



## **WCRC MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION - CONDITIONS**

We are glad that you have expressed an interest in the World Communion of Reformed Churches, and wish to help you in any way we can as you consider applying for membership.

It is obviously important that you should know as clearly as possible what the Communion is and what it exists to do. Its nature and purpose are formally set out in Articles I to VI of the Constitution, which should be studied carefully by prospective applicants. They are:

### **THE CONSTITUTION**

#### **PREAMBLE**

Jesus Christ is the foundation and head of the Christian church.

It is in Jesus Christ that the Word became flesh and the gospel is embodied.

It is to God in Christ that the Holy Scriptures, inspired by the Holy Spirit, bear witness.

It is through Christ that God gives abundant life and spiritual vitality to the members of the church in the power of the Holy Spirit.

The churches in the World Communion of Reformed Churches are called together in the name of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Under the sovereign God, with Christ's followers across the globe, sharing one baptism, the members of the communion belong to the one holy catholic and apostolic church.

#### **ARTICLE I – NAME AND SUCCESSION**

The name of this organization shall be the World Communion of Reformed Churches. The following constitute the name of the organization in French, German and Spanish:

Communion Mondiale des Églises Réformées (CMER)

Weltgemeinschaft Reformierter Kirchen (WGRK)

Comunión Mundial de Iglesias Reformadas (CMIR)

The World Communion of Reformed Churches is an international non-governmental and non-profit organization, registered as a corporation under public law in Germany and as a



501(c)3 corporate entity in the State of Michigan in the United States of America. The membership of the registered entities is the same.

As of the 2010 Uniting General Council, the World Communion of Reformed Churches succeeds the Reformed Ecumenical Council and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and its antecedents, as a united ecumenical body for Reformed churches.

## **ARTICLE II – BASIS**

The basis of the World Communion of Reformed Churches shall be the Word of the triune God, incarnate in Jesus Christ and revealed in the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments through the power of the Holy Spirit. It is to this triune God that the church bears witness. The World Communion of Reformed Churches is committed to embody a Reformed identity as articulated in the historic Reformed confessions and the Ecumenical Creeds of the early church, and as continued in the life and witness of the broader family of Reformed, United and Uniting churches.

## **ARTICLE III – VALUES**

- A. The World Communion of Reformed Churches is called to demonstrate and live the oneness in Christ we profess, to carry out its ministry in ways that enable all member churches to share their gifts, and to honour and be committed to God's saving purposes for the good of all and for the transformation of the world. The World Communion of Reformed Churches serves its members with love and care, encouraging their mutual support and nurture of one another.
- B. The World Communion of Reformed Churches in its order and actions is called to respect, defend, and advance the dignity of every person. In Jesus Christ all human differences must lose their power to divide. No one shall be disadvantaged for, among other reasons, race, ethnicity, or gender, and no individual or church may claim or exercise dominance over another.
- C. The World Communion of Reformed Churches embraces God's covenant promises for the redemption, restoration and renewal of the whole creation through Jesus Christ. In doing so, it affirms the biblical calling of the member to recognize the gift of baptism in one another, and the call to be unified in ministry, and together to bear witness to God's justice and peace and to the integrity of creation.



**ARTICLE IV – IDENTITY, MISSION AND PURPOSES**

- A. Drawing on the heritage of the Reformed confessions, as a gift for the renewal of the whole church, the World Communion of Reformed Churches is a communion of churches which shall foster communion among its member churches by:
1. affirming the gifts of unity in Christ and promoting unity in and among churches through the mutual recognition of baptism and membership, pulpit and table fellowship, ministry and witness;
  2. interpreting Reformed theology for contemporary Christian witness;
  3. encouraging the renewal of Christian worship and spiritual life within the Reformed tradition;
  4. renewing a commitment to partnership in God's mission through worship, witness, diaconal service and work for justice, so as to foster mission in unity, mission renewal, and mission empowerment;
  5. encouraging leadership development and nurture of the covenant community;
  6. engaging with other ecumenical organizations and churches of other traditions in the ecumenical movement through dialogue and cooperation in ministry;
  7. expressing unity and solidarity with those minorities living in the context of marginalization and violence.
- B. The World Communion of Reformed Churches shall assist its member churches by
1. widening and deepening understanding and community among the member churches and helping them to fulfil their own responsibilities in the service of Christ;
  2. facilitating the transformation of the member churches into interdependent missional communities that support, empower and challenge each other as partners in the one mission of God;
  3. promoting the full and just participation of all members, of all ages, in all aspects of the church's life and its public witness;
  4. promoting the full and just partnership of women and men in church and society;
  5. encouraging and promoting diaconal service in the church and society;
  6. expressing unity and solidarity with those of its members who are persecuted or marginalized.



- C. The World Communion of Reformed Churches shall also contribute to the ecumenical movement and the transformation of the world by:
1. promoting economic and ecological justice, global peace, and reconciliation in the world;
  2. promoting and defending religious, civil, and all other human rights wherever threatened throughout the world;
  3. encouraging and promoting relief and sustainable development in the world and focusing on the eradication of poverty;
  4. providing Reformed perspectives on church unity.

### **ARTICLE V – MEMBERSHIP**

- A. Any church of the Reformed, Presbyterian, Congregational, Waldensian, other First Reformation, United, and Uniting traditions is eligible to apply for membership, if such a church affirms this constitution.
- B. Member churches are expected to join in achieving the Mission and Purposes of the World Communion of Reformed Churches by, among other things, participating in meetings, financially supporting its existence, taking seriously its actions and decisions, and engaging in its collective work.
- C. Fellowships and associations of churches that affirm a Reformed identity and include in their membership World Communion of Reformed Churches' members are eligible for associate membership. Such associate members shall share in the fellowship and programmes of the World Communion of Reformed Churches, participate on a reciprocal basis without a vote in governance, and thereby strengthen the broader Reformed family's participation in the church ecumenical.
- D. An institution established by one or more member churches or whose faith basis and operation are in agreement with that of the historic Reformed confessions are eligible for affiliate membership, without voting privileges.
- E. Membership in the World Communion of Reformed Churches does not limit the autonomy of any member church or restrict its relationships with other churches or with other ecumenical organizations.
- F. Members in the World Communion of Reformed Churches shall support the work of the World Communion of Reformed Churches through an annual financial contribution reflecting the resources and membership of that church. The



General Council or the Executive Committee shall set a minimum contribution requirement for all member churches, associate and affiliate members.

- G. Application for membership shall be made to the office of the General Secretary not later than six months before a General Council meeting. Admission to membership shall be by decision of the Executive Committee following consultation with other member churches in the region. The General Council shall ratify new members by a two-thirds majority of ballots cast. A new member shall not vote on the ratification of its own membership.
- H. A member church may terminate its membership by giving notice in writing to the office of the General Secretary. It will be encouraged to give reasons for this action.

### **ARTICLE VI – SUSPENSION OF MEMBERSHIP**

The Executive Committee may suspend the membership of a member church for actions in violation of Article II --- Basis, Article III --- Values, or Article IV --- Identity, Mission and Purposes of this Constitution or for persistent failure to support or communicate with the organization, subject to the conditions stated in the Bylaws.

### **FEATURES OF CHURCH LIFE**

The Communion considers that the following are essential to the life and witness of Reformed churches in our time:

- A. The joyful and earnest worship of God.
- B. The faithful and urgent proclamation of the Gospel.
- C. A commitment to promote the unity of the Church in the service of God's mission to the world.
- D. The creation of a fully inclusive Christian community in which women and men, younger and older, are encouraged to exercise their gifts at every level. This includes an openness and willingness to work toward the ordination of women and to support their appointment to decision-making bodies.
- E. A passionate concern for the well-being of society.
- F. An uncompromising opposition to racism in any form.
- G. Participation in the conciliar process for justice, peace and the integrity of creation.



### **THE BENEFITS OF MEMBERSHIP**

There are considerable advantages involved in the membership of the Communion. Some of the principal benefits are:

- A. Membership of a world-wide Reformed family.
- B. The support of an international community of some 70 million Christians of the Reformed tradition.
- C. A wider variety of Christian service and the opportunity to engage in theological reflection with other Reformed churches.
- D. The right to be represented at the General Councils of the Communion, and, where applicable, its Regional Councils.

### **THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF MEMBERSHIP**

The Communion can only function effectively if its churches take their membership seriously and give one another and the Communion the support expected of them. The Communion therefore expects that its members will:

- A. Be ready to share their particular gifts and their distinctive traditions with one another.
- B. Be open to being challenged and changed by their encounters with other churches of the Communion.
- C. Take serious account of Communion policies and concerns, seek to act on them, and make them widely known among their members.
- D. Commit themselves to sustained dialogue with the Communion, maintaining regular and effective communication with its officers.
- E. Pay to the Communion an agreed annual sum.

We hope that you find this letter helpful and that your reflection on its contents will confirm your wish to become a member of the Communion. If any of what we have written gives you cause for concern, please tell us so that we may discuss it with you further.

If after consideration of this letter you decide to proceed with your application, please fill in the enclosed form and return it to us. We shall require a formal application from the appropriate authority in your church and two recommendation letters from two member churches of the WCRC (preferably from your region, if available) to endorse you.

Please note that it is national churches that can become members of WCRC and not individual congregations, and that there is a **minimum contribution due of at least 380 EUR per year** to WCRC as a membership obligation. The actual membership due rate will be



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Called to communion, committed to justice

calculated at the time of membership acceptance into the Communion. It is based on a range of factors, such as your country's GDP, membership size, etc.

The decision as to the acceptance of your church or organization into the Communion rests with the Constitution and Membership Committee, which typically meets once a year. The Constitution and Membership Committee then forwards its recommendation to the Executive Committee.

I look forward to hearing from you and receiving your church's application. Please let the WCRC General Secretariat know if you should have any further questions during the application process.