure in the plan to start a formal dialogue between the Mennonite Community and the WCRC.

The Vice-President welcomed Rev. Dr. Martin Junge, General Secretary, Lutheran World Federation, and invited him to address the Executive Committee.

Dr. Junge expressed his joy at the worship in the Grossmünster and the reminders in Zürich of the life and witness of Zwingli. He noted that Zwingli said: "in God's name, do something brave." He wondered what that would mean for Christians today. Dr. Junge went on to welcome the fruitful joint working that had followed the Wittenberg Witness and he described some of the initiatives. He also mentioned the need to take this work to the level of regions and local churches and to listen to their concerns and suggestions, in a two-way process. He looked forward to a joint LWF-WCRC staff meeting where these matters would be discussed.

Gifts were presented to ecumenical guests.

Regional Reports

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

Africa Communion of Reformed Churches

Uma Agwu Onmunta presented the report of the Africa Communion of Reformed Churches (ACRC).

The Vice-President called for questions.

ACTION 11

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

Northeast Asia Area Council

Chin-Siong Lian presented the report of the Northeast Asia Area Council (NEAAC).

The Vice-President called for questions.

ACTION 12

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

Asociación de Iglesias Presbiterianos y Reformadas en América Latin

Aginaldo Gomes presented the report of the Asociación de Iglesias Presbiterianos y Reformadas en América Latin (AIPRAL).

The Vice-President called for questions.

ACTION 13

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

Caribbean and North American Area Council

Angela Martins presented the report of the Caribbean and North American Area Council (CANAAC).

The Vice-President called for questions.

ACTION 14

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

Council of WCRC Europe

Hefin Jones presented the report of the Council of WCRC Europe in the absence of Martina Wasserloos-Strunk.

The Vice-President called for questions.

ACTION 15

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

Reports

The Committee noted receipt of a written report from WCRC Indonesia, reminding members that the group was not a formally-constituted regional council. The General Secretary summarized the main points in the report.

ACTION 16

The Executive Committee noted the report of WCRC Indonesia.

Ryan Smith, Director and WCRC UN Representative, presented a report from the Presbyterian Ministry at the United Nations. He described the staffing in the Ministry and some of the projects in which it was engaged. He reminded members that the Presbyterian Ministry could assist member churches in accessing the United Nations. The Committee noted with gratitude the generous support of the Presbyterian Church (USA) for this ministry.

ACTION 17

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

The Executive Committee adjourned for coffee.

Plenary Session

The Executive Committee reconvened in praise.

Decision Session: Finance

Vice-President Vander Wal assumed the chair.

Johann Weusmann, 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 membership contributions with more than 50% of those contributions coming from the Europe region. While the contributions in 2018 were all greater than in 2017, the level fluctuated from year to year, making financial planning difficult. The Committee discussed how Executive Committee members could assist with the collection of membership subscriptions, though some concern was expressed over the sensitivity of such action.

The General Treasurer reminded the Committee that all programme costs had to be met through specific targeted fundraising, the majority coming from OPM and EMW. He also reminded members that, of membership contributions, 7.5% is placed in a reserve fund to help pay for the costs of General Council meetings. He noted with satisfaction that WCRC held €4.2 million in assets, a much stronger financial position than at the time of the move from Geneva to Hannover.

The General Treasurer explained that Bread for the World, formerly a major funder of programme work, had been unable to provide funding more recently, because of evaluation requirements. Discussions had been successfully concluded and he hoped that funding would resume.

The General Treasurer announced with satisfaction that a very rigorous audit by the High Audit Office of the Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland (EKD) had resulted in a favourable and unqualified report. He went on to explain that the Finance Committee was recommending that the Executive Committee make a formal decision to restrict audit work to an independent church auditing institution until the date of the next General Council; this would avoid the need to pay value-added tax. The General Council would be asked to change the Constitution to make this a permanent requirement.

The Budget for 2019 was presented. The General Treasurer noted that it could only be balanced by drawing on reserve funds for core costs, a practice which neither he nor the Executive Committee favoured. It was hoped that fundraising in the course of the year would obviate the need for this.

The Vice-President invited questions. Several members expressed concern that the financial reports and budgets were not accompanied by clear work plans, showing the links between the Strategic Plan, resources, programmes and outcomes. The General Secretary explained that it was for the Executive Committee to oversee the core budget but that strategic and programme work was overseen by the Strategic Plan Programme Group (SPPG); outcomes would be reported to the Executive Committee in the report of the SPPG. The Committee remained uneasy and it was agreed that the General Treasurer and General Secretary would meet in consultation with the SPPG to discuss improvements in reporting on programme work to the Executive Committee.

The Executive Committee moved to vote on the recommendations contained in the Report of the Finance Committee.

ACTION 18

The Executive Committee agreed that follow-up notices be sent to every member church that fails to respond to their membership dues invoice, that the

relevant executive committee members be blind-copied into the correspondence, and that regional councils be asked to report on the follow up efforts.

ACTION 19

The Executive Committee agreed that at each Executive Committee meeting each regional council discuss follow up efforts and additional strategies on the collection of membership dues.

ACTION 20

The Executive Committee approved the 2018 financial statement.

ACTION 21

The Executive Committee accepted the auditor's 2018 report.

ACTION 22

The Executive Committee agreed that the General Secretary and the General Treasurer be exonerated for the budget, economic management and asset administration of the WCRC for the accounting year 2018.

ACTION 23

The Executive Committee thanked the WCRC finance office staff for their hard work.

ACTION 24

The Executive Committee agreed that it commission an independent church auditing institution to carry out the audits of the financial accounts of the WCRC until the next General Council.

ACTION 25

The Executive Committee agreed that the audit of the 2019 financial statement be carried out by the High Audit Office of the Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland.

ACTION 26

The Executive Committee agreed that the General Secretary be asked to carry out additional fundraising efforts so that the 2019 budget can be balanced without drawing from reserves.

ACTION 27

The Executive Committee approved the 2019 budget.

ACTION 28

The Executive Committee gave approval to the officers to devise a balanced budget for 2020 subject to final approval at the 2020 Executive Committee meeting.

The Session ended in prayer.

The Executive Committee adjourned for lunch.

Plenary Session: Ecumenical Greetings

The afternoon session opened in worship.

General Treasurer Johann Weusmann assumed the chair and welcomed Fr. Avelino Gonzalez-Ferrer, Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity, inviting him to address the meeting.

Fr. Avelino brought formal greetings from the Cardinal Prefect, noting that Zwingli's passion for the Word of God was worth remembering and emulating. He added his own thanks for the warm welcome he received from Committee members. He expressed concern that one scene from the film *Zwingli*, screened the evening before, could deeply trouble Roman Catholics and he urged caution if the film were to be screened again in an ecumenical gathering. He noted too that the scene in question could be seen as compromising the churches' commitment to gender justice.

The General Treasurer welcomed Rev. Paul Tche, president of the Council on Christian Unity, Disciples of Christ, and invited him to address the meeting.

Mr. Tche brought formal greetings but added that he found Executive Committee meetings both enjoyable and useful in building "family" relationships. He emphasized the need to walk together, making manifest to the world the unity which is God's gift.

Gifts were presented to ecumenical guests.

The General Secretary reported receipt of a written message of greeting from the EKD. The Committee welcomed the message.

Decision Session: Report of the General Secretary

The first report of the Drafting Team was presented by Tibonge Ng'ambi. It was noted that Discernment Groups had sought more time for consideration of the General Secretary's report but this had not been possible within the timetable for the meeting. It was also noted that all four groups had reported difficulties in engaging with the report, given that it was lengthy, complex and very late in being distributed. The Drafting Team had been asked to stress that future reports must be delivered in good time.

The Drafting Team had gone on to suggest that the report could be improved by the addition of an “impact” report; by a change to the timeframe of reporting; and by the inclusion of clear links to the Strategic Plan. It was also suggested that executive staff should share in the reporting.

Specific suggestions were included in the Drafting Team report under the headings of: communication, travel, staff, regions, priorities, scheduling and programmes.

The General Treasurer thanked Tibonge Ng’ambi and invited questions and comments.

A member noted that a diagram in the SPPG report was a useful summary of actions arising from the Strategic Plan but felt that a deeper, more detailed report was required by the Executive Committee in the light of its responsibilities.

Concern was expressed at the lack of progress in achieving gender balance among the executive staff. It was explained that the terms and conditions of existing staff provided that their contracts could not be terminated for this reason; it was intended that instead gender balance should be achieved through the creation of new programme posts.

A member expressed the view that the report of the General Secretary was too complex and too long; she suggested also that it should include a work plan for the following year as well as a summary of the previous year’s work.

The General Treasurer noted that similar comments had been made in previous years and asked for suggestions on how to address the issues. Various ideas were suggested.

ACTION 29

The Executive Committee agreed that the officers would review the points made in the Drafting Team report and in the discussion, and would take account of them in regular reviews of the performance of the General Secretary.

ACTION 30

The Executive Committee agreed that the officers should review the agenda of this meeting to identify time for groups to review the report of the SPPG.

The General Treasurer expressed his thanks to Tibonge Ng’ambi and to the Drafting Team for their work.

Decision Session: Gender Policy

The Executive Committee moved to consideration of the second report from the Drafting Team, on the draft Gender Policy. The General Treasurer invited Diana Erdélyi to introduce the report.

Diana noted the confusion surrounding the distribution of the draft Gender Policy and asked members to check that they were working from the version on the WCRC website. She summarized the discussions of the Drafting Team as set out in their report, highlighting, in particular, a difficulty with the wording of footnote 8, which the Drafting Team felt might pose problems for some member churches. She presented the Team's concluding recommendation that more time was needed for consideration and discussion and, importantly, that collaboration with regional councils was vital given the specific requirement for this in the original decision of the General Council.

The General Treasurer invited questions and comments.

A member made a proposal that instead of approving an extension the Committee should instead make the required amendments to the draft policy, including the removal of footnote 8, consider and approve the policy by the end of the current meeting, and inform the regional councils that the General Council's instruction had been fulfilled.

A member made a further proposal that footnote 8 be amended but not removed in its entirety. A member suggested that the Drafting Team should note the comments being made in this session and include them in the document, noting the importance of language and tone in the light of the sensitivities across member churches.

An extensive discussion ensued, with some members of the view that the draft Gender Policy should be amended by the Drafting Team that evening and be returned to the Executive Committee for final approval before the end of the meeting. Others felt that the draft policy and the Drafting Team report should be remitted to regional groups, which were due to meet that evening in any case, so that regional views could be accommodated. Some members felt that the General Council decision compelled the Executive Committee to seek the views of regional councils on the draft Gender Policy; others pointed out that the wording of Action 31 of the General Council seemed to require collaboration with regional councils on implementation of the policy but not on its development.

There was a degree of informal consensus that regional councils needed to have some input to the Gender Policy rather than have it imposed on them without consultation. It was also noted that the draft policy seeks to ensure compliance by congregations of member churches but that Article 7 of the WCRC Constitution

provides that “decisions of the General Council involving the life and witness of the member churches are advisory in character.”

The Executive Committee was of a mind to agree that the draft Gender Policy should be amended to take account of the Drafting Team’s concerns and the points raised in the discussion but then moved to consider which group should amend it: the original working group; the Drafting Team; or a new group drawn from the membership of the Executive Committee.

A member proposed that, in light of the need to address complex matters of theology, language, tone, and implementation, the document should be remitted to the original working group together with a note of the Drafting Team’s comments and the report of this discussion, with an instruction that it be brought to the 2020 Executive Committee for final approval.

ACTION 31

The Executive Committee agreed by consensus that the draft Gender Policy, the Drafting Team report and the minute of this discussion should be remitted to the WCRC Secretariat and then to the Gender Policy Working Group for revision, with an amended draft policy being brought to the 2020 Executive Committee for approval.

The Executive Committee adjourned for coffee.

The Executive Committee moved to Regional Meetings.

The Executive Committee adjourned for dinner. Officers were joined for dinner by Gottfried Locher, President of the Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches.

Evening Prayers

The Committee was joined in worship by Gottfried Locher, President of the SEK. Members of the Committee led worship. Tributes were paid to Peter Borgdoff, Robina Winbush and C. M. Kao, all valued members of the worldwide Reformed community. Their lives of service to God were remembered with thanksgiving.

Evening Session

The Message Team met.

A time of fellowship followed.

Tuesday, 14 May

Morning Worship

Members of the Executive Committee led worship. Hannah North gave a meditation on Luke 6:12-26.

Plenary

Adjustments to the day's timetable were noted.

Decision Session: Constitution and Membership Committee

President Najla Kassab assumed the chair. The Executive Committee met in plenary to make decisions arising from the recommendations of the Constitution and Membership Committee. Veronica Muchiri made a presentation, explaining each of the recommendations. The General Secretary added that WCRC staff had completed all necessary checks on each application for membership, that regional councils had been consulted and that the required documentation was held in the WCRC office.

ACTION 32

The Executive Committee agreed to accept the *Comunion Mexicana de Iglesias Reformadas y Presbiterianas*/the Mexican Communion of Reformed and Presbyterian Churches (CMIRP) into the WCRC as a member after having found that the church meets full constitutional requirements.

ACTION 33

The Executive Committee agreed to accept *Iglesia Morava en Cuba*/the Moravian Church in Cuba into the WCRC as a member after having found that the church meets full constitutional requirements.

ACTION 34

The Executive Committee agreed to accept the Baraka Presbyterian Church in Palestine into the WCRC as a member after having found that the church meets full constitutional requirements, while noting the exceptional circumstances of the application of this church and that it is not setting a precedent for the future for other applicants, in light of its particularly small size as a single congregation.

The Executive Committee discussed the application for membership of the Evangelical Church Association (ECA), India. It was noted that the ECA does not currently practise the ordination of women; it was explained that this was not for theological reasons but largely to protect the safety of women in a particularly dangerous zone of India. Members expressed some unease and suggested that instead WCRC should continue to accompany this church and consider membership

at a later date. The General Secretary explained that a long period of accompaniment had already been undertaken.

A vote was taken and there was one abstention.

ACTION 35

The Executive Committee agreed that the WCRC accompany the Evangelical Church Association, India, in light of its difficult context and accept the ECA as a member of the WCRC after having found that the church meets full constitutional requirements.

It was agreed that WCRC should ask ECA for a timetable for the ordination of women.

ACTION 36

The Executive Committee agreed that the WCRC accept Trinity Theological Seminary, Ghana, as an affiliate member of the WCRC after having found that the seminary meets full constitutional requirements.

The Executive Committee discussed the application for associate membership of *Eglise Baptiste au Congo*/Baptist Church in the Congo (EBC), Democratic Republic of the Congo. The General Secretary explained that the application was for associate membership since the church does not have a Reformed structure or polity. He added that although the church appeared to have a Baptist identity, the complicated history of mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo meant that its theology was Reformed. It was suggested that time be taken for further reflection and that the application be resubmitted to the 2020 Executive Committee.

ACTION 37

The Executive Committee agreed that the Constitution and Membership Committee and the African Communion of Reformed Churches be asked to reflect further on the application for associate membership of the *Eglise Baptiste au Congo*/Baptist Church in the Congo (EBC), Democratic Republic of the Congo, and that, if satisfied, to resubmit the application to the 2020 Executive Committee.

Listening Session: Message from Switzerland

Claudio Pasquet presented the first draft of a Message from Switzerland. He pointed out that the Message Team had had representation from all regions and that the Team had tried to include in the draft Message both the experiences of the Executive Committee meeting in Kappel and elements of the global vision of the WCRC.

The draft Message was referred to Discernment Groups.

Visit to Zwingli Monument, Kappel

The Executive Committee walked to the Zwingli Monument in Kappel, erected at the site of Zwingli's death in battle in 1531. The Committee remembered the legacy of Zwingli in a short act of worship and prayer.

The Executive Committee moved into Discernment Groups.

The Executive Committee adjourned for lunch.

Plenary

The Executive Committee reconvened in praise and prayer. Vice-President Raissa Vieira Brasil took the chair.

Listening Session: Ethical Investment Guidelines

The Executive Committee met in plenary to consider amending the document WCRC Investments and Policies, to take account of advice on ethical investments offered by Karin Bassler, Secretary of the *Arbeitskreis Kirchlicher Investoren* (AKI), part of the EKD. Vice-President Vieira Brasil welcomed Karin Bassler to the meeting and invited her to address the Committee. Dr. Bassler made a presentation, describing the EKD's approach to the matter. She stressed that the management of church funds is a responsibility before God and the people, adding that the EKD ensures that its investment policy does not contradict God's commandments and the church's mission. She pointed out that investments are traditionally considered in the light of security, profitability and liquidity; the EKD has now placed ethical sustainability at the heart of these interlocking objectives. The EKD uses the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals as its reference framework. Dr. Bassler went on to give practical examples of the investment decisions that are now made.

Questions were invited and some points were clarified for members. Hong Jung Lee asked if the investment guidelines reflected the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) campaign designed to put pressure on the state of Israel to address human rights issues in Palestine. Dr. Bassler said that this was not included specifically but that the general guidance on not investing in countries with a poor human rights record would apply.

General Treasurer Johann Weusmann pointed out that the Finance Committee had debated the whole issue intensively and had identified areas where opinions were divided on the merits of certain practices, for example on the issue of genetically modified crops. He asked for Discernment Groups to consider such issues. He went on to explain that Discernment Groups were asked to focus on pages 5-7 of the document, where Dr. Bassler's suggested changes and additions were highlighted.

He explained also that section III was standard and needed no change although Discernment Groups could consider it if they wished. The General Secretary advised that Groups should consider each suggested exclusion, deciding if they agreed, and should also attempt to identify any omissions. It was confirmed that the amended document would be brought to a later session of this Executive Committee meeting for approval.

The Vice-President thanked Karin Bassler for her presentation and for her work on the investment policy, and presented her with a gift from the WCRC.

Programme Plan

Philip Peacock drew members' attention to the three pages of diagrams at the end of the Report of the General Secretary, explaining that these constituted the programme action plan requested earlier in the week by the Committee. He explained the structure of the plan and especially noted the Programme Calendar.

The Executive Committee adjourned for coffee.

The Executive Committee broke into Discernment Groups to consider the suggested amendments to the document entitled WCRC Investments and Policies.

The Executive Committee adjourned for dinner.

Evening Prayers

Evening prayers were led by members of the Committee. Special prayers were offered for the safety of Pastor Samuel and refugees being sheltered in his church on the Mexican/US border.

Evening Session

The Drafting Team met to consider the Ethical Investment Guidelines. The Message Team also met.

A time of fellowship followed.

Wednesday, 15 May

Morning worship

Members of the Executive Committee led worship.

Plenary

The President assumed the chair. Adjustments to the day's timetable were noted. Members were urged to complete the online evaluation forms so that comments and suggestions could be taken into account in the planning of future meetings.

Decision Session: Ethical Investment Guidelines; Strategic Plan Programme Group

The Executive Committee moved to consideration of the third report from the Drafting Team, firstly on the Ethical Investment Guidelines. The President invited Hefin Jones to introduce the report.

Dr. Jones explained that the Drafting Team had received a number of comments and, noting the impossibility of accommodating all views, had proceeded by group consensus. There had been no comments on sections 1 and 3 of the draft guidelines; the comments on section 2 and the Drafting Team's responses were set out in the report, as was the final recommendation that the Finance Committee be asked to take account of the Drafting Team's report in finalizing the Ethical Investment Guidelines. The Committee approved the recommendation by consensus.

ACTION 38

The Executive Committee commended the work carried out in preparing the draft Ethical Investment Guidelines, and through a process of discernment concluded that the document provides the basis of ethically responsible investment guidelines on which the WCRC can act. The Executive Committee directed the Finance Committee, prior to finalizing, to heed and give due consideration to the comments arising from the discernment process.

Dr. Jones went on to present the Drafting Team's comments on the Strategic Plan Programme Group's Executive Summary, contained in the Team's third report. He explained that only two groups had considered the SPPG paper; concerns had been expressed about the scope of the Strategic Plan; the limited resources available to implement the action targets; and the apparent absence of a regional focus. The General Secretary suggested that the Officers could note the concerns and remit them to the appropriate committees for action. This was agreed.

ACTION 39

The Executive Committee agreed that the Strategic Plan Programme Group be asked to consider the comments in the relevant section of the Drafting Team's third report and bring to the 2020 Executive Committee meeting a more optimal approach to SPPG review, discussion and planning.

Decision session: Message from Kappel am Albis, Zürich, Switzerland

Hilary Hagar presented the second draft of the Message from Switzerland. She described the general intentions of the Message Committee: firstly, that the Message should cover the main points of the Executive Committee meeting; secondly, that it was not the best means of thanking the Swiss Churches for their hospitality; and, thirdly, that it was not designed to be a simple record of places and people. The President invited comments and questions.

There was some discussion on the second sentence of the fifth paragraph, with some members feeling that it was too abstract and others feeling that the sentiments had to be included somehow. It was suggested that the deletion of the sentence together with the addition of the words “and the disruption of Shalom” to the first sentence would read better. The Committee agreed.

ACTION 40

The Executive Committee agreed to remove the second sentence of the fifth paragraph of the draft Message, and to add the words “and the disruption of Shalom” to the end of the first sentence of that paragraph.

A member suggested adding “forced migration” to the list of stories mentioned in the fourth paragraph. This was agreed.

ACTION 41

The Executive Committee agreed to add the words “forced migration” after the word “violence” in the single sentence in paragraph four.

A member suggested amending the text of the second sentence of the seventh paragraph to make it clearer that it was the abuse of theology that could lead to hostility and violence rather than theology itself. This was agreed.

ACTION 42

The Executive Committee agreed to amend the second sentence of the seventh paragraph to read “We recognize how theological understanding and spirituality can be abused to foster hostility and violence.”

ACTION 43

With these amendments, the Executive Committee approved the text of the Message from Kappel am Albis, Zürich, Switzerland.

The Message Committee was thanked for its work.

Decision Session: Staffing

The Executive Committee moved into a closed session to discuss a staffing matter. The General Secretary was in attendance for part of the session; the minute taker was in attendance throughout. Members were reminded that strict confidentiality must be observed on staffing matters.

The Officers presented a verbal report. After discussion, the report and the suggestions for action and ongoing review were accepted by consensus.

ACTION 44

The Executive Committee accepted the verbal report of the Officers on a confidential staffing matter and noted the suggestions for action and ongoing review.

Executive Committee of the WCRC Michigan Corporation

The Executive Committee reconstituted as the Executive Committee of the WCRC Michigan Corporation. It was led in prayer by the General Secretary. The President took the chair. Phil Tanis explained the legal background to the WCRC Michigan Corporation.

ACTION 45

The Executive Committee approved the minutes of the 2018 meeting of the Executive Committee of the Michigan Corporation of WCRC, held in Seoul, South Korea, 10-16 May 2018.

ACTION 46

The Executive Committee agreed that all the actions of the Executive Committee during its meeting in Kappel, Switzerland, 9-15 May 2019, be fully concurred with and entered into the permanent record of the WCRC Michigan Corporation as constituting the decisions of 2019.

The meeting of the Executive Committee was closed with prayer by the President.

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.

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 distill the variety of material produced into a report with specific recommendations. The processes used in the Drafting Team to create the report will also be by consensus and use norms as determined by the group.

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.¹

- 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.

¹ 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

Najla Kassab

We are happy to hold the Executive Committee of the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) here at the Kappel monastery, in a place that played an important role in the Zürich Reformation where just close by the Reformer Huldrych Zwingli was killed in the battle of Kappel. We are happy to come back to Switzerland as a previous home for the World Alliance of Reformed Churches then and WCRC now and believe that Switzerland will always be part of our journey with who we are and hope to be. We gather here in a special time as we celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, and appreciate greatly the invitation of the Evangelical Reformed Church of Zürich and the Federation of Swiss Evangelical Churches (SEK).

We gather under the theme “Let your Light Shine Forth: Seeking Shalom in the Midst of Empire,” guided by two biblical texts. First, where Jesus’ called the disciples to be the light of the world (Matthew 5:14), and the prophet Jeremiah encouraged the people in exile in Babylon to seek the shalom of the city to which they had been deported (29:7).

To let our light shine and become shalom-makers is such a challenging task. To be a shalom-maker could lead to struggle and problems. Many times people perceive peace (shalom) as merely the absence of war or troubles. Some understand peace as keeping the status quo; no problems and all is smooth. On the contrary, peace is linked to the well-being of the people, flowing out of God's will for all to have "fullness of life." Living peace is the hope of achieving a dignified life for all aside from religion, citizenship, gender or race.

To work towards shalom is to have our eyes focused on human dignity. That is why when we work for justice and peace we could get upset and angry and strive to do something to overcome all pain and restore the dignity of the people. We become concerned with living out God's will for God's people and to defend them with all that this commitment requires. Jesus was ready to get fully involved and pay the price.

Many times we misunderstand peace to mean only my comfort, or what is good only for my nation. Peace should be what is good for all, and to keep the shalom of the city is to get involved in the struggle that gives dignity and well-being to all in the city. To put the dignity of the people at the centre and struggle towards that is the call that the Reformer Zwingli puts in front of us. Zwingli challenges us in being involved even in reforming the political system. There is no way to have our light shine away from keeping the shalom of the people in the city, in the nation and the world as the light house for our journey, which could mean daily struggle, speaking up, disturbing the status quo and even paying a price.

We gather at a critical time where the world is surrounded with lots of injustice, starting from the recent terrorist attacks on worshipers in Sri Lanka, or Muslim worshippers in New Zealand, or the daily killing in Nigeria, besides the difficult social, economic and political situation in Venezuela. We recognize the political conflicts in Cameroon between the anglophone and francophone areas that resulted in a humanitarian crisis.

We are also troubled with the situation of the countries that are still struggling for peace, whether it is in South Sudan, or Israel–Palestine, Yemen or Syria, where death remain a daily reality and people are suffering with war situations. We are faced with the refugee crisis where people were forced to leave their countries and became stuck between challenges that hosting countries are facing, or the difficult possibility of returning home, due to an insecure future or family issues where the younger generation became established in the new country.

We think of the countries that are still discerning the road to peace, whether between North and South Korea or Colombia. We are challenged on how we can help the people who have suffered due to natural disasters, whether it is earthquakes in Indonesia or the Philippines or the cyclone in Mozambique and southern Africa, leaving many people homeless and dead.

Still we stand with great concern about the changes that Europe is facing whether with the growth of the radical right or the authoritarian and populist ideologies, besides dealing with the refugee situation in Europe. Not to forget the Brexit issue that Great Britain is facing and the concern of many about the future. Still the climate change issue remains a serious concern that has its impact on the earth and daily life raising issues of ecological justice.

One cannot but see the economic roots that are behind injustice in the world and has left people in poverty. If we may say the economic greediness has led many countries to grow to empires while other nations suffer, and urging the people to seek other countries for the sake of security for their future, seeing their home countries as hopeless places, taking the risk on the account for their dignity, culture and personal peace as well.

Amid this troubled world that is fallen among thieves (John 10:10) we are called as a communion to journey towards justice, and to be actively involved through discerning, confessing, witnessing and being reformed together.

Discerning the signs of times is a vital step towards the journey in living up to our Reformed identity where we are invited to confess and witness and be shaped anew as a Communion in the hands of God. Discerning the signs of time urges us to hold

responsibility and get involved even when that means pronouncing statements that do not sound popular or favored in the eyes of many.

Lately we celebrated the resurrection of Jesus Christ. One of the interesting persons who is part of the Jesus story is Caiaphas who said, *"You know nothing at all, nor do you take into account that it is expedient for you that one man die for the people, and that the whole nation not perish."* Now he did not say this on his initiative, but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but in order that he might also gather together into one the children of God who are scattered abroad. So from that day on they planned together to kill him (John 11:49-53).

Caiaphas prophesied that that one man die for the people, and that the whole nation not perish. Jesus' salvific act sets a logic that is central to our Christianity; it contradicts the logic of the world today, where nations die for the sake of power of one person, or other nations die for the sake of one nation.

The world is troubled today by attitudes where strong countries feel they can control small, weak countries and even decide their future. That is why a dialogue around church and state that will be part of our Executive meeting will enrich us as we journey towards justice. It is high time for the Communion to lift issues that are political in nature, where the church can no more be silent. We cannot be on the journey of justice without being straightforward struggling with political issues and hearing live stories from different contexts of the communion, that will help us to think practically about justice. The mere fact of meeting in Kappel opens our eyes in our involvement with the society, and Zwingli challenges us on our stand with issues related to the dignity of the people even outside the church.

Also the world is trapped with radicalism. If we want to summarize what is happening in the world today, we cannot see clearly how the world is overwhelmed with the culture of fear rather than hope. Radical groups have succeeded in planting fear around the world.

As a Communion, we are challenged to take the risk and be a sign of hope, even in small steps of crossing boundaries, challenging all culture of fear that separates us and creates borders, and have a dialogue of life that changes our perceptions and proclaims hope beyond fear. We are the people of hope, not because we trust that we will change policies, but rather because we stand as a paradigm of hope. The mere fact that we are ready to tackle the issue of church and state is a sign of hope.

We are happy that the **WCRC Strategic Plan: 2018-2024** was adopted in our last Executive meeting and a "Draft for WCRC Program and Organization Implementation Plan" will be presented to us with timeline and calendar suggestions and will be adopted in this Executive meeting. One of the valuable and complimentary approach for our Strategic Plan is "the implementation and monitoring strategy, the Strategic

Plan itself defines that.” It is not enough to have a strategic plan, or develop programmes, but rather evaluating how these programmes and activities impact lives and move the Strategic Plan into a tangible force of change. The evaluation of the Strategic Plan will not be measured by the amount of activities, but rather what impact these activities create on the life of the Communion and the world around us. This is why the role of the Strategic Plan Programme Group (SPPG) is a vital catalyst that will guide us on our way forward especially through a yearly report that we will receive in our Executive meeting. I am sure you will hear more about this but I would like to highlight that as a healthy sign for evaluating and working in the spirit of communion.

The tasks of the SPPG are:

- *Clarifying which programme will be coordinated by which Reference Group;*
- *Monitoring if programmes are implemented according to the vision and the values set in the Constitution and the Strategic Plan.*
- *Receiving the reports of the Reference Groups and submitting them through the General Secretary to the Executive Committee.*
- *Receiving the Executive Committee decisions on programmes and submitting them to the Reference Groups.*

Midterm review of the General Secretary

The WCRC Constitution, in Article XII, Point B, states: "A comprehensive performance review will be scheduled at the midpoint of each seven-year term and prior to the decision to appoint the General Secretary to a second seven-year term. The performance review shall be conducted by persons appointed by the Executive Committee."

Since the officers are appointed as the Personnel Committee, the officers did carry out the midpoint comprehensive performance review of Chris as he has now served more than four years in his term. Many of us know that the midterm review was around the General Council and this is why it was postponed at a time that the whole Communion was busy with the Strategic Plan. We are happy that many people responded to the online questionnaire, and a report from the officers will be presented to the Executive.

Visitations of the President

June 15-19: Keynote speaker at the Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) annual advocacy summit in Washington, DC, USA

“An organization which works to mobilize US Christians to embrace a holistic perspective and to be advocates of equality, human rights, security, and justice for Israelis, Palestinians, and all people of the Middle East.” It was an occasion of lifting

the issues of injustice in the Middle East and challenging US policies. It was an event where the participants met with politicians on Capitol Hill and discussed issues of injustice on both the Palestinian and Israeli sides. The conference focused on the voice of Christian and Jewish women leaders and some of them are involved in reconciliation projects.

The conference was an enriching experience where the church and the society were in dialogue. Several secular voices contributed to the discussion. It was a golden opportunity to introduce the WCRC to participants, besides forming a network with Palestinian and Jewish women leaders, and it was a first time of encounter with Christian Palestinian women where the war in the Middle East created borders, and we cannot visit each other

June 20-23: PC(USA) General Assembly, preacher at the ecumenical service

Under the theme “Kingdom Building for the 21st Century” I had the honour to be the preacher for the ecumenical service where I spoke about bridges for reconciliation, mainly at a time where migrant children were separated from their families in the USA. The service was a time of pointing to injustice, whether in the Middle East or in the USA and how the church can be a bridge for reconciliation. It was a time of strengthening and celebrating our communion with the PC(USA).

August 21-24: Youth Symposium, Amsterdam

I had the privilege to be a speaker for a Symposium for Youth, held in Amsterdam around “Hospitality on a Pilgrim’s Way of Justice and Peace.” As celebration for 70th anniversary of the World Council of Churches (WCC) and besides the Symposium, I participated in a table talk with the youth together with the general secretary and president of WCC, discussing the role of WCC and WCRC in ecumenism. I also took part in a worship service in Amsterdam Cathedral as part of the celebration.

September 15-20: Tumekutana, Johannesburg, South Africa

It was a great privilege to be a keynote speaker in 2018 Tumekutana gathering held in Johannesburg, South Africa; as plenary speaker on the topic “Women as Stewards, Woman you are the Image of God.” I also participated in an interactive session of sharing with the women and hearing the challenges and joy of key women leaders from 22 countries in Africa, besides some partners around the world who support women’s work in Africa and empower their role in the body of Christ. Elder Veronica Muchiri is on the Executive of the Tumekutana and Rev. Mary Ekinde Salle was a delegate.

October 18-26: Solidarity visit to Iraq

The solidarity visit included a delegation from PC(USA) where we visited the three remaining functioning Presbyterian churches in Bagdad, Basra and Kirkuk. We also held a consultation in Bagdad for the leadership of the three churches, pastors and elders, where we discussed the needs of the churches in Iraq and how they can

cooperate as a synod. One of their main concern is becoming members of WCRC and networking with the Reformed churches in the Middle East, mainly NESSL and Synod of the Nile in Egypt.

January 7-10, 2019: Visiting the Uniting Church in Sweden

I was a key speaker in a conference for all the Swedish pastors and leaders from the Uniting Church in Sweden in Gothenburg. The delegates of the conference were pastors, deacons, youth leaders and other employees from the 700 local Uniting Church congregations throughout Sweden. The theme was “To be a Changing Leadership (A Leadership in Change).” It was a time of strengthening the communion with the Uniting Church in Sweden.

January 30-February 3, 2019: Presbyterian Reformed Church in Cuba

I attended the Synod of the Presbyterian Reformed Church in Cuba (IPRC) and a commemorative conference, “Jose Martí: For the Balance of the World” (Martí was a 19th century revolutionary philosopher and political theorist who laid many of the foundations for Cuba’s quest for independence), tackling the topic “Peace and Christian Ethics.” The visit was a solidarity visit connecting with the church in Cuba that is still struggling with the embargo and isolation. Rev. Aginaldo P.Gomes from AIPRAL and Elder Vilmarie Cintrón-Olivieri, co-moderator of the PC(USA), were attending as well.

Points of Concern

Sustainability is at the heart of our concerns as an Executive Committee, not merely for securing a healthy core budget and financial resources, but it is a sign of commitment to the WCRC. We are happy that there is an increase in commitment of some churches who show their commitment in sharing their resources and paying their membership dues. In the line of our Strategic Plan, we are called as Executive Committee members to be:

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.

I believe this is an important responsibility that is ahead of us as an Executive Committee.

Empowering the regions remains a vital task that helps in building a stronger Communion whether in providing spaces for dialogue and action in the regions or enriching the work of the Communion on the global level. That is why we appreciate the role and presence of the regional representatives whether in the decision-making or presenting their reports. Still I think specifying through our worship time

to focus on one region in every Executive Committee will give us a closer look at the concerns of every region.

Also as mentioned in our Strategic Plan some regions do not have regional councils, and we will start the possibility of forming regional councils in 2021. I know that some representatives of these areas are present; still we are called to start preparing for the formation of these councils from today, whether in visitation or in consultations that lay the ground for that.

Strategizing our travel: Strategizing our travel in a way that supports our plan and challenges is a key factor in moving forward in the coming years, whether it is the traveling of the general secretary, president or officers. I know now as a president the load of the invitations that I receive and many I cannot fulfill. I know the traveling schedule of our general secretary and time and efforts that he puts in that. But I believe it is time to strategize our traveling in a way that helps the Communion in a stronger way. The discussion started among the officers, and the general secretary and I are working on that now. I say this here to plan with the regions the possibility of visitation so that all regions are visited before our next General Council.

2024 WCRC General Council: Concerning WCRC General Council 2024, the officers started to explore possibilities for the place of our General Council, and a letter to churches was already sent, we hope to receive soon an invitation giving priority to those who did not host earlier. We hope in 2020 we will have clarity about the venue and plan, and we will have our committees starting the task of preparation. I believe four years before is not too early for a well-organized General Council.

Communications: One of the vital elements to build a communion is communication, which can strengthen both the Communion itself and also its public witness. That is why in our Strategic Plan, a special attention is given to communication and we hope through the communication desk we will have a short video to present our Strategic Plan and a friendly document that can be used in promoting our identity and WCRC's vision and work. Also enhancing our relations as communion through media helps us in creating a network through which we come to know more about the ministry of the member churches.

Capacity concern: A close look at our strategic plan will easily pose the question about capacity and the possibility of four executive staff, four administrative staff and two interns to accomplish all that is required in fulfilling our Strategic Plan and the goals of the organization. I believe if we were to do our work with a higher level of competence, we have to take this topic seriously. We thank God for the qualified and enthusiastic staff, but I believe we have to be creative in finding ways to expand the number of staff through a variety of means. Also, it must be noted that the current staffing does not properly reflect gender justice, and I hope that this issue of gender balance is met soon and not delayed any further. I know the general

secretary is following up on this matter, but the aspect of urgency is becoming inevitable.

Dear friends, we come together as the Executive Committee of the World Communion of churches to discern the will of God and to continue our journey towards justice. The needs are many and the challenges increase day after day. **I believe follow up is a key road to success**, where many times we tend to tackle issues and get enthusiastic about them and then we proceed to meet all the other responsibilities in our crowded schedules. Prioritizing and picking our battles is important for our Communion. If I may ask, what is at the heart of our struggle as a Communion? What issue will we give special attention to? We are not called to repeat what all other ecumenical organizations are doing, where we can partner with them still, but rather choose the road less trodden.

In my last visit to Iraq, I discovered that the church in Iraq has become a remnant, and there is a serious threat about the Christian presence there, and probably this is the same in Iran and Palestine. I believe as the third largest Christian body in the world, we have great responsibility, and we are called to believe in our important role. Holding a conference in Iraq about reconciliation in 2020 will give us a new breath and strength. This is just one example about the many needs around the world.

What is at the heart of our Communion is a question that I leave with you and I struggle with myself.

Today the world is threatened with radical attitudes, and we are challenged as a Communion to fight radicalism with hospitality and to be a body who dares to get into a “free space,” as Henri Nouwen said is defining hospitality. He says:

Hospitality is a fundamental attitude towards our fellow human beings, it means to create a free space where the stranger can enter and become a friend instead of an enemy. Hospitality is not to change people but to offer them space where change can take place for spiritual growth and transformation.

As a Communion we are called to provide that free space, where we are transformed ourselves. I believe everyone here has felt at some time as a stranger even within the communion, whether with issues related to culture, spirituality, way of thinking, personal struggle. We are here to secure that we have a free space, where we are strangers and we invite strangers as well, but we meet in this precious free space “WCRC” to hear the voice of the one who invited us to be around the table and the one who is ready to change us and shape us anew. I pray that our meeting will be a time of blessings, discernment and envisioning and also a free space.

Today we miss great people around our table, namely Rev. Robina Winbush and Rev. Peter Borgdorff—two precious strong voices who challenged us always to secure the free space in this Communion, the freedom to speak and the power to be transparent and speak for the struggle.

For these two friends who taught us a lot about committed, zealous, Reformed servants of the Lord, we pay tribute, and learn that we cannot take life for granted, but rather it is time to rise, shine and live peace and justice.

To God all Glory, Amen.

Report of the General Secretary Chris Ferguson

Introduction

1. First of all, I want to give thanks to the God of Life for providing us with this opportunity to meet together as an Executive Committee to consider the business entrusted to us from the 2017 General Council of the World Communion Reformed Churches.
2. We are privileged and then challenged to be able to meet here and address our theme: “Let your light shine forth: seeking shalom in the midst of empire.” We draw inspiration for this theme from Matthew 5:14 and Jeremiah 29:7.
3. It's been one year since our meeting in Seoul, South Korea, and in that year we continue to see the dramatic and catastrophic unfolding of our current historical context. It is clear that the whole world community is moving in a time of profound social, political, cultural, environmental and economic change that is putting the life of people and planet in peril.
4. Our Strategic Plan, born from a deep and rigorous reading of the signs of the times informed by Scripture and social analysis, focuses on the faith imperatives that emerge as we confess the God of Life in a world fallen among thieves.
5. The Executive Committee meeting's theme speaks to God's call to address the significant social, political and environmental threats to life by engaging directly and investing ourselves completely in our context. The call to let our light shine forth is a challenge to accept the gravity of the situation and to see that as people of good faith and as God's church we cannot retreat, we cannot ignore the situation and we certainly cannot continue with “business as usual.” The Jeremiah passage often jars in our ears the call to seek the shalom of the city in which the exiles find themselves and can be heard as a call to accept the situation as it is, to simply get on with life without challenging the injustice and the oppression which surrounds us. But nothing could be further from the truth. Jeremiah calls to seek peace, peace that requires justice and equity. Peace for the city requires reconciliation and full participation for all—in the midst of a world where the structures and systems, customs and practices are rigged for the benefit and the interest of the few at the cost of the majority. This has been a hard, hard year in the life of the world, our churches, in all the varied contexts. We rejoice in the faithful witness of our Communion and support each other in solidarity and prayer as we follow the God of Life.
6. As a Communion we entered this year with a clear and compelling vision and spirited conviction that we are called to communion and committed to justice. The

discernment of the Leipzig General Council and the robust participation in the Strategic Plan have given us a strong, biblically based, theologically sound and justice-oriented framework from which to meet the challenges facing creation, our world and our churches.

Strategic Plan Implementation and Processes

7. The Strategic Plan approved by the Executive Committee in 2018 is the basis for WCRC planning, prioritizing, programming, administration and evaluation. It is the harvest of the vision, direction, priorities and the imperatives of the Leipzig General Council. It is the fruit of Leipzig's powerful affirmation of the WCRC as a global *koinonia* "called to communion and committed to justice" which emerged from an extraordinary spirit and intense and participatory process of discernment by consensus.
8. Following Leipzig this vision was elaborated upon and translated into a plan by extensive and diverse processes that involved hundreds and hundreds of people and groups actively feeding into the creation of the plan. Input was sought and received from ecumenical partners, regions and specifically from those in the Communion and beyond whose voices were not already represented in the Executive Committee. The process was guided by a group that included the WCRC officers. The Executive Committee received the proposed plan, amended it and adopted it at the 2018 meeting in Seoul, South Korea.
9. The plan carries the depth and vision of the Leipzig General Council and takes seriously the mandates of that Council. In saying that, it is also clear that the Council made out a vision calling for many actions and initiatives, all of which cannot realistically be achieved given the finite resources of the WCRC.
10. Immediately following the Executive Committee meeting in 2018 we began the implementation process as mandated by the Executive Committee. This involved three distinct processes that we are reporting to this meeting for accountability and information.
11. First is the process of systematizing the plan into a coherent and implementable framework of programmatic and organizational and operational objectives. This is called, obviously, the Programme Plan, although it includes operational objectives that are not programmatic. The process included grouping and prioritizing the mandates given at the General Council and the actions called before with a critical eye to ensuring that we had the capacity to carry out what was in the plan for a clear process to obtain that capacity before we proceed with any program or activity. It also included linking specific programs or activities rigorously to the vision of the plan and the impact and methods of evaluation and assessment; and at the same time we have put in place the new way of working programmatically which the plan

calls for. This includes new and integrative executive staff planning and team structure, such as the Executive Staff Council so that all aspects of the program were carried out in an integrated, collaborative and coordinated manner while maintaining the specific focus of each executive and the responsibilities.

12. Additionally, the implementation of a new role for the communications executive to include leadership for the operational aspects of the plan has been undertaken since February 2019 and as previously approved by the Executive Committee in 2018. Staff planning, monitoring, decision-making mechanisms and a systematic review of staff resources in order to assure maximization of staff capacities has been a key point of the process. This has included new ways of working to address some of the unresolved issues affecting the implementation of the Strategic Plan, such as database issues and significant issues with the Reformed Partnership Fund in relationship to accountability issues with Bread for the World (this we will comment on more significantly).
13. This process for the implementation of a new program planning, monitoring and evaluation structure and system as was called for in the plan involved the establishment of three program Reference Groups: Justice and Witness, Communion and Theology, and Mission and Ecumenical Engagement. These Reference Groups are responsible for overseeing the activities within the Strategic Plan. They come under their area of responsibility as outlined in the Implementation Plan: 2019-2024. The Strategic Plan is set until 2024 and therefore is general and opines basic directions. The Implementation Plan is specific, with detailed objectives which are measurable and express the desired outcome for each activity or initiative. It is still detailed therefore and somewhat complex so in addition we've also created a summary or "user-friendly" introduction booklet to the Strategic Plan.
14. The Reference Groups are also mandated to create and oversee, with the help of the program executives, specific working groups and networks to help carry out the objectives of the Strategic Plan. To ensure the coherence and coordination of the Programme Plan, the leadership of each of the three Reference Groups, together with the general secretary and the president, form the Strategic Plan Programme Group (SPPG). The SPPG receives, reviews, monitors and evaluates the reports of each of the Reference Groups and returns reports within the framework of the Strategic Plan to the Executive Committee through the general secretary. The SPPG is also responsible for certain aspects of the work which requires a more global perspective or overview of the program. All three executive secretaries support the work of the SPPG. The SPPG is essential for ensuring that the program work is effectively monitored, coordinated and carried out in an interrelated and collaborative manner. The names of those serving on the reference groups in the SPPG were approved by the officers can be found in the Implementation Plan (see addendums).

15. The Reference Groups and the SPPG are hard at work, and the first report of the SPPG is appended at the end of this report, and I will outline its highlights below.
16. This new way of working replaces the former “core groups” of the Executive Committee. The purpose of the SPPG structure is to have broad and specialized leadership for the program work while allowing the Executive Committee to be fully focused on governance and vision. Please note in the Strategic Plan and Implementation Plan the Executive Committee recommendation for a mid-term evaluation. This has been included in the program for 2021. The Executive will receive a mid-term review at that time that will allow the Executive Committee to recommend changes, updates and adjustments to the overall plan and working styles for the period 2022 to 2025 (as it would normally need to cover the period following the General Council up to the first meeting of the Executive Committee after the 2024 Council).
17. The third set of processes beyond the refining of the Programme Plan and putting in place the new ways of working has been the actual implementation process itself carrying out through specific programs and activities.
18. The Strategic Plan has, first, consolidation of the ongoing constitutionally-based vision, identity and purposes through our current commitments and, second, expanding our areas of activity and witness to have greater impact.
19. As mentioned above, considerable time and effort has been required in consolidating and attending to ongoing commitments, along with putting the new plan and structures in place. This included significant attention to unresolved issues of the past, some of which date before the move from Geneva.
20. The ongoing commitments to accompany regional councils, member churches, communications, ecumenical dialogues, publications, global peace and reconciliation initiatives in the Korean Peninsula, Colombia, Taiwan, Israel-Palestine and Cameroon, participation in the World Council of Churches (WCC), partnership with Council for World Mission (CWM), follow-up to the Wittenberg Witness and the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ), New International Financial and Economic Architecture (NIFEA) and the GEM School among others were all contemplated in the Strategic Plan and were tended to with the implementation process and launch of new programs. These will be reported in the context of the SPPG and Reference Groups accountability reports which are appended.
21. In addition to the attention to resolving outstanding challenges and consolidating ongoing programs and priorities along with launching several new programs that since 2018 also saw the deepening of the WCRC presence and impact on the global ecumenical church scene with increased participation in significant Vatican events, racism and discrimination in the context of global migration and ecological and

economic justice, as well as strengthening our ongoing participation into significant spaces in alliances and the Global Christian Forum.

22. Overall, I'm very pleased and gratified to report that the Strategic Plan and its implementation is fully engaged by the Communion on many levels and also has had an impact in giving focus to our global ecumenical contribution. One year from the approval of the plan, and we are well underway, although aspects of the operational plan and certain of the evaluation and reporting mechanisms are still a work in progress.
23. The report of the SPPG indicates strong affirmation for both the general direction and specific implementation of the plans. The executive summary of the report and the accountability reports of the Reference Groups, as appended, demonstrate much hard work and enthusiasm in embracing the plan and its vision. I want to pay tribute to the members of the Reference Groups, dozens of working groups, the SPPG and the WCRC staff who have brought us to this significant point. The vision and theological/faith witness embodied in the plan is being widely embraced and according to many reports inspiring several versions and churches to move forward as we seek to deepen our common witness as a confessing communion in a world fallen among thieves.
24. One consistent note of concern about the plan has been voiced at all the levels, and it has been ratified by our own experience of this last year, and that is that the plan is both very comprehensive and visionary and at the same time overly ambitious given our current capacity and limited resources. And while as I will report below there is good (but not yet timely) progress being made on increasing executive staff capacity and gender equity, we have to admit that we have achieved such significant results in the last year only at the expense of undue pressure on our staff team.
25. The staff, sticking to the plan, pressed on with the three processes mentioned above and operated at the very edge and too often beyond the limits of our capacity, energy and health. The officers and SPPG, and of course executive staff together with me as general secretary, are clear that although we did attempt to focus and prioritize, we must do much more in order to keep our activities and reach within the healthy, responsible and reasonable limits of our human capacity. We are confident that we will be able to add staff capacity in the near future, but until we do and of course even after that point we cannot continue to exact such a high toll on people's health and well-being. The 2019-2020 work plans will reflect changes so that the plan is carried out with integrity, new capacities are added and justice and healthy workloads are respected. The principle is to only implement the parts of the plan where resources are and where the capacity is not overstretched. The Reference Groups will be working with the SPPG and the Executive Staff Council and the general secretary to constantly review and re-prioritize our work so that we meet our most important objectives but do so in a way that is just and equitable.

26. The WCRC is the largest Protestant world communion and has the smallest infrastructure and staff. We have laid out a plan that takes our mandates seriously but has ordered them by strategic importance and capacity. The plan will only be implemented to the degree capacities allow.
27. The SPPG report is offered for information and comments. The summary document outlines the work of the Reference Groups and program staff. As this is the first report, and implementation is very much a work in progress, we are moving into new ways of working together.
28. Each Reference Group received staff proposals based on the Strategic Plan as approved with additional input from working groups where appropriate. The Reference Groups also received reports about work carried out. The SPPG additionally received proposals for priority work for 2019-2020. They approved and recommended proposals for the next five-year period with emphasis on the period up to and including 2021. The Reference Groups also proposed the programs and priorities for 2019-2020 in keeping with the overall plan. The SPPG, which as you will recall includes the president and the general secretary, then met to ensure the coherence and coordination of the program work, to make evaluative comments and recommendations and prepare a report for this Executive Committee.
29. The SPPG meeting was dynamic and inspiring. The SPPG was able to clarify roles, address priorities and significantly strengthen the programs. The evaluation process and critical missiological reflection of the group lifted up the strategic imperatives within the plan and placed a very strong emphasis on focusing on the desired impact the programs are designed to achieve and to encourage moving away from simply proposing activities and events to being purpose-driven and lifting up the underlying vision and objectives of all that we do. Planning and evaluating must be tied to the purpose and impact not only the successful execution of a meeting, consultation or a bit. The key role of the regions in all aspects of programs was strongly emphasized.
30. The SPPG specifically reviewed the Programme Plan for 2019 and affirmed it as the operational document for the implementation of the Strategic Plan, at the same time it was noting that there must be flexibility within the plan to deal with emerging issues to adapt to changing circumstances, although without overstretching our capacity or the limits of our resources.
31. The SPPG reviewed the interconnectedness of the Reference Groups' accountability reports according to the Strategic Plan's five interlocking dimensions, which are communion, justice, theology, mission and ecumenical engagement before defining action verbs from the Strategic Plan as seen as effectively driving the work, so it's been discerning, witnessing, confessing and being reformed. This framework was strongly affirmed and seems to be faithfully guiding the work.

32. In reviewing the accountability reports the SPPG has made specific recommendations as to how the reports can be more effectively presented in the future, with clear introductions to each area's work and emphasis on impact rather than activity. It is recommended that an evaluation of impact and results be included in each aspect of the work so that each report states what we had hoped to accomplish, or was actually done, and then evaluates the impact in summary form. Introductions to the accountability reports for each Reference Group will be refined as they explain the vision and goals and those will then form part of the user-friendly introduction to the Strategic Plan.
33. To conclude these general comments on the Strategic Plan and its process: the SPPG report strongly affirms the program and operations plan document as appended. The SPPG strongly affirms with recommendations and guidance for future reports the accountability reports of the three Reference Groups as appended. The program plans as approved by the Reference Groups for 2019-2020 have been affirmed with the caveat to closely monitor staff capacity.
34. A key objective within the Strategic Plan is to increase the number of program executives as soon as possible to add two women from the Global South. This has been moving ahead by seeking support from partners for these positions. There are three possibilities under way, and it is hoped to report positive results very soon in the hope that at least one if not two appointments could be made in 2019.

Highlights of the Reference Group Reports

35. The Reference Groups reports reflect the programmatic work of the two program executives and to a lesser extent the program work of the general secretary and communication and operations executive. The reports are appended, but I will lift up here the major programs and accomplishments since the last Executive Committee meeting. As noted above the last year has been intense with attending to winding up work from the past, attending to ongoing commitments, planning the future and launching key programs in the new plan.
36. Using those four categories I give the "headlines" of the work that falls under each Reference Group as already reviewed by the SPPG:

Justice and Witness

37. Recalling the overarching objective for the justice and witness interlocking dimension of the Strategic Plan:

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 better

able to faithfully confess the God of Life in a world fallen among thieves ...will seek to deepen and strengthen ongoing commitment to justice while at the same time expanding and growing in accordance with the vision of the 2017 General Council.

38. Since the 2018 Executive Committee meeting, the justice and witness secretary together with many working groups and working closely with the communion and theology secretary have focused on translating the 2017 General Council vision and mandate into specific strategic global programs while working with specific regions to promote global impact.

RAN: Resisting Cultures of Discrimination, Authoritarianism and Nationalism

39. A very important new strategic emphasis emerging from the 2017 General Council and the Strategic Plan is addressing the global rise in structural dominance of racism, authoritarianism (often promoted through populist politics) and nationalism. The RAN: Resisting Cultures of Discrimination, Authoritarianism and Nationalism program kicked off in 2018 with two-part consultation featuring a dialogue between Dalit and African American theologians and activists.

40. The consultation worked with the objectives of:

- Conscientizing the membership of the WCRC through naming and understanding the new systemic and ideological formulations of the new political economy.
- To create networks of resistance among and between Black and Dalit communities
- To assess whether a *process confessionis* is required for Reformed thinking on the church and the state.

41. The consultation resulted in:

- A message from the participants addressing the issues of cultures of discrimination, authoritarianism and nationalism from below
- Papers that will be published in the September 2019 issue of the *Reformed World*
- A network of Black and Dalit theologians/activists

42. As part of our regional strategy, the justice and witness secretary will be working closely with CANAAC so that this strategic program area can strengthen and focus CANAAC's very central role, while CANAAC helps facilitate the program for the whole communion.

43. This work, specifically with the repeated call to dismantle systemic racism and authoritarianism as a potential *status confessionis*, hopes to involve all member churches in the biblical-theological reading of the signs of the times, and is extremely, closely interlinked with theology, communion and mission.

Mission in the Context of Crisis and Marginalization

44. The “Mission in the Context of Crisis and Marginalization” program will strengthen member churches in crisis situations that are aggravated by religious tensions (General Council Action 53) and empower them to participate in God’s mission for justice, peace and reconciliation.
45. The programme will:
 - accompany churches particularly in the Middle East, West Africa and Indonesia and support their work for justice, peace and reconciliation.
 - establish a network for exchange, mutual learning and support between member churches in crisis situations that are aggravated by religious tensions.
 - facilitate a process to develop mission strategies for conflict resolution, justice and peace.
46. A consultation is planned for the second half of 2019. The executive secretary for justice and witness has taken the lead in this process during the absence of Hanns Lessing.

Witness for Peace and Reconciliation

47. The justice and witness secretary has been actively involved in working on a transition process for the program work on peace on the Korean Peninsula and the Middle East to shift his desk under the direction of the Reference Group. This has involved the establishment of working groups and taking shared staff leadership for program work previously carried by the general secretary.
48. In the past year, this involved coordinating a major pastoral accompaniment visit to Iraq and follow-up on a significant international conference on religious contributions to peace and reconciliation in Kirkuk in 2020, as well as putting in place a plan for 2019-2020 to move forward accompaniment of the church in exile of Iran and mobilizing the member churches around the Palestine justice mandate from the 2017 General Council.
49. In helping the Communion discern the global *kairos* and provide theological resources for witnessing and confessing, the justice and witness area together with communion and theology, held a global consultation in the Philippines on “Critical Reflections on Empire.” The meeting reinvigorated the theological reading of global context. There will be a follow up consultation in 2019 where there will be publications, resources and study guides produced to aid the task of discerning, witnessing and confessing together.
50. Related was a consultation held with many of our Indonesian member churches to help further know, contextualize and live out the Accra Confession. This was positive but shows the need for more specific resources in this area.

NIFEA: New International Financial and Economic Architecture

51. The justice and witness secretary together with the general secretary have put high priority on re-activating the WCRC's commitment to NIFEA, firstly among our concerns and secondly providing leadership to break the recent rise in ecumenical global cooperation and more the economic/ecological justice work to another level of global impact.
52. This has meant the re-activation of a global panel of experts with the WCC, CWM and the Lutheran World Federation (LWF). The design of a three-year global advocacy foci and impacts. The ongoing work and realigning of the GEM School now moving into its fourth year.
53. Within the Communion we have focused on asking AIPRAL to provide the lead focus and have worked closely to address global issues while rooting them in the Latin American context and examples. The WCRC participated significantly in the G20 inter-religious meetings to influence the G20 meeting in Argentina. We are developing further strategic partnerships with CREAS and Christian Aid (UK) in this regard.
54. A WCRC working group is being formed to provide resources for our common call with strong leadership from AIPRAL.
55. Globally NIFEA will launch a campaign on just taxation and reparations. Just taxation will provide resources through reparations for climate and economic justice.
56. The Accra Confession and Pope Francis' *Laudato Si* have strongly put economic and ecological justice at the very centre of the Christian faith.
57. As a communion, we need to re-double all efforts in the area of climate justice and economic justice. They are inseparably connected.
58. The NIFEA work within the communion is top priority. The ecological justice work must be more forcibly put forward with the imperatives to change the oppressive economic system that is destroying people and planet.

Gender Justice

59. The justice and witness secretary and the Gender Justice Working Group have put a priority on mobilizing the resources of the Theological Educational Scholarship Fund for women studying for ordination with great success after a period of slow use of the fund. The future of the fund and a new emphasis on accompanying women in theology is in place.

60. The justice and witness secretary and the Gender Justice Working Group are working to make visible and mobilize our Communion around the Faith Declaration on the Ordination of Women.
61. Special priority has been given to the drafting of a Communion-wide Gender Policy as mandated by the 2017 General Council. The first report of the Gender Justice Working Group is appended and will be a focus of discussion at this Executive Committee to consider the proposed Gender Policy draft.
62. Apart from these highlights, let me lift up again both the quality and impressive quantity of program work carried out by the program secretary since the last Executive Committee meeting.
63. The program team concept and Executive Staff Council concept have been fully achieved a high level of team work and collaboration between the justice/witness and communion/theology work such as are seldom seen in global ecumenical organizations.

Communion and Theology

64. Since the last Executive Committee, the Communion and Theology Reference Group together with the communion and theology secretary have focused on the planning and expressing in program terms this program area.
65. The RAN program and Mission in the Context of Crisis and Marginalization programs are carried out collaboratively with the justice and witness secretary through the program team and therefore were mentioned above. The lead for the critical theological reflection on empire has been led by the communion and theology secretary.
66. To recall from the Strategic Plan, the overarching objective for theology is:

Hearing the cries of the wounded communities and engaging with them (GC action 21) the theological work of WCRC shall lead the whole communion in the theologically rooted processes of confessing the faith, drawing on the Reformed tradition and contextual theologies to address the present reality.

67. In this last year, significant work has been placed on the Global Institute of Theology (GIT), reactivating the publication of *Reformed World*, as well as the planning for the renewed development of global networks of theologians. There was a major evaluation of GIT and a new dean has been appointed, Hye-Ran Kim Cragg. Planning for GIT 2020 is underway.
68. The Strategic Plan overarching objective for mission is:

In witnessing to its call to communion and its commitment to justice, the WCRC will articulate a fresh 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 and power.

69. The Mission in the Context of Crisis and Migration work is featured here as planning for a major mission reflection and the Ruth Project in response to migration and human trafficking.
70. *Reformed World* has published a volume with the Lombard Prize winners' essays and others on the presentations made at the 2017 General Council. For 2019, the priority will be a re-activation of the editorial board and the articulation of the important role for *Reformed World* in light of the Strategic Plan.

Mission and Ecumenical Engagement

71. The ecumenical dialogue with the Roman Catholics is completed and the document is being readied for distribution and reception within the Communion.

Ecumenical Dialogues

72. International Reformed-Anglican Dialogue (IRAD) is well underway and is opening new methods and foci for ecumenical dialogues by addressing mutual theological reflection and learning on the understanding of *koinonia*—communion—that not only helps move together towards greater unity by attending to disagreements but also support each other as we each face challenges with our understanding of communion within our own traditions.
73. The Reformed-Pentecostal Dialogue is underway and also is pressing to explore different understandings of mission that can have practical implications for the relationship between our communions.
74. A new dialogue and process of reconciliation and growth in understanding is being undertaken with the Mennonite World Conference and will address the painful truth, violence and brokenness of our common history from the side of the Reformed community, in order to focus on the movement towards common witness today.

Ecumenical Partnerships

75. A major accomplishment of the past year was the meeting in Notre Dame University with the five communions who embrace the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ)—resolving to work together as five to build on the common agreement on the JDDJ in greater commitment to the real historic and ecclesial

implications for common witness for justice and peace. A delegation representing the WCRC contributed significantly to this important step forward towards unity.

76. In a similar vein, the WCRC has set up a process of common staff meetings, and a small implementation committee with LWF to look towards concrete steps with implementation of the Wittenberg Witness.
77. The general secretary represents the WCRC on the WCC Reference Group for the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace, and the WCRC participates in the Taiwan Ecumenical Forum, the Ecumenical Forum on Korea, and Palestine Israel Ecumenical Forum all led by the WCC.
78. Along with CWM, the general secretary participates in an annual gathering with the general secretaries of the United Evangelical Mission (UEM) and *Communauté d'Églises protestantes en Mission* (CEVAA).
79. Building strong relationships with the WSCF (World Student Christian Federation) are lifted up in our Strategic Plan, and the WSCF representatives participates actively in our program and planning.

Relationships with Ecumenical Organizations

80. The Strategic Plan proposed active ecumenical engagement at the global level to strengthen the global witness and impact of our objectives as a contribution to the wider ecumenical community in response to God's call and the gospel of Jesus Christ. We are now well placed with our participation in WCC, GCF and ACT Alliance, as well as the Conference of Secretaries of Christian World Communions and the JDDJ group to provide leadership to and learn from the most important global ecumenical bodies or forums.

International Reformed John Knox Center

81. The WCRC, and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches before it, have a very long, deep and historic relationship with the John Knox Center in Geneva. Over the past two years—and, in fact, since the WCRC left Geneva—the relationship has been more distant and our role in both the program life and governance of the Center has been diminished. The Center is facing many challenges financially and in terms of aging infrastructure. There had been tensions between the church-related members of the association and the council, and a new extremely ambitious redevelopment project was proposed without, in the view of many, sufficient consultation. Proposed changes to the constitution which would have made the WCRC relationship to the Center and its assets questionable prompted us to renew an active role in the governing bodies of the Center. The general secretary of the WCRC now sits on the committee and both he and Hanns Lessing are active in the association. We believe

the Center is at a crucial turning point and the WCRC should remain active in the renewal of leadership and shaping the future direction.

82. We also note with regret that the president of the John Knox Center did not submit a report again this year nor has he communicated with us regarding his invitation to this meeting.

ACT Alliance Membership

83. The Executive Committee approved by email ballot the application for WCRC to join ACT Alliance. The general secretary participated in the last assembly in Uppsala in 2018. The application is under consideration. We believe this is an important forum for us to increase common ecumenical witness on the global level and bring the distinctive WCRC justice perspective to the challenges of global advocacy, development and peace and reconciliation from a church perspective emphasizing the voices from the Global South alongside the voices from large, northern-led diaconal agencies.

Global Christian Forum

84. The GCF is a relatively new but increasingly important space for global Christianity. It provides a space for faith sharing, dialogue and building mutual understanding between and among the “four pillars” of worldwide Christianity: Pentecostals, Evangelicals, the Roman Catholics and the members of the WCC. The WCRC has played an important role since the founding of the forum through the leadership of Rev. Dr. Wesley Granberg-Michaelson who has ably represented us on the steering committee. We thank him for his outstanding and prophetic leadership, vision and bridge building.
85. The GCF held its third global gathering in 2018 in Bogota, Colombia. There is an appreciable change in the openness of communication and level of mutual respect among the participants in the forum. There is still far to go to even more effectively address tensions and conflicts within the Christian family and further yet for common witness.
86. At the meeting a new secretary was appointed, succeeding Dr. Larry Miller who had in his turn provided exemplary leadership. Rev. Dr. Casely Essamuah, a Methodist from Ghana now living in the United States, has already begun to lead the GCF forward. Following the GCF Bogota gathering, the WCRC general secretary has joined the global steering committee and participated in its 2019 meeting in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Taiwan Ecumenical Forum

87. In fulfilment of the mandate from the 2017 General Council which resolved to welcome and support the establishment of the Taiwan Ecumenical Forum (TEF), Collin Cowan and I were asked to serve as co-conveners of the TEF which we have

done since 2017. The work has been intensive and has involved much dialogue and discussion in order to frame the accompaniment of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan (PCT) in the context of a very difficult and dangerous conflict and tensions in North East Asia. The TEF focuses on the priority issues such as Indigenous peoples' rights, transitional justice and the future of Taiwan and the Taiwanese people in an ecumenical and regional context. The forum also aims to contribute to constructive dialogue with the China Christian Council (CCC) and The Three-Self Patriotic Movement. This dialogue has not been possible, and the very existence of the forum has been questioned by the CCC. WCRC's role in accompanying the TEF has also been questioned by the CCC. We continue to engage and promote dialogue with both PCT and CCC.

Korean Ecumenical Forum

88. The WCRC actively participates at the request of our member churches in North and South Korea and the National Council of Churches in Korea through the Ecumenical Forum on Korea. We maintain an active relationship with the Korean Christian Federation in the North and actively promote the intra-Korean processes for a peace treaty and reunification as expressed in the 2018 Panmunjon Declaration. The WCRC serves on the steering committee. The Executive Committee in its message stressed the importance of this prophetic action for peace in the context of seeking a world free of nuclear weapons.

Relations with Member Churches

Delegation to Iraq

89. The WCRC, in October 2018, led a high-level delegation to Iraq to express solidarity with Reformed churches in the region. Given the issues faced by Iraq as a country in general and the Christian population in particular this was an important solidarity visit. The visit was made in collaboration with the Presbyterian Church (USA). The delegation included Najla Kassab, Chris Ferguson, Sara Lisherness (PC(USA)), Laurie Kraus (PC(USA)), Ibrahim Nsier (National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon), Tharwat Wabha, Philip Woods (PC(USA)), Elmarie Parker (PC(USA)) and Philip Vinod Peacock.
90. The delegation visited churches in the cities of Baghdad, Basra and Kirkuk and were witness to the life of the churches and the Christian community as well as the mission work that they engaged. The governor of Kirkuk invited the WCRC to conduct a peace and reconciliation consultation in Kirkuk which is being planned for 2020.

Equatorial Guinea

91. The Reformed Presbyterian Church of Equatorial Guinea is faced with major internal church conflicts and has asked the WCRC to lead a process of mediation and accompaniment. As the language of the country and church is Spanish a team was

assembled of Spanish speakers with conflict transformation and church conflict experience (Dario Barolin, Coutinho Maravillhoso Moma and Valdir Franca) led by the WCRC general secretary to carry out an assessment visit accompanied by PC(USA) mission co-workers at the request of the church and make a mediation proposal. Unfortunately, we have still to gain the consent from both parties for ongoing mediation after the initial visit. This situation requires vigorous follow up.

Cameroon

92. In response to the emerging situation in Cameroon and the escalating violence and the threat of civil war, the WCRC has been in regular communication with the Presbyterian church in Cameroon and the Council of Churches along with other ecumenical partners including the WCC, CEVAA and the AACC and planned a staff level team visit in January 2019 around the election time in Cameroon. However, with the advice of our partners on the ground that determined that the time was too dangerous, the visit had to be postponed.
93. As the situation continues to deteriorate the WCRC with the same partners as mentioned above and the PC(USA) is now initiating an Ecumenical Working Group for Cameroon to be able to internationalize the issue. The initial meeting intends to meet at a location outside of Cameroon to be able to have as many voices and expressions as possible involved in creating a plan for solidarity and action responsive to the needs of the Cameroonian churches in the face of an extremely volatile and deadly human rights situation in the context of a deeply polarized conflict.

Colombia

94. The WCRC continues to accompany the Presbyterian Church of Colombia (IPC) in their peace work even as the peace agreements and the mechanisms of transitional justice are increasingly threatened by lack of government compliance with the peace plan. Violence and militarized confrontations continue to spiral upwards in the countryside, and human rights defenders and social movement leaders are being killed at a scandalous and intolerable rate. The WCRC supports ecumenical initiatives like DIPAZ and the peace initiatives and programs of the Reformed University as well as the ongoing programs of the IPC Peace commission.

Witness at the Border

95. In order to bring Christian witness and solidarity to the situation of those seeking asylum at the Mexican-United States border the WCRC initiated a visit to the border followed by advocacy visits to Capitol Hill in Washington, DC. The Witness at the Border was held with the specific objectives of conscientizing our member churches and societies in which they find themselves over the issues involved. Making visible the multiple and underlying causes that make forced migration a growing reality in the region, the hardships faced by migrants on the way to the border and the laws that violate human rights. It worked with the further objective of weaving a wide

ecumenical and social network as well as advocating in different areas so that the actions are not palliative but truly transformative. The Witness at the Border was intended to send out a strong message of the church's advocacy for human rights and particularly the rights of migrants and those seeking asylum.

96. The delegation included Chris Ferguson, Lisa Vander Wal, Douglas Leonard (WCC), Jennifer Flett (CWM), Dario Barolin (AIPRAL), Angela Martins (CANAAAC), Ryan Smith (PC(USA)), Ken Neeval (RCA), Melissa Stek (CRC), Amanda Craft (PC(USA)) and Philip Vinod Peacock.

PC(USA)/ECO

97. For nearly two years now, we have been acting as mediators between the Presbyterian Church (USA) and ECO: A Covenant Order of Presbyterians, two member churches who have had conflicts over congregational allegiances. The process has been going well, with both sides expressing satisfaction in the relationship being in a better place than before and with no new problems having since accumulated. A memorandum of understanding is nearing completion, which will codify the successful discussions, with only a few words yet to be settled.

Israel/Palestine

98. Action 55 of the 2017 General Council held in Leipzig, Germany, instructed the Secretariat of the WCRC to:
- Collect studies and materials that speak to the cry of the Palestinian people, and try to transform the conflict to make it a just and peaceful society, making them available to member churches; and
 - Undertake study and discernment, using the resources available from member churches and the ecumenical movement, regarding the theology that has been employed to legitimate the oppression of the Palestinian people, recognizing that such a study may result in the need for prophetic action.
99. We have engaged a consultant to contact our member churches who have already published such material and put them together to form a study guide for the membership of the communion.
100. Further an initial visit is being planned to the region with a focus on a later high-level delegation to the region along with the Council for World Mission to engage in a face-to-face meeting. The specific impact of the meeting would be to make known the "cries of the Palestinian people" to the global community.
101. We support the theological and advocacy work of Kairos Palestine and the National Coalition of Christian Organizations of Palestine through the *Otto per Mille* funded peace and reconciliation program.

Regional Councils

102. The reports from the regional councils show active engagement and in several places key embracing of the regional councils' special role in the Strategic Plan. We have accompanied the assemblies and special events of the councils and see renewed energy among them.
103. The Strategic Plan calls for a review by 2021 of the question of the number and configuration of regional councils.

CANAAC Assembly

104. As is fully covered in the CANAAC report to the Executive, a successful regional assembly was held last fall, electing new leadership and planning for new activities in line with the WCRC Strategic Plan. Both Philip Vinod Peacock and Phil Tanis were in attendance, with Philip making a presentation on the justice work of the organization, Phil providing support for the entirety of the assembly, along with communication work, and both presenting the Strategic Plan to the assembly. Phil has also provided some support for CANAAC communications since their assembly, as a new website was built (with generous assistance from the Christian Reformed Church in North America). Phil also continues as the staff liaison to CANAAC.

Strategic Mission Partnerships

Council for World Mission (CWM)

105. The WCRC continued with its strategic and focal partnership with the Council for World Mission. For the last two years we have worked on a renewed memorandum of understanding and a second leadership summit to articulate our vision for common work together. This is an extremely important and dynamic relationship for WCRC as we are closely linked by both common member churches and a very tightly aligned common mission vision. CWM has generously provided one million pounds sterling in the past for a capital fund to stabilize WCRC finances and to form the basis for an income generating capital fund. In 2018 CWM reaffirmed their support with a generous annual contribution to ensure the ongoing justice work. We have also recommitted to joint planning and program work which we realize that in last few years has not been as active as had both hoped. Collin Cowan, CWM general secretary, and several senior staff played active roles in our strategic planning process. A recent joint staff meeting led to a commitment to joint programmatic work between the WCRC and CWM in over ten areas of common priorities. The joint program work will include common work on discerning empire, theological networking and women's ordination. The CWM and WCRC general secretaries collaborate closely as co-conveners of the Taiwan Ecumenical Forum.

Otto per Mille/Tavola Valdese

106. The *Tavola Valdese*, through the *Otto per Mille* program generously make available 350,000 euros annually for specific service, humanitarian and peace and justice initiatives. We are in our final year of our first contract with *Otto per Mille*, and it has been a significant success for us. Not only has it provided significant funding for our priority justice work (most notably several NIFEA initiatives) but it has also allowed us to meaningfully engage in global peace initiatives, including in Colombia, the Middle East, the Korean Peninsula and South Sudan. This support has allowed us to significantly impact and contribute the WCRC vision and justice focus to the world ecumenical world. *Otto per Mille* money is also currently the primary funding source for the Reformed Partnership Fund, and notably is a principle source for the important emergency relief and response funds we are able to share in times of disaster and humanitarian crises. A second, three-year contract has been agreed and will commence beginning in 2020. A special thank you to Claudio Pasquet and the Waldensian Evangelical Church for entrusting us with these funds, which are having such a positive impact in so many places.
107. In addition, we have been in dialogue with the *Tavola Valdese* with a view to opening a Reformed Community office in Rome as a focal point for relations with the Vatican and international ecumenical events in Rome. The Waldensian Church has generously offered to provide the office space, a church space for large public events and to assign staff to represent us in events and relationships in Rome.

Evangelisches Missionswerk (EMW)

108. Similarly, we have successfully concluded one contract period with EMW and begun finalizing the next one. These monies are utilized primarily in mission-focused projects, regional council development and our internship program. In wrapping up the first contract by the end of 2019, it should be noted—and thanks given—to EMW for allowing us to utilize some of the money in our strategic planning process, as well as for the “Church, State, and Politics” conference being held on Saturday in Horgen, as a part of our Executive meeting.
109. A summit we hosted with EMW’s leadership last summer underlined the importance of this partnership, with them noting that they were “very satisfied that this common journey continues as a companion on the way”—saying that it is indeed a partnership that can continue to be expanded and deepened. 2019 is a bridging year between the conclusion of the old contract and the start of the next, which we anticipate will be settled for the period 2020-2025.

Bread for the World/Brot für die Welt (BfdW)

110. I am less pleased to have to report that while we remain aspirationally in partnership with *Brot für die Welt* (BfdW), we are still working to finally conclude several old contracts. This has been an extended process, with BfdW having provided funding for several projects to us over these last few years, including monies for the

Reformed Partnership Fund, the General Council and the Global Institute of Theology (GIT). The funding for travel support to General Council delegates from the Global South was finally closed in February. The three contracts still in process are one for the GIT and two for the Partnership Fund. We hope that these will be successfully finished very soon but understand that there are several approval levels within BfdW.

111. Until these contracts are wrapped up, we have agreed with BfdW that we will not proceed on any other funding fronts. This has meant that money for the Partnership Fund has not been forthcoming (and we thus rely on others to provide it currently). But it has not meant that we have ceased planning with them. I had an enlightening and encouraging talk with Cornelia Füllkrug-Weitzel, BfdW president, this spring, and we foresee several exciting possibilities for partnerships. Once the contracts are settled we will hold a summit to agree broad terms and then proceed with developing specific programs and projects with them.

Finance

112. The financial situation of the WCRC as the appended Finance Report shows real progress and stability with the increase of several membership contributions. 2018 finished with a small surplus. Notwithstanding significant donations to our core budget, including subsidies for staff salaries notability from the Church of Westphalia and CWM the projections for 2019 show that we continue to struggle to meet our core budget expenses for staff, office and governance every year.
113. The general treasurer notes the strong project fund contribution and the fundraising initiatives that are underway. Great thanks to the general treasurer and to Gerhard Plenter and Anna Krüger for the work of the strong financial results.
114. The report underlines the imperative to address the ongoing structural challenges of the core budget.
115. The program funds are solid and also at a limit that until we increase staff capacity we cannot responsibly expand our programs even if so doing would increase contributions to our core budget.

Reformed Partnership Fund

116. This last year has seen us take a closer look at the Reformed Partnership Fund (RPF). After the challenges we have had in properly utilizing the funding from BfdW, and with a new Strategic Plan approved, we thought it an opportune moment to hire an outside consultant to review how the RPF functions, including the staff it demands and its strategic benefits.

117. Asir Ebenezer, now general secretary of the National Council of Churches in India, was the consultant. He spent a week at the Hannover office in September doing a comprehensive assessment of the RPF and issued a report with several recommendations. His overall assessment was that the RPF “can be a useful instrument in accompanying the mission of the member churches particularly the smaller churches and churches with no direct access to resource partners.”
118. The report will go to the Partnership Fund Committee at their meeting this week for review. It is anticipated that much of it will be implemented in the coming months, under the direction of the executive secretary for communion and theology and with support from the executive secretary for communications and operations.
119. Even as the RPF was reviewed and despite less money for its operation in the last year, it did continue to support a number of projects. With money from the Evangelical Church of Westphalia and the *Otto per Mille* program of the *Tavola Valdese*, both of whom we thank for their continuing support, the fund assisted in several emergency responses, including flooding in Kerala, India; Tsunami Sulawesi in Indonesia and Cyclone Idai in east Africa. These emergency grants are designed to provide rapid assistance in the aftermath of disasters, granting up to 7500 euro to member churches. The RPF was also able to fund a peace building and conflict transformation project in South Sudan, a women’s education program in South Africa and support theological dialogues.
120. Werner Joecker continues to provide able administrative support to the functioning of the RPF and has prepped more than a dozen applications to be considered by the Partnership Fund Committee at its meeting this week.
121. The Partnership Fund continues to be an important means through which we can strengthen our communion.

Staffing

Current Staff

122. Katrina Mertz, Anna Küger and Werner Joecker continue in their administrative roles. Amritha Bosi Permulla has returned from parental leave. We thank Emelda Ndiwewah for her work in Amritha’s absence.
123. As of February 2019, Phil Tanis has assumed his expanded role as executive secretary for communications and operations following the Executive Committee decision last year for his second five-year term. Thanks to Phil for his significant contributions in a new and challenging position.
124. Gerhard Plenter continues as the financial coordinator on the basis of a volunteer consultancy. We extend great thanks to him for his extraordinary contribution.

125. Philip Vinod Peacock is in his second year as executive secretary for justice and witness. Great thanks to him for his hard work and contribution to the strategic planning process and advancing the justice work. The team relationship with the communication and theology secretary has worked very well.
126. Hanns Lessing is in his second year as executive secretary for communion and theology. He has made a strong contribution to the strategic planning process and the program planning work as well as advancing the ecumenical dialogues, relationships with German churches and as part of his role attending to significant and difficult issues inherited from 2013 concerning the reporting to BfdW and the Partnership Fund which we have discussed above. The JDDJ and Wittenberg Witness follow-up have also been his responsibility. The team relationship with justice and witness has gone well. Hanns is currently on medical leave until June 5. Great thanks to Hanns for his work and contribution.
127. The staff as a team are dedicated and committed and we are indeed fortunate to have them.
128. As part of the Strategic Plan review, we are re-examining the Reformed Partnership Fund as mentioned above and have enlisted the services of a consultant to review our current staffing model and structure to maximize staff capacities and to ensure that the configuration of staff resources is the best placed to achieve our organizational objectives. The consultant has finished his first report and this will be discussed by the Executive Staff Council in early June.

Increasing Staff Capacities

129. We are committed to increasing our executive staff capacity by two full time women from the Global South. The process has been to seek special partnerships or staff secondments rather than general contributions to an already challenged core budget.
130. We have created concept notes and basic position descriptions for the two positions. We have three possible sources for funding, with one coming from the PC(USA) and Presbyterian Women. This has been a long process of dialogue but with real commitment and we expect to have positive results soon in this year. The other would be a shared initiative with UEM with BfdW funding. The third option is to submit a direct request for funding to BfdW. This requires first closing our outstanding contracts with them, which we expect to be completed within the next month.

Interns

131. Our internship program continues to provide diversity and depth to our office staff and provide excellent experiences to young church leaders. We continue with two

interns in the office at all times, though now one intern begins her service in January while the other in September, thus providing continuity in the program. We are grateful to EMW, Presbyterian Church of Korea and the Evangelical Reformed Church of Bern, all of whom provide financial support to the program.

Gender Policy

132. The General Council required the WCRC General Secretariat and Executive Committee to prepare a Gender Policy with implementation strategy and accountability metrics by 2019. The first draft of the Gender Policy is being presented at the 2019 Executive Committee meeting.

Ethical Investment

133. The Finance Committee has been developing an Ethical Investment Policy. The officers reviewed the progress at their meeting in November, and additional work has been done since. It will be presented to the Executive for consideration later this week.

Communications

134. The last year was focused on maintaining a consistent presence online, reporting on the many activities of the organization and developing new communication materials based on the Strategic Plan.
135. An initial WCRC Strategic Plan document in English is ready for the Executive Committee. It provides a brief overview of the work based on the Strategic Plan for the coming several years. This document will be utilized in a number of ways, including forming the basis for Power Point presentations, smaller brochures and a redeveloped website. It will also be translated into several languages (requests are welcome!).
136. Social media continued its steady growth year-to-year. Those “liking” or “following” the WCRC Facebook page has grown 20% from March 2018 to March 2019 while the weekly average “reach” has grown 12% and those “engaged” by 60%. The increased growth in the “reach” and “engagement” over the “likes/follows” indicates that those interested in the WCRC are even more interested than previously, as they interact with the posts, whether through comments, reacting or sharing.
137. In addition to the main WCRC Facebook page (which is primarily English, though articles in other languages are also linked to from that page), a French-language CMER page continues to be used, along with (sporadically) a German page (which had been established for the General Council). Pages for the GIT and Theology office are also maintained and utilized when there is pertinent information.

138. Twitter, which is fully multi-lingual, has seen slower growth, but more attention is being given to it with liking and retweeting partner and member posts to increase engagement. Both Twitter and Facebook are posted to at least daily (except on the weekends).
139. The monthly WCRC eNewsletter features articles posted to the WCRC website from the previous month and continues to attract new subscribers each month. It is sent not only to subscribers but to all member churches (and usually multiple people within each church). 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 now happen later this year, based on the Strategic Plan.
140. *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.
141. *Reformed World*, the WCRC's theological journal, is a joint effort between the offices of communion/theology and communication/operations, with the latter handling the production and distribution of the publication. Due to other demands, its publication was suspended last year. It is anticipated that a new editorial board will be constituted this year, and that the publication will better support the objectives of the Strategic Plan moving forward. The first edition of this year will feature the Lombard Prize winning essays and is currently in production.

Database

142. The database has been a long-standing operational process. While it is in better condition than it has been since the move from Geneva, it is still not in a state that it can be fully utilized to its potential and it is now planned to move the data to a new system, CiviCRM in the coming year with a special grant from the EKD.
143. In Geneva, the WCRC shared a database system with the WCC and other organizations within the Ecumenical Centre. This system, however, was bound to the WCC and could no longer be utilized after the move. In addition, the heavy staff turnover and focus on the move meant that the upkeep of the data was not properly attended to for some time.
144. This thus presented two challenges as the WCRC settled in Hannover: 1) the need for a new database system and 2) outdated data. Consulting with several member churches, the WCRC decided on Salesforce, a for-profit global customer relationship management (CRM) system, which it has used for the last three years.

145. While the structure of the data was cleaned up in the transition to Salesforce and much of the data itself updated in and around the 2017 General Council (as well as through ongoing work with member churches), there remains much data maintenance work to do. In addition, Salesforce has been found to be too business-oriented for the WCRC's needs and budget, as Salesforce enhancements and consultants are geared toward for-profit companies rather than non-profit organizations, especially in Germany.
146. In light of this the WCRC has explored options to Salesforce, again consulting with member churches, and has decided to move its database to CiviCRM, a web-based, open source CRM system dedicated to ensuring "all organizations—regardless of their size, budget, or focus—have access to an amazing CRM to engage their contacts and achieve their missions."
147. Given its dedication to non-profit organizations, it's no surprise that CiviCRM also offers the necessary enhancements to meet the needs of the WCRC; not only is it a cloud-based database but it will handle email newsletters, event management, membership invoicing, online donations/payments and subscription management, and it will also seamlessly integrate with the WCRC's website.
148. Moving to CiviCRM thus will provide the WCRC with a fully functioning CRM, not just a database, integrating systems that are now separate. The WCRC will also take the opportunity to do a thorough updating and cleaning of its data while it is moved from Salesforce to CiviCRM and will put in place global systems that allow for WCRC regional bodies to assist in the upkeep of the data, as well as utilize the system's functions.
149. An application to the EKD for funding assistance on this project is pending at the time of writing, but initial discussions with EKD have given us great hope that the grant will be awarded. Anticipating this work will commence with a Bonn-based consultant later this year, preparatory work for the move will begin in the summer.
150. An added aspect of this project is that it will be an ecumenical effort. With the financial support of the EKD, the WCRC is inviting the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE) and the Conference of European Churches (CEC), along with several member churches, to join in the database project with us, allowing us to pool resources while meeting each organization's specific needs and explore possibilities of future data sharing and cooperation.

Future Meetings

2020 Executive Committee

151. The member churches in South Africa, led by the UPCSA, have invited us to hold the 2020. The exact venue will be announced soon. This invitation has been warmly accepted by the officers.

2021 Executive Committee

152. We have received an invitation from Indonesian member churches to host the 2021 Executive Committee.

2024 General Council

153. It is time to begin the 2024 General Council planning process. A letter has been sent out to member churches asking them to consider hosting the General Council and explaining the expectations of the host church or region.

154. Several member churches in Asia have been approached but so far there has not been a clear expression of interest.

155. The officers have recommended beginning the process of setting the General Council Planning Committee to begin work in 2020 even as the venue is being sought.

General Secretariat and Officers

156. The officers meet by Skype periodically throughout the year and had a face-to-face meeting in Hannover in November 2018. It has requested that the general secretary and president send regular update reports to the Executive Committee throughout the year. This we will gladly do.

157. As general secretary, I have represented the WCRC through visits to member churches in the Czech Republic, United States, Argentina, Colombia, Korea, Japan, Taiwan, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, Equatorial Guinea, Rwanda, Singapore, Italy, Indonesia and Mexico. I have participated in ecumenical initiatives with the GCF, ACT Alliance, WCC, CWM and others. Additionally, I have accompanied churches in times of conflict. Working in this way to strengthen the communion and contribute the WCRC perspective and passion for justice to the wider family.

158. As more of the peace and reconciliation and regional work is expressed through program areas, I will be taking a different role in the peace and reconciliation work in Israel-Palestine, the Middle East, Colombia and the Korean Peninsula and South Sudan.

159. I continue to carry lead regional relations with the Middle East, Latin America and Pacific.

160. It is important for me to focus more on the leadership within the Hannover office and globally to focus on communication-wide representation and strengthening by

devolving much of my heavy program responsibilities to the program staff as capacity allows.

161. The new responsibilities assumed by Phil Tanis in the area of operations will also allow an increased focus in my role as general secretary.
162. The officers have played a vital role in leadership and have represented the WCRC regionally at key events and regional councils. A special mention of the role of our president, Rev. Najla Kassab, who has traveled, written, preached and prayed, conveying her strong vision of WCRC's role and mission.
163. Again, special gratitude to our general treasurer.
164. To the Executive Committee who with the officers have played a key role between meetings in the strategic planning, reference group and working group structures.

Conclusion

165. We have put in place a solid vision and program plan. We are attending to inherited administrative and financial challenges. We are having a global impact. We need urgently to attend to our financial stability and our staff gender balance.
166. We are accompanying each other faced with a world of scandalous injustices to people and planet.
167. We have set in place processes to attend to the problems of the past and effectively meet challenges of the future.
168. The staff and interns, the Executive, the officers, Reference Groups, networks, regional councils—we are living into the fullness of a global *koinonia*—we have a long way to go but thanks be to the God of Life by whose grace we are fully engaged in discerning, witnessing, confessing and reforming as a global *koinonia* called to communion and committed to justice, confessing to the God of Life in a world fallen among thieves.

**Addendum:
Executive Summary:
Strategic Plan Programme Group Meeting
9-10 March 2019**

Overview: The Strategic Planning Programme Group (SPPG) met and received accountability reports from the Reference Groups. These were fully discussed and advice and counsel were given where needed. Key questions were processed and some guiding conclusions were offered as noted below. The accountability reports are coherent and on track showing the WCRC to be moving ahead with the initiatives articulated in the Strategic Plan. Some events/actions are already complete, others are in process, and still others in planning stages. A sequencing of programs for the next few years is being worked out collaboratively. Responsibilities have been coordinated and roles clarified.

The Strategic Plan and the process that lead to it were reviewed along with the Programme Plan for 2017-24 (an operational document based upon the Strategic Plan). We reinforced the interconnectedness of all the work we do in our five interlocking dimensions: communion, justice, theology, mission and ecumenical engagement. Four action verbs articulated in the Strategic Plan drive the work: discerning, witnessing, confessing and reforming. We reaffirmed this basic orientation.

General Questions and Responses

Question: What to do when new unforeseen opportunities or funding sources arise?

Response: Have flexibility to respond in accord with the mandates of the Strategic Plan. SPPG can help in discernment as needed.

Question: Is it advantageous to have SPPG meetings face-to-face for better coordination/collaboration in our communal and participatory process?

Response: Yes, insofar as funding allows for this.

Comment: SPPG recognized the changing ecumenical landscape and the advantage of the new structure we are adopting which is more flexible and nimble and participatory. Balance of structure and flexibility is what we seek.

Accountability Reports from the Reference Groups (RGs) and Responses of SPPG

1) *Justice and Witness. (Philip Vinod Peacock reporting)*

This report presents a programmatic overview of the work of the office of justice and witness, based on the Strategic Plan. SPPG discerned together how the Accountability Reports of the RG's should be structured.

In terms of format, SPPG recommends that accountability reports on particular programs lead with "IMPACT" rather than activity. What is intended in the way of impact? Follow with details on activities and their evaluation.

Since this is an accountability report, SPPG recommends that there be some evaluation of the impact of each activity. In each case, we state what we hoped to accomplish, say what we did, and make an evaluative summary.

SPPG agreed that introductions to the accountability reports will be repurposed as introductions to the work in these three areas. These may also be incorporated in a new "user friendly" version of the Strategic Plan.

2) *Communion and Theology (Hanns Lessing reporting)*

Communion:

Each program was presented and discussed and affirmed. Strategic decisions were made on which activities would move forward and which needed additional planning to prepare for implementation.

Theology:

Processes are on the way to revitalize *Reformed World* and to plan for the next GIT (2020 in the Philippines). These processes were presented and affirmed.

SPPG may need to make qualitative feedback on the Reformed Partnership Fund and what roll the Partnership Fund should play in the Communion.

3) *Mission and Ecumenical Engagement (Hanns Lessing reporting)*

Mission:

There was no concept paper approved at the 2017 General Council, so additional work will be needed. SPPG affirmed "Liberating Discipleship" as a promising theme.

With regard to the Ruth Project, specifically regarding the stated purpose ("to offer refuge"), there was general agreement to broaden that purpose to include advocacy, solidarity, hospitality, etc.

Ecumenical Engagement:

Ecumenical engagement of note: JDDJ communions will be meeting at Notre Dame University in March. Wittenberg Witness implementation will be taken up (once LWF appoints new ecumenical officer),

Reports on each of the ongoing dialogues were received, discussed, and affirmed. Sources of funding were clarified.

Implementation Plan Review and SPPG Response

Communion & Theology: Planned Programmes

Decisions: SPPG would like to see a general proposal regarding where we plan to hold our events/activities so that we can ensure balance among the regions. The SPPG can help evaluate the balance.

Program 3 (Disabilities): While this program is within the Communion & Theology RG, SPPG commends that it be facilitated by the Justice & Witness desk. Decision of the SPPG was that we need to get back to the RG and ask whether this is responsive to the actual, concrete, material claim that the people living with disabilities put to us originally.

Program 4.1 (Communicating the Communion): SPPG affirmed the initiative around “Empire: Living out the Accra Confession” that was begun in Manila last year and supports its continuation.

Suggestion for consideration: Shall we hold a “communion” Sunday and provide resources to member churches for worship and preaching and interpretation of Accra and our identity as “called to communion, committed to justice?” We could perhaps have some resource(s) along the lines of “WCRC: From Confession to Confessing.”

Suggestion for consideration: Should we develop a more visual mapping of our organization and its programs? We might see the interrelations better. SPPG agreed that the program pages need to be improved upon for clarity and visual effectiveness. A member of SPPG will assist.

Program 6 (Human Sexuality): SPPG supports a follow-up to the Chennai consultation, which will include a video project. General Council action 56 condemned all acts of violence against LGBTQ persons and committed to work for a safe world for all persons to flourish.

Program 7 (Race, Authoritarianism, and Nationalism--RAN): SPPG suggests that issues of race, the construction of whiteness, and white supremacy should receive more attention.

Staff Questions to SPPG

Question: Where should RAN settle for monitoring and guidance?

Response: Because it crosses RG's it should be lodged with the SPPG itself, but Philip will be the point person from staff on this.

Question: Program 27 (Migrants) also has overlapping issues. Where shall it be lodged?

Response: Lodge it with the Mission and Ecumenical Engagement RG, but Philip will be the point person on staff.

SPPG reaffirmed that Programs 29-31 do not fall under any Reference Groups as they are under the office of the General Secretary. If there are any programmatic issues they will be brought to the SPPG or the appropriate RG.

SPPG reaffirmed that the Organizational Objectives are not under the purview of the SPPG as they are not programmatic work. The Executive Staff and Executive Committee Officers would be the more likely group to which these would be brought.

Items on pages 15-16 of the Strategic Plan that are not yet translated into activities will receive attention though they connect with work that is ongoing in communicating the communion, empire, redeeming religion, etc. SPPG suggested that these lists may chart the field in which the new editorial board of *Reformed World* can pursue topics; similarly, these could be foci for the GIT.

Planning and themes for GIT were reviewed, discussed, and supported by the SPPG. The appointment of HaeRan Kim-Cragg as Academic Dean received affirmation.

Question: Whether and how WCRC might participate in the Emden Commemoration (450th Anniversary).

Response: We could participate, but would need to keep our role(s) within a realistic scope given other priorities. It cannot become the center of our activity for 2021.

Additional Recommendations from SPPG

The task for SPPG is to provide information that can be drawn into the General Secretary's report. It includes a description of what we have accomplished to date in implementation of Strategic Plan. This information will appear in the three RG Accountability Reports and the summary and guidance from the SPPG's meeting. The SPPG report is summative, referential, and offers guidance to the RGs.

SPPG supported continuing work on the RG Accountability Reports along with a more "user friendly" version of the Strategic Plan.

**Addendum:
Accountability Report
Justice and Witness**

Introduction

Three important pillars have shaped the justice work of our Reformed Family

1. Reading the signs of the times as the first steps in understanding and discerning the will of God and where we have to come together in collaboration with God's plan. Reading the signs of the times is the imperative that Jesus calls his disciples into and implies that we must address questions of structural inequality in the world. To circumvent this is to avoid the roots of the problem and is a refusal to allow the radically inclusive love of God to reach all of God's creation.
2. Justices issues are all interconnected. They cannot be separated and treated individually but is undergirded that the prerequisite of true peace is inclusive social, political, ecological and economic justice
3. The mission of the church can be summarized in working with God in building the "Kin-dom". To build the kin-dom is to be committed to the building of just and inclusive communities that are alternative spaces of resistance and hope in the midst of Empire that turns us against each other and breaks solidarity and human community. Specifically, this means that that justice has to be at the core of the theology we produce to help churches in their mission. Justice has to be at the core of our passion to become a communion. It further means that there is a necessity to forge a communion that has justice at its very heart.

With this background the General Council 2017 resolved that the primary areas that drive the justice work of the WCRC will be economic justice, ecological justice, gender justice and inclusive communities (Action 23).

Overarching Objective

The Strategic Plan 2018-2014 of the WCRC stated that the overarching objective for Justice would be that 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).

It further stated that 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 Justice and Witness desk of the WCRC seeks to work both intersectionally and collaboratively. In its intersectional work it seeks to not only hold the four areas of justice work together but to also engage critically and creatively with the theology and communion desk. In the strategic plan 2018-2024, and in particular response to the General Council 2017, the General Secretariat evolved a Programme Desk that would work on cross cutting dimensions of work together.

In the strategic plan it stated that

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 three areas that the Programme Desk worked together since the General Council were

Race, Authoritarianism and Nationalism

The Strategic Plan stated that:

- 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 these 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.

In implementing this objective, the Programme Desk organized a two-part consultation in December 2018 in Bangalore, India and Bangkok, Thailand that sought to bring together activists, ideologues and theologians from among Black and Dalit communities that will think together on ways to name as well as address the present rise of fundamentalism and authoritarianism. The first part will be an exposure to Dalit reality in India followed by a consultation in Thailand. The

consultation will seek to evolve a position paper on Resisting Cultures of Discrimination, Authoritarianism and Nationalism from below.

The consultation worked with the objectives of:

1. Conscientizing the membership of the WCRC through naming and understanding the new systemic and ideological formulations of the new political economy.
2. To create networks of resistance among and between Black and Dalit communities
3. To assess whether a process confessionis is required for Reformed thinking on the church and the state.

The consultation resulted in:

1. A message from the participants addressing the issues of cultures of discrimination, authoritarianism and nationalism from below
2. Papers that will be published in the September 2019 issue of the Reformed Communion
3. A network of Black and Dalit Theologians/Activists

Strengthening Communion

The WCRC recognizes that:

- 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.

With this objective the Programme Desk of the WCRC held a consultation in Chennai in November 2017.

The consultation affirmed the following commitments:

- Commit to the Bible
- Commit to critical Reformed theological engagement
- Journeying together seeking God's voice
- Commit to the radical hospitality that Jesus called us to
- Commit to continued conversation
 - respect
 - love

- trust
- listening to a variety of voices including those most affected
- Commit to praying for and with one another

Mission in the context of Crisis and Marginalization

The Strategic Plan recognized that

- 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) It further acknowledged 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) And it sought solidarity with our member churches and other communities who live in contexts of religious violence.

To this end a consultation on Mission in the context of crisis and marginalization is being planned to be held between the 7th and the 11th of November 2019 and a working/planning group has already been set up to work towards this.

Further a consultation on reconciliation and peace is being planned in Kirkuk, Iraq (on invitation of the governor) for 2020.

NIFEA

In its collaborative work it seeks to work with similarly minded ecumenical organizations and other partners. A major part of this work is the NIFEA process.

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.

GEM School

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.

Objectives

The School is held with the following objectives in mind.

1. To identify theological starting points for economic justice and to understand the nature and logic of the relationship between theology, ethics and economics.
2. To provide a basic understanding of mainstream economic thinking
3. To identify, relativize and contextualize methodologies and normative fundamentals of economics.
4. Widen the horizon of economics by introducing ecological, feminist and other pluralistic approaches.

Third GEM School in Mexico City, Mexico

The second GEM school was held in Mexico City, Mexico between the 19th of August and the 1st of September bringing together seventeen participants for a ten-day programme. Rev. Chris Ferguson and Rev. Philip Peacock served as faculty bringing in the WCRC perspectives to the NIFEA process.

GEM School Evaluation

The respective coordinating staff of the WCRC, WCC and CWM had a GEM school evaluation and planning meeting. The major recommendations that evolved were a streamlining of the GEM school curriculum in order to meet the objectives of the GEM school. The evaluation also called for an overhauling of the GEM school faculty.

Fourth GEM School, Jakarta, Indonesia

A fourth GEM school is in the process of being planned in Jakarta, Indonesia in the last two weeks of August 2019.

Coordination of Regional Activities

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)¹.

G20 Inter-religious meeting and Ethics and Economy Dialogue

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 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. The WCRC supported the meeting through its partner CREAS

Objectives of the Meeting

The objectives of the consultation were to

1. Create spaces for inter-institutional and inter-disciplinary reflection and analysis.
2. To 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
3. 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.

¹ 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.

Rev. Chris Ferguson, General Secretary and Rev. Philip Peacock, Executive Secretary for Justice and Witness brought the meeting's attention to the premises and goals of the NIFEA process to this important consultation.

NIFEA Core Committee Meeting

In preparation for the meeting of the Global Ecumenical Panel on a New International Financial and Economic Architecture which was to be held in New York on the 21st and 22nd of April 2018 an ad hoc panel was put into place.

The Objective of the Ad Hoc Panel were:

1. To evaluate the NIFEA process and specific programmes
2. To prepare directions and perspectives that should be pursued at New York
3. To discern programmatic directions for the WCRC NIFEA work which may also inform the Strategic Planning Process of the WCRC

The Proposed Outcomes were:

1. A clear direction for the WCRC work
2. 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.

The meeting met in Hannover on the 2nd and 3rd of April 2018 and brought together five persons (one absentee due to illness) to discuss and deliberate NIFEA process 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.

NIFEA Panel Meeting

The 3rd meeting of the Ecumenical Panel on a NIFEA took place in New York to connect with the United Nations 3rd Economic and Social Council Forum on Financing for Development (FfD) which took place from 23-26 April 2018 at the UN headquarters.

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.

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

Objectives:

1. To analyse the signs of the times for the economy and the earth
2. To identify emerging and persisting elements of economic and climate injustice and the key issues ahead
3. To set up a process to update the NIFEA Plan, especially the priority actions, in light of the above and our findings so far
4. To strategise new actions and partnerships as we advocate the analysis and transformation of NIFEA

The 3rd Meeting of the NIFEA Panel

The third meeting of the NIFEA panel met in New York City between the 21st and 22nd of April 2018. 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 World Council of Churches 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:

1. The importance of creating a culture of accountability, putting financial observatories in place, and developing new, just financial structures
2. Forgiveness as the starting point to pave the way for reconciliation, restitution and recovery
3. Strengthening the coalitions of different movements (economical, ecological, social) and not compartmentalizing them; linking poverty, ecology, and inequality as a single issue
4. Encouraging governments to invest in ecological advancements
5. Mobilizing by informing communities, bringing shocking data to the fore to stir people into action
6. Working on taxation issues at the national and global level; joining with other civil society groups like Oxfam
7. 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

8. Changing our own lifestyles by examining gender justice and ecological living within the Church
9. Continuing to rally against things that obscure the Gospel

These recommendations of the NIFEA panel were worked into an action plan for the next three years by the respective staff of the WCRC, WCC and CWM.

Campaign on Just Taxation and Reparation

The Action plan of the NIFEA panel called for a campaign on Just Taxation and Reparations which will be launched in June this year. Preparations for the campaign are underway including a planning meeting in March 2019 with the objectives of

- Deepening churches' understanding of tax justice and reparations as a means to tackle worsening socio-economic inequalities and ecological challenges, not least climate change
- Sharing, exchanging and learning from church engagement and initiatives from around the world to promote just taxation and reparations
- Developing a joint ecumenical campaign or action on just taxation and reparations

The consultation will develop an ecumenical campaign to stimulate church actions for tax justice and reparations.

A campaign on tax justice under the banner of "Zacchaeus Tax" is underway and the intention is that one of the launching sites would be at the UN High Level meeting on the SDG's in New York in July 2019.

The justice section of the strategic planning document sought to work with the four verbs of Discerning, Witnessing, Confessing and Reforming. The following sections of the accountability report will follow the same format as the strategic plan as a template for reporting.

Discerning

Vision and Mission Consultation

The justice dimensions of the strategic plan were particularly strengthened by a Vision and Mission consultation held in March 2018 with the specific objectives of

1. Providing a meta-reading of the President's and General Secretary's report and the actions of the General Council 2017 in order to insightfully reflect on and shore up the vision implicit in these into a consolidated language.

2. Producing an advisory document that will offer a contextual basis, theological vision and programmatic direction toward strategic planning for the next seven years.

The consultation not only fed directly into the strategic plan but also worked to specify the direction of the justice work of the WCRC.

The consultation was intended to bring the three streams of finding a contextual basis, a theological vision and a programmatic direction into a consolidated document. It worked through short white paper presentations and plenaries that foregrounded the various perspectives. Three working groups, each working on one particular aspect was established. Each group had a listener who would serve as part of a writing group. Working groups worked to develop the trajectories into concrete language that was constructive and contributed to the larger strategic planning process. Sufficient effort was taken to ensure cross-fertilization of the various streams and work them together into an integrated whole. A listening/writing group worked towards gleaning from the different groups and worked the results into a document by the end of the consultation.

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.

Critical Reflections on Empire

A joint programme office consultation was held in Manila to enable thinking on current reflections on Empire. See the report of the Theology and Communion Desk for further details.

Regional Consultation on Empire

A regional consultation on Empire and Reading the Accra Confession was held in Jakarta, Indonesia at the end of October 2018 with the following objectives

1. Understanding the message of the Accra Confession in the current global geo-political context and its social, economic, cultural, political and security impact for the global community
2. To identify the position and agency of the WCRC member churches in Indonesia in addressing the impact of change and global geo-political dynamics for Indonesia through the lens of the Accra Confession
3. Affirming the commitment and theological praxis of the Indonesian churches in doing theology from the perspective of the victims of globalization

The consultation brought 45 Church leaders from all Indonesian member churches to think strategically of doing mission in the context of Empire. The consultation had the impact of drawing enthusiasm from the Indonesian churches in using Empire as a lens to discern the signs of the times.

Witnessing

Objective: 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.

Ecological Justice

The WCRC, in accordance with its Strategic Plan, and the call of the General Council has become an active member in the Season of Creation Ecumenical Programme. It has decidedly asserted its position by shaping the message from the Season of Creation 2018 as well as by occupying a position on the steering committee and the advisory committee.

Gender Based Violence and Disability Advocacy were identified as priorities for 2019 onwards.

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.

North Korean Solidarity

A solidarity visit was made to the Korean Peninsula before the 2018 Executive Committee meeting. The visit to North Korea was with the WCC. This visit resulted in the WCRC making a strong commitment to and the calling of all its member churches and ecumenical partners in supporting the Panmunjom declaration.

The WCRC also supports 8 women theological students at the Pyongyang Theological Seminary as well as supporting other activities of the Korean Christian Federation and has been an active participant of the Korean Ecumenical Forum.

Iraq Solidarity

The WCRC along with its member the PCUSA made a high level solidarity visit to churches in Iraq in October 2018. The delegation included the President and the General Secretary. Apart from encouraging the churches in the region by this visit the visit also resulted in an invitation to conduct a peace and reconciliation consultation in Kirkuk. Preparations are underway for the organization of this meeting in 2020.

Palestine Solidarity

The WCRC continues with its policy of supporting the cries of the Palestinian people as outlined in Action 55 of the General Council Actions. It is in the process of putting together a study guide that uses resources from member churches that speaks to the cry of the Palestinian people. The guide will be ready the Executive Committee meeting 2019.

Witness at the Border

The WCRC through its regions (AIPRAL and CANAAC) and with its member churches in North, Central and South America are planning for a high level solidarity visit to the Mexico-USA border in the first week of April 2019. The visit will include education, awareness and advocacy for/on migration and particularly its root causes. It will also involve worship at the border and advocacy activities in Washington D.C.

The specific objectives of this solidarity visit are

1. The conscientization of our member churches and the societies in which they find themselves over the issues involved
2. Making Visible
 - a. the multiple and underlying causes that make forced migration a growing reality in the region
 - b. the hardships of the migrants on the way to the Mexican-United States Border
 - c. the laws that violate human rights and the manipulation of legal systems
3. Weaving a wide ecumenical and social network in pursuit of the defense of human rights.
4. Advocating in different areas so that the actions are not merely palliative, but that a true transformation of the causes of forced migration is sought.

The Witness at the Border was intended to send out a strong message of the Church's advocacy for human rights and particularly the rights of migrants and those seeking asylum.

Reforming

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.

Ordination of Women

On 8 March 2019, International Women's Day the WCRC will launch a communication strategy for communicating the Faith Declaration. The communication strategy will include

1. Series of stories on women who have been ordained posted on the web page with link to the declaration
2. Email with a set of six questions on the faith declaration on the ordination of women for churches to study
3. Prepare and post document on the faith declaration to specific churches

Further a series of consultations particularly for the 41 member churches who do not ordain women is being planned. Already a consultation is being planned along with the CWM for the month of October on the ordination of women.

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.

TESF and Beyond

In the year 2018/2019 the WCRC began supporting sixteen new women candidates through its Theological Education Scholarship Fund. With this the present fund is over and plans are in place to initiate a new fund with the specific goals of not just scholarships but also education and training programmes.

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).

Gender Policy

Two Gender Policy Consultations have already taken place and a gender policy and implementation strategy are ready to be presented to the Executive Committee in its May 2019 meeting.

Confessing

Being a communion that is committed to the full and just participation of all. To attain the goal of full and just participation the WCRC is committed to working with youth and people living with disabilities. Both priorities of Confessing full and just participation have been prioritized for end 2019 and 2021 respectively.

Addendum: Communion and Theology Accountability Report

Introduction

The General Council yielded a new framework for the programme work of the WCRC: The desks of Communion and Theology and that of Justice and Witness should cooperate and develop an integral 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.

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 and the confessions of Barmen, 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.

Theology Programme

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.

RAN (Racism, Authoritarianism and Nationalism)

Programme Objectives:

- 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.

Under the auspices of these objectives and along with the Justice and Witness desk, a two part consultation was conducted in Bangalore and Bangkok. Please see the Justice and Witness report for details.

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.

A meeting in October 2018 brought together a group of theologians from across the globe to reflect on contemporary thinking about empire. This consultation resulted in initial formation and thinking about a network of theologians.

Global Institute of Theology (GIT)

The Global Institute for Theology will continue to nurture and encourage the work of young theologians and scholars. Planning for the next GIT, to be held in 2020, is well underway. An academic dean has been selected (HyeRan Kim-Cragg) and the location decided (the Philippines).

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, revolving around those priorities noted in the Strategic Plan. After a year’s hiatus, the first issue of *Reformed World*, Volume 68, has been printed and the second is in the planning process (*Reformed World* is produced three times each year).

Mission and Ecumenical Engagement

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)

A Mission in the Context of Crisis and Marginalization consultation is being planned in Egypt for November 2019. A working group has been set up and planning is underway.

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)

International Reformed-Anglican Dialogue (IRAD)

The IRAD met at the Vancouver School of Theology 24-30 August 2018 under the leadership of the co-chairs Elizabeth Welch (WCRC) and Howard Gregory

(Anglican Communion). The dialogue focused on *koinonia*. The scope of the theme is both exciting and challenging said report participants. *Koinonia* is adopted within the New Testament to push in a number of ways the commonality of inheritance and calling through faith. The first draft of the report discerned a tripartite structure namely, where does *koinonia* come from? How has it been embodied? And how can *koinonia* shape the priorities of the church and world? A drafting meeting was further conducted in London at the offices of the Anglican Communion.

Reformed-Pentecostal Dialogue

The fifth session of the Reformed-Pentecostal dialogue took place in Legon, Accra, Ghana, under the theme, “Ministering to the Needs of the World: Mission and Eschatology.” This year the dialogue focused on the significance of eschatology to mission. The dialogue will present its report by end of 2019.

The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification

In Wittenberg, the WCRC had 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 World Communion 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 differs from 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!

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

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 were presented at a conference in March 2019 at Notre Dame University in the United States, and a statement issued from the participants (see annex) reaffirms the progress made and looks toward next steps.

The Wittenberg Witness

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

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 Executive Committee meeting 2019 in Zürich 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.

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

At this point, the WCRC has not had a chance to consider and adopt this report. Unfortunately, illness has again prevented the necessary preliminary steps to prepare the discussion process for the Executive Committee at its 2019 meeting. It is anticipated that this will be taken up in 2020.

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.

On going meeting with the LWF have helped strengthen the relationship with them and other ecumenical partners.

Annex

NOTRE DAME CONSULTATION STATEMENT

Who we are and why we are here

In a broken, divided and contentious world, we as representatives of five world communions, Anglican, Catholic, Lutheran, Methodist and Reformed, have met at the University of Notre Dame, Indiana USA, from 26th to 28th March, drawn by a common urgency to present the message of God’s liberating grace and hope for this world. We are convinced of the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ to transform us and the world and we are committed to witness more effectively together to the salvation given to us in Christ (Romans 1:16).

We believe that the Holy Spirit has brought us together following our agreement on the doctrine of justification, expressed in the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ) which states that: “Together we confess: By grace alone, in faith in Christ’s saving work and not because of any merit on our part, we are accepted by God and receive the Holy Spirit, who renews our hearts while equipping and calling us to good works” (para.15). This Trinitarian approach is important for us in understanding justification and sanctification fully.

Our communions are witnesses that through JDDJ we are overcoming centuries-old controversies. We are now five world communions that adhere jointly to the JDDJ. And we rejoice in the fresh and new ways in which our five communions can with

vigour, trust and confidence work in realising a deeper communion towards the full visible unity of the Church and to make manifest the growth in communion which we have already been experienced.

What we affirm together

Experiencing a deep sense of our commonality in the time we have spent together:

We re-affirm the basic truths of the doctrine of justification which are expressed in JDDJ, emphasising that the message of God's grace is powerful and urgently needed in our time.

We commit ourselves to communicate this message to people of our time in meaningful and relevant ways through our common witness and service.

We affirm that justification calls for sanctification, a holiness of life which is both personal and social, and advances a common commitment to resisting and overcoming injustices, which should lead to a life of justice in the world, recognising and defending human dignity and the integrity of all that God has created.

We affirm through our discernment that the Holy Spirit uses one another's ministries, worship and church life, in order to do the Holy Spirit's work to create its fruit, in faith, hope and love.

We affirm that all our activities should be guided by the first imperative of From Conflict to Communion (Lund 2016): We "should always begin from the perspective of unity and not from the point of view of division in order to strengthen what is held in common even though the differences are more easily seen and experienced." We will continue to review how the Lund imperative is being addressed in our church programmes and ecumenical engagement. We rejoice that we are given fresh perspectives of seeing one another and given a new dynamic in our inter-relationships, helping us to find undiscovered fruit in what has already been done before. This will enable us to address further more fully the various questions among us requiring additional clarification as indicated in JDDJ.

We have found that the method of the differentiating consensus has proved to be a fruitful means of overcoming controversies by identifying common substance and distinguishing from its different confessional expressions. Thus this type of consensus encompasses both agreements and differences. It is a creative way to deal with past, present and future complexities, holding together differing perspectives without reducing them to one perspective. We are convinced that we should apply this method to other controversial questions within and between the churches but also to conflicts in the wider society.

We realise that ecumenism proceeds at different levels that are inter-related with each other. Sometimes local ecumenism is lively and is able to inspire theological reflection. In other cases theological reflection challenges ecclesial practices and calls for changes.

What we want to do together

Our churches face similar challenges in communicating the meaning of justification to today's society in ways in which meet the experiences and needs of the world. We are gripped with the imperative of proclaiming the good news of salvation, through compassion and working for justice.

Yet the message has not reached and engaged with all humankind. There is a challenge for us to witness to God's liberating grace in ways which provoke and convey the hope and grace of the gospel.

To proclaim God's grace in our time requires connecting the distinct horizons of justification in biblical times with contemporary perspectives. Language from our traditions about the human person before God, grace and sin, forgiveness and righteousness, must come alive for people today. This work requires careful ecumenical study at all levels, locally, regionally and globally. Such bridging work results also in fresh proclamation. The world is in need of the message of God's liberating grace. In a time of individualism and commodification, we want to stand together to offer the message that God's salvation, human beings and creation are not for sale.

We will work to strengthen our witness to the common bond of baptism we share. We propose to work on creating appropriate resources for celebrations of baptism and renewal of baptismal vows where they do not exist already. In a similar way liturgies to celebrate justification and our common baptism around 31st October, the eve of All Saints, should be offered more widely. Common themes for spiritual edification and ecumenical reflection for each year should be identified.

In all these ways we wish to make more visible our common witness, in worship and service, on our journey together towards visible unity, walking together, praying together and working together. In this new reality in our common life, we shall review the application of the Lund Principle of 1952: "that churches should act together in all matters except those in which deep differences of conviction compel them to act separately" which we have all affirmed.

Next Steps

We will establish a Steering Committee to take forward the momentum generated by our meeting through promoting and monitoring the process of developing relationships among the adherents of JDDJ, comprising at least two persons from each world communion, to meet annually at the time of the Conference of Secretaries of Christian World Communions.

We propose a follow up forum, following the affirmations made, to review progress after a further three years.

We propose to develop a range of catechetical tools and resources, in various forms, written and visual, including a dedicated common webpage, to be used in all aspects of church life and theological education.

Conclusion

We thank God for the opportunity to experience the fellowship of our five communions in this new way. We are grateful for the generous hospitality offered to us by the University of Notre Dame which has enabled us to move forward together on our journey, inspired and energised to proclaim anew the good news of God's liberating grace.

May the Holy Spirit bring to completion the work that we have begun.

March 2019

The University of Notre Dame, South Bend

Addendum:
WCRC Implementation Plan
= WORKING DRAFT =

Program Title: Foundations of Just Communion

Objective

The programme evaluates the WCRC's programme work in the 2017-2024 period, assesses the advances and shortcomings in the conceptualising and implementation of the principle of "just communion" and prepares the background paper on communion for the 2024 General Council.

Timeline: 2023

Program Title: Youth – Dreaming & Engaging in a Transformed Communion

Timeline: Planning: as from 2019; 2020: Regional activities; 2021: Youth summit

Program Title: People Living with Disabilities

Program Title: Communicating the Communion

Objective

The WCRC is a relatively new organisation. The understanding of what it means to be part of a communion is not yet very deeply rooted in the member churches. The programme wants to communicate the Barmen, Belhar and Accra Confessions as central pillars of the WCRC's communion identity. The programme wants

- to create awareness of what it means to belong to a communion;
- to encourage to live as a discerning, confessing, witnessing communion prepared to be reformed by the Word of God;
- to promote the commitment to prophetic discipleship.

Program Title: Empire (Living Out Accra)

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.

Program Title: Gendering Leadership, Enabling Empowerment

Objective

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.

Program Title: Towards a safe world for all persons: WCRC member churches commit themselves to work against violence and discrimination of LGBTQ persons

Objective

WCRC member churches have different views on human sexualities, but the General Council in Action 56 condemned “all acts of violence against LGBTQ persons, regardless of our theological views, around the globe”, confessed “complicity in supporting violence through its silence” and committed itself “to working for justice, freedom and a safe world for all persons to flourish.” In continuation of the process that had started in November 2017 in Chennai, the programme will bring churches with different views on human sexuality together on the basis of the rejection of violence against and discrimination of LGBTQ people. The programme will sensitise against violence and discrimination of LGBTQ people and encourage activities that ensure “justice, freedom and a safe world for all persons to flourish”

Program Title: Race, Authoritarianism, Nationalism

Objectives

1. 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.
2. The WCRC will seek to conscientize its membership through naming and understanding the new systemic and ideological formulations of the new political economy.
3. 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.

Program Title: Mission in the Context of Crisis and Marginalization

Objective

Many of our member churches live and witness in a context where they experience religious tensions and suffer persecution. The WCRC is committed to accompany these churches in the search for mission strategies that will guide them in crisis and marginalization.

The intended impact of the consultation would be to work together to offer to our member churches and the wider ecumenical community a framework for the peaceful co-existence and protection of the rights of minorities.

Objectives

- A comprehensive contextual and global analysis of the crisis
- Development of mission strategies for conflict resolution, justice and peace building and peaceful coexistence
- Formulation of a message on the role of the church in conflict resolution in the context of religious tensions.

Program Title: NIFEA

Objectives

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.

Program Title: 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.

Program Title: Gender Based Violence

Program Title: 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

Objectives

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.

Program Title: Ordination of Women

The 2017 General Assembly adopted “The declaration of faith on the Ordination of Women” and pledged to journey with those members who do not yet ordain women.

Objective

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.

Program Title: Accompaniment of Women in Theology

Objectives

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.

Program Title: Gender Policy

Objective

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).

Program Title: Indigenous People

Objective

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).

Program Title: Engaging Theology: Theologians in the Service of WCRC

Objective

To form a bank of resource people with theological expertise and capacity to draw upon Reformed tradition and contextual theology to address the present reality faithfully.

Program Title: Global Institute of Theology

Timeline: 2020, 2022, 2024

Program Title: Revitalizing *Reformed World*

Objective

The Reformed World to become a vehicle of communication, sharing widely the best work in our areas of committed conversation and action in the five dimensions of our work: Communion, Justice, Theology, Mission, and Witness.

Program Title: Clarifying Missional Foundations

Program Title: The RUTH-Project: Refuge – Underlying Causes – Theological Perspectives – Human Rights

Objective

To call churches: to challenge forces and systems that displace people; to advocate the rights of migrant people; to offer refuge.

Program Title: Redeeming Religion

Program Title: Strengthening the relationship with the Anglican Communion

Objective

Strengthening the relationship with the Anglican Communion

Program Title: Strengthening the Relationship to Evangelical and (Neo-) Pentecostal Movements

Program Title: Strengthening the relationship with the Mennonite World Conference by preparing steps towards reconciliation and joint witness.

Objective

The Mennonite World Conference and the WCRC will set up a joint process that will prepare steps of reconciliation between the two communions and identify areas of joint witness and collaboration.

Program Title: Strengthening the relationship with the World Methodist Council

Objective

Based upon the dialogue reports the WCRC will continue to intensify the collaboration with the World Methodist Council and deepen the communion between WMC and WCRC.

Program Title: Strengthening the Relationship with the Ecumenical Patriarchate

Program Title: Strengthening the Relationship with the Lutheran World Federation: Living out the Wittenberg Witness

Objective

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.

Program Title: Strengthening the Relationship with the Roman Catholic Church

Objective

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.

Program Title: Exploring the Ecclesial Consequences of the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification

Objective

The five signatories of the JDDJ seek to clarify further the ecclesial implications of that agreement and formulate the consequences for church-communion.

Program Title: Clarifying Theological Foundations of Interreligious Cooperation

Program Title: Dialogues for Life

Program Title: Cameroon

Program Title: Partnership with World Alliance of Christian Communicators

Program Title: Inviting Churches

Objective

Expanding WCRC membership (as per criteria in WCRC constitution article V.G.) by inviting churches into the Communion.

Program Title: Increasing Member Church Contributions

Objective

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.

Program Title: Pursuing Funding Partnerships

Objective

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.

Program Title: Annual Appeal

Objective

Extending the annual appeal to the whole of the English-speaking world while developing contextual fundraising appeals in other areas.

Program Title: Exploring Fundraising Methodologies

Objective

Exploring contextual and creative fundraising methods, including possibilities for an endowment fund.

Program Title: Budget Funding

Objective

Continuing other fundraising work to ensure the annual core budget is balanced.

Program Title: Maximize Current Staff Capacities

Objective

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.

Program Title: Expand Staff through Partnerships

Objective

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:

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.

Program Title: Question of Location

Objective

Organizational stability will remain the priority in the short-term. By 2023, however, the organization will return to the question of its physical location.

Program Title: Work and Witness with Council for World Mission

Objective

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.

Program Title: Communicate Vision and Work

Objective

The WCRC will communicate its vision and work, doing so in such a way as to strengthen the Communion and witness to the world.

Program Title: Plan for General Council

Objective

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.

Program Title: Regional Networking

Objective

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.



African Communion of Reformed Churches

Called to communion, committed to justice

REPORT OF THE AFRICA COMMUNION OF REFORMED CHURCHES (ACRC)

Uma Agwu Onwunta, President
Lungile Mpetsheni, General Secretary

INTRODUCTION

The ACRC is a live entity of the WCRC, responsible to and for the member churches in Africa, while—at the same time—encouraging the churches to make the communion work by implementing the resolutions and programmes of the WCRC. The ACRC has held its General Assembly successfully, where the elections for the new leadership were held. It has also held some activities that are aimed at enhancing and developing capacity. This report covers the leadership of the ACRC, highlights of the General Assembly, the youth capacity development workshop and the Executive Committee meeting of the ACRC. The challenges that are faced by Africa are also cited.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE ACRC

The leadership of the ACRC, as elected at its General Assembly in June 2018, is as follows:

President: Rev. Dr. Uma Agwu Onwunta - Nigeria
Vice President: Rev. Pauline Kanuthu Mwaura - Kenya
Secretary: Rev. Lungile Mpetsheni - South Africa
Treasurer: Mr. Koku Mawulikplimi AMEGA - Togo

Sub-regional Coordinators:

Central Africa: Rev. Isaac Kalonji - Democratic Republic of Congo
East Africa: Rev. Martin Wanjala - Kenya
Southern Africa: Rev. Dr. Gustav Claassen - South Africa
West Africa: Mrs. Paulina Afful-Arthur - Ghana

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE ACRC

The General Assembly was held at Kalonji, Rwanda, in June 2018. It was attended by approximately 53 participants. Part of the Assembly was a workshop on Conflict Management, which was well conducted by the Rev. Dr. Samuel Ayete-Nyampong. Rwanda was an ideal country to hold a workshop on this subject in, considering its

genocide story. As such, the leadership of the Presbyterian Church in Rwanda enhanced the quality and relevance of the workshop through sharing firsthand information on how the conflict resolution processes were handled in the country. In addition to Rwanda, there were stories shared from Nigeria, Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Cameroon and South Africa. It was made clear that Africa still has a lot to do in the field of conflict management.

The General Assembly had been attended, supported and addressed by WCRC General Secretary Chris Ferguson. He presented the strategic plan of the WCRC, and the Assembly made a commitment to support the WCRC strategic foci. That was evidenced by the presentation of the ACRC strategic plan, which is summarized below:

- a. **GENDER JUSTICE:** The plan provides the setting up of a Gender Desk. Prof. Christine Landman to work with Mrs. Veronica Muchiri as coordinators. The issues of human sexuality to the activities will be considered by the same desk. They will link up with TUMEKUTANA—the organization that was established by Reformed/Presbyterian women more than 11 years ago. They will also interact with a similar organization was established in 2016 for men—Pan African Presbyterian Men Fellowship (PAPMF). Each sub-region should identify a person for the Gender Desk.
- b. **PEACE MAKING AND OVERCOMING VIOLENCE:** To be coordinated by Rev. Dr. Benebo Fubara-Manuel. Each sub-region is meant to spearhead an area. The region should identify who should lead.
- c. **ECONOMIC AND ECOLOGICAL JUSTICE:** Rev. Prof. Jerry Pillay and Rev. Dr. Gustav Claassen to coordinate.
- d. **OVERCOMING RACISM AND AFFIRMING THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLE:** This is to be centred in Southern Africa and to be coordinated by Rev. Dr. Buhle Mpofu.
- e. **REFUGEES:** East Africa will be the centre of this and will be coordinated by Mrs. Veronica Muchiri and Rev. Omwero SC Knony Halema of Uganda.
- f. **YOUTH DEVELOPMENT:** Central Africa to lead and Adv. Tibonge Namwayi Ng'ambi will coordinate in conjunction with the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon. The activities will involve empowerment.
- g. **THEOLOGY:** Rev. Dr. Setri Nyomi, assisted by Rev. Cornelis Janse van Rensburg to lead the initiative.

Another area of importance that the Assembly worked on is the revision of the constitution for the ACRC. This is still at an elementary stage and, once the draft is concluded, it will be submitted to the general secretary of the WCRC for comment.

Towards the actualization of the Gender Desk and Youth Development, there was a session where men, women and youth formed the respective discussion groups and the reports confirmed the need to concentrate on the works of gender justice and youth capacity development. As a result, it was agreed that the next meeting would focus on youth capacity development.

YOUTH CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP

The youth capacity development workshop was scheduled to be held in Cameroon. Due to the unrest in Cameroon, which, as it was reported, would pose a risk to the participants and make it difficult for the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon to host, the workshop was moved to South Africa where it was held on 18–20 February 2019. The workshop focused on gender justice and ecological justice from the perspective of the youth. Two young guest speakers from Zambia and Tanzania, respectively addressed the two areas. The workshop provided a platform for the youth to network and to come up with ways of contributing to the liberation and development of Africa, especially in the light of the fourth industrial revolution. It was resolved that youth capacity development will be an ongoing programme for the ACRC. The sub-regions were urged to continue with the work.

ACRC EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The ACRC Executive Committee meeting was held on 21 February 2019 in South Africa, immediately after the youth capacity development workshop. The meeting reiterated the commitment to support the strategic plan of the WCRC by all means possible. The lead people for each of the ACRC strategic plan will be activated and in their pursuit, they will link the activities to the positions taken by the WCRC Council. The focus of area in the next event of the areas will be the promotion of theologies from below, especially theologies from Africa. This will be done in the context of marking the fifteenth anniversary of the Accra Confession.

The sub-regional coordinators will assist as much as possible to reach out to the members churches in their respective sub-regions, so as to ensure that the ACRC journeys together with all the member churches to strengthen communion.

CHALLENGES

The major challenges in Africa, arising from Africa's vastness, are communication and travelling to the member churches and to the regional events. We are struggling to keep in touch with all the member churches. Members struggle to reach out to the member churches and/or to venues of the regional events. This makes it difficult to get affiliation fees from the churches. Efforts are being put in place to address the challenges.

CONCLUSION

The ACRC strives to keep in sync with the WCRC. The resolutions of the 2017 WCRC General Council are being incorporated in the life and work of the ACRC. The ACRC strives to arrest the challenges that Africa faces. Where there is communion, there is a way. We continue to express profound gratitude to the WCRC office in Hannover, for care and support, without which, it would be difficult or impossible to hold the events that are cited in this report. We are also grateful to the five members from Africa who serve in the Executive Committee of the WCRC for the wise guidance, as and when necessary.



Annual Report

La Alianza de Iglesias Presbiterianas y Reformadas de América Latina

Darío Barolin

Secretario Ejecutivo

Introduction

AIPRAL presents to the Executive Committee of WCRC its annual report. It presents a brief resume of what we are doing and what our main issues are. The report is divided in the following points:

- Companionship to member churches
- AIPRAL's programs
- Communications
- AIPRAL's Legal Entity
- Ecumenism and Partnership

Companionship to member churches

Being in communication and dialogue with member churches is the very base of our task as alliance of churches. Even though, most of the communication is done in virtual ways, the presence of AIPRAL in the territory it is much value for our constituency.

From a political and social point of view, the region is facing new and numerous complex processes that bring instability to the region. The situation of Colombia, the Northern Triangle, Nicaragua, Venezuela and Brazil, just to name some are worrisome. In this process, evangelical fundamentalist movements are very active adding some extra concerns regarding the status of sexual minorities, women, Indigenous people, etc. This movement is very well spread in the region, organized and connected in the region with extensive support in the media and economic resources. Their impacts in some countries are very powerful and affect our church members too. The three explicit aspect of their agenda are: a) anti-gender equality; b) anti-LGBTQ people; and c) Christian Zionism. Unsaid agenda is very much complex and diverse but in any case related with regressive economic policies, denial of environmental issues and militarization of societies.

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

Venezuela

AIPRAL has been walking close to the *Iglesia Presbiteriana de Venezuela* in this difficult period. This is done together with PC(USA) and its Venezuelan network. Last year we visited the church there and facilitate to design a concrete plan of action to ease the economic and social difficulties the country is going through. We help this church to establish connections with other organizations like *Brot für die Welt*, ACT Alliance, etc.

Recently we joined a consultation organized with ACT Alliance and other regional actors to have a better understanding of the situation in Venezuela. As result of this process and further dialogues, we are at this point in communication with WCRC's office to produce a concept note that allows a wider ecumenical network of companionship to the churches there and their witness for a peaceful resolution of the social, economic and political crisis of the country respecting the international laws and human rights.

In addition, we started a dialogue with a Reformed Church in Barquisimeto. This church has only one congregation but is willing to become a member of our organization. We had some contact in the past and now they are willing to move forward. However, AIPRAL's bylaws does not allow single congregations to become a member. This is not the only case. We are in dialogue with congregations and/or presbyteries and synods that are willing to have a relationship with AIPRAL. Then, it is very much a need to find mechanisms of participation, cooperation and dialogue for this new reality.

Northern Triangle

Given the recommendations approved by the 2017 WCRC General Council to support the so-called Northern Triangle and our churches there, AIPRAL, PC(USA), and the *Iglesia Reformada Calvinista de El Salvador* have been working together to empower young leadership to build communities of peace. We understand this project as a way to empower local communities and allowing, at small scale, the people to have some alternatives to migration. This program started in El Salvador but it will develop in the other countries of the region. Rev. Carlos Tamez, coordinator of the program of Justice and Communion, is part of the leading group in this issue.

In addition, we have visited the churches in the region, especially in El Salvador and Honduras. Thanks to PC(USA) we have started contact and dialogue with the Presbyterian Church in Honduras. This church is not member of AIPRAL but we have begun a process of mutual knowledge and cooperation.

The *Iglesia Evangélica Nacional Presbiteriana de Guatemala* has sent a letter expressing its wish of withdraw from our organization. The letter itself it is not very clear about motives and we have been trying very hard to have some

communication with this church. Moreover, the IENPG has in a middle of a conflictive process or reorganization.

The president of AIPRAL, Rev. Agnaldo Pereira Gomes, has participated in the General Assembly of the *Iglesia Presbiteriana y Reformada de Cuba*. In this way, we reinforced our relationship with this church that is one of AIPRAL's founders. In addition, it offered a unique opportunity to know the processes of changes and transformation happening in the island and to support churches' efforts to witness the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Mexico

After our General Assembly in 2016, the *Iglesia Nacional Presbiteriana de México* withdrew from the regional council but continued as a member of the WCRC. As anticipated in last year report, Rev. Chris Ferguson, Rev. Agnaldo Pereira Gomes, Raissa Brasil and Rev. Darío Barolin had an encounter with the board of the INPM to dialogue about the differences with AIPRAL and how to work on that. We had a good dialogue and we agreed to take some steps to work in each side. Unfortunately and repeating the same pattern, later we received a letter informing that the GA of the INPM also decided to withdraw also from WCRC.

In the same visit, we had a meeting with the *Comunión Mexicana de Iglesias Reformadas y Presbiterianas*. This church has been become already member of AIPRAL and we expect that the same process is taken by WCRC. It is very important to be in companionship of this church with is striving for being a testimony of God inclusive love.

AIPRAL's Programs

After a period of evaluation, we decided that the different departments of AIPRAL should work together having women and young as key element of all their activities. Moreover, the issue of justice and communion should be key to the theological and mission department as the other way around. The results are promising so far. We are having a better and stronger participation of women and youth in our activities, as well that a better understanding of the different issues when we approach them with a transdisciplinary approach.

Paz en tu territorio (Peace in your territory)

This program is intended to produce materials and train young people and specially women for leadership and peacemaking. This year (May 23 to 26) the encounter for southern cone will be done in Uruguay and there are national follow ups events in the Northern Triangle. The process in the Caribe will start in the second part of the year.

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

This program produces 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. Annually they organize a national encounter to produce material for the Praying Day for Latinoamerican Women. Last year it was organized in Brazil and this year it will be held in Mexico.

Accra Confession and the SDGs

AIPRAL intends to dialogue from its tradition and theological heritage, particularly in the Confession of Accra with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It seeks to critically articulate the Reformed diaconal and theological tradition, with the SDGs and thus offer a theological framework and action plan for the member churches in search of a strategic alliance in the implementation of the SDGs.

We are in the process of producing a plan of action to facilitate the dialogue in our constituency on the possibilities and interaction with the SDG from a reformed perspective.

Communications

La Voz (The Voice)

Most of our communication is digitally done. *La Voz* is published quarterly. This newsletter intends to keep a process of dialogue, information and theological reflections among our constituency. Also, the web page and Facebook are used to reach a wider audience.

AIPRAL's Legal Entity

At this moment, we are in the final stage to obtain the legal entity in Uruguay. It will be a legal entity of first degree and composed by the actual member of the Executive Committee elected in the last assembly. This entity will be renewed in their membership after every assembly of AIPRAL.

Ecumenism and Partnership

We constantly make effort to empower ecumenical relationships. The most remarkable are:

- Participation in the Echo School organized by WCC in El Salvador.
- Together with WCRC we were part of the efforts to bring an ethical approach to the G20 meetings.
- Active membership in ALCnoticias: See: <http://alc-noticias.net/es/>

- We cooperate with CWM in the organization of DARE 2018 in Mexico.
- We are glad to be in dialogue and cooperation with several churches outside our region like PC(USA), Church of Scotland and have started communication with the Presbyterian Church of Taiwan and Reformed Presbyterian Church in Equatorial Guinea.
- 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.
- We participated last March in a very important meeting organized by ACT Alliance. It intended to have a better and deeper understanding of the situation in our region. It is expected to be a major level of relationship and partnership.
- We were part of WCRC delegation at the Global Christian Forum held in Bogotá.



www.canaac.org

**REPORT OF THE CARIBBEAN AND NORTH AMERICAN AREA COUNCIL (CANAAC)
TO THE WORLD COMMUNION REFORM CHURCHES EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

Angela Martins, Convener CANAAC

CANAAC has, since its most recent General Assembly held in October 2018 in Guyana, moved forward with a renewed commitment under the General Assembly theme *“Living Faithfully, Building Relationships as a Communion.”*

The Steering Committee which arose from the General Assembly finds as:

Convener: Ms. Angela Martins (United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands)

Co-Convener: Mr. Colin Watson (Christian Reform Church in North America)

Treasurer: Dr. Gail Allan (United Church in Canada)

Secretary: Mrs. Simone-Asha Singh-Sagar (Presbyterian Church in Trinidad and Tobago)

Members at large:

Rev. Matthew Sams (Presbyterian Church of Canada)

Rev. Karl Heimbeck (Presbyterian Church (USA))

Rev. Jesus Rodriguez (Presbyterian Reformed Church in Cuba)

Rev. Valeska Austin (Guyana Congregational Union)

Rev. Lisa Vander Wal (Reformed Church in America), *ex officio* WCRC VP for the region

We met virtually via Zoom in December 2018 with plans to meet virtually each quarter during the next two years as we seek to advance our regional expression of the WCRC priorities. One challenge in this is that Rev. Jesus Rodriguez is unable to join us due to internet challenges in Cuba. We continue to seek ways to include his voice in our deliberations.

To set the context for this report it is important to grasp a sense of the energy and space of the General Assembly. Following that, I will outline what we have engaged with already and the larger strategic thinking which pervades.

Our recent General Assembly

The General Assembly was a truly special time for all of us. Most of those present were new to CANAAC and a number of us were young adults. This was a time of life-giving worship, a time of listening and reflection. We had a time, too, of personal immersion into some raw spaces of Guyanese lived realities. Spaces which challenged us to gather again, seeking deeper immersion in the Word as we responded to the call to build relationships as churches strengthening our Communion across the Caribbean and North America in meaningful, lifegiving ways. Of importance as well was that we *must* engage with the voices of youth and young adults within our Communion.

In all these efforts we were mindful of our region's place within the global Communion to which we belong. In the spaces of our General Assembly there was much evidence of the lived emergence of its theme—*Living Faithfully, Building Relationships as a Communion*. What continues to live is the energy of those common spaces we occupied together. It is this which excites me and propels me forward as the Convener.

1. Encouraging positive relationships

The previous General Assembly was held in 2014 in Jamaica and due to a number of challenges, the next one was not held until October 2018. This means that only the 2014 Assembly gathering preceded the 2017 General Council when normally there should have been two. The 2018 Assembly did not receive a report on what was achieved during this period so reference to issues or impacts arising cannot be presented here or built upon. We propose to host our next General Assembly in 2021 with an expectation of the following one in 2023 immediately preceding the next General Council in 2024.

Arising from the General Assembly in October 2018, we sent out the Assembly Message in mid-November 2018. We were intentional in sending this out to all the Heads of Communions as well as all delegates to the General Assembly and also to those member churches who were not present at the Assembly. To the latter group, we invited those eight member churches who were not in attendance to name delegates to CANAAC to serve with us during the next two-year period. This is a work in progress and we will continue to reach out to all our member churches as opportunities present.

During the first five months since our General Assembly I feel that we have made some real gains. I was able to reach out on a more personal note to a number of our members, one of them was Robina Winbush. I invited Robina to serve as one of my mentors during this my first foray into leadership in this ecumenical space. She and I

had extensive conversations around my curiosity of the historical back pages of CANAAC and what were some of the unwritten precedents which I needed to be aware of. She offered me helpful insights and shared a number of historical footnotes which I am grateful for. Among other things, she helped me appreciate the precedent role of ecumenical officers on the CANAAC Steering Committee. To hear of her passing as I sat in a Council for World Mission meeting in Guyana as CANAAC (its ecumenical partner) with two CANAAC member churches on 12 March 2019 was numbing. She and I had spoken just a week earlier while she was in Palestine. Robina is a huge loss to CANAAC, a regional ecumenical space she deeply loved and applied herself to. She was very involved in the planning and implementation of our most recent General Assembly, and we will remember the Bible studies and the several movements which made our Assembly so memorable. She shared much with me willingly, and I wanted more. More was not to come. God had other plans.

In preparing this report I reached out to some colleagues with whom Robina has journeyed in spaces, particularly CANAAC, far longer than I have known her. I looked for colleagues who knew her in different ways and all who come to raise thanks to Almighty God for all that Robina was as one of us from this region. This is what they had to say:

Rev. Patricia Sheerattan- Bisnauth, Guyana Presbyterian Church

You have fought the good fight, you have finished the race, you have kept the faith. (2 Timothy 4:7)

It is with deep sadness and a profound sense of loss that we received the devastating news of the death of our sister, Rev. Robina Marie Winbush. Robina was a dedicated Minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ both as a pastor and a Reformed ecumenist, whose passion for justice and righteousness engendered a remarkable and refreshing impact within the ecumenical movement and in particular, the World Communion of Reformed Churches and the Caribbean and North America Area Council.

CANAAC is grateful to Robina for her dedicated leadership, especially in the turnaround of the Area Council to enable the strengthening of the Communion through a living and dynamic engagement of member churches in the Caribbean and North America and also with the global Reformed community.

Robina was a beautiful and deeply caring friend and mentor to many of us, counselling and sharing words of wisdom, strength and comfort. She taught us that sisterhood is essential to sustain us in the struggle for justice and peace.

Robina's commitment to gender justice was evident throughout her journey, impacting lives as well as institutions, calling on people to resist all that is evil

and to turn around from this world's death dealing ways and to follow the way of Jesus Christ and to believe *"in the power of the resurrection today, right now in the face of death and destruction!... Resistance means committing ourselves to work for and building communities and systems that values and honors each human being as one in whom divine potential exists... Resistance is seeking out those who have been defiled, dismembered, and discarded on the dung heaps of this world and daring to speak words of life, restoring to them all that has been destroyed!*¹

Rest in peace and power Rev. Robina Marie Winbush. Your legacy will continue to be a blessing onto us. We love you!

¹ Robina Marie Winbush, *Not A Mumbling Word*, page 100 in *Righting Her Story: Caribbean Women Encounter the Bible Story*, edited by Patricia Sheerattan-Bisnauth, World Communion of Reformed Churches, Geneva, Switzerland, May 2011.

Rev. Karen Georgia Thompson, United Church of Christ

Rev. Robina Winbush was a close colleague for the eight years that I held the role as ecumenical officer for the United Church of Christ. We held comparable roles in our denominations and typically saw each other multiple times per year, or were present on phone calls. My primary memory of Robina was that she was the first colleague to call when I started as ecumenical officer. She called, welcomed me to the role, and provided a few dates that I needed to be aware of and put on my calendar.

Robina held a role among her colleagues as being the one among us who had been around the ecumenical world for a while. We appreciated her wisdom, her passion for racial justice and her commitment to the ecumenical movement. Her presence will be missed among us. May she rest in eternal peace.

Rev. Michael W. Caine, Old First Reformed United Church of Christ, Philadelphia

I first met Robina at Union Seminary. She was a year ahead of me in school, but always much further ahead in life. I would tell her back then that she had the face of an angel. Truly her smile could light up a room, and it was just the promise of her compassion, grace and wisdom.

We stayed in touch sporadically, mostly because I have friends in a Harlem Presbyterian Church that she used to preach at. How excited I was when I was

invited a couple of years ago to be part of the UCC's delegation to the World Communion of Reformed Churches. I realized that Robina was one of the organizers of the North American delegates. I got to spend time with her in Leipzig, Germany, and then in Georgetown, Guyana. She was still Robina, though now matured into a powerful church leader and justice fighter. But the compassion, grace and wisdom were the same. The angel face too. Some things death cannot even destroy. May she be organizing angels above...

These voices are just a mere few but by their inclusion here it is my hope that they offer a glimpse of what a significant loss Robina is to her church (PC(USA)) and not just to CANAAC but the global ecumenical space. May she rest in peace.

Beyond my engagements with Robina, I strategically reached out to a number of others seeking to open conversation spaces around new ideas, support for myself and/or gain movement with our various initiatives. In all these spaces, persons were receptive and helpful both then and now. One person who I must name is Phil Tanis, our support person from the WCRC Secretariat. He has been that and lots more. Phil has been invaluable in helping me grasp the context for several issues before me as well as a major help with our website and our communications efforts generally. Much gratitude to you, Phil, for your all-around support to our region.

As Convener for CANAAC's Steering Committee it is clear too, that there are a number of relationships which need to be fostered. Already identified as a priority, is building good relationships with our member churches and also with their ecumenical officers in particular. Beyond that, there are external relationships with ecumenical partners in the region such as CANACOM and CWM, as well as building good relationships with other WCRC regional councils. Engagement with CWM is already in train. I was invited as an ecumenical partner to the CWM Members Mission Forum which took place in Guyana, 9-14 March 2019. Dialogue is underway with CANACOM around opportunities for us to work together with one expression of that as a shared hosting of future Assemblies. I look forward to meeting with the Conveners from the other regions at this upcoming Executive Committee meeting.

2. Governance and engagement of membership

The Steering Committee has taken both a governance and robust communications focus going forward. A number of learnings emerged from the backdrop of the previous four years. The primary one is the critical importance of nurturing open communication and good relationships between and among our members. A second aspect is around managing equity, ensuring that all member churches have an equal voice in the space of CANAAC. This is particularly important as we have among us member churches that are very large while we have some quite small churches as we also have the complexities of the North – South issue facing us. Nurturing relationships is key.

The final issue which became clear quite quickly, was the absent governance processes which were needed in the context to provide clarity and focus for CANAAC to engage its agenda.

One of the first things done was to agree a number of processes that would guide how we operate as a Steering Committee. These ranged from how its members treated communications they received to how the Steering Committee engaged with its wider membership thru working groups, etc. The work on updating our bylaws will incorporate a number of these processes to ensure that the future work of CANAAC is guided by good governance practice.

Our *Directions Document* (workplan) which was started during the General Assembly is a work in progress and not yet finalized as of the writing of this report. We feel that its cover will stretch beyond the two-year period before us as the focus is as such a longer-term plan than simply that which encircles a period between two General Assemblies if we are to properly engage the priority areas of WCRC. That, and the fact we have the issues mentioned earlier to be integrated allowing for a new type of culture to emerge within CANAAC for the longer term.

One critical issue which emerged after our General Assembly is that while the WCRC Constitution was updated in 2017 at the General Council, the Bylaws for CANAAC were not updated to reflect some key changes at the regional level. The chair of our Nominations Committee has already taken up this piece of work to update our Bylaws. Additionally, our Nominations Committee at our General Assembly raised a number of recommendations arising from their work which will now be reviewed in the light of the updated CANAAC Bylaws.

Producing a skills profile instrument was agreed as a way to allow the Steering Committee to be able to draw on the skills of membership in helpful ways for the implementation of its various initiatives; this is in progress. As well, the Steering Committee has agreed as an intentional effort to keep the full membership engaged on an ongoing basis. Our approach to this is via a WhatsApp group set up immediately following the Assembly, and a follow on is that we produce a newsletter to capture the ongoing work being carried out.

3. Financial Management

Rev. Karen Georgia Thompson has been the Treasurer for CANAAC since 2011. As such, our funds were managed by her church and subject to its regular auditing process. At the recent Assembly, Dr. Gail Allan (was elected Treasurer and the transfer of our funds to the United Church of Canada is in train.

We have had some discussion around a funding model for CANAAC. Phil Tanis has been asked to investigate and advise the Steering Committee at its next meeting how other regions handle the issue of funding to continue this conversation. Here again, I recognize the need for a governance process which requires a workplan and an annual budget. We need these as helpful inputs to determine the funds needed annually and how they would be used in the furtherance of our Communion's larger efforts.

4. Social media

During the period under report, improving our communications has been a big priority. Thanks to our colleagues at the Christian Reform Church of North America (CRCNA) we have been able to have our website redesigned and it is now being updated regularly, thanks to Phil et al. CRCNA has kindly offered to cover the nominal ongoing cost for the site for us.

A new feature of our website is a page dedicated to *News* about our member churches as well as a page called *Resources* which contains documents helpful to our member churches. We are now finalizing some criteria for our membership to share information with us for our News page. One feature which will be among the criteria is news items which feature member churches in partnership. This feature is lived out by a post now on our site about the February 2019 meeting of PC(USA) mission partners in Latin America and the Caribbean meeting in Colombia at which Rev. Dr. Yvette Noble- Bloomfield (UCJCI) was the keynote Bible study presenter. We will continue to reach out to our member churches for information of this nature which we can share on our site. As well, we will seek to keep faith with using both English and Spanish on our website as the languages of our region. It keeps faith with a primary feature of our General Assembly's theme "*Living Faithfully, Building Relationships as a Communion.*"

The Resources page started with us posting the useful background documents we received in preparation for the recent General Assembly and this page will continue to be updated as useful reference material becomes available to us. An up-and-coming feature of our Resources page will be Bible studies and reflections produced by our member churches. These we hope to receive in sufficient enough quantity that we can bank them, developing a regular schedule for posting. We believe that all these can be helpful resources which our member churches can access as and when they need them. Feedback from our member churches will guide the evolution of this and other pages on our website. One aspect not yet embarked on is the inclusion of the voice of our youth on our website. In tandem with efforts on our website, our Facebook page is also regularly updated as well.

5. Programmatic areas of focus

Our Directions Document for CANAAC (2019-2021) at the time of writing this report is still a work in progress. What I can share here are highlights from this body of work which aligns itself with the WCRC strategic plan, focusing primarily on those region-specific areas raised by membership at the General Assembly with the addition of one new objective regarding Indigenous peoples.

The Working Group chaired by Rev. Matthew Sams (Presbyterian Church of Canada) has developed a contextual reading of our region to ground this programmatic focus. Arising from the General Assembly the following are the priorities for this region:

1. CANAAC empowering its Communion (full and just participation by all)
2. CANAAC and its Theological Education needs
3. CANAAC and Justice
 - a. Economic Justice
 - b. Social Justice
 - c. Gender justice
 - d. Environmental justice
4. CANAAC as an ecumenical partner in our region

The Steering Committee in its direction to the Working Group was mindful that it wanted a meaningful document with intentionality for the region rather than a shopping list of items. It is anticipated that the document should be ready for submission to the Steering Committee by end of March 2019. Once this is received the members will be invited to offer feedback so that it can be finalized.

5. Venue for 2021 General Assembly

Whilst we have not yet confirmed a host venue for the next General Assembly a marker has been put down. It has been noted that 2021 is a year in which a number of significant ecumenical movements (WCC, etc.) are scheduled to take place so we intend to canvass our members to see when is the best date for us to plan for our General Assembly. It was agreed that this item needs to be kept on our agenda going forward.

In the overall, I feel very positive about our future as a regional expression of WCRC, very grateful for the support from both the WCRC Secretariat and all our members. There is much to be done as we seek to engage *“Living Faithfully, building Relationships as a Communion.”*

Report of the Northeast Asia Area Council (NEAAC)

LIAN Chin-Siong (Joshua)

1. NEAAC holds Area Council meetings every two years, rotating among countries. 22-24 January 2018 was the first ever Area Council in Hong Kong. 2020 will be in Taiwan, 2022 in Japan, 2024 in Korea.

The current NEAAC leadership from 2018-2020 consists of:

Moderator Rev. LIAN Chin-Siong,

Secretary Ms. LU En-hsuan, and

Treasurer Ms. LIN Wan-Jou,

nominated by PCT (Presbyterian Church in Taiwan). Every other member church also sends one member to make up the Administrative Committee:

CCJ (Korean Christian Church in Japan): Rev. HEO Baekki

CCJ (Church of Christ in Japan): Elder FUJIMORI Yoshi

PROK (Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea): Rev. LIM Junghwan

PCK (Presbyterian Church of Korea): Rev. CHO Joohee

HKCCCC (Hong Kong Council of the Church of Christ in China): Rev. Eric SO

2. Usually, the Administrative Committee meets annually. However, there was no Administrative Committee held during the recent Area Council in Hong Kong. And there was also no Administrative Committee held in 2017 because it was the General Council year of the WCRC. NEAAC members only utilized the 2017 General Council to meet briefly during their time in Leipzig to set the dates of the 2018 Area Council. So the Administrative Committee that was held this year in Taipei on 9 April 2019 was actually the first Administrative Committee meeting since 2016 where NEAAC members were able to sit down to talk about business.
3. However, there was an unfortunate situation with the recent 2019 Administrative Committee meeting, in which two members of NEAAC were absent, which is an unusual situation because in NEAAC we seek to make every decision in full consensus among all of the member churches. Rev. Eric SO of the HKCCCC expressed that they need at least two months' notice prior to whatever meeting will be held because they have to discuss the nomination of representative in their Standing Committee and ExCo. Rev. CHO Joohee of the PCK expressed their deep sorry and regret to have to cancel their coming to the meeting only two days before the meeting date on April 9. The 2019 Administrative Committee was thus convened with only the other four member churches (PCT, CCJ, KCCJ, PROK) present. Therefore, it was decided during the Administrative Committee meeting that all decisions made during the meeting should be sent to the two absent churches to get their opinion on the decisions before implementation.

4. The theme of this year's Administrative Meeting was "Revitalizing our Regional Work." We heard updates of each member church. Although PCK was absent, they still managed to present their update and it was read in the meeting. All churches in Korea and Japan expressed that their churches are in decline of membership. And while the PCT membership appears to be growing, it is also a challenge for the PCT that churches are generally speaking not too youth-friendly with its leadership and membership.
5. The Administrative Meeting this year also read and reviewed the whole Strategic Plan approved in last year's Executive Committee of the WCRC. The general impression was that the whole Strategic Plan was trying to include everything and needs to find focus that can show forth a distinctive Reformed and Reforming mark.
6. NEAAC welcomed a program proposal of the PCK to host a NEAAC Youth Empowerment Program in October 24-28. Hosting costs will be shared by PCK and PROK, while other regions should contribute the airfares of attending the Youth Empowerment in Korea. So this special program will not use any NEAAC general budget.
7. The date of next year's Area Council in Taiwan was also set to 10-12 February 2020. The theme was also discussed and tentatively set as "Rediscovering Communion: Power, Just Participation, and Reclaiming the Radicality of the Gospel." Expectation was high that in a Northeast Asian context, this theme can best be dealt with in Taiwan. NEAAC would also like to especially invite WCRC President Rev. Najla Kassab to attend next year's Area Council in Taiwan since it will deal with gender justice and power issues for young people in Asia.
8. A suggestion from Executive Secretary for Justice and Witness, Rev. Philip Peacock, that NEAAC can consider inviting one or two delegates from other smaller churches in Asia that are not NEAAC members to attend the proposed NEAAC Youth Empowerment Program was also discussed. However, it was noted that Asia is very diverse. Northeast Asian churches have issues to deal with that are very different from other areas in Asia. So for the moment this Youth Empowerment Program seeks first to strengthen relationship between Northeast Asian youths.
9. Member churches of NEAAC also utilized the Administrative Meeting in Taiwan to hand in annual membership amount at 1000USD per church per year.

10. NEAAC 2018 Financial Report after Area Council in Hong Kong: Currency in NTD

Date	Notes	Income	Expense	Sum
2018.05.15	Amount received from HKCCCC	380,725		380,725
2018.05.23	Expense for WCRC ExCom flight		9,200	371,525
2018.05.23	Expense for WCRC ExCom accommodation		18,326	353,199
2018.11.08	PCT Membership for 2017-2018	61,290		414,489
2018.12.31	CCJ Membership for 2015-2018	122,692		537,181

**Report of the Council of the World Communion
of Reformed Churches in Europe**

Martina Wasserloos-Strunk, President

STEERING COMMITTEE OF WCRC EUROPE

President: Dipl. Pol. Martina Wasserloos-Strunk (Germany)

Vice President: Rev. Dimitris Boukis (Greece)

Vice President: Rev. Jenny Dobers (Sweden)

Secretary: Rev. Jacobine Scholte-de Jong (Netherlands, till March)/Janos Antal (Romania)

Treasurer: Kerstin Koch

COUNCIL 2./3. May, 2019. Edinburgh

'Europe: a dividing continent? What role can reformed churches have in promoting unity and peace?'

The Council explored the theme both from a political perspective but also, more importantly, from a theological and ecclesiological perspective. How can churches support one another? How can we understand and analyse populist movements and accurately read the signs of the times in which we live? What can churches, as communities of faith, do to reach out to other communities of faith and to express in a new way the belief that all are fundamentally made in the image of God?

Results:

- 1. To react to the increasing xenophobia within our communities through dialogue and discussion of political messages, with special focus on "Christian identity in secular Europe", and finding space to confront right wing parties and populist ideologies even within our churches, all taking into account the current political**
- 2. To improve Christian-Muslim relations by increasing cooperation and dialogue with the Middle East partners of the WCRC, and also learning from the experiences of other WCRC European partners in their cooperation with Muslims. This can entail formal dialogues between Reformed ministers and Muslim imams, local partnerships around shared action in civil society.**
- 3. To have a task force "Theology of diversity" – seeking different approaches for strategies against division and strengthen solidarity.**
- 4. To collaborate with WCRC-RAN process.**
- 5. To bring people of several countries together to share their experiences.**

SOLIDARITY VISITS

In recent years, the Steering Committee has had a policy of making solidarity visits as part of its work. These have taken place alongside regular business meeting of the Committee. We are extremely grateful that the churches visited have received us with open arms. We think that it is a valuable sign to the smaller churches of our communion that our communion cares about them and shares their joys and sorrows. The hospitality is always touching and we are blessed to share time in prayer with the churches. The current Steering Committee has decided to continue this work.

Following the decision of the Council last year to deepen the communion with the so called Middle-East Churches, the Steering Committee was happy to receive the invitation of the WCRC President, Najla Kasab, from the National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon, to come and to learn more about the situation of people living there, with regard to different challenges like the refugee crisis, the threat of radical islamistic groups and the consequent and ambitious education projects for children and students, offered by the church.

ERASMUS PROJECT

“Train the unknown trainer” is an EU financed project with participants in Estonia, Italy, Hungary, Germany and the Czech Republic. The aim of the project is to find out the needs of volunteers working with ecumenical organisations which are working for refugees and to support them. The project is administrated by the Reformed Church in Germany on behalf of WCRC Europe. Now the project has come to its end. We are happy about the fruitful work with several partners across Europe. It was a pleasure to learn together and a privilege to come in contact with people in Churches who live out their faith in engaging with suffered people. Now the final report of “Train the unknown trainer”, a project initiated by the European Region of WCRC is finished. The contact and common discussion about the European response to refugees and migration was a great opportunity to learn more about the situation of churches in Europe and about the political situation they have to live with. Sharing our faith and the motives of our work was an important part of our meetings. The administration of an Erasmus project is not easily done, and we are happy that the Reformed Church supported us with knowledge and experience.

FUTURE PROJECTS

WCRC Europe and the Reformed Alliance will organize an international consultation “Newspaper and Bible – Confessing Christ in Europe Today” in October in Budapest. The study of Karl Barth and his theological thinking encourages Christians, to take up their responsibility for European society and to make their voices heard. We will hear theological keynotes from Hungary and the United Kingdom, accompanied by

case studies, which will highlight the current political situation in different European countries. With this conference, we follow up the decision of the Council to work on the issues nationalism, xenophobia and how we can respond on it from a Christian perspective.

REPORT OF WCRC-INDONESIA

Zakaria J. Ngelow

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 WCRC, Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) and Communion of Churches in Indonesia (PGI). The conference was attended by previous WCRC general secretary, Rev. Dr. Setri Nyomi. He also motivated participants to support the formation of a regional WCRC council for Indonesia.

Some activities

1. WCRC-Indonesia was founded on 9 May 2012 in Jakarta.
2. Since 2012 a simple website of WCRC-Indonesia was provided to share information to member churches. I put them temporarily in my office website at <http://www.oaseintim.org/wcrc-indonesia>.
3. Our Bylaws were approved by members meeting in Kupang, East Nusa Tenggara, on 26 January 2013. The Bylaws were then sent to the general secretary 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 Executive Committee meeting in Ghana, but ratification will be done by General Council in 2017. I learn from our general secretary in Leipzig that there was 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 the 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. Ferguson visited some WCRC congregations in Bandung. Pasundan Christian Church (GKP) was host 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 agreed to spend a day meeting on 29 February 2016 in Jakarta, during a celebration of GPI member churches.
8. The meeting in Jakarta on 29 February 2016 dealt with three main agenda items, namely an introduction to the Accra Confession (WARC, 2004) from an Indonesian perspective; sharing bread among member churches;

appointing a new moderator. The Accra Confession is not familiar to our member churches, although an Indonesian translation was available since 2008 and published in our website. Sharing bread is a program to share available programs among member churches to other members. Pasundan church, for example, offers interfaith program or shelter program for the victim of domestic violence. Other churches are invited to come and learn how Pasundan church runs the programs. 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 treasurer.

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.
10. On 23 – 25 November 2018 WCRC-Indonesia conducted a National Consultation on “Re-reading Accra Confession in the Context of the Latest Global Geo-Political Context and its Effects to the Church, Society, and Nature”. The consultation were funded by WCRC and co-hosted Indonesian church member, GPIB (the Western Indonesia Protestant Church). Participants were delegation of WCRC-Indonesia member churches. Some national experts on related issues were invited to share their insights. Also three officers of WCRC facilitate the consultation: Rev. Dr. Chris Ferguson, General Secretary, Rev. Dr. Hanns Lessing, WCRC Executive Secretary for Communion and Theology, and Rev. Philip Vinod Peacock, Executive Secretary for Justice and Witness. A session was also provided for a meeting with the three WCC officers with leaders of WCRC-Indonesia member churches, and the main agenda are membership consolidation, fund raising for WCRC and possibility for Indonesian church(es) to be the host of coming WCRC General Council.
11. At 28 September 2018 an earthquake (of 7.4 RS) with tsunami and liquefaction devastated some part of Central Sulawesi (Palu, Donggala, Sigi). Government released data that 2,113 people died, hundred or even thousand missing. Three WCRC member churches were severely affected, Protestan Church of Indonesia in Donggala (GPID), Christian Church of Central Sulawesi (GKST) and Toraja Church.

GPID:

1. Affected family heads - 3,945 (= 11,835 people)
2. 173 injuries
3. Death toll: 43 people; lost 8 people

4. Living in tents of 1,534 people
5. Houses 795 were severely damaged, 1,225 were slightly damaged
6. The house was destroyed / lost - 165 houses
7. Church building 58 seriously damaged, 23 slightly damaged
8. The destroyed / lost church building - 11 buildings
9. Manses that were heavily damaged and destroyed / lost - 18 manses
10. A Training Center was lost into the mud of liquefaction.

GKST:

1. Church buildings: 6 heavily damaged, 2 lightly damaged, 2 moderately damaged.
2. Residential houses: 329 severely damaged, 71 lightly damaged, 128 moderately damaged, 36 missing.
3. Death toll: 16 dead, 32 missing; houses and people lost due to liquefaction.

Gereja Toraja:

1. Affected 34 congregations
2. Death toll: 24 people
3. Injuries 38 people
4. Houses of 230 residents were severely damaged; 483 slightly damaged
5. Church building 4 were badly damaged; 24 lightly damaged

Werner Joecker, Administrative Assistant Partnership Fund, offered an amount of grant to help the victims/survivors of the natural disaster through another WCRC member church, the Christian Church of South Sulawesi (GKSS).

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 (87%) Muslim population; 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 Pentacost, Christian Alliance, Adventism, etc.
4. WCRC member churches came from the (1) and (2) background. Some confined to a certain region, some others became ethnic churches that they spread across the country following their members’ migration. While its history from 16th century, most of our member churches were organized into independent church since the 1930s—less than a hundred years under Indonesian leadership.
5. Most of our member churches belong to rural or traditional agrarian churches. Some of their congregations are in the towns or big cities. Only Indonesia Christian Church (GKI) and The Protestant Church of Western Indonesia (GPIB) belong to urban churches. As for the size, some churches have only small number of membership (less than 10,000) but others have some hundred thousand members. Of course you know when you check their respective annual dues. We do not have the number of Indonesian Christians of our WCRC-Indonesia members yet. Our estimation about 10 millions (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 in 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 land. They convert our tropical forest into monocultur of palm oil plantation, or breaking the ground for mineral minings. They also convert people 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 lost their traditional economic resources. Many of them become migrant workers and become victims of human trafficking syndicate. Human rights has become a major issue as some religious minorities, included 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 for the General Council. We also happy that one of our delegation, Rev. Sylvana Apituley, was elected as one of the vice-presidents of WCRC in Leipzig. And we are 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 did 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 it is needed serious efforts to develop better communication. As an effort we keep up-to-date postal addresses, phones, and identify a contact person of each member church. Online information is also updated, such as information from Hannover as we read in WCRC Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/worldcommunion>) or blog (<http://wcrch.ch/blog>). We also share as we get information from member churches. We utilize Facebook group, WhatsApp group and website for sharing information.
2. The second concern is the unpaid annual dues of most of our member churches, which ever increase 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, begin on year 2015, while the back years can be paid in installments. It seems that the WCRC needs to review the amount of annual dues for some member churches which factually have no resources to pay, such as churches with small number of members (only some thousands) while they are economically poor.
3. Another concern is the financial limitation of most of our churches. Unpaid annual dues are related to this limitation. Indonesia is a big country with relatively expensive travel cost. 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 programs. Personally I thought that it seems that the an 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.

I would like to close this report with my sincere gratitude of being included in this WCRC ecumenical ministry. I was appointed in 1912 as president/moderator of Regional Council of Indonesia (we prefer to call it WCRC-Indonesia). In 2016 I was asked to continue. This year will be the end of our term. In November this year our national Communion of Churches in Indonesia was scheduled for XVII General Assembly in Sumba, and it will be the opportunity for member churches to decide the future of WCRC-Indonesia and its new management. Thank you for the opportunity to serve.

DRAFT GENDER POLICY

Introduction

Gender justice includes just and right relationships, mutual respect and accountability, respect for creation and the rights of all people to live life in all its fullness. Gender justice addresses gender and economic injustice, gender-based violence and a whole range of social issues that are rooted in unequal power relations. It is a fundamental building block for church and society.

Gender justice is not just a women's concern, but instead, is an issue for everyone. It seeks to address and dismantle patriarchy, which controls women's labour, sexualities and fertility. Patriarchy also stereotypes and marginalizes men, who have been socialized into deeply-held beliefs and values on what their roles should be. Patriarchy defines masculinity as showing bravery, virility, aggressiveness, dominance, competitiveness, and emotional repression. Men are often socialized into not dealing with their emotions, fears, and vulnerabilities. Men have a vested interest in changing these stereotypes so that they can become better sons, fathers, brothers, partners, lovers and humans. Gender justice requires all genders to work together in partnership.

Gender justice is also integral to our spiritual growth and must be realized in our right relationship with God. Gender perspectives require us to examine and unravel power relations across the breadth of gender identities, paying particular attention to those persons in the intersection of gender and race, colour, sexuality, class, disability, poverty and caste.

The development of a gender justice policy for the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) is part of the journey for churches of the Reformed tradition. Beyond formal equality, we are challenged to examine the deeper questions of substantive equality, that is, of achieving equitable outcomes, and thus creating a true community for all. Our continuing concern and commitment to transformative gender justice is firmly rooted in the story and mission of the Church.

The Gender Justice Policy was created to transform who we are, what we do, and how we act.

Grounded in respect for the body, this Gender Justice Policy fosters physical, emotional, and spiritual health and wholeness. God rejoices when we celebrate spirituality with holiness and integrity.

The Policy starts with a vision of who God wants us to be and the purpose and objectives of this new way of being. We acknowledge that there are many issues that must be addressed in all parts of the Communion. The principles of gender

justice are based on scripture and what the Reformed church has said it believes. Each of us is called to make the necessary changes before the vision of justice and equality can be achieved. We believe that God's love and justice for all peoples and the earth is a core value of reformed theology.

This Policy applies to the WCRC, its executive, staff and member churches. It will be successful only if each of us takes responsibility for its implementation.

Background

The 2017 General Council mandated the Executive Committee and Secretariat of the WCRC to develop a Gender Justice Policy by 2019 and called on them to collaborate with the regional councils to foster and encourage the use of this policy as the practice of the whole communion of churches. It further recommended that this policy include an action plan for the implementation of the policy and accountability measures. Further to that mandate, the Executive established a committee to develop the Policy.¹

We begin by acknowledging our history and beliefs.

We live in a world where injustices thrive, where there is brokenness, and where persons are marginalised. There is a cry for justice, healing and wholeness.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights in Article 7 guarantees that, "All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination."

The Reformed Community has a long and established tradition of working towards a just and equitable world order. It has acted by issuing declarations of faith that cry out for equality and justice for all persons.²

¹ Patricia Sheerattan-Bisnauth (Chair), Peggy Kabonde, Un Hey Kim, Lungile Mpetshine, Hannah North, Lesley Orr, and Beth Symes with staff support from Abigail Scarlett, Katalin Szalai and Philip Vinod Peacock.

² Such declarations can be *status confessionis* meaning "that a Christian, a group of Christians, a church or a group of churches judges that a situation has arisen, a moment of truth has come, in which nothing less than the gospel itself, their most basic confession concerning the Christian gospel, is at stake, so that they feel obliged to testify and act against that situation" Dirki Smit (Cloete & Smit 1985:22). The declaration of *status confessionis*, becomes necessary when the integrity of the proclamation of the gospel is at stake.

In Ottawa the 1982 General Council of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) issued a declaration of faith against apartheid, stating that its theological justification was a heresy.³

During the 1989 Seoul Council, WARC acknowledged that within many churches there had been a marked raising of consciousness for the full participation of women in the life and ministry of the church, and a growing awareness of the injustices faced by women in many societies and cultures of the world.

The 1997 Women's Pre-Conference in Debrecen observed that WARC still had the following issues: the failure to ordain women in some churches, violence against women, sexual harassment, and the failure to include women in church structures.⁴

The 2004 Accra General Council of WARC identified gender injustice as a form of brokenness which destroys right relations – gender, race, class, disability or caste and must be addressed⁵

In 2010 the Uniting General Council in Grand Rapids said that gender justice was an ongoing journey of praying together, engaging, challenging, always seeking discernment on how God wants us to live.⁶

In 2017 the Leipzig General Council of WCRC adopted as a Declaration of Faith that all persons are called to participate in all the ministries of the church.”⁷

³ This arose from a discussion on the political situation in South Africa, whereby member churches concluded that “the promises of God for this world and for [God’s] church are in direct contradiction to apartheid ideals and practices”. They went further and stated that the churches who accepted and defended apartheid “contradict in doctrine and in action the promise which they profess to believe” and concluded “that this situation constitutes a *status confessionis* for our churches, which means that we regard this as an issue on which it is not possible to differ without seriously jeopardizing the integrity of our common confession as Reformed churches”.

⁴ Report of the Women's Pre-Conference 6-7 August 1997, Debrecen, Hungary

⁵ The Accra Confession, Article 27, World Assembly of Reformed Churches, Accra, Ghana, 2004

⁶ “It involves finding and putting into practice new ways to express and live out the uniqueness of bearing the image of God, fulfilling our responsibility of building and nurturing right, just and equal relationships between women, men and the earth.” General Council, World Communion of Reformed Churches, Grand Rapids, USA, 2010

⁷ General Council, World Communion of Reformed Churches, Leipzig, Germany, 2017

Since Ottawa, human understandings of gender identity and human sexuality are evolving, to now include their full diversity.⁸ Each person is created in God's image and this Policy recognizes all genders and sexualities, with an understanding that terms and definitions related to gender and sexuality are diverse and evolving.

We celebrate the on-going work of the Spirit of God in the justice programmes carried out by the Reformed churches in response to God's call to be responsible bearers of the image of God. From Ottawa to Seoul to Debrecen to Accra to Grand Rapids to Leipzig and into the future, the spirit of God has been active in creating and sustaining gender justice initiatives.

Our Vision for Gender Justice

"There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3.28)

We seek a world in which all persons of diverse genders and sexualities live together in dignity, safety, mutual respect, balance and justice; in an enabling and flourishing environment in which all are able to achieve their full potential, in full enjoyment of life; where there is no gender discrimination in decision-making to shape economic, political, social and cultural development, in determining the values that guide and sustain such development and enjoying its benefits.

When the Communion embraces and lives out this vision, we will have reformed who we are, what we do, and how we act.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of the Gender Justice Policy is to advance WCRC's vision of living out our Call to Communion. our Committed to Justice⁹, enabling churches to participate in God's transformative mission of gender justice and partnership.

The objectives of the Gender Justice Policy include:

1. Transformation of churches and communities so that God's desire for gender justice is realized and that human dignity is ensured for all;

⁸ We no longer understand gender as binary: male or female, but, instead, includes persons on the full spectrum of gender. Similarly, our understanding of human sexuality has broadened to include lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and two-spirit persons.

⁹ World Communion of Reformed Churches, About Us

2. Articulation and re-construction of our theology of Gender Justice built on Reformed principles of theological reflection;
3. Transformed structures to ensure the full, just and equitable participation of all persons in all aspects of church life; and
4. Creation of safe environments to end marginalization and the abuse of persons by implementing policies and oversight mechanisms that address gender-based violence and sexual harassment

The Communion has made positive strides in gender justice towards eliminating discrimination and achieving equality.

But we acknowledge that:

- We fail to acknowledge and use the diverse gifts of each person in our communities of faith.
- We fail to hear the voices of women and other marginalized persons in our churches.
- We fail to honour the body and sexuality of each person and have distorted the wholeness of each person and the relationship between their sexuality, spirituality and morality.
- We fail to respect a woman's right to control her body and her right to choose.
- We fail to recognize and address the additional challenges persons in the intersection of gender and race, sexualities, class, disability, and caste face, including racialized women, women with disabilities, women of different castes, Indigenous women, and women living with poverty.
- We fail to include all genders as leaders, including lay and ordained leadership, in worship, sermons, liturgy and the work of our churches.
- We undervalue and do not pay equitably for the contributions of women and other marginalized persons in our churches.
- We abuse the power and authority of leadership, which includes sexual abuse and harassment and results in physical, emotional and spiritual harm and the shaming and exclusion of marginalized persons.
- We fail to keep all persons safe, and engage in gender-based violence, including family violence and abuse of children, take no action and remain silent when we are called to speak out and to act in order to stop the violence.
- We fail to allocate sufficient money and resources in the budgeting processes of our churches to address the issues of gender inequality.

- We fail to speak up, to advocate and to champion the rights and dignity of women and other marginalized persons in our faith communities and in the world

And what does the Lord require of us? To do justice, to love kindness and to walk in God's way (Micah 6:8). In Accra (2004) we were called to reject any form of injustice which destroys right relations – gender, race, class, disability, caste or poverty.¹⁰ This has been and will continue to be a challenging commitment. Only through the radical transformation of who we are, what we do, and how we act, will we begin to address gender inequalities in our Communion.

Principles of Gender Justice Policy

We are each made in the image of God (Genesis 1: 26 &27) and together, as Church, we are the body of Christ. (Romans 12:5; 1 Corinthians 12:12 & 27)

- we are each created, gifted and loved by God;
- we are each loved and valued for the beauty and diversity of our bodies;
- our sexuality is a gift from God and a source of life;
- we are each needed to serve the church, without discrimination;
- service includes both lay and ordained leadership, in the priesthood of all believers; each type of leadership is needed and equally valued;
- no one is excluded in the basis of their gender, sexuality, race, class, disability, poverty or caste; and
- leadership must be exercised through the spirit of God, with respect for all.

The Body of Christ, our Church, will begin to heal when:

- the voices of women and other marginalized persons begin to be heard in our Communion;
- the sexuality of each person is honoured, including the right to control one's body;
- women and other marginalized persons are encouraged and supported to take on leadership roles in our churches, including ordination;
- the contributions of women and other marginalized persons are fairly valued, without discrimination on the basis of gender;

¹⁰ The Accra Confession, 2004, Article 27

- churches no longer tolerate gender-based violence including sexual abuse and sexual harassment by persons in positions of power and leadership, but instead discipline persons for abuse of their power;
- churches become welcoming and safe spaces for women and marginalized persons;
- as churches and as a Communion, we speak up, advocate, and champion the rights and dignity of women and other marginalized persons in our churches and in the world; and
- churches allocated sufficient time, money and resources in their budgeting process to continue the challenging work of gender justice;

CALL TO ACTION

We are called to go out into the world, transforming ourselves, our churches and our Communion as agents for positive change for women and other marginalized persons, respecting the dignity and worth of all.

For the World Communion of Reformed Churches

WCRC, its general secretariat and the executive committee shall be responsible for the implementation of the Gender Justice Policy. To do so, the Communion shall:

- lead by example in ensuring that its executive and administrative staff reflect gender equality through an equitable representation of all genders at all levels of the organization;
- ensure that member churches have equitable representation of women and other marginalized persons at all the General Councils;
- encourage and support member churches to have equitable representation of women and other marginalized persons at all levels of their organizations; and
- invest sufficient time, money and resources for the successful implementation of the gender justice policy throughout all the regions;

For Member Churches

Member churches shall share the custodianship and the responsibility for implementing the Gender Justice Policy and are being called upon to act by:

- affirming that Gender Justice is an issue of justice for their communities of faith;

- conducting critical theological reflections of what it means to live out that each person reflects the image of God;
- promoting the inclusivity of all persons and condemning the marginalization of anyone on the grounds of gender or sexuality;
- affirming the conviction that God calls all persons, including women and other marginalized persons to serve;
- welcoming women and other marginalized persons into ordained ministry, so that they may fulfil their baptismal vows;
- developing mentorship programmes for women and other marginalized persons;
- facilitating engagements, dialogues, and discussions that seek to promote the dignity of all persons, including women and other marginalized persons;
- Commit to a process of study and discernment over the issues of sexuality, sexual pleasure, fertility, reproductive rights and the right to choose;
- condemning all forms of violence whether psychological, physical, emotional or spiritual both in churches and the wider community;
- creating safe spaces in communities of faith where women and other marginalized persons are not sexually abused or harassed; and
- creating space in communities of faith where men can live and work in harmony with women and other marginalized persons;
- nurturing responsible young men who will not fall into the trap of using their masculinity to abuse women; and
- enacting sexual misconduct policies with clear guidelines that will deal effectively with all forms of sexual misconduct of ordained and other leaders, ensuring that disciplinary action addresses the issue of power imbalance and ensuring the safety of everyone in the communities of faith.

We can do all things through Christ, who strengthens us (Philippians 4:13).

Glossary

Gender discrimination

"...all the norms that we have nurtured about the roles and places of women and men in family, society and church, which have resulted in exclusionary practices that pain the heart of God and fracture relationships." and "systemic exclusion of women from positions of leadership in the church" - Uniting GC

Gender Justice

"Gender justice is an ongoing journey of praying together, engaging, challenging, always seeking discernment on how God wants us to live as women and men. It involves finding and putting into practice new ways to express and live out the uniqueness of bearing the image of God, fulfilling our responsibility of building and nurturing right, just and equal relationships between women, men and the earth." - Uniting GC

Gender – based violence

Gender-based violence is an umbrella term for any harmful act that is perpetrated against a person's will, and that is based on socially-ascribed (i.e., gender) differences between males and females.

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is any unwelcome sexual advance, request for sexual favour, verbal or physical conduct or gesture of a sexual nature, or any other behaviour of a sexual nature that might reasonably be expected or be perceived to cause offence or humiliation to another, when such conduct interferes with work, is made a condition of employment or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment.

Marginalized persons

USAID defines marginalized as those who are denied, or have very limited access to, privileges enjoyed by the wider society

Gender Inequality

"gender inequality is a characteristic of most societies, with males on average better positioned in social, economic, and political hierarchies" - UNDP

Accra Confession

"The Accra Confession was adopted by the delegates of the WARC 24th General Council in Accra, Ghana (2004), based on the theological conviction that the economic and environmental injustices of today's global economy require the Reformed family to respond as a matter of faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ." - Accra Confession

Patriarchy

"is the control of women's labours, sexualities and fertility" - Gender policy
"the situation where women's stories and thereby, their experiences, have been ignored, forgotten, misinterpreted and devalued, while stories about men and thereby their experiences have been elevated, remembered, emphasized and overvalued. Patriarchy also refers to systemic societal structures that institutionalize male physical, political, economic and social power over women."

Apartheid

"racial segregation specifically : a former policy of segregation and political and economic discrimination against non-European groups in the Republic of South Africa" - Merriam-Webster Dictionary

Heresy

"(the act of having) an opinion or belief that is the opposite of or against what is the official or popular opinion, or an action that shows that you have no respect for the official opinion" - Cambridge English Dictionary

Discrimination

various types of social prejudices (ie racism, sexism, classism) are contained within and enacted from positions of power, within society, against the offended groups.

Gender

socially constructed (and often unequal) roles, responsibilities and expectations culturally and socio- politically assigned to women and men and the institutional structures that support them. Unlike biological sex, gender is learned and can be transformed. Throughout history gender roles and expectations have been changing.

Masculinity

pertaining to men. It is used to speak of the roles and behaviour that are traditionally assigned to men and sometimes of the properties or characteristics of men.

Sex

biologically determined and physical differences between women and men.

Gender Analysis

a tool that seeks to understand social, religious and cultural processes that create and maintain gender differences - in order to design informed responses of equitable options. It involves the examining the different roles women and men play in society and the differential impacts of policies related to politics, economy, social relations and religion on these roles. Extending from the idea that gender differences are based more on social, cultural and religious defined values, than on biology, this type of analysis recognizes and challenges the value systems which are

responsible for the different (and unequal) impacts and benefits experienced by women and men of any given society.

Marginalization

social process of becoming or being made marginal - to relegate or confine to a lower social standing or outer limit or edge, as of social standing.

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 2019 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, 2018-2019, the Ministry at the United Nations has maintained two broad areas: to equip individuals and communities to engage in global discipleship and to advocate for justice and peace in the name of Jesus Christ.
3. The ministry's staffing pattern remains unchanged: a Director/Representative to the United Nations, a Mission Specialist for International Advocacy and a Young Adult Volunteer. The Young Adult Volunteer position will be eliminated in July 2019, and funds used to support that position will be reallocated to hire part time administrative support for the office. The Presbyterian Mission Agency of the Presbyterian Church (USA) funds 100% of expenses at the United Nations Ministry.
4. In 2019 and 2020, the Presbyterian Ministry at the United Nations joins the Presbyterian Mission Agency in its works on Matthew 25 and the three focus areas of **congregational vitality, structural racism and systematic poverty**.
5. 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.¹ Together we seek life in all its fullness by:
6. The ministry worked with General Secretary and the Justice and Witness Executive Secretary of the WCRC to examine how to strengthen our relationship. A new memorandum of understanding between the Presbyterian Church (USA) and the World Communion of Reformed Churches is in process.
7. The ministry supported the work of the WCRC through participation in the 3rd Meeting of the Ecumenical Panel on a **NIFEA** and the solidarity visit on the **US/Mexico border**.

¹ 2 Corinthians 5:18-20.

8. Addressing the issue of **environmental justice** through participation in the process to implement recommendations of the UN climate change conference. The Presbyterian Church (USA) sent delegates to the UN Conference of Parties negotiations in December.
9. The Presbyterian Church (USA) sent a delegate to the International Conference on the Global Compact for **Migration** in Morocco. Our delegate partnered with the ecumenical community through a partnership with Churches Witnessing with Migrants.
10. Advocated for a just and lasting peace in **Syria**. 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. The Working Group is in transition, however advocacy on a just and lasting peace in Syria continues.
11. Engaging the **UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)**. In 2019, the priority theme was: Social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls; and a review theme was: Women's empowerment and the link to sustainable development (agreed conclusions of the sixtieth session). Twenty-seven women from the Presbyterian Church (USA) participated in formal sessions, side events and advocacy on the agreed conclusions document. The Presbyterian Church (USA) welcomed the accreditation of Presbyterian Women in the Presbyterian Church (USA) as an independent organization. The ministry worked faithfully with Reformed partners from Association of Presbyterian Women Aotearoa New Zealand and Presbyterian Women in the Presbyterian Church (USA). The delegation 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.
12. The ministry hosted a delegation for the **United Nations Commission on Social Development**. The delegation focused attention on the need for reformation in incarceration systems in the world. The ministry co-sponsored two events during the Commission and welcomed the Rev. Stanley Chimesya, prison chaplain, Church of Central Africa, who spoke at both events co-sponsored by the ministry. We have developed a working relationship with the International Prison Chaplains Association and look forward to continuing this work together.
13. Participated in the United Nations Permanent Forum on **Indigenous Issues**.
14. Participated 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.

15. Expressed concern for the protection of religious minorities in **Iraq and Syria** with special attention to Christians.
16. Submitted statements to the United Nations in support of the **Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender** community. Advocated with governments on the decriminalization of LGBTQUI community and support marriage equality for our siblings in Christ.
17. Expressed support for the United Nations General Assembly Resolution call for lifting the US Embargo on **Cuba**.
18. Participated 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. Attended sessions of Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.
19. Monitored and advocated on **Nicaragua, Venezuela and Colombia** and advocated with the United Nations Security Council on issues related to migration, development, human rights, democracy and peace.
20. Monitored and advocated on **Sudan, South Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Madagascar, Cameroon** and advocated with the United Nations Security Council on issues related to migration, development, human rights, democracy and peace.
21. The ministry supported the WCC-EAA **HIV** Strategy of the Faith on the Fast Track Campaign through participation in New York based consultations as well as participation in the Prayer breakfast hosted around the United Nations General Assembly.
22. Participated 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.
23. Provided a forum to call attention to the ongoing political crisis on the **Korean Peninsula**. The ministry hosted civil society representatives from Korea and continued our ongoing advocacy work for a just and lasting peace. Attended the Global Peace Forum on Korea and hosted an interfaith prayer service for the United Nations community.
24. The Rev. Douglas Leonard, from the Reformed Church in America is serving as Director of the World Council of Churches Ecumenical Office in New York. The director of the Presbyterian Ministry at the United Nations continues working on

ways our two offices can coordinate more together. We maintain relationships with ACT Alliance and the Lutheran World Federation as well.

25. Created congregation resources on the **United Nations Sustainable Development Goals**. The ministry is working on an updated version of our resource with biblical reflections from mission partners.
26. 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.
27. 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 Carson Smith and the ecumenical community at the UN.

Greetings from the Council for World Mission

Wayne Hawkins

Deputy General Secretary

President of WCRC, Revd. Najla Kassab, General Secretary Revd. Chris Ferguson, Officers and Members of the Executive, members of the Secretariat, friends and partners standing together: in the strong and saving name of Jesus Christ, and on behalf of the CWM Moderator, Revd. Darchonhaia Darnei, General Secretary Revd. Dr Collin Cowan, directors, trustees and members of the Secretariat of Council for World Mission (CWM) I bring you greetings and warm wishes.

Your Executive Committee meets in Europe at a time of uncertainty. I live with my family in the United Kingdom where news and conversation are dominated by one topic – Brexit. The 2016 UK referendum decision did not happen in a political or social vacuum but arises out of the changing social and cultural context of Europe which has been impacted by the powerful forces of migration from the majority populations of the world. Movements of people into Europe have led to a growing sense of anxiety and concern within existing European communities. One can almost see a direct relationship between the rise in right wing populist forms of nationalism, in several European countries and the rise of migration from the global south. Whilst Europe was once considered the epicenter of the intellectual world, the movement of peoples from east to west and vice versa, has seen this context remain central, as it has now become a meeting point for many diasporic communities, many of whom are settled in congregations in our member churches.

A factor that underpins this sense of uncertainty in Europe, which has in turn given rise to nationalism, is the realization that there is a growing chasm between rich and poor. Throughout Europe, many communities feel left behind and forgotten as the benefits of economic growth are not felt by all people. The rise of urban and rural poverty takes many forms and responses are varied from the gilet jaune movement in France to the recent election of a socialist government in Spain holding out the promise of social change. Your Executive Committee theme “Let your light shine forth – seeking shalom in the midst of empire,” expresses something of the belief that CWM and WCRC share, namely the power and potency of our member churches and local congregations, who as we work to empower and equip them, have themselves a role to play in bringing people together and in and through Christ, being places of reconciliation, light and shalom in the world.

CWM understands itself to be a “partnership of churches in mission,” partnership and mission is an essential part of CWM’s identity. The partnership between CWM and WCRC is of crucial importance as together we campaign and create change in the context of empire. Partnership working requires much effort and determination on all our parts as we seek new ways of working based on co-operation and our

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deepening relationships. This commitment requires much of us and we have made much progress.

The Empire theology we share remains the creative and transformative edge for both CWM and WCRC. We are responding to the death dealing forces of empire for example in the work we share between ourselves World Council of Churches (WCC) and Lutheran World Federation (LWF) in the New International Financial and Economic Architecture (NIFEA) work. Following the 3rd NIFEA ecumenical panel we will together launch the Zacchaeus Project which modelled on the transformative story of Zacchaeus will advocate for tax justice, addressing social and ecological debts, including reparations for colonialism and slavery, locally, nationally, and globally. The campaign would at once serve to educate our churches about the issues involved while advocating for tax justice and reparations at the highest level.

We are proposing a workshop to explore the implications of empire for contextual theologies. Contextual theology emerged out of the de-colonisation struggles and sought to give voice to cultures which had been denigrated and denied by Western colonisation and empire. These gave the impression that we live in a post-colonial world. However, empire wasn't dismantled but morphed into the fluid and more total system we live within and beneath today. So, we would ask what is the aim and agenda of contextual theology in the midst of new empire?

We are working together to develop "Mission in the Context of Crisis and Marginalization", exploring how we establish a framework for the peaceful existence and rights of minorities, looking specifically at the Rohingya crisis in Myanmar and Bangladesh. Aiming to strengthen our member churches who live in contexts of violence and how to most effectively stand in solidarity with them.

Three examples of our co-operation and shared working as we seek to live out your Executive theme, "Let your light shine forth – seeking shalom in the midst of empire."

As WCRC have recently completed and adopted a new strategic plan so CWM has embarked on developing its own for the next phase of its life. Whilst a "strategic plan" may be reduced to an administrative task or merely data gathering it is for CWM a moment full of possibility to engage afresh with members, ecumenical partners and stakeholders in re-orientating and reshaping the organization, developing new priorities and directions that give renewed meaning and relevance.

The developing of a new CWM strategic plan and – as you may know – changes in CWM's senior leadership team mean that the next months are a critical period for CWM, so we would solicit your prayers as the members and the Board of Directors discern and decide the way ahead.

I pray that Christ who is light for all creation will give you light in your discussions and deliberations in the coming days. That in the pursuit of God's shalom we may resist forces that deny to all creation fullness of life and that we may know the Spirit's presence with us.

On behalf of the whole CWM family, I bring you greetings and pray God's richest blessings in your work these days.

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Greetings from Disciples of Christ World Communion

Rev. Paul S. Tché
General Secretary

Dear President Kassab, General Secretary Ferguson, and Brothers and Sisters,

I am pleased to send my word of greeting to the members and guests of the Executive Committee of the World Communion of Reformed Churches as you gather in Kappel, Switzerland.

The Disciples Ecumenical Consultative Council (DECC) is a fellowship of some 20 member churches worldwide; yet, we understand that our core as a world communion lays on thousands of local congregations in every continent. We are a world communion not only seeking global level ecumenism but also encouraging its member churches to be a vehicle to manifest unity, which we understand as God's gift for God's Church, not for Christians, but for the world that God so loves. The DECC sees the annual executive meeting to be a notable example of a world communion to work with regional bodies to manifest Christian unity. Thus, the DECC always welcome to be part of this meeting by being present.

As a communion that has committed to just peacebuilding in this world, DECC calls all member churches, ecumenical partners and people of good will to journey together on being a just peace-making church in this world. This ecumenical call for building a just world for all truly transformative because, at various stations on the way, this journey can pause, reflect and come to new revelations that can deepen our faith and influence our future direction and actions in the ecumenical movement. The DECC celebrate this meeting as one of those moments along the journey when the faithful can pause, reflect, and come to new insights. I wish you the richest of blessings as you continue to discern God's call for the Reformed family.

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Greetings

Greetings from the Protestant Church in Germany (EKD)

Bishop Petra Bosse-Huber

Head of the Department of Ecumenical Relations and Ministries Abroad

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

On the occasion of the 2019 meeting of the World Communion of Reformed Churches' Executive Committee, I convey to you warm greetings from the Protestant Church in Germany (EKD) and assure you of our heartfelt prayers for your discussion and deliberation, your discernment and your conference.

The theme you have chosen to guide your assembly is, indeed very timely: "Let your Light Shine Forth: Seeking Shalom in the Midst of Empire" (Matthew 5: 14, Jeremiah 29: 7), and we trust it will inform all of us as we work together to bring God's abundant love to the world.

Two years ago, your General Council met in Leipzig, a place that stands for transformation and renewal. During the time of political change in the late 1980s, Leipzig with the prayers for peace every Monday in the Nikolai Church was a place of nonviolent resistance. People came together in church praying to God to renew and transform both, their lives and the state they were living in. Their candles confessed Jesus Christ as the light of the world, they sparked transformation and they did it peacefully. The example of Leipzig showed once again that the church can be a place where change can be developed for the whole of society.

The World Communion of Reformed Churches has always been and is still an agent of change and transformation with a strong commitment to justice. Thus, it is not surprising that in your meeting this time you will address specifically the issues of gender justice and ethical investment believing that God's love and justice for all people and the earth is a core value of reformed theology. Your gathering will not remain silent on the so many issues that keep women from fully participating in all matters and parts of religion, society and politics. Church activities in the field of investments should be in accord with God's Commandments and the Church's Mission, and not contradict them. Time and again, the WCRC has reminded all of us to be accountable to each other and be responsible in faith and in action.

Hope is essential in our Christian faith, and indeed in our relationships and actions as churches. The hope we share is far more than simple optimism; the true test is in the actions we take according to the content of our hope, what revelation and values we long to be realized. Thus, our sisters and brothers in the WCRC family can also be a model for our time and our lives as churches worldwide.

May God bless your encounter, and may it be fruitful once again!

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Greetings from the Lutheran World Federation

Rev. Dr. Martin Junge
General Secretary

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Grace and peace to you in the name of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

“Together we pray that the Holy Spirit may give us courage and imagination faithfully to live out our commitment to unity, expressed in shared worship, witness and work in the world. We pray for liberation in the wider world and, by God’s grace, a thoroughgoing renewal and reformation of our churches.”

It is a great privilege for me to bring greetings to this Executive Council on behalf of the Lutheran World Federation. As you may have recognized, I have done so by using words of the Wittenberg Witness, which LWF and the WCRC signed in 2017.

The Wittenberg Witness stands both as a foundation and a constant reminder that we are called to come together and to witness together, nurtured by the presence of Christ in our lives through word and sacraments.

We look forward to our annual staff meeting in September, during which this topic shall be at the centre of our discussions and discernment. We want to trust in God’s promise and the work of the Holy Spirit to show us ways and means to continue living into the commitments we have expressed.

For one of the areas of engagement in which we have been partnering already, the NIFEA process, I am glad to announce that as of next year we have been able to secure staff time to engage and support that pivotal ecumenical process of prophetic presence in our world.

“Not for sale” – was our slogan during the Reformation anniversary in 2017. How much this reformation is ongoing can be seen in how much the present world needs to move away from an approach that commodifies everything. Even human beings. Even creation. As particularly youth is telling us: enough of it. There isn’t future in that approach.

Another area for which we can be thankful is the amazing process that has unfolded after you signed with your own statement into the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification. Only two months ago, Anglicans, Catholics, Lutherans, Methodists and Reformed joined and issued their common statement on the Doctrine of Justification, stating:

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“We are convinced of the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ to transform us and the world and we are committed to witness more and effectively together to the salvation given to us in Christ (Romans 1:16).

I very much like this sentence, which brings together our quest for unity and our vocation to participate in God’s mission. Unity isn’t an end in itself. Rather, it is meant to become a telling witness of the power and the beauty of faith as a source of renewal and transformation.

This is what you have beautifully captured in the theme of your gathering

“Let your Light Shine Forth: Seeking Shalom in the Midst of Empire”.

Sisters and brothers, it is a good time to be the church. Because of the gifts entrusted to us, the message of God’s liberating grace as it reaches humankind through Christ.

Reiterating the greetings of the global communion of Lutheran Churches I pray for a successful meeting, trusting in God’s guidance and presence as you pray, discern, talk to each other and decide.

Thank you very much!

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Greetings from the Mennonite World Conference

J. Nelson Kraybill
President

Dear sisters and brothers:

I greet you in the name of Jesus, Prince of Peace, who has entrusted to us the ministry of reconciliation. Greetings from Mennonite World Conference--a fraternal organization of 107 Anabaptist national churches in 86 countries. Thank you for inviting me and hosting me during these days.

Something deep stirs in my soul as I meet with you in Switzerland. From this beautiful country my ancestor Peter Krahenbuhl emigrated to Pennsylvania in 1754. More importantly, in nearby Zürich in the 16th century, my spiritual forebears allied closely with your spiritual forebears to study scripture and seek divine guidance for renewal of the church. Ulrich Zwingli profoundly influenced a generation of young reformers who soon were called Anabaptists.

At that point our shared history became painful. Even as a child in Pennsylvania, I knew the name of Felix Manz and other Anabaptists who died as martyrs in Switzerland and elsewhere in Europe when disagreements became difficult between Reformed Christians and Anabaptist Christians. Today, in a new era of polarization in Western society, many of us grieve the destructive words and actions that pushed our two traditions apart.

Much healing and reconciliation have happened, thanks be to God. I come to you with gratitude for the Reformed tradition--having spent seven years in graduate theological study at Reformed seminaries in Princeton, New Jersey and Richmond, Virginia. I value the scholarship, homiletics, peacemaking and friendship I have found in your tradition.

Now Mennonite scholars--representatives of Anabaptism--and Reformed scholars are beginning a series of conversations about our shared past and our shared future. We do not seek merger. Rather, we want to celebrate the healing that has taken place even as we understand more fully why and how rupture occurred. Before a watching world, we want to strengthen bonds of love and respect between our traditions, and seek new avenues for collaboration in God's mission to unite all things in Christ. Come Lord Jesus, Amen!

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Greetings from the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity

Cardinal Kurt Koch
President

Greetings and prayerful good wishes to you and the members of the Executive Committee of the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) gathered in Zurich, Switzerland.

Just two years ago, the Catholic Church together with those communions embracing the Protestant Reformation, commemorated the 500th anniversary of the Reformation giving thanks for all the Lord has done, especially in the last fifty years, in *"making the partial communion existing between Christians grow towards full communion in truth and charity"* (Ut Unum Sint 14). Today in this "Zwinglian" year of 2019, we commemorate the 500th anniversary of the beginning of the Reformed Church in Switzerland with the preaching of Huldrych Zwingli on January 1, 1519 at the Grossmünster church in the city where you are now gathered.

Zwingli's passion for the Word of God is of great significance for Christendom today in a time when we are seeing this passion eroding. This passion drove Zwingli to plunge into humanist studies and scholastic theology. Erasmus whom he met in 1515 pointed him to Christian antiquity – Scriptures and the church fathers – which were

being discovered in a new way. Tradition tells us that Zwingli learned the Greek New Testament by heart.

Like Martin Luther, the young reformer was appalled at the general lack of knowledge of basic Christian teachings especially among those who lived in the countryside. Indeed, many did not know the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, the Ten Commandments or a single part of the Word of God. In his sermon on that first January day of 1519, he announced that he would begin to teach the Gospel of Matthew to the congregation the following Sunday.

The careful crafting of his sermons in eloquent yet simple and familiar language made his preaching incredibly effective, bringing many for the first time to knowledge of Word of God which, St. Jerome reminds us, is knowledge of Christ *himself*. Would that all of us today have a similar passion and love for the eternal Word of God. Here, there is much room for continuing and deepening dialogue and the growth of communion.

In his visit to Switzerland in 1984, the 500th anniversary of the birth of Zwingli, Pope John Paul II proposed that *"the fact that we judge in a different way the complex events of the Reformation period, as well as the differences in the central questions of the faith, must not divide us forever."* The Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and the Reformed Churches have, since 1970, been committed to ensure this division is indeed not forever. Our four fruitful international dialogues have addressed some of these central questions of faith. This is evidence of our commitment and sincere hope that the Lord's prayer for Christian unity at the Last Supper may come to fulfillment.

It was in this great spirit of hope that I had the pleasure of gathering earlier this year at the University of Notre Dame with the leadership of the five Christian communions formally associated with the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*. This unique gathering affirmed the recent significant strides of progress in ecumenical relations and recommended ways to further develop relationships between the various traditions. Yet, perhaps the most important element of the gathering was the great urgency which we all felt in providing a convincing common witness to the *"message of God's liberating grace and hope for this world."*

Today, the *"broken, divided and contentious world"* of which we are part, seems to have forgotten or become disinterested in this liberating message. Awakening the present and future generations to this salvific message of the Gospel will be the great task for all Christians, since there can be no justice or peace in a society where the love of God and his eternal Word does not burn brightly in the human heart.

May the risen Lord who came to gather what is scattered through one Baptism, the integrity of faith and the bond of charity, look kindly on you and all those gathered in Zurich for your Executive Committee meeting.

With my personal prayers and best wishes,

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Greetings from the World Council of Churches

Rev. Dr. Simone Sinn

On behalf of General Secretary Rev. Dr. Olav Fykse Tveit

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

The World Council of Churches sends greetings of grace and peace to the Executive Committee meeting of the World Communion of Reformed Churches in Kappel, Switzerland. This place evokes the memory of the famous Swiss Reformer Huldrych Zwingli. He once said: "To be a Christian does not mean to chatter about Christ, but to live a way of life according to Christ's way of life." (*«Ein Christ sein heißt nicht von Christus schwätzen, sondern wandeln wie Christus gewandelt ist.»*). To be a Christian means to embody a Christ-like way of life.

The theme that you have chosen for your meeting articulates this in a powerful way: "Let your Light Shine Forth: Seeking Shalom in the Midst of Empire". Jesus radiated God's Shalom, as he loved the people whom he met: Christ's love gathered, empowered and challenged people from diverse walks of life. Whoever has been touched by God's Shalom starts re-envisioning life in all its facets. No area is left out: the personal, communal, societal and planetary dimensions are addressed as a deep longing for right relationships among all people and all of creation emerges.

Reformed churches have a strong and vibrant tradition of articulating the public dimension of Christian faith. The light of the gospel not only permeates the ecclesial space, but reaches far beyond, engaging the civic realm. Actively raising structural questions, challenging hegemonic power and privilege is an intrinsic part of such engagement with the world. In view of immense complexities in this field, it is significant that you examine the issues at stake in a study day on church, state and politics, focusing on specific contexts: South Korea, Syria, Hungary, Brazil and Cameroon.

As you deliberate during this Executive Committee meeting on the implementation of your strategic plan, may God's Spirit accompany you on your way as a global communion together. In your ecumenical relations, you endeavor to more deeply engage in dialogue with the Mennonite World Conference, jointly studying the painful history, and envisioning a shared future. May God's abundant grace carry

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and uphold you on this journey together. The World Council of Churches values WCRC's commitment to ecumenical dialogue and communion-building, to theological reflection, public engagement and prophetic witness. We rejoice as the WCRC lets shine forth the light of God's Shalom in who you are and what you do.

The World Council of Churches will gather for its next Assembly in Karlsruhe (Germany) in September 2021. The theme will be "Christ's love moves the world to reconciliation and unity". In the midst of a polarized world, there is a new urgency to more deeply understand the call to reconciliation and unity. In the midst of a world disfigured by hostility and hate, racism and rage, discrimination and destruction, Christ's love is that subversive power that radiates God's Shalom. As we have been touched by Christ's love, let us together radiate this love seeking justice and peace. "To be a Christian does not mean to chatter about Christ, but to live a way of life according to Christ's way of life." Let us accompany one another on this journey and seek Shalom.

In Christ,

Drafting Team Report 1

The following report provides summary information from the first two discernment sessions, the one immediately following the Address of the President (dedicated to orientation and sharing) and the second discernment session, taking up the Report of the General Secretary and including the SPPG Report and Introductory Guide.

Address of the President:

There was a general consensus that more time was wanted to discuss the address either in the plenary or in the discernment groups.

Sharing:

A number of country specific concerns were raised during this time which have been compiled and sent along to the Message Team for consideration.

Report of the General Secretary:

The General Secretary's report provided opportunity for the discernment groups to consider in detail the activities of the organization over the previous period. It is encouraging to see how much work has been done. It was noted with satisfaction the development of the Strategic Plan. The implementation and timetable now needs to be activated.

Distribution, Format, Presentation: All four discernment groups found the very late receipt of this report unsatisfactory and as a consequence failed to show the due respect to the executive committee members to engage fully. They expect this to be the last year that such a late distribution of the report occurs.

It was noted that it would be helpful that the format of the report be an "impact report" to create accountability with specific guidelines being evidence-based and also include future planning programmes. The timeframe of the report should be the year from one Executive Committee meeting to the next (June-May). It should also follow the Strategic Plan in structure, with the six dimensions being the primary categories.

Additionally, it would be helpful for the Executive Staff to share in the verbal reporting at the Executive Committee meeting as well as hearing from the General Secretary.

Communication: A query and option were raised on the relationship between the General Secretary and the Executive Committee. Because there is not much communication during the year from the General Secretary it can be hard to

understand the work that is being done. A helpful option would be to receive a very short (2-3 sentences) email on a weekly basis about what the General Secretary is involved in that week.

Travel: The groups noted that they want to see intentional, strategic travel that creates impact. They understand that travel is essential but with this comes questions of sustainability. It would be useful to have greater coordination and strategic planning between the President, General Secretary and Executive Staff in future travels to help cut down on travel by not doubling up the regions or places that are visited. It was requested for a summary of travel destination and strategic impact to be included in the General Secretary report of travel taken and travel planned. The discernment groups stated that the regional councils should be actively engaged in official travel in their regions.

Staff: Within their duty of care the executive committee members raised a concern around issues related to staff duties and staff welfare. This must be addressed so that the staff are safe within the workplace. Paragraph 161 is an essential point for action to achieve this. The reference to the gender balance was met with approval and now needs to be achieved; words are not sufficient.

Regions: There were differing views around the relationship between WCRC headquarters and the regions. While some feel there is a gap between these two entities and want to see how global level issues can be translated into a regional level and how we as an organisation engage at a grassroots level.

Others had an opposite perspective for these members there is excitement around more engagement with the regional councils from both sides and that the WCRC is working really hard in showing congregations about the global body, and people are becoming more aware of an engaged WCRC. We have had a great push on communication and now it is our responsibility as an Executive Committee to help distribute that communication. That WCRC is dealing with the grassroots, and we are moving in the right direction for people to have ownership over the WCRC.

Priorities: Queries were raised regarding priorities around where we need to put our efforts in how we engage with the Communion. For example, we noted work within a country which we do not have a member church and we have other member churches that also need our support.

Scheduling: A question was raised around the timing of the Executive Committee meeting given that it is over some countries' Mother's Day or Parent's Day and this

can be a very important day for some cultures and churches. The suggestion was made to move the meeting either a week earlier or a week later.

Programs: There was delight that the Global Institute of Theology (GIT) (point 68) is being reactivated; the potential for future impact is considerable. Also in lifting up the work that NIFEA has been doing over a very long time.

A question was raised: Has the WCRC responded to the WCC document on *Church towards becoming vision*?

What feedback do you have for the SPPG?

The following comments will be sent to the SPPG for consideration:

We need to maximize our resources for the benefit of our members.

We need to show what is unique about the WCRC.

Appreciate that the WCRC is still holding to the commitments from the Reformed family: NIFEA, GIT, ordination of women.

They appreciate the dialogues we're having with other world communions.

We need to take seriously and act urgently with balancing the staff of the WCRC (gender).

Do more about making the information about WCRC available to our member churches.

Unanimous support for the whole structure of the Reference Groups reporting to SPPG and then SPPG reporting to Executive Committee. Two questions on Reference Groups: 1) Who is on them? and 2) Who constitutes them? There were some feelings that there was strong South African influence. Why isn't the Executive Committee more involved with the Reference Groups? Should at 2-3 Executive Committee members be on each Reference Group to create more engagement and connection?

There was a feeling there was little consideration given how to convey WCRC activity to non-Christians (outside of the immediate family).

Attention must be given to strengthening relationship between regions and global levels as well as between the regions. Maybe when regions report to the Executive Committee there could be a generalized format to use.

There should be grassroots initiatives picked up from the regions — rather than directing down from the global level.

Travels should be strategic and relational — and those traveling for the WCRC should be in contact with all the member churches in that particular area.

Might additional staff not be located in Hannover? Also regarding location, the offices are in Europe while most members are in the Global South. But even after leaving the ecumenical city of Geneva, pleased to see ecumenical activities continuing (JDDJ, dialogues).

How might the WCRC support those more interested in the spiritual side, such as church planting, growing, and worship?

The direction we are moving in does not separate theology from justice — instead we are holding them together. This is very positive.

We should have ecumenical dialogue first, and theological differences can be discussed later.

Interconnectedness of our goals is good.

What suggestions would you have to improve the introductory guide?

The following items will be conveyed to the SPPG and Executive Secretary for Communications and Operations for consideration:

There was strong affirmation of the concept.

The Vision statement is in the document three different times — that space could be used for something else.

Do virtual as well as print distribution.

Pictures: explain the pictures better (captions).

A desire for more text — to fill in the spaces.

Affirmation of the concept; colorful; people pictures.

A question about the target audience: Who is this for? If it's for denominational leaders, it's excellent. If it's for local congregations, it's far far too big. There's too

much text for local congregational consumption. Perhaps something in the size of the Annual Report would be better.

There should be a bigger emphasis on ecological justice.

We need to make it more accessible to people — what are we actually doing, show specific actions rather than just buzz words.

On the back page, include ways in which people in congregations can be involved — how to engage, an invitation and a response to this, participation possibilities.

Drafting Team Report 2

A helpful note before reading this report is ACTION 31 from the 2017 General Council:

The General Council instructs the WCRC Executive Committee and Secretariat to develop a Gender Justice Policy by 2019 and that they collaborate with the regional councils to foster and encourage the use of this policy as the practice of the whole communion of churches. This policy shall delineate issues of gender-based violence within church and society. It shall include an action plan for the implementation of the policy and accountability metrics.

There were some confusion and frustration around the circulation of the final version of the document. There was a varied discussion with concerns and queries about the Gender Policy Draft, this is summarised in the following report.

In your review of the document did you notice any missing elements?

Article III B: Some of the discernment groups wanted the policy to be placed in the context of the WCRC Constitution – Article III B where it talks about “respect, defend and advance the dignity of every person”– this is originally a reference to the Emden Synod; “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.” This needs to be within the opening introductory statement or in the background section.

Also, there were questions raised around what the document actually is and would appreciate a statement of purpose at the beginning.

Gender definition: It was raised that the document needs to define ‘gender’ in the introduction. There is a contradiction around how “man” and “woman” are used within the document and footnote 8 which defines gender as not being binary.

One comment from a discernment group was that there needs to be a section on gender identity, which discusses the construct of gender. Because if the document is acknowledging the previous, footnote 8 should also be a principle, to advance this policy to the next level. It was understood that the communion is in different places around this discussion and nothing the policy states will be perfect. However, it was stressed that it could be explained that this policy had been prayerfully worked on, and that there are places and contexts in which this will be difficult, but the Churches can begin or continue to work on and discuss these issues.

Language: It was recommended that the document use language that is invitational rather than demanding. However, recognising that there needs to be strong language around naming unfair treatment of women as sin as stated in the General Council in 2017.

In “Principles of Gender Justice Policy” - “we are each loved and valued for the beauty and diversity of our bodies” - human beings are more than their “bodies”; surely they should be loved for their ‘total being’?

Implementation: A concern was raised that the policy paper does not refer to how the WCRC will live out this policy. The gap between the policy and the practice needs to be addressed.

Ecumenism: A suggestion was raised to add to the policy that gender equality should be incorporated in ecumenical and interfaith dialogues from both the WCRC and dialogue partners. Perhaps using similar language to point 3 in call to action. To encourage and ensure to the extent that we are able.

Are there any elements of the documents that do not necessarily need to be there?

Quantity: It was noted that the information given was good however, it was more of a theological position paper rather than a policy document. A query was raised whether the document should be renamed; possibly a position paper?

Footnote 8: Footnote 8 needs to be worked on as it can be seen as though the policy is forcing people into positions which they might not agree with. It would be helpful to take out the possessives from this statement. An option is “There is no longer only one understanding of gender...”. Also it was mentioned that it is not necessary to list all the sexualities in this footnote, this would make it more succinct.

Call to Action: An observation was that the Call to Action in its current form seems overwhelming. It was further suggested that the action points could be split into “to be actioned” and “advisory actions” sections. Another suggestion was that each point should be equally strong.

In what ways do you see this policy can be used on the different levels within the WCRC? From global to the regions to the level of the denominations and even the congregations?

Member differences: It was noted that some did not know if the groups needed to answer this given that different contexts will use this document differently. There are great differences between the member churches within the regions. The discernment groups were aware that not all WCRC member churches are ready to

engage in the conversation regarding for example; gender justice or sexuality. There are churches who have already made the journey (affirming churches) and there are ones which stop engaging in conversation when the topic of sexuality is being discussed. The reception of this report would take a long time for these churches. It was pointed out that it is a long journey to compassion. For many churches sexuality is not on the agenda but justice is. The conversation and this document needs to be focused specifically on justice and communion.

Some members will consider aspects or phrases of the policy more acceptable than others, it is important that the policy is not disregarded in its totality on the basis of these issues that are perceived in a more negative light.

Clarity: A concern was raised that this document requires much more work for clarity, including the definition of purpose. Also, a query around whether it requires a consultative process to be actioned with the member churches through the regions. Because of this it was mentioned that; implementation cannot be agreed until purpose is defined, and consultation is action.

What accountability metrics would you suggest for the Gender Policy in order that its implementation be most effective?

Imposition: A very strong opinion was that the WCRC cannot impose this on the member churches and that the WCRC should not suggest any implementation to the member churches. It would be better if this document was used for internal affairs. This of course contracts Action 31 from the 2017 General Council.

Recommendation from the Drafting Team:

Based on this report and the discussions of discernment groups, the Drafting Team conclude that there is a general feeling among Ecm that more time is required for discussion of the issues in the draft policy.

We therefore recommend, that time is taken to collaborate with the regional councils as instructed in Action 31 from the 2017 General Council. Also for the working groups to consider the issues raised by the discernment groups.

Drafting Team Report 3

WCRC Investment Guidelines

Comments from the four Discernment Groups were reported, noted and discussed. The vast majority of comments were concentrated on Pages 5-7 of the WCRC Investments and Policies document circulated at plenary. These pages are entitled *Draft WCRC Investment Guidelines with Possible Changes*; no comments were received on sections I and III. All comments below are based on Group consensus and do not reflect individual Group member views.

Section II: Ethically-sustainable Aspects of Financial Investments

Exclusion criteria for companies

“As long as the share of the business division in the total company turnover does not amount to more than ten percent maximum, exclusion should be discouraged for the sake of proportionality.”

Question: why 10 % - could it be lower? Clarification and justification is required?

“Companies producing liquors (minimum alcohol content 15 percentage by volume)”

Question: why not no alcohol? (asked by one group)

“Companies producing genetically modified crops”

Response: this is not a black-white issue. For example, ensuring food security under climate change scenarios, and providing nutritionally-enhanced yield were noted as positive justification for GM crops. The involvement of multinational industrial concerns and exploitation of subsistence farming were seen as negative. What evidence is there that GM crops have proven negative consequences either medically or environmentally? This requires careful consideration before inclusion. (concerns raised by three groups)

“Companies producing nuclear energy”

Response: in many ways nuclear energy is a ‘cleaner’ energy than other means of producing power. The concern is centred around storage and disposal of nuclear waste. (concern raised by one group)

“Companies demonstrably conducting research on the human embryo or on embryonic cells.”

Response: three of the four Discernment Groups were split in their view, finding consensus difficult. Concern was expressed on medical issues with examples having been presented in the groups highlighting the important role such research can yield. It was noted that the majority of countries where such research is carried out

is done under strict ethical guidelines and legislation. This requires careful consideration before inclusion. (Concerns raised by three groups)

Suggestions for inclusion:

- Companies that misuse personal data
- Companies that block humanitarian aid from reaching its destination (associated with ‘country’ recommendation below)

Exclusion criteria for countries

“The funds of church investors should, on principle, never flow into the budgets of countries that significantly go against church investment guidelines, especially when they

- *act as warmongers,*
- *violate human rights, or*
- *endanger Creation.”*

Question: what does ‘endanger Creation’ mean? Do not the majority of nations by their anthropogenic activity do this. Is it purely in the ‘climate change’ sense? (asked by one group)

“Countries practicing the death penalty”

Question: does this mean no investment in USA? (asked by two groups)

“Countries classified “not free” (in the terms of the organization and research institution

Freedom House)”

Response: needs clarification (asked by one group)

Suggestions for inclusion:

- Countries that block humanitarian aid from reaching its destination (associated with ‘company’ recommendation above)

To be reinstated from original draft (Page 3 of the WCRC Investments and Policies document circulated at Plenary): *‘Investments should not be made in securities of countries which systematically violate human rights (e.g. the death penalty, torture, political arbitrariness, freedom of movement, religious freedom, child labour)’* and also add *“which visibly restricts freedom of speech and religion”*. Also to add to this point, include torture, child soldiers, and LGBTQ persons related issues. Also add, *“where women are given significantly less social and economic development opportunities than men”*. (points 3a and 3f in original draft document)

Positive criteria

“Among investment options of the same kind, it is the objective of positive criteria to identify and favour

- *those that have a better rating in terms of ethics/sustainability.”*

Question: on what basis will this rating be established? No reference index noted. (asked by one group)

Positive criteria for companies (samples):

“Preference for companies that actively promote in all regions measures for infrastructural development and the construction of schools and/or expansion of water and power supply systems.”

Response: clarification of why the highlighting of “in all regions” is considered essential – a suggestion to delete. (noted by one group)

Suggestions for inclusion:

Companies that show active engagement with gender equity. This would require identification of appropriate index metric.

Positive criteria for countries:

“Preference for countries that are fair, liberal, democratic and constitutional.”

Response: what does “liberal” mean? Is it necessary to include? Delete.

“The Shared Prosperity Indicator of the World Bank”

Response: World Bank could be considered as being Empire. Suggest delete. (one group noted)

“World Development Indicator Deforestation and Biodiversity of the World Bank”

Response: see World Bank comment above.

Point 4

“When investing in funds and asset managements, it is important to ensure that an investment approach is pursued that meets the requirements set out in 1 to 4.”

Comment: ‘4’ should read ‘3’.

Recommendation: The WCRC Executive Committee commend the work carried out in preparing the draft Investment Guidance, and through a process of discernment has concluded that the document provides the basis of ethically responsible investment guidelines on which the Communion can act. Prior to finalizing, the Finance Committee are directed to heed and give due consideration to the comments arising from the discernment process.

SPPG

Discussion was limited in most Discernment Groups. In general, it was felt that the WCRC Strategic Plan is excessive (while appreciating that this is based on the remit of General Council); limited attention is also given to the implementation of the Strategic Plan to the regions (a plea was also made by some groups for a longer time period to be given for regional reporting at the Executive meeting). Concern was expressed regarding the possibility of reaching some of the action targets – partly as a result of uncertain structured capacity building (staff). A more optimal approach to SPPG review, discussion and planning was requested at the 2020 Executive Meeting.

Message from the 2019 Executive Committee Meeting
Kappel am Albis, Switzerland

You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hidden.
—Matthew 5:14

But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.
—Jeremiah 29:7

The Executive Committee of the World Communion of Reformed Churches met from the 9th to the 15th of May 2019 in Kappel, Switzerland, under the theme, “Let your Light Shine Forth: Seeking Shalom in the midst of Empire.” We were graciously hosted by the Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches and particularly the Evangelical Reformed Church of the Canton of Zürich. We met at a time when all the Swiss churches are particularly committed to looking for ways to respond to the increasing number of people without religious belonging or affiliation. As the entire country celebrates the jubilee of the reformations they are seeking ways in which they can find inspiration and confidence in addressing this issue. We celebrated, along with Swiss Protestant Churches, the five hundredth anniversary of Ulrich Zwingli and the hundredth anniversary of the ordination of women in Zürich at the Grossmünster in Zürich.

We are inspired by the courage and the resilience of the Reformers, including Ulrich Zwingli, and commit to a continual reforming of our churches and communities through peace and reconciliation efforts. We once more commit ourselves to a reformed spirituality and the spirit of continually reforming the church and the world. We are also encouraged to continue in ecumenical dialogue and partnership.

During the meeting of the Executive Committee, we had the opportunity to engage with our hosts, on “Church, State and Politics: Cooperation or Protest.” We also heard about the specific contexts of Brazil, Cameroon, Colombia, Hungary, the Korean Peninsula, Nigeria and Syria, and were sensitized to global movements towards populism and authoritarianism.

At our meetings, we were also moved by stories of violence, abuse, forced migration and the denial of human rights of marginalized communities in many other situations around the world, particularly Cuba, Palestine and Venezuela.

We recognize the growing machinations of Empire that continue to commodify all of life, and which grow through the exploitation of people and the disruption of shalom. We confess our complicity and silence. In the midst of the growing threats to all of life that Empire creates, we recognize Jesus’ offer of the fullness of life and the call to courageous discipleship and a mutually transforming hospitality.

Message

As we met in Kappel we were reminded of our rich Reformed heritage and the call to be continually reforming. We acknowledge the unfinished agenda of the Reformation and commit to the full and just participation of all, particularly in the area of gender justice.

We remember all the Reformers, and we also acknowledge our own violent heritage. We recognize how theological and spiritual understandings can foster hostility and violence. We commit to the dismantling of such false theologies and spiritualities and to the advancement of theologies that seek the dignity and respect of all life. It is from this stance that we take up a dialogue with the Mennonite World Conference.

As a body called to communion and committed to justice, we reaffirm our commitment to emphasizing justice that leads to peace, healing and reconciliation. We believe that our distinctive contribution is to discern the signs of the times in order to live faithfully and witness prophetically to the God of life.

We call on our member churches, our ecumenical partners and all communities of faith to act towards the just transformation of the world. As Zwingli encourages us, "For God's sake, do something brave."

FINANCE REPORT

Johann Weusmann

Revenue

Membership Contributions

1. 5% of all European membership contributions were allocated to WCRC Europe.
2. 7.5% of all membership contributions were allocated to a newly-created General Council Fund for 2024.
3. Only three Latin American churches contributed, while in 2017 several churches paid several years of arrears at and around the General Council.
4. Contributions from Africa were higher than in 2017 as one of the churches with highest annual dues did not contribute in 2017 (19,000.00 euro).
5. CANAAC contributions were lower than in 2015-2017 because of the following, among other factors:
 - CRCNA contribution reduced by US\$12,000
 - unfavourable exchange rates.
6. Contributions from Asia were higher than in previous years as some churches contributed for two years and others increased their contribution.
7. Contributions from Europe were higher than in previous years, however, one of the churches with the highest annual contribution paid for two years (60,000 euro).
8. All in all, the number of churches who contributed in 2018 was higher than in previous years
9. Communication has been established with some churches that we had not been able to contact before, not all of those have made their contributions yet.

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Africa	49,292	35,393	15,313	47,787	20,424	37,307
Latin America	4,784	8,488	4,149	5,521	8,441	1,245
CANAAC	228,394	230,028	275,951	265,268	290,047	260,383
Asia	60,770	53,901	59,909	56,378	68,230	76,870
Pacific	12,054	4,720	3,714	3,844	2,847	5,971

Europe	510,646	467,644	473,013	401,522	396,492	502,833
TOTAL	865,940	800,174	832,049	780,320	786,481	884,609

Main programme donations in 2018

We would like to mention three considerable donations for programme work.

1. Council for World Mission (CWM): 85,3417.19 euro as support for the Justice and Witness Desk.
2. Evangelisches Missionswerk (EMW): 200,000 euro as support for our missionary activities. The balance from previous years has now been fully spent.
3. Otto per Mille (OPM): These are funds from the Waldensian Church. We received 350,000 euro in our budget year 2018.

Year-end closing 2018

1. The budget year 2018 was closed with a small surplus of 1,684.84 euro.
2. 55,000 euro were allocated towards a provision for reclaimed funds for currently open projects. This provision was established for worst-case scenarios. Should the project partners not reclaim funds in this amount, the remaining balance can be allocated towards the general reserve.
3. Contrary to 2017, our accounts showed a total of 70,323.64 euro in FX gains while the FX losses amounted to 47,753.75 euro, resulting in a total of 22,569.89 euro in unrealized currency gains.
4. Staff costs were reduced significantly as the Church of Westphalia pays the main portion of the salary of the executive secretary for communion and theology. As in previous years, a considerable percentage of the salary for the executive secretary for justice and witness was covered thanks to the CWM donation for the justice and witness desk.
5. Thanks to considerable project donations, approximately 50,000 euro were allocated to the core budget as administration fees, 40,000 euro below what had been budgeted. This illustrates that it is imperative to achieve successful fundraising efforts for programmes because a portion of that (usually 8%) contributes to the core budget.
6. The ordinary budget was balanced by allocating the surplus to the general reserve.

7. Compared to the previous budget year, our assets have increased by roughly 5.5 % to a total of 4,215,955.14 euro.

Audit 2018

1. We received a very positive report from the EKD high audit office.
2. The high audit office reports no objections against the approval and authorization of the annual accounts by the executive committee.

Budget Plan 2019

1. We continue to struggle with balancing the ordinary budget each year. The main reason for this remains the high level of funds we are required to put into a pension provision for executive staff.
2. Even with much hard work and special fundraising efforts, as of mid-April, an allocation to the ordinary budget from reserves in the amount of approximately 70,000 euro was required to achieve a balanced budget.
3. 50,000 euro will come out of an earmarked fund for the justice and witness desk and are to be used for justice-related staff costs, while around 20,000 euro will have to come out of the general reserve.
4. The allocation of funds from the justice reserve towards payroll for the justice desk was made possible thanks to the broadening of the earmarking of the CWM support. This justice reserve is now depleted and will thus not be available for future years.
5. However, special fundraising efforts are ongoing and we are hopeful that they will be successful so that an allocation from reserves will not be needed, or not be needed in this amount, at the end of the budget year.
6. An application with the EKD for a database project that would include 50,000 euro for personnel costs related to the project has been submitted for approval. The outcome is unknown as of mid-April. Additionally, special fundraising efforts have been undertaken with member churches.
7. The existing challenges for the ordinary budget remain the same and a sustainable solution for maintaining a balanced core budget needs to be found. It is imperative that we do not get accustomed to using the reserve to achieve a balanced budget.
8. The budget plan is to be approved by the executive committee during the meeting in Zurich.

Main programme donations for 2019

1. Council for World Mission (CWM): 200,000 Singapore dollars (approximately 130,000 euro). Until including 2018, CWM contributed around 85,000 euro annually as a support for the justice and witness desk. CWM have now solidified their support for five years, and this support can be used beyond the justice desk.
2. Evangelisches Missionswerk (EMW): 200,000 euro as support for our missionary activities to be spent within the same budget year.
3. Otto per Mille (OPM): 350,000 euro as support for global peace initiatives, justice work (NIFEA, anti-racism, indigenous peoples) and Reformed Partnership Fund.

Investments

1. The current draft policy was reviewed with an ethical investment specialist who will also be invited to the executive committee meeting. At that time decisions will be considered.

WCRC INVESTMENTS AND POLICIES

Background

In 2014, the World Communion of Reformed Churches received a significant donation from the Council for World Mission (CWM) of one million British pounds. This, along with generous donations from several churches in Germany, allowed the WCRC to stabilize its reserves. (The CWM money was also meant to stimulate a fundraising campaign to create an endowment fund, something which has not yet occurred.)

These donations, along with concerns over how money was lost through poor investment in the past, prompted the Executive Committee to agree with the Finance Committee's list of criteria for interviewing prospective banks and fund managers in order to ensure that investments are safe, ethically screened and will provide maximum return. A draft of investment policy guidelines was also presented, and the Executive Committee authorized the general treasurer and general secretary to invest the monies.

The 2015 Executive Committee decided to divide the money into four major investment areas: the Presbyterian Foundation, the Barnabas Foundation (both based in the United States) and two different funds in Germany through the *Bank für Kirche und Diakonie* (KD Bank). 400,000 euros were invested in each fund with KD Bank and 350,000 in each of the US-based foundations following the draft investment policy guidelines (along with the adopted financial management policy).

The Presbyterian Foundation, which is affiliated with the Presbyterian Church (USA) but is a separate corporation, "manages financial resources of individuals and institutions to further Christ's mission." They follow the investment guidelines of the PC(USA)'s General Assembly, "drawing on the Presbyterian values of theological, social and economic considerations" and use three main ways to execute their investment strategy: 1) shareholder advocacy, 2) community investing and 3) screening (both positive and negative).

They have been very responsive to requests to ensure WCRC funds are being ethically invested and provided a "Socially Conscious Due Diligence Report" just last summer.

The Barnabas Foundation, also an independent corporation, partners with the Christian Reformed Church in North America, its congregations and other Christian non-profits organizations, including the Reformed Church in America. Their core mission is to help "generous Christians give more effectively to the churches and ministries close to their hearts." They obviously also invest these

donations—and other monies—for these organizations.

Their ethically responsible investment guidelines are summed up in this paragraph (from their Investment Policy Statement):

Social Responsibility

Barnabas Foundation will not knowingly directly invest in institutions or corporations with business activities that contribute to the decline of Christian morals in our society. This guideline specifically prohibits Barnabas Foundation from directly investing in companies with a core business purpose of gaming or gambling, pornography or the manufacturing of alcohol, tobacco, fire arms or abortion-related drugs or products. In addition, Barnabas Foundation will not knowingly invest in any fund whereby the underlying investments of that fund would be in institutions or corporations engaging in these business activities.

Both US-based foundations meet basic criteria for ethical investing, although their approaches differ. The Presbyterian Foundation takes a more “Christian witness” approach, actively involving themselves in the areas in which they invest.

The KD Bank has been active with churches and diakonical organizations for more than eight decades. For their investment policies, they use a variety of means to tailor specific investments to the needs of their customer. For instance, in defining exclusion criteria, they are guided by the goals of the conciliar process initiated by the World Council of Churches in Vancouver in 1983, which includes a shared commitment of the world churches to justice, peace and the integrity of creation. They are also guided by national and international standards, such as the 10 principles of the UN Global Compact, the UN Principles of Responsible Investments and the guideline for ethical-sustainable investments of the EKD.

Both funds in which the WCRC has invested thus meet the basic ethical investment criteria under which the WCRC has been operating.

At their meeting last November, the WCRC Officers heard a report from Karin Bassler, an expert in ethical investing. She provided an introduction to the investment policy of the EKD and then participated in a discussion with the officers about potential modifications to the WCRC’s draft ethical investment policy (see Appendix E). She has been invited to make a presentation and serve as an advisor at the Executive Committee when the investment policy is considered.

Draft WCRC Investment Guidelines

I. Objective and Basis

1. The assets of the Church have a serving function. These guidelines are intended to create and manage the entire financial assets according to the ecclesiastical mandate.
2. The investment strategy is aimed at achieving the greatest possible degree of security with adequate financial profitability. In particular, investments with a corresponding rating are considered safe. In all cases the Investment Restrictions according to III. of these guidelines must be taken into account; aspects of sustainability are also to be considered.
3. The investment strategy is directed at securing the necessary liquidity.

II. Sustainable Aspects of Securities

1. The investment of financial assets may not contradict the ecclesiastical mission.
2. In principle, investments should *not* be made in companies which:
 - a. produce weapons and weapons systems,
 - b. violate any of the five core labour standards (child labour, forced labour, discrimination, freedom of association, the right to collective bargaining),
 - c. seriously violate environmental laws or generally accepted minimum environmental standards,
 - d. *produce nuclear energy,*
 - e. *produce genetically modified plants and animals,*
 - f. *produce tobacco or alcohol,*
 - g. produce pornography or are sex tourism providers,
 - h. *have demonstrably conducted research on the human embryo or on embryonic cells,*
 - i. *produce or promote fossil fuels.*
3. In principle, investments should not be made in securities of countries:
 - a. which systematically violate human rights (e.g. the death penalty, torture, political arbitrariness, freedom of movement, religious freedom, child labour),
 - b. where there is a high level of corruption,
 - c. whose climate protection services are classified as very poor according to the Germanwatch Climate Protection Index,
 - d. which visibly restrict freedom of the press and the media,

- e. which have a disproportionately high armaments budget,
 - f. where women are given significantly less social and economic development opportunities than men,
 - g. responsible for extreme economic and social inequality.
4. When investing in funds and asset managements, it is important to ensure that an investment approach is pursued that meets the requirements set out in 1 to 3.
5. An investment in food and agricultural commodities is excluded.

III. Investment Restrictions

1. Framework

Basically, the WCRC pursues a defensive investment strategy for all financial assets. This means that the investments follow the rule "security before yield". It is important to ensure a balanced distribution of risks. The base currencies are EURO, USD and CHF; the foreign currency portion can be a maximum of 10% of the total financial assets.

2. Maximum value for the investment of total financial assets

The following maximum values of total financial assets are determined:

Liquidity - short-term investments (e.g., current account, money market account (overnight money account), money market funds, time deposits)
up to 100%

Yields - medium and long-term investments (e.g., growth savings, annual deposits, savings bonds, fixed income securities)
up to 100%

Real Value - Participation in the substance of a company (e.g., shares, equity funds, shares in mixed forms of investment)
up to 50%

Tangible Assets (e.g., open-ended real estate funds)
up to 20%

Alternative Investments (e.g., microcredit, infrastructure, renewable energy)
up to 20%

It is permissible to exceed the quotas in the short term for Real Value, Tangible

Assets, and for Alternative Investments as a result of price gains. “Short term” is understood as being a period of up to six months.

The basis for calculating the maximum values of the various asset classes is the average holding during a budgetary or calendar year.

3. Minimum rating

At least 80% of investments must be of investment grade.

Draft WCRC Investment Guidelines with Possible Changes

I. Objective and Basis

1. The assets of the Church have a serving function. These guidelines are intended to create and manage the entire financial assets according to the ecclesiastical mandate.
2. The investment strategy is aimed at achieving the greatest possible degree of security with adequate financial profitability. In particular, investments with a corresponding rating are considered safe. In all cases the Investment Restrictions according to III. of these guidelines must be taken into account; aspects of sustainability are also to be considered.
3. The investment strategy is directed at securing the necessary liquidity.

II. Ethically-Sustainable Aspects of Financial Investments

The investment of financial assets may not contradict the ecclesiastical mission but should support it if possible.

1. Exclusion criteria

Exclusion criteria are used to filter out those security issuers from a previously defined investment universe that should be excluded from investment.

a. Exclusion criteria for companies

As long as the share of the business division in the total company turnover does not amount to more than ten percent maximum, exclusion should be discouraged for the sake of proportionality.

Excluded are due to the following business divisions:

- Companies involved in the development or manufacture of armaments (in terms of the appendix to the War Weapons Control Act) as well as companies involved in the development or manufacture of banned weapons, regardless of their turnover share
- Companies producing liquors (minimum alcohol content 15 percentage by volume)
- Companies manufacturing tobacco products
- Companies manufacturing products that violate human dignity with denigrating and degrading portrayals of persons
- Companies producing genetically modified crops
- Companies producing coal or oil from oil/bitumen sands, and oil shale or provide significant reserves of these raw materials
- Companies producing nuclear energy

- Companies demonstrably conducting research on the human embryo or on embryonic cells.

Excluded are due to controversial business practices:

- Companies, who themselves or whose suppliers systematically violate human rights, (in terms of United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights), in particular companies manufacturing products that are produced in support or toleration of inhumane labour conditions and child labour (in terms of violating one of the fundamental ILO core labour standards)—including the supply chain,
- Companies, who themselves or whose suppliers systematically violate environmental laws or generally accepted minimum environmental standards.

b. Exclusion criteria for countries

The funds of church investors should, on principle, never flow into the budgets of countries that significantly go against church investment guidelines, especially when they

- act as warmongers,
- violate human rights, or
- endanger Creation.

The following exclusion criteria may serve as useful indicators in analysing government bonds:

- Countries whose level of peacefulness ranks “very low” according to the Global Peace Index (GPI), produced by the Institute for Economics and Peace
- Countries practicing the death penalty
- Countries classified “not free” (in the terms of the organization and research institution Freedom House)
- Countries perceived as highly corrupt (in terms of the Transparency International CPI (Rating < 40)
- Countries whose climate performance ranks in the “very poor” category of Germanwatch’s Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI).

2. Positive criteria

Among investment options of the same kind, it is the objective of positive criteria to identify and favour

- those that have a better rating in terms of ethics/sustainability
- those with whom a contribution can be made to the 17 Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations.

a. Positive criteria for companies (samples):

- Preference for companies that have formulated directives on the employees' right to assemble, on reasonable working hours, and/or that are in favour of living wages—including the supply chain
- Preference for companies that further develop and promote the application of regenerative energy sources
- Preference for companies that actively promote in all regions measures for infrastructural development and the construction of schools and/or expansion of water and power supply systems.

b. Positive criteria for countries

- Preference for countries that are fair, liberal, democratic and constitutional. An increased level of public welfare can be established with improvement of the following indices and measures (samples):
 - the Human Development Index of the United Nations Development Programme,
 - the Gini coefficient,
 - the Shared Prosperity Indicator of the World Bank
 - the Press Freedom Index
- Preference for countries that conserve Creation. The following indices may provide guidance for this decision (samples):
 - Climate Risk Index of Germanwatch
 - World Development Indicator Deforestation and Biodiversity of the World Bank
- Preference for countries that assume responsibility for future generations and keep the peace. An improvement of the situation can be identified by using the following indices (samples):
 - UNESCO's Education for All Development Index
 - Global Militarization Index of the Bonn International Center for Conversion

3. All categories of commodity and agricultural investments are excluded (i.e. direct acquisition, acquisition via future markets, indirect acquisition via certificates and funds).

4. When investing in funds and asset managements, it is important to ensure that an investment approach is pursued that meets the requirements set out in 1 to 4.

III. Investment Restrictions

1. Framework

Basically, the WCRC pursues a defensive investment strategy for all financial assets.

This means that the investments follow the rule "security before yield". It is important to ensure a balanced distribution of risks. The base currencies are EURO, USD and CHF; the foreign currency portion can be a maximum of 10% of the total financial assets.

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Liquidity - short-term investments (e.g., current account, money market account (overnight money account), money market funds, time deposits)
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It is permissible to exceed the quotas in the short term for Real Value, Tangible Assets, and for Alternative Investments as a result of price gains. "Short term" is understood as being a period of up to six months.

The basis for calculating the maximum values of the various asset classes is the average holding during a budgetary or calendar year.

3. Minimum rating

At least 80% of investments must be of investment grade.



EVANGELISCHE KIRCHE IN DEUTSCHLAND
OBERRECHNUNGSAMT

(English version)

REPORT

ON THE AUDIT OF THE
FINANCIAL STATEMENT 2018

WORLD COMMUNION OF REFORMED CHURCHES
(WCRC)

HANOVER

LIST OF IMPORTANT ABBREVIATIONS

ACRC	African Communion of Reformed Churches
BfW	Brot für die Welt (Bread for the World)
BSt.	Buchungsstelle (Booking account, classification level in the finance software KFM)
CWM	Council for World Mission
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)
EMW	Evangelisches Missionswerk (Evangelical Mission Society)
EUR	Euro (Currency code according to ISO 4217 for the Euro zone)
Ev.-ref. Kirche	Evangelisch-reformierte Kirche (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)
Madip	Making a Difference Project
Nds. BesG	Niedersächsisches Besoldungsgesetz (Remuneration Law of Lower Saxony)
Nds. MBl.	Niedersächsisches Ministerialblatt (official public announcement gazette)
OPM	Otto per Mille
ORA	Oberrechnungsamt der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland (High Audit Office of the Evangelical Church in Germany)
ORAG	Church law on the High Audit Office of the Evangelical Church in Germany of 12 th November 1993 (ABl. EKD p. 513)
SB	Sachbuchteil (Booking account, classification level in the finance software KFM)
TVPöD	Tarifvertrag für Praktikanten im öffentlichen Dienst (Collective wage agreement for trainees in public service)
Tz.	Textziffer (classification number of the content statements in this report)
UEK	Union Evangelischer Kirchen (Union of Evangelical Churches)
UK	Unterkonto (sub-account – classification level in the finance software KFM)
USD	US – Dollar (Currency code according to ISO 4218 for the USA)
WGRK	Weltgemeinschaft Reformierter Kirchen (World Communion of Reformed Churches)
WRV	Weimarer Reichsverfassung (Weimar Constitution)

I. AUDIT BASICS

Audit assignment

The High Audit Office of the Evangelical Church in Germany (ORA) audits the budget and asset accounting of the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC).

The audit assignment is based on an administrative agreement reached between the WCRC and the EKD on 10th/11th December 2014. The Standing Budget Committee of the EKD synod approved the acceptance of this audit assignment in its conference on 12th/13th March 2014.

Audit subject and aim

The subject of the audit was the annual financial statement of the WCRC for the accounting year 2018. For this it was precisely audited

- whether the budget and economic management as well as the asset administration in the accounting year 2018 took place correctly and according to the relative principles and regulations (concerning the budget) and
- whether the annual accounts 2018 convey an appropriate image of the actual situation concerning the budget implementation as well as the assets, finances and results.

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.

Possible reporting duties resulting from the previous status as a charitable organization according to Swiss law towards Swiss authorities are not covered by this report.

Audit of the budget and economic management

In addition to the audit of the accounting, it is the assignment of the ORA to audit the budget and economic management of the WCRC. This specifically includes the administrative action which is not directly reflected in the annual accounts to be presented. In this case, the audit standards are the correctness and cost effectiveness of the actions.

For this, it was precisely audited:

- whether the entrusted resources were deployed in an adequate, economic and thrifty way,
- whether and in which cases of relevance the regulations and principles applicable to the budget and economic management were not complied with and
- what recommendations for action are to be derived from the audit results for the future, if applicable.

As a whole, it is the intention of the audit to support the 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 a 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 foci were determined:

- correctness and completeness of the annual financial statement (appropriate reproduction of the asset and result situation, adherence to the budget),
- correctness of the asset evidence (correct compilation and applicable recording of the essential asset positions) and
- inspection of single fields of high significance.

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 – with interruptions - by Ms. Tanja Küster, Mr. Ralph Schönemeier and Mr. Tim-Niklas Behrndt in March 2019.

An on-site audit took place in the WCRC office in the Calvin Centre in Hanover (Knochenhauerstr. 42) on 12th March 2019.

The following documents were available for the audit among others:

- a) the 2018 budget for the WCRC and
- b) the financial statement presentation (annual financial statement KFM, SB 00) including General Assembly (SB 02), advances and transit accounts (SB 52), advances and transit accounts of the General Assembly (SB 53), as well as the capital account (SB 92) for the budget year 2018 of 6th March 2019 (ZB closure no. 0333).

In addition to the WCRC files, especially the accounting documents (invoice documents and bank statements), were available. The records requested within the audit were either submitted or access to the corresponding documents was allowed.

The audit was carried out based on the WCRC budget code ("WCRC General Finance Management Policies"), which has already been applied from the financial year 2013 onwards and was officially put into effect by the Executive Committee of the WCRC at its meeting of 11th to 18th May 2014. The information required on the occasion of the audit was provided by Ms Anna Krüger (Assistant for Finance and Communication) as well as Mr. Gerhard Plenter (Evangelical Reformed Church). In addition, other staff members were available for further enquiries when necessary.

Completeness statement

To ensure the audit basics, the ORA requested a representation letter for the financial statement 2018 from the WCRC. It was given by the General Secretary within the scope of this audit dated 12th March 2019.

Final discussion

On the occasion of the on-site audit, a conversation informing about the substantial results of the audit took place on 12th March 2019.

The participants were Ms. Krüger and Mr. Plenter for the WCRC and Ms. Küster for the ORA.

II. ORGANIZATIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES

The World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) is a non-profit, international, non-governmental organization representing 230 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. A revised version was accepted by the General Council in the year 2017. The organization is officially based in Hanover.

In its self-concept, the WCRC follows the tradition of the Reformers John 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 11th December 2012¹. It is subject to state supervision by the Ministry of Culture of Lower Saxony.

In addition, a contract for the regulation of issues corresponding to the legislative responsibility of the federal government was concluded between the Federal Republic of Germany and the WCRC dated 11th/14th April 2014. It was ratified by Federal Law on 10th December 2014.

¹ see announcement of the Ministry of Culture of Lower Saxony of 16th January 2013 (Nds. MBI 4/2013, page 67)

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 1st September 2014, Rev. Chris Ferguson (United Church of Canada) became the current office holder.

The WCRC President is Rev. Najja 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 2018	Revenues	Expenses
	EUR	EUR
Budget appropriation according to budget	3.815.050,00	3.815.050,00
TARGET COSTS 2018 (plan valuation)	3.815.050,00	3.815.050,00
According to the annual financial statement the following amount to:		
The actual receipts	2.746.544,39	
The transfers from program reserves	590.936,94	
The transfers from other reserves	97.765,29	
The actual expenditures		2.714.288,62
The allocations to program reserves		606.080,36
The allocations to other reserves		113.192,80
The surplus 2018 (allocation to General Reserve)		1.684,84
ACTUAL COSTS 2018 (result)	3.435.246,62	3.435.246,62

Investment budget

The investment budget (SB 02) was created for the accounting execution to handle the General Council, which took place in the year 2017.

In the budget year 2018, no entries for the General Council were made.

Advances and transit accounts

The advances and transit accounts of the WCRC (SB 52) 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 advances and transit accounts of the WCRC of the audit period according to the documents presented for the audit are as follows:

Advance payment				
Identification	Opening balance from 2017 EUR	Expense 2018 EUR	Revenue 2018 EUR	Closing balance 2018 carried forward to 2019 EUR
General Advances	1.336,29	33.651,72	33.651,72	1.336,29
Permanent Advance AIPRAL	993,00	586,43	910,71	1.317,28
ACRC Membership	- 1.686,51	423,59	11,50	- 2.098,60
Opening balance from projects	1.174.146,70	1.179.588,08	1.374.274,89	1.368.833,51
Total:	1.174.789,48	1.214.249,82	1.408.848,82	1.369.388,48

Holding ledger				
Identification	Opening balance from 2017 EUR	Revenue 2018 EUR	Expense 2018 EUR	Closing balance 2018 carried forward to 2019 EUR
Transitory Items	- 4.046,11	227.077,73	231.625,16	501,32
Transitory Items Endowment USA	-	-	6.308,78	6.308,78
Deposit	- 3.390,00	2.048,00	893,00	- 4.545,00
Transitory Items - ExCom	-	10.124,93	10.124,93	-
Transitory items - downpayments	404.388,78	63.725,38	4.475,54	345.138,94
Reclaimed Funds Provision	-	-	81.599,89	81.599,89
Interests	-	9.374,49	9.374,49	-
Asset	777.836,81	613.076,71	775.624,45	940.384,55
Balancing Accounts	-	583.099,02	583.099,02	-
Total:	1.174.789,48	1.508.526,26	1.703.125,26	1.369.388,48

The position "accounting balance carried forward from projects" displayed under "advance payment" amounting to 1,368,833.51 EUR and the position "asset" displayed under "transitory items" amounting to 940,384.55 EUR correspond to the reserve stock in ledger 92 (asset stock).

Presentation of the asset situation

The asset accounting of the WCRC (SB 92) as of 31st December 2018 according to the documents presented for the audit is as follows:

WCRC - Assets

Continuation to the table reserve assets			
Reserve assets (including trust assets, according to SB 92)	Opening Balance 01.01.2018 EUR	Closing Balance 31.12.2018 EUR	Annual Percentage Change
WCRC Capital			
Reserve Fund	409.467,14	412.968,37	0,86%
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	0,00	-100,00%
Reserve for FX Fluctuations	100.000,00	100.000,00	0,00%
Oikotree	0,00	4.768,09	100,00%
Pension Contributions Reserve	596.491,08	655.610,76	9,91%
Specific Asset Items			
UEK special donation	683.056,08	0,00	-100,00%
Justice & Partnership Office Support	50.902,07	50.902,07	0,00%
General Council 2024 Fund	58.986,06	113.482,68	100,00%
CWM Endowment Reserve	1.211.500,00	1.211.500,00	0,00%
Endowment Contributions CWM	0,00	714.985,77	100,00%
Communion & Theology Office Programmes			
Global Institute of Theology (GIT)	4.110,36	58.802,28	100,00%
Theological Dialogues	-3.416,78	0,00	-100,00%
Anglican Dialogue	0,00	0,00	0,00%
Pentecostal Dialogue	0,00	0,00	0,00%
Catholic Dialogue	249,04	249,04	0,00%
Mission	11.295,53	11.295,53	0,00%
Multi-Agency Data Integration Project (MADIP)	27.965,33	0,00	-100,00%
Georges Lombard Prize	13.205,30	13.141,53	-0,48%
Network/Reference Group	4.595,32	4.595,32	0,00%
Justice & Witness Offices Programmes			
Covenanting for Justice	582,06	130,34	-77,61%
Gender Justice	41.530,88	41.530,88	0,00%
Theological Education for Women	106.510,58	37.456,96	-64,83%
New Econ. & Financial Archit. (NIFEA)	5.343,37	5.343,37	0,00%
Oikotree *	4.768,09	0,00	-100,00%

Continuation to the table reserve assets			
Reserve assets (including trust assets, according to SB 92)	Opening Balance EUR	Closing Balance EUR	Annual Percentage Change
WCRC Capital			
Partnership Funds			
Partnership Fund A - BfW Funds*	85.574,83	84.384,83	-1,39%
Partnership Fund B	30.556,00	0,00	-100,00%
Partnership Fund D	0,00	1.229,67	100,00%
Partnership Fund E	632,17	632,17	0,00%
General Programmes			
Regional Support - ACRC	9.523,62	0,00	-100,00%
Global Internship Programme	55.773,22	64.670,56	15,95%
Global Internship Programme - GC	1.771,48	0,00	-100,00%
Global Anti-Racism Initiatives	0,00	1.120,84	100,00%
Key Initiatives			
EMW	126.154,44	0,00	-100,00%
OPM	64.212,10	307.932,82	379,56%
Ev. Church of Westphalia	0,00	23.564,22	100,00%
Custodian Funds			
Mission Fund	18.016,30	18.016,30	0,00%
Publications Fund	47.200,75	47.200,75	0,00%
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%
Sub-Total	3.806.154,93	4.021.149,30	5,65%
Trust Assets			
WCRC Europe	187.979,34	194.805,84	3,63%
Total	3.994.134,27	4.215.955,14	5,55%

The total asset stock of the WCRC amounted to 4,215,955.14 EUR for the year-end closing as of 31st December 2018. Compared with the previous year (3,994,134.27 EUR), this stock has increased by 221,820.87 EUR (5.55 %) according to the accounting balance.

IV. AUDIT STATEMENTS

1. General statements

1.1 Correctness of 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:

No.	function	TVPöD	compensation	plan	result
1	General Secretary	NBesG	B 3	1.0	1.0
2	Exec. Secretary for Communications and Operations	NBesG	A 15	1.0	1.0
3	Exec. Secretary for Justice and Witness	NBesG	A 15	1.0	1.0
4*	Exec. Secretary for Communion and Theology	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 Communion	DVO.EKD	EG 9	1.0	1.0
7	Asst. for the Reformed Partnership Fund	DVO.EKD	EG 9	1.0	1.0
8	Asst. to the General Secretary	DVO.EKD	EG 9	1.0	1.0
Subtotal:				8.0	8.0
9	Cleaning personnel	DVO.EKD	E 2	0.18	0.18
10	Trainee (Intern)	TVPÖD	Fixed payment	1.0	1.0
11	Trainee (Intern)	TVPÖD	Fixed payment	1.0	1.0

* 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 2018 year-end closing of the WCRC was compiled dated 6th March 2019 (ZB closing no. 0333). It shows a volume of 3,435,246.62 EUR.

For the audit, the documentation from accounting (SB) was provided as the 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 2018 shows no significant gaps according to the ORA findings.

2.2. Budget balance / Utilization of the 2018 surplus

The balancing of the ordinary budget was induced by an allocation of the profit remaining after execution of all necessary bookings amounting to 1,684.84 EUR to the General Reserve Fund (SB 92, BSt. 5110.00 UK 1).

2.3. Balancing of payment methods as well as of the investment accounts and deposits

For the audit, account and investment statements as well as account balance statements were presented for all the payment methods installed in the WCRC accounting as well as for all the asset components as proven in the balance sheet (SB 92). In this regard, no statements have resulted. No objections were made concerning the balancing of the payment methods either.

2.4 Reserves of the General Council

Within the frame of the General Assembly carried out in the year 2017, the WCRC did not require a share of the contributions received for this purpose from other (member) churches and partner organizations. In the budget year 2017, provisions amounting to 404,388.78 EUR were generated for the non-required means. They were booked as assets into the transit accounts and transferred into the budget year 2018 in full.

As already signalled during last year's audit by the ORA, the contribution notices of the contributors (especially of the EKD and the UEK) mandatorily stipulate that any non-required contribution means are to be reimbursed without delay. The connected risk of additional charge of interest payments was also pointed out.

The non-required means of the EMW amounting to 50,000.00 EUR were allocated to the reserve "Global Institute of Theology" with the approval of the EMW of 22nd May 2018, opposing the existing obligation of repayment. The non-required means from Bread for the World "Towards a Global Community of Life" were transferred to the Evangelische Werk für Diakonie und Entwicklung in February 2019.

3. Single statements

3.1. Development of the program budgets

The program budgets are processed within the ordinary WCRC budget (SB 00). Their financing mainly takes place by means of the provision of third party contributions.

The various program budgets are each separately administered and settled in the single plans 2 to 6 of the budget.

Financial Audit

For the year 2018, the program budgets are as follows:

Programme Budgets 2017	Opening Balance	Revenues	Expenses	Closing Balance
	EUR	EUR	EUR	EUR
Communion & Theology Office Programmes				
Global Institute of Theology (GIT)	693,58	13.428,76	5.320,06	8.802,28
Theological Dialogs	4.844,36	45.240,25	45.240,25	4.844,36
Mission	11.295,53	35.744,94	35.744,94	11.295,53
Vision and Mission	0,00	101.015,10	101.015,10	0,00
Madip	27.965,33	0,00	27.965,33	0,00
Georges Lombard Prize	13.205,30	0,00	63,77	13.141,53
Communion - Regional Consultation	0,00	221,40	221,40	0,00
Justice & Witness Office Programmes				
Covenanting for Justice	582,06	0,00	451,72	130,34
Oikotree	4.768,09	0,00	4.768,09	0,00
New Economic & Financial Architecture (NIFEA)	5.343,37	85.928,25	85.928,25	5.343,37
Gender Justice	41.530,88	16.087,90	16.087,90	41.530,88
Theological Education for Women	106.510,58	219,22	69.272,84	37.456,96
Inclusive Communities	0,00	36.440,78	36.440,78	0,00
Partnership Funds				
Partnership Fund A	85.574,83	0,00	1.190,00	84.384,83
Partnership Fund A - Provision	0,00	46.599,89	46.599,89	0,00
Partnership Fund A - OPM	0,00	107.595,56	107.595,56	0,00
Partnership Fund B	30.556,00	29.000,00	59.556,00	0,00
Partnership Fund D	0,00	1.229,67	0,00	1.229,67
Partnership Fund E	632,17	16.200,00	16.200,00	632,17
General Programmes				
Regional Support - Capacity-Building	0,00	98.704,30	98.704,30	0,00
Youth Programme	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00
Global Internship Programme	57.544,70	72.229,23	65.103,37	64.670,56
Global Initiatives	0,00	20.979,70	19.858,86	1.120,84
Key Initiatives				
Otto per Mille	64.212,10	525.000,00	281.279,28	307.932,82
EMW	135.678,06	200.000,00	335.678,06	0,00
Evangelical Church of Westphalia	0,00	56.187,22	32.623,00	23.564,22
Total	590.936,94	1.508.052,17	1.492.908,75	606.080,36

The following statements concerning the program budgets resulted within the scope of the audit:

- 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, considering the running revenues and expenses of the projects, are transferred back to the corresponding reserves within the scope of the year-end procedures. In the accounting year 2018, the program means were transferred back at the beginning of the accounting year at the beginning of March. Thus, the previously described procedure is given with the original intention of transparency.
- Six of a total of 26 programs showed no financial activities in the year 2018.
- 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. If funders indicate other administrative costs rates, these are applied.

A cursory review of the program costs showed no indications for a misappropriated utilization and/or classification of the funds.

3.2 Utilization and application of contribution funds

Apart from the program budgets, the WCRC carries out other project work, which is financed by contributors. The complete overview of the individual contributors for the year 2018 is as follows:

Donor	Remaining funds 2017 EUR	Revenues 2018 EUR	Expenses 2018 EUR	Carry-over 2019 EUR
Council for World Mission	0,00	85.341,71	85.341,71	0,00
Otto per Mille	64.212,10	525.000,00	281.279,27	307.932,83
Evangelisches Missionswerk	135.678,06	200.000,00	335.678,06	0,00
Ev. Kirche von Westfalen	30.556,00	29.000,00	35.991,78	23.564,22
Total:	230.446,16	839.341,71	738.290,82	331.497,05

The non-required funds amounting to 331,497.05 EUR were carried forward into the budget year 2019 as earmarked or transferred to earmarked project reserves temporarily.

3.2.1 Council for World Mission

The contribution of the Council for World Mission was deployed for expenses for justice and witness as follows:

Council for World Mission	2018 EUR
Remaining funds 2017	0,00
Revenue 2018	85.341,71
Expense 2018	85.341,71
<i>thereof Executive Secretary</i>	<i>69.152,39</i>
<i>thereof Administrative Assistant</i>	<i>16.189,32</i>
Carry-forward 2019	0,00

A cursory review of the program costs showed no indications for a misappropriated utilization of the funds.

3.2.2 Evangelisches Missionswerk

The contribution of the Evangelisches Missionswerk was deployed for the WCRC mission work as follows:

Evangelisches Missionswerk	2018 EUR
Remaining funds 2017	135.678,06
Revenue 2018	200.000,00
Expense 2018	335.678,06
<i>thereof administration fee</i>	<i>30.000,00</i>
<i>thereof Mission</i>	<i>139.432,50</i>
<i>thereof Regional Empowerment</i>	<i>98.704,30</i>
<i>thereof Youth Empowerment</i>	<i>67.541,26</i>
Carry-forward 2019	0,00

A cursory review of the program costs showed no indications for a misappropriated utilization of the funds.

3.2.3 Otto per Mille

The contribution from Otto per Mille for the project work of the WCRC was deployed as follows:

Otto per Mille	2018 EUR
Remaining funds 2017	64.212,10
Revenue 2018	525.000,00
Expense 2018	281.279,27
<i>thereof Communion</i>	221,40
<i>thereof NIFEA</i>	85.854,15
<i>thereof Gender</i>	16.087,90
<i>thereof Inclusive Communities</i>	35.461,10
<i>thereof Partnership Fund</i>	123.795,56
<i>thereof Global Initiatives</i>	19.858,86
Carry-forward 2019	307.932,83

Concerning the funds from Otto per Mille it is to be noted that of the total available funds amounting to 589,212.10 EUR only 281,279.27 EUR were utilized. Among others, this is due to the fact that the receipts of payment did not occur until March or December 2018 respectively. The difference amounting to 307,932.83 EUR was temporarily assigned to earmarked project reserves, which is compatible with the regulations of Otto per Mille.

Other than that, a cursory review of the program costs showed no indications for a misappropriated utilization of the funds.

3.2.4 Ev. Kirche von Westfalen

The contribution of the Ev. Kirche von Westfalen (Evangelical Church of Westphalia) was deployed for the WCRC theology work as follows:

Evangelische Kirche von Westfalen	2018 EUR
Remaining funds 2017	30.556,00
Revenue 2018	29.000,00
Expense 2018	35.991,78
<i>thereof Administrative lump sum</i>	2.320,00
<i>thereof Partnership F and B</i>	1.048,78
<i>thereof Theological Dialogues</i>	27.791,73
<i>thereof Theology - Activities with other Communions</i>	4.831,27
Carry-forward 2019	23.564,22

Concerning the funds from the Evangelische Kirche von Westfalen it is to be noted that of the total available funds amounting to 59,556 EUR only 35,991.78 EUR were utilized. The difference amounting to 23,564.22 EUR was temporarily assigned to earmarked project reserves, which was agreed with the Ev. Kirche von Westfalen.

Other than that, a cursory review of the program costs showed no indications for a misappropriated utilization of the funds.

3.3. 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	20.000,00	37.307,04	17.307,04
Latin America	6.000,00	1.245,00	-4.755,00
Caribbean and North America	255.000,00	260.382,90	5.382,90
Asia	65.000,00	76.869,96	11.869,96
Pacific	3.500,00	5.970,65	2.470,65
Europe	420.000,00	502.832,97	82.832,97
total	769.500,00	884.608,52	115.108,52

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.

3.4 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 2018 can be summarized as follows.

Expat Expenses	Budgeted EUR	Actuals EUR	Difference EUR
111. Executive Secretaries	50.000,00	38.517,51	11.482,49
total	50.000,00	38.517,51	11.482,49

For the rest, the ORA carried out a random revision of singular cases and confirms agreement with the regulations of the “personnel policies and practices“.

3.5 Risks resulting from currency fluctuations

Within the frame of this audit, the ORA determined that the WCRC realized a gain from currency conversions amounting to 22,569.89 EUR (previous year loss of 81,773.82 EUR) in the accounting year 2018. `

Fx Gain/ Fx Loss	Budgeted EUR	Actuals EUR	Difference EUR
Fx gain	-	70.323,64	70.323,64
Fx loss	-	47.753,75	- 47.753,75
total	-	22.569,89	22.569,89

To safeguard against the risks resulting from currency fluctuations, an earmarked reserve of currently 100,000.00 EUR is being maintained.

4. 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. AUDIT RESULT

Audit of the year-end result 2018

Subject of the audit was the annual financial statement submitted by the WCRC for the year 2018. According to the result of this audit, the ORA can confirm that:

- the budget and asset accounting of the WCRC in the accounting year 2018 occurred in due form and in compliance with the relevant principles of orderly (budget) accounting and regulations,
- the financial statement for 2018 conveys an image of the budget implementation as well as the situation of assets, finances and results which corresponds to the actual circumstances.

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 confirm that:

- the budget resolved by the WCRC Executive Committee was 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 2018 can be recommended.

Hanover, 29^h April 2019



AS REPRESENTATIVE

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Schönefelder', is written over a faint circular stamp.

(SCHÖNEFELDER)

OBERRECHNUNGSAMT DER
EVANGELISCHEN KIRCHE IN DEUTSCHLAND



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