

# Reformed communiqué

Articles in Bahasa Indonesia, Deutsch, English, Español, Français, Korean

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## Kelompok penilaian “COVID & Sesudahnya” yang pertama menetapkan kerangka kerja

“Kelompok Penilaian” dari proses “Apa yang dituntut Tuhan dari kita? Menilik, Mengaku, dan Bersaksi di Masa COVID-19 dan Sesudahnya” World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) menetapkan kerangka kerja untuk melanjutkan pekerjaan.

Pertemuan awal ini diakhiri pada hari Rabu, 10 Maret, dengan sebuah pertemuan virtual, meninjau masukan dari sesi sebelumnya dan menyediakan waktu bagi 48 peserta dari seluruh dunia untuk berdiskusi dalam kelompok-kelompok kecil.

“Kerangka yang sedang dibangun ini mengarahkan Persekutuan WCRC untuk menjadi pengakuan yang hidup bagi dunia,” kata Hanns Lessing, Sekretaris Eksekutif WCRC untuk Persekutuan dan Teologi.

“Menurut saya, proses ini telah berhasil melibatkan seluruh Persekutuan dalam hal bagaimana kita menanggapi krisis mendesak zaman kita yang telah ditunjukkan oleh pandemi ini,” kata Philip Vinod Peacock, Sekretaris Eksekutif WCRC untuk Keadilan dan Kesaksian. “Proses ini telah menimbulkan beberapa pertanyaan sulit, tetapi kita berhasil mendengar suara mereka yang biasanya dibungkam.”

Proses ini dimulai dengan sesi pembukaan pada 9 Desember, yang memperkenalkan konsep “*apartheid global*”, menggambarkan berbagai krisis yang muncul ke permukaan akibat pandemi COVID-19. “Kita mungkin berbicara hari ini tentang fenomena yang kita sebut *apartheid*



*global* yang mencakup eksploitasi dan ketidaksetaraan sosial-ekonomi, pengucilan politik dan sosial, diskriminasi ras dan etnis serta ketidakadilan gender dan penindasan heteronormatif. Persamaannya di sini bukan hanya unsur rasial tetapi juga sifat penindasan yang meluas secara sistemik, penuh kekerasan dan totaliter,” kata Allan Boesak dalam presentasinya.

Dalam meringkas sesi penguhan dan pleno tema pertama, yang diadakan pada tanggal 27 Januari dan berfokus pada penilaian, Katherine Cunningham mencatat bahwa kita tidak hanya menangani satu krisis tetapi sebuah kompleks berbagai krisis — ekonomi, lingkungan, rasial, politik — yang harus ditanggapi oleh gereja.

Merangkum sesi *sharing* pertama yang diadakan pada tanggal 10 Februari yang berfokus pada perempuan dan Afrika, Meta Ginting mengatakan, “Di masa krisis, ada kebutuhan untuk membentuk teologi

kontekstual yang dapat membantu orang untuk merangkul keberadaan mereka dan realitas di sekitar mereka, karena Roh terus membara dan harapan terus memberi semangat. Karena keselamatan tidak dapat ditemukan di tempat kekuasaan tetapi di pinggiran, kita perlu memikirkan kembali apa arti keselamatan bagi orang-orang yang paling menderita karena pandemi?”

Sesi *sharing* kedua, yang diadakan pada tanggal 24 Februari dan berfokus pada Eropa dan proses RAN (rasisme, otoritarianisme, dan nasionalisme), membuat Anna Case-Winters bertanya-tanya, “Mungkin visi kita tentang gereja perlu lebih besar. Gereja telah meninggalkan gedungnya. Kita dapat mengatakan bahwa Gereja telah turun ke jalan. Kita mengatakan bahwa gedung gereja itu sendiri ditutup, tetapi Gereja terbuka. Gereja bukanlah bangunan, Gereja adalah gerakan.”

*Bersambung ke halaman 2*

## Kelompok penilaian "COVID & Sesudahnya"

Lanjutan dari halaman 1

"Ini adalah dorongan untuk mengaku, untuk berkata, Tuhan, apa yang Engkau inginkan dari kami sebagai Persekutuan saat ini?" kata Najla Kassab, Presiden WCRC. "Sebagai satu Persekutuan, penting untuk merasa terusik agar dapat maju. Kita harus berani menggun- muli, melihat diri kita sendiri, mengetahui bahwa kita tidak sendiri, untuk percaya bahwa Tuhan sedang melakukan perjalanan bersama kita."

"Proses penilaian ini akan terus berlanjut. Kami mendapat masukan dari suara, pengalaman, dan wilayah yang berbeda, dan penekanan pada pekerjaan yang kita lakukan ber- sama untuk menyebut dunia tempat kita tinggal, untuk menganggap seri- us konteks saat ini," kata Chris Fer- guson, Sekretaris Jenderal WCRC. "Kita akan terus membangun ling- karan ini dan mengundang orang. Kita tidak akan menyimpulkan den- gan jawaban monolitik tetapi men- emukan tanggapan yang beragam, yang berakar kuat dalam visi kita sebagai koinonia global yang dipang- gil untuk persekutuan dan berkomit- men pada keadilan."

Pertemuan kedua dari empat kelompok pertemuan, "Mengaku," bertepatan dengan Prapaskah dan Paskah, akan dimulai pada hari Rabu, 24 Maret, dengan sesi siaran langsung.

Informasi lebih lanjut tentang proses penilaian "COVID & Beyond" dapat ditemukan di [wrc.ch/id/dituntut](http://wrc.ch/id/dituntut). ●

# Churches, civil groups amplify calls to stop human rights abuses in Philippines

**A**s a report on human rights abuses in the Philippines was delivered to the United Nations by the global group Investigate PH, churches and human rights groups reiterated their concerns over propa- gation of a culture that allows the abuse to happen.

The report indicates that changes in culture, not just policies, are needed to curb human rights abuses. Investigate PH is an independent body composed of various faith- based and civil groups from all over the globe.

World Council of Churches (WCC) moderator Agnes Abuom spoke during an online forum hosted by Investigate PH. "Even if we need policy changes and maybe constitu- tional changes, it is not enough," she said. "It has to do with a culture that needs to be changed."

Abuom said that leadership needs to understand that they are part of the global community.

The Investigate PH report has been sent to the United Nations Human Rights Commission.

"This is an urgent matter," said Abuom. "It's a matter that has been going on for very long in terms of violations, and I think it is a shame to the global community that, even when we have evidence-based infor- mation, it is still not enough to push for transformation."

Abuom said that Investigate PH is bringing evidence-based infor- mation from the ground to the various UN bodies.

Investigate PH is collating and submitting reports on alleged rights abuses in the Philippines, especially those that occurred under the term of President Rodrigo Duterte.



The group was created after the United Nations Human Rights Commission decided to pull back on suggestions for it to conduct a full- blown probe in the Philippines.

Chris Ferguson, general secretary of the World Communion of Reformed Churches, said during the online forum that one of the recom- mendations of the report was for the group to determine how many Fili- pinos are against a possible authori- tarian government.

"I think that we need to immedi- ately go to some of the concrete rec- ommendations of this dramatic situ- ation, and one of them of course is to locate what we're doing in terms of the world rising up," said Fergu- son. "We're gathering energy to see people who are saying no to authori- tarian governments and no to the erosion of mechanisms of interna- tional law." ●

*(Article courtesy of WCC.)*

# 동북아시아지역협의회가 가상회의를 통해 커뮤니티를 강화하다



**코**로나-19 전염병으로 인해 세계 개혁신교 협의회(WCRC)의 2021년 동북아시아지역협의회(NEAAC)은 대만 장로교회(PCT)의 주최 아래 2월 8일 가상 회의로 모였다.

모임을 위한 발표에서 WCRC 회장 나슬라 카삽(Najila Kassab)은 청중들을 향해 코로나-19 전염병 사태 아래 교회들이 취할 수 있는 조치에 대해 생각할 것을 격려했다. 카삽은 이 어려운 시기 동안 커뮤니티의 중요성에 대해 강조하며 이 모임의 주제인 커뮤니티의 재발견: 힘, 공정한 참여, 그리고 복음의 급진성의 재생에 응답했다.

기조 연설자 시우 카이-리(Chiu kai-Li)는 마태복음 본문을 인용하며 “내가 진실로 너희에게 이르노니, 너희가 여기 내 형제 중에 지극히 작은 자 하나에게 한 것이 곧 내게 한 것이니라” 소외된 자들에 대한 사랑의 중요성을 설명하였다.

카삽은 “우리는 변화의 시기에 있다. 바른 방법으로 우리의 이웃들과 교제하고 사랑할 수 있는 것이 오늘날 우리에게 대한 도전이다.” 라고 말하며 동의했다.

차례에 따라 제일대한기독교회(the Korean Christian Church in Japan, KCCI)의 허백기가 2021-2022 사회자로 선출되었다. NEAAC의 총무와 회계

담당자로는 각각 일본그리스도교회(the Church of Christ in Japan, CCJ)의 슈헤이 오이시와 카린 쿠시마가 선출되었다.

모임에서는 또한 회원 교회들이 어떤 창의적인 방식으로 이 전염병 사태에 대응하고 있는가에 초점을 두고 그들의 근황을 들었다.

“이 세계적 전염병은 자국 내 선교 활동뿐 아니라 국제적 관계와 에큐메니컬 협동에도 많은 어려움을 불러왔다.” 라고 한국 기독교 장로회(Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea, PROK)의 임청환이 말했다. “직접 만나서 회의를 하거나 대화를 나누는 것은 불가능하지만, 우리는 코로나-19 사태에서 우리의 경험들을 회원 교회들과 기관들과 나누고 그들과 이 상황에 대한 대응책을 모색하며 교회의 정체성에 대해 논의하는 가운데 계속해서 온라인으로 코이노니아를 경험해왔다.”

허백기는 “이러한 전염병의 환경 아래서, 교회의 예언자적 역할은 아주 중요하게 여겨져 왔다. 이제는 교회가 생명보다 돈을 중요시하는 정치와 부자를 위해 가난한 자를 강탈하는 경제적 사회에게 분명하게 하나님의 메시지를 보여줄 때이다.” 라고 보고했다.

중국그리스도교회홍콩협의회(Hong Kong Council of the Church

of Christ in China, HKCCCC) 찬랩-이(Chan Lap-Yi)는 코로나 시기 동안의 새로운 정치적 개발로 인해 홍콩인들과 홍콩 교회들이 겪는 도전들을 전했다. 허백기는 “이것은 정말 가슴 아픈 일이다. 홍콩의 교회들과 사람들을 위해 기도하겠다.” 라고 말하며 HKCCCC를 향한 깊은 염려를 표현했다.

NEAAC의 회원 교회로는 PCT, KCCJ, CCJ, HKCCCC, PROK, 그리고 대한예수교장로회(Presbyterian Church of Korea, PCK)가 있다.

PCT 청년 대표 이 지아-치 양(曠)의 보고. ●

# Le Fonds de Partenariat soutient les églises pendant la pandémie

**A** lors que la pandémie de la COVID-19 a pris toute son ampleur il y a près d'un an, le Fonds de Partenariat de la Communion mondiale d'Églises réformées (CMER) a réorienté son activité afin de fournir aux églises membres un soutien financier pour faire face à cette crise sans précédent.

« Dans toute notre famille de la CMER, nous avons vu nos églises à la fois affronter les réalités de la COVID et toutes les retombées sociales et économiques qu'elle a entraînées, mais aussi revitaliser leur vie et leur témoignage en réponse aux impératifs de la Confession d'Accra et à l'appel à une économie de la vie », a déclaré Chris Ferguson, secrétaire général de la CMER. « Les activités sont allées du pastoral à l'humanitaire en passant par le prophétique, toutes en concordance profonde avec la vision stratégique de la CMER en tant que *koinonia* mondiale, confessant le Dieu de la vie dans un monde tombé au milieu des voleurs ».

Le Fonds de Partenariat fournit généralement de petites aides aux églises membres et aux organisations soutenues afin de réaliser des projets



missionnaires importants pour la vie d'une église et de la communauté qui l'entoure, en particulier dans le Sud global. Le fonds renforce également les liens des églises membres avec la CMER, ainsi que la réalisation des objectifs stratégiques de l'église membre et de la Communion dans son ensemble.

Outre le recentrage des priorités, la CMER a également renforcé le montant des fonds disponibles en transférant des fonds destinés aux programmes vers le Fonds de partenariat, y compris vers son fonds d'urgence.

Des aides d'urgence ont été accordées tout au long de l'année, tandis que les demandes de projets ordinaires ont été approuvées en novembre. Jusqu'en 2020, le Fonds de Partenariat a fourni plus de 200.000 € en aide d'urgence et en subventions pour des projets ordinaires à plus de 30 églises membres.

En 2021, le Fonds de Partenariat continuera à fournir une aide d'urgence tout au long de l'année, tandis que les églises membres seront invitées à soumettre des demandes de projets ordinaires jusqu'au 2 avril, l'argent devant être attribué d'ici juin.

Le Fonds de Partenariat réformé est soutenu par des subventions du fonds Otto per Mille de l'Église vaudoise (Italie) et de l'Église de Westphalie (Allemagne).

Voici quelques exemples illustrant la manière dont les églises membres ont utilisé les subventions du Fonds de partenariat en 2020 :

*L'Église Chrétienne Évangélique de Halmahera (GMIH), Indonésie*

La pandémie a entraîné des difficultés économiques non seulement pour la GMIH, mais aussi pour le Nord des Moluques, où l'église est active. Tout en s'occupant de ses pasteurs et de ses collaborateurs, l'église a également tendu la main aux plus faibles dans ses communautés.

Un *guide pour le service de l'église au milieu de la pandémie de COVID-19* a été publié afin de fournir une aide aux pasteurs qui poursuivent leur ministère pendant la pandémie. Il a été distribué aux 453 communautés de la GMIH, malgré les problèmes logistiques dus au confinement pendant la pandémie. Alors que les difficultés économiques s'aggravaient en raison du confinement, la GMIH a également distribué des denrées





alimentaires aux collaborateurs de l'église et une aide alimentaire aux familles défavorisées.

« Ce programme a permis de créer un très fort sentiment de solidarité au sein de la communauté pendant la pandémie, ce qui prouve que jusqu'à présent, les communautés sont très préoccupées par la situation, indépendamment de leur religion, de leur ethnie, de leur race et de leur culture. S'entraider dans le besoin crée donc un bon sentiment de solidarité », a noté la GMIH dans son rapport.

#### *Église Presbytérienne au Ruanda*

En collaboration avec le gouvernement, l'église a distribué de la nourriture aux personnes pauvres, âgées et handicapées touchées par la crise. En outre, l'église a transmis des messages sur la manière de



limiter la propagation de COVID-19 grâce à une meilleure hygiène à la télévision du Ruanda et dans d'autres médias numériques.

Le président de l'église, Pascal Bataringaya, a appelé tous les membres à se souvenir en particulier des personnes âgées et des pauvres et à partager ce qu'ils ont durant la lutte contre COVID-19, en disant : « Pour aider, il n'est pas nécessaire de posséder un surplus ou d'avoir en abondance ; il faut plutôt un cœur plein d'amour pour le peuple de Dieu. Gardons un tel cœur en ces temps difficiles et prêchons par notre compassion. Même si les temples de pierres et de briques sont fermés, nos cœurs, qui sont les vrais temples, sont ouverts. C'est pourquoi nous devons travailler pour le Seigneur, déclarer publiquement son amour autant que possible, en promettant que Dieu est avec nous, quelle que soit la situation ».

#### *Église Chrétienne Réformée du Honduras*

En plus de l'impact de la pandémie, les Honduriens ont été victimes de deux violents ouragans : Eta et Iota. L'église a coordonné une réponse rapide avec dix de ses paroisses, en fournissant des rations alimentaires et des produits

d'hygiène pour répondre aux besoins urgents dus aux graves dégâts et à la perte de maisons et d'effets personnels causée par les fortes pluies et les inondations.

Plus de 1100 personnes ont bénéficié de cette aide. L'Église du Honduras et les bénéficiaires directs « remercient vivement la CMER pour son soutien à ce projet de secours alimentaire qui a sans aucun doute contribué à améliorer les conditions de vie de certains des foyers les plus menacés et les plus touchés après les tempêtes Eta et Iota. Nous vous remercions pour votre soutien spirituel et économique ».

#### *L'Église Presbytérienne du Sud Soudan (PCOSS)*

Par le biais de son bras humanitaire, l'Agence Presbytérienne de Secours et de Développement (PRDA), la PCOSS a distribué de la nourriture et d'autres articles à ceux qui souffrent du ralentissement économique provoqué par la pandémie. Son principal projet, cependant, était une campagne de sensibilisation pour éduquer les gens au sujet de la nécessité d'une meilleure hygiène contre le coronavirus.

« Au cours de cette campagne de quatre semaines, plus de 1000 personnes ont été directement atteintes dans quatre endroits sélectionnés. Ce chiffre va certainement augmenter, car les promoteurs de l'hygiène qui ont été engagés continueront à interagir avec les membres de la communauté pour diffuser les messages sur l'hygiène et renforcer les soins psychosociaux communautaires et la prévention de l'infection par COVID-19 au-delà de la durée du projet », a indiqué l'Agence PRDA. ●

# Dialogue report on *koinonia* commended for use

**K***oinonia: God's Gift and Calling*, the report of the International Reformed–Anglican Dialogue (IRAD), was officially introduced at a webinar co-hosted by the Anglican Communion and World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC).

Howard Gregory, an Anglican Archbishop from the Caribbean and co-chair of the dialogue process, welcomed the 50+ participants from around the world with an opening prayer “for the church universal and for the two communions in dialogue, that through the report and building on previous experiences, God will heal our divisions and bring us to a greater unity.”

“The final report focusing on what God makes possible through the gift of *koinonia* opens up a way to look again at our differences and disagreements and place us once more in God’s hands to find a way to closer unity,” said Elizabeth Welch, a minister in the United Reformed Church (UK) and co-chair of the dialogue.

“The theme of *koinonia* is hardly a new topic of discussion for ecumenists,” said Jamie Hawkey, a member of the Anglican dialogue team. “But the golden nugget of this report is the insight that Christians have seriously undervalued and underestimated the primary contributions of *koinonia* in and between the churches. The report celebrates *koinonia* as both gift and calling. What we have here in this report is a renewed operating system for dialogue between two communions that had been out of dialogue for over 30 years.”

Hanns Lessing, WCRC executive secretary for communion and theology, noted that the high expectations of that previous dialogue—seeking greater unity through ecclesial unifications—were

never met. “In response to these experiences, the 2020 report attempts to find a deeper understanding of communion that surpasses the church order focus that often marked the ecumenical discourses of unity,” he said.

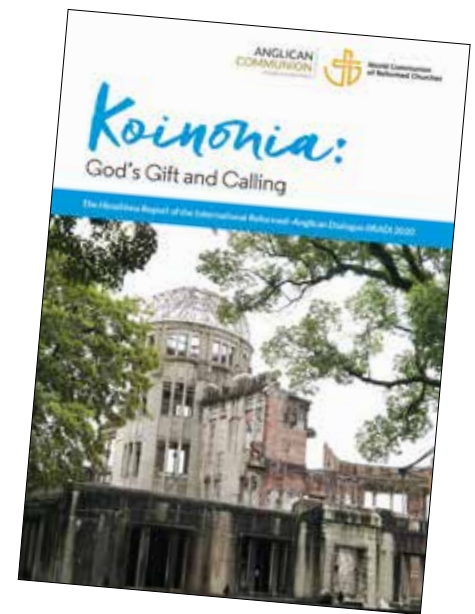
“In the diversity and the conflicts of the 21st century unity calls are often regarded with suspicion, because they are seen as power devices to stifle deviating forms of difference,” said Lessing. “In contrast to such closed understanding of unity, the New Testament understanding of *koinonia* is open, processual, and dynamic and calls for the continuous reception of God’s gift of communion in all areas of life.”

“Lived *koinonia* thrives on hospitality,” said Helene Steed, a member of the Anglican dialogue team. “Hospitality continues to be radical, especially in a COVID world. *Koinonia* by its very nature keeps doors ajar, rather than shuts them. We receive the godly-giveness of *koinonia* gratefully.”

“We were not just talking about our ecumenical need for *koinonia* and reconciliation but for needs within our communions, as well,” said Aimee Moiso, a member of the Reformed dialogue team. She said that report asks, “Can communion/*koinonia* contain conflict so that conflict loses its power to divide us? What would that mean to come into a dialogue believing that the relationship itself was so firm in Christ that we could talk about really hard things together, deal with difficult subjects together? Can *koinonia* contain conflict? Can it encompass the conflict?”

Peter Donald of the Church of Scotland and Royce Victor of the Church of South India (CSI) shared perspectives stemming from their own contexts.

“Local churches are terribly good at putting up walls between us,” said



Donald. “So, I hope the report will challenge us. I hope we can all be drawn more together with Jesus Christ uniting us because storms are going to keep coming our way.”

Royce noted that the ecumenical movement in India brought about two united churches, CSI and the Church of North India, which contain not only Reformed and Anglican but other traditions as well. “Today, not only the Indian church but the whole Indian society urgently need a *koinonia* between themselves, crossing the human borders and embracing each other to create a peaceful and just society,” he said.

“This is a beginning of a process that we hope will move beyond this level and to the grassroots of both our communions,” concluded Gregory, in commending the report for use by all levels of both communions.

During the webinar tribute was also paid to Anglican dialogue team member Clint Le Bruyns, who recently passed away from the coronavirus. The one-hour webinar was held on Tuesday, 16 February 2021 and may be viewed online.

*Koinonia: God's Gift and Calling* is available for free download from both the Anglican Communion and WCRC websites, as well as for sale through Amazon in the United Kingdom, USA, Japan, and Europe (please visit specific country sites). ●

# what does God require of us?

Discerning, Confessing, and Witnessing in the Time of COVID-19 and Beyond

Through the “What does God Require of Us? Discerning, Confessing, and Witnessing in an Age of COVID-19 and Beyond,” Communion-wide discernment process, the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) is seeking to live faithfully to its call to communion and commitment to justice.

The discernment process began with a global online gathering and a call to prophetic action in December 2020 and has continued with a steady series of online sessions since.

While hundreds of people are participating in the process virtually, all members of the Communion are invited to join. The following pages provide highlights from the inaugural session, including excerpts from presentations, worship material, and discernment questions.

Everyone is invited to utilize these materials in their own contexts and join in the conversation by sending their responses to [require@wrc.ch](mailto:require@wrc.ch).

This material, along with highlights from subsequent sessions, will be collected into booklets and made available soon. More information on the “COVID and Beyond” process can be found at [wrc.ch/require](http://wrc.ch/require).

## Opening Remarks from President Najla Kassab

In this year we have seen the world shaken by the COVID-19 pandemic. The situation has opened our eyes on many challenges and realities that affirmed the need to meet, discern, confess, witness, and change to what God has called us to.

The COVID-19 pandemic revealed the injustices that surround the world whether they are social, political, or economic. It exposed inequality, exploitation, and oppression that are rooted in economic systems that exploited the dignity of people where healthcare and other fundamental rights are only available to those who can afford them. Almost everywhere the vulnerable, poor, and marginalized are most affected by the disease—and by the measures of disease control.

Today we meet as one family around the Communion as we are challenged throughout our churches in strengthening our witness in response to the imperatives of the Accra Confession and the call for an economy of life. This is a special time, where a crisis could become an opportunity, where in the midst of our pain and struggle, we see hope, mainly because God is with us, as we strengthen one another. This is a time of building a stronger Communion, a prophetic one, an impactful presence in every place that hurts. Today we meet to initiate a Communion-wide process on the response of the WCRC to the COVID-19 pandemic based on the guiding objectives of our strategic plan, where a justice-centered response is timely.

Today is moment of *kairos* where we are called to act, to be prophetic voices, and to strive towards healing the world from the long-lasting injustice that even a vaccine will not heal. It is a *kairos* moment in our self-understanding as churches and a Communion and our mission as we prepare the agenda of our next General Council. It is our role to seek new ways of strengthening the Communion and transforming the world as we are transformed ourselves—to be the church in the public square reflecting the presence of God in spite of difficult times, to dream of new alternatives and see visions of a reality based on justice.

Today is a time where we gain strength as we come together and strengthen one another. It is a time to discover the blessings of discerning as a Communion. It is a time to be shaped in the image of Christ, who taught us love and justice. It is a time where fear will never limit our abilities. It is a time of manifestation for how God could send us out to a broken world. It is a time to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with our God. It is a time of witnessing to a God of Life. In this season of Advent, we learn to wait in great expectation and ask our Lord to speak to us, to teach us anew how to be called to communion and committed to justice. Together we can make a difference. Let us live in hope.

## Allan Boesak on the concept of “global apartheid”

**T**he unprecedented onslaught of the novel coronavirus has hugely impacted our work. COVID-19 has exposed and exacerbated the scandalous reality of what we have come to call global apartheid. The term has become more and more depressingly applicable to our world situation. South Africa, with its draconian policies of apartheid—declared by the international community a crime against humanity, and by the ecumenical movement led by the Communion of Reformed Churches as a travesty of the gospel, and its theological justification a heresy—set the world a particularly vicious model of racial oppression and discrimination, injustice, and exploitation.

We may thus speak today of a phenomenon that we call global apartheid which includes social-economic exploitation and inequalities, political and social exclusion, racial and ethnic discrimination, as well as gender injustices and heteronormative oppression. The common denominator here is not only the racial element but also the systemic, violent, pervasive, and totalitarian nature of the oppression.

The general reference today is the division of the world between the so called 1% and the 99% made crystal clear in Oxfam’s annual reports: In January 2017, just eight white men own as much wealth as half the world population. One in nine people do not have enough to eat. And more than one billion live on less than \$1.25 a day. In 2019, Oxfam reported that in 2018 billionaires’ fortunes grew by 2.5 billion dollars a day while

3.8 billion of the poorest half of humanity showed their wealth decline by as much as 11%.

This year Oxfam focuses more tightly on yet another form of global apartheid: Gender injustice, gender vulnerability, and gender oppression. Women and girls are among those who benefit least from today’s economic system. They spend billions of hours cooking and cleaning and caring for children and the elderly. Unpaid care work is the “hidden engine” that keeps the wheels of our economy, business, and society moving. It is driven by women who often have little time to get education, earn a decent living, or have a say on how our societies are run and who are therefore trapped at the bottom of the economy.

The situation at all levels and in all counties of the world, in every imaginable way, is getting worse even as we speak. The irresponsibility of many governments and their leaders is beyond shocking but hardly surprising.

One could remind the world and the church that the Crucified One amongst the crucified ones today has disarmed the rulers and authorities and made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them as Colossians 2:15 tells us. So, the question here is: Can the church sense, discern, and act upon the *kairos* moment the God of history has placed upon us?

In our discussion we will refer to two documents from within our Communion, and they have helped us to understand better the challenges that we are facing. I’m speaking of the Belhar Confession

of my own denomination from 1986, and I’m speaking of the Accra Confession from the WCRC from 2004. Belhar has three main pillars: 1) the unity that we have in Christ, 2) the reconciliation brought by Christ, and 3) the justice demanded by God. To simply put, Belhar confesses God’s radical indivisible justice, God’s radical indivisible equality, God’s radical indivisible inclusivity, and God’s radical indivisible solidarity. In these things, the church is called to follow God and to stand with the poor, the oppressed, the wronged, the destitute, the marginalized, the excluded in any form of injustice whatsoever.

In the Accra Confession we look at the world through the eyes of the poor and the oppressed, the powerless and the suffering, and then we see then a scandalous world. We confess to hear the cries of the poor knowing that in the cries of the poor and the oppressed we hear the very voice of God. We confess that we see the wounds of God and God’s creation caused by greed and hubris and selfishness, but we know also that every wound inflicted upon God’s children is a wound inflicted upon God. And so, the Accra Confession exposes all systems of injustice—economic social, and political—and, like Belhar, we call on the church to call these heresies and to follow God in God’s struggle for justice so that we can stand with those who struggle with God for justice.



## Worship Resources

### *Prayer*

We praise you Holy Chosen One  
 Son of Mary, Son of David  
 God's high down-dwelling one  
 Fruit of Prophecy, law's fulfillment  
 Sign of Grace  
 Love's firstborn child  
 You the one whom Jacob wrestled  
 The one for whom Miriam sang  
 You the one of Isaiah's vision  
 You the source of Saul's blinded sight  
 The one in whom all things began  
 In whom we fall and rise

Holy unreligious One  
 Frame and Faith nor chain can bind you  
 Nor demand that you must come  
 So, looking far beyond us  
 We prepare to find you near us  
 You:  
 Rage in sin  
 Joy in change  
 Fire in belly  
 Desire in loins  
 Voice in wilderness  
 Disappointment in leadership  
 Wisdom from above  
 Truth from below  
 Power of Blackness  
 Humbling of Whiteness  
 Come to us:  
 Baby in straw  
 Thorn in foot  
 Justice in cry and in creation.

### *Liturgical Response*

And so we plead our witness to the  
 hills and to the mountains  
 But they are hesitant to respond  
 Haven't we destroyed these sacred spaces that belong  
 to Indigenous communities by our mining  
 And so we rush to the rivers and the streams  
 But they too do not hear  
 For their waters are polluted by our industries  
 We take our case to the seas  
 But the plastic chokes them, and they cannot speak  
 Creation groans, not in anticipation, but  
 in pain, she cries out in brokenness  
 And neither can we take our case to the  
 impoverished, the enslaved, the dispossessed  
 Because they are tired by our words,  
 our false promises, our mission  
 And so we return to our tired God who is sick to the  
 stomach of our rituals, our theologies, our pretense  
 And God tells us what is required...  
 To do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly

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"God calls us to be a prophetic voice of hope and peace, a church which rejects all use of violence, be it from the state and its agencies, organized groups that exist on the margins of law, or all those who try to take political advantage of the social unrest, by denying its legitimacy and increasing violence."

—Gloria Ulloa,  
 Presbyterian Church of Colombia

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## Worship Resources

### *Commissioning Confession (excerpt)*

As we journey as a church, we lament in our complicity in systems that destroy creation, as we have sinned against the earth, in greed we have over-consumed and exploited earthly resources. Droughts, rising temperatures, air pollution, and changing weather patterns continue to threaten the most vulnerable populations, exacerbating existing inequalities that continue to rise like the sea levels.

In our lament we recognize our interconnectedness and interdependence with all creation. We are God's creatures existing in relationship with God's creation. Let us therefore listen to the cries of anxiety, grief, and trauma from the Indigenous communities, as the land of the ancestors continues to be threatened. In our lament let us find the tools for change, resistance and solidarity.

**We are called to do justice, in kindness and humility, and so as the sea levels rise, and the earth weeps we plead our case before the mountains, and let the hills hear our voice, as we chant together:**

**We're not drowning, we're fighting  
We're not drowning, we're fighting  
We're not drowning, we're fighting**

After God freed the people from the house of slavery, he called on us to remember the acts of the wicked, and the saving acts of the Lord (Micah 6:4-5). Today we witness the acts of the wicked when God's people cannot breathe because of a knee to the neck. When God's people cannot breathe because their trafficked bodies are trapped as cargo in the back of a lorry waiting to be sold. When God's people cannot breathe because they have been silenced in their suffering by the dominant powers of the state and the system. When God's people cannot breathe because they have fallen victim to the pandemic that disproportionately affects people of colour. When God's people cannot breathe.

We confess that at times we have remained too silent in the face of racism, segregation, and inequality, that as Churches our histories are corrupted by slavery and exploitation, and our complicity must not be hidden if we are to be true witnesses in our journeying for justice.

**We are called to do justice, in kindness and humility, and so we recognize the sins of inequality, the atrocities of racism, the vilification of the marginalized, and the devastation inflicted by the houses of slavery, and so we chant together:**

**Black Lives Matter  
Black Lives Matter  
Black Lives Matter**

We are commissioned on this journey to do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with God, to become agents of transformation in the world (Micah 6:8).

To do justice, we must witness.

To love kindness, we must repent.

To walk humbly, we must be in solidarity with the oppressed.

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"The moral cost needs to be lifted up. People over might, people over exorbitant wealth, people over not being patient enough to live through this but instead find themselves in a hurry dying."

— J. Herbert Nelson II,  
Presbyterian Church (USA)

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## Discernment Questions

1. In what ways does the term “Global Apartheid“ describe the crises exposed by the COVID-19 pandemic? Is it an adequate lens to read the signs of the times?
2. How should the WCRC respond to the revolutionary affirmation of the Belhar Confession that the church should stand where God stands, at the side of the destitute, the poor, and the wronged? In what specific ways should we join the global struggle against injustice, imperialist violence, and greed to work for life, global solidarity, and human dignity?
3. How can we be church in a situation where we respond not simply to a crisis, but to the whole complex of crises upon us today: An exclusionary, exploitative system of death, a scandalous order of a world fallen among thieves”, which, in the words of Jürgen Moltmann, can best be described as a “God-Crisis?”
4. What would best embody the goals of the *processus confessionis* (process toward confessing) in our Communion? What document and mission practice would this require?
5. In the time of the pandemic, we see a global increase in gender-based violence. How can the church contribute to end gender-based violence through its theology, preaching, teaching, and mission?
6. What does salvation mean in the midst of the multiplicity of violences against those who fall outside of the constraints of normalized patriarchy (women, men who face violence from other men because they are lower in the patriarchal hierarchy, LGBTQ+ community)?
7. How can the WCRC as a global communion take up Indigenous knowledge in addressing the burning challenges of the African region and in other parts of the world?
8. How can the church be relevant in a situation where religion is used to justify nationalisms, authoritarianisms, and racism?
9. How can churches become aware of their complicity and complacency with xenophobic and racist cultures and practices?
10. How can the extensive actions that have been taken to fight the virus be used as an example that it is possible to act drastically when needed? How can this be an example to realize that it is actually possible to resolutely address challenges like the climate crisis?

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“Congregations have created new avenues of supporting those in need by providing food, housing expenses, and emotional support to the vulnerable and isolated in their communities. We do this because as Christ’s church we know that through the Holy Spirit all of us, the people of this earth, are the work of His hands and are under His Almighty Sovereignty. The truth of His Word warms our hearts and brings peace to our troubled emotions and thoughts, strengthening our weary hands and feet to the service of others.”

—Dimitris Boukis,  
Greek Evangelical Church

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# Third Transformative Masculinities webinar calls for repentance

**T**he COVID-19 pandemic can become a “*kairos*” moment of opportunity for men to repent of the sin of patriarchy and create positive partnerships that empower women and men. Churches should be in the front line of this process, drawing on Scripture and other faith resources to advance gender equality.

That was the theme of a third Transforming Masculinities webinar which took place on Ash Wednesday, 17 February, featuring Ezra Chitando from the University of Zimbabwe, coordinator of the World Council of Churches program on Ecumenical HIV and AIDS initiatives and advocacy.

The webinar series is part of an ongoing process pioneered by the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC), ACT Alliance and the South Africa based Sonke Gender Justice network. Its goal is to work with faith leaders and train regional practitioners to facilitate spaces of dialogue, root out gender violence and engage men and boys in the task of promoting gender justice.

Chitando began by noting that “patriarchy promised a lot for boys and men,” but “we, who are supposed to be the beneficiaries, are also the victims of patriarchy.” As a result of the way in which boys are socialized “to dominate and control” others, he said, men are often unable to express vulnerability, to listen to women, to cooperate with them or to apologize for their own mistakes.

It is vital to work within families and faith communities, he said, to change the narrative, to promote cooperation with women’s movements and to invest “with urgency” in the training of young boys and girls. This season of Lent, he said, is an appropriate time to call men—as

Jesus called Zaccheus—to “come down immediately” from their position of privilege, to repent and offer restitution to those who have been harmed.

Among those joining Chitando in the conversation was Chad Rimmer LWF’s program executive for identity, communion and formation, who said “our faith traditions have the resources to resist negative narratives and ‘restory’ what it means to be a man.” He suggested this time of global pandemic could be an opportunity for transformation and progress towards greater gender equality. Men, who traditionally see themselves as the breadwinners, have been confined to their homes in a move that has “relativized the power of the patriarchy,” panelists agreed. How can churches support this confinement and combat the rise in domestic violence, they asked?

Another participant was Bafana Khumalo, co-founder and director of Strategic Partnerships for the Sonke network. He spoke of the reasons why many men resist gender justice work, citing the way they may feel emasculated by the feminist movement and noting that they too can be victims of violence and discrimination. Making comparisons with criticism of the Black Lives Matter movement, Chitando noted that the “system of privilege quickly moves into self-protective gear.” “Let us not compete for trauma,” he said, adding that “magnified victimhood is a patriarchal construct to allow for not coming to the conversation table.”

Philip Vinod Peacock, the WCRC’s executive secretary for justice and witness, spoke of the vital role that churches can play in transforming toxic masculinity through liturgy, preaching, teaching and reading of Scripture. “The church is the last boys’ club,” he said, but “we

should be leading way and not lagging behind.” Contextual bible studies and “increasing faith literacy,” he insisted, are vital ways of moving the needle towards greater justice and equality.

Participants watched a short film entitled *The Gift of Fatherhood* about two brothers living in a huge township in South Africa, where more than half of all children grow up without a father in the home. The film, featured on the MenCare website, highlights the importance of providing safe spaces for men to share feelings, encounter positive role models, and learn non-violent coping strategies.

Panelists emphasized the importance of challenging “cultural norms” and working with traditional leaders to stop violence against women. “We need to engage,” and not “push away or let off the hook those who don’t agree with us,” Khumalo said. He cited projects in Zimbabwe and Tanzania where traditional leaders have attended workshops on women’s empowerment and have become “champions of equality calling for the end of child marriages and female genital mutilation.”

Just as “Jesus showed Zaccheus how to become part of the solution for change,” Khumalo said, so people of faith must “move out of our comfort zones” and confess the way churches have excluded and discriminated against women. The ability to “reconfigure our gender narratives” to promote justice and inclusion, panelists concluded, is a mark “upon which our faith stands or falls.” ●

*(Article courtesy of LWF/P. Hitchen)*

# CANAAC convoca a una jornada de oración el 20 de enero

**E**l Consejo del Área del Caribe y América del Norte (CANAAC) convoca a las iglesias miembros de su región, así como de toda la Comunión Mundial de Iglesias Reformadas (CMIR), a dedicar una jornada de oración este próximo miércoles 20 de enero.

“Estuve sufriendo por Estados Unidos, una nación que debe lidiar con disturbios en su Capitolio mientras es avasallada por el COVID, que parece haber sido relegado a un segundo plano ante las manifestaciones de la supremacía blanca”, expresó Angela Martins, coordinadora del CANAAC. “En este sentido, me siento fortalecida por este llamado a la oración por todos nosotros y por todas nosotras en esta región y en toda la CMIR en un tiempo como el que nos toca vivir”.

“Somos parte de un mundo en peligro. La pandemia del COVID-19 continúa afectando prácticamente cada zona de la tierra habitada. Como vicepresidenta de la CMIR en esta región, tengo particular consciencia de la situación del coronavirus en Canadá, en los Estados Unidos de Norteamérica y en muchas partes del Caribe. También estoy muy consciente de los disturbios políticos y del violento asalto al Capitolio de los Estados Unidos de Norteamérica el pasado 6 de enero”, dijo Lisa Vander Wal, de la Iglesia Reformada en los Estados Unidos de Norteamérica.

“Estados Unidos de NA sigue en conmoción por causa de la continua injusticia racial y la supremacía blanca entre la población, acentuada luego de las elecciones estadounidenses del mes de noviembre”, añadió Vander Wal. “Mientras esperamos la transición hacia una nueva administración, nos preocupa que la violencia continúe e impida una transferencia pacífica del poder. “Oh

Señor, clamamos a ti en nuestra angustia; ¡Oh Señor, oye nuestra oración! “

“Lo que está sucediendo en nuestros entornos y en el mundo es grave, ya sea por la pandemia, o con los disturbios en los Estados Unidos de NA, o con los valores agitados en todo el mundo, o con la injusticia que implica proporcionar la vacuna a las personas ricas y poderosas, en tanto que quienes no pueden permitírsele deben esperar en su sufrimiento”, dijo Najla Kassab, presidenta de la CMIR. “Orar de manera conjunta es una gran fuente de sanación, y unirnos como un cuerpo de 100.000.000 de miembros en todo el mundo será importante a los ojos de Dios y fortalecerá y profundizará nuestra comunión juntas y juntos”.

“En El Líbano, a partir de hoy, estamos ante un bloqueo total durante los próximos 10 días, dado que los hospitales están completamente ocupados”, agregó Kassab. “Oremos por las personas enfermas, desanimadas, preocupadas y por las muchas personas que sienten que su vida se detuvo. Señor, danos fortaleza y sana a quienes necesitan sanidad”.

“Estamos de luto por las pérdidas de aquellas personas a quienes amamos. Lamentamos la forma en que las comunidades que están marginalizadas están siendo aún más impactadas por el sufrimiento causado por este virus”, dijo Karen Georgia A. Thompson, ministra general asociada para ministerios y operaciones eclesiales en general de la Iglesia Unida de Cristo. “Nos afligen las políticas que no responden. Lamentamos la falta de humanidad en las decisiones que se toman, al tiempo que pedimos que se preste atención a un cuidado médico de calidad para todas las personas”.

“En medio de los clamores de este tiempo, oigo la súplica de ciertos líderes diciendo que ‘esto no es lo

que somos’. Sin embargo, la triste realidad es que esto sí es lo que somos. Somos gente pecadora”, dijo Colin Watson, director ejecutivo de la Iglesia Cristiana Reformada en América del Norte y coordinador del CANAAC. “La Biblia nos recuerda que necesitamos que el Señor nos ayude a ser diferentes. Es solo por la gracia de Dios, y por medio de su encarnación y resurrección, que se nos ofrece la capacidad de ser diferentes. Debemos actuar afirmativamente de manera diferente y perseguir su justicia para que podamos ser verdaderamente sal y luz”.

“Nuestra sociedad está abrumada por la ansiedad. Está ensombrecida por el recelo sobre el futuro, que puede causar estragos en los valores y la moralidad del presente”, expresó Joy Abdul-Mohan, moderadora de la Iglesia Presbiteriana en Trinidad y Tobago. “Por eso necesitamos esta buena noticia de que no estamos en soledad. Dios nos ha ofrecido una esperanza duradera. El día de alegría llegará en que la oscuridad se desvanecerá. ¿Hay una palabra más oportuna que pueda pronunciarse que ésta? “

“¿Qué significa amar a tu prójimo, a tu prójima, en el contexto del COVID-19?” preguntó Michael Blair, secretario general de la Iglesia Unida en Canadá. “En tanto continuamos buscando ser buenos prójimos y buenas prójimas, unámonos en oración por las personas trabajadoras de la salud y otras cuidadoras que están trabajando denodadamente para atender a las víctimas del COVID-19, oremos por los liderazgos gubernamentales que se esfuerzan por tomar decisiones sabias y oremos para que Dios nos conceda la sabiduría para ser buenos prójimos y buenas prójimas”.

*Continúa en la página 15*

# Prayers and support requested for Belarus

*Remember those who are in prison, as though you were in prison with them; those who are being tortured, as though you yourselves were being tortured.*

—Hebrews 13:3

**T**he World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) joins WCRC Europe's call for prayer and action to support protestors in Belarus.

For the last six months, citizens of Belarus have been staging protests against the government and President Alexander Lukashenko, who was declared the winner in elections which have been widely condemned as fraudulent.

Protesters have faced violent persecution by the authorities, as well as abusive detention. A statement by the United Nations Human Rights Office early on in the protests cited more than 450 documented cases of torture and ill-treatment of detainees, as well as reports of sexual abuse and rape. At the end of 2020, the Viasna Human Rights Centre documented 1,000 testimonies of torture victims.

In a letter to WCRC member churches in Europe, Martina Wasserloos, WCRC Europe president, shared a request from a member of the small Reformed community in Minsk, who had to flee the country: "We ask you to pray for freedom and legality in Belarus, for humanity and human rights in our country. ... At the moment, more than 30,000 best people of Belarus of all professions and ages (from underage schoolchildren to even 89 years old!) have gone, through the courts and prisons."

WCRC Europe has called on member churches to:

- Pray for peaceful protestors and prisoners
- Join actions in support of the democracy movement
- Raise awareness of the situation to local politicians
- Write to prisoners

WCRC Europe included a suggested prayer, which begins:

*Eternal and merciful God!*

*Before you, we think of the people of Belarus today. More people than ever took to the streets last year demonstrated peacefully and happily against the falsification of the election, against the arbitrariness and violence of the regime.*

*They were forcibly dispersed and many thousands arrested. But they didn't let themselves be intimidated and kept going. Among them were many Christians, Catholics, Orthodox, also members of the small evangelical minority, young and old, men and women.*

*We ask you, God: give them your spirit: Power, love and prudence.*

*Don't let them get tired of their hope for a free land and strengthen them in their advocacy for the rights of all people.*

*Lord, have mercy!*

Please join sisters and brothers in Europe and around the world in prayer and support for the protestors and detainees in Belarus. ●

## Applications invited for interns

The World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) is accepting applications for its internship programme. The programme gives highly qualified young people an opportunity to gain valuable experience working with an international ecumenical organization.

The internship will be for 12 months in the WCRC offices in Hannover, Germany, tentatively beginning from July or August, depending on pandemic travel restrictions.

The programme is open to English-speaking individuals of WCRC member churches who are aged 30 or younger, including ministers, seminarians, or Christian professionals with an interest in working for their churches or the ecumenical movement at any level. Women and individuals from the Global South are particularly encouraged to apply.

As part of the programme's leadership development goals, interns are given a variety of experiences and responsibilities within the WCRC. They provide project assistance for both programme

offices, participate fully in staff teams, and are assigned executive-level projects for completion (with supervision). Areas of work in the internship experience include:

- Theology and Communion
- Justice and Witness (including economic, climate, gender, and racial justice)
- Mission
- Ecumenical Engagement
- Communicating the stories of the WCRC

The WCRC internship programme is sponsored by the *Evangelische Missionswerk* (EMW), as well as donations from member churches, and covers almost all costs (including travel, housing, medical insurance and a small stipend). However, it is asked that the intern (or sponsoring church) share in some costs (based on ability).

**Deadline for applying is 11 June 2021—and all applications must be endorsed by a WCRC member church.** Applications may be obtained by emailing [wrc@wrc.eu](mailto:wrc@wrc.eu) or online here: <http://wrc.ch/leadership-development/internships>

## **CANAAC convoca a una jornada de oración el 20 de enero**

*Continúa de la página 13*

“Jamaica se encuentra actualmente atravesando una propagación comunitaria y el índice de contagios está aumentando rápidamente. Ha habido una variedad de efectos causados por las implicaciones del COVID-19, incluidos hogares que pierden sus redes de seguridad financiera, cierres de escuelas y restricciones en la movilidad”, dijo Norbert Stephens, secretario general de la Iglesia Unida en Jamaica y las Islas Caimán. “Instamos a todas nuestras hermanas y hermanos en Cristo a unirse en oración por los problemas que rodean la pandemia del COVID-19, por aquellas personas que están fuera de la red de seguridad social, por nuestros niños y niñas y por las y los educadores que deben adaptarse a la nueva normalidad para el ambiente de enseñanza y aprendizaje, por aquellas personas que sufren emocionalmente, por quienes no tienen acceso a suministros e información, por nuestros profesionales de la salud y nuestros socorristas, para que puedan escuchar y experimentar al Cristo cuya presencia, provisiones y poder nos han sido asegurados”.

J. Herbert Nelson, II, secretario de la Iglesia Presbiteriana (EE. UU.), hizo referencia a las cerca de 400.000 muertes por COVID-19 en los Estados Unidos de NA, así como a la “insurrección planeada en el Capitolio de los EE. UU., que tuvo lugar contra nuestro gobierno y con-

tra toda la ciudadanía norteamericana. Como personas de fe, debemos tomar una postura unánime y enfrentar la realidad del racismo, en todas sus formas. No debemos responder con miedo o escepticismo, sino con lo único que nos ayudará a salir adelante: el amor a Dios y a nuestros prójimos y prójimas” (Deuteronomio 6:4).

“En Canadá tenemos gratitud por la promesa que traen las vacunas y por su disponibilidad; estamos agradecidos y agradecidas por líderes políticos que se han tomado esta pandemia en serio”, dijo Matthew Sams, presidente del Comité de Relaciones Ecuménicas e Interreligiosas de la Iglesia Presbiteriana de Canadá. “También expresamos nuestra preocupación por los límites de la atención médica en nuestros centros más grandes, ya que los casos infecciosos son seis veces más altos que los números de la primavera. Sin embargo, nuestro corazón está junto a las comunidades rurales, remotas e indígenas que con frecuencia carecen de instalaciones médicas básicas; y nuestro corazón está junto a las personas que sufren otras enfermedades, algunas mortales, que no pueden recibir adecuada atención”.

“Somos una Comunión comprometida con la justicia, y es justo que cuando nuestras iglesias miembros están sufriendo, nos acerquemos a ellas con apoyo y oración”, manifestó Chris Ferguson, secretario general de la CMIR. “En toda nuestra familia de la CMIR, vemos a nuestras iglesias

respondiendo a las realidades del COVID y a todas las consecuencias sociales y económicas que produjo, pero también las vemos revitalizando su vida y su testimonio en respuesta a los imperativos de la Confesión de Accra y al llamado por una economía de vida.”

“Hay un sendero de esperanza que se abre de par en par para nosotros y nosotras a medida que el mundo emerge de este desastre sin precedentes”, dijo Ferguson. “Mientras lloramos nuestras pérdidas, mientras nos esforzamos por volver a la vida diaria, hagamos todos los esfuerzos posibles por no volver a la normalidad, sino a un mundo transformado por medio de la gracia de Dios y de nuestra mayordomía de la esperanza”.

“Invitamos a nuestras hermanas y hermanos de CANAAC y de toda la Comunión a unirse en una jornada de oración el miércoles 20 de enero”, pidió Martins, “y continuar orando luego y apoyándose mutuamente en los meses venideros”. ●



Chris Ferguson

# What does God require of us?

*He has told you, O mortal, what is good;  
and what does the LORD require of you  
but to do justice, and to love kindness,  
and to walk humbly with your God?*  
—Micah 6:8 (NRSV)

**T**he WCRC Strategic Plan is the result of intense participation by our Communion to articulate the specific strategic vision emerging from the 2017 General Council in Leipzig, Germany—a vision that seeks to translate our core mission into the present tense and the present context for our global *koinonia* as it is “called to communion, committed to justice.”

The plan is lived out under the banner “Confessing the God of Life in a world fallen among thieves” and lifts up the four guiding verbs of our vocation: discerning, confessing, witnessing, and being reformed.

For the last four months we have as a worldwide family created a process to try to fully embrace these four active dimensions of our collective vocation in response to the pandemic and to the deeper, pre-existing reality of a “world fallen among thieves” (John 10:10).

Called “What does God Require of Us? Discerning, Confessing, and Witnessing in the Time of COVID-19 and Beyond,” we find ourselves profoundly engaged in a grace-filled moment of discernment in community using a virtual platform to share, discern, listen, witness, reflect, and in real terms deepen and strengthen our global *koinonia* as we build a more fully just and participatory *koinonia*.

In forming discernment circles where our Communion through its diverse regions, areas of work and witness, and voices and constituencies share and listen about the reality of the pandemic and its impact, we have received the powerful movement of Spirit and release of transformative prophetic imagination. The witness of our churches and communities in their diversity and specific character and often woundedness has revealed the suffering and brokenness of this world ravaged by empire and even more certainly has made plain the uprising of Spirit of Life as those who have been marginalized, destroyed, excluded, and dispossessed witness through their suffering to the power of the Resurrection in our history.

The voices of persons living with disabilities, the reality of Indigenous people, Palestinians, the struggles for gender justice, the death-dealing of economic injustice, the systemic horrors of white supremacy, and racial injustice have come to us as a rising up led by the Spirit and nurtured by the Good News of Jesus Christ so that all may have life abundantly.

The world situation continues to unfold, and the pandemic takes new and awful turns every day. Forward movement is often met with a new wave, another variant. The urgent crises that beset us and the systemic injustices saddle upon this world have not been able to keep down the uprising of the Spirit from below, from the broken one. In this time between Easter and Pentecost we are as a Communion left with the gift that allows us to embrace each other as we hear the cries of the people and earth community and at the same time see and feel the rising up—we embrace each other and embrace the question: What does God require of us? Micah answers: To do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God.

Beset by crises—gifted with communion.  
Thanks be to God. ●

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WCRC  
Calvin Centre  
Knöchenhauerstrasse 42  
30159 Hannover, Germany

tel: +49 511 8973 8310  
fax: +49 511 8973 8311

[wrcr@wrcr.eu](mailto:wrcr@wrcr.eu)  
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