



World Communion  
of Reformed Churches

# Executive Committee Minutes 2021

AT SUCH A TIME AS THIS.



**World Communion of Reformed Churches  
Executive Committee  
25-28 May 2021  
via Zoom**

**Theme: “At such a time as this”**

*“For if you keep silence at such a time as this, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another quarter, but you and your father’s family will perish. Who knows? Perhaps you have come to royal dignity for just such a time as this.” —Esther 4:14*

**CONTENTS**

<b>Participants</b>	3
<b>Timetable</b>	5
<b>Actions of the Executive Committee</b>	6
<b>Narrative Record</b>	11
<b>Documents Received</b>	
Rules of Procedure for a Virtual Executive Committee	29
Address of the President	40
Report of the General Secretary	51
Addendum: General Secretary Search Committee: Interim Report	62
Addendum: Proposed Interim Plan	65
Addendum: Strategic Plan Programme Group Report	80
Addendum: Communion and Theology Report	84
Addendum: Justice and Witness Report	96
Addendum: Communications and Operations Report	103
Reports from Regions	
ACRC Report	109
AIPRAL Report	112
CANAAC Report	116
NEAAC Report	122
WCRC Europe Report	124
Reports	
Gender Justice Policy	130
Report of the United Nations Ministry	141
Greetings	
Evangelical Mission in Solidarity	145
John Knox International Reformed Center Association	146

## Contents

Lutheran World Federation	146
Mennonite World Conference	148
Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity	149
World Association for Christian Communication	150
World Council of Churches	151
Drafting Team Reports	
Report of the Drafting Team 1:	
Report of the General Secretary, Address of the President	153
Report of the Drafting Team 2:	
Proposed Interim Plan, Search Committee	158
Report of the Drafting Team 3:	
Sustainability	162
Message from the 2021 Executive Committee	166
Finance	
Finance Report	168
Audited Financial Report for 2020	175
Audit Basics	177
Organizational Circumstances	180
Presentation of Accounting Results	182
Audit Statements	186
Audit Result	195

## **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 (GPIB)

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. Baekki Heo, NEACC

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

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

Rev. Milciades Pua, Presbyterian Church of Colombia

Rev. Mary Ekinde Salle, Presbyterian Church in Cameroon

Dr. Susan Thomas, Church of South India

Martina Wasserloos-Strunk, WCRC Europe

Rev. Dr. Dianna Wright, Presbyterian Church (USA)

### **Ecumenical Guests**

Rev. Dr. Will Adam, Anglican Communion

Rudelmar Bueno de Faria, ACT Alliance

Cesar Garcia, Mennonite World Conference

## Participants

Fr. Avelino Gonzalez-Ferrer, Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian  
Rev. Dr. Dieter Heidtmann, Evangelical Mission in Solidarity  
Rev. Dr. Martin Junge, Lutheran World Federation  
Rev. Célestin Kiki, *Communauté D'églises en Mission*  
Rev. Dr. Nelson Kraybill, Mennonite World Conference  
Rev. Dr. Dirk Lange, Lutheran World Federation  
Dr. Philip Lee, World Association for Christian Communication  
Dr. Vasile Octavian Mihoc, World Council of Churches  
Rev. Lydia Neshwange, Council for World Mission  
Dr. Jean-Daniel Pluess, Global Christian Forum  
Rev. Prof. Dr. Ioan Sauca, World Council of Churches

## Observers

Hon. Elizabeth Bohler, John Knox International Reformed Center  
Rev. Michael Blair, The United Church of Canada  
Pfr(in). Susanne Erlecke, Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD)  
Rev. Serge Fornerod, Protestant Church in Switzerland  
Rev. Stephan Kendall, Presbyterian Church in Canada  
Rev. Paul Tche, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

## Staff

Anna Krüger, Assistant to Finance and Communications  
Meta Ginting, Intern  
Werner Joecker, Assistant for the Reformed Partnership Fund  
Rev. Dr. Hanns Lessing, Executive Secretary for Communion and Theology  
Rev. Philip Peacock, Executive Secretary for Justice and Witness  
Amritha Perumalla, Assistant for Justice and Theology  
Gerhard Plenter, Finance Coordinator  
Sue Rheem, PC(USA) Ministry to the United Nations  
Hon. Phil Tanis, Executive Secretary for Communications and Operations

## Worship Leader

Dr. Eve Parker

## Minute Taker

Pauline Weibye, Church of Scotland

## Interpreters

Corina Díaz  
Robert Jordan

## 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. All times noted are CEST (UTC +2).*

### **Tuesday, 25 May**

13:00	Welcome and Opening Worship
13:45	Orientation, adoption of Rules of Order, approval of Agenda, appointment of Drafting Team
14:00	Plenary: Address of the President
14:30	Break
14:45	Plenary: Report of the General Secretary
15:30	Discernment Groups: Report of the General Secretary
16:30	Drafting Team / Social Time

### **Wednesday, 26 May**

13:00	Daily Prayers
13:30	Plenary: General Secretary Search Committee/Proposed Interim Plan
14:30	Break
14:45	Plenary: Decisions: General Secretary Report Strategic Plan mid-term review (including COVID and beyond)
15:15	Discernment Groups: Proposed Interim Plan
16:30	Drafting Team / Social Time

### **Thursday, 27 May**

13:00	Daily Prayers
13:30	Plenary: Decisions: Proposed Interim Plan, Gender Justice Policy
14:30	Break
14:45	Plenary: Budget, Finance
15:15	Discernment Groups: Sustainability
16:30	Drafting Team / Social Time

### **Friday, 28 May**

13:00	Plenary: Decisions: Budget, Finance, Sustainability
14:30	Break
14:45	Plenary: Final decision, Michigan Corporation
15:45	Plenary: Appreciation of outgoing General Secretary
16:15	Thanks and Closing Worship

## ACTIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 2021

The Executive Committee:

### Membership

1. Welcomed Dianna Wright as a substitute member of the Executive Committee in place of J. Herbert Nelson II (PC(USA)).

### Rules of Procedure for Use in a Virtual Executive Committee (Discernment Procedures)

2. Approved the Rules of Procedure for Use in a Virtual Executive Committee.

### Agenda

3. Approved the agenda for the meeting.

### Appointments

4. Appointed Dianna Wright, Presbyterian Church (USA); Susan Thomas, Church of South India; Annabell Lalla-Ramkelawan, Presbyterian Church of Trinidad and Tobago; and Diana Erdélyi, Reformed Church in Hungary, to serve as the Drafting Team.
5. Appointed the following as members of Discernment Groups:  
*Discernment Group 1*  
Lisa Vander-Wal (moderator), Dianna Wright (scribe), Tibonge Ng'ambi, Veronica Muchiri, Hefin Jones, Agnaldo P. Gomes, Milciades Pua, Susanne Erelecke, Philip Lee, Célestine Kiki, Paul Tché  
*Discernment Group 2*  
Samuel Ayete-Nyampong (moderator), Susan Thomas (scribe), Hong Jung Lee, Hannah North, Hilary Hagar, Mary Ekinde Salle, Dirk Lange, Cesar Garcia, Michael Blair, Will Adam  
*Discernment Group 3*  
Raissa Vieira Brasil (moderator), Annabell Lalla-Ramkelawan (scribe), Clayton Da Silva Leal, Baekki Heo, Claudio Pasquet, Uma Agwu Onwunta, Martina Wasserloos, Serge Fornerod, Dieter Heidtmann, Ioan Sauca  
*Discernment Group 4*  
Sylvana Apituley (moderator), Diana Erdélyi (scribe), Johann Weusmann, Angela Martins, Coutinho Maravillhoso Moma, Khid-arn Prawate, Vasile-Octavian Mihoc, Avelino Gonzalez, Jean-Daniel Plüss, Eve Parker

### **Address of the President**

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

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

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

### **Interim Report of the General Secretary Search Committee**

8. Received the Interim Report of the General Secretary Search Committee and referred it to Discernment Groups.

### **Proposed Interim Plan**

9. Received the Proposed Interim Plan and referred it to Discernment Groups.

### **Executive Committee Minutes 2019**

10. Approved the Minutes of the Executive Committee 2019 as a correct record of the meeting.

### **General Council Planning**

11. Endorsed the terms of reference and the composition of the General Council Task Group.
12. Referred the reflections of the Discernment Groups to the General Council Task Group for further consideration.

### **Strategic Plan Programme Group (SPPG)**

13. Thanked the Strategic Plan Programme Group (SPPG) for its commitment to the implementation of the Strategic Plan.
14. Referred the reflections of the Discernment Groups on question 2.a (implementation of the Strategic Plan) and 2.b (development of a decentralized leadership model) to the General Secretary for further consideration.
15. Referred the reflections of the Discernment Groups on question 2.c (extension of the peace and reconciliation work of the WCRC) to the Officers' Committee and General Secretary for further consideration and



## Actions

involvement of the regions.

16. Referred the reflections of the Discernment Groups on question 2.d (strengthening global processes of discernment) to the General Secretary for further consideration and involvement of the regions.

## Address of the President

17. Expressed its appreciation to the President for her opening sermon and her address.
18. Referred the issues identified during discernment to the General Secretary for special attention and further consideration.

## Proposed Interim Plan

19. Resolved that the WCRC shall operate under the interim leadership structure from 1 September 2021 until 31 August 2022.
20. Requested the Officers' Committee to conduct a mid-term review on the progress of the search process and the sustainability campaign not later than February 2022. Further, it requested that if the implemented processes do not provide the expected results, the Officers' Committee will make a proposal to the Executive Committee on how to proceed.

## General Secretary Search Process

21. Mandated the General Secretary Search Committee as currently composed to continue its search for a suitable candidate to be presented to the Executive Committee for election at its meeting in May 2022.

## Leadership Model during Interim Period

22. Endorsed the leadership model described in the Proposed Interim Plan that during the interim period the core functions and responsibilities of the general secretary as found in the Constitution and Bylaws shall be delegated to the "Collegial General Secretariat," composed of the three executive secretaries.
23. Approved the distribution of functions and responsibilities of the general secretary to the Collegial General Secretariat, acting general secretary, Officers' Committee, individual executive secretaries, and individual members of the Officers' Committee and Executive Committee as described in the Proposed Interim Plan.
24. Appointed Hanns Lessing as acting general secretary during the time of the interim.

## Gender Justice Policy

25. Approved the Gender Justice Policy.

### **Sustainability**

26. Endorsed the following terms of reference of the Sustainability Task Group:

*Terms of Reference of the Sustainability Task Group:*

The Sustainability Task Group will intensify the sustainability activities of the WCRC according to the goals of the Strategic Plan and within the mandates of the constitution and will present comprehensive proposals for decision-making at the Executive Committee meeting in November/December 2021.

The task group shall work on the following assignments:

- intensify the process of designing a long-term, comprehensive sustainability model that will address the challenge of the structural deficit of the core budget;
  - the development of a process to activate the whole Communion to more strongly contribute to the work of the WCRC with witness, prayer, human resources, and financial resources;
  - intensify the processes to secure funds to cover the shortfalls in the 2021 and 2022 core budget;
  - intensify the process of developing a medium-term budget plan that will allow the election of a general secretary in 2022;
  - engage a consultant to analyze why the WCRC is having such problems with sustainability;
  - explore models used by other organizations.
27. Endorsed the composition of the Sustainability Task Group in terms of capacity, expertise, and representation, as guidance for the Officers' Committee to appoint specific individuals.
  28. Referred the reflections of the discernment groups to the Sustainability Task Group for further consideration.

### **Finance Report**

29. Approved the 2020 financial statements.
30. Accepted the auditor's report 2020.
31. 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 2020.
32. Agreed that the audit of the 2021 financial statement be carried out by the

## Actions

- High Audit Office of the *Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland*.
33. Approved a balanced 2021 budget.
  34. Agreed that the Officers' Committee should give preliminary approval for a balanced budget for 2022 subject to final approval at the 2022 Executive Committee meeting.

## Regional Councils

35. Received the report of the *Alianza de Iglesias Presbiterianas y Reformadas de América Latina* (AIPRAL).
36. Received the report of the African Communion of Reformed Churches (ACRC).
37. Received the report of the Caribbean and North American Area Council (CANAAC)
38. Received the report of the Council of WCRC Europe.
39. Received the report of the Northeast Asia Area Council (NEAAC).

## Message

40. Authorized the Officers' Committee to make the agreed changes to the draft text and to send it out thereafter as the agreed Message from the May 2021 meeting of the Executive Committee.

## Executive Committee of the WCRC Michigan Corporation

41. Approved the Minutes of the 2019 meeting of the Executive Committee of the Michigan Corporation of WCRC, held in Kappel am Albis, Zürich, Switzerland, 9-15 May 2019.
42. Agreed that all the actions of the Executive Committee during its virtual meeting 25-28 May 2021, be fully concurred with and entered into the permanent record of the WCRC Michigan Corporation as constituting the decisions of 2021.

**NARRATIVE RECORD  
of the Zoom-based meeting of the Executive Committee  
25-28 May 2021**

**TUESDAY, 25 MAY**

**Opening Worship**

The Executive Committee convened over Zoom at 13:00 (CEST) for opening worship.

The Executive Committee was welcomed by President Najla Kassab. General Secretary Chris Ferguson added his welcome to the guests and ecumenical partners who were joining the Committee on this occasion. Eve Parker led worship.

President Kassab preached on the theme, “At such a time as this” (based on Esther 4:14). She drew a parallel between the challenges facing Esther and those facing the Communion throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and as the world seeks to recover. She pointed out that the Communion must speak up for others and must not seek merely to mediate but to take sides based on truth and justice. Such a time as this is the right time, God’s time, *kairos* time.

**Plenary Session**

Phil Tanis introduced and explained the mechanics of a Zoom meeting.

The President opened the first session of the Executive Committee.

The General Secretary informed the Executive Committee that 23 of 27 members of the Executive Committee were present. An apology had been received from J. Herbert Nelson II, Presbyterian Church (USA); Dianna Wright was confirmed as an alternate member in his place for the duration of the Executive Committee. The President declared the meeting to be quorate.

**ACTION 1**

**The Executive Committee welcomed Dianna Wright as an alternate member of the Executive Committee in place of J. Herbert Nelson II (PC (USA)).**

The General Secretary presented the proposed Rules of Procedure for Use in a Virtual Executive Committee and reminded members of the mechanics of the discernment and consensus model of decision-making.

**ACTION 2**

**The Executive Committee approved the Rules of Procedure for Use in a Virtual Executive Committee.**

Narrative

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 3**

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

### **ACTION 4**

**The Executive Committee appointed Dianna Wright, Presbyterian Church (USA); Susan Thomas, Church of South India; Annabell Lalla-Ramkelawan, Presbyterian Church of Trinidad and Tobago; and Diana Erdélyi, Reformed Church in Hungary, to serve as the Drafting Team.**

### **ACTION 5**

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

#### *Discernment Group 1*

**Lisa Vander-Wal (moderator), Dianna Wright (scribe), Tibonge Ng'ambi, Veronica Muchiri, Hefin Jones, Aginaldo P. Gomes, Milciades Pua, Susanne Erlecke, Philip Lee, Célestine Kiki, Paul Tché.**

#### *Discernment Group 2*

**Samuel Ayete-Nyampong (moderator), Susan Thomas (scribe), Hong Jung Lee, Hannah North, Hilary Hagar, Mary Ekinde Salle, Dirk Lange, Cesar Garcia, Michael Blair, Will Adam.**

#### *Discernment Group 3*

**Raissa Vieira Brasil (moderator), Annabell Lalla-Ramkelawan (scribe), Clayton Da Silva Leal, Baekki Heo, Claudio Pasquet, Uma Agwu Onwunta, Martina Wasserloos, Serge Fornerod, Dieter Heidtmann, Ioan Sauca.**

#### *Discernment Group 4*

**Sylvana Apituley (moderator), Diana Erdélyi (scribe), Johann Weusmann, Angela Martins, Coutinho Maravillhoso Moma, Khid-arn Prawate, Vasile-Octavian Mihoc, Avelino Gonzalez, Jean-Daniel Plüss, Eve Parker.**

### **Listening Session: Address of President, Report of the General Secretary**

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 thanked the President for her informative and passionate speech.

#### **ACTION 6**

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

The President took the chair and invited the General Secretary to present his report, his last before the conclusion of his term of office in August 2021.

The General Secretary presented his report, explaining and clarifying its main points. He drew attention to the various addenda and invited the executive secretaries each to address the Committee to highlight points of interest in their reports.

The General Secretary asked the Executive Committee to note the report from the United Nations Ministry. He mentioned the departure of Ryan Smith and thanked him for work for and with the WCRC; he welcomed Sue Rheem, Mr. Smith's replacement, to her first meeting of the Executive Committee. The General Secretary also noted that the Communion's relationship with the John Knox International Reformed Center Association in Geneva had been reinvigorated with the help of the Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches; he thanked Serge Fornerod for his assistance in that regard.

The General Secretary concluded by thanking the WCRC interns for their enthusiasm and for the gifts they brought to the Communion during a difficult year. He also thanked the staff for their hard work and commitment, mentioning in particular the need for prayer to support Sanjog Patro, who had experienced a close family bereavement. He also drew attention to the voluntary work of Gerhard Plenter and thanked him for his sharing of his time and expertise.

#### **ACTION 7**

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

The Executive Committee broke for Discernment Group meetings.

After the meetings of Discernment Groups, the Drafting Team met while other members of the Executive Committee took part in a social time organized by Philip Peacock.

**WEDNESDAY, 26 MAY**

#### **Daily Prayers**

President Kassab opened the meeting and invited Eve Parker to lead the Executive

Narrative

Committee in worship. Readings were from the Book of Esther. The sermon was preached by Rev. Dr. J. Herbert Nelson II, by video recording.

### **Plenary Session**

The General Secretary thanked all those who had taken part in worship. He introduced Rev. Dr. Martin Junge, general secretary of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), who brought greetings to the Executive Committee and expressed his gratitude for the journey together of the LWF and WCRC in recent years. He added a personal appreciation of Chris Ferguson as he reaches the end of his term of office.

### **Listening Session: General Secretary Search Committee and the Proposed Interim Plan**

Vice-President Lisa Vander Wal took the chair.

The President presented the Interim Report of the General Secretary Search Committee.

### **ACTION 8**

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

The President presented the Proposed Interim Plan, stressing that the recommendations in the report were the work of the officers, the general secretary, and the executive secretaries. The proposal was designed to address three principal issues: the uncertainty arising from the impact of COVID-19 on the operations of the Communion; concerns over the sustainability of the core budget; and the decision of the General Secretary Search Committee not to present a candidate for election to the post of general secretary. The Communion was fortunate to have three very capable executive secretaries who had the readiness, skills, and commitment to serve the Communion and to provide joint leadership, allowing time for the sustainability issue to be addressed and the work of the Search Committee to continue for another period of time. The specific proposals were:

- to postpone the election of a General Secretary
- to set up a “Collegial General Secretariat,” with Hanns Lessing as acting general secretary
- to set up a Sustainability Task Group
- to set up a General Council Task Group
- to hold an Extraordinary Meeting of the Executive Committee in November-December 2021
- for the Officers’ Committee to review progress on all these issues in

February 2022

- to report to the meeting of the Executive Committee of May 2022
- assuming satisfactory progress, to conclude the interim arrangements on 31 August 2022

The Vice-President thanked the President for her leadership at this time of challenge and invited questions. Questions covered: support for the staff members who would be assuming extra tasks; the legality under the WCRC Constitution and German employment law of the proposals; the eligibility of the acting general secretary to apply for the position of general secretary; the additional measures proposed by the Search Committee to improve response rates; the need for the new General Secretary to move to Hannover given the likely increase in remote working; the extent to which the executive secretaries concurred with the proposal for a Collegial General Secretariat; the need, or otherwise, for a new Search Committee to be appointed; and the need to improve communication with member churches, particularly those who might be struggling with finances or other issues post-COVID.

Several questions were raised on the proposed model, particularly on whether it was the right model at this time; whether it could be extended for a time or indefinitely if it proved effective; and whether the Communion should be looking at a drastically different model than the traditional one of the team being headed by a general secretary. All questions were noted and would be considered by the appropriate task group or individual as the work progressed.

#### **ACTION 9**

**The Executive Committee received the Proposed Interim Plan and referred it to Discernment Groups.**

The Vice-President thanked everyone for their contribution to the listening session. A short break followed.

#### **Decision Session: Minutes, Report of the General Secretary, Address of the President**

Vice-President Sylvana Apituley took the chair. The General Secretary introduced the *Executive Committee Minutes 2019* and sought approval for them as a correct record.

#### **ACTION 10**

**The Executive Committee approved the Minutes of the Executive Committee 2019 as a correct record of the meeting.**

The Vice-President invited Dianna Wright, moderator of the Drafting Team, to present the Team's report on the outcome of the Discernment Groups'



Narrative

deliberations. Dr. Wright summarized the report that had been circulated in advance, highlighting the principal points of concern raised by Discernment Groups. She then presented the recommendations of the Drafting Team.

**ACTION 11**

**The Executive Committee endorsed the terms of reference and the composition of the General Council Task Group.**

**ACTION 12**

**The Executive Committee referred the reflections of the Discernment Groups to the General Council Task Group for further consideration.**

Coutinho Maravilhoso Moma asked that the General Council Task Group ensure the inclusion of children as well as youth in the next General Council. The Committee agreed, and Dr. Wright undertook to add this point to the Drafting Team's report and commend it to the General Council Task Group.

**ACTION 13**

**The Executive Committee thanked the Strategic Plan Programme Group (SPPG) for its commitment to the implementation of the Strategic Plan.**

**ACTION 14**

**The Executive Committee referred the reflections of the Discernment Groups on question 2.a (implementation of the Strategic Plan) and 2.b (development of a decentralized leadership model) to the General Secretary for further consideration.**

**ACTION 15**

**The Executive Committee referred the reflections of the Discernment Groups on question 2.c (extension of the peace and reconciliation work of the WCRC) to the Officers' Committee and General Secretary for further consideration and involvement of the regions.**

**ACTION 16**

**The Executive Committee referred the reflections of the Discernment Groups on question 2.d (strengthening global processes of discernment) to the General Secretary for further consideration and involvement of the regions.**

Clayton Da Silva Leal urged the SPPG to ensure that the renewed focus on the work of regions resulted in action and change in this regard. The Committee agreed, and Dr. Wright undertook to add this point to the Drafting Team's report and commend it to the SPPG.

**ACTION 17**

**The Executive Committee expressed its appreciation to the President for her**

**opening sermon and her address.**

### **ACTION 18**

**The Executive Committee referred the issues identified during discernment to the General Secretary for special attention and further consideration.**

Hong-Jung Lee asked that the current situation in Myanmar be considered by the SPPG. The General Secretary confirmed that indeed the Peace and Reconciliation Coordination Group was actively pursuing that situation. Sylvana Apituley mentioned also the need to consider the situation in West Papua. The General Secretary agreed and reassured the Executive Committee that the remit of the Peace and Reconciliation Coordination Group was flexible enough to allow for urgent new situations to be addressed.

The Vice-President thanked the Discernment Groups and the Drafting Team for their work.

The plenary session ended in prayer led by Raissa Vieira Brasil.

The Executive Committee broke for Discernment Group meetings.

After the meetings of Discernment Groups, the Drafting Team met while other members of the Executive Committee took part in a social time organized by Philip Peacock.

## **THURSDAY, 27 MAY**

### **Daily Prayers**

President Najla Kassab opened the meeting and invited Eve Parker to lead the Executive Committee in worship. Readings were from the Book of Esther. The sermon was preached by Rev. Lydia Neshangwe, moderator of the Council for World Mission.

### **Plenary Session**

The President thanked those who had taken part in worship and expressed her gratitude to Rev. Lydia Neshangwe for her sermon and for the close relationship between the Communion and the Council for World Mission.

The General Secretary 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 Cardinal Kurt Koch, President of the Council. The Cardinal paid tribute to the heroic efforts of individuals who ministered to others

during the COVID pandemic and expressed his thanks to God for the courage of this great crowd of witnesses. Fr. Avelino added his personal thanks to the General Secretary for his hospitality and for his commitment to ecumenical partnership during his term of office.

### **Decision Session: General Secretary Search Committee and the Proposed Interim Plan**

The President took the chair and invited Dianna Wright, moderator of the Drafting Team, to present the Team's report on the outcome of the Discernment Groups' deliberations. Dr. Wright summarized the report that had been circulated in advance, highlighting the principal points of concern raised by Discernment Groups. She then presented the recommendations of the Drafting Team, pausing after each section to invite comments and questions.

After section 3, Samuel Ayete-Nyampong commented that there appeared to be a conflict between the recommendation that the Search Committee should continue its work and present a suitable candidate for election to the Executive Committee meeting in May 2022, and the earlier comment that the interim model could, if successful, be left in place for a longer period. Dr. Wright replied that a deadline was felt to be essential for the Search Committee's work but that the interim model offered flexibility if the search was again unsuccessful or if the sustainability issues remained problematic. Lisa Vander Wal added that Discernment Groups had sensed tension between those who would like to see a new general secretary appointed as quickly as possible and the attraction of the proposed new model of leadership. She called for the Executive Committee to hold both ideas in tandem and to work intentionally on both, reminding members of the need for them to be actively involved in providing direction and support throughout this time of change.

Mary Ekinde Salle asked if the Search Committee would approach member churches to solicit new applications for the post of general secretary or if the Search Committee would rely on previous applications. The President replied that the intention was to relaunch the process in its entirety and to invite new applications.

#### **ACTION 19**

**The Executive Committee resolved that the WCRC shall operate under the interim leadership structure from 1 September 2021 until 31 August 2022.**

#### **ACTION 20**

**The Executive Committee requested the Officers' Committee to conduct a mid-term review on the progress of the search process and the sustainability campaign not later than February 2022. Further, it requested that if the implemented processes do not provide the expected results, the Officers' Committee will make a proposal to the Executive Committee on how to proceed.**

**ACTION 21**

The Executive Committee mandated the General Secretary Search Committee as currently composed to continue its search for a suitable candidate to be presented to the Executive Committee for election at its meeting in May 2022.

**ACTION 22**

The Executive Committee endorsed the leadership model described in the Proposed Interim Plan that during the interim period the core functions and responsibilities of the general secretary as found in the Constitution and Bylaws shall be delegated to the “Collegial General Secretariat,” composed of the three executive secretaries.

**ACTION 23**

The Executive Committee approved the distribution of functions and responsibilities of the general secretary to the “Collegial General Secretariat,” acting general secretary, Officers’ Committee, individual executive secretaries, and individual members of the Officers’ Committee and Executive Committee as described in the Proposed Interim Plan.

**ACTION 24**

The Executive Committee appointed Hanns Lessing as acting general secretary during the time of the interim.

The President thanked the Drafting Team for its clear report. She thanked the staff team for their willingness to take on new responsibilities and congratulated the new Collegial General Secretariat on its appointment, assuring them of the support of the Executive Committee.

Samuel Ayete-Nyampomg asked if the new arrangements were permitted by the Constitution and Bylaws. Johann Weusmann replied that they were: the appointment of an acting general secretary was provided for in the Constitution. He assured the Executive Committee that the new arrangements did not violate the Communion’s governing documents.

**Decision Session: Gender Justice Policy**

The President invited Philip Peacock, executive secretary for justice and witness, to present the Gender Justice Policy which had been previously circulated. Rev. Peacock explained the process which had resulted in this version of the policy. A group had met on three occasions to prepare a draft policy; this had been circulated to partner organizations and, after some amendments, had been brought to the meeting of the Executive Committee in 2019. Further changes had been requested by the Executive Committee. After these were made, the policy was again

Narrative

transmitted to partner organizations for further comment. Since no responses had been received, the draft policy was being presented to this meeting of the Executive Committee for approval.

Comments and questions were invited. Angela Martins expressed her satisfaction with the revised document, commenting that the language was vastly improved and that the Communion now had a Gender Justice Policy which she would be proud to support and circulate among member churches. Clayton Da Silva Leal asked how translations would be approved, stressing the need for accurate and appropriate translation. Rev. Peacock replied that the WCRC would do its best to ensure that translations were accurate and would then circulate draft translations to member churches for feedback before they were confirmed for wider circulation.

## **ACTION 25**

### **The Executive Committee approved the Gender Justice Policy.**

Hanns Lessing invited Dr. Vasile-Octavian Mihoc, programme executive for ecumenical relations of the World Council of Churches, to bring the greetings of the WCC to the Executive Committee. Dr. Mihoc brought the formal greetings of Rev. Prof. Dr. Ioan Sauca, acting general secretary. Prof. Dr. Sauca expressed his appreciation for the common witness of WCC and WCRC for economic and ecological justice, reminding the Communion that it is in togetherness that we experience God's grace and love—even in this long period of pandemic.

A short break followed.

### **Listening Session: Finance Reports**

Vice-President Raissa Vieira Brasil took the chair. She invited General Treasurer Johann Weusmann to present the various finance and budget papers to the Executive Committee.

The General Treasurer opened with an overview of the income of the Communion, pointing out that the membership contributions from some regions had dropped in 2020, largely due to the impact of COVID-19 on local church finances, but that the contributions from other regions had risen slightly. The overall level of membership contributions remained lower in 2020 than it had been in 2018; this was a source of continuing concern although it had been noted that WCRC was not alone in ecumenical bodies in experiencing a drop in contributions. He stressed that action would require to be taken to try to increase contributions from some areas. In contrast, income for programme work remained robust; the Communion was grateful for the generosity of its programme funders.

Expenditure on core costs had to be monitored carefully as a consequence of the

drop in membership contributions. The Communion cannot afford to pay staff salaries from the core budget alone and had to rely on donations from the Church of Westphalia and the Council for World Mission.

Overall, the year had ended with a small surplus of 52,469 euros. The General Treasurer pointed out, however, that had there been a meeting of the Executive Committee in 2020, as planned, the budget would have merely broken even.

The General Treasurer reported that the WCRC had once again received a very positive audit report from the High Audit office of the EKD, who were content to recommend approval and authorization of the annual accounts by the Executive Committee.

Mr. Weusmann moved on to present a budget plan for 2021, commenting that it was not possible to present a balanced budget. Instead, a deficit of 50,800 euros was forecast although it was hoped that this gap could be filled through fundraising. Even so, this was only possible because of the savings to be achieved through the planned delay in filling the post of general secretary.

The General Treasurer drew attention to the redemption of US investments from the Barnabas and Presbyterian Foundations; this was to ensure compliance with the Executive Committee's ethical and sustainable investment policy. The funds will be moved at an appropriate point to a new fund set up with the German KD Bank; this fund will be fully compliant with the WCRC investment policy.

Mr. Weusmann explained that the recommendations to the Executive Committee were contained in the Finance Report which had been circulated. Comments and questions were invited.

Hefin Jones asked what percentage of membership contributions was not being received. The General Treasurer replied that this was unclear since the office remained in conversations with the churches who had been facing difficulties and it was hoped that, in some cases, the situation could be resolved. However, he stressed that there remained a structural finance problem: salaries had naturally been increased over the years but membership contributions had decreased. This was unsustainable.

Coutinho Maravilhoso Moma asked if the WCRC had lost any funds in the move of investments from the US to Germany. Anna Krüger answered that care had been taken to move the funds at a time when losses would not be sustained, and indeed that there had been no currency losses.

Serge Fornerod drew attention to page 11 of the EKD audit report and the risk highlighted there that substantial sums might have to be returned to two funders.

Narrative

Mr. Weusmann explained that he had been in regular consultation with the two funders and was confident that the funds would not require to be returned and could instead be set aside, through various mechanisms, for the funding of the next General Council. Formal confirmation of these arrangements had not yet been received from the funders and the risk had therefore been rightly highlighted in the audit report.

Hannah North asked how the Communion could achieve its aim of appointing a woman from the Global South as an executive secretary if funding remained so problematic. Mr. Weusmann explained that funding was not available so the recruitment of such a post, though desirable, had not proceeded. The President added that some funding had been received from PC(USA) for the post but that more was required; she urged member churches to support fundraising for this cause.

The General Secretary explained that Discernment Groups were now being asked to consider overall sustainability. He emphasized that the Sustainability Task Group would be considering not just financial matters but overall Communion sustainability. The terms of reference of the Task Group were set out in the discernment questions for the following session.

Before moving to Discernment Groups, Hanns Lessing explained that, because of urgent pastoral commitments affecting some of its members, the remaining members of Group 3 would be split among the other groups.

The Executive Committee broke for Discernment Group meetings.

After the meetings of Discernment Groups, the Drafting Team met while other members of the Executive Committee took part in informal regional group meetings.

## **FRIDAY, 28 MAY**

### **Plenary Session**

The President took the chair. Angela Martins opened the session in prayer.

### **Decision Session: Sustainability and Finance**

The President invited Dianna Wright, moderator of the Drafting Team, to present the Team's report on the deliberations of the Discernment Groups.

Dr. Wright summarized the report that had been circulated in advance, highlighting the principal points of concern raised by Discernment Groups. She then presented the recommendations of the Drafting Team. Questions and comments were invited.

Lisa Vander Wal remarked that young people often had considerable influence and that it was right for them to be involved in the Sustainability Task Group. Hannah North agreed but pointed out that any young person involved ought, like other members, to have some skills and experience in finance. Angela Martins suggested that it might be helpful to expand the definition of young people to include those in both their 20s and 30s, who might be expected to be able to make significant contributions.

#### **ACTION 26**

**The Executive Committee endorsed the following terms of reference of the Sustainability Task Group:**

***Terms of Reference of the Sustainability Task Group:***

**The Sustainability Task Group will intensify the sustainability activities of the WCRC according to the goals of the Strategic Plan and within the mandates of the constitution and will present comprehensive proposals for decision-making at the Executive Committee meeting in November/December 2021.**

**The task group shall work on the following assignments:**

- **intensify the process of designing a long-term, comprehensive sustainability model that will address the challenge of the structural deficit of the core budget;**
- **the development of a process to activate the whole Communion to more strongly contribute to the work of the WCRC with witness, prayer, human resources, and financial resources;**
- **intensify the processes to secure funds to cover the shortfalls in the 2021 and 2022 core budget;**
- **intensify the process of developing a medium-term budget plan that will allow the election of a general secretary in 2022;**
- **engage a consultant to analyze why the WCRC is having such problems with sustainability;**
- **explore models used by other organizations.**

#### **ACTION 27**

**The Executive Committee endorsed the composition of the Sustainability Task Group in terms of capacity, expertise, and representation, as guidance for the Officers' Committee to appoint specific individuals.**

#### **ACTION 28**

**The Executive Committee referred the reflections of the discernment groups to the Sustainability Task Group for further consideration.**

The Committee moved to consider the recommendations for action contained in the Finance Report.



Narrative

**ACTION 29**

The Executive Committee approved the 2020 financial statements.

**ACTION 30**

The Executive Committee accepted the auditor's report 2020.

**ACTION 31**

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 2020.

**ACTION 32**

The Executive Committee agreed that the audit of the 2021 financial statement be carried out by the High Audit Office of the *Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland*.

**ACTION 33**

The Executive Committee approved a balanced 2021 budget.

**ACTION 34**

The Executive Committee agreed that the Officers should give preliminary approval for a balanced budget for 2022 subject to final approval at the 2022 Executive Committee meeting.

The President extended her thanks to all for their hard work on the finances of the Communion, mentioning in particular the members of the Finance Committee and the staff.

**Regional Councils**

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

*Alianza de Iglesias Presbiterianas y Reformadas de América Latina.*

Agnaldo Gomes presented the report of the *Alianza de Iglesias Presbiterianas y Reformadas de América Latina* (AIPRAL).

The President called for questions.

**ACTION 35**

The Executive Committee received the report of the *Alianza de Iglesias Presbiterianas y Reformadas de América Latina*.

*African Communion of Reformed Churches*

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

The President called for questions.

**ACTION 36**

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

*Caribbean and North American Area Council*

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

The President called for questions.

**ACTION 37**

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

*Council of WCRC Europe*

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

The President called for questions.

**ACTION 38**

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

*Northeast Asia Area Council*

Baekki Heo presented the report of the Northeast Asia Area Council (NEAAC).

The President called for questions.

**ACTION 39**

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

**Message**

The President explained that it was normal for the Executive Committee to prepare and approve a Message to be sent out after its meetings. A draft Message had been

Narrative

prepared and was shared on screen.

A short break followed.

### **Plenary Session**

The President took the chair and invited comments on the draft Message.

Hong-Jung Lee commented that the draft statement lacked a clear message. He felt that it should not simply be a record of what the Committee had considered but should reinforce the message the Communion wished to share with its member churches and the world.

Clayton Da Silva Leal was concerned that a word of hope was missing, remarking that such hope would be empowering to churches at such a time as this.

The President accepted both suggestions and invited the Committee to permit the Officers to make the changes and send the Message out.

### **ACTION 40**

**The Executive Committee authorized the Officers to make the agreed changes to the draft text and to send it out thereafter as the agreed Message from the May 2021 meeting of the Executive Committee.**

### **Ecumenical Greetings**

The President invited Jean Daniel Plüss to bring greetings from the World Pentecostal Fellowship. Dr. Plüss spoke of the appropriateness of the theme “at such a time as this,” pointing out that the Pentecostal World Fellowship had been founded in an equally challenging period for many people of colour, for women, and for minorities. It had been the sense of community which had helped Pentecostals at that time and which sustained them now. He called for both communions to be sensitive to the voice of the Holy Spirit and to each other.

Paul Tché brought the greetings of the Disciples of Christ and the Council on Christian Unity. He commented that his church was considering what it meant to be church together at such a time and added that this was a good time to be church for the world. He expressed his thanks to Chris Ferguson for his faithful service to the WCRC and the worldwide ecumenical movement and added that he would be missed.

Célestin Kiki was invited to bring the greetings of the Community of Churches in Mission (CEVAA). He expressed his thanks for the invitation to attend the meeting. He said that his own organization was to celebrate its 50th anniversary in 2021 with

the theme “let’s keep the flame alive.” He noted that churches and ecumenical bodies all faced the challenge of keeping the flame alive.

The President extended her thanks to the speakers and to all ecumenical guests and partners for their contribution to the success of the Executive Committee meeting.

The President formally closed the May 2021 meeting of the Executive Committee.

### **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 Veronica Muchiri. The President took the chair. Phil Tanis explained the legal background to the WCRC Michigan Corporation.

#### **ACTION 41**

**The Executive Committee of the WCRC Michigan Corporation approved the minutes of the 2019 meeting of the Executive Committee of the Michigan Corporation of WCRC, held in Kappel am Albis, Zürich, Switzerland, 9-15 May 2019.**

#### **ACTION 42**

**The Executive Committee of the WCRC Michigan Corporation agreed that all the actions of the Executive Committee during its virtual meeting 25-28 May 2021, be fully concurred with and entered into the permanent record of the WCRC Michigan Corporation as constituting the decisions of 2021.**

The meeting of the Executive Committee of the WCRC Michigan Corporation was formally closed in prayer by Agnaldo Gomes.

A short break followed.

### **Appreciation of General Secretary Ferguson**

The President led the Committee in a tribute to the leadership of Chris Ferguson. She gave thanks to God for Rev. Ferguson’s contribution to the work and life of WCRC, describing his appointment as a gift to the Communion. She commented on the difficulty faced by the General Secretary of one of the largest ecumenical bodies which had the smallest staff and limited resources, and expressed her gratitude for Rev. Ferguson’s achievements in the fields of peace, justice, and reconciliation throughout the world. She paid tribute to his courage and the seven years of his life spent in servanthood within the WCRC.

Prof. Dr. Ioan Sauca, Acting General Secretary of the WCC, paid tribute to Rev. Ferguson in a pre-recorded video.

Rev. Dr. Collin Cowan, General Secretary of the Council for World Mission, also brought the greetings and thanks of his organization to Rev. Ferguson in a pre-recorded video.

A short slide show capturing some of the significant events of Rev. Ferguson's tenure was presented.

Rev. Dr. Jooseop Keum, General Secretary Designate of the Council for World Mission, together with Philip Peacock and Hanns Lessing, co-editors, launched the latest issue of *Reformed World*, which takes the form of a *Festschrift* dedicated to the life and work of Rev. Ferguson. The volume is in three parts with headings derived from the prophetic contributions made by Rev. Ferguson throughout his life of service: transformative ecumenism, peace building, and living out the Accra Confession.

Hanns Lessing, Philip Peacock, and Phil Tanis, executive secretaries, each paid personal tribute to Rev. Ferguson. On behalf of the staff group, Hon. Tanis presented the gift of a carved map of Hannover to remind Rev. Ferguson and his wife, Susan, of the years they had spent with the WCRC.

Rev. Ferguson replied with heartfelt thanks for the tributes and good wishes he had received. He also thanked all those who had worked alongside him and had strengthened his understanding of communion and service. He paid tribute to the support of the two presidents with whom he had worked and for the advice and support of Rev. Dr. Setri Nyomi, his predecessor as general secretary. Rev. Ferguson expressed his gratitude to the staff of the Communion and pledged to offer them and his successor his continuing support.

The General Secretary expressed the thanks of the Communion to all who had enabled the virtual meeting of the Executive Committee to take place.

### **Closing worship**

The Executive Committee and all participants in the meeting joined in worship led by Eve Parker. Worship included a Prayer of Commissioning for the newly appointed Collegial General Secretariat. The General Secretary preached and concluded by leading the meeting in prayer for the three executive secretaries and for the Communion.

The meeting was closed by the President pronouncing the benediction.

## **RULES OF PROCEDURE FOR A VIRTUAL 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.”

The WCRC Executive Committee adapted the 2017 General Council Rules of Procedure for its own in-person meetings in 2018 and 2019. The restrictions placed on global gatherings have necessitated a slight adaptation of the rules to allow for conducting a virtual meeting, although the spiritual and theological foundations remain the same.

## **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 (WCRC) 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 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 are also celebrated informally as we 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 have been constituted by previous actions of the Executive Committee and continue to fulfil their mandates:

- Finance Committee
- Membership and Constitution Committee
- Reformed Partnership Fund Committee

Last year, without an Executive Committee meeting called due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the officers constituted a committee which will report to the 2021 Executive Committee:

- General Secretary Search 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).

**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 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;
- 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. 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.

## **7. 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)

## **8. 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.

The "raise hand" reaction will be displayed if a participant wishes to ask a question of clarification on the matter under discussion. When the participant is recognized by the Moderator, s/he will unmute and ask the question, re-muting immediately after.

*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.

## **9. 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 re-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 an experience of the discernment process and can be used by the leadership to accommodate differing cultural needs, fix any glitches in the system (especially translation), etc. While structured to produce constructive results that will move the process to the Drafting Team, the discernment process is geared to hear all voices and invite the movement of the Holy Spirit into all groups.

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

The discernment process during the Executive Committee is value driven and should respect each individual and her/his voice even as the process unites the delegates through discussion and consensus. No member should be marginalized based on any factor: "The World Communion of Reformed Churches in its order and actions is

called to respect, defend, and advance the dignity of every person. In Jesus Christ all human differences must lose their power to divide. No one shall be disadvantaged for, among other reasons, race, ethnicity, or gender, and no individual or church may claim or exercise dominance over another” (WCRC Constitution, Article III, Section B).

At the end of each Discernment Group session, the Scribes will gather to distil the variety of material produced into a report with specific recommendations. The processes used in the Drafting Team to create the report will also be by consensus and use norms as determined by the group.

## **10. 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*

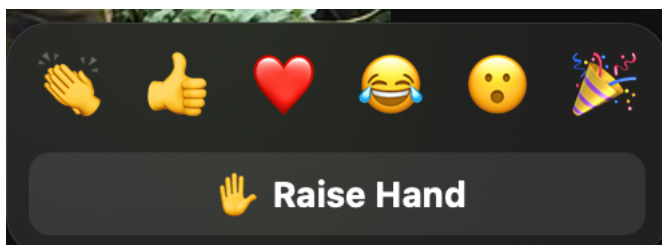
Zoom provides a number of “reactions” through which participants may seek the chance to speak and to indicate their feelings toward proceedings.

The “raise hand” reaction will be displayed if a participant wishes to speak to the matter under discussion. When the participant is recognized by the Moderator, s/he will unmute and speak for the allotted time allowed, re-muting at the conclusion.

At the end of each speech, voting delegates may choose to indicate their response to the content of the speech by displaying the appropriate reaction. The reactions provide a quick and visible indication of the mood of the Executive Committee.

- Showing a “heart” reaction indicates warmth and appreciation towards a point of view.
- Showing an “open mouth” reaction indicates coolness and hesitation towards a point of view, or that more discussion is needed.

Reactions 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 display the “party cone” reaction as an 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.

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.

## **11. When Voting is Required**

Only voting members may vote. The Moderator declares the method of voting (show of hands, display of reactions, electronic 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.

## 12. 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 and operations before the next session commences.

## 13. Procedural Proposals

Procedural proposals may be raised by Executive Committee members 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.

## 14. 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 member 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.

## **15. Adoption of the Rules of Procedure**

The Executive Committee in its first business session determines by simple majority vote whether to adopt or modify these Rules of Procedure. 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

Dear respected Executive Committee members and partners,

We meet in critical times, while the world faces continued injustices besides the COVID-19 pandemic. We hear of the escalated violent situation in Jerusalem and Gaza between Israel and Palestine, resulting in increasing numbers of deaths, disregarding any respect of human rights and international law, supporting an apartheid approach away from the dignity of the people.

We recognize the unjust practices of the Filipino government and its increased repression and oppression on the United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP) under the Anti-Terrorism Act of 2020 and other such laws, practicing harassment of the church leaders and its workers. We identify the violent repression against the popular protests in various cities of Colombia where the Colombian government does not respect the dignity and rights of protestors and suppresses dialogue around the concerns relating to the withdrawal of the tax bill, and the passage of bill 010 on health, the national mass vaccination plan, and basic income. The three mentioned situations are but few from the many injustices that our churches face today in different contexts around the Communion.

I start my address with the reality that the people are in, and the continued struggle for justice that the Communion committed its journey to, at a time where the coronavirus captured our attention and became the injustice that silenced the cries of other injustices, merely because it unified the world with similar pain. The corona impact on people and their struggle towards lived justice became above all injustices. Corona created a new reality that crippled us, threatened us, distracted us, and left us insecure about the future. Yes, these are difficult times and challenging days, where we face every day the cry of the struggling around the world, whether in India, Brazil and Latin America, Africa or other countries where death has become a daily reality, and the fear of tomorrow with all its uncertainties and unpredicted developments urges us to live in the moment and to discern how to remain a Communion of hope, 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.

The COVID-19 pandemic revealed the injustices that surrounds the world whether it is social, political, or economic. It exposed inequality, exploitation, and oppression that are rooted in economic systems and exploited the dignity of people where healthcare and other fundamental rights are only available to those who can afford it. Almost everywhere the vulnerable, poor, and marginalized are most affected by the disease and by the measures of disease control. The pandemic situation has opened our eyes on many challenges, and how to balance between the corona

pandemic challenge and other injustices is key on the coming journey of the Communion.

### **A call for renewed imagination**

How do we stand in the face of the corona crisis, define our future, growth, strength, and role as a Communion? Still a crisis could become an opportunity, when 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 is a time of *kairos* as well. In Greek there are two words for time: *chronos*, which is a sequential, measured, linear moving from the past to future and has no freedom—and *kairos*, a time of imagination that cannot be controlled or possessed. *Kairos* is circular, moving back and forth, without beginning or ending, and knows no boundaries. It is numinous time where the divine interferes and shapes us in a new way.

It is not an easy way to balance between *chronos* and *kairos*, especially where the concept of time as *chronos* is disturbed, but in such synchronicity of *chronos* and *kairos* lies our deepest consolation and our steepest aspiration. *Chronos* time is controlled, organized, and predictable while *kairos* time is a time of enrichment, rich opportunities, inspiration, and imagination. *Kairos* time is disturbing time as well, but pushes us to new realities.

In the midst of our disturbance, we recognize the *kairos* where we are called to act, be prophetic voices, and 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 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. As we hear the witness of our churches around the Communion, our envisioning is deepened recognizing new possibilities, new blessings. Then we gain hope in what God is doing among us and can still do.

On July 2017 the WCRC signed a valued document, the Wittenberg Witness, which was an expression of deepening the unity in the body of Christ between Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and WCRC member churches around the world. It expresses the common call of churches to witness in the world. The Wittenberg Witness, which was the fruits of theological dialogues, claimed in section 6 for a call for new imagination:

*Together we long for renewed imagination of what being the church in communion could mean—for our world, in our time.*

*We need new imagination to live together in ways that would embrace our unity not only as gift but also as calling.*

*We need new imagination to dream a different world, a world where justice, peace and reconciliation prevail.*

*We need new imagination to practice spiritualities of resistance and prophetic vision, spiritualities in service of life, spiritualities formed by the mission of God.*

When the Wittenberg Witness was written we never imagined that this would speak so clearly to the present situation. The corona situation challenges us to be shaped with new imagination about how to be the church for today; the Communion for today. It calls us to live up to new imagination, to think with imaginative minds towards change through practical steps, to be in *kairos* time and have new imagination. We believe that the new imagination is led by the work of the Holy Spirit among us and urges us to join efforts and live with courage and assurance that we are in *kairos* time, awaiting new shaping for a new tomorrow.

### **Renewed imagination for transition**

Today we are in a time of transition where current General Secretary Rev. Dr. Chris Ferguson finishes his seven-year term by 31 August 2021. Rev. Ferguson started his role as a general secretary in 2014 at the edge of a new moment of renewal and transformation in the life of the Communion. Just as the Communion was moving to a new location, Hannover, Chris was called to be part of this renewed commitment to communion and justice. It happens that Chris also leaves at a critical edge of the life of the Communion where the Communion is challenged to face the COVID-19 pandemic as a new reality with all its impact on the life of the churches around the Communion which led the Communion to start a discernment process, trying to envision, “What does the Lord require of us?”

Despite the unusual days and difficulty of meeting face-to-face—where every member church was overwhelmed with the sudden threat to church life and even life itself—in the midst of all discouragement, the officers with the general secretary took courage to continue and to proceed in thinking of the future, at a time where no clear horizon for the world was seen. At a time of discouragement, we committed ourselves to continue and search for the next general secretary. This is why a search process was initiated for the position of general secretary by the officers and a search committee was composed. The people contacted were enthusiastic to join the efforts towards moving forward at a critical time. The General Secretary Search Committee was composed of:

- Rev. Dr. Yvette Noble Bloomfield (Moderator), United Church of Jamaica and the Cayman Islands
- Rev. Dr. Dario Barolin, AIPRAL/Waldensian Church of the River Plate
- Rev. Najla Kassab, WCRC President, National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon
- Ms. Sara Lisherness, Ruling Elder, Presbyterian Church (USA)
- Rev. Catherine McMillian Haueis, Protestant Church in Switzerland
- Rev. Dr. Setri Nyomi, Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Ghana
- Rev. Dr. Daniel Rathnakara Sadananda, Church of South India
- Dr. Johann Weusmann, WCRC General Treasurer, Evangelical Church in the Rhineland

The committee has worked diligently and delivered an interim report to the officers indicating that they have received applications and nominations and reached out to potential candidates. A short list of candidates was interviewed, but the Search Committee did not succeed in presenting a name for a general secretary. The context of the COVID-19 pandemic created a disruptive impact that led many potential candidates to indicate that they were not able to consider a major move to Hannover at this time. At the same time the economic impact on WCRC member churches underlined the ongoing reality that much of the core budget is funded by churches who found themselves with difficult financial situations and dwindling budgets. Although this financial challenge impacted the whole ecumenical movement, it has affected WCRC particularly.

The WCRC has been able to balance its budget annually since the move from Geneva. Important support has been given by key ecumenical partners as well as member churches. The WCRC has, due to the generosity of key partners, very solid and reliable sources of program funds. However, the Communion's core budget is facing a challenging deficit for 2021, even with adjustments made to the core budget because of the pandemic, and the prospects for future budgets are even more challenging.

This is why the officers decided to ask the Search Committee to temporarily pause their work in order to allow some time for the pandemic-related conditions to improve, and to allow more qualified candidates to consider a major move and very importantly to ensure that the long-term sustainability issue is addressed so that electing a general secretary to a seven-year term happens in a fiscally responsible manner.

The officers met regularly to discuss the situation and think of a paradigm that emerged around the question of which tasks the Communion needs to meet in the coming year, knowing that the world will take another year until it can again function normally. An interim plan was prepared through discussions between officers, general secretary, and executive secretaries, proposing a plan for the

consideration of the Executive Committee for one year to cover the period from the conclusion of the general secretary's term after 31 August.

From 1 September, the WCRC shall operate under an interim period. In the interim period, the three executive secretaries will collegially take up the functions of the general secretary as defined in articles X, XI, XII, and XIV of the Constitution and section V of the Bylaws, and an acting general secretary from the executives will be appointed to represent the WCRC. A mid-term review conducted by the Officers' Committee not later than February 2022 will be carried to ensure that different factors are in place: the interim plan, the sustainability efforts, and search process (please see the "Interim Plan Proposal" with a more detailed presentation for the interim period structure presented later). At the same time the Search Committee will continue its work to present a candidate for the Executive Committee to consider.

The interim period will allow a new model of shared responsibility where the involvement of the officers, executive members, and regional leaders will be vital. This will allow a stronger participation from the regions and more involvement from the Communion churches and leaders in sustaining the transitional model. We look forward to the interim model which hopefully will allow new participation and new imagination in building a stronger communion.

### **Renewed imagination for confessing**

The Communion, challenged by the COVID-19 pandemic as a new reality with all its impact on life, started a discernment process known as "COVID and Beyond," trying to envision what does the Lord require from the Communion today? It is a process where the Communion is striving to establish a renewed and refreshed theological understanding of the current crisis, through a wide discernment process on the present crisis and to provide for a prophetic theological response to move towards a confessing Communion—engaging the whole Communion on local and regional levels; providing space for the regions to share challenges, prophetic theologies, and activities of witness with the global level.

The "COVID and Beyond" process has inspired the Communion to ask the right questions at the right time and set the strategy for the new journey. In the line of the strategic plan, the "COVID and Beyond" process infused new breath in the Communion, to help member churches to get closer and discern together, to hear the cry from different regions, and to strive to experience strength together. I believe this new process will open our eyes to new realities. As president I discovered the commitment of the leaders and partners of the Communion in the process where we are enriched with the blessings of discerning as a Communion. This process allowed new imagination in the life of the Communion and new hope. It

is a new journey that will send us out anew to a broken world, away from fear, witnessing to a God of Life.

As we move to the closing of the process of “COVID and Beyond” we await to be a confessing Communion, with new imagination that is shaped by the journey of discerning, witnessing, and confessing—enabling the Communion to provide a prophetic theological response and move to a confessing moment.

### **Renewed imagination for sustainability**

The WCRC is challenged today by sustainability related to the core budget, which finances large portions of the salary bill and office expenditure. While funds for programs are usually acquired without problems, we are challenged to bring the WCRC to a level of sustainability which allows the continuation of its operations.

As our strategic plan states:

*Sustainability should not be defined narrowly in financial terms. We are sustained in all things by the Lord Jesus Christ, who brings our communion into being and nurtures it according to God’s will. While organizational sustainability, including financial stability, is one important part of the faithful living out of our communion, we also recognize and celebrate that we have much to share that sustains us in time and space. We take seriously the sharing of prayer, time, friendship, goodwill, and all the gifts of the Spirit as we carry out our ministry. All this is integral to the sustainability of the WCRC.*

We are challenged today to work towards a new imagination on how we will sustain the work of the Communion. Sustainability is an expression of commitment, relations, ownership, and deepened communion. Sustainability is at the heart of strengthening the communion as a goal.

Renewing our imagination for sustainability will encourage the continuous commitment of those member churches that already contribute substantially to the WCRC budget and create the conditions to raise funds in regions who are currently not yet contributing according to their capacity—besides support from partner organizations.

This is why a Sustainability Task Group will be formed to allow a new approach in this regard and think of a sustainability model which is more intricate than the current one. The “COVID and Beyond” process which involves regions and member churches has already laid the ground for a stronger communication that will help us to think together of better ways of building a strong, sustained, and hopeful Communion. Our hope of sustainability is linked to our togetherness and

commitment for our witness and work for justice. It is far from giving up, just as we discover that the budgets of churches were affected. What brings us together is not money, but commitment to our Reformed identity and witness together.

We are called today to join hands, allowing our imagination to find new initiatives for sustainability whether in raising funds or other ways of supporting the work of the Communion.

### **Renewed imagination for inclusion of all marginalized**

One of the essential roles that the Communion calls for is inviting the marginalized to the table of the Communion. The “COVID and Beyond” process has echoed the voice of those who felt marginalized especially due to the coronavirus. Differently-abled people shared their stories of being left out on journeys of justice, as did the youth, the Indigenous groups, and many who were marginalized due to race, colour, sexuality, and other discriminations. We are called in the line of our strategic plan to make sure that all are included—also engaging in dismantling patriarchy, empowering women in church and society, and scrutinizing and auditing the place of women in leadership and decision-making in church life.

At a time of distancing the world is challenged with how to mend the distancing culture. We are challenged to renew our imagination in inviting all those who are distanced and to continue dealing with the injustices that have lasted too long. To stay focused on all kinds of injustice remains at the heart of our struggle. As we recognize the world fallen among thieves, we are called to continue to shed the light and point to realities, to name the thief, and to recognize the roots of injustice towards all who are excluded, even among us, where our practices blinded our sight from recognizing the lived injustice that is many times close to home.

Lifting up the Accra Confession, Barmen Declaration, and Belhar Confession remains as a lens to read the signs of the times and a call to prophetic action—to engage in resisting the empire in the political, economic, and social realms, as well as in daily life.

We remain committed to unfinished business in the gender justice challenge, where moving more churches to accept the ordination of women remains strategically a valued endeavor towards lived justice in the church. Promoting the “Declaration of Faith on the Ordination of Women” and addressing gender leadership and power issues are at the heart of the continued journey that the Communion is challenged with.

Today we stand working towards being held accountable as leadership in presenting an integrative paradigm in our offices, and hiring a women executive remains an inevitable expression for the journey of justice. We already have some of the funds

that are given to WCRC for meeting this need and hope that we will continue our campaign that was hindered due to the coronavirus. We are pioneers in the ecumenical movement in empowering women—present in our last General Council, among our officers, and in leadership as president—but still inclusion of a woman executive will present a profound message of gender justice as we carry our programs and encounter our churches. We stand today in transparency and accountability and claim that gender justice will be expressed on every level of our work, especially as today we present to the ecumenical world as a Communion that walks the talk.

### **Renewed imagination for new spiritualities**

The corona pandemic revealed the fragility of human life and the need of new spiritualities that interpret our Reformed theology into contemporary Christian witness; encouraging the renewal of Christian worship and spiritual life within the Reformed tradition; renewing a commitment to partnership in God's mission through worship, witness, diaconal service, and work for justice, working towards mission renewal, and mission empowerment and cooperation in ministry.

It is a time where our spiritual vision to see our world, our relationships, our situations, our past, present, and future from God's perspective (2 Corinthians 4:16-18). We are called to renew our imagination, dreaming for God's kingdom and God's people (Ephesians 3:20-21); to interpret life through eternal lenses with spiritual eyes. To journey into maturity and be transformed by the renewal of our minds as we look at life from an eternal perspective (Psalm 1). Justice work will always be rooted in new depths of our spiritual and practical resistance as the transformation of our lives promised through Jesus Christ. Our work is not mere activism; but an expression of spiritual engagement and being deeply rooted in the power of God's Spirit. This new imagination of spirituality opens our eyes to the presence and power of God in all of creation. Further, it draws us into ever-deeper community with one another. Deepening our spirituality can connect us with God's power for the healing of personal wounds, social scars, and divisions.

We need new imagination to practice spiritualities of resistance and prophetic vision, spiritualities in service of life, spiritualities formed by the mission of God.

### **Renewed imagination for a Communion empowered by the work of the regions**

Strengthening the regional work remains at the heart of renewed imagination. The "COVID and Beyond" process opened our eyes on the richness that the regions bring to the global in the work for peace, justice, and reconciliation. Joint efforts and coordinated regional work and platforms, networking and cooperating with global platforms creates a stronger Communion. The General Council (in Action 44) reaffirmed the importance of the regions within the WCRC, and their pivotal role in



strengthening communion between the churches by providing spaces for dialogue and action; and in programmatic work to enhance the participation of the churches from all regions affirming working styles that strengthen the synergy between the local, regional, and global levels.

We are called for new imagination where despite the varying levels of capacity and involvement in regions—with some regions lacking officially recognized regional councils—still envisioning together a strong synergy between the local and regional is a step towards an impactful Communion.

### **Renewed imagination inspired by hope**

Finally, we can say with I Samuel 7:12, “so far the Lord has helped us.” God has sustained us as a Communion, and remains to sustain us on the journey in the coming days. This is our source of strength.

I want to thank all the people who strived to bring hope to the Communion, the officers who were taking their role seriously and responsibly; for Executive Committee members and regional leaders who got in touch and said we are available for any help for the future; for the staff in our offices who even when facing daily death, struggling with the collapse of many organizational plans, insisted to carry on the work virtually and are ready with great commitment and dedication to put all their talents in the coming year to secure that we continue to have a healthy Communion.

I particularly would like to thank outgoing General Secretary Chris Ferguson, who dedicated seven years of his life for empowering the Communion and witnessing for justice. I know we will have a special time to recognize all his work and efforts, but I would like to take the chance as president to say, even when you leave the position of general secretary, you will remain a valued leader and contributor for the life of the Communion. We will continue to be dedicated together for a better Communion where the journey toward life abundant for all remains at the heart of our vision and hope every day.

George. F. Watts' painting entitled “Hope” portrays the image of a woman sitting upon a globe, blindfolded, with an instrument in her arms that appears to have lost all of its strings but one. The picture shows pain, fear, discouragement; the strings are not in place and broken with only one string left.

Still the woman insists holding on to that instrument. It did not matter to her that the instrument was not complete as it was initially constructed to be. Still the woman insists to continue playing on the remaining string. One string could give the instrument its integrity and give the woman the ability to make beautiful music.



That one string provided *hope* that there was still promise of a different future for her and her instrument. One string could make a tune, probably not the perfect tune, but it is a tune that gives hope. It is a different tune that the world may not give, but it does make a difference. Today we might feel affected, broken, not the same. But we can play our tune of justice.

We stand in hope as the life of Jesus is manifested in us.

Address of the President

*We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies.*

—2 Corinthians 4:8-10

As a Communion we renew our imagination inspired by hope where our Lord continues to journey with us for a better tomorrow.

To God all glory.

Najla Kassab  
President

## Report of the General Secretary

1. Before all else I want to give thanks to the God of Life for this opportunity for the WCRC Executive Committee to meet virtually in the midst of global challenges and crises of truly historical dimensions after such a long delay.
2. It has been two years since our last full and formal meeting of the Executive in Kappel am Albis, Switzerland. We gather now under the theme “At such a time as this” (Esther 4:14) to carry forward the goals and objectives of 2018-2024 Strategic Plan, *Confessing the God of Life in a World Fallen Among Thieves*, and to make crucial decisions related to the leadership and sustainability of the WCRC as a global *koinonia* “called to communion and committed to justice.”
3. This will be my last report to and my last meeting with the Executive as WCRC General Secretary. My seven-year term ends on 31 August 31 2021.
4. The theme, “At such a time as this,” comes from a complex, entangled and highly problematic text emerging from a complex and problematic context that seeks to affirm that we are called to resolute faith and action in the defense of life no matter where we find ourselves in a complex and life-threatening historical circumstance.
5. The text is therefore apt for our theme. There is no doubt as to the depth, breadth, and gravity of the crises facing the *oikoumene* (the whole inhabited earth: peoples, planet, creation). The ecological, economic, racial, gender, and social injustices which are the product of the ravages of militarized empire defended and protected by systems and ideologies of white supremacy, toxic authoritarian nationalisms, patriarchy, and colonialism bringing us to the stark reality of world living under the oppression of global apartheid.
6. As the Earth community was stirring and grasping to understand the immensity of the threats to life we were faced we were struck with the COVID-19 global pandemic. The pandemic deepened and worsened the “pre-existing,” death-dealing global crises. The pandemic continues to bring unprecedented tolls of disease and death. Moreover, the pandemic is apocalyptic in biblical terms; it has unveiled, unmasked, revealed, and made plain the reality of global apartheid; it has made us confront global injustice; it has revealed the fault lines of our civilizational crisis; exposed the limits of Eurocentric modern ideologies; and laid bare the truths about the inability and lack of will of the current world (dis)order to serve an economy of life. The limits and contradictions of current unjust approach to multilateralism was plain to see in response to COVID-19 and continues with what seems to be the refusal to overcome what many in the global south call vaccine-apartheid.

7. Achille Mbembe calls our present reality “necropolitics” where the few and powerful through systems, structures, culture and ideologies not only oppress, socially control, and exploit the lives of others but decide who lives and who dies.
8. In trying to name well this current time it is clearly as we have discovered a time of crisis at the “civilizational” level in the Biblical sense of judgement and a situation which demands moral resolution. Moreover, this time is clearly “*kairos*.” It is a time also of great rising up. Of growing resistance to the status quo. Of children, youth, women oppressed, and dispossessed people saying no to the systems and structures that destroy life and yes to justice, solidarity, love, and transformation. The reading of the signs of the times, interpreting them, and acting faithfully requires the courage and willingness to engage complexity and diversity that comes as allow ourselves to be led by the Spirit of the living God as followers of Jesus the crucified and disposed one.
9. Our theme is apt. But is more of a task than a prescription. To know what God requires of us ... at a time such as this requires discernment, in fact to know what time it is. And to locate ourselves as Esther was forced to at the intersection between our faith in God and our entanglement in the current unjust realities of our world while standing with all within creation where life is threatened. As I will outline below discerning together as a Communion what God requires of us is a great challenge and an even greater gift for the WCRC and our member churches and regions.
10. This report will follow the structure and framework of the Strategic Plan 2018-2024 and will focus on the key issues and decisions facing the WCRC Executive at this time.
11. Since our meeting in Kappel the Strategic Plan Program Group (SPPG), together with the program reference groups and the executive staff and general secretary have moved forward in focusing the Strategic Plan as adopted in making it easier to understand and implement.
12. The **overarching goal** until the next General Council:

*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 WCRC, 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 (john10:10).*

*As it strives to fulfill its vision, the WCRC works through two strategic trajectories:*

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

*The trajectories are applied through five interlocking dimensions:*

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

13. The Strategic Plan is structured around four verbs, two trajectories, and five interlocking dimensions our work.
14. In the last two years the Secretariat together with the SPPG has simplified the number of program areas to five corresponding to the five interlocking dimensions.
15. There now are impact-oriented goals and objects for each program area and also operational goals for nonprogrammatic work. Priorities and work plans are established for each program together with the reference groups and relevant working groups. This process is coordinated and evaluated by the SPPG.
16. The five programmes are:
  - P1: Cultivating a Justice Communion
  - P2: Covenanting for Justice
  - P3: Doing Theology for Transformation
  - P4: Engaging God's Mission in a Context of Crisis
  - P5: Working with All the Partners God Provides
17. The COVID-19 pandemic crisis required a total rethinking concerning the implementation of the Strategic Plan. The activities and programs related to the Strategic Plan up to the end of 2020 including adjustments made under the direction of the SPPG and the officers group were reported upon last year and the relevant accountability reports sent to all members of the Executive at that time (they are contained in an addendum to this report solely to be entered into the official record).
18. My report will share the updates since that time and particularly focus on the framework that has been defined for moving forward with the Strategic Plan in light of the current global context, the restrictions, limitations, and challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic, the completion of my term as general secretary, being at the mid-point of the Strategic Plan period, and the urgency of planning for the 2024 General Council.

19. By God's grace we can report that our communion is well on track in the implementation of our Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan framework and our structures, especially regional networks, have allowed us to respond to the crisis and advance our goal according to our two trajectories even while virtually all regular activities were suspended. Making extensive use of virtual communication we have significantly deepened and strengthened the life of our Communion. We have been able to create together a Communion-wide process of discerning, confessing, and witnessing that has marked by creativity and resilience and robust theological and prophetic engagement.

The details of the "COVID and Beyond" process can be found in the attached reports and specifically the SPPG and Communion and Theology report.

20. In the midst of untold suffering, crises, and trials we have in fact an irrefutable indication of health and vitality of our Communion in face of an unprecedented crisis where by the power of the Spirit and upheld by the God of life, not only have continued to be faithful to our vocation but have adapted to the adversity in such a way as to emerge even stronger as a *koinonia*.
21. Thanks to the generosity of our largest program fund partners, the *Tavola Waldenses*, EMW, and the Church of Westphalia we were able to redirect programme funds to emergency and COVID-related response of our member churches. This has been tremendously important again as an indication of how important our Communion is offering global support and solidarity to our members many of whom would have had no other external support. The work of the Reformed Partnership Fund also continued to transform through this period as it moved from beyond just a channel of funds to a vehicle to support our churches to work together as a family often regionally and sub-regionally in service to others. In fact, after all our struggles with the operation of the Partnership Fund this period has allowed us to fully overcome administrative failings of the past and one could say "put the partnership" back into the RPF! The specific details of the projects supported and breakdown by countries and regions are available in attached reports.
22. In keeping with our "communion strengthening trajectory" we can also say confidently that our activities in this period made visible WCRC's call to build a just communion and commitment to justice and the global prophetic vocation true to the Reformed tradition in its diversity. This crisis has called us to intentionally attend to the full participation of our family by region, language groups, members of governing bodies, networks, Indigenous peoples, persons living with disabilities, youth, women, the LGBTQIA+ community, racialized communities. We still have far to go but this crisis has set us on the course to ensure that in literally everything we do we do it with an eye to building a just communion. In our discernment process the centrality of justice to our faith and witness has been affirmed and reaffirmed. It

is part of our distinctive identity to bring with our theological reflection and robust engagement with scripture our prophetic witness to justice.

23. Similarly, we have continued strongly in these last 15 months to make a global impact as WCRC. This has been both in terms of consolidating our presence in global ecumenical fora such as ACT Alliance where we are now full members and active in the ACT Global Forum, The Global Christian Forum Steering Committee, the Leadership Group of the WCC Pilgrimage for Justice and Peace Reference Group, convening the JDDJ follow up steering group, initiating and participating in ecumenical forums and peace processes for Taiwan, Cameroon, Palestine/Israel, and Colombia. In coordinating new efforts for coordinated ecumenical responses to emergencies and global conflicts. These specific activities are reported in the appended reports but are mentioned here to indicate that our global impact has in fact increased during this recent period in spite of a total inability to travel and be physical present at consultations or in contexts of conflict.
24. In fact, the significant forward movement of our Strategic Plan's goals and the refocusing of our way of working has reflected the increased focus and priority setting which was needed in the first two years of this Strategic Plan cycle. However, our goals are still extremely ambitious and continue to strain the capacity of both staff and non-staff alike.
25. The capacity issue is not to be ignored and goes along with the extremely positive fact of being on track with both trajectories of our Strategic Plan overarching goals. We will not continue to meet our basic goals if capacity issues are not addressed. This means both new resources and new and different ways of meeting our goals.
26. We are facing a sustainability crisis. A major issue raised in the Strategic Plan which has been with WCRC in some way or other since 2010 is the unresolved challenged of long-term sustainability. The Strategic Plan goals include to both increase executive staff capacity and to resolve the medium- and long-term problem of funding of the WCRC core budget. The fundraising for a new executive staff position to support global advocacy and to address the gender justice deficit in the executive staff complement have been frustrated by the COVID-19 pandemic crisis. Significant funds have been offered by PC(USA) but more must be found to actually allow us to hire. But the fundraising for that position even before COVID-19 was in tension with an annual shortfall in the WCRC core budget. It was not possible to fundraise for a new permanent position when each year we started the year not knowing if the we could raise enough for the current staff.
27. As outlined in the Strategic Plan and in our self-understanding as a Communion sustainability cannot be reduced to financial security. At the same time, we have a specifically financial crisis on short, medium, and long terms that must be addressed if we are to meet our goals as a global *koinonia*.



28. The Financial Report and the Auditor Report which are appended make it clear that each year we have successfully closed with a balanced budget or in some cases a surplus. Every year during my time as general secretary, I together with the general treasurer have had to approach member churches or private donors or seek special projects to balance the core budget. This situation has been frequently reported to the Executive and well known to all of us. I will therefore not rehearse the details about previous fundraising efforts. Although it must be acknowledged that the Council for World Mission (CWM) made an extraordinary and generous donation of a million British pounds for a capital fund and that even still we have not been able to leverage that to solve the core budget issue.
29. I stress core budget because you will recall that we receive adequate program funding from very faithful and generous funding partners. Even with the efforts to change our membership contribution formula to make it fairer we have never been able to meet our goal of having the contributions cover the basic core expenses of salaries, governance, and infrastructure. In fact, the executive salaries are supported by funding partners to larger extent already. The largest percentage of the contributions come from two regions and very few churches. Most of our churches in those regions report declining membership, shrinking resources, and aging membership.
30. It is important to point out that as the world's largest Protestant Christian communion in keeping with Reformed values we, in fact, have the smallest and by all counts modest secretariat and staff complement. It is also important to know that most global and regional ecumenical and church organizations are facing similar sustainability issues in light of the global economic situation and radically changing patterns in ecumenical funding.
31. My term as general secretary comes to and end on 31 August 2021.
32. The WCRC finds itself therefore at the intersection of the COVID-19 pandemic in the midst of major global crises, a transition of leadership, a suffering but vital Communion with excellent staff leadership, and dynamic participation of its members well on the way to meeting its strategic vision and a major persistent structural sustainability crisis on the short, medium and long term.
33. The officers named a General Secretary Search Committee as has been previously reported. The committee's report is appended indicating that they are not yet in the position to bring a name or names for the consideration of the Executive.
34. The officers, in light of the Search Committees' report, taking the current pandemic restricts into account, and considering the sustainability issues have paused the search process temporarily and are presenting a proposal for the consideration of

the Executive for a one-year collegial interim secretariat in order to address long-term sustainability challenges before electing a general secretary to a seven-year term. This proposal and its details will be presented at a separate moment in our meeting.

35. In order to take up the sustainability challenge and meet the goals and activities outlined in the Strategic Plan which have been frustrated by the last 15 months of COVID-19 impacts, there is a specific proposal aimed at mobilizing the whole Communion to address together the sustainability challenge in such a way as to strengthen our *koinonia* and common witness. The proposal for a Sustainability Task Group will be addressed on 27 May at the designated discernment session.
36. The pandemic and the forced changes it brought has also delayed the planning for our 2024 General Council. Progress on a plan to consider several Asian churches working together to co-host the General Council in one country but supported by a consortium of churches in the same region has been delayed. Therefore, there is a proposal to form a General Council Task Group to move the planning processes forward even though we are not yet able to make specific proposals on venues and budget at this meeting. That proposal will be discussed today during the discernment session on my report. The terms of reference and proposed group members are presented for your consideration in an attached document.
37. The agenda and methodology of this virtual meeting is limited in time available and by the restrictions of a Zoom meeting. Therefore, the heart of my report is lift up the juncture at which we find ourselves and the key decisions (beyond budget decisions and receiving accountability reports) before you as proposed by the officers in light of the Strategic Plan. First the proposal for a collegial interim general secretariat. Then to consider the setting up of a Sustainability Task Group. And thirdly a General Council Task Group.
38. The officers group, at the advice of the general secretary and Executive Staff Council, have further recommended to deal with decisions emerging from the task groups and Strategic Plan-related issues not able to be dealt with at this meeting, that there be a second virtual meeting held 29 November to 1 December 2021.
39. The SPPG Report is appended. The SPPG has been dealing with the oversight of the implementation of the Strategic Plan programme. The three programme reference groups report to the SPPG and each reference group leader is a member of the SPPG. The SPPG has been actively involved in the process of refocusing the programme work in the face of the pandemic. The general secretary and the president are SPPG members to ensure close communication and coordination. A very full SPPG report was sent in writing to the Executive at the end of 2020. A new group was set up to coordinate the various initiative in the peace and reconciliation work called the Peace and Reconciliation Coordinating Group as the present general

secretary and the two programme secretaries are all three involved in peace and reconciliation initiatives.

40. We are at mid-term in the Strategic Plan cycle. Normally a mid-term review with a adjustments would be proposed, however, given that the COVID-19 crisis has forced a total reworking of the programme activities and work plan and that a new framework was adopted through the “COVID and Beyond” process, the SPPG has decided to affirm those changes as representing the necessary mid-term review while still considering a further reflection later this fall depending on the impact on programmes by the decisions made by this Executive.
41. To summarize key parts of the appended report: “The Reference groups strongly affirmed the ongoing work of the Strategic Plan.” “We are agreed this is not a time for scaling back but stepping up.” “Towards that end we commend and commit to developing a new working model that is less leader dependent.”
42. “We have seen in the ‘COVID and Beyond’ process what is possible in the way of involving people from all over the world...In some ways the communion is more connected and activated than ever.” “The SPPG commends the Executive staff for their creative, flexible and effective leadership in these challenging times.”
43. In their report the SPPG makes special note of the capacity challenges during a possible interim, noting, “The primary answer to the diminished staff capacity should—whenever possible—not be to downgrade goals, but to develop a programme model that will allow the implementation of the objectives of the Strategic Plan.”
44. The Report of the Communion and Theology Executive is appended. Special note is made to the items under “Programme work under the conditions of the COVID-19 Pandemic.” This outlines the process and content related to a fundamental shift in our programme work now brought within the framework of “What does God Require of Us? Discerning, Confessing, and Witnessing in Time of COVID-19 and Beyond.”
45. Following the structure of the Strategic Plan the Communion and Theology Report outlines the activities and related to P1: Cultivating a Just Communion. We note with great satisfaction the reactivation of the editorial board of the *Reformed World* and the decisions to tie the contents of *Reformed World* closely to the other programme activities of the Communion. Also under P1, there is important information on the communion dimension of the change of working style and focus of the Reformed Partnership Fund. the logistic details are found in the Communication and Operations report (also attached).

46. The Communion and Theology report details P3 activities related to Doing Theology for Transformation with additional information about the “COVID and Beyond” discernment process. The process is a lens for understanding the current integration of the WCRC programme work.
47. The report updates on the Global Institute of Theology (GIT). Please note that the face-to-face meeting of GIT will be held in 2022 with GIT students being involved in 2021 “COVID and Beyond” activities.
48. In the report, P4 outlines specific mission activities. The Cameroon Ecumenical Forum has been successfully launched and WCRC through Hanns Lessing who continues to provide significant leadership.
49. The GRAPE—Global Reformed Advocacy Platform for Engagement—is a work in progress and is tied to seeking partnering with Bread for the World and securing additional executive staff capacity.
50. P5: Ecumenical Engagement. Of special note are the significant steps taken to follow up on past and current ecumenical dialogues and proposed future activities. Please note the upcoming webinar on 4 June 2021 on justice and justification, as well as the very heartening report on the progress of follow up to the JDDJ.
51. The Justice and Witness Report lifts up particularly the importance of continuing the planning for a WCRC Youth Summit in 2022 which was postponed due to COVID-19.
52. The report stresses the need to follow up on the issues of sexuality and justice and a consultation to follow up on the Chennai Consultation on Sexuality.
53. The “COVID and Beyond” process has allowed forward movement on the justice work with people living with disabilities. The work with Indigenous peoples continues despite frustrations due to covid restrictions.
54. The Justice Report emphasizes that the NIFEA work and particularly the GEM School has been negatively impacted by COVID-19. However, much of the work was picked up online. And progress is being made and important webinars have been held. And the ZacTax campaign has advanced. We are extremely happy to announce that the World Methodist Conference has joined the NIFEA consortium along with WCC, LWF, CWM, and WCRC.
55. The peace and reconciliation work has really intensified in this period and is largely shared between the general secretary and the justice and witness desk. As this is being written we are involved in specific and intense processes in Korea, Palestine/Israel, Colombia, Cameroon, Myanmar, Taiwan, Philippines, Bolivia, West Papua, and other contexts less intensely.

56. The Communications and Operations Report is appended. The report outlines the adjustments necessary in the last 15 months and special projects such as the database project funded by EKD which is both a major need for WCRC and a great opportunity to collaborate with other ecumenical organizations.
57. As mentioned earlier this report explains the details about changes in the operation of the Reformed Partnership Fund which we are pleased to report is working extremely well thanks to concerted effort by all staff and an excellent committee.
58. The good work in operational effectiveness has a consequence in not allowing as much time for communications, notwithstanding the good work done in newsletters, social media, and the website and plans for a new website design.
59. Another great gift of the COVID process has been to move the dynamic relationship with our regional councils to a new place of communication and cooperation for which we give thanks.
60. The UN Office Report is appended. Great Thanks to Ryan Smith for his time with us during his tenure in the office and welcome to Sue Rheem. We appreciate the important work done and hope that through the justice and witness desk this relationship will become even more active over the next years.
61. The John Knox International Reformed Centre relationship had not been getting the time and attention it deserved since we left Geneva in 2014. In the last year we have re-invigorated the relationship and are now part of the committee structure and intimately involved in the plans for a new future for the centre. We are pleased that the Protestant Church in Switzerland will be representing WCRC on the John Knox Committee.
62. The internship program continues, and we are grateful to Meta Ginting from Indonesia, our current intern, who has extended her time with us to the end of the year. Jessica Bwali from Zambia left at the end of last year. It has been a tough time to be interns but their resilient and open attitude and considerable skill has added to the ability of the Hannover staff to move forward creatively during this period. Great thanks to them.
63. It has been a challenging time on all fronts with the administrative staff in a period where remote work was the norm. Weekly worship and regular zoom meetings have helped keep us connected.
64. Sanjog Patro has been the temporary assistant to the general secretary, and he finishes his time with us at the end of June. Werner Joecker will be leaving us at the end of June as well to take up new opportunities. Anne Krüger and Amritha

Perumalla continue. We are in the process of temporarily adjusting the administrative staff complement from four to three and regrouping the responsibilities and changing the staff model. We are currently seeking a person for the position of Administrator for the General Secretariat as one step towards the new model.

65. If the Interim Plan Proposal is approved that means that there is an effective reduction in core staff from eight to six (of course noting the invaluable contribution of the interns and that of our volunteer finance coordinator, Gerhard Plenter, to whom thanks is also given). Urgent attention must be paid to giving the staff adequate support and bending all efforts to increase capacity and to adopt different shared working methods if I may be bold to say.
66. Combining a personal and official remark I want to extend my most profound appreciation and heartfelt gratitude to all the WCRC staff. Other reports have stressed the diligence, resilience, dedication, competence, flexibility, team work, and positivity of the staff during this period. That is even yet an understatement. The WCRC has an exemplary staff team and I thank them for all the support, cooperation, wisdom, humour, and hard work in service of justice and in care of our Communion.
67. At such time as this...I end my time not able to reconnect personally with the people as I had hoped for some farewell and closure, and contexts that have shaped my time with WCRC over these last seven years, but the virtual reality has allowed me to be in daily touch with so many.
68. I want to express my full support for the executive staff time in the time of interim if that be the decision of the Executive.
69. I express my gratitude to our president and the officers, the Executive members, and all those in the regions, networks, and committees with whom I have had the pleasure to serve.
70. The Strategic Plan is a clear expression of our prophetic task and we have been bold to ask together what God requires of us at this time...you know, says Micah, yes you know...do justice, love kindness and walk in God's way.

Thanks be to God.

Chris Ferguson  
General Secretary

**Addendum:  
General Secretary Search Committee: Interim Report**

**The Search Committee Members**

Rev. Dr. Yvette Noble- Bloomfield, Moderator  
Rev. Najla Kassab, WCRC President  
Dr. Johann Weismann, WCRC General Treasurer  
Rev. Catherine McMillan Haueis, Rapporteur  
Rev. Dr. Dario Barolin  
Mrs. Sara Lisherness  
Rev. Dr. Setri Nyomi  
Rev. Dr. Daniel Rathnakara Sadananda

The Committee had its initial meeting on June 18, 2020, and has had eight meetings subsequently, all via Zoom.

**The Process**

1. We received from the WCRC Office the documents from the previous General Secretary's Search Committees. These were analyzed and used as guidelines for the current process.
2. The job description for the post of general secretary was reviewed by the Officers of the WCRC and accepted by the Search Committee.
3. The executive secretary for communications and operations created the promotional material including articles regarding the search process that were based on interviews held with the president and general secretary of the WCRC and the moderator of the Search Committee. The advertisement for the post and the general information on the process have been posted on the WCRC website.
4. Members of the Executive Committee and regional leaders were invited to intentionally inform their regions on the search for the new general secretary, promote the advertisement and also identify and encourage persons deemed suitable to apply for the position.
5. A task basket has been developed and will become applicable in the final phase of the process which will be the face-to face interview in Hannover.
6. xcg Executive Consulting Group AG, based in Zurich, Switzerland, has been engaged as consultants. They will do an interview via Zoom with the final two or three candidates, prior to the face-to-face interview in Hannover.

7. There were several persons who showed interest in the position but only six applications were received by the November 30, 2020 deadline. One additional application was received after the deadline.
8. At the end of the shortlisting process, three of the seven candidates were selected. Letters were written to those who were not shortlisted thanking them for their interest and for submitting their application for the position.
9. The three short-listed candidates were interviewed on February 16, 2021 via Zoom.
10. The Committee met for reflection and discussion on February 18, 2021, and the consensus is that at this stage, the Committee is unable to present to the Officers a suitable candidate for the office of general secretary. Letters have been written to the candidates that were interviewed informing them of the decision of the Search Committee.
11. The Committee is of the opinion that the search process needs to be re-opened so that a suitable candidate can be offered to the Officers and the Executive Committee as the next general secretary of the WCRC.

## **Observations**

### *1. The uniqueness of this time*

The Search Committee is cognizant of the unprecedented nature of the existing time and that the incoming general secretary will need to discern, navigate, and manage the Communion through the current vicissitudes including the COVID-19 challenges facing the world. The WCRC, the regional councils, and the member churches have all been affected in varying ways. The reality is that whoever comes to the office of general secretary will need to have particular gifts and skill sets that will enable the individual to continue to guide the theological construct and the process that will address these issues. In addition, there will be the need to manage the office in Hannover, do in-depth financial management and fund-raising, work closely with all the regions, and assist the member churches through the variety of existing opportunities and challenges.

### *2. Relocating to Hannover*

Several potential applicants whilst interested in the position have expressed their hesitancy to relocate to Hannover due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As such, the Search Committee wishes to bring this to the attention of the Executive Committee for discussion. Is it possible for the general secretary to work remotely in the initial period until the COVID-19 pandemic is more under control?



*3. Timeline for new General Secretary to be in Office*

The Search Committee is seeking clarity on the timeline for the appointment of the new general secretary. This clarity will enable the Committee to expedite the continuation and conclusion of the process.

Respectively Submitted,  
Yvette Noble-Bloomfield

**Addendum:  
Proposed Interim Plan**

This document of the Officers' Committee provides information, discernment, and proposals to prepare the discussion of the Executive Committee about the leadership model, objectives, and timeline of an interim period when the WCRC will operate with a collegial general secretariat with one of its members to be appointed as acting general secretary.

The Interim plan consists of two parts:

- I. Proposal on the Leadership Model
- II. Objectives, Structure, and Timeline of the Interim

**I. Proposal on the Leadership Model**

**A. Executive Summary**

**Responding to the Challenges Ahead**

1. The current general secretary's seven-year term ends 31 August 2021.
2. In 2020, a search process was initiated for the position of general secretary by the Officers' Committee.
3. The interim report of the Search Committee indicates that—due in part to the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic—no candidates can be recommended at this time for election.
4. The current financial situation concerning the long-term sustainability of the core budget does not provide secure funding for the salary and benefits of a general secretary.
5. At their meeting on 12 April 2021, the Officers' Committee decided to recommend to the Executive Committee that the election of a new general secretary shall be postponed until funding for the salary and benefits shall be secured.
6. The Officers' Committee proposes that after the end of the term of the incumbent general secretary a new person should not immediately be appointed.

**The Interim**

7. Until the appointment of a new general secretary the WCRC shall operate under an interim structure.
8. The period between the end of the term of the incumbent and the installation of a new general secretary the WCRC shall be as short as possible and feasibly be limited to one year.
9. There shall be a mid-term review conducted by the Officers' Committee not later than February 2022 on the progress of the search process and the

sustainability campaign. If the implemented processes will not provide the expected results, the Officers' Committee will submit a proposal to the Executive Committee on how to proceed.

### **The Leadership Model**

10. During the interim period the responsibilities of the general secretary shall be delegated to the collegial general secretariat, composed of the three executive secretaries, which shall collegially take up the functions of the general secretary as defined in articles X, XI, XII, and XIV of the Constitution and section V of the Bylaws until a new general secretary shall be elected.
11. One of the executive secretaries shall be appointed as acting general secretary to represent the WCRC on behalf of the collegial general secretariat in areas where legal requirements, protocol, or strategic prudence suggests the presence of a general secretary. The acting general secretary shall also have a coordinating role in the activities to safeguard sustainability.

## **B. The Leadership Model**

### **1 Principles**

During the interim the leadership model of the WCRC shall:

- be founded on transparency, accountability, clear communication, and coherence;
- do justice to the transitory character of the interim;
- be effective in securing the operations of the WCRC;
- and send a signal of affirmation to the Communion, which assures that the current challenges can be met.

The challenges that the WCRC has to meet in the course of the interim period go beyond maintaining the operational status. The ongoing sustainability challenges of the organization require redeveloping the model of how member churches contribute to the work and the budget of the WCRC, as well as strengthening the relationship to partners who are willing to support the WCRC.

The leadership model to be implemented during the interim period must therefore assure a high level of coordination of these different processes and must give those who negotiate the necessary agreements the authority to secure the successful conclusion of any negotiations.

### **2 Roles and Responsibilities**

#### ***2.1 The Role of the Collegial General Secretariat***

For the period of the interim, the Executive Committee delegates the duties and responsibilities of the general secretary (defined in articles X, XI, XII and XIV of the Constitution and section V of the Bylaws) to a collegial general secretariat of the three executive secretaries who will operate within the structure of the existing Executive Staff Council.

This leadership model holds the three executive secretaries together in a collegial general secretariat, in which decisions will be reached through consensus.

The members of the collegial general secretariat *coordinate* the work in their particular areas of responsibility. The mandate to *direct* the work lies with the Executive Staff Council, which receives reports and proposals from its members and acts upon them.

The collegial general secretariat shall be responsible to the Executive Committee (Art XII). In the exceptional situation of the interim there is a need for the highest level of transparency and communication between the collegial general secretariat and the Officers' Committee, which is tasked to "ensure coherence in the interdepartmental work of the World Communion of Reformed Churches" (Bylaws IV).

General Secretary Functions Delegated to the Collegial General Secretariat:

*According to Constitution and Bylaws:*

- 1) Chief Executive Officer of the WCRC;
- 2) Coordinate and direct the work of the WCRC;
- 3) Primary spokesperson of the WCRC, along with the president (Constitution, X. G. 2.; Bylaws V. C.);
- 4) Advise the Executive Committee and the officers of risks and potential liabilities that may pertain;
- 5) Supervise WCRC publications.

*Other functions:*

- 1) Carry out the mandates of the General Council to coordinate the representation of the WCRC in different areas (in close collaboration with the president, the officers, and Executive Committee members);
- 2) Delegate staff, the officers, and/or Executive Committee members to visit member churches;
- 3) Supervise the preparation and execution of the budget.

## **2.2 The Role of the Acting General Secretary**

For the duration of the interim the Executive Committee shall appoint an acting general secretary from among the executive secretaries. The acting general secretary shall act on behalf of the collegial general secretariat. This entails fulfilling

all legal requirements, negotiating new sustainability possibilities with partner organizations and member churches, and representing the WCRC where protocol or tactical prudence suggests the presence of a general secretary.

The acting general secretary shall also have a coordinating role in the activities to safeguard the sustainability of the WCRC.

General Secretary Functions Delegated to the Acting General Secretary (acting on behalf of the collegial general secretariat):

- 1) Represent the WCRC in legal matters (Constitution, XI. D.);
- 2) Represent the WCRC as assigned by the collegial general secretariat in areas where protocol or tactical prudence suggests the presence of a general secretary;
- 3) Coordinate programmatic fundraising (negotiations about new sustainability possibilities with partner organizations and member churches).

### ***2.3 Executive Staff Supervision and Performance Reviews***

During the interim the organization of the day-to-day work (holidays etc.) shall be administered collegially by the Executive Staff Council.

The supervision of the executive secretaries shall be conducted by the president.

The performance reviews of executive secretaries shall be conducted by the Officers' Committee, functioning as the Personnel Committee, with the president as point person.

General Secretary Functions Delegated to the Officers' Committee:

- 1) Supervise executive staff;
- 2) Conduct the mandated performance reviews of executive secretaries.

### ***2.4 Delegation of General Secretary Responsibilities to Individual Executive Secretaries, Officers, and Executive Committee Members***

#### **2.4.1 Executive Secretary for Communion and Theology**

##### ***Representation***

- 1) Represent the WCRC in areas assigned by the collegial general secretariat where the presence of a general secretary is not required including:
  - a) to the member churches and the whole Reformed family in Europe and Africa;
  - b) to the ecumenical movement, in particular to the World Council of Churches, the JDDJ communions (especially to the Lutheran World

- Federation), and other Christian world communions in the areas of theology, mission, and ecumenical relationships;
- 2) Maintain relationships and manage documents with regional councils in Europe and Africa;
  - 3) Visit member churches as assigned by the collegial general secretariat in Europe and Africa
    - a) to support them in times of crisis;
    - b) to strengthen their witness.

*Sustainability*

- 1) Raise funds in areas assigned by the collegial general secretariat for core budget and overall Communion needs.

2.4.2 Executive Secretary for Justice and Witness

*Representation*

- 1) Represent the WCRC in areas assigned by the collegial general secretariat where the presence of a general secretary is not required including:
  - a) to the member churches and the whole Reformed family in Asia and the Pacific;
  - b) to the ecumenical movement, in particular to the World Council of Churches, the JDDJ communions (especially to the Lutheran World Federation), and other Christian world communions in the areas of justice and witness;
- 2) Maintain relationships and manage documents with regional councils in Asia and the Pacific;
- 3) Visit member churches as assigned by the collegial general secretariat in Asia and the Pacific
  - a) to support them in times of crisis;
  - b) to strengthen their witness.

*Sustainability*

- 1) Raise funds in areas assigned by the collegial general secretariat for core budget and overall Communion needs.

2.4.3 Executive Secretary for Communications and Operations

*Representation*

- 1) Represent the WCRC in areas assigned by the collegial general secretariat where the presence of a general secretary is not required including:
  - a. to the member churches and the whole Reformed family in North America, the Caribbean, and Latin America;
  - b. to the ecumenical movement, in particular to the World Council of Churches, the JDDJ communions (especially to the Lutheran

- World Federation), and other Christian world communions in the area of communications;
- 2) Maintain relationships and manage documents with regional councils in North America, the Caribbean, and Latin America;
  - 3) Visit member churches as assigned by the collegial general secretariat in North America, the Caribbean, and Latin America
    - a. to support them in times of crisis;
    - b. to strengthen their witness.

#### *Sustainability*

- 1) Raise funds in areas assigned by the collegial general secretariat for core budget and overall Communion needs;

#### *Operations*

- 1) Manage and administer the Communion's organization;
- 2) Supervise the administrative staff;
- 3) Make necessary arrangements for the convening, reporting, and proper conduct of the General Council;
- 4) Ensure time and place for Executive Committee meetings;
- 5) Coordinate the timely submission of reports to the Executive Committee;
- 6) Handle correspondence of the Communion.

#### 2.4.4 Individual Officers and Executive Committee members

- 1) Represent the WCRC in areas assigned by the collegial general secretariat where the presence of a general secretary is not required including
  - a) to the member churches and the whole Reformed family;
  - b) to the ecumenical movement, in particular to the World Council of Churches, the JDDJ communions (especially to the Lutheran World Federation), and other Christian world communions;
- 2) Visit member churches as assigned by the collegial general secretariat
  - a) to support them in times of crisis;
  - b) to strengthen their witness;
- 3) Raise funds in areas assigned by the collegial general secretariat for core budget and overall Communion needs.

### **C. Proposals**

The Officers' Committee proposes that the Executive Committee will resolve the following:

### **The General Secretary Search Process**

1. The Executive Committee receives the report of the General Secretary Search Committee with thanks for its work under very difficult circumstances.
2. The Executive Committee mandates the General Secretary Search Committee as currently composed to continue its search for a suitable candidate to be presented to the Executive Committee for election at its meeting in May 2022.

### **The Interim**

3. The Executive Committee resolves that until the installation of a new general secretary the WCRC shall operate under an interim structure.
4. The Executive Committee requests the Officers' Committee to conduct a mid-term review on the progress of the search process and the sustainability campaign not later than February 2022. Further, it requests that if the implemented processes will not provide the expected results, the Officers' Committee will make a proposal to the Executive Committee on how to proceed.

### **The Leadership Model**

5. The Executive Committee endorses the leadership model described in this proposal that during interim the core functions and responsibilities of the general secretary as found in the Constitution and Bylaws shall be delegated to the collegial general secretariat, composed of the three executive secretaries.
6. The Executive Committee approves the distribution of functions and responsibilities of the general secretary to the collegial general secretariat, acting general secretary, Officers' Committee, individual executive secretaries, and individual members of the Officers' Committee and Executive Committee as described in this proposal.
7. The Executive Committee appoints Hanns Lessing as acting general secretary during the time of the interim.



## II. Proposal on Objectives, Timeline, and Structures of the Interim

### A. Executive Summary

#### Objectives

1. During the interim the following objectives shall be achieved:
  - a. continuing the search process to identify suitable candidates for the general secretary position;
  - b. setting the conditions for short-, mid- and long-term sustainability of the WCRC;
  - c. preparing the base requirements for General Council planning (location, budget, staff capacity, theme, programme structure).

#### Structure and Timeline

2. The interim shall be divided into two phases with an extraordinary Executive Committee meeting to be held in November/December 2021 being the dividing point:
  - a. It will begin in September with a *planning phase*
    - i. during which the current activities in the areas of sustainability and General Council planning shall be intensified;
    - ii. and a comprehensive proposal shall be prepared to address the challenges in these areas, which shall be tabled at the Executive Committee meeting.
  - b. It will be followed by an *implementation phase* from December in which the actions taken by the Executive Committee will be executed.
3. Two task groups shall be formed to create the base conditions for the accomplishment of the objectives for the interim:
  - a. Sustainability Task Group
  - b. General Council Task Group

### B. Objectives

The following objectives shall be accomplished with priority during the interim period:

- Devise and execute a sustainability plan, which safeguards the necessary financial stability to allow the election of a general secretary.
- Provide sufficient staff capacity and develop a working model that will allow the implementation of the Strategic Plan during the interim period.
- Prepare and carry out a solid planning process for financing, logistics, and programmatic preparation of the 2024 General Council.

## 1 Securing Sustainability

The WCRC has been challenged by sustainability issues for several years. While funds for programmes can usually be acquired without problems, the income of the core budget, which finances large portions of the salary bill and the office expenditure, is currently not secured. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the shrinking finances of the large contributors to the WCRC core budget will lead to an aggravation of the situation.

During the interim the following objectives shall be achieved:

- intensify the processes to secure the funds to cover the shortfalls in the 2021 and 2022 core budget;
- intensify the process of developing a medium-term budget plan that will allow the election of a general secretary in 2022;
- intensify the process of designing a long-term sustainability model that will address the challenge of the structural deficit of the core budget.

To bring the WCRC to a level of sustainability which will allow the continuation of its operations and the appointment of a general secretary shall require the strengthening of activities in the following areas:

- outreach to WCRC members and regions to develop an improved sustainability model, which will
  - activate the whole Communion to contribute to the work of the WCRC with witness, prayer, human resources, and money;
  - encourage the continuous commitment of those member churches that already contribute substantially to the WCRC budget;
  - and create the conditions to raise funds in areas that are not yet contributing according to their capacity;
- invitation of churches for membership of the WCRC;
- institutional financial support from partner organizations;
- programme partnerships which cover salaries, management costs, and office expenditure.

The success of a new sustainability model will strongly depend on successful communication which will activate member churches beyond the leadership and programme network circles that the WCRC is usually in contact with. Communication shall therefore be an important aspect of all efforts to improve sustainability.

The sustainability campaign should not only be seen as an isolated project, but as a crucial aspect of all activities of the WCRC. Particularly relevant shall be the programme work, especially the “COVID and Beyond” process, which involves

regions and several member churches (see below), the installation of the advocacy programme (see below), and the planning of the General Council (see below).

These processes will lead to a sustainability model which will be more complex than the present one. The allocation of sufficient management and administrative capacities shall therefore be of paramount importance.

## **2 Preparing the Base Conditions for the General Council**

The planning of the General Council has been delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic and other factors. The quick implementation of a robust planning process is therefore very important. Negotiations with Asian member churches are well developed but not yet concluded.

This process shall focus upon the following areas:

- location,
- finance,
- planning committee,
- staff resources,
- logistics,
- programme.

The mood and commitment of member churches toward the Communion are currently quite good. The planning of the General Council could foster this positive spirit and lead to a stronger Communion that shall be ever more determined to make an impactful witness. Such active mobilization may also lead to a higher commitment to contribute to the financial sustainability of the WCRC.

## **3 Providing Sufficient Staff Capacities and Developing a Working Model that Will Allow the Implementation of the Strategic Plan**

The particular conditions of the interim shall require the people in the secretariat to achieve more with reduced capacity. This has an impact on the execution of the Strategic Plan and requires a revisiting of objectives and activities under the following perspectives:

- acquiring additional capacity (e.g., by entering into programme partnerships with funding organizations that are prepared to support the activities of the WCRC);
- reprioritizing the objectives and activities set out in the Strategic Plan according to the limitation of capacity during the interim.

### ***3.1 Negotiating Programme Partnerships***

The NIFEA and the envisioned Global Reformed Advocacy Platforms for Engagement (GRAPE) programme are examples of how programme partnerships can create opportunities to increase staff capacity.

This perspective is particularly interesting for the safeguarding of the peace and reconciliation work, which will otherwise be difficult to sustain under the capacity limitations of the interim. Advocacy in peace, reconciliation, and justice is particularly important for the identity of the WCRC; the work also provides an active and much appreciated service to the member churches. All efforts should therefore be made to maintain and to develop the programme.

At the same time, programme partnerships might require some significant compromises, e.g., in the location of staff as several partner organizations will not fund positions in the Global North.

As in all other activities, it shall be of crucial importance to assure that sufficient management and administrative capacities shall be provided to properly implement such programmes.

### ***3.2 Reprioritizing Objectives and Activities***

In the process of the current mid-term review of the Strategic Plan, the programme staff together with the reference groups and Strategic Plan Programme Group (SPPG) shall prepare a proposal that will outline the parameters of the programme work in the time until the 2024 General Council.

The “COVID-19 and Beyond” process might provide an example of how different programme activities can be integrated into one process. While the pace of the COVID process cannot be continued indefinitely, the implementation of activities that serve more than one programme objective might offer some interesting synergies.

### **4 Securing the Functioning of the Secretariat**

The functioning of the secretariat during the interim will depend on effective administrative support. The increased workload of the executive secretaries would be eased by upgrading the administrative roles from assistance to taking up managerial tasks in the areas of office administration, finance, logistics, and project management. New job descriptions are being written for each.

## **C. Structures and Timeline**

The interim will be prepared through a *transitional phase* (June-August 2021) during which the task groups will be constituted and collect the process knowledge from the outgoing general secretary.

The interim shall be divided in two phases:

- a *planning phase* (from September 2021),
  - in which current activities will be intensified in the areas of
    - sustainability;
    - General Council preparations;
  - and concrete strategic proposals for the work of the Communion in these areas shall be developed and presented to an extraordinary meeting of the Executive Committee in November/December 2021 for review and decisions.
- and an *implementation phase* (from December 2021),
  - in which the decisions will be executed;
  - and a close monitoring process will take place that will allow an assessment whether the set targets are being achieved;
  - this assessment shall form the basis for the decision on whether a new general secretary can be elected at the Executive Committee meeting in May 2022.

Taking these principles into consideration, the timeline of the interim of the interim model will look as follows:

## **1 Planning Phase**

### **1.1 Executive Committee Meeting in May 2021**

The Executive Committee meeting in May 2021 takes the following actions that are laid out in section D. of this document (see below). These decisions shall assure the functioning of the WCRC under the decisions of the interim.

### **1.2 Executive Task Groups**

The Executive Committee selects two executive task groups that are mandated to intensify the activities of the WCRC in the areas of “sustainability” and “General Council planning.” These task groups will be coordinated by members of the collegial general secretariat. The task groups shall present comprehensive proposals for decision-making at the Executive Committee meeting in November/December 2021.

#### **1.2.1 Sustainability Task Group**

The Sustainability Task Group will be coordinated by the acting general secretary and will be composed of persons from members of the following bodies of the WCRC:

- Officers and elected members of the Executive Committee;
- leadership of WCRC regions;
- Finance Committee.

The Sustainability Task Group will intensify the sustainability activities of the WCRC according to the goals of the Strategic Plan and within the mandates of the constitution and will present comprehensive proposals for decision-making at the Executive Committee meeting in November/December 2021.

The task group has the following tasks:

- the development of a process to activate the whole Communion to contribute to the work of the WCRC with witness, prayer, human resources, and financial resources;
- intensify the processes to secure funds to cover the shortfalls in the 2021 and 2022 core budget;
- intensify the process of developing a medium-term budget plan that will allow the election of a general secretary in 2022;
- intensify the process of designing a long-term sustainability model that will address the challenge of the structural deficit of the core budget.

#### 1.2.2 General Council Task Group

The General Council Task Group will be coordinated by a member of the collegial general secretariat and will be composed from members of the following bodies of the WCRC:

- Officers and elected members of the Executive Committee;
- leadership of WCRC regions;
- representatives of the member churches in the region where the General Council will take place;
- representatives from different areas of the work of the WCRC.

The General Council Task Group will intensify the activities to prepare the 2024 General Council and will present comprehensive proposals for decision-making at the Executive Committee meeting in November/December 2021. The Executive Committee will also appoint members of the General Council Planning Task Group as the General Council Planning Committee.

The task group has the following tasks:

- to propose a location for the 2024 General Council;
- to identify sources of income and to present a balanced budget for the General Council;
- to create the conditions for the appointment of the necessary staff resources;

- to propose a theme and suggest a general programme structure.

### ***1.3 Executive Committee Meeting in November/December 2021***

The Executive Committee meeting in November/December 2021 will receive and discern the reports and proposals of the task groups and will take the necessary actions.

The Executive Committee also will receive an interim report from the General Secretary Search Committee.

## **2 Implementation Phase**

### ***Implementation Activities***

In the implementation phase the actions taken by the Executive Committee will be executed.

The task groups shall be transformed into advisory bodies that accompany the implementation of the proposed activities.

### ***Monitoring Process***

The Officers' Committee will closely monitor the progress. Based on these observations and a second interim report by the General Secretary Search Committee they will decide no later than February 2022 whether they can recommend the election of a general secretary during the Executive Committee meeting in May 2022 or which measures should be proposed to proceed.

### ***Executive Committee Meeting in May 2022***

Discerning the proposal of the Officers' Committee the Executive Committee meeting in May 2022 will:

- either elect a new general secretary
- or act upon a proposal by the Officers' Committee on how to proceed.

## **D. Proposals**

The Officers' Committee proposes that the Executive Committee will resolve the following:

### **Objectives**

8. The Executive Committee approves the objectives to be accomplished during the interim period as described in this proposal, in particular:
  - a. setting the conditions for short-, mid- and long-term sustainability of the WCRC;
  - b. preparing the base requirements for General Council;

- c. assuring the implementation of the Strategic Plan under the challenges of reduced staff capacity during the interim period.

### **Structures and Timeline**

9. The Executive Committee endorses the structure and the timeline of the transition and interim periods as described in this proposal.
10. The Executive Committee resolves that an extraordinary Executive Committee meeting shall be held virtually 29 November to 1 December 2021 to monitor the progress and take the necessary decisions that will allow the accomplishment of the objectives set for the interim.
11. The Executive Committee selects two task groups to intensify the work and to present comprehensive proposals for decision-making at the extraordinary Executive Committee meeting in the areas of:
  - a. Sustainability
  - b. General Council preparations



**Addendum:  
Report from Strategic Plan Programme Group**

The Strategic Plan Programme Group (SPPG) received with appreciation the letter from the President and the General Secretary to the Executive Committee and the SPPG reviewing the current status of things in the WCRC Offices. Both the President and the General Secretary offered further interpretation regarding the one year pause in the search for General Secretary and also the need to do additional work toward long-term financial sustainability. Both these realities have implications for current staff in the Secretariat.

The SPPG at its April 17 meeting received and affirmed document summarizing feedback from the Reference Groups in relation to the present challenges. That document entitled “Feedback from the Reference Group on the WCRC Programme Work” is appended in full at the end of this report.

The Reference Groups strongly affirmed the ongoing work of the Strategic Plan. We are agreed that this is not a time for scaling back, but a time for stepping up. Toward that end we commend and commit to developing a new working model that is less leader dependent. Gifts of leadership and the willingness to serve is spread throughout our Communion. Now is a good time to use our creative imagination to find new ways to work together. It may be that we will experience a multiplication of energies and an even stronger communion. In this *kairos* moment, we know that it is the Spirit who leads us, and we have the courage and motivation to follow. Executive staff leadership would take the form of oversight, coordination, collaboration, and communication.

We have seen in the “COVID & Beyond” process what is possible in the way of involving people from all over the world in the work of discernment. In some ways the Communion is more connected and more activated than ever. The SPPG commends the executive staff for their creative, flexible, and effective leadership in these challenging times. Despite the difficulties our work has moved forward with quality and capacity.

The annual evaluation that SPPG attends to in every spring is still in process. Two SPPG members, Rathnakara Sadananda and Hilary Hagar, are heading up the mid-term evaluative review. When that is received it will be shared with the SPPG and the results will be sent as an Appendix to this report for the ExCom.

The SPPG also discussed the prospect of calling a new executive staff person. We are seeking a woman from the Global South who might lead in the area of peace and reconciliation and oversee the Global Reformed Advocacy Platforms for Engagement (GRAPE) work as well. This position would include work in advocacy and networking. The Presbyterian Church (USA) has offered generous funding, and additional funding

may come from the Council for World Mission and member churches might make this possible.

The SPPG considered the possibility of this being a de-centralized position. Advantages and disadvantages were discussed. Advantages: Some persons considered by the General Secretary Search Committee were unwilling, in this time of pandemic, to leave their regional location. They might consider a decentralized position, however. De-centralized staffing could have the prospect of strengthening the regions and enhancing connections between regions and the office in Hannover. Disadvantages: If it is only this position being considered for de-centralizing, and this person is a woman from the Global South, this may have the unwanted effect of marginalizing. Considerations of equity and justice are cause to be concerned about the appearance (or reality) of creating a secondary status by this step. More discussion is needed.

In anticipation of General Council in 2024 there is much to be considered. The “COVID & Beyond” process is posing the question whether we are in a confessing moment as we have been discussing “global apartheid,” RAN, and the situation in Palestine.

In addition to work already mentioned there is ongoing work in many areas. The WCRC anticipates a new volume of *Reformed World* that will share three ecumenical dialogue reports with reflections that show their import and impact. Significant work is also underway in peace and reconciliation (e.g. Taiwan, Korea, Philippines, Palestine). The Global Institute of Theology (GIT) and Youth Summit are also on the horizon.

Respectfully submitted,  
Anna Case-Winters, Moderator

#### **Appendix: Feedback from the Reference Groups on the WCRC Programme Work during a Possible Interim Period with Reduced Staff Capacity**

1. The Reference Groups see the challenges to implement the Strategic Plan with the current staff capacities and are concerned that a reduction of capacity for a possible interim period might lead to a situation where the WCRC will not be able to fulfil major objectives of the Strategic plan.
2. The Strategic Plan defines the mandate of the Reference Groups to “coordinate the implementation of the objectives within their portfolios.” The Reference Groups therefore understand themselves as guardians of the goals and objectives of the Strategic Plan. They stress that it is their responsibility to ensure that the responsibilities the WCRC has committed to by adopting the

Strategic Plan shall be fulfilled. It should not be their task to take responsibility for the abandonment or weakening of these commitments.

3. The primary answer to the diminished staff capacity should – wherever possible – not be to downgrade goals, but to develop a programme model that will allow the implementation of the objectives of the Strategic Plan.
4. Such a programme model shall allow executive secretaries to call upon WCRC regions, member churches, and working groups to implement global programmes on behalf of the WCRC. The Hannover secretariat shall support the programme activities administratively. The role of the executive secretaries shall focus on the coordination of these activities and not so much on their facilitation. It shall be the primary function of the executive secretaries to develop the programme work according to the goals and objectives of the Strategic Plan and to ensure coherence of the different programme areas with the vision and the mission of the WCRC.
5. The Reference Groups emphasize the importance of the peace and reconciliation work and strongly support the establishment of the Global Reformed Advocacy Platforms for Engagement (GRAPE). The GRAPE programme shall secure core responsibilities of the WCRC with third party funds. The GRAPE platforms are designed to allow the WCRC to maintain a priority objective of the Strategic Plan without adding to the workload responsibility to the existing staff.
6. The ecumenical leadership of the WCRC is critical for the furthering of our common call to unity. We perceive that this is not a time to pull back our energies from this work. We commend shared discernment to determine the best ways to go forward. This may include heavier reliance on Reference Groups and Working Groups for implementation of objectives in this area. Reference Groups expressed willingness to expend greater energy in this area as needed. Executive secretaries would focus upon coordination, coherence, and communication in the ecumenical endeavours currently before us. The capacity for online gatherings for this work has the advantage of not expending scarce funds for travel to meetings.
7. The “COVID and Beyond” project is an example how different programme objectives can be integrated into one activity. This approach has several advantages: It uses the capacity in the Hannover secretariat more effectively and it brings the different programme networks into the conversation of the whole communion. This allows mutual engagement and cross-fertilization in processes of joint discernment. The strategy of the integration of programmes should be continued on a smaller scale after the end of the current “COVID and Beyond” process.
8. The Reference Groups noted the effectiveness of our online work together. There are in fact advantages of wider accessibility, the possibility of more

frequent meetings, and the capacity to record and make widely available the presentations and proceedings of the project.

9. The Reference Groups expressed deep appreciation for the executive staff in their wise and effective leadership in these uncertain times and a willingness to assist in the ways that seem best.

**Addendum:  
Communion and Theology Accountability Report**

**Introduction: Programme Work under the Conditions of the COVID-19 Pandemic**

During the past year the programme work has been severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, operationally as well with regard to content. By mid-March 2020 the programme desk stopped planning for meetings and consultations and cancelled all trips. Afterwards, like everyone else, we had to decide how to pursue the programme work under these very special circumstances. From the very beginning we worked on the assumption that the impact of the pandemic would affect the world for months to come and that the WCRC programme work therefore had to adjust its working style.

The Executive Staff Council considered different responses to the situation: After the cancellation of all travels, for a moment we lived under the impression that the pandemic would offer a very welcome pause in the often- hectic life of the programme desk that could be used constructively to catch up with the publication of the activities of the previous years. We planned the revitalization of the *Reformed World* and a number of publications on the material gathered during earlier programme activities, which had not yet been processed due to the limited capacity of the programme desk. We identified the following areas in particular: The publishing of the latest dialogue reports, the proceedings of the 2019 Mission in Contexts of Crisis Conference in Alexandria and the Freedom of Religion Conference, that had taken place in Frankfurt (Main) in February 2020. However, the pause only lasted for a few weeks. After the ecumenical world had adapted to the situation and embraced a digital working style, there suddenly were many more meetings than before. Some of the envisioned projects are therefore are not yet completed.

The interruption of activities also opened a space to intensively engage with the member churches. We heard from severe hardships and utterly desperate situations. We learned how churches reconfigured their lives to foster communion, comfort, and mutual support in difficult times. And we were impressed by the intense efforts to read the signs of the time and to discern the response to the pandemic in confessing, witnessing, and being the church in times of crisis.

It was this experience that laid the ground to what would become the “COVID and Beyond” process. Already in April 2020 the general secretary called for a Communion-wide process of discernment. This idea was supported by the Officers’ Committee. In June a Zoom call with participants from all areas of the Communion discussed the idea and decided to conduct the process with a justice-centred approach: While during the first months of the pandemic “many churches and ecumenical institutions responded to the crisis with pastoral letters and diaconal activities, it now becomes ever more obvious that the pandemic has aggravated

already difficult situations in many countries. Everywhere very far-reaching decisions are being negotiated. It is here that the WCRC would position itself with a critical and prophetic approach.” The process should serve the following goals:

1. To enable a communion-wide discernment on the present crisis and to provide for a prophetic theological response.
2. To prepare the Communion to move towards a confessing church in terms of the ‘global apartheid’ that this crisis has unveiled.

A working group and several task teams were formed that organized the process under the heading “What Does God Require of Us (Micah 6:8)? Discerning, Confessing, Witnessing in the Times of COVID-19 and Beyond.” The discernment process started with an inaugural session on 9 December 2020, and since then gives shape to the programme activities of the WCRC throughout the year 2021 (for details see “Unfinished Agenda of the Reformation” below).

The digital format of the “COVID and Beyond” process offered new opportunities for the life of the Communion. In the different sessions all the regions of the WCRC, the focus groups and the programme networks are sharing their experiences under the conditions of the pandemic. This sharing includes reports about the specific situations, but also of the attempts to read the signs of the time, to respond theologically, to witness, and to be the church in times of crisis. In all these testimonies the Communion impressively demonstrated the strength of its life and its commitment. We experienced the special situation of the years 2020 and 2021 as a period of enormous spiritual passion, of lucid analysis, serious theology, and courageous witness.

The COVID-19 process is creating a very solid foundation for the journey of the WCRC towards the next General Council. The results of the first six months of joint discernment are currently compiled to a comprehensive statement that will express the witness of the WCRC to come to terms with the impact of the pandemic. Resource material will be made available that will allow the member churches to engage even more actively in the discernment process.

Many of the activities that were planned for 2020 and 2021 could be integrated in the Covid-19 project. The theme “What Does God Require of Us? Discerning, Confessing, and Witnessing in the Times of COVID-19 and Beyond” offered a comprehensive framework for deep reflection. We are very grateful that the implementation of the Strategic Plan could continue under the conditions of the pandemic. However, the COVID-19 process is consuming a lot of capacity. Several planned activities had therefore to be postponed to a later stage.

### **Report about Programme Activities According to the Strategic Plan**

The following paragraphs will summarize the 2020-2021 programme activities facilitated by the Communion and Theology desk according to the structure of the Strategic Plan.

## **P1: Cultivating a Just Communion**

### **Communicating the Communion**

#### *Reformed World*

In April 2020 the newly constituted board of the *Reformed World* convened for the first time. The board is composed of the following persons: Anna Case-Winters, Dirk Smit, Heleen Zorgdrager, HyeRan Kim-Cragg, Jooseop Keum, Margit Ernst-Habib, Munther Isaac, Nadia Maris, Rathnakara Sadananda, Reinerio Arce Valentin, Yvette Bloomfield, Philip Peacock, Phil Tanis, and Hanns Lessing.

The work of the editorial board is coordinated by its moderator, Prof. Heleen Zorgdrager. According to the Bylaws of the Constitution the general secretary has a supervisory function for the publications of the WCRC. Hanns Lessing was appointed editor of the *Reformed World*; Phil Tanis serves as managing editor.

The terms of reference for the work of the editorial board describe the aim and scope of the *Reformed World* as follows:

The *Reformed World* is an international journal that provides a forum for sharing and debating theological studies and prophetic witness that seek to engage and transform the realities of our time. The journal draws on, widens and deepens the treasures of Reformed sources, past and present. *Reformed World* purposefully and joyfully embodies a diversity of voices and contextual perspectives, inspired by ecclesial, academic and grass roots communities. In the understanding of Reformed World, theological studies include the biblical, historical, systematic, and practical, as well as reflections on visual art, music, poetry, and other expressions of the human mind and soul that aim at the transformation of the world.

In doing so, *Reformed World* is committed to the mission of the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) to be a global *koinonia*, covenanting for justice, and marked by discerning, confessing, witnessing, and being reformed together. The journal also strives to receive impulses from and give impulses to the wider ecumenical movement, working together with all the partners God provides.

Two issues are currently in preparation: A compilation of the latest reports of the dialogues with the Roman Catholic Church, the Anglican Communion, and the

Pentecostal World Fellowship together with a series of articles that engage with these reports from different perspectives. The editors of this issue are Heleen Zorgdrager and Hanns Lessing. And a *festschrift* for General Secretary Chris Ferguson that gathers voices from different areas in the life of the Communion, in which Chris Ferguson was particularly active: “Called to Communion, Committed to Justice,” “Transformative Ecumenism,” “Peace Building,” and “Living Out the Accra Confession.” This issue is edited by Jooseop Keum, Philip Peacock, and Hanns Lessing.

We are very grateful for the contributions from the editorial board and the different authors.

### **WCRC Project Work**

The WCRC administers three different funds to support activities of the member churches:

- *Emergency Fund* to support member churches that support people in an immediate emergency situation like a natural disaster.  
(*Final approval: general secretary, president, and general treasurer upon advice by the Executive Staff Council*);
- The *Reformed Partnership Fund* to support small projects of member churches that take up the vision of the Strategic Plan of the WCRC.  
(*Selection: Reformed Partnership Fund Committee upon a proposal by the Executive Staff Council*);
- *Global Peace Initiatives* to support projects of member churches and partner organizations that promote advocacy for peace and justice as defined by the Strategic Plan (*Selection: Executive Staff Council*).

These funds are supported by the *Otto per Mille* programme of the *Tavola Valdese* (Italy) and the Evangelical Church of Westphalia (Germany). We are very grateful for the support by these back donors.

Because of the difficult situation of many churches during the COVID-19 pandemic the Reformed Partnership Fund Committee agreed to stop the regular application process and to transfer most of the funds earmarked for the Reformed Partnership Fund in 2020 to the Emergency Fund.

The following regulations applied:

- In the horizon of communion building, applying churches shall be strongly encouraged to collaborate with other member churches in their country.
- During the corona pandemic the funds of the Emergency Fund are distributed with a strong bias to COVID-19 related emergency relief. The general definition of emergency projects still applies. The fund assists



hands-on projects of WCRC member churches that assist people in the actual, immediate situation.

- Projects will be selected with a strong bias towards those initiatives where member churches are trying to engage with the crisis in a direct way. In the current situation NGOs have extended access to funding. Applications of member churches on behalf of NGOs should therefore only be selected when they are particularly benefitting the work of the applying member church.

The following selection process was put in place in 2020:

- In the emergency situation in 2020 the Reformed Partnership Committee acted as a reference group rather than as a selection committee.
- The moderator of the Reformed Partnership Fund Committee served on the Emergency Fund final approval committee consisting of the general secretary, the president, and the general treasurer.

For the details of the approved projects cf. the report of the Project Desk.

### **P3: Doing Theology for Transformation**

#### **Unfinished Agenda of the Reformation**

##### *COVID and Beyond*

For information on the goals and objectives of the “COVID and Beyond” process cf. the relevant sections of the introduction to this report.

The “COVID and Beyond” process is guided by the COVID-19 working group, which is comprised of the following members: Lungile Mpetsheni (moderator), Sylvana Apituley, Peter Cruchley, Dario Barolin, Dianna Wright, Seforosa Carroll, Martina Wasserloos, Puleng LenkaBula, Rathnakara Sadananda, Allan Boesak, Rothney Tshaka, Jennifer S. Leath, Eve Parker, Chris Ferguson, Hanns Lessing, Philip Peacock.

The COVID-19 sessions are prepared by the following working groups: 1. Worship and Resources; 2. Working Paper; 3. Discernment; 4. Conference.

These bodies developed the following structure for the project:

- The process should be structured in four circles, each engaging with one of the four central verbs of the Strategic Plan that define the mission of the WCRC (“discerning,” “confessing,” “witnessing,” “being reformed”).
- Each of these verbs should be unfolded in relationship to a season of the year of the Church: “discerning” – Advent and Epiphany, “confessing” – Lent and Easter, “witnessing” – Pentecost, “being reformed” – ordinary time.
- Each circle should follow the order of three types of sessions:

- theme plenary (giving theological and liturgical input);
- sharing sessions (sharing experiences, readings of the signs of the time, prophetic theologies, acts of witness and ideas for being the church in times of crisis);
- discernment session (answering the leading question: “What does God require of us?”).
- The sharing session should involve all areas of communion life:
  - WCRC regions (established and not established);
  - WCRC focus groups: Women, youth, people living with disabilities, indigenous people;
  - Programme networks: Racism-Authoritarianism-Nationalism (RAN), Israel/Palestine, NIFEA, human sexuality, freedom of religion, mission in the context of Crisis and Marginalization, Global Institute of Theology (some changes might be necessary).

The project started with the inaugural session on 9 December 2020, and is conducted bi-weekly throughout the year 2021.

In the first quarter of 2022 we plan a conference that can hopefully be held face-to-face where the Communion will be called to account for itself for the learnings and commitments made during the process. This conference will lead into the planning process for the next General Council, where central positions shall be ratified.

### **Global Institute of Theology**

Due to the pandemic, the Global Institute of Theology, which shall engage with the theme “Unsettling the Word,” had to be postponed and can hopefully be held face-to-face in 2022.

We express our gratitude to the two seminaries that were prepared to host the GIT, the Union Theological Seminary (Philippines) that had invited us in 2020 and the Jakarta Theological Seminary that was prepared to be our host in 2021. We also thank the GIT faculty that is still committed to the cause: HyeRan Kim-Cragg (academic dean), Chin-Siong Lian (dean of students), Revelation Velunta, Munther Isaac, Christel Weber, Stephen Burns, Debra Mumford, Jennet Tabe, Philip Peacock, Hanns Lessing.

We plan to involve the GIT students into the “COVID and Beyond” process. The students shall be invited to participate in an essay competition, which shall develop the material that shall be presented during a Covid-19 session in October.

## **P4: Engaging God's Mission in Contexts of Crisis**

### **Global Peace Initiatives**

#### *Ecumenical Forum on the Anglophone Crisis in Cameroon*

In the Ecumenical Forum on the Anglophone Crisis in Cameroon the World Council of Churches (WCC), World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC), the Anglican Communion, the All-African Conference of Churches (AACC), the Methodist Church in Britain, Mission 21, and the Presbyterian Church (USA) Presbyterian Mission accompany the Protestant churches in Cameroon to make a constructive contribution to the solution of the Anglophone crisis.

The Ecumenical Forum on the Anglophone Crisis in Cameroon will be active in the following fields: (1) Providing accurate information about the Anglophone crisis and about peace and justice initiatives that aim at constructive solutions; (2) undertaking international, regional and national advocacy for negotiated solutions; (3) peace building; and (4) accompanying of the affected population and the churches.

A particular highlight in 2020 was the conference of Cameroonian religious leaders (Protestant, Catholic, and Muslim) that was held in November 2020 to build capacities for peace making.

After the workshop, the leaders present issued a statement saying "that the cost and consequences of the armed conflict in Anglophone Cameroon and the Boko Haram insurgency in the North are becoming increasingly unbearable on the local populations who are paying a high price for these conflicts. [...] We the Religious Leaders of Cameroon acknowledge our neutrality and impartiality while reserving our rights to point out what is right or wrong in any conflict situation, decided to make the following declarations." The statement declares the readiness of religious leaders of Cameroon to use their institutions and means to "objectively, faithfully, fearfully and lovingly assist, if not play a front role to bring about a just and peaceful end to the armed conflict ravaging Anglophone Cameroon."

This conference shall lead to a Peace Caravan, which will express the need to stop the violence in different locations where atrocities had taken place.

### **Global Reformed Advocacy Platform for Engagement (GRAPE)**

The initiative for the formation of Global Reformed Platforms for Engagement (GRAPE) attempts to achieve the following objectives:

- supporting the advocacy activities of WCRC member churches in the areas of justice, peace and reconciliation;

- creating a connection between global and local/regional advocacy activities within the WCRC for greater impact;
- strengthening staff capacity that allows the WCRC to provide an essential service to its member churches without creating a burden for the WCRC core budget.

Negotiations with *Brot für die Welt* (Bread for the World) are under way to fund the GRAPE programmes in the WCRC regions. We also hope to be able to solicit funding for the position of an Executive Secretary for Peace and Reconciliation who should coordinate the GRAPE project.

## **P5: Working with all the Partners God Provides**

### **Ecumenical Dialogues and Cooperation**

During the pandemic, also the ecumenical relationship had to be lived out in a digital format. Many ecumenical voices agree that digital meetings are not really conducive to intense dialoguing. But, also here, several creative ideas have been tested with the result that several conversations could be kept alive and, in some cases, even could advance. Some other initiatives, however, had to be postponed.

On the side of the WCRC the preparation of recent dialogue reports for publication led to a process of self-reflection that resulted

- in a policy paper that defined the WCRC's approach to ecumenical dialogues;
- and the attempt to gather the members of WCRC dialogue themes to work on a common understanding of the goals of dialogue processes.

#### *Concept Note on Ecumenical Dialogues*

The concept note formulates the following goals for ecumenical dialogues:

Ecumenical dialogues serve the churches as we together seek more visible unity in faith and common witness. We hope to come together in sacramental sharing and mutual recognition of ministries as signs of our deepening communion. Toward that end Christian world communions in close cooperation with the World Council of Churches and the Global Christian Forum engage one another around theological differences and similarities in hopes of better understanding one another and gaining insight in the mutual sharing of the wisdom of our traditions. As an expression of the unity that we have already reached the WCRC strives at common witness around shared commitments such as advancing peace, justice, and integrity of creation.

Dialogue reports are expressions of the consensus reached in the dialogue groups and must therefore be distinguished from agreements between Christian world communions and their member churches. The purpose of dialogue reports is to stimulate discussion on all levels of church life.

Dialogue reports will be published by the WCRC after they have been finalized by the dialogue groups subject to the approval by the General Secretary who has to ensure that the report does not contradict the constitutional values of the WCRC.

On recommendation of the Mission and Ecumenical Engagement Reference Group dialogue reports are tabled to the Executive Committee through the Strategic Plan Programme Group (SPPG). The recommendation explores the opportunities provided by the dialogue report to strengthen the relationship to the participating Christian world communion(s) on the way toward visible unity and common witness and makes suggestions for the process of reception by the WCRC and its member churches.

*Webinar on "Justification and Justice: The Journey of the WCRC from Columbus to Notre Dame"*

The Webinar that will take place on 4 June 2021 will gather the people who in recent years have represented the WCRC in different ecumenical dialogues. We plan to convene this group regularly:

- to share experiences;
- to reflect upon the outcome and the impact of the processes that we have participated in
- and to consider future ecumenical initiatives of the WCRC.

The webinar will have the theme "Justification and Justice: The Journey of the WCRC from Columbus to Notre Dame" will address the following topics:

- telling the story of the journey of the ecumenical engagement of the WCRC with the Joint Declaration from the Columbus conference (2001) to the gathering at Notre Dame;
- sharing the advances of the latest dialogue report with the Roman Catholic Church;
- engaging with the new reality of Roman Catholics, Lutherans, Methodists, Anglicans, and Reformed being joined together in the JDDJ consensus.

*Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*

During a conference held in March 2019 at the Notre Dame University in Indiana the five communions that have associated themselves with the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (Roman Catholics, Lutherans, Methodists, Anglicans, and Reformed) have committed themselves “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.” A steering Committee was founded to pursue those goals. The WCRC was asked to facilitate the work of the steering committee from 2019-2021.

In this period the relationships between the five communions have been strengthened. Significant initiatives have been sponsored by all five churches. Communions have engaged together in regions of conflict and have offered their accompaniment in cases where the relationships between members of different communions have been strained.

In the future the five communions want to intensify their commitment to more visible unity and have agreed to coordinate their activities toward Christian unity and common witness.

A study guide is being prepared to share the potential of the JDDJ consensus and to provide resources for the member churches for deeper engagement.

#### *Lutheran World Federation*

The Wittenberg Witness of 2017 has laid the foundation for an intensified relationship between the LWF and the WCRC, which led to several joint initiatives on national and global level.

The Wittenberg Witness shall be lived out also in form of deepened engagement in theology and witness. A joint conference on the freedom of religion has been planned, which should engage with the theological legacies of the Emden Synod (1571) and Luther’s theology on freedom as expressed in the treatise on the freedom of a Christian (1520) and develop a theological perspective that will allow the two communions to witness together in current conflicts where the freedom of religion has become a contentious issue.

Unfortunately, this project had to be postponed because of the pandemic.

#### *Anglican Communion*

The Anglican Communion have jointly published the latest dialogue report *Koinonia. God’s Gift and Calling: The Hiroshima Report of the International Reformed-Anglican Dialogue (IRAD)*. The report was launched in a well-attended webinar in February 2021.

We hope that the Executive Committee of the WCRC will have the time to engage with the report at its meeting in 2022, which can hopefully be held face-to-face, and to act upon the perspectives that it opens up.

#### *Pentecostal World Fellowship*

The report *Called to God's Mission: Report of the Third Round of the International Dialogue Between Representatives of the World Communion of Reformed Churches and Representatives of the Pentecostal World Fellowship 2014-2020* has been published by the Pentecostal World Fellowship and the WCRC. It is the first time that the Pentecostal World Fellowship is officially sponsor the document. We are very grateful for this commitment.

We plan to present the report to the 2022 Executive Committee Meeting for discussion and acting upon it.

#### *Roman Catholic Church*

The Executive Committee did not yet discuss the latest report of 2016, *Justification and Sacramentality: The Christian Community as an Agent for Justice. Report of the Fourth Phase of Catholic-Reformed International Dialogue*.

We are glad that the report will now be published in the Reformed World and will feature prominently in the webinar on "Justification and Justice: The Journey of the WCRC from Columbus to Notre Dame" on 4 June. Like the other reports also this one shall be presented to the Executive Committee meeting in 2022.

In the meantime, the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity has invited the WCRC to a new round of dialogue.

#### *Commencement of New Dialogues*

The WCRC has committed itself to dialogue processes with the World Methodist Council and the Mennonite World Conference. Due to COVID-19 restrictions and the limited capacity on the side of the WCRC these dialogues did not yet commence.

#### **Conclusion: Programme Work under the Condition of Limited Staff Capacity during the Interim Period**

The reduction of staff capacity during the interim will aggravate the already existing challenges to implement the objectives of the Strategic Plan. At the Programme Desk we are very glad that the members Reference Groups and the Strategic Plan

Programme Group understand themselves as guardians of the Strategic Plan and are willing to support the implementation of its goals.

I see the upcoming challenges as an opportunity to consider the working model that guides the WCRC programme work. Such an evolved working model could allow the executive secretaries to cooperate with WCRC regions, member churches and working group in the implementation of global programmes on behalf of the WCRC. The Hannover secretariat will support these programme activities logistically. In such a model it the primary function of the executive secretaries would be less focused on implementation but rather concentrate on coordination and safeguarding the coherence of the programme work with the goals and objectives of the Strategic Plan with the vision and the mission of the WCRC.

It would be good if the challenges of the interim would spark such a discussion on an evolved working model for the WCRC programme work.

Hanns Lessing  
Executive Secretary for Communion and Theology



## **Addendum: Justice and Witness Accountability Report**

### **Introduction**

The programmatic work of the WCRC has been severely affected by the travel bans put into place to contain the pandemic. Within this context each programmatic piece has been evaluated on the following four criteria:

1. Those programmes for whom face-to-face meetings are necessary to be postponed to a later date
2. Those programmes which can be dropped in strategic interests (particularly due to changing structures in the general secretariat)
3. Those programmes that can be moved online
4. Those programmes that can have a dual model of both online and face-to-face. Particularly those which can have regional meetings. Or those into which a face-to-face meeting can be postponed into the future

### **Youth**

The WCRC is unequivocally committed to the participation of all young people at all levels of its governance and programme life. As part of its strategic plan and focus for the years 2018-2024, the WCRC has clearly stated that it intends to do this at every level while paying attention to full gender diversities and gender dimensions. It is envisaged that youth engagement will become a launching pad for a deeper involvement of younger generations in the work of the WCRC and therefore the establishment of a young adult network would be an absolute priority.

In order to implement the directives of the strategic plan, the WCRC intends to hold a youth summit with the explicit purpose of energizing the entire Communion through the engagement, participation, and leadership of young people. Conceptually the idea of the youth summit would be to bring together those progressive young people from across the Communion so that they would be able to offer leadership and vitality to both young people across the entire Communion and the ecumenical movement itself. In this sense the youth summit is intended to be a space in which young people can have their voices shared among themselves as well as a platform from which their voices can be heard by the larger church and society.

It was planned that the youth summit be held in 2021 but COVID has forced us to move it to 2022.

The youth summit which will be held in 2022 will have the following objectives:

- To provide a platform for young people to voice their concerns and take ownership and leadership of the ecumenical movement
- To reestablish a WCRC youth network
- To make accessible the history of the radical contributions of young people and students of the ecumenical movement

In 2020/21 planning work towards this youth summit has begun. This has involved:

- Bringing together a working group
- The selection of a coordinator
- Networking with organizations that have a similar youth focus e.g., WSCF
- Conceptualizing how the youth summit can engage with the GIT in 2021

### **George Lombard Prize and Youth Network Building**

In the present situation it was best felt that the work should be directed towards building a youth network. To meet this goal it decided that the George Lombard Prize would be directed towards building energy around the youth summit and the youth network.

The youth working group met and decided that the George Lombard Prize essay competition would be conducted in 2021 and going into 2022. The theme of this essay competition is “Ecumenism from the Margins: Confessing a God of Life in a World Fallen Among Thieves.” The advertisement calling for essays and outlining the process will be published soon.

### **Sexuality**

It was reported to the SPPG that a workshop on sexuality, in continuation of the Chennai process would be conducted in 2021. While the Chennai processes concentrated on the communion aspects of the question of sexuality, this next consultation was to concentrate on the justice aspects and particularly how the Communion may live out 2017 General Council Action 56, which stated that the General Council:

1. condemns all acts of violence against LGBTQ persons, regardless of our theological views, around the globe;
2. confesses its complicity in supporting violence through its silence; and
3. continues to commit itself to working for justice, freedom, and a safe world for all persons to flourish.

This consultation would be necessarily a face-to-face consultation which is intended to be held in September to November of this year.

There have already been initial discussions with ACT Alliance in order to see how we can work with them on this question since there are several resonances with the sexuality question and the mandate of the ACT Alliance General Assembly. However, it has to be noted that the ACT Alliance has different organizational principles and is subject to different funding mechanisms that effect the nature of the work. So, while there will be piece of joint work there would also need to be a piece of separate work.

### **People Living with Disabilities**

The work of the WCRC with people living with disabilities has been slotted to begin in 2021. The planned start of work was to have an issue of the *Reformed World* on this issue to be published in the first quarter of 2021. In discussions with the editorial board of 2021 this issue has already been discussed and has been agreed upon.

However, the “COVID and Beyond” process (which has occupied a large part of work in 2020/21) has already allowed for a process of network building in the area of working with people with disabilities. This sharing circle was held on the 14<sup>th</sup> of April 2021.

### **Indigenous People**

At the end of 2019 a detailed proposal for work with Indigenous people was proposed. Funding for this process was also secured. However, given the present circumstances alternative mechanisms have to be found. One of the tasks of this reference group would be to discuss the future of the Indigenous people’s group.

On the other hand, determined efforts have ensured that Indigenous people have found their space in all levels of the work of the WCRC. This has been made particularly evident through the “COVID and Beyond” process as well as the NIFEA processes. A webinar on Indigenous people’s economic visions was conducted through the NIFEA process on 22 April 2021.

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

Of all the work affected by the pandemic it was probably the NIFEA work that has been affected the most and particularly the GEM School. While it was initially planned that the GEM School 2020 would be conducted in the dual mode of the cohort working online in 2020 and meeting in person in 2021. However, it is now clear that there will be no face-to-face meeting in 2021. This however did not mean that the work stopped, just that it moved online.

The good news on the NIFEA front is that the Methodists have now officially joined the NIFEA process.

### *NIFEA Panel*

The 2021 year theme of NIFEA is “Living sufficiently and sustainably” and the plan is to continue with GEM School, conduct the NIFEA panel online, particularly in the context of changing leadership of four of five of the member organizations, to work towards a plan for the next three years.

### *GEM School*

The GEM School 2020 began by doing series of webinars on the Economy of Life. These included those selected as GEM School candidates, members of the NIFEA panel, and other experts in the areas of economics and theology.

Some of the webinars were only intended for the GEM School participants while others were open to the public.

Decisions regarding the GEM school 2020:

- 2020 cohort will be the 2022 cohort.
- 2022 In person, larger budget, include Methodist input.
- Open slots if 2020 participants can no longer participate
- Expand local participation

It was also agreed that we would work on a GEM School manual. Funding for doing the same has already been secured. Work has begun on the manual.

### *ZacTax Campaign*

Work on the ZacTax manual has also reached completion and an official launch along with a webinar will be conducted in June.

At the NIFEA general secretaries meeting it was stressed that there is a need to increase the advocacy portion of the NIFEA work in order to make concrete changes in the economic and financial architecture.

The intention is to use avenues for advocacy via engagement at Civil Society Policy Forum of the annual meetings of IMF/WB as well as participation in G20/WSF/UN/IMF/WB Processes.

### *NIFEA Public Webinars*

In 2021 the following webinars are planned:

- Indigenous People and an Economy of Life
- ZacTax manual launch
- Dominion, Domination, Damnation: Critiquing Colonialism, Capitalism and Christianity’s Role in Creating Climate Chaos

Regional Process

Small groups working on key questions and focused on these areas:  
 Pacific and Asia, Europe and Africa, the Americas and Caribbean  
 -- 3 regional online meetings that include interfaith dimensions

*NIFEA Programme Plan*

	<b>Thematic Focus</b>	<b>Connect with</b>
Public NIFEA Webinar 1	Indigenous People’s focus	<b>14 April 2PM</b> <b>Link to the UN</b>
Public LSS Webinar	‘Living sufficiently and sustainably’	<b>1 June 2PM CET</b> (Launch 2021) Theme
Small Group Regional Consultation 1  Small Group Regional Consultation 2  Small Group Regional Consultation 3	‘Living sufficiently and sustainably’	<i>June - August</i>  Asia Pacific  Europe.Africa  America Caribbean
Public NIFEA Webinar 2	ZacTax	June/July? (launch ZacTax manual)
LSS Global Meeting/NIFEA Panel Meeting	‘Living sufficiently and sustainably’	<b><i>Week 4 of September</i></b>
NIFEA Staff	‘Living sufficiently and sustainably’	Letter to G20 - <b>Week 1 of October.</b>

		<p><i>October IMF/WB annual meetings</i></p> <p><i>November with G20 leaders summit ad COP</i></p> <p>Strategic/NIFEA - Dec/Jan2022?</p> <p><b><i>Week 2 - December GEM School Manual</i></b></p>
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**“COVID and Beyond” Discernment Process**

The difficulties presented by the inability to travel has necessitated not only new ways of doing things but the pandemic has also meant that we have to do new things. One of the major responses to the pandemic by the WCRC has been the “What has God required of us? Discerning, Confessing and Witnessing in a Time of COVID-19 and Beyond” process which has enabled the WCRC to engage in a Communion-wide process that has brought together our regions, our programmes, and our processes. The “COVID and Beyond” process has been designed to coincide with the liturgical calendar and this has been used as a theological framing for the process. Along with each discernment circle we have a working paper that highlights the issues and offers a theological framing for them.

The process is designed to move towards the 2024 General Council with the intention of moving the Communion to being a confessing church. At the moment the process involves the conducting of a global webinar every two weeks with the planning meetings taking place in between.

**Gender Justice**

The original plan was to conduct a series of trainings on gender, leadership, and power in different regions. In 2021 we were supposed to do two regions, Africa and the Middle East. These meetings have been postponed to a future date.

The WCRC is working on a Gender Justice Audit for engaging our member churches on the question of gender justice and particularly to see where our membership is on the question of women’s ordination. An initial draft of the audit has been created, and it will now be taken to a core group.

A series of three webinars on masculinity were conducted along with the Lutheran World Federation. Further plans are being worked out on how to move forward with this piece of work

### **Freedom of Religion**

A consultation in February 2020 was held on the Freedom of Religion. The plan for 2021 is to conduct a second seminar as well as make a publication.

### **Peace and Reconciliation Work**

The peace and reconciliation work of the WCRC now has its own “Programme Coordination Group.” A programme coordination group lies between a working group and a reference group and in this particular case reports directly to the Strategic Planning Programme Group (SPPG).

Work in this area has included:

1. Work on the Palestine question continues. We are also engaging with the PC(USA) led coordination group as well as supporting.
2. Work on the Palestinian document in response to 2017 General Council Action 55 is progressing well and it should be out in a few months.
3. Work on the Korean Peninsula also continues, and Chris Ferguson has been taking it forward.
4. We continue to support the peace initiative in Colombia and Cameroon. For the latter Hanns Lessing has been moving this forward.

### **Emerging Areas of Crisis**

The pandemic not only unveiled the deep-seated inequalities that plague our planet, but it has also provided opportunity for the strengthening of both capitalism and authoritarianism. This has led to several areas around the world that have needed attention. The WCRC has been able to engage with other ecumenical organizations such as the WCC and LWF on several issues including Bolivia, Zimbabwe, Ethiopia, West Papua, East Timor, Indonesia, and Myanmar.

Work is presently being done on bringing out an advocacy training manual for churches with the LWF.

Philip Vinod Peacock  
Executive Secretary for Justice and Witness

**Addendum:  
Communications and Operations Accountability Report**

**Operational Adjustments**

It will come as no surprise that the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent restrictions imposed by governments around the world had a significant impact on the operations of the WCRC this last year-plus. The German government imposed a series of “lockdowns” that, while less restrictive than in many countries, compelled staff to work from home beginning in March 2020.

Moving from a close-knit office setting to remote work entailed significant shifts in not only routine processes but also in how staff communicated with each other to even make changes to systems, let alone continue with all the regular work. This was further complicated in that as staff moved to remote working, Katrina Mertz was on maternity leave, then decided not to return to her position as assistant to the general secretary, and her maternity-leave substitute did not continue beyond Katrina’s anticipated return, thus necessitating the hiring of a third person for that position within less than a year. A significant amount of institutional memory was lost in these several transitions, and other staff had to take on numerous responsibilities carried by Katrina.

With the upcoming departure of Werner Joecker, as well as that of temporary administrative assistant Sanjog Patro (both in June), administrative staff responsibilities are being reworked to ensure that the continuing three support positions will be able to cover all the needs demanded of them. It is anticipated that the staffing situation will be settled prior to the meeting of the Executive Committee.

Over the first several months of remote work, new systems and routines were put into place to ensure the effective working of the administrative and operational side of the WCRC. Despite a brief pause in public activities (as adjustments were also made to the work of the general secretariat and programmatic offices), operational demands never slowed. To wit: Various video communication technologies were tested before settling on Zoom as the primary application to use. Procedures to continue the flow of physical mail to the proper desks were implemented. Policies were put in place to ensure that any extra financial burdens of remote working were not borne by staff.

The pandemic did assist in one unexpected project, at least in providing physical space to work. Resource materials and documents dating back to the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and Reformed Ecumenical Council have been in storage in a cellar in the building next to the WCRC offices. In February 2021, staff were informed that the cellar would be renovated and the storage space there lost. It was decided to take this as an opportunity to move the materials into the lower, presently empty



floor of the WCRC offices and conduct a thorough inventory and evaluation of them. Many of these materials had been made available to attendees of the 2017 General Council, and re-inventorying them had not been possible until now. It is anticipated that this will be completed prior to the departure of Sanjog, and that useful materials will be made available through the WCRC website to member churches.

### **Reformed Partnership Fund Response**

Through the Reformed Partnership Fund (RPF) the WCRC provides small grants and other resources to churches that carry out development projects important to the life of a church and its surrounding community, particularly in the Global South. These projects fall within the guidelines as established by *Otto per Mille* (OPM), the primary funding partner, as well as the Church of Westphalia, which also contributes funds. These grants are intended to strengthen the ties of member churches to the WCRC, as well as meet strategic objectives of both the member church and the Communion as a whole.

In addition, the Reformed Partnership Fund grants a smaller amount of money to member churches suddenly responding to a disaster, whether natural or manmade.

As the full extent of the COVID-19 pandemic unfolded, the WCRC shifted its traditional focus of the Partnership Fund to emphasize providing member churches financial support to deal with the unprecedented crisis. It was noted that member churches were responding both to the realities of the pandemic, as well as all the social and economic fallout from it.

Not only did the RPF focus on assisting churches with COVID-related projects, it also increased the amount of money dedicated both to regular and emergency projects. This money was shifted from programmatic monies, especially as the programs could not be carried out as planned with pandemic lockdowns and travel restrictions.

To promote regional empowerment, the criteria for applications also stressed the importance of partnering with other member churches in the same country or geographic area. A number of churches did so, most notably in Africa.

Finally, the RPF shifted its application window from the first to the third quarter of 2020. This allowed for the change in focus and goals to be fully incorporated into new criteria and applications. During this time, the WCRC provided significant support through the emergency fund (which granted up to 7500 euros per application).

Through 2020, the Partnership Fund provided assistance to over 30 member churches in 2020, with more than 140,000 euros granted for emergency projects and more than 65,000 euros for regular projects.

These higher amounts will continue in 2021, although they will switch back to the norm, with around 120,000 euros for regular projects and 60,000 euros dedicated to emergency responses.

It should be noted that Werner Joecker has steadfastly tended to the processing of applications, collection of reports from grantees, and WCRC reporting needs to OPM.

### **Database Project**

After its move to Hannover, Germany, from Geneva, Switzerland, the WCRC underwent a near-complete institutional rebuilding, with systems needing to be reconstructed along German, rather than Swiss, configurations and regulations. An ongoing challenge in this process has been to create a database system that will effectively serve the myriad needs of the WCRC.

In Geneva, the WCRC shared a database system with the World Council of Churches (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.

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 several years.

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 remained much data maintenance work to do. In addition, Salesforce (a multinational corporation) 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.

In 2019, the *Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland* (EKD)—along with the Protestant Church of Switzerland, the cantonal churches of Bern and Zürich, and the German churches of Westphalia, Rhineland, Lippe, and Leer—provided financial support to shift the WCRC database from the Salesforce platform to CiviCRM, an open-source database system dedicated to non-profit organizations. CiviCRM offers the necessary components to meet the needs of the WCRC. It is a cloud-based database that can handle email newsletters, event management, membership invoicing, online donations/payments and subscription management, and it can also integrate with the WCRC's website.

In addition, the WCRC has explored cooperative data sharing and invited the following organizations to join in the database project, allowing the pooling resources while meeting each organization's specific needs: the Communion of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE) in Vienna, the Conference of European Churches (CEC) in Brussels, and the Reformed Alliance in Germany (Hannover). By making this a shared project with other ecumenical bodies, training and installation could be carried out together and the administrative effort for data maintenance could be significantly reduced.

In January 2020, the WCRC gathered the ecumenical organizations together to discuss the possibilities. Both CPCE and CEC expressed strong interest in joining the project. However, as work continued toward implementation, only CPCE has followed along. It is still hoped that CEC and other organizations will yet join.

Working with Systopia, a German-based consulting firm with expertise in CiviCRM, the WCRC has successfully created a new database structure with event management and email systems on CiviCRM. The WCRC data housed on Salesforce was successfully transferred to the system in January 2021, and since then data clean-up and training have commenced, the latter in partnership with CPCE. It is anticipated that the event management system will be fully functional by this summer, with the email system following shortly thereafter. And after an initial, large "spring cleaning," data maintenance will continue as a routine operation. Other features will be added as needed, including an expansion of the event management capabilities for the next General Council.

It should be noted that Werner Joecker has taken a lead role in the success of this significant move for the database.

## **Communications**

Communications work continued almost as usual with one exception: due to international disruptions in physical mailing, the second issue of *Reformed Communiqué* in 2020 was distributed only electronically. *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 stories about member churches. It is sent to all member churches, partners, and interested individuals.

The monthly WCRC eNewsletter continues to feature articles posted to the WCRC website from the previous month and to attract new subscribers. It is sent not only to subscribers but to all member churches (usually multiple people within each church).

Social media, specifically Facebook (in English, French, and German) and Twitter, remained useful tools throughout 2020, continuing steady growth in followers and interactions.

Of most importance, the English and French Facebook pages, along with AIPRAL's Facebook page (in Spanish) have been key spaces for public participation in the WCRC's "COVID & Beyond" discernment process. Live streams of each session have happened on each (as well as the WCRC's YouTube Channel), allowing anyone to not only follow the process but to voice their opinions (either in the comments or by sending an email to [requie@wrc.eu](mailto:requie@wrc.eu)).

Communication support for the "COVID & Beyond" process has been significant. Besides the live streams (including interacting during the stream and monitoring comments thereafter), webpages in all eight website languages have been developed and maintained; invitations and preview articles for each session have been written, posted, and sent; summary articles have been written and posted; a "highlights" booklet for each circle is being developed, as is a special center section in *Reformed Communiqué*.

The executive secretary for communications and operations also provided assistance in contracting for translation and technical support for the process. Special thanks should be given to Gerardo Oberman for his work as translation coordinator and to Joanna Hipp for her work in developing the highlights booklet(s).

In the initial phase of the pandemic, there were hopes to use the anticipated "extra time" of program executives to produce a series of publications. It was also decided that these publications should be made available as free PDFs on the WCRC website and for sale as print-on-demand through virtual stores (Amazon, etc.).

After due research, it was decided that IngramSpark would be the company through which the WCRC produces its print-on-demand books, an account was established, and sufficient ISBN numbers were purchased. However, with the fabled "extra time" never materializing, only one publication has been completed: *Called to God's Mission: Report of the Third Round of the International Dialogue Between Representatives of the World Communion of Reformed Churches and Representatives of the Pentecostal World Fellowship 2014-2020*. The WCRC is well prepared for future publications.

*Reformed World*, the WCRC's theological journal, is a collaborative project between all three executive secretaries, with oversight from the general secretary. The Editorial Board of the journal was re-constituted in 2020 and work began on the development of the next issues. It is anticipated that *Reformed World* will appear twice yearly beginning in 2021. Thanks should be given to the Protestant Church of

Switzerland which provided a special donation for the publication of an edition featuring several ecumenical dialogue reports.

Building on the language of the strategic plan, a new introductory brochure was developed to introduce the WCRC and its work and witness. The text contained within brochure will be utilized in other areas, including on the website, and has thus been translated into all eight languages.

Prior to the pandemic, there had been plans to redevelop the whole of the WCRC website by now. These hopes remain, but are now contingent, at least in the coming year, on the approval of a pending grant application with the *Fondation pour l'aide au protestantisme réformé* (FAP). Unlike in the previous two redevelopments (a full one in 2013/14 and a smaller reconfiguration in 2015, which also expanded the number of languages), staff capacities are not sufficient to carry out this work in house. If the grant is not approved, alternate plans will be made to proceed with at least a small update, anticipating a larger redevelopment in preparation for the next General Council.

The executive secretary for communications and operations has also overseen the annual fundraising appeal for North America, acted as official secretary for the Executive Staff Council, and provided some small but impactful communication support for CANAAC in the posting and distribution of weekly reflections (see their report for additional details).

Phil Tanis

Executive Secretary for Communications and Operations

## **Report on the Life and Work of the Africa Communion of Reformed Churches (ACRC)**

*“Promoting Justice, Peace, Mission, Theology, Ecumenism, and Communion in the African Continent”*

### **INTRODUCTION**

This report gives an overview of the life and work of the ACRC, since the last meeting of the WCRC Executive Committee. The report discusses the structure of the ACRC, the strategic plan and the operationalization thereof, the use and effectiveness of technology in the running of the life and work of the ACRC, the impact of COVID-19 and the financial assistance that has been received from the WCRC.

### **THE STRUCTURE OF THE ACRC**

#### **Executive Committee**

The Executive Committee consists of the four office bearers, the coordinators of the sub-regions and the five (5) members of the WCRC Executive Committee who come from Africa.

**Table 1: ACRC Executive Committee – Office Bearers**

<b>Position</b>	<b>Name</b>
President	R.t Rev. Dr Uma Onwunta (Nigeria)
Vice President	Rev. Pauline Mwaura (Kenya)
Secretary	Rev. Dr. Lungile Mpetsheni (South Africa)
Treasurer	Mr. M. Koku Mawulikplimi AMEGA (Togo)

#### **The Subregional Coordinators**

For control purpose and for ease of reach to the member churches, the ACRC is structured in four (4) regions as shown in the table below.

**Table 2: ACRC Sub-regions and Coordinators**

<b>Sub-region</b>	<b>Coordinator</b>
Central Africa	Rev. Isaac Kalonji (Democratic Republic of Congo)
Eastern Africa	Rev. Martin Wanjala (Kenya)
Southern Africa	Rev. Dr Gustav Claassen (South Africa)
West Africa	Mrs. Paulina Afful-Arthur (Ghana)

## OPERATIONAL FRAMEWORK – STRATEGIC PLAN

The ACRC Assembly that was held in Rwanda in June 2018 adopted a strategic plan to serve as an operational framework for the Communion in the region. The table below portrays the strategic areas and the champions thereof.

**Table 3: ACRC Strategic Areas and Champions**

<b>KEY FOCUS AREAS (In line with WCRC)</b>	<b>RESOURCES/ People Responsible</b>
Gender Justice	Prof. Christine Landman Mrs. Veronica Muchiri
Peace Making	Rev. Dr. Benibo Fubara-Manuel
Economic and Ecological Justice	Prof. Jerry Pillay Rev. Dr. Gustav Claassen
Overcoming Racism and Affirming the Rights of Indigenous People	Rev. D.r Buhle Mpofu
Refugees and Internally Displaced People	Mrs. Veronica Muchiri Rev. Omwero SC Knony-Halema
Youth Development	Adv. Tibonge Ng'ambi
Theology	Rev. Dr. Setri Nyomi

The operationalization of the plan depends much on the champions organizing activities. Before COVID-19, the ACRC used to hold at least two seminars/workshops on either one or two of the areas. The last of the contact sessions was a seminar on Theology that was organized and facilitated by Dr. Nyomi and it was held in Kenya in November 2019. With the outbreak and spread of COVID-19, it has been impossible to hold the meetings.

### USE AND IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGY FOR HOLDING MEETINGS

When one door closes, another opens. With the difficulties caused by the spread of COVID-19, we have seen exponential growth in the use of technology to hold meetings and webinars. The ACRC Executive Committee capitalized on that and used the ZOOM platform optimally. The benefits include, and not limited to the following:

1. We hold meetings of the Executive Committee regularly.
2. We managed to hold a meeting for the ACRC member churches in the course of 2020.
3. The ACRC has been able to participate in the activities that are organized by the WCRC.

Through all this we have achieved the following, among others:

1. Several aspects have been addressed.
2. Cohesion among the members of the Committee.
3. Increased awareness of the WCRC and ACRC by the member churches.
4. ACRC presented to the WCRC “COVID and Beyond” programme on gender issues, on matters pertaining to refugees, internally displaced, people, stateless people, racism, xenophobia, and migrants.
5. Some of the ACRC member churches have paid their dues to the WCRC. We continue to encourage all the members to meet their obligations.

### **ACRC AND COVID-19**

In the meetings of the Executive Committee, the coordinators do report on the impact of COVID-19 in Africa. South Africa is the hardest hit country in the region. The impact includes:

1. The closing of churches for worship.
2. The disruption of education for children and the youth.
3. High rate of unemployment.
4. Loss of income, leading to escalation of poverty.
5. Gender-based violence.
6. The worsening conditions of refugees, internally displaced, people, stateless people.
7. Intensification of gender and economic inequalities.
8. High levels of corruption.

The ACRC encourages its member churches to join all the efforts in their local situations to curb the negative effects of COVID-19.

### **FINANCIAL SUPPORT FROM THE WCRC**

The ACRC appreciates the financial support that the WCRC has given to Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus in Ethiopia and the churches in Eastern Africa. That support has gone a long to ameliorate the plight of the destitute in that part of the region. The ACRC continues to encourage member churches to apply for finance assistance that is available at the WCRC level.

### **CONCLUSION**

The ACRC has witnessed cohesion, growth, strength, and sustainability thus far. The spread of the COVID-19 has crippled the plans of the ACRC to visit parts of the region. The ACRC has however taken advantage of the rise in the use of technology to pursue its programmes with much success. We have enjoyed the support of the staff in the office in Hanover and especially the General Secretary, the two programme officers and Ms. Anna Krüger.



## **Report of Latin America Alliance of Presbyterian and Reformed Churches (AIPRAL)**

### **Introduction**

Subsequent to the AIPRAL assembly in 2016 and then adjusted in 2017, the following lines of work were developed:

- The empowerment of women and especially young women.
- The creation of youth leadership for peace.
- Reflection of the contributions of Reformed theology (Accra and Sao Paulo) and ecumenical theology on the SDGs in search of strengthening diakonia and its impact in the region.
- Accompaniment to the primary and secondary educational instances of the churches in the region.
- Accompanying the churches in their various training needs such as institutional development and emergencies.
- Communication and theological formation with member churches
- Participation in the regional ecumenical movement and support for Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking churches.

The pandemic situation necessitated a serious review process. This process resulted in a work proposal for the year 2020-2021. The central lines of work have been maintained because what we have seen is that the pandemic has revealed and made more visible the situations that we sought to address before the pandemic.

Certainly, the pandemic has deepened existing crises and brought in some new ones. Moreover, the pandemic itself has become an axis that runs through the whole reality.

We see with concern that more than a year after the beginning of the pandemic we still have a great level of uncertainty about how it will evolve and what situations we will have to face. On the other hand, it is clear that for regional organizations such as ours there are aspects that are here to stay. For example, the decisive incorporation of virtual work in the different work processes.

### **Empowerment of women, especially young women**

Five planning and organizational meetings were held for the production of the Day of Prayer for Latin American Women (DLMO). This cooperative production process is in itself a tool for empowerment and training. The DLMO was carried out through the Zoom platform, and a video and written material were made available so that churches had the possibility to participate directly in the event or do so asynchronously.

Around the International Women's Day and the Day of the Fight against Gender Violence, materials were produced to raise awareness, prevention and comprehensive guidance in the face of situations of violence, something that has been intensified during the period of "physical isolation."

### **The creation of a youth leadership for peace**

The planned program of work around the promotion of youth leadership for peace was put on hold as its program depended on face-to-face meetings. However, this theme was maintained in biweekly meetings with the youth leadership of member churches. The meetings initially demanded a strong sense of containment, accompaniment, and sharing of personal and community responses to the pandemic. Surprisingly, this sector, which was the most comfortable with networking, was one of the most affected by social isolation.

### **Reflection on the contributions of Reformed theology**

A meeting was planned to validate the process of reflection on the contributions of Reformed and ecumenical theology on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This meeting was scheduled for the last week of March but was suspended due to the pandemic. The material continued to be compiled and systematized, but since it was intended as printed material and face-to-face work, it has not been possible to conclude it. The expected result is an operational plan for the member churches in search of encouraging and accompanying the member churches in the process of knowledge and management of the SDGs from the perspective of Reformed theology and their implementation.

### **Accompaniment to theological formation spaces**

Contrary to other processes, this area had a significant leap forward. In relation to the work with theological formation institutions, the spaces for dialogue continued and this has led to the development of the *Miradas* project, which will begin on Saturday, March 27.

It is a cycle of online meetings to rethink the diakonia and mission of the Church from different perspectives within the evangelical and ecumenical spaces of our continent, with the aim of reflecting on "*How to accompany the journey of our peoples in hope?*" We ask ourselves this question in the face of five vital challenges for our region: Pauperization and concentration of wealth; climate change; forced migration; gender violence; and catastrophes.

We have a twofold objective: 1) to foster conversations, reflections, and practices related to these issues and to the vitality of the post-pandemic Church and its prophetic unfolding in society; 2) to link Reformed theologians in Latin America and

the Caribbean and to generate collaboration and exchange with seminary students and pastoral roles and leadership of Presbyterian and Reformed churches.

On the other hand, initiatives of theological reflection have been supported. Particularly relevant is the space for ecumenical dialogue on the Amazon that has been created in conjunction with the Pan-Amazonian Ecclesial Network (REPAM), the Network of Protestant and Evangelical Universities (Qonakuy).

Together with the Reformed University Corporation (CUR, Barranquilla), McCormick Presbyterian Seminary, and Qonakuy, we organized an international course: Mission of the Church: North-South Dialogue from a Hispanic-Latin perspective.

We also accompanied the “Reformed Resistance” movement, which seeks to create a “confessing church” movement within the churches of the Reformed tradition in Brazil in the face of the political use of theology by fundamentalist movements. An agreement was made with them for the joint publication of three books in e-book format and printed on demand.

### **Accompanying churches in their various training needs**

In the context of the pandemic, we have conducted a series of interviews and meetings to accompany the member churches in the face of the challenges of the pandemic and also to coordinate common actions aimed at supporting the needs of the population with material and spiritual aid. We emphasize that thanks to these meetings it was possible to carry out common actions on the part of the member churches, to learn from other experiences, and also to anticipate actions. They shared and discussed protocols of care in the face of the pandemic, responses to situations of violence, strategy management, exchange of resources, etc.

### **Communication and theological education with the member churches**

The social isolation and the move of most of the churches’ activities to a virtual form made it possible for AIPRAL to actively participate in the life of the churches. This occurred not only at the institutional level, but we were able to “be present” at various levels: local, presbyterial, national, and regional. We worked on themes of prophetic diakonia, critical biblical interpretation, gender, peace, reformed theology and ecclesiology, etc.

### **Participation in the regional ecumenical movement**

Even in the midst of the pandemic, the political instability of the region demanded from us a constant dialogue with other faith-based organizations (FBO) and civil society organization (CSO) actors, always in close dialogue with our member churches or nearby churches in the country. We especially highlight the advocacy

actions in the plebiscite in Chile; political and economic crisis in Venezuela; political crisis and international interference in the case of Bolivia; political crisis and corruption in the case of Peru; authoritarianism and political persecution in Brazil; peace agreements and assassination of social leaders in Colombia; hurricanes and forced migration in Honduras and El Salvador.

We would also like to highlight the strengthening and joint work with ecumenical organizations. Among the many relationships we had this year, we highlight those we had with FESUR (ACT Alliance), Presbyterian World Mission (PC(USA)), DiPaz (Colombia), REPAM (Pan-Amazonian Ecclesial Network), Qonakuy, CUR, *ALCnoticias*, *Resistencia Reformada*, FUMEC; Religions for Peace.

### **World Communion of Reformed Churches**

Finally, we want to highlight our collaboration in the work of the World Communion of Reformed Churches. As a regional council we are actively participating in the process of discernment about the situations revealed by the pandemic, "What Does God Require of Us? Discerning, Confessing, and Witnessing in the Time of COVID-19 and Beyond." We not only have participants involved in the process itself, but we live stream each session in Spanish on the AIPRAL Facebook page. Also, the dialogue with the offices in Hannover regarding actions in our region is very active and participatory.

Dario Barolin  
Executive Secretary

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

### **Regional context in this time of COVID-19**

Overall, the region continues to deal with the direct and indirect impacts of COVID-19.

One year in and it seems that congregations in the United States are adapting to the challenges and opportunities of the pandemic. Many have moved to online worship and engaging members through social media and technology. Some are yet struggling through the moment with limited internet access and the challenges of a more technologically driven environment that was not planned for.

The escalating numbers of deceased persons, the inability to grieve in community, supporting electronic funerals and memorials are also challenging as mental issues are now raising emerging concerns given the severe isolation that is being experienced.

As the vaccine rollout continues, it is clear that access to vaccines is a justice issue in the US and overseas.

One view shared is that the church generally has been in a rut of sorts, COVID has identified fault lines in the lack of preparedness for community response, sustainability, and how to bring the Word in times of crisis.

All this, coupled with the ongoing impacts on loss of employment, on housing and food insecurity across states for many, in particular, black and brown Americans. The seemingly never-ending mass shootings and other racial tensions across the country combine to impact our member churches and their congregants in continually traumatic ways.

Canada has since December seen a growing increase of its COVID numbers across most provinces. Its borders continue to be closed to the US and closed now to more and more international points with the worsening numbers especially in Ontario, Alberta, and Nova Scotia. There is a deepening fear that they cannot get a handle on rising cases for the collapse of their health care systems as ICU beds are now almost all assigned to COVID patients. Lockdown fatigue is wearing on those in particular who live in cities like Toronto and Calgary, and disquiet is now a matter of fact. As of May 9th, 42% of Canadian adults have received at least their first dose of a vaccine. At this rate, all adults and children over 15 years who wish will have received at least their first dose by the end of August. This is in stark contrast to much of the world, and yet there is a generalized feeling of scarcity. Poor communities and neighbourhoods with a significant population of non-white residents have

consistently been underserved with testing facilities and vaccination programs. This has led to test positivity rates of more than 10x regional averages.

Churches and all faith communities along with businesses and other non-profit organizations were eligible to receive wage supplements from the federal government from March 2020. This unusual program has provided financial stability in a difficult time. Depending on the needs of the local jurisdiction, faith communities have lobbied on behalf of vulnerable communities and the ability to visit the sick and those who are mourning. A large majority of faith communities have conformed with and promoted public health recommendations including limiting public worship since March 2020.

Across the Caribbean area, the conditions with COVID are getting somewhat better and then worse. Jamaica has seen a significant reduction in the number of positive cases and a reduction in deaths; the former it is felt has come about due to more recent restrictions on movement. With the arrival of more vaccines, people are now getting their second shot. In all, this good news there is much anxiety that if the restrictions are significantly removed, a third wave of infections could emerge.

Trinidad and Tobago, on the other hand, is currently under a full lockdown as the number of positive cases and deaths multiply. Trinidad is on its 3rd lockdown with hundreds of new positives each day, numbers rising dangerously high, and deaths rising as well. Churches are all online and the big positive is that they have been forced to upskill quickly in the use of technology for a variety of scheduled activities of the church which hitherto would only be considered as face-to-face possibilities. In particular they just completed their Synodical Elections for Moderator complete with secret ballot, and all worked well. This has increased costs for the church but in the overall they see this as the way forward for church and are grateful. With the lockdown the migrant Venezuelans who are either unemployed or were doing retail types of work pre-lockdown are now in dire situations. The church has a program of food hampers for them and local citizens who are also in need. Beyond that the church has secured trained counsellors and psychologists who are available at no cost to persons who need help whether grief counselling or dealing with the vagaries which Covid has thrown up.

Guyana is also seeing an increase in positives since March with deaths reaching 339. Churches have moved online with lockdown from last year and currently follow the regime of only 35% of sanctuary capacity allowed back in worship services. During this period, as well, there has been a stark increase in gender violence against women and children. Some churches have offered up their sanctuaries as vaccine centres as a way to combat the resistance to taking the vaccine from some. This apparently has had some success.

The economic woes facing the small island states in the region which hitherto were largely tourism dependent economies continues to worsen as governments can only support their economies for so long. Many of them have opened back up to short stay tourism guests, a quick way to obtain needed foreign exchange whilst an inevitable outcome has been an increase in positive cases and, ultimately, increase in COVID-related deaths of its citizens. The church in the Caribbean is struggling with states of lockdown with urban and rural communities having a mixed bag of internet capability with an aging population and worrying food insecurity. All this, and churches have seen tithes and offerings dwindle which then creates real fear for support to ministers and commissioned workers. In spite of all this, the faithful labour on. Zoom is now known to the oldest among us as they watch Sunday service or mid-week Bible study on a cell phone. Life is no longer as it used to be. There is little indication that it will go back to what was the “old normal.” There is more and more a conversation among the ecumenical bodies in the region and their member churches around the matter of what it means to be church in these times and how the church needs to reimagine itself to meet members in community as they are in this time.

COVID has impacted every corner of the CANAAC region in every sphere of life. Across the entire region significant economic issues abound and food insecurity is now a thing to be reckoned with even in the developed nation like the US. Issues impacting children of all ages with accessing education is real everywhere in the region. Mental health issues from adults and young people from lockdown and so many deaths, the continuing fear which this virus presents provide daunting climbs for the church as it seeks to deal with seemingly never-ending life and death issues all in the same breath.

What we remain assured about is that our faith in Almighty God and our works in service to him is what will keep the church able to always be a force for restoration and healing for all. Notwithstanding all the doom and gloom across the entire region there are just many brilliant ways that doing and being church have evolved which are reassuring. Please visit our website where many examples are shared (<http://canaac.wcrc.ch>).

Here at CANAAC we have responded to the tremors impacting our membership in various ways.

#### *Personnel changes*

The Steering Committee said goodbye to its treasurer, Gail Allan (United Church of Canada), in the summer of 2020. She was replaced by Pat Elson (also United Church of Canada). Pat retired at the end of March 2021, and we are pleased to advise that Rev. Dr. Japhet Ndhlovu, an admittant to the United Church of Canada from the Reformed Church in Zambia, is now our full time representative on the Steering Committee. The United Church of Canada holds our funds for us.

Three persons have offered their time and energy to support CANAAC:

- Rev. Anne Weirich (retired minister, PC(USA)). Anne has been on board with us for some months now and manages coordination of our weekly reflections. We have reflections scheduled thru September 2021 at this time.
- Rev. Peter TeWinkle (Reformed Church in America) based in St. Croix has come on board and will primarily support our three Working Groups (see below).
- Phillip Romine (PC(USA)), preaching elder in Minnesota, will also help with our Working Groups.

### *Administration*

Thanks to our tech support from the WCRC we are now set up with a new email address and our own Google space which replaced the earlier FB Workplace space. I have a Zoom account so we are able to engage easily going forward.

### *Support to Member Churches*

- Our efforts with weekly reflections being sent out has continued non-stop since March of 2020. These reflections continue to be written by pastors and members across our region from all our churches large and small. These weekly reflections have received a very positive response from members. In particular, we celebrate The Presbyterian Church in Trinidad and Tobago under the leadership of its Moderator Rt. Rev. Joy Abdul-Mohan which has been sending our weekly reflections out to all their congregations. This is resulting in over 30,000 persons having weekly access to them. We have been asked to provide a sign-up capability on our website as our larger denominations want to create access to their member churches.
- Chair invited to attend the 2020 Synod of The Presbyterian Church in Trinidad and Tobago. Due to the pandemic this Synod was held virtually in October 2020, and a recorded greeting was sent. This greeting recognized the upcoming ordination of a young member of their church well known across much of the CANAAC region, Sanya Beharry.
- Chair attended the virtual ordination service of Rev. Sanya Beharry.
- Chair joined with six colleagues from around the WCRC virtually on World Communion Sunday in Worship at Old First (UCC church) in Philadelphia.
- Chair currently engaged with Guyana Presbyterian Church (GPC) in the dynamic question of legitimacy of leadership which they are journeying. Involved with CANAAC/WCRC is Council for World Mission (CWM) in supporting our brothers and sisters across GPC at this time. The actual team leading this intervention is WCRC Vice-President Rev. Lisa Vander Wal and Rev. Collin Cowan (general secretary of CWM).



- Chair invited to serve as moderator of a CANACOM webinar, “Lockdown and the rise in domestic violence,” on 27 November 2020. PC(USA) is supporting this CANACOM webinar series.
- Chair has been invited by CWM to participate in its Caribbean Members Mission Forum in May 2021. The contributions made will be to an “unscripted conversation” of the UCJCI Cayman Regional Mission Council context in these COVID times.
- UCJCI has asked the chair to serve on the Finance and Administrative Board of CANACOM (May 2021) as this can enhance the ecumenical work done by both entities together within the wider Caribbean region.
- CANACOM has invited CANAAC into a conversation on the worsening economic and social conditions in Cuba as our shared member church (*Iglesia Presbiteriana- Reformada en Cuba*) there struggles with the outcome of the embargo put in place by the Trump Administration. This conversation is set to begin shortly.
- CANAAC will present its regional context on 21 July 2021 as a part of the WCRC series “COVID and Beyond” which has been ongoing for some time now. Rev. Dr. Hanns Lessing met with the Steering Committee in March 2021 and outlined what is expected of us. Work is underway towards refining the thematic concepts for this presentation.

### **CANAAC’s Working Groups (WG)**

1. *Racial Justice* - Providing a voice for the church across the region to respond to the nuances of race whether among blacks and other minority groups or the range of issues affecting Aboriginal peoples in Canada.

2. *Social Justice* - This will look at church and state in Cuba and the ways these are misaligned and therefore negatively impacting God’s desire for all to live in harmony and with equal provision of basic needs. Once this is underway this WG will seek to draw in the Dominican Republic church’s context and perspective as well.

3. *A focus on Youth* across the region. This is taking a deliberately creative response to introducing youth to each other across the region and allowing the agenda to emerge from them rather than a CANAAC leadership led agenda. This anticipates a Spirit-led direction in its creativity such that over time there could well be several different expressions of “joined up youth voices” across the region.

All three Working Groups will articulate their issues and impacts on the church. They will identify key questions which they see emerging and develop ways of engaging as Church. Each WG has invited other persons from across our denominations to participate in further discovery work to allow for the broadest reach and understanding of the issue across the various denominations within our region. Basic outcomes anticipated are that the efforts made realize practical tools for churches at

the grass roots level to be nourished and strengthened during these challenging times. Possible spaces for theological interrogation of subject matter etc. could emerge as well.

We want to leave a broad scope for each WG to evolve the work they are engaged in rather than be too prescriptive. We believe too that outcomes across the WGs will likely take a multi-pronged implementation focus.

At times it feels like we are getting nowhere and then, God makes a way. In our region there is dynamic energy present in all our denominations and their churches. Larger denominations are much more visible, but the smaller denominations across the region are hard at work as well. They are all battling COVID, domestic violence, food insecurity, and a myriad of other social issues impacting our families. In all the struggles, we stand strong in our faith that our God will provide, as always. CANAAC has much to give God thanks for during these challenging times

Angela Martins  
Chair

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

NEAAC holds Area Council Meeting every two years, rotating among countries. Unfortunately, the Area Council Meeting, which was scheduled to be held in Taipei on February 10-12, 2020, was postponed due to travel restrictions due to the coronavirus pandemic, and only the Administrative Meeting by Skype was held on the 12th. Originally, New officers were scheduled to be elected here, but it did not come true, and the Moderatorship, which was supposed to be handed over to Japan, remained in Taiwan. The administrative meeting concluded that the current moderator (PCT) nominates the next moderator (KCCJ) to attend the Executive Committee Meeting as proxy.

The postponed Area Council Meeting will be held online (ZOOM) on February 9-10, 2021. A total of 27 people from 6 denominations from Taiwan, Hong Kong, South Korea and Japan participated in this meeting. After hearing the latest reports from WCRC President Rev. Najla Kassab, there were sharings from each denomination' updates and reports on youth activities, and also the report of The 1st Youth Empowerment held in Korea in October 2019.

The most significant of the reports from denominations was the update from the HKCCCC. The report expressed the challenges Hong Kong people and churches faced under the new political oppression. For a short time, NEAAC member churches shared and gathered prayers how much risk it is to live in the face of increasing crackdowns. Originally, NEAAC should consider making a statement about the suppression of human rights and the protection of the democratic system in Hong Kong, and about the freedom of expression of people's political beliefs, but considering the risks that HKCCCC is exposed to, members' churches agreed to keep a record in limited terms.

Regarding Youth Empowerment, NEAAC has a common understanding that it is an important issue in building an organic and fruitful ecumenical cooperative relationship in the long term. Currently, it is not possible to proceed due to travel restrictions by COVID-19, but as soon as the situation improves, the second holding plan is going to be proceed.

Following the rotation, Moderatorship moved from Taiwan to Japan as Rev. Baekki Heo (The Korean Christian Church in Japan) was elected as the new moderator of the 2021-2022 term and as the new secretary Rev. Shuhei Ohishi (The Christ Church in Japan), as the new treasurer, Karin Kushima.

## NEAAC 2020 Financial Report at present: Currency in NTD

2018				
Date	Notes	Income	Expense	Sum
2018.05.15	Amount received from HKCCCC	380,725		380,725
2018.05.23	Expense for WCRC ExCome flight		9,200	371,525
2018.05.23	Expense for WCRC ExCome Accommodataion		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
2019				
2019.02.01	Expense for WCRC ExCome flight		38,129	499,052
2019.04.12	Expense for WCRC ExCome Food		9,636	489,416
2019.04.15	KCCJ Membership for 2019	30,417		519,833
2019.04.15	CCJ Membership for 2019	30,417		550,250
2019.04.15	PROK Membership for 2018	30,417		580,667
2019.04.17	WCRC-NEAAC 2019 Administrative Meeting-Accommodation		34,200	546,467
2019.05.06	WCRC-NEAAC 2019Administrative Meeting-Transportation		2,500	543,967
2020				
2020.02.10	PCT Membership for 2019-2020	60,000		603,967

Baekki Heo  
Moderator

## Report of WCRC Europe

Since our last WCRC-Europe meeting in Edinburgh 2019 the Steering Committee followed the council decision to strengthen our relationship to churches of Middle East and Eastern Europe. We visited people of the Reformed Church in Oradea (2019) and in Cairo (2020). During the pandemic it was and until now it is not possible to meet physically but we've used the opportunity to meet by Zoom and we did this nearly once a month.

The time period for this report is from 2019 until today.

### Joint Conference

#### ***“Confessing Christ in Europe today. Newspaper and Bible”***

WCRC Europe and the Reformed Alliance in cooperation with the Reformed Church in Hungary organized an international consultation “Newspaper and Bible – Confessing Christ in Europe Today” in October 2019 in Budapest. Twenty-five participants from all over Europe discussed the phrase of Karl Barth, that Christians have to read Bible and newspaper at the same time, to be a real citizen in the world. Therefore, Christians have to form an opinion about the things of the world. The study of Karl Barth and his theological thinking encourages Christians to take up their responsibility for European societies and to make their voices heard. The Gospel is not limited for Church rooms but the contribution of Christians to the societies they are living in. Participants heard theological keynotes from Hungary and the United Kingdom, accompanied by case studies, which highlighted the current political situation in different European countries. With this conference, we followed up also the decision of the Council to work on the issues of nationalism, xenophobia, and how we can respond to them from a Christian perspective. It was a pleasure to enjoy the hospitality of the Reformed Church in Hungary.

### Solidarity visits

#### *Oradea, Romania*

In October 2019 we met in Oradea. The warm welcome of the Reformed Church in Romania and the conversation with Bishop Czüry and others opened us insights in the Church's life and challenges. Once again it was obvious that our task is to hear and to understand, before we think we know.

We've heard about the problems of a Church living as minority in a post-communist environment, losing young people because of work migration, challenged by corruption and poverty, and at the same time struggling with some European expectations to do more, for example for refugees. The well-known question of “lost properties” means properties which have been lost after World War II by expropriation was also an issue. One result of our solidarity visit is the decision to

organize a joint conference about the theme “Lost territories” in 2022, in cooperation with the Evangelical Church of Rhineland. We want to learn more about what it means to lose your homeland or nationality and to live as minority. The conference will take place in Oradea, and we want to open historical and political approaches and also to ask what it means to be communion in a divided situation.

#### *Cairo, Egypt*

Following the Council decision to strengthen our relationship to the Middle East Churches, we visited the Reformed friends, the Synod of the Nile (SON) in Egypt. We have experienced a church on the move here. Even living as minority in a Muslim society the Church has support from the government and is accepted as the one who offers qualified education and diaconia. This was not always the case. In earlier times the Muslim Brotherhood persecuted them, but nowadays we were surprised about the high level of acceptance. For example, the government gives pieces of good land to the church for one or two years. In this time the Church can built something or make the land usable and can keep it afterwards. We have seen Christian churches being rebuilt and congregations growing! SON has an ambitious program to facilitate dialogue between Christians and Muslims. In big cities and small villages, the church wants to contribute to building peace and trust in society by inviting Muslims and Christians to meet. We’ve also heard some stories about conversion to the Christian community and also, that this is OK for the government. We pray that this is a role model for future communion. As Europeans we realize that we have a lot to learn from the experiences of churches living as minorities in Muslim countries.

The visit in Cairo was an important contribution to our striving to show our appreciation to the churches of the Middle East.

By the way it is also a result of these trustful meetings, that we’ve heard from our friends in Damascus, Syria, about the consequences of the explosion in July. We shared the information about with our member churches. Some of them collected money to help to rebuild the homes of people there.

#### *Lesbos, Greece*

With a small group we visited the refugee Camp of Moria in 2020. We talked with people who work as volunteers in the camp and saw how life goes on under very bad conditions.

It was very impressive to see how many very young people are working there as volunteers, giving their holidays to support families or play with the children. It was also good to see how Greek people in the neighbourhood are affected and how they mostly keep their calm. But it is also true – the right wings are looking for the possibility to get more influence and the chance to get it is good.

## **Solidarity Fund**

During the time of corona restrictions, we had strong contact to our member Churches, hearing their challenges and what they are facing. Because of the fact, that many of them —especially of the smaller member Churches — are living in financial hardships we offered a solidarity fund about 30.000 euro. First, we thought this would help to support some projects, but meanwhile we are open to support staff costs as well, because we see, that in some Churches, which needs collected money to pay their pastors the deficits are increasing because of the loss of collections. It was meant as a sign of solidarity to show: as reformed family we see the need. Every Church was allowed to apply for up to 3000 euro – not so much, but what we've heard from our member churches was a great appreciation for the sensibility, and some of them are now ready to look for a new relationship to the WCRC-Europe; for example, the Church in Serbia asked us to visit them and to strengthen our community.

## **Advocacy statement on situation of migrants and refugees in Europe**

On September 2020 the European Commission launched the New Pact on Migration and Asylum, a set of proposals with the aim to strike a new balance between responsibility and solidarity among member states, faster procedures, and stronger partnerships with third countries.

But we've seen: The events in Moria camp on the island of Lesbos in Greece highlighted longstanding shortcomings of European Union (EU) migration and asylum policy, inconsistent with the EU's own core values and with fundamental ethical or faith principles. Churches and international church-based organizations reaffirmed their commitment to a compassionate response to people on the move.

A network of churches and organizations throughout Europe and globally, as well as church-based agencies particularly concerned with migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers, found together to answer this New Pact on Migration. We called for adequate support both for people on the move and for their host communities. As European region we undersigned a resolution which expressed our concerns and underlined, that as Christian organizations we are deeply committed to the inviolable dignity of the human person created in the image of God, as well as to the concepts of the common good, of global solidarity and of the promotion of a society that welcomes strangers, cares for those fleeing danger, and protects the vulnerable.

The network shows the variety but also the strength of the Christian voice in Europe.

## Belarus

Shortly before Christmas, we received worrying news from the small Reformed Church in Minsk. Just like many Catholics and members of the Orthodox Church, members of the Reformed community also took part in the protests against the election fraud, against the arbitrariness and violence of the Lukashenko dictatorship. Several members of the community were arrested and fined. Now, a spokesman for the community, whom we met at our councils and who had to flee abroad, wrote to us: “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 school children to even 89 years old!) have gone, through the courts and prisons (...)”

President Martina Wasserloos shared the letter with all our member Churches and invite them to act:

- to pray for the peaceful protesters and the prisoners.
- to invite to join actions in support of the movement for democracy and those in prison
- to look for opportunities to make politicians in their country aware of the situation in Belarus.
- to write letters to those who are in prison

And we shared also a suggestion for an intercessory prayer.

The reaction of our member Churches was overwhelming. Some of them sent Synod decisions to be aware for the situation and to support the people in Belarus, some collected money, others published the letter in their newspapers. We have achieved widespread attention, and this shows us that those very small signs of solidarity can achieve a lot of attention – not only for those in troubles but also for our common understanding as communion in Christ.

### **Joint Conference: WCRC-Europe – CPCE – Swiss Church**

#### ***“Theological and ethical challenges for churches living with the Covid pandemic”***

It was a first attempt to do something together. In our joint conference more than 80 persons participated, from 24 churches, even from Canada and North America. We started off with speakers from Spain, Sweden, Hungary, and Great Britain, describing how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected their churches. Prof. Torsten Meireis from Berlin presented a brand new guide produced by the Communion of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE)’s advisory board on ethics, detailing the ethical challenges posed by the pandemic in theological, social, and healthcare terms. We discussed questions of physical and mental health, of pastoral care and



diaconal work to aid isolated people and their concerned family members. Religious freedom and civil rights were highlighted. The question as to how far the churches consider themselves to be “relevant to the system” or reclaim this role for themselves was finely elaborated: to be relevant for the system means not automatically to fulfil the mission of God’s Gospel! In October we will have the second part of our joint venture in Rome.

It is more and more important that Protestant churches in Europe no longer celebrate their differences but search for the common. In times of secularization we should use every possibility to speak with one voice and to introduce ourselves with what we can offer together. So, I’m happy about this very fruitful cooperation and hope, that this is something like a starting signal or a role model for the next years.

### **WCRC core budget deficit**

From WCRC President Najla Kasab we were informed about shortages in the budget of WCRC global and requested to give some more money from the European region. The European region feels deeply connected to the Communion, and we are ready to undertake responsibility. Therefore, we asked for a budget plan of WCRC global and raised the question what we can do to invite member churches worldwide to feel invited to take also responsibility for the financial basis of the communion.

### **WCRC Discernment process**

WCRC-Europe contributed already a presentation to the “COVID and Beyond” discernment process.

We talked about challenges that we are facing as European Churches in times of pandemic. Theological questions the pandemic confronts us were raised and the question of communion and justice in times of a lack of vaccines were lit up.

The WCRC process is very complex, committed, and well organized. Nevertheless, sometimes we have to find our European role in that system and all participants have to work hard to overcome prejudices.

I think it is nevertheless important to make clear: What can we do so that we not remain in political claims and activism and ask what this means for our faith and the way we hear and interpret the Gospel?

### **Minority Safe Pack**

A few weeks ago, I received a letter from Bishop Kato about the decision of the European Parliament, regarding to the Minority Safe Pack. In January 2021, the European Commission decided to ignore the Minority Safe Pack European Citizens’

Initiative in which more than one million EU citizens urged the EU Parliament to initiate legal acts for the protection of national and linguistic minorities.

As the European Region of the World Communion of Reformed Churches, a number of our members are directly affected by the EU Commission's decision. We see those – e.g. the Hungarian minority in Romania, Slovakia and Ukraine – who experience cultural and linguistic disadvantages in their homeland. We also see that the claims for restitution of expropriated properties, after confiscation by communist governments has still not finished.

As European region of the World Communion of Reformed Churches we feel a deep mutual connectedness to the concerns of our brothers and sisters especially if they live in a situation that is sometimes difficult for them. Inclusive of our involvement as Reformed churches in Europe, we see ourselves as a network with a deeply rooted European identity in which our task is to raise our voice to the fact that many minority communities are too small and therefore do not receive the recognition or support of the state they live in.

In solidarity within the Reformed churches, the President of WCRC-Europe expressed also on behalf of the Steering Committee our regret for the European Commission's refusal. We asked the Commission to reconsider this decision and to look for opportunities to give more support to people living as minorities in Europe.

### **Taskforce: "Nationalism and Xenophobia"**

The Council decided to appoint a Taskforce on Nationalism and Xenophobia. It was planned to meet in different European countries and to hear how churches are involved in these issues, how they are responding to nationalism and xenophobia in their own contexts, what nationalism means in different contexts, whether nationalism supports or threatens democratic structures, what the challenges of nationalism and xenophobia mean for us as different and diverse communities, and what the contribution of churches could be into the debate. We found very engaged members from some European countries and had a few digital meetings. And then the pandemic came!

Until now we have first considerations and a few very excellent written contributions and the idea to work on it as soon as we can meet physically.

**Finally:**  
**Please look on [wcrc-europe.eu](http://wcrc-europe.eu)**

Martina Wasserloos  
President

## **World Communion of Reformed Churches Gender Justice 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 invite 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.

This Gender Justice Policy was created to transform who we are, what we do, and how we act. This policy has been prayerfully worked on with the full recognition that there are places and contexts within the Communion that this will be difficult. It is hoped that this policy will be the space from which conversations on the policy will be opened up.

Although the term "gender" is widely used today, it is too often employed to mean "women" or "sex." It is important to note that while "sex" refers to a person's biological make-up, "gender" describes their social definition, that is the values and

roles society assigns them. Gender is a social construct that is influenced by other forms of social, religious, cultural, economic, and political processes.

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.

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.

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 General Secretariat of the WCRC to develop a Gender Justice Policy by 2019. It 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 a committee was established to develop the Policy.<sup>1</sup>

We begin by acknowledging our history and beliefs.

We live in a world where injustices thrive, where there is brokenness, and where persons are marginalized. 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."

<sup>1</sup> 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.

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.<sup>2</sup>

The values of the WCRC regarding equality and justice are clearly outlined in Article III – B of its constitution which states: “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 sentence from the constitution is rooted deep in the Reformed tradition and dates back to the Emden Synod of 1571.

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.<sup>3</sup>

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. It also noted 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 the 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.<sup>4</sup>

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 addressed. The Accra Confession specifically stated, “Therefore we reject any theology that claims that God is only with the rich and that poverty is the

<sup>2</sup> 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” Dirk Smit (Cloete & Smit 1985:22). The declaration of *status confessionis*, becomes necessary when the integrity of the proclamation of the gospel is at stake.

<sup>3</sup> 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.”

<sup>4</sup> Report of the Women’s Pre-Conference 6-7 August 1997, Debrecen, Hungary.

fault of the poor. We reject any form of injustice which destroys right relations—gender, race, class, disability, or caste. We reject any theology which affirms that human interests dominate nature.”<sup>5</sup>

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.<sup>6</sup>

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.<sup>7</sup>

Since Ottawa, human understandings of gender identity and human sexuality are evolving, to now include their full diversity. 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 ongoing 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.

<sup>5</sup> The Accra Confession, Article 27, World Alliance of Reformed Churches, Accra, Ghana, 2004.

<sup>6</sup> “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.

<sup>7</sup> General Council, World Communion of Reformed Churches, Leipzig, Germany, 2017.

## **Purpose and Objectives**

The purpose of the Gender Justice Policy is to advance WCRC's vision of living out our "call to communion and commitment to justice,"<sup>8</sup> enabling and inviting 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;
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 have failed to acknowledge and use the diverse gifts of each person in our communities of faith.
- We have failed to hear the voices of women and other marginalized persons in our churches.
- We have failed to honour the body and sexuality of each person. We have distorted the wholeness of each person and the relationship between their sexuality, spirituality, and morality.
- We have failed to respect a woman's right to control her body and her right to choose.
- We have failed 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 have failed to include all genders as leaders, including lay and ordained leadership, in worship, sermons, liturgy, and the work of our churches.
- We have undervalued and do not pay equitably for the contributions of women and other marginalized persons in our churches.

<sup>8</sup> World Communion of Reformed Churches, About Us.

- We have abused 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 have failed to keep all persons safe, and engage in gender-based violence, including family violence and abuse of children. We have taken no action and have remained silent when we are called to speak out and to act in order to stop the violence.
- We have failed to allocate sufficient money and resources in the budgeting processes of our churches to address the issues of gender inequality.
- We have failed 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.<sup>9</sup> 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 totality of our being and the diversity of our bodies;
- our sexuality is a gift from God and a source of life;
- we are all needed to serve the church, without discrimination;
- service includes both lay and ordained leadership, in the priesthood of all believers; every 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;

<sup>9</sup> The Accra Confession, 2004, Article 27.



- 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;
- 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 allocate 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*

The 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*

We invite member churches to share custodianship and the responsibility for implementing the Gender Justice Policy and call upon them 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.

### **The Ecumenical Movement**

- We call on the ecumenical movement to pay serious and considerable attention to the questions of gender justice;
- that all ecumenical gatherings will be safe spaces for persons of all genders; and
- that gender justice and equity be incorporated into every initiative of the ecumenical movement.

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

## **Glossary**

### *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 Reforemd family to respond as a matter of faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ. See [wrc.ch/accra](http://wrc.ch/accra)

### *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*

### *Discrimination*

Various types of social prejudices (i.e., 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.

### *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 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.

### *Gender-based violence*

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.

### *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 General Council

#### *Gender Inequality*

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

#### *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 General Council

#### *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*

#### *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.

#### *Marginalized persons*

Those who are denied, or have very limited access to, privileges enjoyed by the wider society. –USAID

#### *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.

#### *Patriarchy*

The control of women's labours, sexualities, and fertility. –Gender Justice 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." –*In God's Image: From Hierarchy to Partnership*

#### *Sex*

Biologically determined and physical differences between women and men.

*Sexual Harassment*

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.

## Report of the United Nations Ministry

1. The report of the Ministry at the United Nations to the 2021 Executive Committee meeting of the World Communion of Reformed Churches highlights aspects of the ongoing witness that a presence at the United Nations makes possible.
2. This past year, 2020, was like no other in memory due to the COVID-19 pandemic. New York City became a hot spot in early March bringing the city, and then the country, to close down. United Nations cancelled all in-person events and instituted virtual meetings and participation via online platforms. It was in this environment that the UN commemorated its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary on October 24<sup>th</sup> with little fanfare due to the restrictions.
3. The Ministry at the United Nations continued to maintain two broad areas of engagement: to equip individuals and communities to engage in global discipleship and to advocate for justice and peace in the name of Jesus Christ at the United Nations.
4. The Ministry's staffing pattern changed during the year when the Director/ Representative to the United Nations departed on October 1, 2020. The Mission Specialist for International Affairs was promoted to Representative to the United Nations. Office Assistant was promoted to Mission Specialist. This is a part time position. The Presbyterian Mission Agency of the Presbyterian Church (USA) funds 100% of expenses at the United Nations Ministry. The Staff has been working remotely since March 2020.
5. The Ministry at the United Nations continued to work on the Presbyterian Mission Agency Matthew 25 vision and the three focus areas of **dismantling structural racism, eradicating systematic poverty, and building congregational vitality**.
6. Rooted in the Reformed tradition, we affirm that God, Creator and Sovereign of all, so loved the world that Jesus the Son was sent with a message of justice and peace, redemption and reconciliation. God calls us to serve as ambassadors for Christ seeking God's peace and reconciliation in a world where humanity and creation are wounded, broken, and in need of healing (2 Corinthians 5:18-20). Together we seek life in all its fullness.
7. 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 continues to be in process.

8. Addressed the issue of **environmental justice** through participation in the process to implement recommendations on the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. The Presbyterian Church (USA) sent delegates to COP25, the UN Conference of Parties Negotiations, in December 2019 which took place in Madrid. Due to the pandemic, COP26 was postponed and is scheduled to take place in November 2021.

9. Also addressed **environmental justice** by joining the newly formed **Committee of Religious NGOs Climate Working Group** to better prepare NGOs on the COP process and raise awareness on the impacts of climate change, and to work towards better collaboration among faith-based and UN community in New York.

10. Advocated for a just and lasting peace in **Syria**. We continue to advocate with the United Nations Security Council as part of the NGO Working Group on the Security Council advocating for a just and lasting peace in Syria after a decade of war.

11. **UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)**. When New York City became a hot spot for coronavirus infections in March 2020, UN decided to hold only the opening session and suspend the rest of the proceedings. Thus, CSW64 delegation did not participate in 2020. We hope to welcome partners from the World Communion of Reformed Churches in future CSW events.

12. The Ministry participated in the 58<sup>th</sup> Session of the **United Nations Commission on Social Development (CSocD)** in February 2020. The theme was “affording housing and social protection systems for all to address homelessness.” We hope to welcome partners from the World Communion of Reformed Churches in future CSocD events.

13. Participated in the Red Hand 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.

14. Expressed concern for the protection of religious minorities in **Iraq and Syria** with special attention to Christians.

15. Continued to monitor and advocate for **Cuba** at the United Nations and support for lifting of US sanctions on Cuba. In January 2020, Ministry hosted Stated Clerk of Presbytery of Havana for meetings at the UN office.

16. Participated in the **NGO Working Group on Israel-Palestine**. It advocated with the Security Council in opposing the illegal annexation of land in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and monitored the discussions around the question of statehood for Palestine. Attended sessions of Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

17. 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.
18. 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.
19. Monitored and advocated on **Nagorno-Karabakh** and advocated with the United Nations Security Council on issues of displacement, human rights, and peace.
20. Participated in the work of **NGO Committee on Migration**. It advocated to realize justice for migrants, refugees, stateless persons, internally displaced persons, trafficked persons by examining environment/climate-induced displacement and situations of vulnerability.
21. The ministry hosted virtual worship service to commemorate the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Korean War. The ministry continued our ongoing advocacy work for a just and lasting peace in **Korean Peninsula**.
22. In October 2020, Ryan Smith, Director and Representative to the United Nations departed to become the Director of the **World Council of Churches Ecumenical Office** after Rev. Doug Leonard left that position in the summer of 2020. While the ministry at the United Nations has lost a colleague, we look forward to ways that our two offices can collaborate in the future. We also maintain relationships with ACT Alliance and the Lutheran World Federation as well.
23. Launched a new congregational resource, **Engaging Our World**, on the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the UN. It is a Sunday School Resource to accompany the **Study and Devotional Guide to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals** (Second Edition). Both are available online from the Ministry at the United Nations webpage.
24. There will continue to be needs and opportunities for the Reformed family to work and witness for peace and justice within the context of the UN.
25. 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 in these challenging times as the world continues to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. I give special thanks for Ryan Smith's nearly decade of service to the Ministry at the United Nations and wish him well in his new role with the World Council of Churches Ecumenical Office. I am particularly grateful for my colleague, Ivy Lopedito, as we have learned to work remotely together and for my colleagues in the ecumenical



UN Ministry Report

community as we have supported one another through this time to work for God's peace and justice at the UN.

Sue Rheem  
Representative to the United Nations

## Greetings

### **Evangelical Mission in Solidarity**

Churches and Missions in International Partnership

Dear Rev. Ferguson,  
Dear Sisters and Brothers,

We greet you from the Evangelical Mission in Solidarity (EMS) in the name of Christ the God of Peace. Thank you for asking us to send a message of greetings on the occasion of the Meeting of WCRC Executive Committee. It is so unfortunate that we cannot meet in person on such an occasion due to pandemic context globally. We hope and pray that all of you are well and protected by the favour of God.

EMS is an international association of 25 protestant churches and 5 mission societies in Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Europe, among them 16 churches from a reformed tradition. It is active in mission and church cooperation worldwide. We are an international fellowship and work to enhance the living conditions worldwide. In particular, we advocate the rights of poor, marginalized and vulnerable people. We promote a respectful encounter over cultural and religious borders. We learn from each other and with each other, we take decisions in common and share our resources. We live a vivid and solidary partnership.

The Covid 19 pandemic has faced all our churches with a great challenge. While personal fellowship and worship has stopped and online worship patterns have emerged, it has not stopped or reduced the depth and intensity of the church's ministry. Instead, we have experienced new perspectives of contextual ecclesiology.

We have experienced that we are all battered by the same storm, but we're not in the same boat. Our boats are very different. Many have plenty of room, enough to eat and a good healthcare system. Others are fully exposed to the fury of the storm. Nevertheless, we share our faith and our resources across three continents and we grow closer together. We pray these days especially with our brothers and sisters in India. But our concern is also for the Middle East with the flare-up of conflicts and violence.

For many years, EMS member churches have experienced that our problems can only be solved together. In emergencies such as these, the fellowship has always proved to be strong and united, as it says in the Book of Ecclesiastes 4:12: "And though one might prevail against another, two will withstand one. A threefold cord is not quickly broken." (NRSV)

As you gather for the WCRC Executive Meeting, we send you our wishes and prayers for a meaningful and spirit filled meeting.

Greetings

With Gods blessings,  
Rev. Dr. Dieter Heidtmann  
General Secretary, EMS

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**Association du Centre  
International Réformé John Knox**

Warm greetings from the John Knox International Reformed Center Association in Geneva and our very best wishes for a successful Executive Committee meeting.

The last 18 months have been difficult for one and all, but the pandemic has also been an excellent opportunity to reset the clocks and build the future on stronger and more stable grounds. At the Center we have worked to this end and look forward to further rekindling and strengthening our relationship with the World Communion of Reformed Churches.

On a personal note, we send our special thanks to your outgoing General Secretary Chris Ferguson who, despite his busy schedule, has been actively involved in helping us to better define our future – he will always be welcome at the Center. Hych'ka Chris!

Peace be with you.  
Elizabeth Böhler-Goodship  
President

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**Lutheran World Federation**

Respected President of the WCRC, Rev. Najla Kassab  
Respected Officers and Members of WCRC Executive Committee  
Respected General Secretary, dear Rev. Dr. Chris Ferguson  
Dear sisters and brothers

With joy, I bring you greetings from the Lutheran World Federation. As we journey in these times of pandemic with so many difficulties at all different levels, I give thanks to God for the close partnership with the World Communion of Reformed Churches. Though we cannot be together in one place for worship, discussion, and work, we note with gratitude the many ways in which we have been able to witness to the gospel together throughout this unprecedented time.

Since the co-signing of the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification, the Wittenberg Witness, and the meeting at Notre Dame University in 2019 between five world communions, we have been committed to witnessing more effectively to the salvation given to us in Christ. As the Notre Dame Consultation Statement expresses it, "We are convinced of the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ to transform us and the world." Together, we work to communicate and share God's justification, never without God's justice, for the world. In the work and witness, we too are transformed.

The LWF also gives thanks for the significant initiative you have launched in response to the pandemic, COVID-19 and Beyond. It raises a deep awareness for all churches of the rapidly changing context of proclamation and service. The discernment process you have engaged also highlights the many ways injustice continues to impact the life of communities. We have all become learners and listeners with you.

Our journey continues as we explore how the Wittenberg Witness takes shape in our life and witness as ecclesial communities. In its own ecumenical commitments, the Lutheran World Federation has made it a priority to seek implementation of consensus statements we have reached. Reception can take on many forms. For example, work has begun between our two communions on the study of religious freedom and the ways in which God's justice is embodied between different faith communities.

We also keep in the forefront our agreement in the dialogue report *Communion – On being the Church*. At the time of its affirmation, I said that this document opens up new avenues of both repentance for wrongdoings, and for joint witness in a world thirsting for words and actions of compassion, justice and reconciliation. It is this spirit of reconciliation that now shapes our witness to the gospel that entails dismantling oppressive political, social, and economic structures so that all people may know God's gift of life abundant.

Your meeting in these days is also one of farewell. Allow me to say a personal word of appreciation and gratitude to my long-time colleague, Rev. Dr. Chris Ferguson. We have been able, through the years, to discuss openly and honestly many issues and questions. It has been a joy to work in many different ways and on many different tasks together.

The prayers of the Lutheran World Federation and my personal prayer accompany you in and through these days of discernment and work. Together, we trust in the One who always shows us a way deeper into that gift of unity of faith and solidarity with all people. In the words of the Wittenberg Witness,

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

Greetings

in the world. We pray for liberation in the wider world and, by God's grace, a thoroughgoing renewal and reformation of our churches.

May God grant your Executive Committee Meeting, strength, imagination, and encouragement.

With gratitude and hope in Christ,  
Rev. Dr Martin Junge  
General Secretary

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### **Mennonite World Conference**

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

I thank God for your witness to Christ and for the privilege of sending my greetings on behalf of Mennonite World Conference (MWC). MWC is a global communion of 107 national Anabaptist- related churches joined together for fellowship, worship, service and witness. As you meet during this week in May 2021 for your Executive Committee, we plan our global assembly, which we hope to have this coming year in Indonesia.

These are challenging times. Violence and polarization continue to grow in many places despite the global pandemic impacting our societies. Amid that context, Christ's Church moves forward. I have been reflecting on the theme of your meetings, "At such a time as this." It is in a time as this that I pray for you and your online encounters with the words attributed to Archbishop Oscar Romero:

"It helps, now and then, to step back and take a long view.

The Kingdom is not only beyond our efforts; it is even beyond our vision.  
We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction  
of the magnificent enterprise that is God's work.  
Nothing we do is complete, which is another way of saying  
that the Kingdom always lies beyond us.

No statement says all that could be said. No prayer fully expresses our faith.  
No confession brings perfection. No pastoral visit brings wholeness.  
No program accomplishes the Church's mission.  
No set of goals and objectives includes everything.

That is what we are about. We plant a seed that will one day grow.  
We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise.

We lay foundations that will need further development.  
We provide yeast that produces effects far beyond our capabilities.

We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that.  
This enables us to do something, and to do it very well.

It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way,  
an opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter and do the rest.

We may never see the end results, but that is the difference between  
the master builder and the worker. We are workers, not master builders,  
ministers,  
not messiahs.

We are prophets of a future not our own."

May God's Spirit be with us as we walk with hope through times of transition,  
knowing that the Kingdom seeds that we plant one day will grow thanks to God's  
work through and in us!

In Christ,  
César García  
General Secretary

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### **Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity**

Greetings, Peace and especially in these times of the Covid-19 pandemic good health  
to you and the members of the WCRC Executive Committee who are gathering  
virtually from 25 – 28 May 2021.

Although a personal participation of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian  
will not be possible as in previous years, I am most grateful for the opportunity to  
provide this written greeting to you and the members of the Executive Committee.

Given the current state of affairs, the theme for your gathering – "At such a time as  
this" (Esther 4:14) – appears most appropriate. One of the curiosities of the  
marvelous Book of Esther is the conspicuous absence of the divine name of God in  
the Hebrew text (the Greek text does not contain references to God).

In the Hebrew Esther, the absence of the divine name seems to emphasize the  
'secular' context in which the people of God found themselves in the Babylonian  
exile. Important analogies can be drawn to our present times where Christian

Greetings

communities are often living as minorities and sometimes in a hostile situation. Similar to the times of the Hebrew Esther, although God seems hidden in the modern 'secular' culture, He is very much present in the salvation history. The God of history in fact does not abandon his people, and continuously demonstrate his fidelity by raising up heroic individuals like Esther. In the face of great personal danger and risk of annihilation, these individuals give witness to the elevating power of grace.

In our present time, stories abound of heroic individuals who put their lives on the line by ministering to those suffering from the Covid-19 virus. Many have sacrificed their lives trying to save others or simply by making sure the sick do not die alone. Others have worked tirelessly to develop vaccines at record time in order to save a greater amount of lives. These are all modern-day Esthers and their lives reflect the wisdom of God: "Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom" (James 3:13). For the courage of this great crowd of witness we must be grateful to God.

As you gather during a time of transition in leadership, allow me to thank you as General Secretary of the WCRC for your commitment to promoting ecumenical dialogue and Christian unity. The commitment of the Reformed Churches in recognizing that "the world is not as God wants it and it can and must be changed" is something that resonates with the Catholic Church's understanding of the mission to Proclaim the Gospel and bear to Jesus Christ, calling humanity to the lofty vocation of the building the "culture of life" and the "civilization of love", the ideal to which a society permeated by divine love must be oriented (Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, 231, 391).

In this week that follows the celebration of the feast of Pentecost, may "the superabundant gift of the Holy Spirit, the Consoler, who internalizes Christ's own style of life in human hearts" (Compendium, 29) fill you with every grace and blessing (cf. 1 Cor 1:7).

With prayers and best,  
Cardinal Kurt Koch  
President

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### **World Association for Christian Communication**

Dear Executive Committee Members,

Warm greetings on behalf of the directors, members, partners, and staff of the World Association for Christian Communication.

WACC has always greatly valued and appreciated its relationship with the WCRC as we tackle shared ecumenical and humanitarian concerns. There is a saying that on any journey – or, better still, pilgrimage – what is important is not arriving but sharing the ups and downs of the journey itself. It is a privilege to do so alongside the WCRC.

In particular, we would like to congratulate Chris Ferguson on his tenure as General Secretary and to wish him well as he moves on. Dedication, insightful reflection, and moral integrity have marked his leadership as he inspired not just the WCRC and WACC, but other ecumenical partners in our common struggle.

Very best wishes for your deliberations and decision-making during your 2021 Executive Committee meeting.

Yours sincerely,  
Philip Lee  
General Secretary

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### **World Council of Churches**

Dear sisters and brothers,

Grace and peace be with you, in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

It is my joy to extend greetings to you on behalf of the World Council of Churches in this week of Pentecost. The World Communion of Reformed Churches is a strong partner in the one ecumenical movement and we are thankful for your witness as a family of churches called to communion and committed to justice.

The theme of your meeting – “At such a time as this” (Esther 4:14) – calls us to speak out prophetically against the powers of division and destruction, which create so much suffering in our world. From Esther we learn that people can become instruments in revealing God’s will. Esther is a strong example of how to set aside our own will and to follow God.

We share a common concern for the people and churches in the Middle East. Together, we pray and hope that God will bring healing and consolation to all those injured. We witnessed again, how vulnerable peace can be. Peace-building requires prevention, protection and mediation, and a culture committed to fostering peace. “At such a time as this” we speak out for justice and peace, proclaiming God’s unconditional love for all people; and promoting peace among the nations.



Greetings

The WCC is grateful for our common witness for economic and ecological justice. As partners in the New International Financial and Economic Architecture (NIFEA) project, we seek to engage the churches in addressing public finance and debt, regulation of the financial sector and global economic governance with a vision of fullness of life for all. More than ever, speaking together for those who have been left out of social-economic and political decision-making, we become a stronger voice for marginalized and vulnerable communities in urging those in power to find sustainable answers that leave no one behind.

We are grateful for our sustained companionship in God's vineyard. It is in togetherness that we experience God's grace and love – even in this long period of pandemic. In the midst of enormous suffering, isolation, despair, instability and loneliness we are encouraged by countless acts of love, compassion, hope and faith.

In this spirit of love and hope, I wish you God's blessing and inspiration in all your endeavours to discern the right course of action for "such a time as this". May your gathering bring a vision of hope, encouragement and inspiration for the world.

Yours in Christ,  
Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca  
Acting General Secretary

## Drafting Team Reports

### Report of the Drafting Team 1: Report of the General Secretary, Address of the President

#### A) General Council 2024 Planning

##### *Discernment Questions*

1. Are there strategies and ideas that you would commend to the General Council Task Group to take up?
2. Do you agree with the Terms of Reference for the General Council Task Group?
3. Do you agree with the composition of the task group in terms of capacity, expertise, and representation for a General Council to be held in Asia?

##### **Narrative Report**

1. Are there strategies and ideas that you would commend to the General Council Task Group to take up?

##### *Full and just participation in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic*

Several group members raised the concern that it might be difficult to hold a global gathering in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. What the world will look like in 2024 after the damage done by corona was a probing question.

In the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is still not sure that everyone will have the possibility to travel and attend in person such a meeting.

Several members of the discernment group therefore suggested that the General Council meeting should be postponed or conducted in a hybrid format to allow widest participation of the Communion.

##### *Finances*

It might be difficult to raise the necessary funds for the General Council in the context of an economy diminished by COVID-19 pandemic.

Several discernment group members therefore emphasized that the task group should therefore ascertain the financial sustainability of the gathering before we start talking.

Other members stressed that the attempts to deal with the financial challenges must not compromise the principles which guide the General Council planning, in

particular the commitment to full and just participation of all members according to the provision of the WCRC Constitution.

In its attempt to secure the necessary finances for the General Council the task group should look beyond the borders of the Communion and the scope of the usual sources of income.

### *Programme*

When gathering for the next General Council after such a challenging time full of pain and suffering all around a world there will be even bigger need for spiritual moments beside the business sessions.

It could be considered to dedicate more time to common worship and prayer on the first day of the General Council to create the right atmosphere for listening, discerning, and working together.

In a post-pandemic world special emphasis shall be laid on truth telling. The world needs to rebuild trust in the truth. The WCRC should reflect how it can contribute to building this trust by telling the truth in the public sphere.

The pre-council meetings for women and youth should be part of the next General Council.

### *Considerations for the Planning Process*

The task group should reflect on the “ecological footprint” of the General Council.

It can be helpful to look at how other ecumenical organizations are preparing for their gathering, looking at “best practices.”

#### 2. Do you agree with the Terms of Reference for the General Council Task Group?

All discernment groups agree with the terms of reference for the General Council Task Group.

#### 3. Do you agree with the composition of the task group in terms of capacity, expertise, and representation for a General Council to be held in Asia?

The discernment groups agree with the composition of the General Council Task Group, because it includes representatives from the member churches in Asia where the General Council is planned to take place. The WCRC regions are also represented.

However, several discernment groups strongly emphasize that the composition of the General Council Planning Committee, which is planned to be formed at the extraordinary Executive Committee Meeting at the end of the year must apply the diversity commitments of the WCRC. The General Council Planning Committee must include the youth and people living with disabilities.

### ***Recommendation from the Drafting Team***

1. The Executive Committee endorses the terms of reference and the composition of the General Council Task Group.
2. The Executive Committee refers the reflections of the discernment groups to the General Council Task Group for further consideration.

## **B) Report of the Strategic Plan Programme Group (SPPG)**

### ***Discernment Questions***

What are your thoughts and ideas:

- a. about how the WCRC shall stand to the commitments of the Strategic Plan in periods of reduced staff capacity?
- b. for the development a working model for the programme work that is less dependent on staff input from the secretariat?
- c. about extending the advocacy dimension of the peace and reconciliation work of the WCRC as suggested in the plans for the formation of the Global Reformed Advocacy Platforms for Engagement (GRAPE)?
- d. for strengthening ways of involving people from all over the world in the work of discernment building on the experiences of the “COVID and Beyond” process?

### **Narrative Report**

1. What are your thoughts and ideas about how the WCRC shall stand to the commitments of the Strategic Plan in periods of reduced staff capacity?

### ***Prioritization***

The discernment groups expressed their appreciation for the Strategic Plan, but raised concerns about the lack of capacity for its proper implementation. Several groups expressed the need for rigorous prioritization, which must not lose the important parts and commitments.

In this process of prioritizing, it will be important to listen to the regions on what they feel more important. The process should also open a space for more “grass-root initiatives” coming from the regions.

### *Networking*

Several discernment groups welcome the introduction of a more decentralized working model. Such a model should involve the WCRC member regions and member churches and intensify networking with ecumenical partners that share the same concerns.

There are skills in the Communion that can be used to implement the strategic goals of the WCRC. It should be considered how members of the Executive Committee and people from the member churches can be involved in the implementation of the plan.

### *Outreach*

The use of digital technology (Zoom) provides the opportunity for more involvement of member churches. After the end of the pandemic the WCRC should continue to use digital formats.

2. What are your thoughts and ideas for the development of a working model for the programme work that is less dependent on staff input from the secretariat?

The discernment groups welcome the development of a working model that is less dependent on staff input from the secretariat.

However, they stress that the success of such a system will depend on clear definition of roles and good communication with the Hannover secretariat is essential.

The regions should meet and discuss this matter.

3. What are your thoughts and ideas about extending the advocacy dimension of the peace and reconciliation work of the WCRC as suggested in the plans for the formation of the Global Reformed Advocacy Platforms for Engagement (GRAPE)?

### *Creation of a New Staff Position*

The discernment groups support the attempts to create a new staff position to which a woman from the Global South shall be appointed. Several voices emphasize the need for a careful search process for find the right person for the position.

The groups stress that the economic constraints of the WCRC will have to be considered in this process.

### *Involvement of the Region in the Peace and Reconciliation Work*

The discernment groups support the idea of strengthening the peace and reconciliation work of the WCRC and emphasize that this discussion should take place in close cooperation with the regions: Regions know their people and their challenges well, the regional leadership can help to do the work. They also belong to other ecumenical bodies that they can lean on for resources and help.

4. What are your thoughts and ideas for strengthening ways of involving people from all over the world in the work of discernment building on the experiences of the “COVID and Beyond” process?

Positive feedbacks were received for the “COVID and Beyond” process, and the discernment group hopes that all the knowledge and experience from this online consultation will be put into use in the future with special attention to the technical part of this process.

Digitalization taught us to think more locally and globally at the same time and we need to pay attention to how this digitalization affects the church community on a local level.

Regional bodies should be allowed to invite other interested groups within its context to the “COVID and Beyond” discussions to give their point.

### ***Recommendations from the Drafting Team***

1. The Executive Committee thanks the Strategic Plan Programme Group (SPPG) for its commitment to the implementation of the Strategic Plan.
2. The Executive Committee refers the reflections of the discernment groups on question 2.a (implementation of the Strategic Plan) and 2.b (development of a decentralized leadership model) to the general secretary for further consideration.
3. The Executive Committee refers the reflections of the discernment groups on question 2.c (extension of the peace and reconciliation work of the WCRC) to the Officers’ Committee and general secretary for further consideration and involvement of the regions.
4. The Executive Committee refers the reflections of the discernment groups on question 2.d (strengthening global processes of discernment) to the general secretary for further consideration and involvement of the regions.

## **C) Address of the President**

### ***Discernment Question***

1. What parts of the Address of the President would you like to be uplifted or specially noted?

### **Narrative Report**

The Address of the President was highly appreciated in all the discernment groups.

Members particularly welcomed the tone of hope in which the President described the situation of the Communion and recommended the handling of Esther in the President's sermon and the passage on *chronos* and *kairos* in the report for further reflection. Several voices supported the appreciation of the COVID-19 process.

The following issues should receive special attention in the discussions of the WCRC:

- Renewal of faith and spirituality of the people;
- bridging the distance between the different cultures in the Communion;
- Taking a more active role in Israel and Palestine.

### ***Recommendations from the Drafting Team***

1. The Executive Committee expresses its appreciation to the President for her opening sermon and her address.
2. The Executive Committee refers the issues identified during discernment to the general secretary for special attention and further consideration.

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## **Report of the Drafting Team 2: Proposed Interim Plan, Search Committee**

### **A) Structures and Timeline of the Interim Period**

#### ***Discernment Questions***

1. What concerns or suggestions do you have for the interim period?
2. What structures of support do you think would be helpful for the interim period?

#### **Narrative Report**

1. What concerns or suggestions do you have for the interim period?

### *Time Period*

- Perhaps we might consider a longer interim period.
- The Executive Committee need reports along the way and give guidance as needed.
- The interim plan will be in place until we call a General Secretary.
- Continued concerns about sustainability of resources.

### *Workload*

- If the model works well, can we consider it a viable model going forward?
  - Does the model provide for one among the three or someone else to serve as coordinator for the group?
  - We must be clear about roles and responsibilities of each executive secretary that will eliminate concerns about any conflict, good or bad.
  - Involve the regions and executive committee as much as possible in getting the work done.
2. What structures of support do you think would be helpful for the interim period?
- Ask the Executive Committee to check in the with the three staff on their work.
  - Make sure that all three are taking good care of themselves and have the support they need.
  - Consider asking for the support of former general secretaries who can give assistance.
  - Executive Committee could be more involved in the work, picking up some of the work, depending on what is needed.

### ***Recommendation from the Drafting Team***

The drafting team recommends to change the wording of proposal #1:

Instead: “The Executive Committee resolves that *until the installation of a new general secretary* the WCRC shall operate under an interim structure”, the proposal should read: “The Executive Committee resolves that *the WCRC shall operate under the interim leadership structure until August 31, 2022*”

Reason: The interim plan limits the interim period to one year. The Executive Committee will discuss a proposal by the Officers’ Committee on the future leadership model and will take the necessary decisions.

1. The Executive Committee resolves that the WCRC shall operate under the interim leadership structure from 1 September 2021 until 31 August 2022.



2. The Executive Committee requests the Officers' Committee to conduct a mid-term review on the progress of the search process and the sustainability campaign not later than February 2022. Further, it requests that if the implemented processes do not provide the expected results, the Officers' Committee will make a proposal to the Executive Committee on how to proceed.

## **B) The General Secretary Search Process**

### ***Discernment Questions***

1. What concerns do you have for the Search Committee?
2. What suggestions do you have for the Search Committee as they continue their work?

### **Narrative report**

1. What concerns do you have for the Search Committee?
  - We suggest that the committee continues its work as soon as possible.
  - Remember the issue of sustainability.
  - Provide a job description that does not seem so overwhelming and scary.
2. What suggestions do you have for the Search Committee as they continue their work?
  - Review the obstacle you faced that prohibited you from calling a general secretary: relocation, suitability.
  - Consider whether it is absolutely necessary for the general secretary to live in Hannover. A concern especially for regions who wouldn't mind a general secretary from their areas living at home.
  - The general secretary cannot live somewhere else if the three executives now live in Hannover.
  - We need to be brave and bold to change and to adapt to new realities, so our rules allow for general secretary to live in his/her own home country.
  - Consider a hybrid model of in Hannover as needed and home country?
  - We also need to include the regions so they can provide support to WCRC work in Hannover.
  - The interim model might inspire us to think in new and creative ways that we can design the leadership for WCRC.
  - Review your process for your work, rethink about what is important for the position,

- What might we learn from the processes followed by others calling leadership (WCC)? Including your modes of searching for possible candidates.

**Recommendation from the Drafting Team:**

3. The Executive Committee mandates the General Secretary Search Committee as currently composed to continue its search for a suitable candidate to be presented to the Executive Committee for election at its meeting in May 2022.

**C) The Leadership Model During the Interim**

***Discernment Question***

1. What concerns or suggestions for improvement do you have regarding the proposals for the leadership model during the interim?

**Narrative Report**

- Provide a section on care and support, especially for their mental, psychological, and physical well-being.
- Clearly defined roles for each executive.
- Consider how they will coordinate their work.
- We appreciate the work of the staff in such a time as this.
- Consider if this model will work for us going forward. If the interim plan works, do we need a general secretary?

***Recommendation from the Drafting Team***

4. The Executive Committee endorses the leadership model described in this proposal that during the interim period the core functions and responsibilities of the general secretary as found in the Constitution and Bylaws shall be delegated to the collegial general secretariat, composed of the three executive secretaries.
5. The Executive Committee approves the distribution of functions and responsibilities of the general secretary to the collegial general secretariat, acting general secretary, Officers' Committee, individual executive secretaries, and individual members of the Officers' Committee and Executive Committee as described in this proposal.
6. The Executive Committee appoints Hanns Lessing as acting general secretary during the time of the interim.

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## Report of the Drafting Team 3: Sustainability

### Sustainability Discernment

#### *Discernment Questions*

1. Do you agree with the Terms of Reference for the Sustainability Task Group?
2. Are there strategies and ideas that you would commend the task group to take up?
3. Do you agree with the composition of the task group in terms of capacity, expertise, and representation?
4. Can you think of ways in which you, as an Executive Committee member, can assist in ensuring the sustainability of the organization?

### Narrative Report

1. Do you agree with the Terms of Reference for the Sustainability Task Group?
  - Consider other models of leadership that may be more sustainable.
  - Remember that the mission should drive our talk about sustainability.
  - Define sustainability!

#### *Recommendation from the Drafting Team*

1. Amend the last bullet point of the list of assignments of the Sustainability Task Group by adding the word comprehensive to indicate the breadth of the work that includes finance, staffing, programme, etc: “intensify the process of designing a long-term, comprehensive sustainability model that will address the challenge of the structural deficit of the core budget.”
2. Change the order of the list of assignments: Put the last bullet point first because of its importance:
  - “intensify the process of designing a long-term comprehensive sustainability model that will address the challenge of the structural deficit of the core budget.
  - the development of a process to activate the whole Communion to more strongly contribute to the work of the WCRC with witness, prayer, human resources, and financial resources;
  - intensify the processes to secure funds to cover the shortfalls in the 2021 and 2022 core budget;
  - intensify the process of developing a medium-term budget plan that will allow the election of a general secretary in 2022.”

## **Narrative Report**

2. Are there strategies and ideas that you would commend the task group to take up?
  - Any strategy must consider the regions and their current struggles and capacity.
  - Young people and women should be included as part of the process/resources.
  - It is important to communicate the mission of the WCRC to the church and the wider communion. Work on ways to improve the pipeline of information that might help us make direct connections with the communion at all levels.
  - Empower the regions by establishing internal links.
  - Create regional offices of WCRC that could increase regional participation.
  - Connect with resources outside of ourselves for finance and programming; including people who are available; and partnerships with UN agencies (AIPRAL, Religions for Peace).
  - The Task Group should also look at how other ecumenical bodies address the issue of sustainability.
  - The Task Group has a task to think about the question of redefining ecumenical sponsorship (In the spirit of "always reforming").
  - We have a responsibility to help smaller churches recognize their importance within the communion.
  - The more churches contribute the better we can address the issue of sustainability. Not the size of the contribution but the willingness to be involved matters.
  - Hold "A Global Day of Contributions" to talk more about WCRC to our member communions.

### ***Recommendation from the Drafting Team:***

The drafting team recommends to add the one more item to the task group list of assignments: "Ask a consultant to analyse why the WCRC is having such problems with sustainability. Discover the models used by other organizations."

## **Narrative Report**

3. Do you agree with the composition of the task group in terms of capacity, expertise, and representation?

Note: We are being asked to affirm the composition of the task group in terms of capacity, expertise, and representation, not the proposed list of group members. The Officers' Committee will do that.

The discernment groups voiced the following considerations:

- Had questions concerning the makeup related to gender, and young people who can bring new ideas to the table.
  - Request that the communion keep the group in prayer as they carry out this difficult task, prayer for the leading of the Holy Spirit, they we are led by Holy spirit to the right people to talk to, and for God to use us to do what we need to do, with God's help.
  - How can we confirm individuals on the list who have not been consulted, or affirmed their availability for this work?
  - Create balance of the people from Europe and North America who have access to more money.
  - We can continue to make suggestions of people who can be used in the process that the officers can consider.
4. Can you think of ways in which you, as an Executive Committee member, can assist in ensuring the sustainability of the organization?
- Raise the profile of WCRC in our regions and denominations.
  - We can check with our denominational offices to see if they are up to date and are contributing.
  - Increase awareness about the mission and ministry of WCRC – Talk with our folks on the importance of making their contributions.
  - Make personal family contributions.
  - Help small communions understand the importance for their contributions. Small contributions add up to much. Consider the widows mite – how she gave what she could, out of her poverty.
  - Send a report to communions on what they have contributed, how they have participated, and other resources they have given.
  - Establish a WCRC Sunday – WCRC may consider dedicating a day to raise awareness for our organization; e.g., organizing a WCRC Sunday when member churches can learn more about the WCRC as well as donate for its activities (this could be another way of fundraising).

Other suggestions:

- Add Dr. Seong Wong Park from Korea to the list of members of the task group.

***Recommended Actions (incorporating the above)***

3. The Executive Committee endorses the following terms of reference of the Sustainability Task Group:

***Terms of Reference of the Sustainability Task Group:***

The Sustainability Task Group will intensify the sustainability activities of the WCRC according to the goals of the Strategic Plan and within the mandates of the constitution and will present comprehensive proposals for decision-making at the Executive Committee meeting in November/December 2021.

The task group shall work on the following assignments:

- intensify the process of designing a long-term, comprehensive sustainability model that will address the challenge of the structural deficit of the core budget;
  - the development of a process to activate the whole Communion to more strongly contribute to the work of the WCRC with witness, prayer, human resources, and financial resources;
  - intensify the processes to secure funds to cover the shortfalls in the 2021 and 2022 core budget;
  - intensify the process of developing a medium-term budget plan that will allow the election of a general secretary in 2022;
  - engage a consultant to analyse why the WCRC is having such problems with sustainability;
  - explore models used by other organizations.
4. The Executive Committee endorses the composition of the Sustainability Task Group in terms of capacity, expertise, and representation, as guidance for the Officers' Committee to appoint specific individuals.
  5. The Executive Committee refers the reflections of the discernment groups to the Sustainability Task Group for further consideration.

## **Message from the 2021 Executive Committee**

*(Please note that this is the final draft, completed after the conclusion of the Executive Committee meeting.)*

We, the Executive Committee of the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC), met virtually 25-28 May 2021 to evaluate the work of the past year, discern the present circumstances, and plan for the future direction and work of the organization.

The text of Esther 4:14, “At such a time as this...” framed our deliberations and our conversations. Using this text, President Najla Kassab invited the Communion into a renewed imagination regarding the questions of sustainability that lay before the Communion and called us into a radical hope for the Communion.

This time of pandemic has not only prevented us from meeting in person but has served as an apocalyptic moment that has unveiled our present reality and exposed the inherent inequalities and injustices in our world.

The work ahead of us in terms of communion and justice is significant, especially at such a time as this. We particularly noted the state of vaccination nationalism and the situations in which vaccines are available for some and not for all, deeply connected to the privatization of healthcare and the unavailability of healthcare resources to many in the world today. The pandemic situation has been particularly hard on women who have been the first to be moved out of the work force as the economy takes a beating as well as the ones who, along with children, are facing domestic violence and abuse at home.

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 and exploited the dignity of people where healthcare and other fundamental rights are only available to those who can afford it. Almost everywhere the vulnerable, poor, and marginalized are most affected by the disease and by the measures of disease control.

In this situation we call upon the whole Communion and all people of goodwill to join us in discerning “What does God require of us” (Micah 6:8)? Such a process shall strive to establish a renewed and refreshed theological understanding of the current crisis. We hope that such a practice of common discernment shall lead the whole Communion—local, regional and global—to a prophetic theological response and determined acts of witness that speaks the truth to power and calls for justice.

It is in this moment that we approved the Gender Justice Policy. The purpose of the Gender Justice Policy is to advance the WCRC’s vision of living out our call to

communion and our commitment to justice, enabling and inviting churches to participate in God's transformative mission of gender justice and partnership. The policy seeks to address gender inequalities and injustice in our Communion and in our churches.

We were happy to hear that the Communion's Ethical Investment Guidelines adopted at our last meeting are in action, moving investments away from any agency that violates any of the five core labour standards (child labour, forced labour, discrimination, freedom of association, the right to collective bargaining). The WCRC also will not invest in any organization that produces or promotes fossil fuels.

We also reiterated our commitment to peace and reconciliation around the world—particularly in this time of pandemic where we find the intensification of both capitalism and authoritarianism:

- We recommitted to our initiatives for peace in Cameroon and the violence between the francophone and anglophone parts of the country.
- We agreed to continue our peace building initiatives in Colombia where dissent and protest are being violently suppressed.
- We highlighted the situation of Palestine and the ongoing occupation and colonialism that is depriving people of their human rights and is unjustly seizing land.
- We remain committed to encouraging dialogue between the north and south of the Korean Peninsula, building bridges to bring a just peace.
- We continue to partner with our churches in Myanmar who are facing a military dictatorship with life and livelihood at risk.
- And we pledged to work for West Papua and the human right violations that are happening there.

At such a time as this, we lift up the call of President Kassab in her address and call the Communion to a renewed imagination for transition, a renewed imagination for confessing, a renewed imagination for sustainability, a renewed imagination for the inclusion of all marginalized, a renewed imagination for new spiritualities, a renewed imagination for a Communion empowered by the work of its regions—all inspired by the hope we have as the life of Jesus is manifested in each and every one of us.

*We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies.*

—2 Corinthians 4:8-10

As a Communion we renew our imagination inspired by hope where our Lord continues to journey with us for a better tomorrow.



## Finance Report

### 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 the General Council Fund for 2024.
3. Only four Latin American churches contributed, while in 2017 several churches paid several years of arrears at and around the General Council. The contribution rate from this region then declined to an average of three churches contributing per year.
4. Contributions from Africa were higher than in 2019, with fifteen churches contributing in 2020 while only ten contributed in 2019.
5. CANAAC contributions were at their lowest because of the following, among other factors:
  - CRCNA contribution reduced by 10,000 euro in 2019
  - PC(USA) contribution reduced by 45,000 euro in 2020
  - Unfavourable exchange rates
6. Contributions from Asia were slightly higher than in 2019 but lower than in previous years due to only fifteen churches contributing.
7. Contributions from the Pacific decreased with only two churches contributing, while in 2019 four churches had contributed.
8. Contributions from Europe were higher than in 2019 and most previous years.
9. All in all, contributions were slightly higher than in 2019 but below the level of previous years.

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Africa	49,292	35,393	15,313	47,787	20,424	37,307	15,460	22,330
Latin America	4,784	8,488	4,149	5,521	8,441	1,245	1,052	2,034
CANAAC	228,394	230,028	275,951	265,268	290,047	260,383	270,350	231,357
Asia	60,770	53,901	59,909	56,378	68,230	76,870	49,450	60,493
Pacific	12,054	4,720	3,714	3,844	2,847	5,971	4,508	2,956
Europe	510,646	467,644	473,013	401,522	396,492	502,833	412,597	437,045
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>865,940</b>	<b>800,174</b>	<b>832,049</b>	<b>780,320</b>	<b>786,481</b>	<b>884,609</b>	<b>753,420</b>	<b>756,218</b>

## **Main Programme Donations in 2020**

We would like to mention three considerable donations for core and programme work.

1. Council for World Mission (CWM): 124,477 euro as support for the core budget with a justice focus.
2. *Evangelisches Missionswerk* (EMW): 200,000 euro as support for our missionary activities. A balance of 67,104 euro was carried over into 2021.
3. *Otto per Mille* (OPM): These are funds from the Waldensian Church. We received 350,000 euro in our budget year 2020. 86,042 were carried over into 2021.
4. Evangelical Church of Westphalia: These funds support or theology work with a special focus on the Reformed Partnership Fund. 7,795 euro were carried over into 2021.
5. At the beginning of 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, programme funds coming from EMW and OPM were returned after the closing of the budget year 2019. Programmatic work could not be carried out as planned. While a significant amount was reallocated towards the Reformed Partnership Fund with a main focus on COVID-19 relief projects, not all funds could be expended and were thus carried over into 2021 as described.

## **Year-end Closing 2020**

1. The budget year 2020 was closed with a surplus of 52,469 euro.
2. 62,740 euro were allocated towards a designated fund for personnel costs of the internship programme.
3. Contrary to 2019, our accounts showed a total of 16,949 euro in unrealized FX losses while the previous year ended with an unrealized currency gain of 7,535 euro.
4. Staff costs continue to be funded in a significant amount by two main partners: 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 as well as the assistant to the programme desks was covered thanks to the CWM donation to the core budget.

5. Thanks to considerable project donations by the before-mentioned main donors as well as a number of smaller donations, approximately 55,000 euro were allocated to the core budget as administration fees.
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 16.99% to a total of 4,831,698 euro. However, 325,012 euro are earmarked funds, including those belonging to EMW, OPM, Evangelical Church of Westphalia, Mission and Advocacy, Database, and Georges Lombard Projects.

### **Audit 2020**

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 2021**

1. The 2021 draft budget is based on pausing the search for and appointment of a general secretary.
2. Two reasons led to this proposal by the Officers: 1) The search committee did not find a candidate for general secretary (primarily for COVID reasons), and 2) the core budget is projected to be in a deficit position. A sustainability task group would also be formed.
3. In this scenario a collegial interim would be formed by the three current executive secretaries with one named acting general secretary.
4. A 50,800 allocation from general reserves was required to achieve a balanced budget plan.
5. This will hopefully be offset from other donations that will be sought in order to fully balance the budget.
6. 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.

7. The budget plan is to be approved by the Executive Committee during the virtual meeting in May.

### **Main programme donations for 2021**

1. Council for World Mission (CWM): 200,000 Singapore dollars (approximately 125,000 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): 220,000 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, cultivating a just communion, covenanting for justice, and the Reformed Partnership Fund.

### **Investments**

1. In accordance with the reviewed ethical investment policies, the US investments with the Barnabas and Presbyterian Foundations were redeemed (approx. 1,100,000 euro). Additional liquidity on the 5th3rd Bank account not required for daily business in the US was moved to Germany for final investment (approx. USD 200,000). The Swiss PostFinance account was closed and funds were transferred to Germany (approx. 135,000 euro).
2. These funds were temporarily invested in the collective investment scheme of the Reformed Church in Germany.
3. A newly set up fund with the German KD-Bank was identified for final investment of these funds: The *KinderZukunftsFonds* (Children Future Fund). This fund is in risk category 3 (moderate) and has a higher percentage of shares than our current investments with KD-Bank (KCD Sustainability and Fair World Funds).
4. This fund as well as its initiators, the German KD-Bank and *Kindernothilfe* (one of the largest European Christian organizations for children's aid) have received praise by the 8<sup>th</sup> General Secretary of the United Nations, Ban Ki-moon, for "their effort to push the sustainable finance discussion to the next level and to accept the challenge of identifying available data sets and indicators that can inform best and pro-active corporate practice to support the rights of the child..."

5. The steps that have been taken mean that we are now in compliance with our ethical investment policy.

Dr. Johann Weusmann  
General Treasurer

## **Finance Committee Meeting: 20 May 2021**

Present: Johann Weusmann (treasurer), Stephen Kendall (notetaker), DeAmber Clopton, J. Herbert Nelson II, Hilary Hagar, Anna Krueger (finance staff), Gerhard Plenter (finance staff), Chris Ferguson (general secretary)

Regrets or absent: Chang Bae Byun, Prawate Khidarn, Mary Salle, Lungile Mpetsheni, Annabelle Lalla-Ramkelawan, Najla Kassab (president)

The Finance Committee met on Thursday, 20 May 2021 at 13:00 (CEST).

It reviewed the year-end statement 2020, audit report 2020, and budget plan 2020, and had the following recommendations to the Executive Committee:

1. That the Executive Committee approve the 2020 financial statements.
2. That the auditor's report 2020 be accepted.
3. 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 2020.
4. That the audit of the 2021 financial statement be carried out by the High Audit Office of the *Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland*.
5. That a balanced 2021 budget be approved.
6. That the officers give preliminary approval for a balanced budget for 2022 subject to final approval at the 2022 Executive Committee meeting.





EVANGELISCHE KIRCHE IN DEUTSCHLAND  
OBERRECHNUNGSAMT

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(English version)

# REPORT

ON THE AUDIT OF THE  
FINANCIAL STATEMENT 2020

**WORLD COMMUNION OF REFORMED CHURCHES  
(WCRC)**

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HANNOVER



## LIST OF IMPORTANT ABBREVIATIONS

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ACRC	African Communion of Reformed Churches
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 6th September 2018 (ABl. EKD 2019 p. 74)
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)
GG	Grundgesetz für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland (Constitution for the Federal Republic of Germany)
KFM	Kirchliches-Finanz-Management (finance software of KIGST-GmbH, Offenbach am Main)
Nds. BesG	Niedersächsisches Besoldungsgesetz (Remuneration Law of Lower Saxony)
Nds. MBl.	Niedersächsisches Ministerialblatt (official public announcement gazette)
NIFEA	New Economic and Financial Architecture
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 <sup>th</sup> November 1993 (ABl. EKD p. 513)
RAN	Racism, Authoritarianism and Nationalism
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)
WGRK	Weltgemeinschaft Reformierter Kirchen (World Communion of Reformed Churches)
WRV	Weimarer Reichsverfassung (Weimar Constitution)

## I. AUDIT BASICS

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### **Audit assignment**

According to article X section G. No. 4 in connection with article XIV section C of the constitution of the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC), it falls to the Executive Committee to accept and authorize (discharge) the audited year-end closing of the WCRC. The WCRC has instructed the High Audit Office of the Evangelical Church in Germany (ORA) to carry out the necessary auditing activities for this purpose.

The audit assignment is based on an administrative agreement reached between the WCRC and the EKD on 10<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> December 2014. The Standing Budget Committee of the EKD synod approved the acceptance of this audit assignment in its conference on 12<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup> March 2014.

### **Audit subject and aim**

The subject of the audit was the annual financial statement of the WCRC for the accounting year 2020. For this, it was precisely audited:

- whether the budget and economic management as well as the asset administration in the accounting year 2020 took place correctly and according to the relative principles and regulations (concerning the budget) and
- whether the annual accounts 2020 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.

### **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 verified in single cases and this remained without audit objections, no approval is to be deduced from this fact.

The audit was carried out by Ms. Tanja Fitzel in April and May 2021.

The following documents were available for the audit among others:

- a) the 2020 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 2020 of 15<sup>th</sup> April 2020 (ZB closure no. 0243).

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 11<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> May 2014.

The information required on the occasion of the audit was provided by Ms. Anna 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 completeness statement from the WCRC for the financial statement 2020. It was given by the General Secretary within the scope of this audit dated 11<sup>th</sup> May 2021.

### **Final discussion**

A final discussion was mutually regarded as unnecessary.

## II. ORGANIZATIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES

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The World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) is a non-profit, international, non-governmental organization representing more than 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 Hannover, Germany.

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).

The WCRC status is that of a public body in terms of article 140 GG in conjunction with article 137 paragraph 5 page 2 WRV, awarded by the Federal Government of Lower Saxony, order issued on 11<sup>th</sup> December 2012<sup>1</sup>. It is subject to state supervision by the Ministry of Culture of Lower Saxony. The WCRC is also registered as a 501(c)3 corporate body in the state of Michigan in the United States of America.

In addition, a contract for the regulation of issues corresponding to the legislative responsibility of the federal government was concluded between the Federal Republic of Germany and the WCRC dated 11<sup>th</sup>/14<sup>th</sup> April 2014. It was ratified by Federal Law on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2014.

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<sup>1</sup> see announcement of the Ministry of Culture of Lower Saxony of 16<sup>th</sup> January 2013 (Nds. MBI 4/2013, page 67)

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/she bears the responsibility for the management and coordination of their work towards the General Council and the Executive Committee. On 1<sup>st</sup> September 2014, Rev. Chris Ferguson (United Church of Canada) became the current office holder.

The WCRC President is Rev. Najla Kassab (Lebanon). The office of General Treasurer was assigned to Dr. Johann Weusmann (Germany).

The current administration of the WCRC is assumed by an operational office directed by the General Secretary. It was based in Hannover (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 and the result of the audit are as follows:

WGRK Annual Statement 2020	Revenues EUR	Expenses EUR
Budget appropriation according to budget	2.615.540,00	2.615.540,00
<b>TARGET COSTS 2020</b> (plan valuation)	<b>2.615.540,00</b>	<b>2.615.540,00</b>
According to the annual financial statement the following amount to:		
The actual receipts	1.902.780,76	
Internal reallocations between programmes (project)	422.296,05	
The transfers from program reserves	190663,72	
The transfers from other reserves	5.469,30	
The actual expenditures		1.424.671,34
Internal reallocations between programmes		422.296,05
The allocations to program reserves		341.506,08
The allocations to other reserves		280.267,03
The surplus 2020 (allocation to General Reserve)		52.469,33
<b>ACTUAL COSTS 2020</b> (result)	<b>2.521.209,83</b>	<b>2.521.209,83</b>

## Advances and transit accounts

The advances and transit accounts of the WCRC (SB 52) were randomly audited.

The advances and transit accounts of the WCRC of the audit period according to the documents presented for the audit are as follows:

<b>Advance payment</b>				
<b>Identification</b>	<b>Opening balance from 2019 EUR</b>	<b>Expense 2020 EUR</b>	<b>Revenue 2020 EUR</b>	<b>Closing balance 2020 carried forward to 2021 EUR</b>
General Advances	0,00	1.200,00	1.200,00	0,00
Permanent Advance AIPRAL	-2.684,44	0,00	1.400,70	-1.283,74
ACRC Membership	-2.579,93	0,00	0,00	-2.579,93
Opening balance from projects	1.012.971,51	1.018.412,89	2.344.570,74	2.339.129,36
<b>Total:</b>	<b>1.007.707,14</b>	<b>1.019.612,89</b>	<b>2.347.171,44</b>	<b>2.335.265,69</b>

<b>Holding ledger</b>				
<b>Identification</b>	<b>Opening balance from 2019 EUR</b>	<b>Revenue 2019 EUR</b>	<b>Expense 2019 EUR</b>	<b>Closing balance 2020 carried forward to 2021 EUR</b>
Transitory Items	323,13	37.279,49	39.132,24	2.175,88
Deposit	-3.510,00	0,00	450,00	-3.060,00
Transitory items - downpayments	315.224,16	0,00	0,00	315.224,16
COVID Cancellation refunds 2019-2020	0,00	10.579,17	10.579,17	0,00
Interests	0,00	21.613,33	21.613,33	0,00
Asset	695.670,15	1.249.326,50	2.574.582,30	2.020.925,95
Balancing Accounts	0,00	152.465,97	152.465,97	0,00
<b>Total:</b>	<b>1.007.707,44</b>	<b>1.471.264,46</b>	<b>2.798.823,01</b>	<b>2.335.265,99</b>

They were predominantly balanced within the year-end tasks. This especially refers to the passage accounts. The audit revealed no indications concerning any relevant cases of delayed accounting. As far as any audit-relevant circumstances arose, these were broached and/or spoken about during the audit statements.

The position "accounting balance carried forward from projects" displayed under "advance payment" amounting to 2,339,129.36 EUR and the position "asset" displayed under "transitory items" amounting to 2,020,925.95 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 2020 according to the documents presented for the audit is as follows:

Reserve assets (including trust assets, according to SB 92)	Opening Balance 01.01.2020 EUR	Closing Balance 31.12.2020 EUR	Annual Percentage Change
<b>WCRC Capital</b>			
Reserve Fund	470.430,25	640.237,31	169.807,06
IT Provision	32.063,59	32.063,59	0,00
Fundraising Fund	31.012,44	31.012,44	0,00
Reserve for FX Fluctuations	100.000,00	100.000,00	0,00
Oikotree	4.768,09	4.768,09	0,00
Designated Core Funds	800,00	0,00	-800,00
Reformed World	0,00	6.972,92	6.972,92
Pension Contributions Reserve	814.274,03	980.108,53	165.834,50
<b>Specific Asset Items</b>			
General Council 2024 Fund	166.899,91	224.489,45	57.589,54
CWM Endowment Reserve	1.211.500,00	1.211.500,00	0,00
Endowment Contributions CWM	714.985,77	714.985,77	0,00
<b>Programmes (Structure as per Strategic Plan)</b>			
<b>P1 CULTIVATING A JUST COMMUNION</b>			
Internship Programme	75.435,37	18.765,00	-56.670,37
Internship Programme - Personnel Reserve	0,00	62.740,98	62.740,98
Reformed Partnership Fund B	17.305,25	0,00	-17.305,25
Reformed Partnership Fund E	2.619,35	2.639,84	20,49
<b>P2 COVENANTING FOR JUSTICE</b>			
NIFEA - Campaigns	5.343,37	5.343,37	0,00
Ecology	130,34	130,34	0,00
Gender, Leadership and Power	41.353,38	41.353,38	0,00
TESF	11.549,83	4.467,72	-7.082,11
RAN	2.033,86	2.033,86	0,00
<b>P3 DOING THEOLOGY FOR TRANSFORMATION</b>			
Global Institute of Theology (GIT)	68.402,28	77.102,28	8.700,00
Theological Networks	4.595,32	4.595,32	0,00

<b>Reserve Assets</b>			
<b>Reserve assets (including trust assets, according to SB 92)</b>	<b>Opening Balance 01.01.2020 EUR</b>	<b>Closing Balance 31.12.2020 EUR</b>	<b>Annual Percentage Change</b>
<b>P4 ENGAGING GOD'S MISSION IN THE CONTEXT OF CRISIS</b>			
Mission	11.295,53	10.829,48	-466,05
<b>P5 WORKING WITH ALL THE PARTNERS GOD GIVES US</b>			
Catholic Dialogue	249,04	249,04	0,00
<b>Key Initiatives</b>			
EMW	0,00	67.104,82	67.104,82
OPM	0,00	86.042,06	86.042,06
Ev. Church of Westphalia	0,00	7.795,56	7.795,56
<b>Custodian Funds</b>			
Database Project	14.503,78	32.916,07	18.412,29
Mission and Advocacy	0,00	145.695,26	145.695,26
Justice & Partnership Office Support	50.902,07	50.902,07	0,00
Justice and Witness	13.091,78	13.054,01	-37,77
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
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>3.943.319,80</b>	<b>4.657.673,73</b>	<b>714.353,93</b>
<b>Trust Assets</b>			
WCRC Europe	186.654,91	174.025,11	-12.629,80
<b>Total</b>	<b>4.129.974,71</b>	<b>4.831.698,84</b>	<b>701.724,13</b>

The total asset stock of the WCRC amounted to 4,831,698.84 EUR for the year-end closing as of 31st December 2020. Compared with the previous year (4,129,974.71 EUR), this stock has increased by 701,724.13 EUR (16.99%) according to the accounting balance. However, this includes 325,012.22 EUR of earmarked funds consisting of the stocks of the EMW, Otto per Mille, the der Ev. Kirche v. Westfalen, the Data Bank Project, Mission and Advocacy and the Georges-Lombard Prize.

## 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	tariff scheme	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
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
				<b>10.18</b>	<b>10.18</b>

\* The employee is seconded by the Evangelical Church of Westphalia

\*\*vacant between 01 Aug-12 Oct

\*\*\* occupied Feb-Dec

No objections concerning the job chart have arisen. The ORA came to the conclusion that the agreed job chart was complied with.

### 2. Statements about the year-end closing

#### 2.1 Correctness and completeness of the year-end closing

The 2020 year-end closing of the WCRC was compiled dated 15th April 2021 (ZB closing no. 0243). It shows a volume of 2,521,209.83 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 2020 shows no significant gaps according to the ORA findings.

## **2.2 Budget balance / Utilization of the 2020 surplus**

The balancing of the ordinary budget was induced by an allocation of the profit remaining after execution of all necessary bookings amounting to 52,469.33 EUR to the General Reserve Fund (SB 92, BSt. 5110.00 UK 1).

## **2.3 Balancing of the 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). 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 Council 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 2020, provisions amounting to 315,224.16 EUR were generated for the non-required means. They were booked as assets into the transit accounts and transferred into the budget year 2020 in full.

Concerning the non-required contribution funds from the EKD amounting to 116,233.04 EUR and the UEK amounting to 138,063.95 EUR (254,296.99 EUR), the disposition of the funds has not been clarified so far. Thus, the risk that the non-required funds be reclaimed by these contributors still exists, the creation of the reserve was correct. In addition, the ORA points out the risk of additional claims of interest payments.

Concerning this matter, the WCRC imparted that no clarification concerning the disposition of the funds has taken place on the part of the contributors. If a clarification on this matter should occur, the disposition can be released and, if applicable, transferred to the reserve "General Assembly 2024" or reimbursed, according to the result.

### 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 7 of the budget.

For the year 2020, the program budgets are as follows:

<b>Programme Budgets 2020</b>	<b>Opening Balance</b>	<b>Revenues</b>	<b>Expenses</b>	<b>Closing Balance</b>
	<b>EUR</b>	<b>EUR</b>	<b>EUR</b>	<b>EUR</b>
<b>Main Structure 2</b>				
<b>THEOLOGY - GENERAL</b>				
Georges-Lombard-Preis	13.091,78	0,00	37,77	13.054,01
<b>Main Structure 6</b>				
<b>KEY INITIATIVES</b>				
Otto per Mille	0,00	366.767,92	280.725,86	86.042,06
EMW	0,00	202.353,32	135.248,50	67.104,82
Ev. Church of Westphalia	17.305,25	29.000,00	38.509,69	7.795,56
<b>Main Structure 7</b>				
<b>P1 CULTIVATING A JUST COMMUNION</b>				
<b>FULL AND JUST PARTICIPATION</b>				
Youth	12.694,39	59.193,79	53.123,18	18.765,00
<b>REFORMED PARTNERSHIP FUND</b>				
Reformed Partnership Fund A	0,00	71.496,00	71.496,00	-
Reformed Partnership Fund B	0,00	34.200,00	34.200,00	-
Reformed Partnership Fund D	0,00	4.597,70	4.597,70	-
Reformed Partnership Fund E	2.619,35	154.028,49	154.008,00	2.639,84
<b>P2 COVENANTING FOR JUSTICE</b>				
New Economic and Financial Architecture (NIFEA)	5.343,37	13.306,06	13.306,06	5.343,37
Ecology	130,34	0,00	0,00	130,34
<b>GENDER, LEADERSHIP AND POWER</b>				
Gender, Leadership and Power	41.353,38	0,00	0,00	41.353,38
Ordination of Women	11.549,83	0,00	7082,11	4.467,72
Racism, Authoritarianism and Nationalism (RAN) - EMPIRE	2.033,86	6.904,72	6.904,72	2.033,86
<b>P3 DOING THEOLOGY FOR TRANSFORMATION</b>				
Global Institute of Theology (GIT)	68.402,28	9.732,00	1.032,00	77.102,28
Theological Networks	4.595,32	0,00	0,00	4.595,32
<b>P4 ENGAGING GOD'S MISSION IN THE CONTEXT OF CRISIS</b>				
Mission in the Context of Crisis	11.295,53	0,00	466,05	10.829,48
Peace and Reconciliation	0,00	38.032,90	38.032,90	-
Theological Dialogues	249,04	1.989,69	1.989,69	249,04
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>190.663,72</b>	<b>1.043.856,59</b>	<b>893.014,23</b>	<b>341.506,08</b>

The following statements concerning the program budgets resulted within the scope of the audit:

- For the administration of the program budgets, the WCRC strives for a transparent procedure which completely transfers the earmarked stocks of the program reserves from the WCRC balance sheet to the ordinary budget for administration every year, thus making 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. The ORA checked the procedure in the accounting year 2020
- Three of a total of 20 programs showed no financial activities in the year 2020.
- In the case of the means of the program "Global Institute for Theology (GIT) ", the opening stock was raised by 50,000 EUR from the reserve GIT at the beginning of the year.
- In the case of the means youth work "Internship Program ", an adjustment posting was carried out according to the resolution of the Finance Committee of 26th February 2021. A personnel costs reserve for interns amounting to 62,740.98 EUR was created from these means. Thus, the opening stock amounting to 75,435.37 EUR was reduced to 12,694.39 EUR.
- The 2020 carry-over of the means Theological Dialogues amounting to 4,844.36 EUR was split into 294.04 EUR (Theological Dialogues) and 4,595.32 EUR (Theological Networks).
- 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 Hannover office. If funders indicate other administrative costs rates, these are applied.

A revision of the program costs and an examination of the procedure showed no indications for a misappropriated utilization or assignment of means.

### 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 2020 is as follows:

Donor	Remaining funds	Revenues	Expenses	Carry-over
	2019 EUR	2020 EUR	2020 EUR	2021 EUR
Council for World Mission	0,00	124.477,00	124.477,00	0,00
Otto per Mille	16.767,92	350.000,00	280.725,86	86.042,06
Evangelisches Missionswerk	2.353,32	200.000,00	135.248,50	67.104,82
Ev. Kirche von Westfalen	17.305,25	29.000,00	38.509,69	7.795,56
<b>Total:</b>	<b>36.426,49</b>	<b>703.477,00</b>	<b>578.961,05</b>	<b>160.942,44</b>

The non-required funds amounting to 160,942.44 EUR were carried forward into the budget year 2021 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	2020 EUR
Remaining means 2019	0,00
Revenues 2020	124.477,00
Expenses 2020	124.477,00
<i>thereof Executive Secretary</i>	82.626,18
<i>thereof Administrative Assistant</i>	41.850,82
<b>Carry-over 2021</b>	<b>0,00</b>

A review of the program costs showed no indications for a misappropriated utilization of the funds.

### 3.2.2 Otto per Mille

The contribution from Otto per Mille for the project work of the WCRC was deployed as follows:

<b>Otto per Mille</b>	<b>2020 EUR</b>
Remaining means 2019 from reimbursements in the budget year 2020	16.767,92
Revenues 2020	350.000,00
Expenses 2020	280.725,86
<i>thereof NIFEA</i>	13.306,06
<i>thereof Peace and Reconciliation</i>	38.032,90
<i>thereof RAN</i>	3.882,90
<i>thereof Partnership Fund</i>	225.504,00
<b>Carry-over 2021</b>	<b>86.042,06</b>

Concerning the funds from Otto per Mille it is to be noted that only 280,725.86 EUR of the total of 366,767.92 EUR available funds were deployed. The difference amounting to 86,042.06 EUR was temporarily assigned to earmarked project reserves. This was agreed upon with Otto per Mille.

A review of the project costs showed no indications for a misappropriated utilization of the funds.

### 3.2.3 Evangelisches Missionswerk

The contribution from the Evangelisches Missionswerk for the missionary work of the WCRC was deployed as follows:

<b>Evangelisches Missionswerk</b>	<b>2020 EUR</b>
Remaining means 2019 from reimbursements in the budget year 2020	2.353,32
Revenues 2020	200.000,00
Expenses 2020	135.248,50
<i>thereof lump sum administration</i>	30.000,00
<i>thereof Leadership Development</i>	49.972,68
<i>thereof Regional Empowerment</i>	52.254,00
<i>thereof Global Apartheid</i>	3.021,82
<b>Carry-over 2021</b>	<b>67.104,82</b>

A review of the project costs showed no indications for a misappropriated utilization of the funds.



### 3.2.4 Ev. Kirche von Westfalen

The contribution from the Ev. Kirche von Westfalen was deployed for the theology work of the partnership fund of the WCRC as follows.

Evangelische Kirche von Westfalen	2020 EUR
Remaining means 2019	17.305,25
Einnahmen 2020	29.000,00
Ausgaben 2020	38.509,69
<i>thereof lump sum administration</i>	2.320,00
<i>thereof Partnership F und B</i>	34.200,00
<i>thereof Reformed Dialogues</i>	1.989,69
<b>Carry-over 2021</b>	<b>7.795,56</b>

Concerning the funds from the Ev. Kirche von Westfalen it is to be noted that only 38,509.69 EUR of the total of 46,305.25 EUR available funds were deployed. The difference amounting to 7,795.56 EUR was temporarily assigned to earmarked project reserves. This was agreed upon with the Ev. Kirche von Westfalen.

Other than that, a review of the project 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	23.000,00	22.330,61	-669,39
Latin America	2.000,00	2.034,43	34,43
Caribbean and North America	230.000,00	231.357,15	1.357,15
Asia	40.000,00	60.493,96	20.493,96
Pacific	3.000,00	2.956,46	-43,54
Europe	420.000,00	437.045,55	17.045,55
<b>total</b>	<b>718.000,00</b>	<b>756.218,16</b>	<b>38.218,16</b>

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 Hannover, 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 2020 can be summarized as follows:

<b>Expat Expenses</b>	<b>Plan EUR</b>	<b>Ergebnis EUR</b>	<b>Saldo EUR</b>
<b>1111. Executive Secretaries</b>	26.000,00	23.849,48	2.150,52
<b>Gesamt</b>	<b>26.000,00</b>	<b>23.849,48</b>	<b>2.150,52</b>

The ORA carried out a revision of single cases and detected 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 had to realize a loss from currency conversions amounting to 16,949.04 EUR (previous year gain of 7,535.94 EUR) in the accounting year 2020.

<b>Fx Gain/ Fx Loss</b>	<b>Budgeted EUR</b>	<b>Actuals EUR</b>	<b>Difference EUR</b>
Fx gain	-	45.882,78	45.882,78
Fx loss	-	62.831,82	62.831,82
<b>total</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>- 16.949,04</b>	<b>- 16.949,04</b>

To safeguard against the risks resulting from currency fluctuations, an earmarked reserve of currently 100,000.00 EUR is being maintained. The exchange loss of 16,949.04 EUR was financed from the current budget.

### 3.6 Accounting entries of the program budgets

Concerning the program budget funds, the opening stocks of four programs were altered in 2020, as already mentioned in Tz. 3.1. Thus, the stated closing stock of the previous year does not correspond to the opening stock of the year 2020.

The opening stock of the reserve “Youth Internship Program” was altered due to a withdrawal of reserves amounting to 62,740.98 EUR. This withdrawal of reserves was

entered as a cancellation in SB 92. The ORA was able to reconstruct the corresponding entries.

The ORA recommends avoiding the cancellation of reserve stocks and opening stocks in the future. The closing stocks of the previous year have to correspond to the opening stocks. The corresponding cross entries are to be booked as reserve withdrawals within the frame of the year-end closing.

#### **4. Further statements**

Various questions and problems which arose during the course of the audit were discussed orally. 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

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### Audit of the year-end result 2020

Subject of the audit was the annual financial statement submitted by the WCRC for the year 2020. According to the result of this audit, the ORA can confirm that:

- the budget and asset accounting of the WCRC in the accounting year 2020 occurred in due form and in compliance with the relevant principles of orderly (budget) accounting and regulations,
- the financial statement for 2020 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 2020 can be recommended.

Hannover, 19<sup>th</sup> May 2021



AS REPRESENTATIVE

(SCHÖNEMEIER)

OBERRECHNUNGSAMT DER  
EVANGELISCHEN KIRCHE IN DEUTSCHLAND





## World Communion of Reformed Churches

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