

Annual Report 2021



#ThursdaysInBlack

The WCRC and its members work for a world without gender-based violence.



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About the WCRC

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

Called to communion and committed to justice, the WCRC believes that communion and justice are inextricably connected: communion without justice masks inequality, exclusion, and oppression; justice without communion is in danger of becoming divisive. Together the whole of the Communion works to renew and restore the economy and the earth, so that all humanity and the whole of creation might live life in its fullness (Deuteronomy 30:19).

As the Accra Confession states, “We believe that God has made a covenant with all of creation (Genesis 9:8-12). God has brought into being an earth community based on the vision of justice and peace. The covenant is a gift of grace that is not for sale in the market place (Isaiah 55:1). It is an economy of grace for the household of all of creation.”

As a global *koinonia* marked by discerning, confessing, witnessing, and being reformed together, the WCRC strengthens and deepens unity among its members and coordinates common initiatives to increase its impact around the world.

The WCRC **discerns** both the signs of the times and God’s call to action, guided equally by its commitment to justice and

to maintaining the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

The WCRC is a **confessing** body, driven by the unfinished agenda of the Reformation and inspired by the Confessing Church in Germany, the community of the Belhar Confession, and the Accra Confession.

The WCRC **witnesses** to the good news of Jesus Christ that transforms death-dealing systems and structures and liberates for the fullness of life.

In **being reformed**, the WCRC collaborates and engages in God’s work of reforming and transforming according to the Word of God and movement of the Holy Spirit.

Introduction

At Such a Time as This

In May 2021, the Executive Committee met under the theme “At such a time as this.” (Esther 4:14) The verse has allowed us to express the stress that we experience under the conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic. The disruption of the “old normal” has sensitized us afresh for the challenges around us.

Almost all of us have lost relatives and friends during the pandemic. We have held the hands of people who could not breathe. We have experienced helplessness and anger when we saw how ill-equipped health systems have been unable to deal with the pandemic, how women have been abused at home, and children have been deprived of education and support. Politicians and businesses have taken advantage of the

situation to maximize their power. Existing divisions in our societies and throughout the globe have increased. People who have been vulnerable and marginalized are now living in even more abject conditions.

But despite all these challenges, we can still approach this difficult situation and its impact in a spirit of hope. This *kairotic* moment challenges us to a spirit of renewed imagination. In this light, the word “At such a time as this” opens up a space. It expresses not only the difficulties but also marks a special moment. The clarity of the view of the problems around us expresses itself as a calling. We are forced to see the world with open eyes. And it becomes abundantly clear that we have to act.

As we gathered virtually throughout 2021, we built a communion in which we can

comfort, support, and sustain each other in our attempts to meet God’s call in our proclamation and witness. This communion experience strengthened our confidence in God’s guidance:

- We **discern** ways in which to address the injustices of this world.
- We **confess** God’s justice against all attempts to normalize marginalization, oppression, and abuse.
- We **witness** in our many attempts to further peace and justice.
- And we allow ourselves **to be reformed by God**, who sustains us and gives us the strength to persevere in times of crisis.

Najla Kassab, President

Hanns Lessing

Philip Vinod Peacock

Phil Tanis, Collegial General Secretariat



The Officers' Committee is composed of the Collegial General Secretariat and the elected officers.

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



What Does God Require of Us?

Throughout 2021, the WCRC’s “COVID and Beyond” process brought the Communion together, asking, “What does God require of us? (Micah 6:8) Discerning, confessing, and witnessing in times of COVID-19 and Beyond.”

“This is a push for confessing, to say, Lord, what do you want from us as a Communion today?” said President Najla Kassab. “It’s important to be troubled as a Communion to move forward. We have to be courageous to discern, to look at ourselves, knowing that we are not alone, to trust that God is journeying with us.”

“This process has been able to engage the whole Communion in terms of how we respond to the urgent crisis of our times that the pandemic has exposed,”

said Philip Vinod Peacock, executive for justice and witness as part of the Collegial General Secretariat. “It has raised some difficult questions, but we have also been able to hear the voices of those who are normally silenced.”

“Our urgent call is not to feel that we have lost, that we are the victims—it is to articulate a new, regional ecumenics to seek following the love of Jesus Christ,” said Dario Barolin, executive secretary of the Latin America Alliance of Presbyterian and Reformed Churches.

“The church may not be ‘expert,’ but we know that without the love of God which calls for solidarity, compassionate justice, and respect for the rights and humanity

of others, our world will perish,” said theologian Allan Boesak of South Africa.

“Even when we say that the building is closed, the church is open. The church is not a building, the church is a movement,” said theologian Anna Case-Winters of the United States.

“The framework that is being built points the Communion to become a living confession for the world,” said Hanns Lessing, acting general secretary as part of the Collegial General Secretariat.

More information on the “COVID & Beyond” discernment process can be found at wrcr.ch/require.

Cultivating a Just Communion

In December the WCRC launched its new Gender Justice Policy at a webinar which focused on “Why the church needs intersectional feminism.”

“This is a special time as we gather to celebrate the launching of the Gender Justice Policy as an empowering document and guiding map on our journey towards lived justice for all,” said President Najla Kassab. “To address the issue of gender justice is not as an act of sympathy towards women, but rather integrity of the church, and a call for all of us as a Communion and churches worldwide.”

“We must be free to explore the liberative narratives of our Scriptures, to witness where women have navigated their identities in Christ in cultures that have not necessarily been on the side of women,” said Eve Rebecca Parker, a

professor at Durham University (United Kingdom), specifically citing the biblical story of Hagar and Sarai.

“Women all over the world experience sexism, but we do experience it differently depending on class, race, and sexuality,” said Isabel Phiri, deputy general secretary of the World Council of Churches. “When we talk about sexism we talk about the oppression of women on the basis of gender. Because we experience it differently, it becomes very important that feminist theology should reflect the context in which women live.”

“One of the things I appreciated in the Gender Justice Policy is that gender justice is not just a women’s concern. Too often feminism is reduced to a women’s issue. Men, too, need to be liberated from gender injustice that limits their

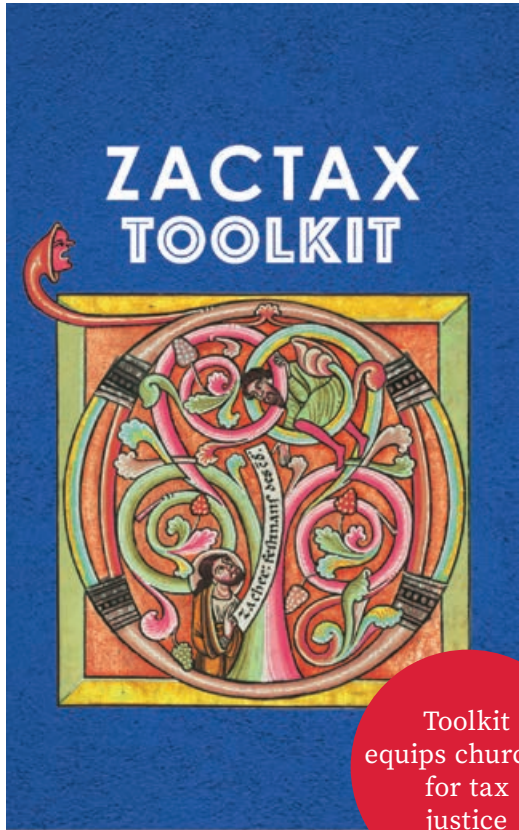
full humanity,” said Hanna Reichel, a professor at Princeton Theological Seminary. “Feminism is not about women. It’s about dismantling these structures of power that suffocate people all around the world, that inhibit everyone from fully flourishing, most especially this myth of white self-sufficient masculinity.”

The WCRC’s Gender Justice Policy advances the Communion’s vision of living out its call to communion and 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 the Communion and member churches.

The Gender Justice Policy can be downloaded at wcrch.org/justice/gender-equality.



Gender
Justice Policy
Launched



Toolkit
equips churches
for tax
justice

Covenanting for Justice

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

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

To both educate and enable churches to organize around the issue of tax justice,

the campaign has recently released the *ZacTax Toolkit*.

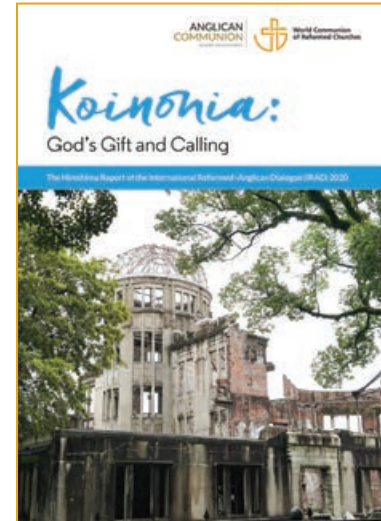
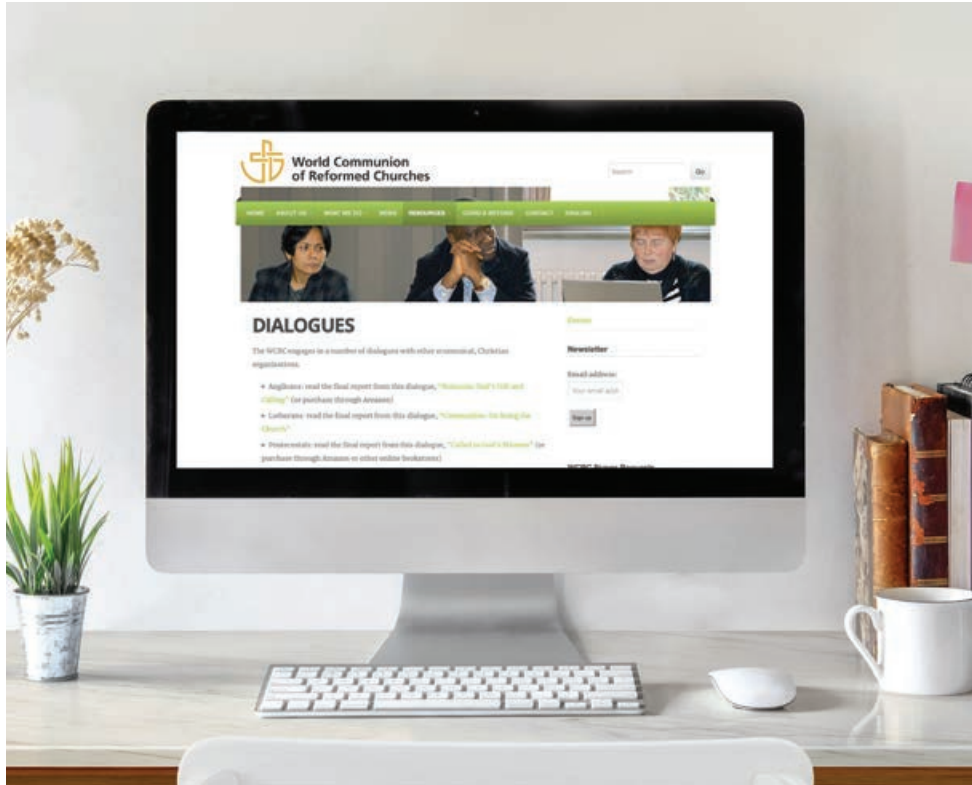
“Taxation is an important tool for sharing wealth equitably within and across countries as well as for holding corporations and citizens accountable for their responsibility towards upholding the common good, including care for the global ecological commons,” states the introduction to the Toolkit.

“Churches can and ought to play an important role in encouraging national and international systems of taxation that: reward work and redistribute gains, promote gender justice and ecological

sustainability, and penalize ‘public bads’ such as speculative, polluting, and resource-depleting activities,” it states.

The Zacchaeus Tax Campaign is a part of the New International Financial and Economic Architecture initiative (NIFEA), a joint effort by the Council for World Mission, Lutheran World Federation, World Communion of Reformed Churches, World Council of Churches, and World Methodist Council. Funding is provided by *Otto per Mille*.

The *Toolkit* and more information can be found at wcrch.ch/zactax.



Doing Theology for Transformation

Koinonia: God's Gift and Calling, the report of the International Reformed-Anglican Dialogue, was officially introduced at a webinar co-hosted by the Anglican Communion and WCRC in February.

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

“The theme of *koinonia* is hardly a new topic of discussion for ecumenists,” said Jamie Hawkey, a member of the Anglican dialogue team. “But the golden

nugget of this report is the insight that Christians have seriously undervalued and underestimated the primary contributions of *koinonia* in and between the churches. The report celebrates *koinonia* as both gift and calling.”

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

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

Koinonia: God's Gift and Calling is available at wrcr.ch/theology/dialogues.



Dialogue
report on
koinonia
commended
for use

Engaging God's Mission in a Context of Crisis

As the full extent of the COVID-19 pandemic unfolded, the WCRC's Partnership Fund shifted its focus to providing member churches financial support to deal with the unprecedented crisis.

“Throughout our WCRC family we saw our churches both responding to the realities of COVID and all the social and economic fallout that it brought but also reinvigorating their life and witness in response to the imperatives of the Accra Confession and the call for an economy of life,” said Chris Ferguson, former general secretary. “The actions ranged from the pastoral to the humanitarian to the prophetic, all in deep resonance with the WCRC's commitments as a global *koinonia*.”

Supported projects included:

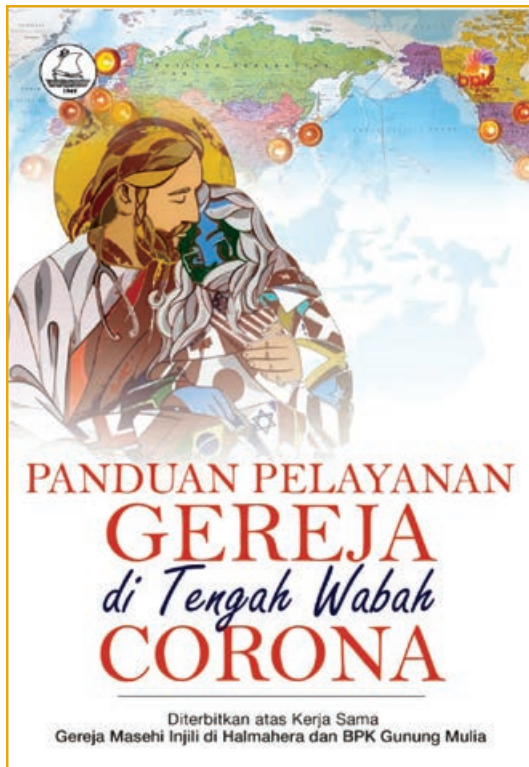
The Presbyterian Church in Rwanda, working with the government, distributed food to poor, elderly, and disabled people affected by the crisis. In addition, the church transmitted messages on how to limit the spread of COVID-19 through enhanced hygiene on Rwanda Television and other digital media.

The Evangelical Christian Church in Halmahera (GMIH) published *A Guide for Church Service in the Midst of the COVID-19 Pandemic* to provide assistance to ministries during the pandemic. It was distributed to all 453 GMIH congregations, despite logistical issues due to lockdowns. As suffering increased economic hardships due to the lockdowns, the GMIH also

distributed foodstuffs to church workers and food aid to vulnerable families.

Through its relief and humanitarian arm, the Presbyterian Relief and Development Agency (PRDA), the Presbyterian Church of South Sudan distributed food and other items to those suffering from the economic downturn brought on by the pandemic. Its main project, however, was an awareness campaign to educate people about heightened hygiene against the coronavirus.

The Reformed Partnership Fund is supported by grants from *Otto per Mille* and the Church of Westphalia (Germany), as well as donations from individuals and members.



Partnership Fund supports churches during pandemic

Living Out the Unity that We already Have

This mission-oriented understanding of *kolnonia* has influenced the way how the WCRC engages in the building of ecumenical relationships.
It taught us to place our understanding of the unity of the church in the horizon of the *missio dei*:

World Communion of Reformed Churches

Called to communion, committed to justice



Webinar on
ecumenical
dialogues looks
to future



// The WCRC signing the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification

Working with All the Partners God Provides

A webinar on “Justification and Justice: The Journey of the WCRC from Columbus to Notre Dame” gathered nearly two dozen participants in June to trace “the steps of a journey on which we’ve made momentous advances in the unity of the church—making that unity more visible in our life together,” as host Anna Case-Winters said.

The recent dialogue processes between the WCRC and both the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and the Roman Catholic Church, through its Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity (PCPCU), were detailed by dialogue team members.

Priscille Djomhue noted that the goal with the Lutherans “was to seek ways to encourage more visible unity between Lutheran and Reformed churches around

the world” which included exploring possibilities of common actions and statements.

This dialogue produced the report *Communion: On Being the Church* which itself was the basis for the Wittenberg Witness, a statement affirming the WCRC and LWF’s common call to continued renewal and cooperation, which was signed on the occasion of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in Wittenberg.

Justification and Sacramentality: The Christian Community as an Agent for Justice, the report of the latest Catholic-Reformed dialogue, was a stepping stone toward the WCRC signing the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ), at the

same worship service in Wittenberg during the 2017 General Council.

The webinar was designed to do more than present an overview of the WCRC’s past dialogues. It was also a launching point for the next phase of dialogues, as well as a deepening of the ongoing ecumenical partnerships already established.

“This idea of where to go from here has to do with the fact that we no longer approach dialogues as if there is a storehouse of Reformed ideas,” said Chris Ferguson, former general secretary. “Instead, we are actually sharing a living tradition. What does it mean to be in dialogue with a Reformed church always reforming?”

More information can be found at wrc.ch/theology/dialogues.

Finances

At an extraordinary meeting of the WCRC Executive Committee in November, General Treasurer Johann Weusmann presented a finance report with balanced budgets for both 2021 and 2022 but noted budgetary challenges thereafter, especially after the installation of the next general secretary.

“We will have a busy year as we seek the necessary funding for our 2023 budget and beyond,” Weusmann said. “Our members have been faithful in their payments, but costs continue to rise, so there will be work to do.”

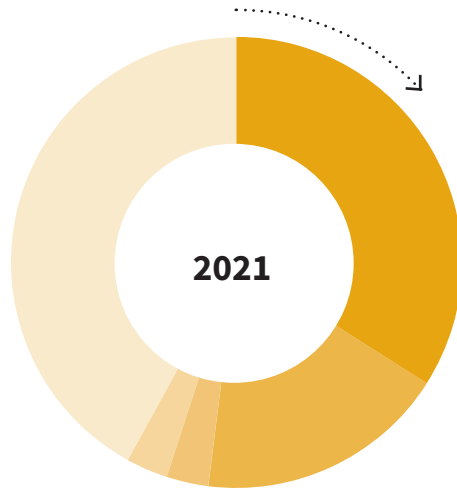
Recognizing these challenges, the Executive extended the mandate of the Task Group on Sustainability until 2025 while also adopting a definition of sustainability that is more than simply monetary:

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.

The Task Group was established in May to secure the short-, mid-, and long-term finances of the WCRC.

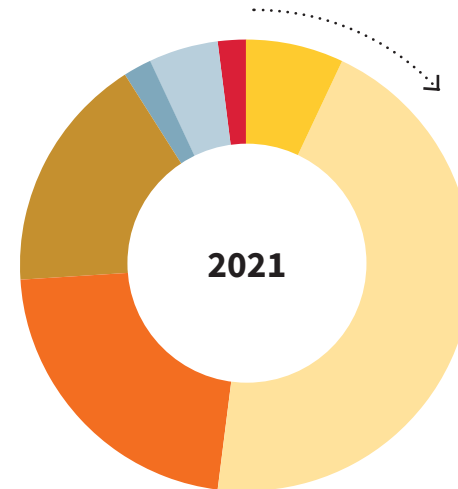
» Sustainability should not be defined narrowly in financial terms. We are sustained in all things by the Lord Jesus Christ, who brings our communion into being and nurtures it according to God’s will. «

Income - 2,813,052.61 €



- 34% ● Membership Contributions
- 18% ● Institutional Support
- 3% ● Programme Administration Fees
- 3% ● Others
- 42% ● Programme Support

Expenses - 2,813,052.61 €



- 7% ● Operational
- 45% ● Personnel
- 22% ● Others
- 17% ● Cultivating a Just Communion
- 2% ● Covenanting for Justice
- 5% ● Doing Theology for Transformation
- 2% ● Engaging God's Mission in a Context of Crisis

Executive Committee

Officers

PRESIDENT

Najla Kassab
*National Evangelical Synod
of Syria and Lebanon*

VICE PRESIDENTS

Sylvana Maria Apituley
Protestant Church in West Indonesia

Samuel Ayete-Nyampong
Presbyterian Church of Ghana

Raïssa Vieira Brasil
*United Presbyterian Church
of Brazil*

Lisa Vander Wal
Reformed Church in America

GENERAL TREASURER

Johann Weusmann
*Evangelical Church in
the Rhineland*

GENERAL SECRETARIAT

Chris Ferguson
(through August 2021)
United Church of Canada

THE COLLEGIAL GENERAL SECRETARIAT (From September 2021)

Hanns Lessing
Evangelical Church of Westphalia

Philip Vinod Peacock
Church of North India

Phil Tanis
Reformed Church in America

Members of the Executive Committee:

Clayton Da Silva
*Independent Presbyterian
Church of Brazil*

Diana Erdélyi
Reformed Church in Hungary

Hilary Hagar
Presbyterian Church in Canada

Hefin Jones
Union of Welsh Independents

Annabell Lalla-Ramkelawan
*Presbyterian Church of
Trinidad and Tobago*

Hong Jung Lee
Presbyterian Church of Korea

Coutinho Maravilhos Moma
*Evangelical Congregational
Church in Angola*

Veronica Muchiri
Presbyterian Church of East Africa

J. Herbert Nelson
Presbyterian Church (USA)

Tibonge Ng'ambi
United Church of Zambia

Hannah North
*Presbyterian Church Aotearoa
New Zealand*

Claudio Pasquet
Waldensian Evangelical Church

Khid-arn Prawate
Church of Christ in Thailand

Milciades Pua
Presbyterian Church of Colombia

Mary Ekinde Salle
Presbyterian Church in Cameroon

Susan Thomas
Church of South India

Regional Leaders on the Executive Committee:

Uma Agwu Onmunta
*African Communion of
Reformed Churches*

Aginaldo P. Gomes
*Alliance of Presbyterian
and Reformed Churches
in Latin America*

Heo Baekki
North East Asia Area Council

Angela Martins
*Caribbean and North American
Area Council*

Martina Wasserloos-Strunk
WCRC Europe



// The Executive Committee stayed connected with online meetings



// Staff Illustration by intern Meta Ginting

2021 Staff

Chris Ferguson

General Secretary (through August 2021)
United Church of Canada

Hanns Lessing

Executive Secretary for Communion and Theology
Collegial General Secretariat (from September 2021)
Evangelical Church of Westphalia

Philip Vinod Peacock

Executive Secretary for Justice and Witness
Collegial General Secretariat (from September 2021)
Church of North India

Phil Tanis

Executive Secretary for Communications and Operations
Collegial General Secretariat (from September 2021)
Reformed Church in America

Gerhard Plenter

Finance Coordinator
Evangelical Reformed Church (Germany)

Anna Krüger

Administrator for Finance and Sustainability

Amritha Perumalla

Administrator for Projects and Programs

Werner Joecker

Assistant for the Reformed Partnership Fund
(through July 2021)

Resources



WCRC website: wrcr.ch

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



Facebook

facebook.com/worldcommunion



Twitter

[@reformedcomunio](https://twitter.com/reformedcomunio)

Reformed Communiqué

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

Reformed World

Published two times per year in English.

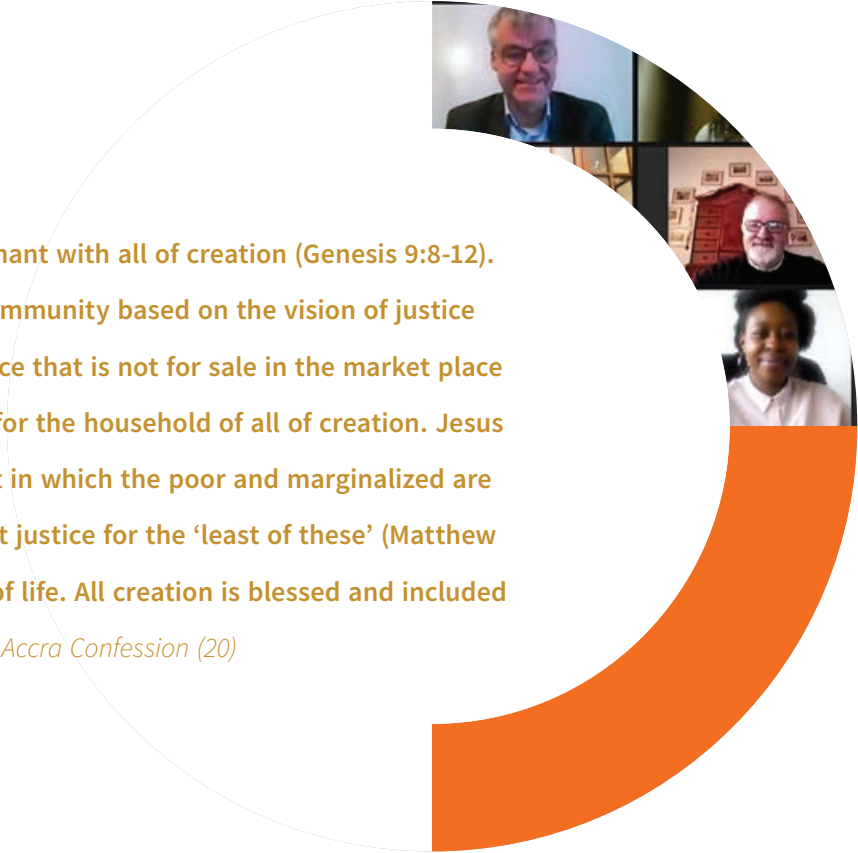
Monthly e-news summary

Sign up at the WCRC website.

The staff of the World Communion of Reformed Churches is based at the Calvin Centre in Hannover, Germany.

General enquiries: wrcr@wrcr.eu

General Secretariat: gs@wrcr.eu



» We believe that God has made a covenant with all of creation (Genesis 9:8-12). God has brought into being an earth community based on the vision of justice and peace. The covenant is a gift of grace that is not for sale in the market place (Isaiah 55:1). It is an economy of grace for the household of all of creation. Jesus shows that this is an inclusive covenant in which the poor and marginalized are preferential partners and calls us to put justice for the ‘least of these’ (Matthew 25:40) at the centre of the community of life. All creation is blessed and included in this covenant (Hosea 2:18ff). « —*The Accra Confession (20)*

