



**World Communion
of Reformed Churches**

**Called to communion,
committed to justice**



**ANNUAL
REPORT
2019**

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About the World Communion of Reformed Churches

The World Communion of Reformed Churches unites 100 million Christians from over 230 denominations in more than 105 countries. Members come from Congregational, Presbyterian, Reformed, United, Uniting and Waldensian and other pre-Reformation traditions.

Believing John Calvin’s tenet that the whole of creation is the “theatre of God’s glory” the WCRC brings the resources of the Reformed theological and confessing tradition into the present tense through listening to the suffering and cries of humanity and all of creation. The WCRC takes up the prophetic traditions of public witness as a confessing communion in a world fallen among thieves (John 10:10).

The WCRC is funded by contributions from its member churches, church agencies and ecumenical partners. Gifts and grants also come from individuals, congregations, foundations and other sources. Supporters of the WCRC help make a difference in the world by donating to specific funds and scholarships, as well as to the organization as a whole.



INTRODUCTION

Becoming shalom-makers

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. –Matthew 5:9 (NRSV)

To let our light shine and become shalom-makers is a challenging task. 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.”

To work towards shalom is to have our eyes focused on human dignity. That is why when we work for justice and peace we can get upset and angry and strive to do something to overcome all pain and restore the dignity of the people. We work to live out God’s will for God’s people and to defend them with all that this commitment requires.

As a Communion called to justice, we must be actively involved through discerning, confessing, witnessing and being reformed together. Discerning the signs of the 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 the times urges us to hold responsibility and get involved even when that means pronouncing statements that do not sound popular or favoured in the eyes of many.

As a Communion, we are challenged to take the risk and be a sign of hope, even if in small steps of crossing boundaries, challenging cultures of fear that separate us and create borders. 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.

You will see here some of the work we as a Communion have done in the past year as we seek to become shalom-makers around the world.

Blessings,

Najla Kassab
President

Chris Ferguson
General Secretary

STRATEGIC PLAN

The work and witness of the WCRC are guided by a strategic plan.

Vision

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

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

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

Overarching Goal

By 2024, the World Communion of Reformed Churches will strive to be significantly strengthened and increasingly effective in living out God’s call to communion and commitment to justice. As a global

Koinonia, we are marked by discerning, confessing, witnessing and being reformed together.

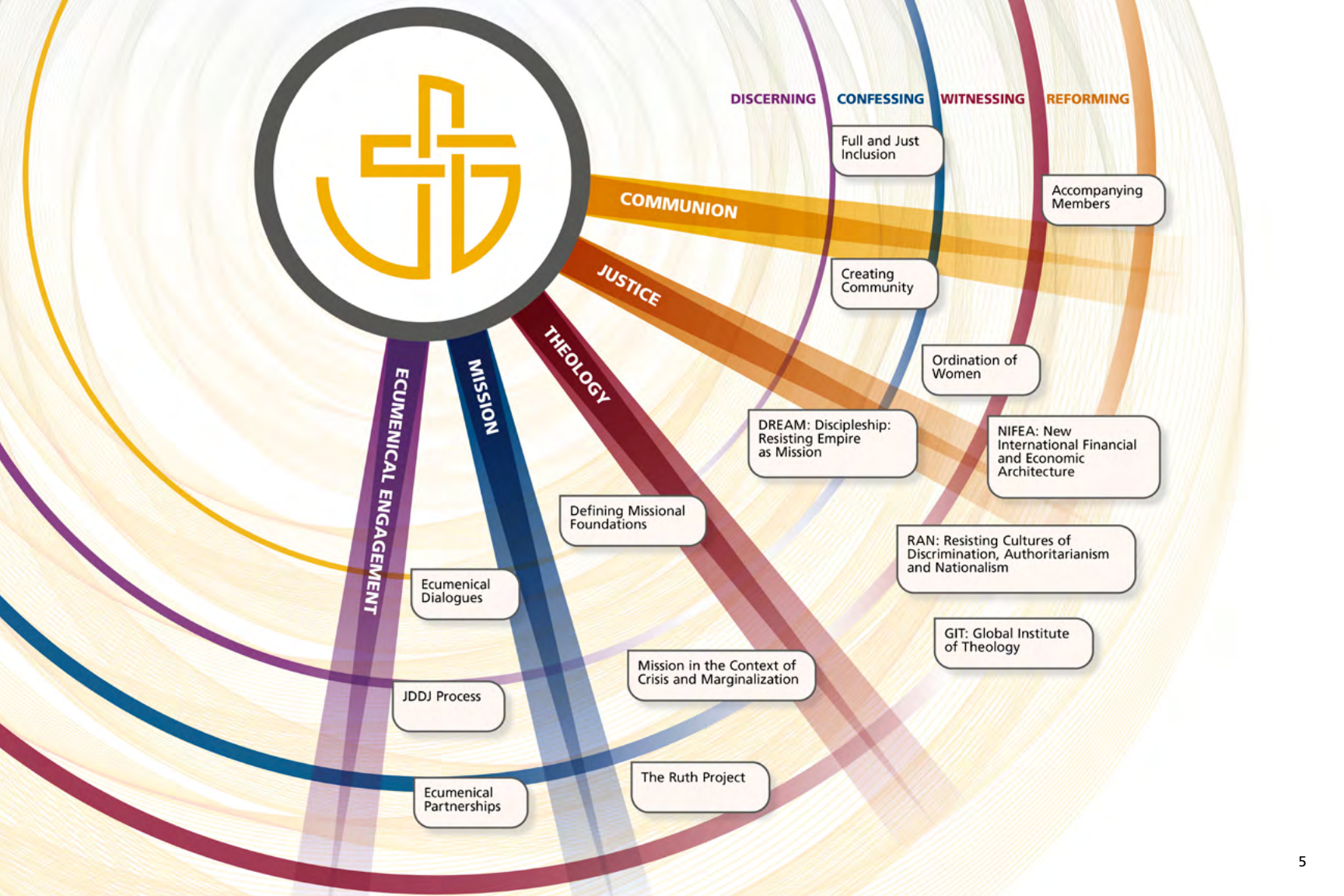
The World Communion of Reformed Churches, with all the partners God provides, serves its member churches and also works for the transformation of the whole world, which is so loved by God but still trapped by multiple injustices and death, having fallen among thieves (John 10:10).

As it strives to fulfil its vision, the World Communion of Reformed Churches works through two strategic trajectories:

- » Strengthening and deepening the *koinonia*.
- » Growing and expanding its work for a greater global impact.

These strategic trajectories are applied through five interlocking dimensions:

- » Communion
- » Justice
- » Theology
- » Mission
- » Ecumenical Engagement and Interreligious Cooperation



DISCERNING CONFESSING WITNESSING REFORMING

COMMUNION

Full and Just Inclusion

Accompanying Members

JUSTICE

Creating Community

Ordination of Women

THEOLOGY

DREAM: Discipleship: Resisting Empire as Mission

NIFEA: New International Financial and Economic Architecture

Defining Missional Foundations

RAN: Resisting Cultures of Discrimination, Authoritarianism and Nationalism

ECUMENICAL ENGAGEMENT

Ecumenical Dialogues

GIT: Global Institute of Theology

MISSION

JDDJ Process

Mission in the Context of Crisis and Marginalization

Ecumenical Partnerships

The Ruth Project





CULTIVATING A JUST COMMUNION

Learning from the margins

A consultation on Resisting Cultures of Discrimination, Authoritarianism and Nationalism has “discerned this to be a *kairos* moment when God has issued a challenge for decisive action.”

“We understand our faith to emphasize that we are called to treat all humanity as neighbours in ways that we would wish to be treated (Leviticus 19:18b; 33-34), called by God to intervene on behalf of one another when found in need (Luke 6:27-31), and that our treatment of those deemed the least among us evidences our Christian covenant with God and one another (Matthew 25:31-46),” concluded consultation participants.

The consultation gathered Dalits and people of African descent from the Americas in Thailand to seek to redeem religion from the idolatry of power and privilege by drawing from theologies and ideologies that intentionally have positioned themselves outside of traditional power structures.

Building from lessons learned during the struggle against apartheid in South Africa, Allan Boesak delivered a keynote address, saying, “We may speak today of a

phenomenon called ‘global apartheid’ which includes socio-economic exploitation and inequalities, political exclusion, racial and ethnic discrimination, as well as gender injustice and heteronormative oppression.

“That the Reformed tradition has been abused for the justification of oppression is unquestionably true, but ... more important is the fact that that same tradition has given rise to theological, social, and political resistance,” he said. “It testifies to the manner in, and extent to which, the Reformed tradition, rightly understood, has helped oppressed people claim their agency and embrace their historic task of fighting for freedom, justice and dignity.”

“The fact is that religions of all hues have enmeshed themselves with dominant and dominating ideologies and have provided the ideological underpinnings of racism and other cultures of discrimination,” said Philip Vinod Peacock, WCRC executive secretary for witness and justice. “But as we seek to become a just communion, we must listen to those from the margins and their theologies—to redeem not only ourselves but the world.”

COVENANTING FOR JUSTICE

Zacchaeus campaign calls for tax justice

An ecumenical campaign advocating for tax justice was launched in July at the United Nations in New York City.

The Zacchaeus Project is a part of the New International Financial and Economic Architecture initiative (NIFEA), a joint effort by the Council for World Mission, Lutheran World Federation, World Communion of Reformed Churches and World Council of Churches.

“Our faith compels us towards a just world,” said Philip Vinod Peacock, WCRC executive secretary for witness and justice, “and one way of attaining it is through a system of just taxation that is directed towards the needs of the poor and dispossessed and not towards the wants of a few.”

The project calls for a global tax and economic system that acts like Zacchaeus, the tax collector who repented of his wicked ways, which delivers equity and makes reparation for exploitation and injustice.

“Zacchaeus’ changed ways are signs of the changes needed to our systems so that through the fruit of our work and wealth the poor are lifted up and those who have been exploited are recompensed,” states the concept note for the project. “Taxation is an important tool for sharing wealth equitably within and across countries as well as for holding corporations and citizens accountable for their responsibility towards upholding the common good, including care for the global ecological commons.”

The campaign advocates for tax justice, addressing social and ecological debts, including reparations for colonialism and slavery, at local, national and global levels. The campaign serves both to educate churches about the issues involved while advocating for tax justice and reparations at the highest level.

More information can be found online: wrc.ch/zactax

NIFEA and the Zacchaeus Project are made possible by funding from Otto per Mille.

Narrative & Story telling

Facts of Legacy and Ongoing Consequences

Connecting to Cultural and Historical Connections

Connecting to Faith, Sacred Texts and Denominational Polity

Faithful Action- Advocacy & Doing Justice







DOING THEOLOGY FOR TRANSFORMATION

Ecumenical dialogues deepen theological understandings

Even as a new dialogue with the Mennonite World Conference (MWC) launches under the title “Seeking a Common Witness: Restoring Our Family to Wholeness,” the WCRC is closing two, important, years-long dialogues.

The Mennonite dialogue will prioritize right remembering, mutual reconciliation and intentional collaboration. The initial history of the Reformed and Mennonite (Anabaptist) traditions was fraught with violence.

“Both of our communions are now global churches and though our 16th century origins are important, for many of our brothers and sisters, that is no longer the starting point, and that’s not the primary point of reference,” said John Roth, secretary of the MWC Faith and Life Commission. “We think it important that we engage this dialogue with a focus on common witness.”

The International Reformed–Anglican Dialogue between the WCRC and Anglican Communion met for the fifth time in August in Hiroshima, Japan, concluding with a focus on *koinonia* as God’s gift and calling.

The forthcoming report from the dialogue examines the foundations of *koinonia* (communion) in Scripture, theology and history, and how it is expressed in ecclesiology and mission. The dialogue explored the understanding of *koinonia* and how *koinonia* is lived out. How *koinonia* helps address the diversities within and between the Communions was also explored.

The Reformed-Pentecostal Dialogue has revolved around the understanding of “mission,” and used its final gathering to bring together the fruits of their work:

- » mission and salvation
- » the Holy Spirit and mission
- » mission and the unity of the church
- » mission and eschatology

The work will be presented in a single document to be published soon. Dialogue participants hope that this publication will be useful for Reformed and Pentecostal churches to better understand each other and encourage common witness in word and action.



ENGAGING GOD'S MISSION IN A CONTEXT OF CRISIS



Transforming mission from “witness” to “with-ness”

A group of church leaders, theologians, and activists have called for a prophetic theology which reflects God’s concern for compassionate justice.

They gathered in November at the Beit El Salam Retreat Centre (Alexandria, Egypt) to share their experiences, deliberate and discuss the missiological question: How can Christian witness and peaceful co-existence be initiated and maintained in a context where Christians are the minority, often facing violence and marginalization from the majority community?

“We heard the cries of people from other contexts around the world, where people live as minorities, not just from the perspective of being religious minorities but also minorities on the basis of race, ethnicity, caste, economic oppression, gender and language,” states the consultation’s concluding message.

The message says that it is necessary to have “a prophetic theology which reflects God’s concern for

compassionate justice as without the fulfilling of this justice, peaceful co-existence is impossible.”

Participants charged the church to journey with the marginalized in a solidarity of “with-ness.” This goes beyond presence and seeks to hear from and be led by those who have been forced to the margins of society and those within marginalized communities who experience discrimination and exclusion.

They further challenged the churches who are numerical minorities yet have considerable power and privilege due to their global and economic connections to understand that they are called to journey with those who are marginalized and persecuted.

“Our faith proclaims the victory of Christ, and through him ours, over the power of sin and death, fear and powerlessness we shall no longer be afraid and commit ourselves to the task of prophetic witness, led by and journeying with those who are marginalized,” the message concludes.

WORKING WITH ALL THE PARTNERS GOD PROVIDES

JDDJ signatories look toward common future

The five signatories of the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ) looked toward a future “realizing a deeper communion towards the full visible unity of the church and to make manifest the growth in communion which we have already been experiencing.”

“In a broken, violent and fearful world, it is urgent that the church bear witness to the possibility of unity and reconciliation and manifest the courage to stand together in works of proclamation, justice and compassion,” said Anna Case-Winters, a member of the WCRC delegation to a consultation of the JDDJ communions, held in March on the campus of Notre Dame University (Indiana, USA).

Originally signed by leaders of the Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation, the JDDJ has since been broadened to include the World Methodist Council, the Anglican Communion and the WCRC, all of which agree on the core message of salvation in and through Christ.

“It is a landmark gathering in the sense that the five communions have agreed to work together especially in

activities that bring them together and promote unity in the midst of the divided, broken world with so many injustices and the degradation of all God’s creation,” said Peggy Kabonde, a member of the WCRC delegation.

In a concluding statement, participants highlighted the way in which the JDDJ process led to the overcoming of centuries-old controversies. They also noted how its method of differentiating consensus, which allows for core agreement while maintaining different confessional expressions, can be used to deal with past, present and future obstacles relating to both doctrinal and ethical questions.

“We are united in common witness to the God of life so that we can embrace difference and disagreements without allowing them to divide us,” said Chris Ferguson, WCRC general secretary. “This is possible because of the common affirmation that it is God alone who effects the gift of salvation and the justice which is in and through it!”







REGIONAL HIGHLIGHT: AFRICA

Accra Confession focuses justice work in Africa

The Accra Confession was the focus of a capacity building consultation that gathered church leaders from across Africa in Nairobi, Kenya, in November.

The Accra Confession, adopted by the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and reaffirmed at the 2010 WCRC Uniting General Council, is based on the theological conviction that the economic and ecological injustices of today's global economy require the Reformed family to respond as a matter of faith in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Following the justice traditions of the biblical prophets and of Jesus in the gospel narratives, the Accra Confession views the current world situation by "looking through the eyes of powerless and suffering people." It calls the churches and society to hear the cries of the people who suffer and the woundedness of creation itself, over-consumed and under-valued by the current global economy.

"The Accra Confession is important because it speaks to issues of justice that are of concern to the women in my church and community," said Veronica Muchiri of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa. "Many women are

struggling to make a living to feed their families and take their children to school. The question of economic justice is constantly on their minds as they see other people who are extremely rich, driving big cars and living in posh homes. They wonder whether they are children of a lesser God."

Setri Nyomi, former WCRC general secretary and a minister in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Ghana, said, "In the work my church is doing, it is in our consciousness that injustice is wrong, and has brought much suffering to many in our communities. For some of us when we preach or engage in pastoral care, the values of the Accra Confession shape our messaging."

Fifteen years after its adoption, the Accra Confession is "still very relevant today even more than when it was first written. The urgency for the churches to confront and speak out against injustice needs to be louder and clearer now than ever before," said Muchiri.

The consultation was supported by funding from Otto per Mille.

1st NEAAC YOUTH EMPOWERMENT PROGRAM

October 24(Thu) – 28(Mon), 2019

North East Asia Council (NEAAC)
of Ministers of Education
Meeting
of PRO

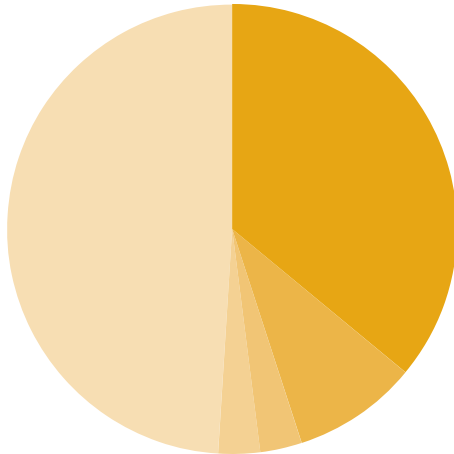
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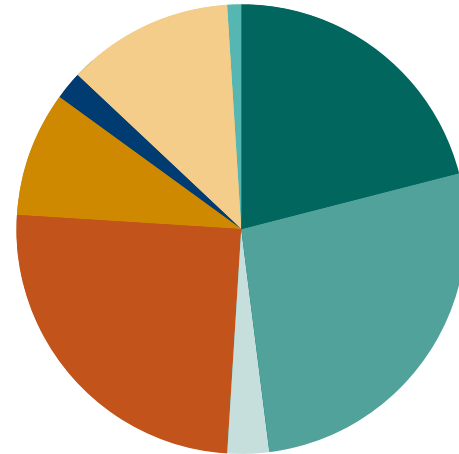
FINANCES

2019 Income - 2,112,627.58 €



Membership Contributions	36%
Institutional Support	9%
Programme Administration Fees	3%
Others	3%
Programme Support	49%

2019 Expenses - 2,112,627.58 €



Operational	21%
Personnel	27%
Others	3%
Cultivating a Just Communion	25%
Covenanting for Justice	9%
Doing Theology for Transformation	2%
Engaging God's Mission in the Context of Crisis	12%
Working with All the Partners God Provides	1%





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WCRG staff and officers dressed for the #ThursdaysInBlack anti-violence-against-women campaign



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WCRC website: wrc.ch

Visit our website for worship resources, prayer requests, reports, publications, news releases and messages from churches. While visiting the site, you can make an online donation!



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Reformed Communiqué

A thrice-yearly newsletter in multiple languages. Available free of charge. Ask for it at the WCRC website.

Reformed World

Published three times per year in English.

Monthly e-news summary

Sign up at the WCRC website.



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