



World Communion  
of Reformed Churches

# Executive Committee Minutes 2022

“STAND FIRM, GIVING YOURSELVES FULLY  
TO THE WORK OF THE LORD”



**Minutes of the  
World Communion  
of Reformed Churches  
Executive Committee  
held 17-20 May 2022**

**“Stand firm, giving yourselves fully to the  
work of the Lord”**

*“Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters,  
stand firm. Let nothing move you.  
Always give yourselves fully  
to the work of the Lord,  
because you know  
that your labour  
in the Lord is  
not in vain.”*

—1 Corinthians 15:58

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## **PARTICIPANTS**

### **Officers**

#### **President**

Najla Kassab, National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon

#### **Vice-Presidents**

Samuel Ayete-Nyampong, Presbyterian Church of Ghana

Raíssa Vieira Brasil, United Presbyterian Church of Brazil

Lisa Vander Wal, Reformed Church in America

#### **Treasurer**

Johann Weusmann, Evangelical Church in the Rheinland

#### **Collegial General Secretariat**

Hanns Lessing, Evangelical Church of Westphalia

Philip Vinod Peacock, Church of North India

Phil Tanis, Reformed Church in America

#### **Members**

Wertson Brasil, AIPRAL

Diana Erdélyi, Reformed Church in Hungary

Agnaldo P. Gomes, AIPRAL

Hefin Jones, Union of Welsh Independents

Prawate Khid-arn, Church of Christ in Thailand

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

Shuhei Oishi, NEACC

Uma Agwu Onmunta, ACRC

Claudio Pasquet, Waldensian Evangelical Church

Milciades Pua, Presbyterian Church of Colombia

Mary Ekinde Salle, Presbyterian Church in Cameroon

Martina Wasserloos-Strunk, WCRC Europe

Dianna Wright, Presbyterian Church (USA)

#### **Ecumenical Guests**

Susanne Erlecke, Evangelical Church in Germany

Casely Essamuah, Global Christian Forum

Dirk G. Lange, Lutheran World Federation

Vasile Octavian Mihoc, World Council of Churches

## Participants

Jean-Daniel Pluess, Pentecostal World Fellowship  
Olaf Rehren, Association of Protestant Churches and Missions in Germany  
Eckhard Zemmrich, Evangelical Mission in Solidarity

### **Observers and Guests**

János Antal, WCRC Europe  
Michael Blair, The United Church of Canada  
Serge Fornerod, Protestant Church in Switzerland  
Joseph Kabango, John Knox International Reformed Center  
John McPake, Church of Scotland  
Sue Rheem, PC(USA) Ministry to the United Nations  
Paul Tch , Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)  
Karen Georgia Thompson, United Church of Christ

### **Staff**

Anna Kr ger, Administrator for Finance and Sustainability  
Antranik Manoukian, Administrator for the General Secretariat  
Modesta Mekeresi, Intern  
Amritha Perumalla, Administrator for Projects and Programs  
Gerhard Plenter, Finance Coordinator  
Ismetyati Tuhuteru, Intern

### **Worship Leader**

Eve Parker

### **Minute Taker**

Antranik Manoukian

### **Interpreters**

Corina D az  
Robert Jordan

## TIMETABLE

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

### **Tuesday, 17 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: Listening: Address of the President
14:30	Break
14:45	Plenary: Listening: CGS Report, SPPG Report
15:30	Discernment Session: Address & Reports
16:30	Drafting Team / Social Time

### **Wednesday, 18 May**

13:00	Daily Prayers
13:30	Plenary: Decisions: Reports
14:00	Plenary: Greetings from Ecumenical Guests
14:30	Break
14:45	Plenary: Listening: General Council Planning
15:30	Discernment Session: General Council Planning
16:30	Drafting Team / Social Time

### **Thursday, 19 May**

13:00	Daily Prayers
13:30	Plenary: Decisions: General Council Planning
14:00	Plenary: Listening: Reappointments / Review Reports
14:30	Break
14:45	Plenary: Listening: Leadership Model
15:30	Discernment Session: Executives and Leadership Model
16:30	Drafting Team / Social Time

### **Friday, 20 May**

13:00	Plenary: Decisions: Executives and Leadership Model
13:30	Plenary: Reports from Regions
14:30	Break
14:45	Plenary: Reports from Regions continued
15:15	Plenary: Budget/Finance, Remaining business, Michigan Corporation
16:15	Thanks and Closing Worship

## ACTIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 2022

The Executive Committee:

### Rules of Procedure

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

### Agenda

2. Approved the agenda for the meeting.

### Executive Committee Minutes 2021

3. Approved the Minutes of the Executive Committee meetings in 2021: both regular (May) and extraordinary (November/December).

### Appointments

4. Appointed the following people to the Drafting Team: Dianna Wright, Hefin Jones, Hilary Hagar, Karen Georgia Thompson, Antranik Manoukian.
5. Appointed the following as members and officials of Discernment Groups:  
*Discernment Group 1*  
Lisa Vander Wal (facilitator), Dianna Wright (scribe), Tibonge Ng'ambi, Veronica Muchiri, Agnaldo P. Gomes, Milciades Pua, Wertson Brasil, Joseph Kabongo.  
*Discernment Group 2*  
Samuel Ayete-Nyampong (facilitator), Hefin Jones (scribe), Hong Jung Lee, Hannah North, Mary Ekinde Salle, Dirk Lange, Michael Blair, John McPake.  
*Discernment Group 3*  
Raïssa Vieira Brasil (facilitator), Antranik Manoukian (scribe), Claudio Pasquet, Uma Agwu Onwunta, Martina Wasserloos, Serge Fornerod, Casely Essamuah, Olaf Rehren, Eckhard Zemmrich, Susanne Erlecke, Paul Tch .  
*Discernment Group 4*  
Hanns Lessing (facilitator), Karen Georgia Thompson (scribe), Johann Weusmann, Angela Martins, Diana Erd lyi, Coutinho Maravillhoso Moma, Khid-arn Prawate, Shuheji Ohishi, Vasile-Octavian Mihoc, Jean-Daniel Pl ss, Eve Parker.



### **Address of the President**

6. Received the Address of the President and referred pertinent portions of it to discernment groups for discussion.

### **Report of the Collegial General Secretariat**

7. Received the Report of the Collegial General Secretariat and referred pertinent portions of it to discernment groups for discussion.

### **Report of the Strategic Plan Programme Group**

8. Received the Report of the Strategic Plan Programme Group and referred pertinent portions of it to discernment groups for discussion.

### **Drafting Team Report: 18 May**

9. Received the Drafting Team Report: 18 May as an accurate reflection of Discernment Group discussions and referred its contents for use by the pertinent bodies noted.

### **Report of the General Council Task Group**

10. Received the Report of the General Council Task Group and referred it to the discernment groups for discussion.

### **2025 General Council Theme**

11. Adopted "Persevere in Your Witness" as the theme for the 2025 General Council.

### **General Council Planning Committee**

12. Established a General Council Planning Committee consisting of the following members:
  - Dario Barolin (moderator)
  - Najla Kassab
  - Prawate Khid-arn
  - Veronica Muchiri
  - Gerardo Oberman (moderator of the Worship Committee)
  - Victoria Turner
  - Karen Georgia Thompson
  - A representative of the Asia Consortium
  - Collegial General Secretariat (*ex officio*)

And with the following mandate:

The General Council Planning Committee shall be responsible for the planning of the 27th General Council to be held in Thailand in 2025.

Responsibilities include working with the WCRC staff to develop a detailed programme, timetable, budget, publications, discernment processes, and symbolic events of the General Council.

The General Council Planning Committee, in consultation with the Officers' Committee, may appoint other committees, subcommittees, or working groups.

The General Council Planning Committee shall work with representatives of the host committee in Thailand and member churches in Asia to establish and assure that the Council is rooted contextually.

The General Council Planning Committee shall report regularly to both the Officers' Committee and the Executive Committee.

### **Reappointment of the Executive Secretary for Communion and Theology**

13. Expressed appreciation for the work of the Rev. Dr. Hanns Lessing and approved his appointment to a second five-year term as Executive Secretary for Communion and Theology.

### **Reappointment of the Executive Secretary for Justice and Witness**

14. Expressed appreciation for the work of the Rev. Philip Vinod Peacock and approved his appointment to a second five-year term as Executive Secretary for Justice and Witness.

### **Personnel Committee**

15. Received the Officers Report as the Personnel Committee

### **Postponement of the Election of a General Secretary and the Interim Period**

16. Postponed the election of a general secretary until such a time when an election is feasible.
17. Continued the interim period with delegation of the responsibilities of the general secretary to the Collegial General Secretariat (as defined in 2021

Executive Committee, action 22), and including the Executive Secretary for Mission and Advocacy upon her/his appointment, until a general secretary is installed into office.

### **Sustainability**

18. Appointed a Committee that shall consist of individuals from the General Secretary Search Committee, Sustainability Task Group, and Strategic Plan Programme Group, with the Collegial General Secretariat participating as *ex officio* members.

This Committee is mandated to:

- focus on the short- and mid-term sustainability challenges described in this report;
- explore ways in which the WCRC can develop a model that allows flexibility in collaboration with regions, member churches, and partners to pursue the vision and mission of the WCRC;
- present a report with proposal(s) to the 2023 Executive Committee meeting on how the conditions can be created that would:
  - allow the election of a general secretary;
  - assure sufficient staff capacity to collaborate and to coordinate the work of the WCRC.

### **Staff Capacity**

19. Welcomed additional staff capacity that is funded by programme grants or through collaborative and cooperative agreements with member churches and partners, which may include a more decentralized working model.

### **Regional Councils**

20. Received the reports of the regional councils with thanks.

### **Finance Committee Report**

21. Accepted the Audit Report 2021.
22. Exonerated the Acting General Secretary and the General Treasurer for the budget, economic management, and asset administration of the WCRC for the accounting year 2021.
23. Agreed to have the audit of the 2022 financial statement be carried out by the High Audit Office of the *Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland*.

Actions

24. Authorized the officers to give preliminary approval to a balanced budget for 2023 subject to final approval at the 2023 Executive Committee meeting.

**Executive Committee of the WCRC Michigan Corporation**

25. Approved the Minutes of the Executive Committee of the Michigan Corporation of WCRC, held virtually 25-28 May 2021 and 29 November – 1 December 2021.
26. Agreed that all the actions of the Executive Committee during its virtual meeting 17-20 May 2022, are fully concurred with and entered into the permanent record of the WCRC Michigan Corporation as constituting the decisions of 2022.

**NARRATIVE RECORD  
of the Zoom-based meeting of the Executive Committee  
17-20 May 2022**

**TUESDAY, 17 MAY**

**Opening Worship**

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

The Executive Committee was warmly welcomed by President Najla Kassab. The President also welcomed the attending guests and ecumenical partners as she emphasized the significance of the Communion for the Churches to come, discern, confess, and reform together.

Philip Vinod Peacock greeted the participants on behalf of the Collegial General Secretariat (CGS).

Eve Parker led worship.

Rita Famos, president of the Protestant Church in Switzerland, was scheduled to be the preacher during worship. Since she was absent due to her illness with COVID-19, her sermon was read on her behalf by Serge Fornerod.

**Plenary Session**

Phil Tanis introduced and reminded members of the mechanics of a Zoom meeting.

The President opened the first session of the Executive Committee. She welcomed Shuhei Oishi, who replaced Heo Baekki, moderator of Northeast Asia Area Council (NEAAC), and Dianna Wright, in place of J. Herbert Nelson II (Presbyterian Church (USA)), as alternate members of the Executive Committee. She also welcomed and congratulated Wertson Brasil, the new president of the Latin America Alliance of Presbyterian and Reformed Churches (AIPRAL), on his election. Aginaldo Pereira Gomes, outgoing AIPRAL president, was also welcomed to the meeting.

On behalf of the CGS, Phil Tanis stated that a quorum to proceed was present. The President declared the meeting to be quorate.

Upon the request of the President, Hanns Lessing, on behalf of the CGS, introduced and welcomed the ecumenical guests and partners.

Phil Tanis presented the proposed Rules of Procedure for Use in a Virtual Executive Committee (see page 25) and reminded members of the mechanics of the discernment and consensus model of decision-making.

**ACTION 1**

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

Phil presented the proposed agenda for the Executive Committee meeting (see page 5).

**ACTION 2**

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

Phil presented the minutes from the two meetings held in 2021, the regular meeting in May and the extraordinary meeting in November/December, noting that both were posted to the website and distributed to WCRC member churches.

**ACTION 3**

**The Executive Committee approved the Minutes of the Executive Committee meetings in 2021: both regular (May) and extraordinary (November/December).**

Phil presented the proposed assignments to the Drafting Team and discernment groups.

**ACTION 4**

**The Executive Committee appointed the following people to the Drafting Team: Dianna Wright, Hefin Jones, Hilary Hagar, Karen Georgia Thompson, Antranik Manoukian.**

**ACTION 5**

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

***Discernment Group 1***

**Lisa Vander Wal (facilitator), Dianna Wright (scribe), Tibonge Ng'ambi, Veronica Muchiri, Aginaldo P. Gomes, Milciades Pua, Wertson Brasil, Joseph Kabongo.**

***Discernment Group 2***

**Samuel Ayete-Nyampong (facilitator), Hefin Jones (scribe), Hong Jung Lee, Hannah North, Mary Ekinde Salle, Dirk Lange, Michael Blair, John McPake.**

***Discernment Group 3***

**Raïssa Vieira Brasil (facilitator), Antranik Manoukian (scribe), Claudio Pasquet, Uma Agwu Onwunta, Martina Wasserloos, Serge Fornerod, Casely Essamah, Olaf Rehren, Eckhard Zemmrich, Susanne Erlecke, Paul Tch .**

***Discernment Group 4***

**Hanns Lessing (facilitator), Karen Georgia Thompson (scribe), Johann Weusmann, Angela Martins, Diana Erd lyi, Coutinho Maravillhoso Moma, Khid-arn Prawate, Shuhei Ohishi, Vasile-Octavian Mihoc, Jean-Daniel Pl uss, Eve Parker.**

**Listening Session: Address of President**

Vice-President Lisa Vander Wal took the chair and invited the President to address the Executive Committee.

The President presented her address (see page 36).

The Vice-President thanked the President for articulating the Communion’s celebrations and challenges and expressing the call to hope.

**ACTION 6**

**The Executive Committee received the Address of the President and referred pertinent portions of it to discernment groups for discussion.**

A short break followed.

**Listening Session: CGS and SPPG Reports**

The Vice-President invited the CGS to present their report.

Hanns Lessing introduced the CGS report with a short reflection on the 2022 Executive Committee theme, “Stand firm, giving yourselves fully to the work of the Lord” (see page 42).

Philip Vinod Peacock, on behalf of the CGS, presented their report (see page 45).

**ACTION 7**

**The Executive Committee received the Report of the Collegial General Secretariat and referred pertinent portions of it to discernment groups for discussion.**

Hanns Lessing invited Daniel Rathnakara Sadananda to present the Strategic Plan Programme Group (SPPG) report.

Daniel Rathnakara Sadananda presented the report (see page 64).

## **ACTION 8**

**The Executive Committee received the Report of the Strategic Plan Programme Group and referred pertinent portions of it to discernment groups for discussion.**

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 led by Phi Tanis.

### **WEDNESDAY, 18 MAY**

#### **Daily Prayers**

President Kassab opened the meeting and invited Eve Parker to lead the Executive Committee in worship. Readings were from the 1 Corinthians. The sermon was preached by Philippa Osei, youth moderator of the United Reformed Church.

#### **Plenary Session**

Philip Vinod Peacock thanked Eve Parker and Philippa Osei for their contribution to the worship and invited President Najla Kassab to lead the proceedings. The President expressed her deep gratitude for the common worship that brings the members together and appreciated particularly the presence of youth at the Executive Committee meeting. She invited the interns and staff of the global office to introduce themselves to the Committee.

#### **Decisions Session: Reports**

Vice-President Vander Wal took the chair.

Based on the discussions of the discernment groups, Hefin Jones presented the Drafting Team Report: 18 May (see page 128). He also acknowledged the work of the other Drafting Team members.

## **ACTION 9**

**The Executive Committee received the Drafting Team Report: 18 May as an accurate reflection of Discernment Group discussions and referred its contents for use by the pertinent bodies noted.**

#### **Listening Session: Greetings from Ecumenical Guests**

The President invited Hanns Lessing to introduce the ecumenical partners and guests to the Executive Committee to present their greetings.



Hanns Lessing invited the following guests to deliver their greetings to the Executive Committee:

- Vasile-Octavian Mihoc brought the greetings of the World Council of Churches (see page 125).
- Jean Daniel Plüss brought greetings of the World Pentecostal Fellowship (see page 126).
- Paul Tch  brought the greetings of the Disciples of Christ World Communion (Disciples Ecumenical Consultative Council) (see page 119).
- Casely Essamuah brought greetings of the Global Christian Forum (see page 122).
- Olaf Rehren brought the greetings of the Association of Protestant Churches and Missions in Germany (see page 118).
- Susanne Erlecke brought the greetings of the Evangelical Church in Germany (see page 120).

In addition, video greetings from the Evangelical Mission in Solidarity were shared with the Executive (see page 121).

Hanns Lessing welcomed Joseph Kabango from the John Knox International Reformed Center to present his report (see page 114). Due to an internet connection issue which interrupted the report, the President invited Serge Fornerod, the WCRC representative at the John Knox International Reformed Center, to report on the Center's work and developments.

A short break followed.

### **Listening Session: General Council Planning**

Vice-President Samuel Ayete-Nyampong took the chair. He invited Karen Georgia Thompson to present the Report of the General Council Task Group.

Karen Georgia Thompson presented the Report of the General Council Task Group (see page 73).

Hong Jung Lee asked for clarification on the Asian Consortium and its membership. Philip Vinod Peacock explained the consortium as a group of member churches which will accompany the 2025 General Council. It is planned to have a representative of the Asian Consortium on the General Council Planning Committee when the latter is established. Hong Jung Lee proposed to include the Consortium representatives in the initial stage of the General Council planning so that their role would not be limited to finding or securing financial resources but they should be involved as well in regard to determining the content and the structure of the

Narrative

Council.

### **ACTION 10**

**The Executive Committee received the Report of the General Council Task Group and referred it to the discernment groups for discussion.**

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 led by Phi Tanis.

## **THURSDAY, 19 MAY**

### **Daily Prayers**

The President opened the Executive Committee meeting and invited Eve Parker to read the prayers. Modesta Mekeresi read the biblical text from 1 Corinthians. The sermon was collectively preached by the CGS.

### **Plenary Session**

After thanking the organizers and the contributors to the worship, the President started the plenary session

### **Plenary: Decisions: General Council Planning**

President Kassab invited Vice-President Raíssa Vieira Brasil to lead the plenary.

Vice-President Brasil thanked the President and asked Hefin Jones to present the Drafting Team Report: 19 May (see page 133).

Hefin Jones presented the report based on the discernment discussion about General Council planning. Since there was not any consensus on specific changes to the wording of the General Council's theme, he stated the drafting team's proposal to the Executive Committee was to adopt "Persevere in Your Witness" as the theme for the 2025 General Council.

In consideration of the brief wording of the theme, Vice-President Vander Wal drew attention to the significance and breadth of the added biblical passages to the proposal, indicating that the full parts of these scriptures would be unpacked during the General Council.

Vice-President Ayete-Nyampong added that presenting subthemes to the broad theme would help to see what one can look forward to in regard to the general

discussion of the theme and proposed to break down the theme into subthemes to be presented to the Executive Committee in the future.

**ACTION 11**

**The Executive Committee adopted “Persevere in Your Witness” as the theme for the 2025 General Council.**

**ACTION 12**

**The Executive Committee established a General Council Planning Committee consisting of the following members:**

- **Dario Barolin (moderator)**
- **Najla Kassab**
- **Prawate Khid-arn**
- **Veronica Muchiri**
- **Gerardo Oberman (moderator of the Worship Committee)**
- **Victoria Turner**
- **Karen Georgia Thompson**
- **A representative of the Asia Consortium**
- **Collegial General Secretariat (*ex officio*)**

**And with the following mandate:**

**The General Council Planning Committee shall be responsible for the planning of the 27th General Council to be held in Thailand in 2025.**

**Responsibilities include working with the WCRC staff to develop a detailed programme, timetable, budget, publications, discernment processes, and symbolic events of the General Council.**

**The General Council Planning Committee, in consultation with the Officers’ Committee, may appoint other committees, subcommittees, or working groups.**

**The General Council Planning Committee shall work with representatives of the host committee in Thailand and member churches in Asia to establish and assure that the Council is rooted contextually.**

**The General Council Planning Committee shall report regularly to both the Officers’ Committee and the Executive Committee.**

The Vice-President thanked the drafting team and asked the President to return to the chair. Before moving to the next session, the President reminded those gathered of Angela Martin’s absence due to health reasons. The President expressed the Committee’s prayers and hopes that she would get well soon.

### **Decision Session: Reappointments / Review Reports**

The President asked Vice-President Vander Wal to present the Officers Report as the Personnel Committee (see page 69).

Vice-President Vander Wal presented the report, including recommendations to the Executive Committee.

#### **ACTION 13**

**The Executive Committee expressed appreciation for the work of the Rev. Dr. Hanns Lessing and approved his appointment to a second five-year term as Executive Secretary for Communion and Theology.**

#### **ACTION 14**

**The Executive Committee expressed appreciation for the work of the Rev. Philip Vinod Peacock and approved his appointment to a second five-year term as Executive Secretary for Justice and Witness.**

After their reappointments for a second term, Vice-President Vander Wal expressed on behalf of the Officers' Committee their great appreciation to Hanns and Philip for the work they have accomplished in extraordinary circumstances and which they'll continue to do on the way to the next General Council.

Also, since Phil Tanis will finish his second (and final) term with the WCRC in 2024 the Vice-President noted with deep appreciation Phil's competent and cheerful work on behalf of the Communion.

General Treasurer Johann Weusmann noted that Hanns Lessing's reappointment is also conditioned by the extension of Hanns' secondment to the WCRC which has not been fulfilled yet.

Uma Agwu Onmunta raised the question of the appointment of Phil's successor, noting the importance to arrange for his successor to understudy him before his departure from the WCRC.

Phil explained that normally when a term of an executive secretary is close to completion, a search committee is set up in time to appoint someone at a date before the end of the current executive secretary's term. Thus, the Executive should address this issue at their 2023 meeting.

Veronica Muchiri asked whether there would be possibilities to extend the term of the current Executive Secretary for Communications and Operations by one year, considering that his term ends a year before the next General Council and that communications is key for the Communion on its way to the Council.

The President affirmed that at its 2023 meeting, the Executive Committee should consider all factors, including both the challenging financial situation of the Communion and the serious need to maintain the continuity of the communications work in the organization.

Veronica Muchiri also called to consider during recruitment the issue of gender justice even at the level of the executive secretary positions, noting that all current secretaries are male and that the WCRC should constantly engage with this issue and see how best it can reflect the professed ideals as a communion.

The President thanked Veronica Muchiri for raising this point and affirmed that a female executive secretary will join the global office. She stressed that the issue of gender justice at the office remains an important concern.

#### **ACTION 15**

**The Executive Committee received the Officers Report as the Personnel Committee.**

A short break followed.

#### **Listening Session: Leadership Model**

The President invited General Treasurer Johann Weusmann, as a member of the General Secretary Search Committee, to present the Search Committee's report (see page 83).

General Treasurer Weusmann presented the report to the Executive Committee.

The President invited Vice-President Samuel Ayete-Nyampong to present the Proposal by the Officers' Committee on the Election of a General Secretary and the Leadership Model During the Interim (see page 85).

Vice-President Ayete-Nyampong presented the proposal.

The Executive Committee broke for Discernment Group meetings.

After the meetings of discernment groups, the President closed the meeting and asked John McPake and Angela Martins to say prayers.

After the meeting concluded, the Drafting Team met.

## FRIDAY, 20 MAY

### Plenary Session

The President opened the plenary session with a word of prayer.

### Decisions: Executives and Leadership Model

The President invited Vice-President Samuel Ayete-Nyampong to lead the plenary.

The Vice-President thanked the President and asked Hefin Jones to present the Drafting Team Report: 20 May (see page 138).

Hefin Jones thanked his colleagues on the drafting team for their work and presented the report.

Vice-President Ayete-Nyampong thanked Hefin Jones and the drafting team for their comprehensive report and commended their work.

### ACTION 16

**The Executive Committee postponed the election of a general secretary until such a time when an election is feasible.**

### ACTION 17

**The Executive Committee continued the interim period with delegation of the responsibilities of the general secretary to the Collegial General Secretariat (as defined in 2021 Executive Committee, action 22), and including the Executive Secretary for Mission and Advocacy upon her/his appointment, until a general secretary is installed into office.**

### ACTION 18

**The Executive Committee appointed a Committee that shall consist of individuals from the General Secretary Search Committee, Sustainability Task Group, and Strategic Plan Programme Group, with the Collegial General Secretariat participating as *ex officio* members.**

**This Committee is mandated to:**

- **focus on the short- and mid-term sustainability challenges described in this report;**
- **explore ways in which the WCRC can develop a model that allows flexibility in collaboration with regions, member churches and partners to pursue the vision and mission of the WCRC;**
- **present a report with proposal(s) to the 2023 Executive Committee meeting on how the conditions can be created that would:**

- **allow the election of a general secretary;**
- **assure sufficient staff capacity to collaborate and to coordinate the work of the WCRC.**

### **ACTION 19**

**The Executive Committee welcomed additional staff capacity that is funded by programme grants or through collaborative and cooperative agreements with member churches and partners, which may include a more decentralized working model.**

The President assured the Executive Committee that all concerns raised in the presented reports will be taken into serious consideration and discussed with the Officers.

Vice-President Ayete-Nyampong invited Dirk G. Lange to bring greetings from the World Lutheran Federation (LWF) on behalf of Anne Burghardt, LWF general secretary (see page 123).

The Vice-President invited Sue Rheem, PC(USA) representative to the United Nations, to present the report of the United Nations Ministry (see page 115).

Vice-President Ayete-Nyampong invited the President to return to the chair.

### **Listening Session: Reports from Regions**

The President introduced the plenary and invited Vice-President Vander Wal to take the chair.

Vice-President Vander Wal invited the representatives of the regional councils to present their reports.

Agnaldo Gomes presented the report of AIPRAL, *Alianza de Iglesias Presbiterianas y Reformadas de América Latina* (see page 101).

Uma Agwu Onmunta presented the report of ACRC, Africa Communion of Reformed Churches (see page 97).

Angela Martins presented the report of CANAAC, Caribbean and North American Area Council (see page 108).

A short break followed.

Vice-President Brasil took the chair to continue the reports from the regions.

Shuhei Oishi presented the report of NEAAC, Northeast Asia Area Council (see page 111).

János Antal presented the report of WCRC Europe (see page 00112)

## **ACTION 20**

**The Executive Committee received the reports of the regional councils with thanks.**

### **Decision Session: Finance Committee Report**

The President assumed the chair and invited General Treasurer Johann Weusmann to present the Finance report.

General Treasurer Weusmann presented the report (see page 144).

The President called for questions.

Several questions related to membership issues were raised as essential concerns to be addressed by the Communion. Phil Tanis affirmed that membership-related issues will need to be a priority as the WCRC is heading to the next General Council, proposing a procedure to clarify membership dues-related questions, in cooperation with the regional councils to reach to the churches concerned. General Treasurer Weusmann emphasized that the WCRC needs to focus on membership-related matters in order to maintain the identity of WCRC as a lively communion.

Related questions about the increasing operational costs and the location of the global office were raised by Hong Jung Lee and Vice-President Ayete-Nyampong. Phil Tanis noted that the WCRC Strategic Plan calls for a review of the office location in the coming year.

The President emphasized that the WCRC is a free communion and its members are called to think together, especially in regard to the questions related to the organization's future and sustainability. She stressed to not limit the Communion's relations with the member churches to issues of membership or the General Council; but to have lively relations with them and strategize on how to involve them in the life of the Communion.

## **ACTION 21**

**The Executive Committee accepted the Audit Report 2021.**

## **ACTION 22**

**The Executive Committee exonerated the Acting General Secretary and the General Treasurer for the budget, economic management, and asset administration of the WCRC for the accounting year 2021.**



**ACTION 23**

**The Executive Committee agreed to have the audit of the 2022 financial statement be carried out by the High Audit Office of the *Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland*.**

**ACTION 24**

**The Executive Committee authorized the officers to give preliminary approval to a balanced budget for 2023 subject to final approval at the 2023 Executive Committee meeting.**

The President thanked the General Treasurer for the report and all the contributors for the clarity and the transparency of it.

The President formally closed the May 2022 meeting of the Executive Committee.

**Decision Session: Michigan Corporation**

The Executive Committee reconstituted as the Executive Committee of the WCRC Michigan Corporation. It was led in prayer by Coutinho Maravilhoso Moma. The President took the chair. Phil Tanis explained the legal background to the WCRC Michigan Corporation.

**ACTION 25**

**The Executive Committee of the Michigan Corporation of WCRC approved the minutes of the Executive Committee of the Michigan Corporation of WCRC, held virtually 25-28 May 2021 and 29 November – 1 December 2021.**

**ACTION 26**

**The Executive Committee of the Michigan Corporation of the WCRC agreed that all the actions of the Executive Committee during its virtual meeting 17-20 May 2022, are fully concurred with and entered into the permanent record of the WCRC Michigan Corporation as constituting the decisions of 2022.**

The President formally closed the May 2022 meeting of the Executive Committee of the WCRC Michigan Corporation.

**Thanks and Closing Worship**

The participants of the Executive Committee meeting joined in worship led by Philip Vinod Peacock. Philip welcomed all participants to the closing worship and expressed thanks and gratitude to Eve Parker for preparing the worship for the entire Executive Committee meeting and the three speakers of the worship services. Closing worship included Scripture reading from the 1 Corinthians and a prayer of thanksgiving.

## Narrative

President Kassab preached and called to stand firm, no matter what circumstances might be, inspired by faith and the hope of resurrection. She concluded by asserting the enrichment of the churches through the sharing of experiences and stories and the churches' togetherness during the Executive Committee. She expressed her hopes and prayers for the next Executive Committee meeting to take place in person.

Finally, the President expressed her gratitude to all who made the virtual meeting possible and deeply thanked the partners for their commitment and expressed deep appreciation to the participants, the Officers, the Collegial General Secretariat, and the staff.

The meeting was closed by Hanns Lessing 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*

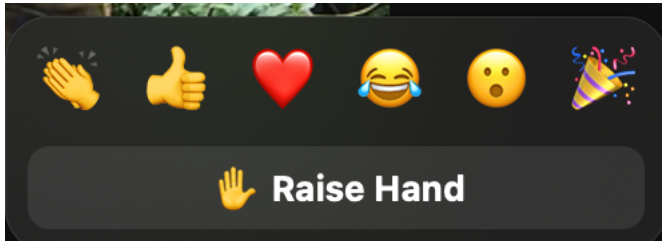
Zoom provides a number of “reactions” through which participants may seek the chance to speak and to indicate their feelings toward proceedings.

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

Najla Kassab

Dear respected Executive Committee members and partners,

We gather today as Executive Committee members under the theme **Stand firm, giving yourselves fully to the work of the Lord**. The theme is taken from I Corinthians 15:58 which reads, “Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.” The text calls us to stand firm because our Labor in the Lord in not in vain.

Probably the text addresses the current status that many of us have experienced as we were struck by COVID, and are facing now the challenge of recovering; many of us feel knocked down with the new reality that COVID led us to. We feel it is hard to stand firm, even as we see visible signs that the protocols of lockdown are abating, still we question how will we continue our work and how will our work be affected — and whether our labour went in vain. The pandemic has impacted our lives and has particularly affected the lives of the most vulnerable. Still many discovered that the work for several years was challenged, as if we are starting anew, facing the weakness, loss, confusion, with less energy. Our bodies feel weak to stand up even and stand firm.

This is the feeling of individuals but as a Communion as well. We are challenged with all that happened, especially with not being able to meet in person as an Executive Committee since 2019, which led to real challenges in deepening the communion relations, keeping the motivation high, and the prioritization of the Communion work on our agendas and budget. This distancing and the inability to visit one another has created a puzzling reality. Had it not been for the “COVID and Beyond” program, the damage would have been much more.

This struggle for facing the aftermath of COVID was accompanied by the Russian invasion of Ukraine that has tremendously impacted the life and livelihood of the peoples of Ukraine, but also threatens peace and stability in Europe and the world. We seem to have moved from a pandemic into war. Just as the world was tackling the issue of refugees from different countries and lately the Syrian refugees, here the number of refugees from Ukraine has worsened the situation and more people are pushed to margins, and the scenes of scared children and fleeing families continues to threaten the life of the people and affects the possibility of dignified life. Indignity has become the new normal for people in new zones. In many countries and churches around the Communion this has been a daily lifestyle; the suffering of the people has become their daily bread. The new reality in Ukraine discourages many who are thrusting to a better world, better life for all. Just as we

were waiting for the old pain to heal, we discover a new pain in Europe that did affect the world.

In my solidarity visit lately to Berehove, Ukraine, on May 13, close to the Hungarian border, I had the chance to get introduced to the ministry of the Reformed Church there. The Reformed Church in Transcarpathia launched a ministry with the refugees who moved from dangerous areas of war zones. Sitting with the refugees who have been there almost 80 days, despite their thankfulness to the support provided by the church, still one can notice their worries about the future, and their troubled question around how long that could take. The staff working in the bishop's office were busy preparing plans for providing shelters that can protect the people. They are expecting that more people impacted by war could move to their areas. Safety has become the concern of people instead of dreaming of a better tomorrow. Survival has become their concern; their dream has become to survive a violent war.

I share this to say that war that has been for long in some areas of the world, is now started in new areas. **The language of war in facing disagreements is still alive**, even when we thought that this was in the past, and the world has better ways of resolutions and communication. We see aggression and violence and provision of weapons as a language that is received well today and even welcomed. That could mean more death, more refugees, more unstable situations, more indignity, and more unrest for the world. I believe we are called as a Communion to stand firm against this language, no matter which side on the globe we are. We are called to remain the voice of peace, assuring that war language should not be accepted and the roots for war should be tackled.

Today we are called to stand firm as we continue **to press on in our involvement in all injustices**. The Communion has been involved in several issues around injustice, whether related to general themes that are global, related to economic injustice, like the NIFEA process which is now a fully functioning program with the Methodists, Lutherans, besides Mennonites who are showing interest; or the ZacTax Campaign and publication of the ZacTax Tool Kit; besides launching of the GRAPE program.

Also, gender justice work is central for our journey as a Communion on the way towards justice where completion of the Gender Policy of the WCRC as mandated by the General Council is fulfilled; besides initiating a gender audit of our member churches and encouraging the churches to reflect on the status of women in leadership positions and their involvement in the life of the church.

**Still the Communion remains keen on peace and reconciliation endeavors** in several countries, such as Cameroon, Ethiopia, Indonesia, West Papua, Korean Peninsula, Zimbabwe, Israel/Palestine, and now Ukraine and other regions. It is natural that some regions are given special attention due to developments, still we are continually called to evaluate and audit our focus and involvement, to scrutinize our strategies in moving forward and creating impact. The scope of work of justice is

quite large and how to secure balanced involvement so all injustices are taken seriously and are not overlooked. How to balance our involvement with issues of injustice and journey closely with the suffering around us is a great challenge to fulfill with the limited capacity that we have. We want to make sure that no one is forgotten. The intensity of the needs and struggle around us, and the long-lasting hurts that we face daily are overwhelming and how to keep the focus, the follow up, the journeying together, with all those who are struggling is at the center of our justice work. How to keep justice among injustices. Many are concerned that the world has waves of attention and in these days they could be forgotten. We are challenged to stay in focus and to audit continually our involvements.

**To stand firm is to be called to strengthen the work of the regions.** As a Communion we are blessed and enriched with the ministry and witness of the churches in the regions. We are a Communion that is rich with great human resources in the regions. To encourage the work in the regions is at the heart of a strong Communion. The strength of the Communion is not centered in the global office, despite the capable staff who are fully committed to the work of the Communion; still empowering the work in the regions goes side-by-side with the work on the global level of the Communion. Cooperation between the global and regions is at the heart of a healthy, blessed Communion. Holding regular meetings between the global and local work will create a better harmony and a better tune with stronger impact.

**Today we are called to stand firm and to secure financial resources,** stability, and sustainability in the midst of financial challenges that threaten all ecumenical work. Despite the fact that the Communion is blessed by the trust that we receive from different partners in the program work of the Communion and which encourages several organizations to support financially the program work, and many are ready to cooperate. Still the core operational budget, which finances large portions of the salary bill and office expenditure is still unsecured. 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.

Despite our understanding that sustainability is not defined narrowly in financial terms as our Strategic Plan claims, still our organizational sustainability, including financial stability, is one important part of the faithful living out of our communion. How we will sustain the work of the Communion is a serious challenge to us all. Sustainability remains an expression of commitment, relations, ownership, and deepened communion. Sustainability is at the heart of strengthening the communion as a goal.

The Sustainability Task Group that was formed started its work to allow a new approach in this regard and think of a sustainability model which is more intricate than the current one. This is a process that will allow better evaluation of the



present and will lay the ground for a stronger commitment for 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.

We are called today to join hands and find new initiatives for sustainability, whether in raising funds or other ways of supporting the work of the Communion. We are called to take this matter seriously and to discover that if we care for the Communion we are called to care for its financial stability as well. So far we did not see tangible changes.

**To stand firm as a Communion is to envision direction toward the General Council:**

We are currently in a mid-point between our General Councils. We are called to concentrate on evaluations of our plan towards the 2025 General Council. This is a time where we are called to prioritize our programs and with the help of the Strategic Plan Programme Group (SPPG) find direction towards our next council.

Also today **we stand firm as we celebrate God's work around the Communion, where our churches give themselves fully to the work of the Lord, and their labour in the Lord is not in vain.** I wish I had enough time to narrate what is happening in the regions. I believe we will hear that in the reports of the regions; still, allow me to celebrate the election of the new leadership in AIPRAL at its XIII General Assembly 21-23 April. We are thankful for all the efforts of the previous leadership and welcome the new leadership:

- President: Wertson Brasil de Souza (Brazil)
- Vice-President: Berla Andrade de Vargas (Venezuela)
- Treasurer: Yasmín Mosquera García (Colombia)
- Youth Department Director: Emilia Ahumada Tapia (Chile)
- Director of the Women's Department: Blanca Geymonat Gonnet (Uruguay)
- Director of the Dept. of Theology and Mission: Paulo C.M. Pereira Jr. (Brazil)
- Director of the Department of Justice and Communion: Dan González Ortega (Mexico)
- Executive Secretary: Dora Arce-Valentín (Cuba)

Dear Executive Committee members, the past years have been difficult days and I believe this is a time to support one another. I hope that this will be our last Zoom meeting where we hope that **our next meeting** will be in person. It is urgently needed to put our resources together to make this happen. Our coming together will rekindle a strong encounter as a Communion.

**I would like to take this opportunity to celebrate the decision to appoint a woman**

Executive Secretary for Mission and Advocacy and to start the search process for the right candidate, moving on the way towards gender justice in our office work.

Despite the financial challenges, we are grateful to our partners who allowed this to happen.

Also, I am so grateful for the work done by the **General Secretary Search Committee** and their dedication to find the right person to lead the Communion. The committee is pursuing its work, and the members are key, dedicated leaders from our churches, but due to the inability of securing the necessary funds to finance the general secretary position, which has not been acquired yet, and the current state of the core budget only allows operations with reduced staff, and there are no firm indications that the financial situation might not improve as fast as hoped. The Search Committee will continue its interviews, and the candidates know already about the prevailing situation.

This is why the Officers' Committee is recommending to continue with the present Collegial General Secretariat (CGS) model till appointment of a general secretary. The officers are in close discussion with the CGS on how to sharpen the model through continual evaluation and discussion. Still I cannot but stress that this model has served our financial challenge and met lots of our needs. But this model has overwhelmed the executive staff who are torn between their program work and regular job description and the extra requirements of follow up on general secretary work, mainly sustainability and building stronger relations with member churches.

Accordingly, we are called to take the issue **of staff capacity** and work load seriously. There must be a lot of clarity in the empowerment of the CGS where special attention and support is necessary. This model remains temporal, and we hope through the work of the SPPG we will work towards setting priorities, evaluating our program work in the line of our Strategic Plan.

We need take a breath and enjoy what the Lord has called us to. We are called as a Communion to think of our "brand" if I may say. What is special around us; what gifts can we give to the world, and what motivation and clarity God's call us to. We should not be troubled to compete with any other ecumenical organizations but rather we are called to focus on our call, our talents, our identity and live accountability accordingly. Friends, we are all held accountable as leaders of the Communion meeting today, to give ourselves fully to the work of the Communion. Despite all challenges our work will not be in vain because it is inspired by the power of God.

Today, we come together as an Executive Committee not to merely respond to reports, or to take decisions, but to answer the question about what does the Lord require from us as we gather as a Communion — how will each member church support the Communion's work and how will the Communion empower our work locally? This remains not an easy question to answer but rather answering this question will bring, trust, ownership, and solidarity in our work together.

**To stand firm is a commitment to hope that tomorrow will be a better day for all.**

Despite the challenges, we continue to see God's sustenance to the work of the Communion, whether in involving more young people and women in our work, in enjoying the continued partnership relations and especially with our partnership with the Council for World Mission, and other faithful partners, in recognizing the enthusiasm of the churches in the regions and their willingness to contribute to the work of WCRC. The "COVID and Beyond" program has shown us new horizon for God's work that will shape our envisioning.

May the Lord provide strength as we stand together, and may we envision together how to live up to our call as a hopeful Communion. Our strength continually comes from above and in Christ we live hope and wait in hope. To God all glory.

### **A Reflection on the 2022 Executive Committee Theme from the Collegial General Secretariat: “Stand firm and let nothing move you”**

Our Executive Committee meeting has the theme “Stand firm and let nothing move you” (1 Corinthians 15:58). In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul puts this call at the end of his reflection on the resurrection. The appeal does not conceal the harshness of the realities of human life. One does not call upon people to stand firm when there is nothing to worry about. Paul’s letters explicitly refer to experiences of persecution, violence, and death. At no moment he would downplay the suffering, the pain, or the doubts. But at the same time, he is deeply convinced that death does not have the last word. In his faith, the resurrection opens a horizon of hope that changes the perception of the present. His appeal to stand firm calls us not to allow desperation and fear to move us away from the resurrection and continue to explore the potential of hope even in the most challenging situations.

As the World Communion of Reformed Churches, we hear this call in a situation that is still marked by the COVID-19 pandemic and challenged by wars in different parts of the world. These events test our faith in the potential of the resurrection perspective to testify to the God of life. Both experiences reveal the deeply entrenched injustice and violence in this world and force us to revisit established patterns of thinking and acting.

In recent months, it has been particularly the Russian invasion of Ukraine that provoked this kind of self-examination of the sources of our hope and the foundations of our peace witness. As the WCRC, we have always been sceptical of the notion of peace. Our analysis of empire pointed us to engage with the underlying destructiveness of the current world order. The Russian invasion demonstrates how fragile the instruments are that have been developed after World War 2 to prevent wars. The Russian attack confirms the conviction of the Accra Confession that economic globalization is aggravating conflicts and is, therefore, an unsuitable instrument to maintain peace.

But the invasion also challenges the confidence in a global order based on international law. In the Russian example, the obligations of the international order even fuel aggression. Political and religious leaders reject the universal principles that are at the core of the international order as an onslaught on national identity, which must be rejected by all means.

In the Racism, Authoritarianism, and Nationalism (RAN) programme of the WCRC, we have detected this violent pattern in several current conflicts. The current war affirms the need to engage with this destructive dialectic of the universal order as a matter of urgency. We need to find a way to get out of the violent alternative that only gives us two options: We either accept that universal values must be enforced, or we condone that identity must be defended against this enforcement. Even if we

regard the universal principles of the Enlightenment as substantial resources for peace-making, we must acknowledge that both options are inherently violent and legitimize military force.

In this situation, the theme of our Executive Committee meeting becomes very relevant. Paul's call to stand firm in the resurrection perspective is a rejection of all forces of death, howsoever they are motivated. The appeal to not move from the hope of the resurrection calls us for a renewed engagement with the question, "what does God require of us?" (Micah 16:8). In a situation where old paradigms are shattered, what is our calling in receiving God's gift of peace?

In an opinion piece, Marco Hofheinz, a German Reformed theologian, in his search for an answer to this question, points to a letter that John Calvin wrote to the congregation in Aix en Provence in 1561. Facing brutal religious persecution, the congregation had written to Calvin: "What can we do in persecution? Should we defend ourselves against our enemies by force of arms? Should we give in to our enemies and let them triumph?"

In his answer, Calvin clearly distinguishes between legal rights and Christian calling. Legally, it is legitimate "to avenge ourselves on a mutinous populace, because this is not resisting the order of justice; nay, that the laws themselves arm both great and small against robbers." But while Calvin affirms the legal right to resist, he cautions the congregation that by taking up this right, we "prevent God from coming to our relief."

At first glance, this sounds very cruel. By waiving the right to resist, the only option left seems to be to give in to the oppressor. But this was not Calvin's intention at all. Indifference to the suffering of innocent victims of war for him is not an option. But instead of condoning armed resistance, Calvin called for active perseverance as a third way that should lead Christians out of the dilemma of choosing between either giving in or violating God's commandments. For Calvin, active perseverance is a blessed state that allows God, who is faithful to the promise to sustain and protect his people after their enemies shall have vented all their rage, to come to our relief.

It is this active perseverance that the theme of this Executive Committee meeting is calling us for. As the World Communion of Reformed Churches, we should never condone injustice, oppression, or violence. But even if we agree that, in some situations, armed resistance is legitimate or even mandated, we are called to act within the space that God's promise opens for our witness. The Accra Confession calls such witness "covenanting for justice": By entering into God's covenant with all creation, Christians become part of God's saving work that promises to bring life in its fullness for all. If we look at the responses to the Russian invasion, we see many examples of such covenanting.

The violent division of friend and foe does not cover the whole reality. The vibrant civil society in Ukraine, which has been invigorated by the challenges of the war, is an impressive example: The firm will to not give in to the forces of destruction is not directed against anyone but wants to secure spaces in which life can flourish even in the atrocities of the war.

Churches and civil society groups in Ukraine, but also in Europe, North America, and Asia are working together to let humanity prevail in times of war. This witnessing for peace is neither naïve nor ignorant of people's suffering in war. But it opens a horizon of active engagement that is completely invisible in the binary logic of military engagement.

And even if churches and civil society are not strong enough to stop the brutality, they can contribute much to fostering a spirit of defiance that will not give in to the notion of defeat. The firm conviction that war is wrong is a vital resource for the perseverance required to sustain prolonged periods of hardship. As in many other war zones, life will remain threatened in Ukraine. This situation will be an enormous challenge to all people determined to uphold their humanity against the forces of terror and oppression. In such a situation, the belief that God blesses the peacemakers becomes a very significant political resource.

At this meeting of the Executive Committee, the WCRC will officially begin the journey that shall lead us to the next General Council that will take place in 2025 in Thailand. On this journey, we will continue discerning what God requires of us. As the Reformed church always reforming according to God's word, we accept the challenge that requires new ways of discerning, confessing, and witnessing. We are aware that this journey might lead us through stormy waters. We might find ourselves in situations where we get to the brink of desperation when we see how little we can do to put an end to injustice and violence. At these moments, we will need the assurance that God is faithful to God's promises. God will bless us and our witness when we stand firm in the covenant and let nothing move us.

**Report of the Collegial General Secretariat**  
Hanns Lessing, Philip Vinod Peacock, Phil Tanis

**Working with an Integrated Approach**

Following the decisions of the Executive Committee on its meetings in May and November/December 2021, the Collegial General Secretariat (CGS) was tasked with the following duties:

- the responsibilities of the General Secretary;
- the tasks according to the job descriptions of the different executive secretary positions;
- the coordination of the sustainability initiative;
- and an exercise to strengthen existing regions and start preparing the establishment of regions in areas where they do not yet exist.

To do justice to all these different expectations, the CGS decided to follow an integrated approach that would allow addressing different aspects within one activity.

Several countries have relaxed their COVID-19 restrictions. This allowed the CGS to reach out to member churches and start discussing and implementing different activities.

Since the beginning of the interim period, we have been in intensive contact with churches in the regions stated below. The exercise will be continued to reach all parts of the Communion. Following the integrated approach, the CGS was represented by two or even all three of its members. This allowed us to address the different dimensions of the work assigned to us.

*Caribbean and North American Area Council (CANAAC)*

Main contacts: CANAAC steering committee, Reformed Church in America, Christian Reformed Church in North America, United Church of Christ, Presbyterian Church (USA), Princeton Seminary, McCormick Seminary, Calvin Seminary, Calvin Institute of Christian Worship.

Perspectives for deeper cooperation: Racism, indigenous people, people living with disabilities, theological education, Christian worship.

*Africa Communion of Reformed Churches (ACRC)*

Main contacts: ACRC executive committee, member churches in Cameroon.

Perspectives for deeper cooperation: GRAPE programme, Ecumenical Forum for Justice and Peace in Cameroon.

### *WCRC Europe*

Main Contacts: European steering committee, Tavola Valdese, Church of Scotland, Protestant Church in the Netherlands, Church of Hungary, Reformed Church in Transcarpathia, Evangelical Church of Westphalia, Association of Protestant Churches and Missions in Germany (EMW), Bread for the World, International Reformed Theological Institute.

Perspectives for deeper cooperation: Reformed Ecumenical Office in Rome, GRAPE programme, Ukraine network, migration, theological education, freedom of religion and belief.

### *Northeast Asia Area Council (NEAAC)*

Main Contacts: NEAAC Council, Presbyterian Church of Korea, Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea, National Council of Churches in Korea, Presbyterian Church in Taiwan.

Perspectives for deeper cooperation: 2025 General Council, Taiwan Ecumenical Forum, Ecumenical Forum for Korea, theological education, theology of life.

### *South Asia*

Main Contacts: Church of North India, Church of South India, National Council of Churches in India, Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society, United Theological College.

Perspectives for deeper cooperation: formation of a South Asian region, freedom of religion and belief, theological education, children, sexuality.

### *Southeast Asia*

Main Contacts: Church of Christ in Thailand.

Perspectives for deeper cooperation: 2025 General Council, formation of Southeast Asian region.

## **Sustainability**

The Sustainability Task Group submitted proposals about the understanding of sustainability, the methodology of the sustainability initiative, and a tentative assessment of the sustainability situation in its report to the extraordinary Executive Committee meeting in November/December 2021. Applying the proposed methodology, the CGS held perspective discussions with regional councils, communicated with church leaders and partners, and convened round table discussions.



Results of these meetings have been entered into the report of the Officers' Committee and the programme report below. At this point, we want to share some general observations.

Our experiences in the meetings with different member churches and partners were quite diverse. In areas with established regions, we experienced very positive feedback on the life and mission of the Communion. However, in areas where there are no established regions yet, we had to share basic information on the work of the WCRC at some places. This observation affirms the need to strengthen the regions to involve them more deeply in the life of the WCRC.

All member churches and partners have responded well to the definition of sustainability adopted by the Executive Committee during its extraordinary meeting (Action 12) that emphasized the sharing of all the gifts of the Spirit. As it will be demonstrated in the programme report below, this idea of sharing encouraged numerous ideas about how member churches and partners could contribute to the life and work of the Communion. Several member churches pledged personnel capacity to coordinate activities or offered to implement particular programmes on behalf of the Communion. There is immense potential in this idea of sustainability that is built on sharing resources.

Seeing this support, we are not worried about the future of the WCRC as a Communion. Member churches and partners affirm that the WCRC is relevant and are willing to support its mission. However, there are dangers to the future of the WCRC as an institution with a central structure that is financed through a core budget. The COVID-19 pandemic and the structural changes in world Christianity have reduced the available income. Several churches that we have been in contact with experience their own sustainability challenges. Some had to reduce staff to secure their own sustainability. Despite these difficulties, we have not received signals that churches plan to reduce their contributions. On the contrary, some churches are searching for additional funds.

But, like in November, we have to report again that we have not received pledges that would cover the projected deficits of a core budget with the inclusion of a general secretary. The Officers' Committee discuss the consequences of this situation in their report on the future leadership model of the WCRC.

## **Strengthening the Regions**

### *The Significance of the Regions*

The significance of the regions for the life and work of the Communion cannot be emphasized enough. In between General Councils, member churches participate in the mission of the WCRC mainly through the work of the regions. Regional meetings

offer opportunities to keep in contact, share information about programmes and initiatives, and discern the work of the WCRC. Regional leaders participate in governance meetings and voice the ideas of their regions in the discussion about the direction of the Communion. Regional programmes allow the regions to adapt the mission of the WCRC to meet the challenges of the different regional contexts.

Global programmes of the WCRC should always be implemented in cooperation with the regions. The current Strategic Plan states: “All programmatic activities will strengthen the regions, engaging member churches with their regional councils and engaging regional councils both with each other and the secretariat” (Organizational Goal 13). However, while some progress in the communication between the general secretariat and the regions has been made, this commitment is not yet fully implemented.

### *Regional Consultation*

In the context of the sustainability discussion, the CGS has held perspective discussions with the ACRC, WCRC Europe, CANAAC, and NEAAC. In this discussion, the wish for convening a regional consultation has been expressed. Such meetings are convened at irregular intervals. They offer opportunities to strengthen interregional cooperation, develop the relations between regions and the general secretariat, and prepare the regional input for General Councils and other significant gatherings.

In 2022 a consultation of regional leaders was held virtually on 8 and 15 February. The recommendations adopted by this meeting highlighted the importance of developing relations between the regions and the general secretariat. It was resolved that the general secretariat will hold an annual meeting with the regional leaders. The secretariat was also requested to support plans and projects that emerge from the regions.

The regional leaders stressed the wish to develop the relationships between the regions. Such contacts should allow the regions to pray with one another, get to know one another, provide care for one another, as well as to share best practices and main concerns.

The consultation also encouraged the regions to encourage the formation of regional youth platforms and allow them to interact globally.

### *Establishment of New Regions*

In recent years, it has been lamented frequently that in large parts of Asia, the Middle East, and the Pacific, the WCRC has not yet created regional structures. Therefore, the Executive Committee resolved at its extraordinary meeting in 2021 to

authorize the creation of a process to explore the development of regional councils in Asia, the Middle East, and the Pacific, with the understanding that the next General Council could formally constitute any new councils.

The CGS has started such a process in South Asia and consulted with the two united churches in India. In these discussions, it became evident that connecting churches in areas where there is no established tradition of regional work will require considerable resources. The exercise must, therefore, be seen as a long-term project that needs to be fostered on a regular basis.

## **Communications**

Despite less time available to devote to the communication needs of the Communion, not only have all regular communications continued but several larger projects have also been undertaken in the last year.

*Reformed Communiqué*, the WCRC's thrice-yearly print/PDF newsletter continued as scheduled. The August 2021 edition was especially important as it focused on the transition from General Secretary Chris Ferguson to the Collegial General Secretariat, while the December 2021 edition featured the decisions taken at the extraordinary Executive Committee regarding the next General Council and the ongoing search process for the next general secretary.

The monthly WCRC e-Newsletter 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 this last year, continuing steady growth in followers and interactions.

As was done in 2020, the English and French Facebook pages, along with AIPRAL's Facebook page (in Spanish) were key spaces for public participation in the WCRC's "COVID & Beyond" discernment process, which ran until November 2021. Each session was livestreamed 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 [require@wrc.eu](mailto:require@wrc.eu)).

"COVID & Beyond" highlight booklets and videos were being developed prior to the completion of the discernment process itself, and the first of these are soon to be available (the time it takes to make coherent and usable highlight materials from the substantial amount of presentations should not be underestimated!). Joanna Hipp, a

former intern and minister in the Presbyterian Church (USA), has provided essential assistance in this project.

Support from the communications desk has also been given to the development of several new resources, including the *ZacTax Tool Kit*, *Focus: Palestine* resource package, and the *Gender Justice Policy* – including reviews of the print publications, updates to the website, and news coverage of the launch of each.

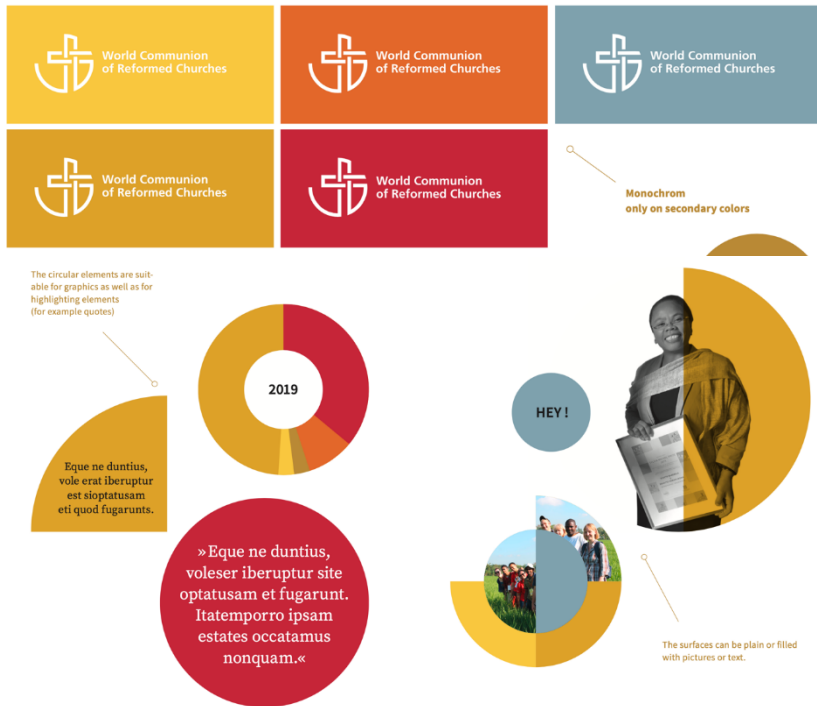
Two grants were received for communications work, which have allowed the larger projects to proceed despite staff capacity limits. The *Fondation pour l'aide au protestantisme réformé* (FAP) provided a grant for the redevelopment of the WCRC website while the Cantonal Church of Zürich gave a donation that made a corporate redesign possible (including the rollout across publications) and the development of introductory videos.

*Website Redevelopment:* This has been a long time in the coming as the last full redesign was done in 2013/14, with a smaller reconfiguration in 2015. Adaptive Momentum, a website development group based in Grand Rapids, Michigan (and founded by two former Reformed Church in America staff members), is driving the process, under the guidance of the executive for communications. Work began in November 2021 and, while initially scheduled for completion prior to the Executive Committee meeting, will now not be complete until later this year. The site will be shifted from its present news-oriented focus to a site that better serves the WCRC membership. Downloadable resources will be added, with plans already forming for additional, historic pieces to be brought online in the coming years. The new site will not only reflect the current programmatic work and language of the Communion but will also be prepared to easily expand to support the 2025 General Council. The site will remain in eight languages, a not insignificant commitment.

*Introductory Videos:* This, too, has been a project long in the coming. Several inhouse attempts over the last several years were not successful. Thus, outside assistance has been hired. Samuel Pfeffer Mediaproduktion was contracted to create a basic introductory video to the WCRC, along with videos for each of the five main programmatic foci. Due to ongoing pandemic travel restrictions, the process of obtaining video interviews of Communion leaders has been slow. One round was completed in Chicago in November 2021, while another was done in May 2022 (also in Chicago, coincidentally) with more scheduled for later in the month. Once completed, the videos—including subtitles for a variety of languages—will feature prominently on the website and be available for presentations around the world.

*Corporate Redesign:* The WCRC logo, along with an accompanying style guide, were developed as part of the preparations for the 2010 Uniting General Council. Colours were updated when design work was done for the 2017 General Council. In preparation for the 2025 General Council, it was decided that a review of the entire

corporate style guide was in order, especially since the colours selected for 2010 have not aged well. The WCRC logo itself was untouched but everything around it — colours, typefaces, and design elements — were all reviewed and updated. The new designs have been applied to both the *Reformed Communiqué* and *2021 Annual Report* (and are also being incorporated into the new website). An official style guide is available in both English and German. The redesigns were done by the Sitzgruppe, the same design firm that developed the 2017 General Council logo.



## Personnel

With the completion of Chris Ferguson’s term as general secretary at the end of August 2021, the three executive secretaries took on those responsibilities as the Collegial General Secretariat (CGS). This interim situation has created challenges and successes as noted elsewhere. Besides this increase in demands for the three executives, another cost-savings measure on the administrative level was implemented over the summer of 2021, both of which have strained staff capacities.

Werner Joecker departed in July 2021. After his resignation announcement, a thorough review of the needs of the organization was conducted with a focus on the responsibilities of the then-administrative assistants. It was concluded that the organization would be better served with three administrators (operating at a higher level) than four assistants.

Thus, Anna Krüger became Administrator for Finance and Sustainability, and Amritha Perumalla became Administrator for Programmes and Projects. Not only did they continue to provide support to the executives but they also took on new responsibilities (for instance, Anna now drives the budget development process while Amritha manages the Reformed Partnership Fund). A special thanks should be given to Elfi Abrams, recently retired from the EKD personnel office, who continues to provide consultative services to the WCRC and helped guide the review as well as the search for the position noted below (twice!).

The third position – Administrator for the General Secretariat – was filled by Godwin Muoneke, beginning in August 2021. Within the six-month probationary period (as set by German labour laws) it was determined that Godwin was not a good fit for the position, despite being very well liked by his colleagues. He was thus released and the position posted again in January 2022. After an extended search process, Antranik Manoukian was hired with a May start date. Antranik, an Orthodox Armenian from Lebanon, has served as assistant to the general secretariat of the Middle East Council of Churches and in the World Council of Churches General Assembly office in Karlsruhe.

During the several months without an administrator in the general secretariat, critical needs were covered by several staff members, including Eri Yoon, a former intern now working on her Ph.D. in theology at Göttingen University, who was hired on a part-time, limited term contract to focus on several organizational projects which had not been attended to since the departure of Katrina Mertz. These included an extensive inventorying, review, culling, and reorganizing of the WCRC print resources (as our storage space in the cellar next door was lost due to the redevelopment of that space), a reorganization of the various library spaces in the office (most especially that of the general secretariat), and a reorganization of the server storage, beginning with documents and images untouched since the move from Geneva.

Meta Ginting, the longest serving intern in WCRC history (thanks to a pandemic-instigated extension) returned home to Indonesia in December 2021. Another Indonesian, Taya Tuhuteru, began with us at the end of October 2021. Modesta Mekeresi of Zimbabwe has joined as of the beginning of May, and Priyanka Gupta of India will come aboard this summer — providing us with three interns for several months before we revert to the standard two upon Taya's departure this fall (this

was made financially feasible due to the gap between the departure of Meta and the arrival of Modesta).

It should also be noted here that progress continues on the addition of a fourth executive secretary (with details found elsewhere) along with negotiations to bring on two seconded associate executives — funded fully by the supporting organizations. There is a good possibility that WCRC staff capacities can be significantly increased by the end of this year without impacting the core budget.

## **Operations**

Thanks should be given to all who have served and continue to serve the WCRC in these challenging times. Due to the Omicron variant (and its subvariants), the WCRC offices have not yet returned to full operations, with most staff continuing to work remotely for the majority of each week. While Zoom fatigue is being felt, staff continue to gather virtually each Monday for worship along with coordination and planning meetings. It is hoped that a “new normal” in office life will commence by this fall, though this will likely continue to include some remote work.

This “new normal” along with the potential increase in the number of people on staff in Hannover will necessitate a review of how office space is best utilized, including whether desks might be shared on a rotational basis. The work Eri has done in organizing the resource and library areas is an important step in ensuring there is sufficient room for people, too!

It was noted in last year’s report that CiviCRM has successfully become the WCRC’s operative database. With the departure of Werner in July and the subsequent turnover in the position of Administrator for the General Secretariat — whose responsibilities include day-to-day management of the database — planned progress on data upkeep has not yet been fully implemented. It will soon become a priority, with the 2025 General Council driving much of data updating.

An extraordinary Executive Committee meeting in November and monthly Officers’ Committee meetings have used a fair amount of capacity in organizing the meetings, assisting in the development of agendas and drafting of reports, keeping the minutes, and then following up on decisions. Again, these first months of the Collegial General Secretariat have been a learning process for all involved. On top of this, a constitutionally-mandated review of all three executive secretaries was necessary. The results of these reviews will be reported elsewhere, but thanks can be given here to Katrina Mertz, who was hired to coordinate the administrative work for this process.

Minuting meetings of and providing organizational support to the collegium has also been an ongoing demand, although not dissimilar to that given to the previous

leadership team, the Executive Staff Council, although with more active participation in the meetings.

Finally, administrative supervision of the administrators and interns has been a part of the executive for communications and operations portfolio since September, even as work assignments have continued to come through regular channels. Thankfully, these supervisory demands have not been exceedingly great and assistance to fulfil some of the more technical parts has come from Elfi, Amritha, and Anna — so a specific word of thanks to them for stepping up as we have operated with even less capacity than expected for several months at the beginning of 2022.

### **Programme Work**

In 2021, the Strategic Plan Programme Group (SPPG) discerned the impact of the shortage of programme staff during the interim period in which the executive secretaries have to take up the responsibilities of the general secretary. They used this opportunity to reflect on the prospects of the WCRC programme work under the expected sustainability challenges. This discussion led to two significant affirmations: 1) Sustainability challenges should not lead to scaling back of programmes; and 2) To assure the continued implementation of programmes, the WCRC should develop a working model that would be less dependent on the capacity of the general secretariat but would rather utilize the resources of the Communion at large.

These affirmations were discerned during the Executive Committee meeting in May 2021 and referred to the general secretary for further consideration.

The CGS discussed these affirmations in its meetings with regions, member churches, ministries, seminaries, and partners and received positive feedback. Many ideas for programme cooperation emerged from these discussions. The CGS sees high potential in this cooperation and has already negotiated a number of such programme partnerships. This network support assured that the programme work could mainly proceed as planned.

As many countries reduce the COVID-19 related restrictions, we also look forward to several in-person meetings; most of them are scheduled for the fourth quarter of 2022.

### **P1: Fostering a Just Communion**

#### *People Living with Disabilities*

The programme to assure full and just participation of people living with disability was the main topic of discussion at meetings of the CGS with people engaging with



disability concerns in the Reformed Church in America (RCA) and Western Theological Seminary in Holland, Michigan.

We are very glad that Terry DeYoung, RCA coordinator for disability concerns, agreed to become the guest editor for an issue of the *Reformed World* on disability concerns that will be published in the course of the year.

The next step in this programme will be the development of a mandate on disability for our member churches that will assure the full and just participation of people living with disabilities.

### *Indigenous People*

Building an Indigenous people's network has been a priority for the WCRC since its inception in 2010. However, due to various factors this was not actualized. In 2019 a planning meeting was held that suggested a three year plan; this plan was further delayed due to COVID. Conversations have been ongoing with our North American partners for a meeting on Indigenous people. A full-scale meeting is not possible this year, but we have been invited to collaborate with the United Church of Christ in their Indigenous pre-assembly next year. In the meantime a meeting on Indigenous people and a theological education for life will be held in Asia in the last quarter of this year

### *Youth*

Furthering the youth network has been the focus during this time of pandemic. This was done by both the creation of the WCRC Youth Instagram account as well as the Lombard Prize. The Lombard Prize was conducted with the theme "Ecumenism from the Margins: Confessing a God of Life in a World Fallen among Thieves." Many young people from around the world responded to the theme, and a number of essays were received. A panel of distinguished people, including church leaders, seminary professors and past winners judged the essay, and three prizes were awarded.

## **P2: Covenanting for Justice**

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

The NIFEA work continued in collaboration with the World Council of Churches, the Council for World Mission, the Lutheran World Federation, and the Methodist World Council.

Webinars: Webinars/hybrid meetings were held on the occasion of the COP26, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank spring meetings.

GEM School: The GEM School could not be held for the last two years. The 2020 cohort will be meeting in Berlin 2-9 July 2022.

GEM School Manual: Work on the GEM school manual is near completion and will be released in early Autumn.

ZacTAX: The ZacTAX campaign is being implemented in the following areas by the WCRC: 1) In the AIPRAL region, plans are being made to further and deepen this; 2) European region through Kairos Europa, and this has had a lot of European churches come on board; 3) India with the National Council of Churches in India. The three regions have also been brought into conversation with each other so as to have some global planning. This has resulted in a workshop that will be held at the WCC Assembly in Karlsruhe.

NIFEA Panel: The last NIFEA panel has been working since 2014. Since this time some members have passed away and others have not been active. At the NIFEA general secretaries meeting a new NIFEA panel was proposed and accepted. This panel will be convened later this year and will facilitate a three year plan.

### *Gender Justice*

Gender Policy: The Gender Policy was accepted by the last Executive Committee and was launched by the WCRC at a webinar entitled “Why the Church needs Feminism.” The work is now about the implementation of the policy.

Gender Audit: As part of the implementation of the Gender Policy the WCRC is undertaking a gender audit of all its member churches to find out the status of women in the churches. This audit is being planned in a way that the exercise will not only lead to an understanding of the status of women within the Communion but will also be a transformative exercise in itself.

### *Anti-Racism*

A consultation on anti-racism is being planned with our North American partners in the third quarter of this year.

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

### *Global Institute of Theology (GIT)*

The Global Institute of Theology was initially scheduled for 2020 but had to be postponed several times because of the COVID-19 pandemic. We are delighted that the faculty, as well as many of the selected students, have expressed that they are still interested in participating. We invited the GIT students to an essay competition

on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The winners of this competition presented their reflections during a session of the “COVID and Beyond” process in October 2021.

We now plan to hold the following GIT in 2023 and consider approaching churches and seminaries in the Pacific region (e.g. Australia, New Zealand, or Fiji) to host the event. In 2025 another GIT is planned to be held in connection with the General Council.

### *Reformed World*

In 2020 the newly appointed editorial board convened and prepared two issues of *Reformed World* that were published in 2021.

The first issue published the dialogue reports that the WCRC had prepared with the Roman Catholic Church, the Anglican Communion, and the Pentecostal World Fellowship, together with a series of reflections that engage with the Reformed approach to ecumenical dialoguing.

The second issue assembled tributes to the contribution of Chris Ferguson to the work of the WCRC. This publication gives important insights into the WCRC's engagement with transformative ecumenism, peacebuilding and justice.

### *Worship*

Worship materials for Reformation Day, along with a Reformation Day worship service featuring voices from throughout the Communion (available on the WCRC YouTube Channel,) were prepared and shared throughout the Communion in 2021.

The sessions of the “COVID and Beyond” process were embedded in worship. In the course of the process, a rich body of worship resources was produced. In its meeting with the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship in Grand Rapids, the CGS and worship institute agreed to make these resources available for the Communion. The process of preparing the material is ongoing, and we hope that we will be able to publish it soon.

During this meeting, the CGS also explored further possibilities for cooperation, e.g. the preparation of worship material for the annual WCRC Sunday at Reformation Day or support of the worship team of the 2025 General Council.

### *Theological Education*

In its discussions with member churches, seminaries and ecumenical partners, the CGS detected a lot of energy on questions connected to theological education. The

COVID-19 pandemic created huge challenges but also opportunities that should be taken up and developed further. The experiences with Zoom teaching were described as ambiguous. Digital technology allowed the continuation of course programmes at most places. But not all students had access to the internet and buying the necessary airtime proved to be a big economic challenge for many. Many seminaries discovered that digital courses require a new pedagogy but found it difficult to access the required resources.

At the same time, the challenges of the pandemic opened new horizons for theological education. Several seminaries report good experiences in working with global student bodies. This situation allowed reflections from the perspectives of different contexts, which contributed much to the depth of theological discussions. Other seminaries used the situation to reach out beyond the limits of traditional theological education and offered programmes to support the discernment of the whole church. Several seminaries in the US engage in prison ministry.

These discussions have led to the idea of a major conference on theological education that will take place in December 2022 in Trinity Theological Seminary in Legon, Ghana. This conference will consist of two parts: A hybrid conference prepared in cooperation with the WCC, LWF, and the EMW that is directed to the wider ecumenical network of theological institutions and will address the challenges and opportunities of theological education in the post-pandemic situation. Immediately afterwards we will gather representatives from seminaries and schools that are related to the WCRC. The intention of this conference is to build a WCRC network of theological institutions that will foster mutual support and allow discussion on goals and methods of theological education. This conference will also take place in Ghana. The participants will be invited to take part in the ecumenical meeting.

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

*Advocacy (Creating the Global Reformed Advocacy Platforms for Engagement (GRAPE))*

At the extraordinary meeting in November/December 2021, the Executive Committee endorsed the GRAPE programme, approved the creation of the position of an Executive Secretary for Mission and Advocacy, and authorized the CGS in conjunction with the Officers' Committee and the Peace and Reconciliation Working Group to form a search committee for the appointment of the executive secretary.

These activities are on the way, and we hope that the search committee will be able to present a candidate for the executive secretary position soon. This candidate will have to be appointed by the Executive Committee by mail vote. We will share the details of the process as soon as possible.

The preparations for the launch of the Global Reformed Advocacy Platforms for Engagement are on the way. We hope to conclude the discussions with funding partners soon. We have already signed a contract with the Economic Policy Research Institute to prepare the advocacy training programme and cooperate with the ACRC in preparing a conference in July to prepare the pilot projects in the African region.

#### *Ecumenical Forum for Justice and Peace in Cameroon*

After the meeting of the Ecumenical Forum for Justice and Peace in Cameroon in October 2021, the Cameroonian participants created an interreligious forum that also includes Islamic institutions in Cameroon. This network has adopted a plan of action that is currently being implemented.

#### *Ukraine Network*

Just prior to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the WCRC, in cooperation with WCRC Europe, invited member churches in Europe and mission organizations that engage in Ukraine for a digital consultation to prepare a joint approach to the situation. After this consultation, a network was formed that has since convened weekly to coordinate the activities of the different partners to express solidarity and support the churches in Ukraine. This network is very active and serves as a platform for sharing ideas and planning coordinated activities.

The WCRC also initiated the ecumenical peace prayer on 2 March 2022, which was co-sponsored by LWF, World Methodist Council, Mennonite World Conference, and the Conference of European Churches. The peace prayer was attended by more than 3,000 viewers.

#### *Palestine*

There is continued support for our Palestinian partners and Kairos Palestine in particular. Further the publication, Focus: Palestine, is being well received and efforts are on for translation. The Focus: Palestine document was released at a webinar in October 2021.

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

#### *Reformed Ecumenical Office in Rome*

The WCRC is in the final stages of discussions with the Tavola Valdese and the Church of Scotland about the creation of Reformed Ecumenical Office in Rome. The presence shall be located in the office of the Tavola Valdese while the Church of

Scotland will provide some staff capacity. The WCRC will engage on the level of programme work.

The Reformed Ecumenical Office shall

- a. seek ecumenical dialogue and engagement and joint action for peace and justice with ecumenical partners in Rome;
- b. present significant Reformed initiatives to the ecumenical community in Rome.

We are very grateful for the support of the two member churches and look forward to much enhanced possibilities for cooperation with the Roman Catholic Church and other ecumenical partners.

We also plan an annual event on Reformation Day in connection with the WCRC Sunday. This event shall uplift the Reformed presence not only in Rome but also globally.

#### *World Council of Churches*

While collaborative efforts with the World Council of Churches continues on many levels the focus is now on the WCC Assembly at Karlsruhe. Towards this end the WCRC will be focusing on its justice work, particularly on its gender justice and economic justice. We have been invited to create a workshop on the theme of the “faith declaration on the ordination of women” at the Assembly.

Further at the Assembly the Communion has been asked to organize a Reformed space for meeting, as well as a worship with Communion.

As part of the build up to the Assembly we will be organizing a theological reflection on the WCC Assembly theme, “Christ’s love moves us to reconciliation and unity.” This consultation will look at the theme from a uniquely Reformed perspective and particularly seek to elucidate the implications of the theme from the perspective of the margins. The meeting will be held in South Korea in partnership with our Korean member churches.

#### *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ)*

In the last year, we have experienced some delays in implementing the planned programmes of the JDDJ process. Father Avelino Gonzalez, who was responsible for coordinating the JDDJ process, left the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity in July 2021. The PCPCU has requested the communions that are linked to the JDDJ to pause the process until a successor has been appointed.

### *Roman Catholic Church*

The vacancy also delayed the planning of the next process of dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church. The CGS officially visited the PCPCU during its retreat in Rome in September 2021. Both parties expressed their interest in soon engaging in planning the next dialogue, but this can only be pursued after the appointment of a PCPCU staff person for the relations with the WCRC.

We hope that the creation of the Reformed Ecumenical Office in Rome will help to establish closer relations with the Roman Catholic Church.

### *Lutheran World Federation (LWF)*

Relations with the LWF continue to be very close. The CGS met with the executive staff during its visit to Geneva in September 2021. At this meeting, both parties confirmed the significance of the Wittenberg Witness for the relationship of the two communions and confirmed their willingness to strengthen joint programmatic work, particularly in the areas of theology, ecumenical relations, and justice and witness.

### *Freedom of Religion and Belief (FORB)*

In continuation of our 2020 conference on the Freedom of Religion in which we produced a Reformed position paper on the question of freedom of religion and belief, we have been in conversation with the LWF to have a consultation that will result in a set of guidelines for FORB from a protestant perspective. A core group of theologians and church leaders from both communions have been working towards planning this meeting to be held in November 2022.

### **Reformed Partnership Fund**

The Reformed Partnership Fund (RPF) of 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 2021, the Reformed Partnership Fund supported 26 regular projects and 11 emergency projects. Following is a brief description of the regular projects funded amongst various member churches:

1. Support for Children with Disabilities, *Iglesia Evangelica del Rio de la Plata*
2. Education Campaign and Stigma Reduction Strategy, *Presbyterian Church of Ghana*
3. Education Campaign – Educated to Heal – Churches Facing COVID-19, *Iglesia Presbiteriana-Reformada en Cuba*
4. Computers and Beds, Motswedi Rehabilitation Center, *Dutch Reformed Church in Botswana*
5. Touch Project – Empowerment Campaign and Tree Planting, *Reformed Church in Zambia*
6. Health Care – Equipping Young Girls, *Church of South India*
7. Strengthening Ecumenical Partnership, Leadership Conference, *Church of North India*
8. Campaign to Empower Vulnerable Women and Minorities, *Ekalesia Kelisiano Tuvalu*
9. Wholistic Transformation in Eastern Province, Zambia – Empowering Women and Girls, *Church of Central Africa Presbyterian, Zambia Synod*
10. Sustainable Base for Internally Displaced Women in Douala of the Littoral Region, *Presbyterian Church in Cameroon*
11. Mission Response to COVID-19 – Regional Empowerment Campaign, *United Congregational Church of Southern Africa*
12. Pig Production, *United Church of Zambia*
13. IT and Outreach Ministry, *Church of North India*
14. Social Inclusion Project for Families with Children with Disabilities, *Eglise Presbyterienne au Rwanda*
15. After School Classes for Roma Children in Transcarpathia Ukraine, *Reformed Church in Hungary*
16. Evangelism, Training, and Development, *Church of Jesus Christ Madagascar*
17. Socio-economic support to Church Workers Due to COVID-19, *United Church of Christ in the Philippines*
18. Human Rights and Conflict Capacity Building, *Comunion Mexicana de Iglesias Reformadas y Presbiterianans*
19. Engage Disability National Conference 2021, *National Council of Churches in India*
20. Agro-Basket Project, Compassion Protestant Society, *National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon*
21. Sustaining Mission Activities, *Church of Jesus Christ Madagascar*
22. Education E-Learning during COVID-19 Pandemic, *Church of Central Africa Presbyterian, Livingstonia Synod in Malawi*
23. COVID Response – Consultation and Equipping Pastors, *Church of North India*
24. Food Security Project, *Iglesia Presbiteriana de Colombia*
25. Peace and Reconciliation Work Colombia, *Corporacion Universitaria Reformada*



26. Livelihood Support Project – Pigs, Poultry, Trees - *Reformed Presbyterian Church in Africa*

As the COVID-19 pandemic continued to unfold into 2021, the Reformed Partnership Fund dedicated funds to emergency projects to support member churches in relief efforts to combat the pandemic. Following are the member churches that received COVID-19 relief funds through the Reformed Partnership Fund:

1. *Iglesia Presbiteriana de Venezuela*, Presbyterian Church of Venezuela
2. *Baptist Community of the Faithful in Africa*, Democratic Republic of Congo (affiliate member)
3. *Association of Reformed Evangelical Churches of Burkina Faso*, Burkina Faso
4. *Diocese of Faisalabad*, Church of Pakistan
5. *Africa Inland Church*, Sudan
6. *Sinodo Igreja Protestante Iha Timor Leste*, East Timor
7. *National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon* (Compassionate Protestant Society), Lebanon
8. *Uniting Churches in Southern Africa* (Gobabis Congregation), Namibia
9. *Church of Central Africa Presbyterian*, Zimbabwe

In addition, the Reformed Partnership Fund supports member churches suddenly responding to a disaster, whether natural or human made.

10. *Eglise du Christ au Congo*, Presbyterian Community of Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo –volcanic eruption
11. *United Church of Christ in the Philippines*, Philippines – typhoon

Through 2021, the Partnership Fund aided nearly 40-member churches, with more than 80,000 euros for emergency responses and approximately 200,000 euros for regular projects.

It should be noted that Mr. Werner Joecker who tended to the Partnership Fund left the WCRC in June 2021. The Reformed Partnership Fund is now managed by Amritha Perumalla. Anna Krüger is responsible for the WCRC's financial reporting needs to OPM.

## Report from the Strategic Plan Programme Group

The Strategic Plan Programme Group (SPPG) received with appreciation the mandate from President Najla Kassab and the Collegial General Secretariat (CGS) to review the current status of the programmatic work, along with the capacity impact created by new responsibilities during this interim period. The president and the CGS offered further interpretation regarding the long-term financial sustainability and its implications.

The SPPG at its 4-5 May meeting in Chicago received and affirmed statements summarizing the work of the CGS and the executive secretaries by the president and the CGS in relation to the present challenges as well as opportunities. As the reference groups could not meet the SPPG had members of the SPPG, the moderator of the “COVID and Beyond” project, and the chair of the General Council Task Group present, along with the president and CGS members.

The SPPG took note of the fact that based on recommendations from last year’s SPPG meeting, a more network-oriented programmatic work system has been initiated. Member churches have responded positively to this, allowing them to become more engaged in the programmatic work of the Communion. The SPPG further agreed to strongly recommend its last year’s affirmation that “this is not a time for scaling back, but a time for stepping up.” The SPPG commend and commit to developing a new working model that is less leader-dependent. Gifts of leadership and the willingness to serve are spread throughout our Communion. Executive staff leadership would take the form of networking, oversight, coordination, collaboration, and communication.

The SPPG also took note of the fact that the Collegial General Secretariat seemed to have worked sufficiently – and even appreciated in many ways – since September 2021, internally, externally, and throughout the Communion. Though the larger challenge is capacity; besides the regular responsibilities as executive secretaries, the general secretariat responsibilities were taken up as well as initiating a sustainability program along with strengthening the regional systems. This did allow for a synergistic model, integrating programs into communion building and raising funds.

The SPPG affirms that WCRC is not a Communion in crisis, but instead it is united, enthusiastic, and engaged. In the midst of institutional challenges, the WCRC shifts from a traditional organizational system (based in Northern, European models and reliant on this economics) to a postcolonial model; there is still plenty of work needed for this transition, but it is being received positively.

The SPPG affirms that the “COVID and Beyond” process has enabled the Communion to understand that this is a time to be disturbed and to call for a new imagination (as

noted in the Wittenberg Witness), that WCRC is pushed into new thinking, new ways of working. The WCRC is discovering the richness in resources it has around the Communion.

The SPPG evaluated the impact of the pandemic on the Strategic Plan which forced disruptions and challenged the WCRC to shift the programmatic direction. Now coming out of the pandemic, a considered review of the Strategic Plan is necessary from two vantage points: 1) How the Strategic Plan was taken up into the “COVID and Beyond” process; and 2) How the Strategic Plan and the learnings from the “COVID and Beyond” process may help the Communion to take orientation and direction towards the next General Council. This would also help the Communion to look back at the last four years programmatically and evaluate — Was the Strategic Plan a useful device? How did the WCRC match its potential strategic planning priorities into the future? Programme planning and prioritizing?

The SPPG received the Report of the Programme Executives, with thanks and gratitude (also contained within the CGS Report). It is a fact that the CGS is working, yet overburdened. Moreover, the CGS is discharging the responsibilities of the programme executives along with general secretariat and sustainability tasks. The SPPG strongly feels that staff capacity and the enormous work capabilities needs to be monitored. The leadership of the WCRC should extend all the needed care and support to the members of the CGS. The SPPG affirms the hard work of the members of the CGS and wholeheartedly thanks them for providing coordinated, organized team leadership.

The SPPG commends the work of the CGS and the executive secretaries and agrees that the CGS has given the ecumenical world a new model. It also affirms that the WCRC programme budget is doing very well (despite challenges in the core budget). This is a clear sign from the ecumenical world of the strength and relevancy of WCRC as well as its continuing commitment to justice is noted, appreciated, and affirmed by all partners.

The SPPG affirms that the WCRC is in the moment of problem solving, paradigm shifting, direction setting. The priority is how do we leverage investment in common interest and build consensus to do so? A strong part of the work must be involving churches regionally, with and through the various area councils. Programmatic work has to be operationalized through the regions and member churches.

The SPPG also notes that simply naming collaboration and cooperation is easy but doesn't necessarily achieve much; and that the WCRC's centralized systems do not encourage effective cooperation; thus, a more flexible, more open model which would allow more possibilities needs to be evolved. And the WCRC needs to clarify and define how could member churches with their programs work on behalf of the

whole Communion? Which level of flexibility and identity-focus is needed and demanded?

The SPPG observes that the Communion has realized in the “COVID and 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 the work has moved forward with quality and capacity. Now is a good time to use creative imagination to find new ways to work together and experience a multiplication of energies and an even stronger communion.

The SPPG appreciates the “COVID and Beyond” project, which held the Strategic Plan and the most relevant theological, ethical, and spiritual reflection and response of the Communion to the pandemic and its challenges together. The “COVID and Beyond” process provided the networks and regions a chance to engage and express, as well as an opportunity to get challenged and empowered.

SPPG affirms that the “COVID and Beyond” process:

- was a kairos moment in the life of the Communion. The Strategic Plan should be looked at through this lens and make the WCRC a people of vision, mission, and theology.
- also helped the WCRC to celebrate its communion, liturgically exploring and hermeneutically reimagining four verbs of the Strategic Plan: discerning, confessing, witnessing and being reformed.
- has also brought the people to the centre — youth; children; women; Indigenous people; people with disabilities; migrants; people of diverse identities; people who suffer marginalization exclusion and extinction because of racism, authoritarianism, and nationalism; people who are victims of war and violence — and enabled a deep listening process in its discernment as the WCRC moves towards becoming a just Communion

The “COVID and Beyond” process was through Zoom, and the SPPG stress the need to be vigilant of the digital divide within the WCRC. The technology accessibility and inclusion, as well as the technology inaccessibility and exclusion and the disadvantages of technology need to be articulated.

The SPPG notes that pandemic time has pointed out some new areas of privilege, and new power dynamics — including Zoom, which includes infrastructure — even without thinking about who this is excluding. This can perpetuate the exclusion of those already marginalized (especially poor and rural contexts). The process also brought to attention the question of language, and the dilemma of being virtual when the experiential is an important component of seeing understanding, acting, and witnessing.

The SPPG took note of the fact that the members of the governance structure apart from a very few participated. It would have been great to have the active engagement of a majority, in terms of ownership, as well as inspiring the member churches.

The SPPG recommends that the proposed regional meetings of the “COVID and Beyond” process are organized and that the final gathering may still have relevance and is crucial for harvesting all the fruits of process for the benefit of the communion.

The SPPG strongly recommends the publication and dissemination of the wealth of material produced during the “COVID and Beyond” process have to take priority for the benefit of the WCRC and the ecumenical movement (digital, video, soft/hard copy).

The SPPG affirms that the “COVID and Beyond” process was successful in making visible and energizing the groups already at work in the Communion. It also revealed some shortcomings: several regions had challenges, the WCRC doesn’t have strong connections to various parts of the Communion, there were divergencies in how the pandemic was being experienced and responded to.

The SPPG agrees with the proposed theme for the 2025 General Council — “Persevere in Witness” — and would recommend that now onwards the programmes will focus on the theme and build a momentum towards the General Council.

The SPPG affirms that the “global apartheid” concept and the need to continue with reflection on global apartheid as we focus towards the 2025 General Council.

The SPPG emphasizes the emergence of poverty as the major concern of mission, after the emergence of the COVID pandemic.

The SPPG also took note of the following programmes:

- On the publication of Reformed World, especially with the special issue on people with disabilities;
- Lombard Prize winning essays and the proposed webinar for youth;
- Building up a WCRC Youth Network, GIT, and Youth Summit;
- A three-year process on Indigenous Peoples (North America, South America, and Asia) which will begin with Asia with focus on theological education;
- Covenanting for Justice: NIFEA, GEM School, ZacTax Campaign, Decade for Climate Justice, Gender Policy of WCRC, a meeting of women leaders of WCRC and CWM;

- Doing Theology for Transformation: on the issue of Freedom of Religion working with the LWF, building on the Emden Synod anniversary, on exploring Presbyterian polity and discernment/consensus processes, on building theological networks to strengthen theological education throughout the Communion by connecting seminaries/theological colleges around the world as well as a conference on migration/migrant churches.

The SPPG is of the opinion that the time is now to strengthen the partnership, collaboration and working relationship with the Council for World Mission. in the light of the Strategic Plan (page 27). It affirms that working together with CWM is about mission together.

The SPPG also discussed the imminent appointment of a new executive staff person especially 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). This position would include work in advocacy and networking. The Presbyterian Church (USA), EMW, and *Brot für die Welt*, as well as possibly Church of Scotland and Protestant Church of the Netherlands, will partner with the WCRC in accompanying and supporting member churches on the grassroots level to become effective advocates.

The SPPG welcomes the imminent inauguration of an office in Rome, with the threefold purposes: 1) liaison to the Vatican, 2) make visible the Reformed contribution to world Christianity with an annual event, 3) liaison with other ecumenical bodies in Rome, where the Church of Scotland and the Waldensian Church will collaborate with WCRC.

The SPPG recommends that the major emphases of the Strategic Plan that were absorbed into the “COVID and Beyond” process now need to unfurl in exegeting and interpreting the General Council Theme “Persevere in Witness” in discerning, confessing, witnessing, and being Reformed towards building a just communion and doing justice.

## Officers Report as the Personnel Committee

### Background

The WCRC Constitution in Article XIII – C specifies that, *“The Executive Secretaries shall serve a term of five years and shall be eligible for another five-year term. A comprehensive review will be scheduled at the mid-point of each five-year term and prior to the decision to appoint an Executive Secretary to a second five-year term. The performance review is conducted by the General Secretary.”*

To fulfill this requirement in the absence of a general secretary and as authorized by the 2021 Executive Committee (Action 23), the officers initiated 360-degree reviews of each of the executive secretaries in the early months of 2022. Evaluations were sent to the officers, selected members of the Executive Committee, WCRC staff members, individuals within the wider communion, and ecumenical partners. In addition, self-evaluations by each of the three executive secretaries were requested. These were compiled by President Kassab and distributed to the officers for consideration and to provide recommendations to the Executive Committee at its May 2022 meeting.

### General Commentary

In the comments generated within the evaluations it was widely noted that our communion is going through extraordinary times due to the absence of a general secretary. In taking on the role of a Collegial General Secretariat (CGS), the executive secretaries have added a significant role and additional responsibilities to the already robust job descriptions into which they were appointed. These extraordinary circumstances have been greatly exacerbated by the global COVID-19 pandemic which has altered not only the working environment within the WCRC office, but also the general engagement with the wider Communion.

Still, the evaluations widely acknowledged that the “COVID-19 and Beyond: What Does the Lord Require of Us?” process enabled the communion and justice work of the SPPG to proceed in meaningful ways. The executive secretaries, particularly the two programme secretaries, were credited with creatively advancing the strategic priorities of the Communion despite lockdowns, travel restrictions, and heightened inequities in the midst of a global pandemic. It was also noted that during this time the executive secretary for communications and operations has taken on a great deal of additional responsibility for administration and management within the Hannover office.

Thus, these factors have significantly influenced the evaluations that were received: acknowledgment of the enormity of the roles the executive secretaries have been asked to fulfill, and the inability to fulfill every responsibility to its fullest extent.

*Executive Secretary for Communion and Theology: Rev. Dr. Hanns Lessing*

The following comments are excerpts from Hanns' 360-degree review:

"Dr. Hanns has no doubt demonstrated impeccable commitment to the strategic focus and engagements of the Communion. He has facilitated different processes that continuous to contribute to the overall mission and goals of WCRC. Some of the notable discernment processes include peace and reconciliation, accompanying memberships in their prophetic engagements in Cameroon and other countries, freedom of religion, and 'Discerning, Confessing, and Witnessing in the Time of COVID-19 and Beyond.'"

"Hanns had a primary role in crafting the Strategic Plan and knows it very well. .Hanns is a real asset to the execution of the plan."

"Hanns has done stellar work in furthering the goals of the organization. His ability of clear and conceptual thinking and to nuance and see the complexities of the issue are very valuable in outlining and communicating the vision of the organization."

The following comments are excerpted from Hanns' self-reflection:

*Please list the significant challenges or obstacles in fulfilling this role.*

The two main challenges I have already addressed above: My tendency to continuously take on too many responsibilities and getting involved too deeply; and my limitations in communication need to be addressed.

*Please list the growth areas you see as important for yourself in this role in the future.*

I believe that the general secretariat would be helped by some professional supervision in dealing with the multiple demands directed to the staff. With regard to communication, I would appreciate it if there was some training.

The Personnel Committee notes the above comments and believes that a growing edge for Hanns is administration and management, particularly to be willing to delegate some of the parts of his work to others. We believe this is important for his own well-being and health, as well as the health of the communion.

**Recommendation:**

**To express appreciation for the work of the Rev. Dr. Hanns Lessing and to approve his appointment to a second five-year term as Executive Secretary for Communion and Theology.**



*Executive Secretary for Justice and Witness: Rev. Philip Peacock*

The 360-degree review yielded these comments about Philip:

“Rev Peacock has done an excellent job of developing the WCRC’s work and commitment to justice and witness, he has strengthened and built on existing relationships with partners, [and] created excellent resources. . . His breadth of insight into issues of justice is apparent throughout his work. This job requires someone who is tactical in relationship management as well as having theological knowledge and a desire to serve others in social justice; Rev Peacock has displayed such attributes over the last few years . . . in the ecumenical world and beyond.”

“Philip will be the first to admit that he is not an administration-minded person. His strengths evolve in the immediate contact with people and not in the conception and implementation of institutional processes. He is conscious of this limitation and appreciates and supports the engagement of others in management and governance.”

Philip’s self-reflection included these thoughts:

*Please list the significant challenges or obstacles in fulfilling this role:*

One obstacle is the workload and the amount of work to do. Honestly the world is hurting and there is a lot of work as far as furthering the justice agenda goes.

*Please list the growth areas you see as important for yourself in this role for the future.*

I want to work further on deepening and furthering my managerial and administrative skills.

The Personnel Committee notes the above comments and believes that Philip is most challenged by the managerial aspects of his position and would benefit from additional training in management and administration.

**Recommendation:**

**To express appreciation for the work of the Rev. Philip Peacock and to approve his appointment to a second five-year term as Executive Secretary for Justice and Witness.**

*Executive Secretary for Communications and Operations: Phil Tanis*

The 360-degree review process yielded these comments about Phil:

“Phil does an amazing job handling all the parts of his role. He is very responsive when issues are raised and collaborative with colleagues and members of the communion. Is very attuned to the Strategic Plan and the parts of it for which he has responsibility, but also doesn’t overstep on things that aren’t in his role.”

“His work is of very good and high quality and his many contributions is highly appreciated. Phil is reliable, customer oriented and focused on his objectives. In particular, we would like to highlight the fact that under his leadership Phil has developed and implemented the new structure of the communication setup in the WCRC. . . He works very hard with minimum supervision. He has developed good relationships with his teammates, and colleagues and staff members of organizations served.”

Phil [is] a high contributor to the effectiveness of the staff and in achieving the goals of the WCRC Strategic Plan. Phil’s work is important, and he does well in getting the Communique out and to ensuring the information and content is what the churches need to know about WCRC. The newsletter continues to be an important between WCRC and members churches.”

Phil notes this in his self-reflection:

*Please list the significant challenges or obstacles in fulfilling this role.*

By far the biggest ongoing challenge is capacity, by which I mean we’re being asked to do more than we possibly can.

*Please list the growth areas you see as important for yourself in this role in the future.*

I’m in my final two years, and am thus working to ensure that I leave the communications office in a place that can easily be handed over to other(s) to run; and that the operations of the WCRC are in a state that they can continue without the amount of time/effort I’ve had to put into them. I would hope that my successor (should we be able to afford one) could focus her time on communications with the operational aspects rightly being moved back to the general secretariat’s office (with both the administrator and GS herself overseeing these responsibilities).

The Personnel Committee has conducted this constitutionally required mid-term review for Phil, but it does not require action by the Executive Committee. Phil will finish his second (and final) term with the WCRC in 2024. We note with deep appreciation Phil’s competent and cheerful work on behalf of the communion.

## Report of the General Council Task Group

The Executive Committee of the World Communion of Reformed Churches that met in May 2021 created a task group to lay the foundations for the next General Council. The task group was to take on the following responsibilities:

- to propose a location for a 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.

At the extraordinary Executive Committee meeting in late 2021, the Task Group reported on its progress, and the Executive endorsed the preferred location of the next Council as Thailand (with the Church of Christ in Thailand (CCT) acting as hosts). The Executive also approved the delay of the Council to 2025, due to the pandemic. It should be noted that 2025 is the 150th anniversary of the WCRC, and this could be factored into the Council.

Finally, the Executive requested that the task group “consider other texts and themes for the General Council in 2025.”

In March 2022, Philip Vinod Peacock (as staff support for the task group) and Hanns Lessing (with his experience as the coordinator of the 2017 General Council) visited Thailand, meeting with CCT leadership, including Executive Committee member Prawate Khid-Arn. They developed a memorandum of understanding between the WCRC and CCT (see appendix A). This agreement will be signed by officials of both the WCRC and CCT during a visit later this month at which possible sites for the Council will be surveyed.

While details on the exact location of the Council are still needed to finalize a budget, it should be noted that the CCT is reliant upon the financial support of other Asian churches to effectively host the Council. Initial discussions with a group of Asian churches showed strong interest in partnering on this. The task group therefore recommends the Executive Committee take the following decision:

- **Asian member churches shall form a consortium that will collectively support the General Council financially, ensuring that the agreed budget is fully covered.**

Taking up the request of the extraordinary Executive Committee meeting on the development of the Council’s theme, members of the Strategic Plan Programme Group (SPPG) were invited to join in this work. The SPPG also considered how programme work could be better oriented toward the next General Council (see

their report). The proposed theme and additional texts can be found below. The theme is commended to the Executive Committee for adoption.

With the Task Group's essential responsibilities nearly complete, the Officers' Committee has proposed the creation of a General Council Planning Committee to build on these foundations with the following mandate:

The General Council Planning Committee shall be responsible for the planning of the 27th General Council to be held in Thailand in 2025. Responsibilities include working with the WCRC staff to develop a detailed programme, timetable, budget, publications, discernment processes, and symbolic events of the General Council.

The General Council Planning Committee shall work with representatives of the host committee in Thailand on all aspects of the hosting operations, ensuring that the housing and conference facilities are adequate for the General Council.

The General Council Planning Committee shall coordinate with the consortium of Asian churches and WCRC staff to ensure that the General Council budget is balanced.

The General Council Planning Committee shall be composed of the following people:

- Dario Barolin (moderator)
- Najla Kassab
- Prawate Khid-arn
- Nancy Lin
- Veronica Muchiri
- Gerardo Oberman (moderator of the worship committee)
- Victoria Turner
- Karen Georgia Thompson
- Hanns Lessing
- Philip Vinod Peacock
- Phil Tanis

It is recommended that the Executive Committee take the following action:

- **A General Council Planning Committee is established consisting of the members so named and with the mandate noted above.**

An essential component of any successful General Council is worship. It is thus recommended that the Executive Committee take the following action:

- **The Officers' Committee, working with the General Council Planning Committee, is authorized to appoint a General Council Worship Committee to develop the worship services and spiritual aspects of the 2025 General Council.**

## **2025 General Council Theme**

### *Signs of the Times*

The WCRC General Council will take place in 2025 in Thailand. As the road to the 2025 General Council opens before the Reformed fellowship, there are a myriad of challenges and opportunities facing the church, the global ecumenical community and the world. While we have no way to predict where we will be with this global pandemic, the most recent data shows that over 15 million lives have been lost in this health crisis.

The past two years have been defining, with the pandemic being apocalyptic in the Biblical sense, that is to say that it unveils or reveals something. We have been witnesses to how the pandemic has unveiled the deep inequalities that exist in our world. While the pandemic rendered many unemployed and exposed the inadequacy of global health care systems, at the same time a handful of people made obscene amounts of money due to the pandemic. Poverty increased and the gap between the few wealthy and the many poor only widened.

During the pandemic we were also witnesses to increasing racial inequalities and all forms of discrimination; we were witness to how authoritarian regimes used the pandemic to squash dissent and increase surveillance. Furthermore, we are all living through a climate crisis that threatens all life on this planet, with an increasingly shorter time in which we can make amends. The situation of the poor, Indigenous people, women, people living with disabilities, and children worsened with gender-based violence and unemployment fueling homelessness, hunger, and human trafficking.

The wars in Ukraine, Syria, Yemen, Palestine, and in other parts of the world have broken hope and expectations of peace. We are witnesses to the cruelty of war, torturing and taking lives. These have further contributed to loss of life and the displacement of people globally. War, famine, climate change, and drought are forcing people from their homes and into unsafe situations. There are currently over 80 million people living as refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants trying to find places to live. We are losing faith in humanity as we continue to see the lack of caring for the lives of others and the absence of the love of God given to us.

We have seen the tiredness of people struggling over and over for justice and peace that does not come. We have seen people receiving stones and snakes instead of

bread and fish. People have been broken and no longer expect anything better than this. Life of God's creation is at stake if we accept and succumb to this "new normality" of injustice and exploitation.

The General Council will gather in the shadows of these and other challenges, each providing an opportunity for the church to be witness and respond to the needs of the world. It will be important for the theme of the assembly to acknowledge the times and provide hope for those who have witnessed and experienced loss. It will be a time of lament as the whole Communion gathers for the first time since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. And it will be important for the theme to provide encouragement for those who are growing weary in the ongoing fight for justice on behalf of communities that continue to live in the margins created by greed, privilege, hierarchy, and dominant cultures.

The proposed General Council theme is "Persevere in Your Witness."

### *Persevere in Your Witness*

Persevere in your witness is a prophetic call to the church. This theme offers encouragement to the church, even as it engenders hope for a future yet to be realized, where love and justice will prevail on behalf of all people. Yet this theme also allows us to encapsulate the pain and brokenness of where we are as a people. It further draws on Palestinian ideas of somood which speak of staying firm in the midst of trials.

This call is not new but it has a strong presence in several biblical testimonies:

*Hebrews 12:1*: "Since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us" (NRSV).

The whole epistle to Hebrews is read like a homily. The community to whom this preacher is speaking is under political unrest, even facing persecution. This community, like the members of the WCRC, has been suffering and it seems that this dire situation of suffering is far from being over. Like us in this pandemic, the future is unknown and it is easy to lose sight of faith.

In this context, the homilist affirms that they are not alone and that their ancestors in faith are watching over them as "a cloud of witnesses." With this comforting assurance, the homilist encourages them to carry on with life with perseverance. The word, "perseverance" in Greek means neither passive nor forced endurance but involves an active resistance in terms of never giving up hope, holding on to the resilience of life and its fullness and its dignity that are claimed by God.

*James 5:11*: “Indeed we call blessed those who showed endurance. You have heard of the endurance of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful” (NRSV).

The exhortation to perseverance in James appears in the midst of a context of suffering brought because of their faith. As if the announcement and practice of Jesus' good news had generated a counterculture (4:4) that faces rejection and persecution.

The exhortation is to keep integrity of faith, to practice it (1:22). In 5:7-11, James calls for patience with the certainty that something new will happen, which is like the certainty of the farmer who sows the seed. In this same category we can include the certainty and confidence of the prophets he invites to emulate. On the other hand, James calls not to give up but to persevere.

Patience and perseverance are not a submissive acceptance of suffering but denounce it (notice the mention of Job as an example of it). This is vital because James' letter works on the theme of coherence between what one believes and what one does to avoid falling in hypocrisy (2:12). Practical perseverance affirms us in what we believe and in turn it drives us more strongly to action.

*Luke 21:19*: “By your endurance you will gain your souls” (NRSV).

Jesus is with his disciples at the temple in Jerusalem and they wonder at its magnificence. Then, Jesus starts to announce coming events before the fall of the temple (Luke 21:5-11). In 21:20-24 he announces the fall of the city of Jerusalem. In between those texts, Jesus reveals events that will happen before the fall of the temple and the city of Jerusalem (21:12-19).

In this short unit Jesus, as a prophet, prepares his disciples for those events. He warns his disciples about political and religious persecution (v. 12), betrayal (v.16), hatred (v. 17) and even death (v.16) because of his name (v.12, v. 17). However, in the midst of such harsh times, Jesus sees a possibility for public witness (v.13). In addition, he ensures the disciples that they will be empowered with wisdom to face those that persecute them (vv.14-15) and that not a hair of their head will perish (v. 18, see 12:7). Finally, Jesus instructs them to persevere.

The events announced in these verses constitute the core of the narrative in the book of Acts. So, what here is a prophecy, they became past events for the reader of Luke-Acts. In this way, the reader can test out the veracity of the prophecy and also has the certainty of what was promised in Acts.

Luke twice uses the word “endure” (*hypomone*): 8:15 (parable of the sower) and in 21:19. This word in the New Testament is connect to a context of persecution

(Romans 5:3-4; 8:25; 2 Corinthians 1:6; Col 1:11; 1 Thessalonians 1:3; 2 Thessalonians 1:4; Hebrews 10:36; 12:1; James 1:3-4; Revelation 13:10).

According to The Dictionary of New Testament Theology, “while *hypoméno* is at first ethically neutral, *hypomonéno* becomes a prominent virtue in the sense of courageous endurance. As distinct from patience, it has the active significance of energetic if not necessarily successful resistance” (p. 582).

The task group recommends that the Executive Committee take the following action:

- **The Executive Committee adopts “Persevere in Your Witness” as the theme for the 2025 General Council.**



## Appendix A

### **Memorandum of Understanding between the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) and the Church of Christ in Thailand (CCT) on Hosting the WCRC's 27th General Council in 2025**

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#### **1. Basic Information on the General Council:**

##### **1.1 Time:**

- 1) The 27th General Council will take place in 2025 at a date advised by the CCT (the final dates shall be determined during the WCRC's technical visit to the conference locations in the 1st quarter of 2022).
- 2) The General Council shall be in session for 8-9 days and is preceded by pre-councils for women and youth (2-3 days) and the Global Institute of Theology (14 days).

##### **1.2 Location:**

- 1) The General Council will take place in Chiang Mai, where the CCT has several congregations and operates the Payap University and other institutions.

##### **1.3 Participants:**

- 1) Some 500-600 people are expected to attend
- 2) The total is composed of 350-400 delegates and some 200 stewards, staff, consultants, and GIT students. Usually, the General Council also welcomes visitors.

##### **1.4 Finances:**

- 1) The expenses of the General Council shall be raised by the WCRC (General Council reserve) and the consortium of hosting churches in Asia (Presbyterian Church in Korea (PCK), Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea (ROK), Presbyterian Church in Taiwan (PCT), Presbyterian Church in Singapore (PCS), Hong Kong Council of the Church of Christ in China (HKCCCC), and others).
- 2) The budget of the General Council is currently in preparation.
- 3) Once the budget is set, discussions with consortium members and the WCRC will settle on specific financial contributions.

##### **1.5 Planning:**

- 1) General Council planning shall be overseen by the General Council Planning Committee (to be appointed by the Executive Committee in May 2022).
- 2) Programme planning shall be coordinated by the general secretariat in Hannover and the General Council Coordinator (GCC), who will be based in Asia.
- 3) The GCC shall be supported by a local host committee that shall prepare the local activities in Chiang Mai.

##### **1.6 Logistics:**

- 1) Logistics (registration, visa, travel, accommodation etc.) shall be coordinated by the General Council Coordinator in collaboration with the general secretariat in Hannover and the local group of logistical volunteers (to be convened by the GCC).

## **2. Agreement**

This MoU comprises the basic framework of the commitments of the CCT and WCRC in the planning and realization of the 27th General Council in Chang Mai. Details shall be discussed and agreed upon in the process.

### **2.1 Commitments of the Church of Christ in Thailand (CCT)**

#### **2.1.1 Time:**

- 1) The CCT suggests a suitable time for the 27th General Council in 2025.

#### **2.1.2 Location and venues:**

- 1) The CCT offers facilities in Chiang Mai (congregations, institutions, Payap University) to be used for the General Council, the pre council and the Global Institute of Theology. The details of management and expenditure budgets will be discussed further.
- 2) The CCT uses its local contacts to negotiate the best possible deal with local hotels (if needed for the General Council).

#### **2.1.3 Finances:**

- 1) As part of the consortium of hosting churches in Asia, the CCT pledges contributions to the General Council budget (the amounts shall be discussed in the consortium).

#### **2.1.4 Planning:**

- 1) The CCT supports the search for a General Council Coordinator and offers office space at no charge during the twelve months before General Council.
- 2) The CCT, in cooperation with the general secretariat and the consortium of hosting churches, convenes a local host committee to plan local events (special worship services, exposure programme, programmes to introduce the churches in the region and the CCT).

#### **2.1.5 Logistics:**

- 1) The CCT uses its contacts with the government of Thailand to secure visas for all General Council participants and acquires other forms of government support.
- 2) The CCT, in cooperation with the general secretariat, convenes a local group of logistical volunteers to assist in registration, visa, travel, accommodation management, etc.

### **2.2 Commitments of the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC)**

The World Communion of Reformed Churches agrees to take up the following commitments:

2.2.1 Venues:

- 1) The WCRC conducts a technical visit to Chiang Mai to examine possible venues, accommodations, and other facilities for the different activities of the General Council. After this visit, the technical team and CCT leadership take the necessary decisions on dates, venues and other critical technical matters.

2.2.2 Finances:

- 1) The WCRC contributes funds from the General Council reserve and approaches its member churches to raise the funds that cannot be solicited by the consortium of hosting churches in Asia.

2.2.3 Planning:

- 1) The Executive Committee appoints a General Council Planning Committee that oversees the preparation and realization of the General Council.
- 2) The WCRC conducts a search process for a General Council Coordinator (GCC) who is based in Asia, in the twelve months before the council, preferably in Chiang Mai.
- 3) In cooperation with the GCC, the general secretariat appoints and accompanies a General Council Worship Committee and planning committees for the business sessions of the General Council.

2.2.4 Logistics:

- 1) The general secretariat and the local logistical volunteers cooperate in registration, visa, travel, accommodation management etc.

2.3 Implementation and Monitoring

General Council planning is a continuing process that requires careful monitoring and frequent adaptation to changing circumstances. Therefore, to allow adequate responses to potential challenges, the different stakeholders convene the General Council Implementation and Monitoring Committee (GCIMC):

2.3.1 Composition:

- 1) WCRC general secretariat and CCT each appoint a representative who, together with the General Council Coordinator, the Moderator of the General Council Planning Committee, and the convener of the consortium of hosting churches in Asia, form the General Council Implementation and Monitoring Committee.

2.3.2 Task:

- 1) The GCIMC will meet regularly to monitor the state of General Council Planning and take decisions within the mandates of the General Council Planning Committee.

2.4 List of Committees

The following bodies shall work at planning and realizing the 2025 General Council:

- 2.4.1 General Council Planning Committee (appointed by the WCRC Executive Committee);
- 2.4.2 Consortium of Hosting Churches in Asia;
- 2.4.3 Local Host Committee (appointed by the CCT and its hosting partners in Asia)
- 2.4.4 General Council Implementation and Monitoring Committee (GCIMC);
- 2.4.5 General Council Worship Committee;
- 2.4.6 planning committees for the business sessions of the General Council;
- 2.4.7 group of logistical volunteers.

[To be signed by officials of both WCRC and CCT.]

## **WCRC General Secretary Search Committee: Interim Report**

### The Search Committee Members

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

In September 2021, the WCRC General Secretary Search Committee resumed its mandate to identify and recommend the next General Secretary of the Communion and has had five (5) meetings via Zoom.

Six persons submitted application packages by the deadline of January 15, 2022.

The applicants were from members churches in Africa, Europe, and Central, North and South America. Three persons, two males and one female, were shortlisted. All applicants received letters indicating their status in the process following the shortlisting process.

The Search Committee agreed on a two-step interview process for the shortlisted applicants, one with the professional xcg Executive Consulting Group AG, and a second face-to-face interview with the Search Committee.

The xcg Executive Consulting Group AG and the moderator of the Search Committee interviewed the three shortlisted applicants on March 10, 2022. Each interview lasted two hours. The interview process included but was not limited to professional development, suitability for the position, self-appraisal, personality, and aptitude tests.

The Search Committee received a detailed written report on each candidate from the consulting group on March 17, 2022. On April 21, 2022, the Search Committee met with the consulting group and discussed each report.

One candidate has voluntarily withdrawn from the process due to the uncertainty of the commencement date of the position. The other two candidates are still in the process, the next phase hopefully being the face-to-face interview with the Search Committee in Hannover.

The Search Committee awaits further information and instructions from the Officers and the Executive Committee regarding the timeline.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Yvette Noble-Bloomfield (Rev. Dr.)

## **Proposal by the Officers' Committee on the Election of a General Secretary and the Leadership Model during the Interim**

### **Introduction**

In early 2021, the WCRC realized that its long-running sustainability challenges had reached a breaking point that required immediate action. After extended consultations, the Officers' Committee and Executive Committee took the following decisions:

- postponement of the election of a general secretary;
- cutting personnel expenditure (the number of administrators was reduced from four to three);
- Executive Committee meetings would take place in a digital format;
- appointment of a Sustainability Task Group that should explore additional funding sources to assure the short-, mid-, and long-term sustainability of the WCRC.

These decisions were designed to give the WCRC some breathing room to overcome the sustainability challenges. The Executive Committee set the goal that, in 2022, the WCRC should be in a situation that would allow the election of a general secretary and the continuation of normal operations.

To coordinate and direct the work of the WCRC during the interim, the Executive Committee adopted a temporary leadership model limited to one year. Accordingly, it appointed the three executive secretaries as a Collegial General Secretariat (CGS). The Officers' Committee was charged to reassess the situation in February 2022 and discern whether the election of a general secretary was feasible in the current sustainability situation.

During this discernment, the Officers' Committee determined that the necessary funds to finance the general secretary position had not been acquired yet. The current state of the core budget only allows operations with reduced staff and without in-person governance meetings. To this date, there are no firm indications that the financial situation will improve substantially in the near term.

This report summarizes the findings of the Officers' Committee and presents the discernment on the following issues:

- A. Feasibility of the General Secretary election
- B. Leadership during an Extended Interim Period
- C. Towards a Sustainable Working Model for the WCRC
- D. The Role of the CGS during an Extended Interim
- E. Proposals for the Way Ahead

### **A. Feasibility of the General Secretary Election**

In the current sustainability situation, the election of a general secretary is a decision that has a significant impact on the financial stability of the WCRC and the conditions under which it will be able to work. In the current budget situation, the addition of the salary of a general secretary would either lead to immense sustainability risks or would demand a significant reduction of executive staff capacity. Under these conditions, every decision on a roadmap for the election of a general secretary must strive for the best way to meet the following strategic priorities:

1. the need for a balanced budget;
2. the return to the constitutional mandate to elect a general secretary
3. the transition to a postcolonial working model to improve the future sustainability of the WCRC

Each of these three priorities is important. The WCRC must strive toward the election of a general secretary without compromising a balanced budget or obstructing the possibilities for future sustainability improvements.

However, it might not be easy to do justice to all three of them simultaneously. Therefore, the Communion needs to discuss how to bring these three goals into the best possible balance.

The following analysis explores the impact that each particular strategy would have if it would give preference to one priority at the expense of the others. This exploration flags potential unintended consequences that should be considered.

### *1. Prioritizing a Balanced Budget*

A strategy aimed at securing the financial stability of the WCRC would put all efforts into maintaining a balanced budget.

Under current conditions, this strategy would allow maintaining the status quo of the operations of the WCRC. This stability results from the 2021 cost cuttings exercise: not electing a general secretary, reducing the staffing plan by one administrator, and no in-person Executive Committee meetings. While these cuts allow the WCRC to operate for the foreseeable future, they have a massive impact on the work of the WCRC. In the current situation, the budget does include the additional salary for a general secretary. As a result, the executive secretaries have had to take over these responsibilities. This shift has led to noticeable reductions in the programme work.

To overcome these challenges, balancing an extended budget that would allow returning to the 2021 state of work would require new funding sources. The current sustainability initiative has explored several options.



However, these explorations made clear that there are only a few easy gains to be made. Faced with the impact of the pandemic and other structural challenges, many member churches have experienced financial problems that forced them to cut budgets and reduce staff. This shift in the funding landscape makes fundraising more complex and demanding. Funds available to support institutions have dwindled across the globe. In this situation, fundraisers have to convince potential partners of the relevance of the WCRC's work for the life of their organizations. Only strong relations and considerable trust will allow earmarking parts of such grants for financing the general secretariat.

As long as this situation prevails, it is unlikely that established fundraising patterns for the core budget can raise sufficient funds to pay the additional salary of a general secretary in the short-term and perhaps even in the mid-term future.

To put it bluntly: If the WCRC continues to pursue its current fundraising approach, it won't be easy to reach the financial stability that will allow the election of a general secretary any time soon.

## *2. Prioritizing the Election of a General Secretary*

The Constitution defines the general secretary as the chief executive officer of the WCRC. Therefore, the election of a general secretary is of crucial importance for the WCRC's work. A strategy prioritizing such an election would focus all efforts on obtaining the funds for the salary of a general secretary. Such funds would have to be secured for the whole election period of seven years.

In the current sustainability situation, such a strategy would have to be based on the hope that it will be possible to discover new sources of funding that would allow the return to the "old normal" of operations before 2021.

This hope has so far been disappointed. There are no pledges from member churches that would even get close to the amount required to pay the salary of a general secretary.

Therefore, finding the funds for an additional salary of a general secretary would put the WCRC into a dilemma. Assuming the WCRC does not want to risk its mid-term viability by depleting its reserves, the money for the salary of a general secretary could only be guaranteed by further drastic cost-cutting measures.

Current budgetary limitations would only allow two options. A general secretary would either:

- have to be funded through monies currently dedicated to an executive secretary (which would postpone an election until 2024 when the current executive for communications and operations concludes his term);

- be an in-house appointment (i.e. the promotion of a current executive secretary to general secretary, which could happen immediately).

In both instances, the election would entail the sacrifice of executive staff capacity. In both scenarios, the new general secretary will only have the support of two executive secretaries instead of three.

### 3. *Prioritizing the Transformation to a Working Model for the WCRC*

If the current fundraising model cannot provide the necessary income, the WCRC must look for new models to fund its work. A strategy that emphasizes the long-term sustainability of the WCRC would explore the conditions for a “new normal” that will involve the resources of member churches in new ways. Such a strategy could invite member churches, ministries, regions, and ecumenical partners to second staff for certain projects or implement programmes on behalf of the Communion. This approach would need a high degree of flexibility in obtaining the necessary staff resources, which would reduce the liabilities of the core budget.

Such a working model would also address the structural challenges that affect many ecumenical organizations. Till now, the funding of ecumenical organizations follows old mission structures that raise funds in the North to finance the work of the global church. These traditional funding structures conflict with the postcolonial self-conception of large parts of the ecumenical movement. In the twenty-first century, they are also increasingly unfeasible. The financial resources of churches in the Global North have peaked. Even if the support of the ecumenical movement is still high, these churches will not be able to shoulder the bulk of ecumenical finances the same way as they did in the past.

As Dr. Rathnakara Sadananda, the moderator of the Sustainability Task Group has put it, we need a constructive decolonization of ecumenical finances that regards the whole Communion as a resource. Such a new perception of Communion finances must pay particular attention to churches’ funding and working models in the Global South. Unlike churches in the North, these churches do not have large financial resources at the level of assembly offices and governance structures but need to raise funds for financing their central structures from congregations and, in many cases, also from individuals.

To fund ecumenical organizations like the WCRC, the church leadership has to raise particular funds for this purpose. This requires an extraordinary commitment. The central church offices need to reach out to congregations to convince them that ecumenical organizations are worthwhile funding goals. For this work, they need the support of the Communion. Successful fundraising on this level requires excellent member church relations, inspiring programmes, and effective communication.

Seeing these requirements, it becomes clear that such a strategy will require considerable resources for coordination and accompaniment. Our experience demonstrates that the transition to a postcolonial Communion model necessitates sufficient staff capacity, a long breath, and high institutional stability. Even if there are several positive signals of churches that are willing to support the work of the WCRC in the described manner, it is not guaranteed that the funds to finance this overhead can be raised through the programme budgets.

As promising as this postcolonial strategy would look for the future viability of the WCRC, it cannot secure sufficient income to pay for the capacity to coordinate and accompany the necessary transformation. As desirable as it would be to have a general secretary leading the shift to a new understanding of the Communion, the process itself cannot guarantee the necessary funds for the salary in the near or perhaps even in the broader future.

### *Assessment*

None of the described strategies can provide a quick and easy way toward a general secretary election. The three priorities impact each other; the pursuit of one goal leads to unintended difficulties with regard to the others:

1. Without new fundraising approaches, it is unlikely that the funds needed for the general secretary position can be obtained any time soon;
2. Without additional resources, the salary of the general secretary can only be covered by either risking the financial reserves or by cutting executive staff capacity;
3. Without sufficient staff capacity, it will be challenging to organize the transition to a postcolonial sustainability model that makes the WCRC less dependent on core budget income.

This looks like a vicious circle, where the flow from one to the next leads to more problems. In the current situation, it will be difficult to reach the goals of a balanced budget, the election of a general secretary, and sufficient staff capacity to implement a new Communion model simultaneously.

However, the picture is not as gloomy as it might look. The analysis shows that the WCRC is currently in a stable condition and that there is a promising outlook for a more sustainable future.

What is difficult is finding the right strategy that will get the WCRC through the challenges of the short- and mid-term future.

In 2021, the Executive Committee mandated the General Secretary Search Committee and the Sustainability Task Group to each deal with a part of the challenge. The same decision requested the Officers' Committee in February 2022 to

discern whether the election of a general secretary was feasible and, if not, make a proposal to the Executive Committee about the way ahead.

Formulating such a proposal requires a comprehensive discernment that needs more time and a broader outlook than was possible since February 2022.

The Officers' Committee, therefore, proposes that the Executive Committee appoints a *Future Direction Committee* that shall consist of members of the Officers' Committee, the Sustainability Task Group, and the General Secretary Search Committee (see proposals below).

This committee shall be mandated to discern the sustainability challenges described in this report and present a proposal to the 2023 Executive Committee meeting on how the conditions can be created that would allow the election of a general secretary while assuring sufficient staff capacity to coordinate the work of the WCRC.

## **B. Leadership during an Extended Interim Period**

The feasibility study, as presented in the previous section, has shown that, under the current sustainability conditions, the only way to elect a general secretary in 2022 is if it would choose one of the existing executive secretaries. Under all other scenarios, the election would have to be postponed until the salary of the general secretary can be secured.

In this situation, the WCRC has to prepare for continuing its operations with an interim leadership model. To prepare for this decision, the Officers' Committee has conducted an evaluation of the current leadership model under which the responsibilities of the general secretary are delegated to a Collegial General Secretariat (CGS), consisting of the three executive secretaries.

### *General Observations*

As was already stated in the report to the Extraordinary Executive Committee meeting in November-December 2021, the appointment of a Collegial General Secretariat has found much positive interest in the WCRC and ecumenical partner organizations. Several people see the model as a timely experiment of non-hierarchical leadership that is more open to accommodating the diversity and richness of twenty-first century church life. Others have pointed to the collegial tradition of Presbyterian and Reformed churches that have adopted the office of powerful general secretaries only recently. The exercise has captured the interest and the imagination of many.

### *Inter-personal Relationships*

However, some people have raised the concern that the structure strongly depends on good personal relationships among the three members of the CGS and offers only limited resources for conflict resolution.

These observations express undoubtedly a valid concern. At the same time, the WCRC, as an organization with a very lean staff, has always depended on good relationships among the people working in the Hannover office. In the past, attempts to solve conflicts by invoking the authority of a superior office have not been very successful.

The model of the CGS requires a high amount of transparency and mutual accountability. In our observation, the structure has, till now, contributed to good relationships in the office rather than impeding them.

### *Role Clarity*

While the internal transformation to the CGS system proceeded without significant hiccups, there was a learning curve in the relationships with external bodies.

After a while, however, member churches and partners discovered the advantages of relating to the general secretariat in a multi-faceted way that involves institutional relationships and programmes.

The coordination of responsibilities between CGS and WCRC governance bodies raised more complex questions. In the beginning, it was not always understood who was responsible for what. We also had to clarify when the CGS had to appear as a collegium and when an individual would be appropriate.

These questions needed proper attention, but it is our impression that they are solvable.

### *Learnings for Leadership Development in the WCRC*

The CGS started its work only on 1 September 2021. This short period does not yet allow a final assessment. There are, however, some learnings that should be taken seriously in the future development of the WCRC's leadership model:

- **Transparency and accountability:** Because decisions can only be taken in the collegium, the executives must be in continuous conversation with each other. This has led to a much-improved quality of discussion and a deeper integration of the activities. The system has also improved the communication between executives and administrators.

- Integration of member church relations and programme work: Since the sustainability model adopted by the Executive in May 2021 calls for the mobilization of member churches, the CGS is now coordinating member church relations and programme work much more closely. Dr. Sadananda sees this fusion of member church relations and programme work as an essential building block of the WCRC sustainability strategy and strongly encourages the Communion to develop it further.

### *Summary*

The CGS model stands in the collegial tradition of Presbyterian leadership and encourages the diversity of relationships, programmes, and approaches in the Communion into a continuous conversation. This is very helpful for the coordination of the life and work of the Communion. The evaluation has not discovered significant problems that would lead to questioning the model in principle.

What has nevertheless been problematic is the increased workload, particularly for the executive staff. It is obvious that adding the responsibilities of the general secretary and the coordination of an extended sustainability initiative to already overstretched portfolios would have a negative impact on the programme work and other activities.

This is, however, not a problem with the model as such but with limited staff resources in the secretariat. The current funding model that relies on member church contributions to the core budget cannot adequately address these capacity challenges. The WCRC needs a new sustainability approach that mobilizes the whole Communion.

### **C. Towards a Postcolonial Sustainability Model for the WCRC**

The feasibility analysis of the general secretary position demonstrates the need for a postcolonial working model that will allow the WCRC to operate with limited financial resources. In a situation without sufficient funds to even sustain core operations, the WCRC needs a structure that is less centralized and allows flexible cooperation with member churches, regions, and other partners (secondments, sharing of ministries, employing consultants for individual programmes etc.).

The Executive Committee has already started to work towards such a new model. At the extraordinary meeting in November-December 2021, it affirmed a definition of sustainability that embraces the different gifts from member churches and ecumenical partners:

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. (Action 14)

At its meeting in May 2021, the Executive Committee had received recommendations from the Strategic Planning Programme Group (SPPG) that proposed a working model that would allow implementing programmes in a less centralized way:

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 kairós 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. (Actions 13-16)

In close cooperation with the Collegial General Secretariat, the Future Direction Committee should develop this idea of a postcolonial Communion into a comprehensive strategy that, as the 2021 SPPG report stated, will allow the WCRC to “step up” rather than resigning to “scaling back.”

#### **D. The Collegial General Secretariat during the Extended Interim**

##### *Responsibilities of the General Secretariat*

The feasibility analysis at the beginning of this report has established that a postcolonial sustainability model will require a core coordinating capacity. As the SPPG report suggests, the role of the general secretariat will change. In the future, the Hannover office will be less involved in implementing individual programmes but will focus on coordinating and accompanying the work.

But also in a network structure, the WCRC needs a coordination facility to ensure that it continues to operate as a Communion rather than as a fellowship of special interest groups. Such coordination will be essential during the implementation period when the wider network is being built. Building and sustaining programme networks require staff resources.

This capacity must be financed. However, as pointed out in the feasibility analysis above, the current sustainability efforts have not yielded sufficient pledges to finance this coordination capacity in the general secretariat.

In this situation, the CGS has taken responsibility for coordinating the transformation process toward a postcolonial sustainability model. In executing the decisions taken by the Executive Committee in 2021, the CGS, together with the Sustainability Task Group, advisors, and regional leaders, have engaged in the following activities:

- dialoguing with churches that currently shoulder the main load of the WCRC's income to secure the current contributions and investigate options for possible increases;
- securing the current secondments and staff capacity support agreements and examining options for extensions and potential growth;
- exploring new ways of fundraising on the level of member church congregations and ministries;
- partnering with member churches, institutions, and ecumenical organizations to secure funding for programme capacity.

These approaches have been well received. Member churches and partners appreciate the relevance of the WCRC and want to support its sustainability.

#### *Equipping the CGS Model for the Challenges of an Extended Interim*

These processes can only be successful if they are given sufficient time and the support of the Communion. However, these conditions create an organizational contradiction in the interim system that needs to be addressed:

- By definition, an interim is a transitory structure that operates in a limited timeframe. This limitation restrains the authority of any interim structure.
- At the same time, interims are often called in situations of emergency, when the “old normal” has become unfeasible. Under these conditions, the interim is a period of profound change because it must prepare for a “new normal” in which more permanent systems can operate sustainably.

This contradiction also marks the current condition of the WCRC. The interim was designed as a transitory arrangement and, therefore, limited to one year. It was hoped that the necessary funds could be obtained during this time. However, the experiences had thus far point to a situation where fundraising to reach the sustainability goals will take more time than hoped.

This new situation requires the CGS model to be developed further. The transition can only be successful if the people mandated to organize it enjoy the full support of the officers and the Executive Committee. Decisions on the leadership model should recognize that strategic transformation is a long-term process. The current sustainability situation requires a huge investment in member church relations and



partnering with like-minded organizations. To achieve long-term sustainability, the WCRC needs the staff capacity that allows the general secretariat to coordinate strong programmes and strengthen relations with members and partners simultaneously.

### *Additional Capacity for the General Secretariat*

This multitude of tasks not only stretches the limits of the possible but seriously overstretching it. The increase in governance meetings has led to less attention to the programme networks. The sustainability demands have delayed the implementation of programmes. Major communication projects, like the publication of the resources of the COVID-19 process and the new website, have been delayed. What is more, all three executive secretaries have experienced health issues that indicate that this situation cannot be continued indefinitely.

What can be done? Under the current circumstances, the election of a general secretary will be a zero-sum game concerning capacity: Within the limitation of current budget constraints, a general secretary can only be elected if an executive secretary is promoted or if an executive secretary position is abandoned. Neither option offers any new executive or administrative resources.

Under current circumstances, the only feasible relief is the appointment of executive secretaries and associate executive secretaries that will be funded through programme budgets. If it is possible to employ more programme staff, the staff capacity challenges will be reduced. We expect that the necessary coordination demands will be outweighed by the contributions that the additional staff people will bring to programme work and church relations. Such processes are well developed and will bring in additional capacity already in 2022.

This raises the question of how new staff members could be integrated into the existing interim structure.

According to our analysis of the current CGS structure, integrating a new executive secretary into the CGS would not be a problem. This would allow distributing the different tasks upon more shoulders. Associate executive secretaries should be invited to the CGS table if programmatic work is being discussed, but not as full members of the collegium, as has been done with the administrators and their work.

### *Summary*

The CGS needs to be equipped to meet the challenges of an extended interim. The current workload in the Hannover office is unsustainable. The near-term election of a general secretary can most likely not improve the situation because it will require cuts in executive staff capacity. Potential relief can only come through acquiring

additional programme staff. While such appointments do not, in themselves, bring additional coordination capacity for the general secretariat, the new staff will allow distributing the overall workload upon more shoulders.

### **E. Proposal for the Way Ahead**

The Officers' Committee proposes the following actions for discernment and decision:

1. The Executive Committee postpones the election of a general secretary until such a time when an election is feasible.
2. The Executive Committee continues the interim period with delegation of the responsibilities of the general secretary to the Collegial General Secretariat (as defined in 2021 Executive Committee, action 22), and including the Executive Secretary for Mission and Advocacy upon her/his appointment, until a general secretary is installed into office.
3. The Executive Committee appoints a Committee that shall consist of individuals from the General Secretary Search Committee, Sustainability Task Group, and Strategic Plan Programme Group, with the Collegial General Secretariat participating as ex officio members.

This Committee is mandated to:

- focus on the short- and mid-term sustainability challenges described in this report;
- explore ways in which the WCRC can develop a model that allows flexibility in cooperation with member churches and partners to pursue the vision and mission of the WCRC;
- present a report with proposal(s) to the 2023 Executive Committee meeting on how the conditions can be created that would:
  - a. allow the election of a general secretary;
  - b. assure sufficient staff capacity to coordinate the work of the WCRC.
- 4. The Executive Committee welcomes additional staff capacity that is funded by programme grants or through cooperative agreements with member churches and partners, which may include a more decentralized working model.

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

### INTRODUCTION

COVID-19 has taken a toll on many organizations, not sparing the ACRC. The ACRC has not been so vibrant in year under review, as it used to, previously. Nonetheless, some work has been covered. This report will present 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 meetings and typical agenda items thereof, the interventions in conflict ridden areas, and natural disasters as experienced in certain parts of the region.

### 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**

Serial No	Position	Name
	<b>a</b>	<b>b</b>
1	President	Rt. Rev.Dr. Uma Onwunta (Nigeria)
2	Vice President	Rev. Pauline Mwaura (Kenya)
3	Secretary	Rev. Dr. Lungile Mpetsheni (South Africa)
4	Treasurer	Mr. M. Koku Mawulikplimi Amega (Togo)

#### The Subregional Coordinators

For control purposes 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**

Serial No	Sub-region	Coordinator
	<b>a</b>	<b>b</b>
1	Central Africa	Rev. Isaac Kalonji (Democratic Republic of Congo)
2	Eastern Africa	Rev. Martin Wanjala (Kenya)
3	Southern Africa	Rev. Dr. Gustav Claassen (South Africa)

4	West Africa	Mrs. Paulina Afful-Arthur (Ghana)
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### 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**

Serial No	KEY FOCUS AREAS (In line with WCRC)	RESOURCES/ People Responsible
	a	b
1	Gender Justice	Prof. Christine Landman Mrs. Veronica Muchiri
2	Peace Making	Rev. Dr. BeniboFubara-Manuel
3	Economic and Ecological Justice	Prof. Jerry Pillay Rev. Dr. Gustav Claassen
4	Overcoming Racism and Affirming the Rights of Indigenous People	Rev. Dr. Buhle Mpofu
5	Refugees and Internally Displaced People	Mrs. Veronica Muchiri Rev. Omwero SC Knony-Halema
6	Youth Development	Adv. Tibonge Ng'ambi
7	Theology	Rev. Dr. Setri Nyomi

The operationalization of the plan is one area that has suffered the most, due to the loss of energy among the champions, blame it on COVID-19. The last meeting of the ACRC Executive Committee resolved to hold webinars on the different aspects of the strategic plan, as shown in the table below.

**Table 4: ACRC Plan on Strategic Areas**

Serial No	Month	Strategic Area
	a	b
1	April 2022	Theology, with focus on Accra Confession in the context of COVID-19.
2	May 2022	Gender justice
3	June 2022	Ecological justice
4	July 2022	Migration
5	August 2022	Peace making
6	September 2022	Youth (This will, hopefully, be a physical meeting, all things being equal)

## **MEETINGS**

Since the last report (March 2021), the ACRC Executive Committee has held four virtual meetings, as follows: 11 May 2021, 11 August 2021, 16 November 2021, and 15 February 2022. The Committee is making optimal use of the available technology to remain connected.

## **TYPICAL AGENDA ITEMS**

The ACRC Executive has been consistent in discussing the following items, among others:

- ✓ Implementation of the Strategic Plan.
- ✓ Accompanying Churches to incorporate Accra Confession in their life and work.
- ✓ Raising Awareness about the Communion.
- ✓ Update on the activities of the WCRC, especially on COVID-19 and Beyond programme and WCRC Sustainability project.
- ✓ ACRC and partnerships.
- ✓ Finance updates – especially on the payment of affiliations to the WCRC and ACRC.
- ✓ Sub regional reports.

Through the meetings and the discussions of the main aspects of the life and work of the Communion, the members of the Executive are appraised of the developments in the Communion and the member churches are given information. The ACRC has already accepted the GRAPE initiative and is waiting upon the Hanover office to roll out the programme. The member churches were informed about this programme and the campaign on WCRC Sustainability.

## **INTERVENTIONS IN CONFLICT RIDDEN AREAS**

The ACRC Executive Committee welcomed the visit by Dr. Hanns Lessing to parts of the region that are experiencing ongoing conflicts. The sub regional coordinators continue to journey with the brothers and sisters in those parts of the Communion. The areas that suffer the worst of the conflicts include, but not limited to the following: Cameroon, Central Africa Republic, Tigray Province of Ethiopia, Cabo Delgado Province of Mozambique, Northern parts of Nigeria, certain parts of Kenya and eSwatini. We continue to request for prayers for the peoples in the areas to experience peace, stability, and prosperity.

## **CLIMATE CHANGE AND NATURAL DISASTERS**

The effects of climate change have been felt hard in some parts of the region. The recent occurrences include the following:

- ✓ Floods, landslides, and volcanic eruptions in parts of the Democratic Republic of Congo in 2021.
- ✓ Strong winds and heavy rains (cyclone) in Malawi in Dec 2021
- ✓ Floods in parts of South Africa in April 2022

Most unfortunately, as it is usually the case, people who suffer the worst are the poor. The governments need to improve in putting in place the early warning systems and in human settlements, in general. Humanity must be informed and sensitized about climate change and the effects thereof.

## **CONCLUSION**

Some of the governments in the region have lifted the states of disaster which were put in place to manage the spread of COVID-19. Those governments claim to have developed capacity to manage the situation. Humanity, as they get used to living with COVID-19 or as they come out of COVID-19, should be guided on how to take of themselves. The church must also learn to be church in a new context. As people began assembling for church activities, there should be focused messages from every pulpit, giving guidance and raising awareness on the issues of socioeconomic and spiritual nature.

Climate change is fast becoming a force to be reckoned with. The issues of racial, economic and gender justice remain with us. The Communion is continuously challenged to lead in the prophetic, liberation, and developmental ministries, to remain relevant and in touch with the people, the laos of God. The ACRC will endeavor to pursue its strategic plan, as the plan remains relevant to being and doing church in our context and times.

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

WCRC's input provides the substantial foundation on which AIPRAL's work is built. The fundamental axes of our work for the 2018-2020 period are:

- The empowerment of women and especially young women.
- The creation of a youth leadership for peace.
- Reflection of the contributions of Reformed theology (Accra and Sao Paulo) and ecumenical theology on the Sustainable Development Goals (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.

### **1. Women**

This department continued to publish communications aimed at the churches to raise awareness and proposals for action in relation to gender violence and generations.

Communications were issued for significant dates such as International Women's Day, the day of the fight against gender violence, etc.

A series of online meetings were held, culminating in a face-to-face meeting of the women of the member churches in Uruguay to prepare the material for the Day of Prayer for Latin American women. <https://aipral.net/genero/2021-dia-de-oracion-por-la-mujer>

We continued to accompany initiatives and proposals arising from women's organizations and movements within the member churches, the ecumenical movement and civil society. An example of this is the active participation in the Platform of Faith-Based Organizations - United Nations Population Fund.

The network of women in the member churches is kept active and materials are provided for awareness-raising, prevention and guidance on gender-based violence, and the promotion and empowerment of women. Based on the experience of a member church, its protocol for action in situations of gender violence and generations was shared.

For the coming year, a work program on gender justice was defined, with the understanding that it constitutes a transversal programmatic axis, with specific activities and resources, being linked to the other programs of AIPRAL. The objective of this program is to make society in general aware of the drama of gender violence in our continent and to make the Alliance's position on the matter visible. The objective is: To make visible our position and our commitment from the evangelical message, the call for justice and peace. This is done under three premises: 1. Training; 2. To create spaces of intersection; 3. Advocate publicly and within the churches of AIPRAL.

## **2. Youth**

*The creation of a youth leadership for peace.*

As a continuation of the work done, a space for monthly online meetings of young people was consolidated in what was called Formándonos (Network).

Given the pandemic conditions, the meeting of the Caribbean region of the "peace in your community" program is yet to be held.

The work was focused on the participation of young people in the pre-assembly held in February 2022.

## **3. Theology and mission**

### *3.1 Accompaniment of theological formation spaces.*

The link with seminaries continued and theological formation activities were organized with them. We especially emphasized the spaces of continuous formation promoted in conjunction with the Ecumenical Network of Theological Education.

On the other hand, the effort of the work was the realization of the training cycle "Miradas." Seven monthly online meetings were held with an average attendance of 75 people per event.

This project counted on teachers from seminaries and theological faculties, people with experience and/or university training in each topic.

The initially proposed objectives were satisfactorily achieved:

- a) To foster conversations, reflections, and practices related to these themes and to the vitality of the post-pandemic Church, and its prophetic unfolding in society.
- b) 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.



- c) To produce knowledge that feeds the process of dialogue, study, and discernment in the pre-assemblies of women and youth, in the conference and in the Ordinary Assembly.

At the conclusion of this first cycle of the Miradas project, a pedagogical route for approaching the different themes was developed.

The Miradas project, and especially its pedagogical proposal, were presented at the first conference (April 1) prior to the Assembly. It is proposed that this project continue in the following period in its double dimension: a) deepening in these themes and including new ones; b) facilitating for the different ecclesial and community leaderships the dialogue on these themes from a Reformed and ecumenical theological perspective. For the latter, the pedagogical paths elaborated are a fundamental tool. See <https://aipral.net/proyecto-miradas>

In this area, we continued with training spaces based on the guide on Water and Climate Change "We are on time" prepared by AIPRAL in its assembly of 2016.

### 3.2 *Zacchaeus Project*

From December 1 to 3, 2021, the campaign for tax justice and reparation Project #ZAQUEO - #ZacTax, rooted in the vision of a New International Financial and Economic Architecture (NIFEA), was presented at the Reformed University in the city of Barranquilla, Colombia. The campaign seeks the promotion and generation of a paradigm shift of regional and global tax and economic systems that act as the figure of Zacchaeus in the New Testament (Luke 19: 1-10). This process beginning in 2021 was designed to address the power of economic and financial institutions in the contemporary globalized world. It is a joint ecumenical effort of WCRC, World Council of Churches, Council for World Mission, Lutheran World Federation, and World Methodist Council.

The Latin America and Caribbean launch was organized by the Alliance in conjunction with WCRC and CUR/Qonakuy. It was a meeting of leaders and leaders of churches and academic spaces in the region, together with high-level speakers, who shared their critical views on the fiscal and tax systems of Latin American countries, as well as theological perspectives that vindicate the active role of faith in the promotion of fairer national and global economic systems.

As a result of this meeting, a road map was drawn up and presented at the second conference (April 2) and is awaiting the support of the XIII assembly so that it can be continued in the next period.

It should be noted that the WCC assembly will include a workshop by the promoters of #ZAQUEO in the region, for the presentation of this process.

#### **4. Communications**

More than ever, digital communication has become a fundamental tool for communication with and formation of our member churches. The digital edition of *La Voz* (quarterly), is the constant tool in which relevant topics are addressed. At the same time, the social media enhance this tool and serve as a means of rapid communication with a larger membership.

The media strategy focused on giving centrality to the website, which was updated from a blog format with entries on various topics to a real web portal, with news differentiated by thematic categories, a section presenting the organization, a section of resources and downloads, and the creation of specialized sections, such as the educational tool *Miradas*, or specific work areas during virtual activities.

Due to the pandemic, the work specialized in generating and technically supporting the virtual instances of meetings and conferences, a great example being the cycle of meetings *Miradas*, as well as the production of audiovisuals within the framework of the Day of Prayer for Latin American Women and video messages from the Executive Committee and others. We collaborated in this aspect for the International vigils for peace in Colombia, several conference spaces, and various activities of the departments. The pandemic situation also accelerated the need to establish a virtual format for Executive Committee meetings, a situation that facilitates the work of continental organizations. In addition, we worked hard to hold AIPRAL's pre-assemblies, conferences, and assemblies in an online format, seeking to ensure equitable and transparent participation.

Finally, during 2021 the symbol of the logo (iconic part) was modified in agreement with the World Communion of Reformed Churches: thus the current visual identifier of the Alliance was created, which adopts the semantic load of the emblem of the Communion and visually relates the organizations. The color palette is adopted and the logo (written part) is kept, achieving a brand with greater visual density and linkage to the Reformed universe.

#### **5. Missional and institutional strengthening**

*Accompanying the churches in their various training needs, such as institutional development and emergencies.*

The on-site accompaniment to the member churches was all done remotely, except for the visits made to the Presbyterian Church of Colombia and the Presbyterian Church of Colombia Reformed Synod, as well as to the Reformed Presbyterian Churches of Cuba and the Moravian Church of Cuba.

The forms of accompaniment are varied, from direct communications with the board of directors, participation in events organized by the churches, correspondence, etc.

We also highlight the dialogue with other sister churches. One has requested its adherence to the Alliance and with others we are in the process of dialogue.

We also highlight that with the support of the emergency fund of the Partnership Fund, the assistance work of the Christian Reformed Church of Honduras in its response to the victims of the floods in that country was supported in solidarity.

During 2021, a consultation process was held with the member churches to postpone the assembly to the year 2022 and then to hold it online.

In this task of accompaniment, the constant need for the formation of cadres knowledgeable in the Reformed and/or Presbyterian forms of government was detected. We also detected a strong aggressive presence of evangelical fundamentalist sectors that seek to polarize the discussions in the churches and thus their division.

Finally, a good part of the work of the year was the organization of the XIII General Assembly of AIPRAL. Its organization in a context of so much uncertainty demanded a lot of work from the Executive Committee to adjust and make new decisions with the evolution of the pandemic.

Its motto — "Sharing in hope" — is based on John 6:9 and the action of the boy who shares his five loaves and two fish and initiates the miracle of a multitude being filled. We understand that this context, dominated by the impotence or inability to transform a reality that appeared overwhelming, is broken by the hopeful gesture, almost naively hopeful, of a child who brings his gifts and they reach the hands of Jesus. Then the miracle happened.

We came to this assembly after having created a rich space for sharing and learning through the Miradas and Zaqueo projects (see above).

In this area we finally highlight the work from the executive secretariat in relation to WCRC: WCRC General Secretary Search Committee; COVID & Beyond project; WCRC General Council Task Group; among others.

## **6. Participation of the regional ecumenical movement**

We also highlight the relationships with other WCRC member churches in our region: Positively the constant work of coordination and mutual support with the Presbyterian Church (USA), the collaboration with the Church of Scotland, and the dialogue with the Spanish Evangelical Church. On the other hand, it is with sadness that we note the launching by the Reformed Church in America of a project in the

region that ignores the member churches of the Communion and its regional council. The general secretariat of the WCRC was informed about this.

AIPRAL supports and leads several ecumenical spaces in the region. We highlight here the role in ALCnoticias that allows us to strengthen this growing and yet fragile communications space so vital for the region. We led the international ecumenical accompaniment to Dipaz Colombia; facilitated several online accompaniment spaces and translation spaces to coordinate advocacy actions in the United Nations Security Council; the search for better coordination of ecumenical work in relation to peace; organized, supported, and participated in the ecumenical pastoral visit. Together with ACT Alliance, we promoted the sending of a solidarity container from the Dominican Republic to the National Council of Churches in Cuba. We worked together with Qonakuy in the realization of the Zacchaeus meeting and a proposal for a "School of Economy" and other actions related to ethics and economy were elaborated.

Through the Department of Justice and Communion, we continued to participate in the Interreligious Alliance for the 2030 Agenda; from the presidency, we actively participated in Religions for Peace, and the president was elected Religions for Peace in Brazil. In Brazil, two interreligious spaces were promoted in connection with the climate crisis and the Amazon rainforest. The support and relationship with "Resistencia Reformada" and CEBEP in Brazil continued.

The secretariat joined the work of the theology group Global Kairos for Justice and is also working on an international meeting on Christian Zionism within the framework of a dialogue between the Palestinian and Latin American situations.

## **7. General Assembly**

Prior to the Assembly, Youth and Women's Pre-Assemblies were held in February, and there were public conferences at the beginning of April — all of which were virtual.

The XIII Assembly was also held virtually 21-23 April, bringing together 39 delegates from the current 20 member churches. It developed a work plan for the coming years that continues AIPRAL's work as the Reformed faith in mission in Latin America.

A new Executive Committee was also elected and installed and includes the following officers:

President: Wertson Brasil de Souza (Brazil)  
Vice-President: Berla Andrade de Vargas (Venezuela)  
Treasurer: Yasmín Mosquera García (Colombia)

Youth Department Director: Emilia Ahumada Tapia (Chile)  
Director of the Women's Department: Blanca Geymonat Gonnet (Uruguay)  
Director of the Dept. of Theology and Mission: Paulo C.M. Pereira Jr.  
(Brazil)  
Director of the Department of Justice and Communion: Dan González  
Ortega (Mexico)  
Executive Secretary: Dora Arce-Valentín (Cuba)

According to the WCRC Constitution<sup>1</sup>, the newly elected president, secretary, and treasurer should be confirmed by the WCRC Executive Committee. It is requested that the Executive Committee take such action, confirming the new president, treasurer, and executive secretary.

*Rev. Dario Barolin*  
*Executive Secretary*

<sup>1</sup> WCRC Constitution, Article XVI, Section C: Each Regional Council shall meet from time to time within the geographic area, provide for an Administrative Committee, and elect officers, including a Moderator (or President or Convener), a Secretary and a Treasurer, pursuant to its Bylaws, subject to confirmation by the Executive Committee.

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

**In this time: May 2021 - May 2022**

CANAAC, like the other regions of the WCRC, has over this period found itself slowly emerging from extended periods of lockdown, mask wearing, and other restrictions which have all impacted every aspect of daily life as a result of the COVID virus.

In the United States, there were significant outbursts of national dissonance seemingly focused on the matter of one's human rights being violated by those who took on an anti-government / anti-vaxxer theme. This was displayed both at the highest levels of government as well as within state politics and local communities. Ironically, in all this rhetoric there was no apparent concern for those who were most vulnerable in a number of ways and for whom the vaccine was an only hope.

In Canada, the "Freedom Convoy" which left western Canada and descended on the capital Ottawa created significant issues at both the level of disturbance of lives locally and nationally with protests against lockdown and vaccine policies widespread across the country. Of great concern was the unsettling threat of this convoy to democracy across Canada. Indications all pointed to what appeared as a sinister motive which was to bring down the government. The ripple effect of this effort also resonated in the US and across Europe where like-minded individuals took energy from this.

On the other hand, in the Caribbean, shortages of vaccines left island nations like Jamaica among others almost impotent to help their citizens, resulting in high numbers of deaths from COVID being reported. Food insecurity in Cuba and the ravages of its political regime saw waves of mass demonstrations take place in the street at the same time. It is difficult to speak to the matter of vaccine utility in Cuba as the government has been tight lipped about the effectiveness of the several vaccines it reported it developed.

During this time as well, the Canadian landscape of church and community was rocked by the large numbers of human remains found at former sites of residential schools for Indigenous children. It is estimated that there could be remains of several thousand bodies already found and in recent weeks more sites have been identified. While these schools were mainly held by the Catholic and Presbyterian denominations, the impact of these findings has fueled a deeper schism on the way church is viewed by a growing number of young people and others who self-label as unbelievers.

Added to all this were troubling signs within a number of our member churches across the region arising in some cases from what appears as power struggles within

church politics or divisions due to differences in ideology and/or absent consensus on acceptance of the whole people of God.

In all of the foregoing, the matter of mental health for the communities of faith was also under siege. Member churches report a sense of hopelessness among youth and evidence of this with incidents of teen suicide.

The picture which emerged during the time under review is not rosy even beyond first glance. Member churches across the region rose nonetheless to reframe a way of doing and being church in the midst of all the challenges, finding ways to engage, never ceasing to bring the Word and Sacrament to the people of God largely in virtual worship.

### **Celebrations**

- Emergence of an alternative form of worship - virtual church which is gaining traction across the region. Member churches report it will remain as a form of worship going forward.
- A slow but progressive return to an in-person engagement both within the church and community. This is very significant as it allows in-person support for the mental health issues in youth and young adults arising from the isolation and other ravages of a time of COVID.
- Use of technology by CANAAC to share reflections from both clergy and lay across the region during the weeks of isolation. This has tapered off as we look to identify what are other ways to reach out to our member churches going forward.
- Use of WhatsApp to stay connected with all members of our 2018 General Assembly. This has allowed opportunities to both celebrate and grieve with members, as well as a space of sharing by members of activities taking place in both the WCRC and member church spaces.
- The number of virtual opportunities afforded the convenor to be in attendance at various synodical and other meetings of member churches which was hitherto not possible.
- Appointment of Rev. Michael Blair as general secretary of the United Church of Canada.
- The recent ordination into the ministry of Word and Sacrament of our General Assembly colleague Rev. Joshua Narcisse, PC(USA).
- The richness of the regional presentation done by our member churches in our presentation for the “COVID and Beyond” series in July.
- Several opportunities for our convenor to engage with CWM and CANACOM within the Caribbean region whether in meetings or leading working groups - lockdown and domestic violence, what does this look like across the region, and how open is the church to engage in the

conversations youth want to have on issues like domestic violence from the perspective of youth.

**Looking outwards**

- Engagement with church youth leaders in Cuba on the matter of human rights and broad areas of justice. Join their conversation for a call for a youth gathering.
- Work more closely with member churches in Canada to identify ways to enlarge the issues emerging from the residential schools pain across the region.
- Host a webinar on resilient families with partners across the region.
- Early discussions with the Steering Committee on General Assembly 2023.
- Be available to be led by the Spirit in the work we do.

Angela Martins  
Convenor CANAAC



## **Report of the North East Asia Area Council (NEAAC)**

### **Area Council Meeting**

The Area Council Meeting was held online on February 9, 2021, and elected the following as the officers for 2021-22:

- Moderator: Rev. Heo Baekki, KCCJ
- Area Secretary: Rev. Shuhei Oishi, CCJ
- Treasurer: Ms. Karin Kushima, CCJ

### **Round-table Conference**

Online round-table conference with two members of WCRC Collegial General was held on April 27, 2022.

- Participants from KCCJ (1), CCJ (1), PCK (2), PROK (2), PCT (1) with CGS members Hanns Lessing and Philip Peacock
- Shared the current situations in this pandemic and current issues of each of the member churches.
- Rediscovering the meaning of our ecumenical relationships in north-east asia area, which is strong in our weakness (in this difficult situation of pandemic or this geopolitical tensions).
- The CGS noted that the next General Assembly of WCRC will be held in Thailand.
- The next NEAAC meeting is still in the planning stage.

### **Officers Meeting**

Online meeting is going to be held (on Zoom) on May 19, 2022, to discuss next area council meeting.

—Shuhei Oishi, Area Secretary

## **Report of WCRC Europe**

Martina Wasserloos  
President of WCRC-European region

Under the conditions of the COVID pandemic, the work in the European area has mainly taken place digitally. During the reporting period, our work was led by the efforts to strengthen contact and communication within WCRC global and the European region, within the WCRC regions, within member churches in Europe, as well as, within European ecumenical bodies.

### **Some catastrophes are happening in certain regions, but they are challenging the whole communion**

The threat of a war in Ukraine was the starting point for a very deep cooperation between the General Secretariat, through Hanns Lessing, and the President of the European Region. For weeks we were in consideration to organize to visit churches in Ukraine to express solidarity and to set signs for peace. A wider network of partners inside and outside WCRC was found to learn more about the situation in Ukraine and to get insights into the political situation there. Multiple Zoom meetings brought us Ukrainian people closer and made us aware of their challenges. Since the outbreak of the war, we have been working with them in a network, in regular meetings. Of course, our possibilities to help them are limited, but to be together – even via Zoom – to share and pray, is a sign of solidarity that is very important, as we always hear from our friends in Ukraine. We also try to identify ways we can help concretely, in joint mission with other denominations. We also hear some news we never read in our newspapers. This is an opportunity to find a position beside some fake news, we are hearing sometimes.

### **We are communion together with other regions**

We feel that our communion needs to care for each other, it is inspiring to journey with others, with a shared mission. We are convinced that sustainability is first a question of common identity and the experience of doing things together, of sharing the gospel, and of being connected. Therefore, European church leaders met to discuss how we can strengthen the work of WCRC in that sense, to bring the regions more in contact, so that a common identity “WE as WCRC – colorful, diverse and united in Christ” can raise. We also discussed this with other regional leaders and found a great openness and a common understanding about the challenges that WCRC is facing. We asked the collegial Secretariat to organize a regional leaders’ meeting to find out, how we want to work with each other in future. We decided to look for more contact, for common action, if possible, for exchange to know what happens in other regions.

### **Prayer, awareness, understanding and sharing best practice**

Since the beginning of war in Ukraine we are even more deeply connected with our member Churches in Eastern Europe. We have weekly Zoom meetings to hear how the work with refugees from Ukraine is managed, what the needs are, what ideas are good to share. The regular meetings are a forum for all those who need an ear. We are aiming to bring church leaders and other participants together, to learn from best practices and to search for help from other sides. The regular forum is also the place to share fears and concerns. Beside that the Steering Committee offered to support projects financially.

The President of the European region, Martina Wasserloos visited in April the Hungarian Reformed Church in Ukraine and in Romania to show solidarity in these times of war. She met Bishop Zan Fabian and his assistant to gain first-hand information about the worrying developments in the region, what that means for the local people and what their concerns are. It was clearly stated on the spot, that signs of solidarity– even if they are “only” signs, show the power of communion and the connectedness in Christ.

Bishop Zan of our sister Church in Ukraine is also a regular participant in our Zoom meetings.

### **To strengthen ecumenical contacts makes us stronger inwards and outwards**

The Europe of pandemic and war has clearly shown us, that we as Protestant Churches and ecumenical bodies in Europe need more searching for common features than lamenting on differences. Speaking with “one voice” in times of secularization can make us stronger inwards and outwards.

The COVID pandemic has challenged churches in many ways: in their liturgical practices, in their spirituality, in the pastoral care, diaconal work, finances, communication policies, in the way to live the fellowship and solidarity between churches, and, last but not least, theologically and politically. The impact of the pandemic on the social and health policies in the various countries will also affect the work and witness of the Church. Some see it as an evidence, others claim for it: the time «after the crisis» won't and can't be a “go back to normal situation.” However, this crisis is also a chance to renew and rethink many issues and habits churches assumed so far to be standard or not questionable.

To discuss all these aspects on a wider perspective the European region organized with CPCE and the Protestant Church of Switzerland the conference “*Theological and ethical challenges for the Churches living with the COVID pandemic*” was held in Rome. It was our first joint project and it was very welcomed by participants and churches.

## **Report of the John Knox International Reformed Center**

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

The Center has emerged relatively unscathed from the pandemic. We have our financial worries – but then, these days, who doesn't! At least, we can now hope to soon be able to rehire our staff on a full-time basis and to welcome back groups.

Looking forward, we have reconsidered how to progress and are now working with a team of volunteer architects, engineers, hospitality specialists, and city planners to construct a greener Center which will build on our history, on our statutory goals, and on a better integration into the local community. This will of course take a few years, but it always takes time to build in Geneva.

In the meantime, the committee has given a framework to the Programme Commission which now plans to organize annual meetings on various topics open to all who are interested.

Furthermore, the Witnessing Together in Geneva movement, so dear to our hearts and those of many church and international communities, is active again and planning its intercommunal celebrations for 9 September 2022.

Should you be in town, do look us up. So often visitors say, "This place is magic!" Indeed, when you look beyond the buildings which are increasingly somewhat decrepit, there is an undeniable feeling of peace. We hope that the Center will always be a safe haven, a place of dialogue, and a home from home for generations to come.

## **Report of the United Nations Ministry**

Sue Rheem, Representative to the United Nations

1. The report of the Ministry at the United Nations to the 2022 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. Due to ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the United Nations continued its practice of conducting UN meetings and participation via online platforms.
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 was staffed by the representative to the United Nations and part time mission specialist. A young adult volunteer and student intern from Princeton Theological Seminary joined the office in the fall for one year term. The Presbyterian Mission Agency of the Presbyterian Church (USA) funds 100% of expenses at the United Nations Ministry. The staff has been working remotely.
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. Together we seek life in all its fullness by:
7. Met with CGS Members Philip Peacock and Hanns Lessing in New York City in November 2021 to examine how to strengthen our relationship and to highlight priorities of work. 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 issues of climate justice, ecological justice and care for creation through participation in the process to implement recommendations on the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. The Presbyterian Church (USA) sent

a small delegation to COP26, which was held from 1 November to 12 November 2021 in Glasgow, Scotland. World Communion of Reformed Churches was invited to be part of the delegation.

9. Also addressed climate justice by participating in the 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. UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). CSW was held virtually from 15 March to 26 March, 2021. The commission focused on women's full and effective participation and decision-making in public life, elimination of violence, for achieving gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls. Over 25,000 delegates participated from around the world. We hope to welcome partners from the World Communion of Reformed Churches to future commissions.
11. The Ministry participated in the 59th Session of the United Nations Commission on Social Development (CSocD) from 8 February to 17 February, 2021. The theme for this year's commission was "socially just transition towards sustainable development: the role of digital technologies on social development and well-being of all." We hope to welcome partners from the World Communion of Reformed Churches in future commissions.
12. Advocated for just peace, human rights, particularly gender rights, and humanitarian assistance for Afghanistan after United States pulled out its military forces in August 2021. We continue to advocate with the United Nations Security Council as part of the NGO Working Group on the Security Council for human rights, peace and security, and humanitarian assistance for the people of Afghanistan.
13. 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 over a decade of war.
14. Expressed concern for the protection of religious minorities in Iraq and Syria with special attention to Christians.
15. Advocated for peace for Israel-Palestine. Participated in the NGO Working Group on Israel-Palestine. We also 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.

16. Monitored and advocated on Nicaragua, Venezuela and Colombia and advocated with the United Nations Security Council on issues related to human rights, democracy and peace, migration, and development.
17. Continued to monitor and advocate on Cuba at the United Nations and support for lifting of US sanctions on Cuba.
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 Korean Peninsula, Philippines, Myanmar and advocated with the United Nations Security Council and UN agencies and international human rights organizations on issues related to human rights, democracy, sanctions, peace, migration, and development.
20. Participated in the work of NGO Committee on Migration to realize justice for migrants, refugees, stateless persons, internally displaced persons, trafficked persons by examining environment/climate-induced displacement and situations of vulnerability.
21. 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.
22. 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 am particularly grateful for my colleagues, Ivy Lopedito, Leah Brooks, and Angelina Devincenzo, as well as our colleagues in the Office of Public Witness, particularly Catherine Gordon and Jimmie Hawkins, the director of the advocacy offices, as we have learned to work remotely together and for my colleagues in the ecumenical community as we have supported one another through this time to work for God's peace and justice at the UN.

Greetings

## GREETINGS

### **Association of Protestant Churches and Missions in Germany**

Dear Mrs. President,  
Dear Members of the Executive Committee,  
Dear Staff and all Members of the Communion of the WCRC,

From EMW ,or the so-called Association of Protestant Churches and Missions in Germany, I bring greetings and the best wishes for you and your communion work, from our board of directors, as well as our staff.

May I, as executive secretary, briefly introduce ourselves to you. We are an organization of Protestant churches, agencies, and associations in mission and ecumenism. Nine mission urgencies, five free churches, five associations, and the evangelical church in Germany (EKD) form our umbrella organization of the protestant mission agencies. At the same time EMW acts as a professional association for ecumenical world mission and mission theology for members and associated organizations.

The distance between the EMW in Hamburg and the WCRC office in Hannover is rather short. One and a half hours and you're in direct contact to one another. But that means not only the geographic distance; we feel very close to the work of the Communion office and by this, also to the work of the WCRC in general. Being well informed and included in your ideas, and planning, and proud to be able to contribute to not only this but also to contribute financially.

We all are facing difficult times. We got used to COVID challenges but, in fact, one cannot overcome too many challenges at a time. The pandemic situation, war in Ukraine, living together with injustice, climate change, but also internal discussions about the right way of being church; or the interim general secretariat solution in WCRC; that all needs our energy to be recognized as a church that is giving stability, vision, and the feeling of being part of the community.

We see and hear in the discussions with the staff of the Communion office that WCRC moves along these issues, trying to give advice, as well as solidarity, and the feeling of togetherness to all its members.

You in the Executive Committee have come together to find out how to face the challenges in the next time by listening to reports, planning the General Council, and trying to find the right way to be a world communion to the world.



We are thankful to be involved in your reflections, and considerations; experiencing the WCRC as a vital and important ecumenical player in the world.

May your way be sustainable, led by God's word, as well as a spiritual mentor and provider of the physical needs of your members. Thank you and may God bless you and your work.

Mr. Olaf Rehren

Executive Secretary, Association of Protestant Churches and Missions in Germany

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### **Disciples of Christ World Communion (DECC)**

Dear WCRC Executive Members and President Najla Kassab:

May the peace of Christ be with you! I send greetings on behalf of the Disciples of Christ World Communion (Disciples Ecumenical Consultative Council) on the occasion of the Executive Committee of the World Communion of Reformed Churches in May 17-20, which will be held online this time.

Although we see a glimpse of hope that we will soon be out of this global pandemic, unfortunately, the world is experiencing another surge of COVID-19. I lament that it has been too long for us to gather in person. I had anticipated that we could meet in person this year, yet the lingering pandemic still affects how we meet and gather as a community.

I understand that the member churches for the WCRC have endured a number of ordeals over the last couple of years—like others around the world. Yet, the members of the WCRC have shown to the world how churches faithfully carry the hope in Christ and live out their faith in God even during a dark time in human history. I am so grateful to my sisters and brothers in the WCRC for being a beacon of resilience and aspirations in a time such as this.

This year's theme for the executive meeting, Stand Firm, Giving Yourselves Fully to the Work of the Lord (1 Corinthians 15:58), is particularly significant because it motivates us to move forward, free from our fear of continuing our work of the Lord for the world, which seems to constantly fall into the trap of war, conflict, and division. As you have indicated with this theme, we are standing firm in a transformative hope for the world, and I am pleased that the Disciples of Christ throughout the world could join the WCRC in this effort!

As you gather in May 17-20, I pray that the Holy Spirit guides your reflection and discernment regarding your call as the body of Christ in a time such as this.

Greetings

Peace in Christ,

Rev. Paul S. Tché  
General Secretary  
Disciples of Christ World Communion (DECC)

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***Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland (EKD)***

Dear Madame President,  
Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Many thanks for your kind invitation to take part in this WCRC's executive committee meeting. It is a great pleasure for me to be with you again.

I am delighted to send heartfelt greetings to all participants of the WCRC committee meeting from the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) and especially from Bishop Petra Bosse-Huber. She wishes you a pleasant and blessed together-ness, intensive and gainful reflection and discussions.

Time has changed, togetherness has changed through the pandemic but somehow, I think, we even came closer during this time. As much as I am missing to talk to you personally, I noticed this crisis offered new approaches to come together more easily worldwide.

The digital possibilities are offering us new ways to talk about the pandemic and many other is-sues, and the digital world allows us to listen to and to get a feeling of the situation of our brothers and sisters around the world. At this point in time, it allows to pray with one another especially for the people in Ukraine and all others who are suffering. It allows us to listen to their stories of war, of fear but also of hope, seeking peace, justice and freedom for all.

We are together. We are here with one another. We are loud.  
And our prayers can change the world and hopefully soon the mind of any aggressor too, as well as our behaviour regarding climate challenges/ issues.

We are one. We are on a pilgrimage together. We are a Christian family amongst all. That is a gift to live, to share and to work for every day. It is a story of hope. Let us feel involved in the search for a better way of building up the Kingdom of God. Stand firm giving yourselves fully to the work of the Lord (1. Cor. 15,58)

May God bless you all!

His peace and joy will be with you!

And I personally am looking forward to seeing you all in Karlsruhe, my hometown, in August!!

Rev. Susanne Erlecke

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### **Evangelical Mission in Solidarity (EMS)**

Dear President Kassab,  
Dear Members of the WCRC Executive Committee,  
Dear — may I say — “Trinity” of WCRC General Secretariat

I greet you all on behalf of the Evangelical Mission in Solidarity (EMS). I am particularly pleased to greet you after our recent meeting in Beirut, President Kassab. The peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you!

What you have seen and heard at the beginning is our EMS Jubilee song “Together we are free” (<https://youtu.be/BCKUdrUbsRI> ). The song illustrates in a wonderful way what the fellowship in the EMS stands for, especially in our Jubilee Year.

It stands for the fact that together in an ecumenical fellowship like the World Communion of Reformed Churches or the EMS, we have more possibilities than alone. It stands for the fact that we are stronger as a fellowship than we are as individual members.

What is decisive is what keeps us together.

In your Executive Committee meeting, you will focus on the role of the churches in times of war and in times of the pandemic. Since the beginning of the pandemic, a verse from Paul’s second letter to Timothy is strengthening us: *“God did not give us a spirit of cowardice but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline.”* (2 Timothy 1:7) We set our hope in Jesus Christ.

“Together we are free:” We are free to be ambassadors of hope, to be ambassadors of peace, to be ambassadors of Jesus Christ.

We have sent this song to all EMS members and are now getting more and more versions from different member churches of EMS. This is a very beautiful symbol of our worldwide ecumenical relation. The second part of the song that I will play to you is sung by a choir of students from India.

Greetings

I would also like to invite the WCRC member churches to send us your versions of the EMS Jubilee song. As you might know, quite a number of EMS members belong to the Reformed confessional family. I know you have all great musical talents in your church.

I greet you warmly from EMS and wish you a successful ExCom meeting with fruitful deliberations.

May our Lord Jesus Christ keep and guard you.

Rev. Dr. Dieter Heidtmann  
General Secretary, EMS

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### **Global Christian Forum**

Dear WCRC Executive Committee members

I bring you greetings in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ from the GCF Secretariat. We are holding you in prayer this week as you hold the WCRC Executive Committee meetings. Your theme **Stand firm, giving yourselves fully to the work of the Lord** (1 Corinthians 15:58) speaks to the calling of Christians everywhere to stand confidently in the hope and promise of the resurrection. We are grateful for your fellowship in the gospel.

The Global Christian Forum is a body that seeks to provide a space of welcome and hospitality for all communities within the Christian faith. The four pillars of GCF include: the World Council of Churches, the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (Catholic Church), the World Evangelical Alliance, and the Pentecostal World Fellowship. GCF focuses on bringing the various streams and families of Christianity together to share faith stories and build relationships. GCF provides an open space where the Spirit moves to bring people together in a community of belonging.

At this time in the history of the world, we realize more than ever the deep interdependence of humanity and our shared need for the new life promised through Jesus Christ. In Jesus Christ we look forward to the day when there will be no more sickness, no more violence, no more death; we look forward to the day when we will worship together as the family of God. When we gather in fellowship, we have the opportunity to glimpse, even briefly, the beauty of that glorious day.

We ask that you will also pray for us as we prepare for GCF's Global Gathering which will be held in Accra, Ghana during the week of April 15-19, 2024.

In Christ,

Revd. Dr. Casely Essamuah  
Secretary  
Global Christian Forum

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### **Lutheran World Federation**

#### **Stand firm, giving yourselves fully to the work of the Lord (1 Corinthians 15:58).**

Respected President of the WCRC, Rev. Najla Kassab,  
Respected Officers and Members of WCRC Executive Committee,  
Respected General Secretariat,  
Dear sisters and brothers,

Greetings and blessings from the Lutheran World Federation. In my first year as General Secretary, I am grateful for our strong commitment to the gospel and to one another on this journey towards unity.

This past year has brought many transitions in our lives and work, both individually and as communions. We continue to live in a form of “on-going pandemic”, always navigating what it means for our work and witness. Meetings increase, particularly as we try and catch-up on many missed opportunities for gathering. Our two communions have been working ever more closely together yet we too have been hindered by the pandemic and our implementation of the Wittenberg Witness (2017) has been slowed down.

Yet, we are able now to engage more actively with one another, especially with the Study Group on Religious Freedom. We have had the first two meetings. A process has been defined. In this world, where extremism and polarities and self-proclaimed rights prevail, the work of this Study Group is particularly pertinent.

Not only is this joint project significant for the world in which we live. There is another angle as well. Through the Study Group on Religious Freedom we are able to explore and deepen our understanding of our commitments in the Wittenberg Witness. In the spirit of the Wittenberg Witness, both communions together express their longing for new imagination “to dream a different world, a world where justice, peace and reconciliation prevail” (Art. 5). We are challenged today to make our “dreaming” a reality.

Greetings

I give thanks to God for the close partnership with the World Communion of Reformed Churches. Joint proclamation, witness, and service are more and more urgent in this time of crisis and war in Ukraine and in many other regions of the world. The theme of your meeting is therefore particularly meaningful: “Stand firm, giving yourselves fully to the work of the Lord” (1 Corinthians 15:58).

At the beginning of Lent, we prepared together a prayer for global peace. Together, with many ecumenical partners, we prayed for a just peace. And now together we continue to engage, in the spirit of the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification, for the realization of justice – God’s justice – as the visible witness of salvation, bringing about God’s generous and good intent for all creation.

The Lutheran World Federation continues to hold you in prayer, especially as you navigate this time of transition. We are grateful for the General Secretariat and for our continuing close collaboration. With joy, we look forward to the realization of our gospel hopes. With perseverance, we continue to hold the WCRC, and you, its Executive Committee, and you, the General Secretariat, in our prayer. We entrust this meeting and the important decisions you are making to the Triune God.

May God grant you all to “stand firm,” rooted in love, hope, and encouragement of the Holy Spirit.

With thanksgiving,

Rev. Anne Burghardt  
General Secretary  
The Lutheran World Federation

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### **World Association for Christian Communication**

Dear Colleagues,

Many thanks for your kind invitation to take part in the virtual meetings of the WCRC’s Executive Committee 17-20 May 2022. I apologise for not replying to your earlier letter, a delay occasioned by the need to firm up on a number of WACC-related events and dates.

Having done so, I regret my inability to attend the Executive Committee meetings and wish you well in your deliberations and decision-making.

First, let me commend you on your bold assumption of a collegial general secretariat and all that it implies for the collective burden of leadership and implementation of

actions. A problem shared is a problem halved, they say, and I hope this is proving true as the WCRC extends its activities and influence.

Second, in the face of the tragedy being played out in Ukraine, it is heartening to see the extensive work WCRC is undertaking in cooperation with its members and partners. WACC and WCRC are united in their condemnation of the invasion and their horror at the atrocities and harm being perpetrated. Equally, we are united in our call for peace and for a swift end to the tremendous suffering. Sadly, both seem to be a long way off.

Two areas of work in particular stand out in the WCRC's emphasis on justice that find a ready echo in WACC's Strategic Plan 2022-27. They are "Gender justice and partnership" and "Ecological justice and care for creation". Over the next few years, WACC looks forward to working with the WCRC and other ecumenical partners to bring greater understanding of these issues.

In the meantime, on behalf of directors and staff, I send greetings and very best wishes.

Philip Lee  
General Secretary | CEO

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## **World Council of Churches**

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Christ is risen!

The Pascal period offers us the strongest message of hope in our times affected by the still ongoing pandemic and its consequences, as well as the war in Ukraine and elsewhere and the many injustices that we are witnessing across the globe. The WCRC Executive Committee gathers this year virtually under the theme "stand firm, giving yourself fully to the work of the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58), which is a strong encouragement and imperative from Apostle Paul to outstand fear and to courageously proclaim the victory that God gave us through the sacrificial love of our Lord Jesus Christ over the power of sin and death.

The risen Lord sends his disciples today into a broken world overwhelmed by suffering, violence, loss of hope, and death. He mandates and empowers Christians as peacebuilders to be agents of healing and reconciliation. As Christians, we carry this great calling with humbleness and responsibility, working for and encouraging a sustained dialogue for peace while building bridges of reconciliation. It is our shared

Greetings

prophetic vocation to stand firm as signs of faith, justice, hope, and love, proclaiming the kingdom of God, which is made visible in our charitable acts.

With its theme “Christ’s love moves the world to reconciliation and unity” the upcoming World Council of Churches Assembly, which will take place this year in September in Karlsruhe, Germany, points to the concretisation of us being co-workers in God’s initiative. It is the love of Christ that moves us to act, not for our own interests, but for the care of others. It is in this divine love that the acts of compassion and solidarity enable us and our communities to become agents of transformation and healing at all levels, so that the world might see the presence of God among people. The WCC Assembly will offer a special opportunity to our 352 member churches to commonly affirm the calling of being disciples of the incarnated love of God to transform the world by love, each in our places and together as the body of Christ.

In the context of the current multidimensional challenges, it is vital that we carefully listen to each other to discern God’s will for our times and to find sustainable ways of ecumenical cooperation. Therefore, I wish you God’s blessing and inspiration as you reflect and discern on the course of action for the future of the World Communion of Reformed Churches and of our common oikos. May your gathering bring a vision of hope, encouragement, and inspiration.

Yours in the Risen Christ,

Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca  
Acting General Secretary

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### **World Pentecostal Fellowship**

**Stand firm, giving yourselves fully to the work of the Lord** (1 Corinthians 15:58).

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ

Thank you for giving me, as representative of the Pentecostal World Fellowship, the opportunity to address the WCRC Executive Committee with an ecumenical greeting.

The theme of your meeting “Stand firm, giving yourselves fully to the work of the Lord” gives me the opportunity to reflect on the development of Reformed-Pentecostal relations.

Our respective churches have in their history gone their different ways, whether in South Africa, in Korea or in Brazil, just to mention three areas. They stood firm to



their beliefs by stressing their proper convictions and developed in their varied ways of being part of the living Body of Christ. Not only have they upheld the gospel of Jesus Christ in word and worship, they have also done much to alleviate suffering and injustice in their neighbourhoods and abroad.

We are also acutely aware that our times are changing. What once could be done in separate units needs now a common effort, because we are all affected and because we are all part of God's mission in this world. With that in mind it was a necessary step to enter into a formal dialogue between the member churches of the Reformed Communion and the churches associated with the Pentecostal World Fellowship in the 1990s. During the past three rounds of official dialogue the two groups have much to be grateful for because we have built mutual trust, we have deepened our understanding of each other's convictions, and discovered how we can "stand firm" together in many aspects of our faith. This fact calls us to continue our mutual engagement, so that we may grow in Christian unity for the sake of God's good will towards all creation. The Pentecostal World Fellowship would therefore welcome a continuation of the international dialogue between our two church families.

Indeed, it is our vision to be standing firm together in the transformative hope given to us in Christ Jesus and through the power of the Holy Spirit to the glory of God.

As the next global Conference of the Pentecostal World Fellowship will be taking place in Seoul, South Korea, from October 12-14, 2022, we would like to extend a heartfelt invitation to the World Communion of Reformed Churches to attend.

In these difficult and challenging times we need to stand together. May God bless you in your work within the WCRC. I pray that the Holy Spirit will give you wisdom, peace and joy in all your deliberations.

Jean-Daniel Plüss  
Member of the Christian Unity Commission of the Pentecostal World Fellowship

## Drafting Team Reports

### Drafting Team Report: 18 May

Drafting Team: Karen Georgia Thompson, Dianna Wright, Hefin Jones, Antranik Manoukian (notetaker only)

Questions for the Discernment Session on 17 May 2022 focused on the Address of the President, the Report of the Collegial General Secretariat and the Report of the Strategic Plan Programme Group (SPPG).

### Address of the President

**The President expresses her hope that the next meeting of the Executive Committee will be in person. She pulls upon the Communion to put our resources together to make this happen. Our coming together will rekindle a strong encounter as a Communion.**

- a. **How can regions and member churches contribute to allow an in-person Executive Committee meeting in 2023?**

There was a general recognition and acknowledgement of the inspiring and challenging nature of the President's Address.

Across the four Discernment Groups there was a general consensus that there was undeniable value in meeting face-to-face and that although the use of online platforms had allowed us to meet over the pandemic there was now a *"need to focus on human relationship as one family of God"* and that we had been *"distanced by electronic means."*

In deciding on the format of the 2023 Executive Committee we must not, however, not take heed of concerns expressed regarding:

- the financial expense of such a gathering: We have become accustomed to virtual online platforms, and Zoom is inexpensive. In the context of supporting members to attend, should consider whether pooling resources would allow all participants to attend. Are there regional considerations to be made in supporting members to attend?
- the environmental cost of meeting: Should we not be hearing the concerns of climate change and international travel in the context of our Christian stewardship of creation? One group questioned should there not be a conversation on this Christian duty first, before making any decision on the format of Executive Committee 2023. While technological issues may cause challenges for virtual meetings, are these not easier to solve than mitigating the environmental concerns?

- the travel challenges: These ranged from applying and obtaining visas to resurgences in virus variants. This may also have regional implications.

**Recommendation:** While the value of face-to-face meetings is undeniable, all groups raised concerns that WCRC Officers were encouraged to consider, analyse, and discuss before making any final decisions. On a more practical basis, offers of potential locations were noted in various groups, and the importance of receiving information on the decision of format as soon as possible was highlighted.

### **Report of the Collegial General Secretariat**

**The WCRC is in the process of establishing a Reformed Ecumenical Office in Rome that shall seek ecumenical dialogue and engagement and joint action for peace and justice with ecumenical partners in Rome and present significant Reformed initiatives to the ecumenical world.**

- a. Examine the potential of the office for strengthening the relations with the Roman Catholic Church. In which areas shall the two communions collaborate more closely?**
- b. Discuss which WCRC initiatives could gain a stronger global visibility by promoting them during the annual event in Rome.**

There was general commendation of this process and all groups saw opportunities to enhance witness, ecumenical development, and expression of faith. Presence in Rome would advance communication between the communions and this, in turn, could be utilized to advance WCRC priorities and objectives at an ecumenical level. Specific examples relating to ecumenical relationships already active with the Waldensian Church and the Church of Scotland were provided. The concept of organizing once a year a conference by Reformed churches as a way to lead ecumenical work with the Catholic Church was mooted.

Discussions across the groups could be summarized as focusing on two particular aspects:

- doctrinal / theological reflection
- practical actions

The main focus of ecumenical dialogue and engagement from a doctrinal perspective very much centred around the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification. A number of groups saw this as a means of catalysing formal dialogue of theological issues and, in particular, discussing in some detail issues of justice. This led to the listing of a number of specific initiatives where an ecumenical approach with the Catholic Church could, possibly, strengthen WCRC activity and promote global visibility. These included: the role of laity, ordination of women, communion, the concept of non-violence, social solidarity, poverty, disability and the whole concept

of being created in the image of God, movement of migrants, environmental issues, and Indigenous people.

### **Report of the Strategic Plan Programme Group**

- 1. The SPPG recommends that the learnings of the programme work and the COVID and Beyond process should be harvested and developed to build momentum towards the 2025 General Council.**
  - a. Which are the most important learnings of the work of the WCRC since Leipzig that should receive primary attention in the preparation of the 2025 General Council?**
  - b. Are there important statements (like the faith stance on the ordination of women), ecumenical agreements (like the JDDJ and the Wittenberg Witness), or symbolic acts that you would want to be developed?**

There was a general theme throughout the group reports that even with all its negative aspects the pandemic and the COVID and Beyond process had brought people together, had ensured contact with one another — a degree of people-centredness — and that it was important that this was not lost as we move forward. This possibly should be one of the main objectives of the General Council in 2025.

Numerous suggestions were made on the development of actions for the General Council. For example:

- Is there scope for liaison with the proposed Sixth World Conference on Faith and Order in 2025, a year that will mark the 1700th anniversary of the first Ecumenical Council at Nicaea?
- The faith stance of the ordination of women remains a sensitive theme for many WCRC member churches and ignoring this issue at General Council would not be serving the Communion.
- Issues associated with disability and ensuring inclusivity was an area for development.
- The importance of hearing voices from the regions and, in particular, the voices of youth and young people.

A recurring view arising from many groups was that to focus on statements should not be a priority of the 2025 General Council; instead “ecumenism of the heart” should be encouraged as this would go beyond academically, philosophically, and culturally influenced text in order to consider the pragmatic aspect of the life of the church and of Christians.

- 2. The SPPG recommends that the concept of “global apartheid” that had been explored during the COVID and Beyond process should be developed in the contexts of the WCRC response to poverty,**

**marginalization, exclusion due to war, racism, authoritarianism, and nationalism.**

- a. **How would the concept of global apartheid inform the reading of the signs of the time in your context?**
- b. **Which forms of witness would be inspired?**
- c. **What are potential problems that should be considered by using the concept?**

Of all the set of questions this seemed to be the statement and associated question tasks that had caused most lack of understanding, dilemma, and possibly confusion. The term "*global apartheid*" was generally thought not "*to have lots of traction.*" There was a call from the groups that there was a need for a clarification of the Christian concepts associated with the term "*global apartheid*" to be more visually emphasized. As one group summarized, "*the associated and relevant issues of the concept must be tackled but the term – global apartheid – might not be suitable title for this.*" Indeed, one group expressed concern, or at least queried, whether the term itself might prove divisive.

In terms of which forms of witness would be inspired, the areas that appear to have been discussed by the groups ranged from the apartheid that exists against people of differing gender identities, concerns regarding refugees, and contextualizing the Israeli-Palestinian situation.

3. **The SPPG recommends that the WCRC should develop a new working model that shifts the role of the secretariat from implementing programmes to strategic leadership in networking, coordination, collaboration, and communication.**
  - a. **Identify strengths in the work of your church/region that could be utilized in programmes that express the vision and mission of the WCRC.**
  - b. **Describe the advantages that the shift to a network model would bring.**
  - c. **Name possible dangers that should be considered.**
  - d. **What would be the main role of the general secretariat in this new working model?**

Not all groups managed to discuss this question and the final question below. It was noted that there would be time later in the Executive meeting to discuss issues of leadership (on Thursday). Other groups had found their discussion encompassed both this set of questions and the next question in the same consideration.

Specific to questions stated in this section was the view that the Communion is not the global office, but brothers and sisters meeting in chapels and churches all over the world. This creates a challenge for WCRC and all similar organizations. Ministry

across borders and regions — as the solidarity visit of the President to Ukraine — is much needed. This means that any activity that can link fraternity and fellowship, such as linking member churches in the UK to Ukraine, for instance as a cited example, is important to transcend any kind of boundary, national, or ethnic divide.

From a sustainability angle, it is important to be questioning the new model in as pragmatic a way as possible. One group highlighted that, as churches in regions are usually active and typically do not need coordination of their (local) activities, the central office should concentrate and work on more global and central issues.

- 4. The SPPG recommends that the WCRC should become more flexible and creative in securing the necessary staff capacity to coordinate its programmatic work.**
  - a. Which staff resources do you see in your church/region that could support the work of the WCRC?**
  - b. How should such staff resources be integrated into the structures of the general secretariat**

There were a number of suggestions as to how staff resources could be used collaboratively across member churches, supporting WCRC activities and initiatives. Some of the examples cited included the New International Financial and Economic Architecture (NIFEA) initiative coordinated by CWM, and various initiatives of the WCC. The Collegial General Secretariat (CGS) has a central role to play in the coordination and development of such networks to strengthen and highlight the work of the WCRC, to develop collaborative reciprocal relationships and ventures — all with the task of making WCRC's actions more impactful.

It was also highlighted that this was not necessarily an issue of physically integrating resources but of developing communication. A suggestion was made that at a local level we should be encouraging churches to ask local church press officers to speak about the WCRC and what is happening at the global level.

## **Drafting Team Report: 19 May 2022**

Drafting Team: Karen Georgia Thompson, Dianna Wright, Hefin Jones, Antranik Manoukian (notetaker only)

Questions for the Discernment Session on 18 May 2022 focused on General Council Planning.

### **On the Theme: “Persevere in Your Witness”**

***What does “Persevere in Your Witness” sound like in your native tongue? How does this speak to your context?***

It is appropriate the considerable work that has already been undertaken in planning the next General Council and the General Council Task Group and Asia Consortium are to be commended.

The various Discernment Groups discussed this question in various ways. For one group time was spent hearing “perseverance” in different languages; another considered the limitations of using the term “perseverance” while another discussed the challenge of “perseverance.”

In the first case, there was brilliance and meaningful excitement reported in hearing how the word – persevere - sounds in the native tongue and there was a strong recommendation that this rainbow of witness should be incorporated into General Council communications and activities. While many were able to contextualize the need for “perseverance” as we emerge from COVID-19, some were concerned that there may be an implication of staying in the same place. Do we not need to emphasize the transformational aspect of our faith as we move forward? Is “perseverance” not somewhat passive in nature? Should we be looking at a theme of “persevere in transformative witness.” This, however, was not the consensus view across groups. In another group, “persevere” was seen as an active verb and, moreover, an imperative – a command. This can therefore be perceived to be a call to action and witness, to challenge difficulties and to overcome hurdles. It is a call not to be discouraged, to be resistant to many of the demands of reality, to witness and to position oneself on firm and stable ground.

In terms of context-setting, “persevere” was seen as being appropriate in many situations. As a selected set of examples, from the struggles of many small congregations post-COVID-19 to the killing of Christians (church people) in Cameroon to the whole concept of deconstructing faith by young people and the need to “persevere” to rebuild.

Overall, there was clearly general positivity towards the theme and the context-setting of its usage; the Planning Committee might benefit from considering the various understandings and perceptions of the word “persevere” outlined above, and how to ensure clarity of thought and meaning in the communication of the theme.

**What do you think are the implications of the theme in a “post-pandemic” world in which violence and inequality are endemic particularly as we attempt to move into a “new normal?”**

There was much duplication of issues in the discussion of this question with what had been previously discussed in the first question. Comments were, generally, considerably briefer in nature in response to this question. There was again much conversation around the concept of conversion and the transformative nature of perseverance. There was a general desire that the theme needed to be seen as witnessing in both words and deeds – the theme of needing concrete action as evidence of witness was made across the group.

What is “normal?” Before we attempt to move into the new “normal,” we need to know what that “normal” is, in fact, referring to.

It was highlighted that as well as the endemic violence and equality noted in the question and exemplified by various members of the Discernment Groups, the transformative demand on our faith to encounter climate change and the latter’s transformation of our world, God’s creation was also highlighted. Several comments were also made on the need to learn from the pandemic for after the pandemic – identifying true communion and learning from one another.

**How could the theme direct the work and witness of the WCRC leading up to and through the Council?**

Throughout these three questions it was clear that all Discernment Groups had found common threads and that common themes ran through all questions. Throughout the excitement and encouragement of developing a “full communion” was prevalent.

There was a general feeling across groups that encouraging this concept of transformation through the “persevere in your witness” theme could provide focus for member churches as they prepare for the General Council. This could provide the necessary “push” to become more active. Is there an opportunity to develop a series of Bible studies that would aid this activating transformation? Building this witness over the next 2-3 years was considered an important aspect of preparation for General Council as many, if not all of us, feel a sense of dislocation post-pandemic.



It was also suggested that the theme could act as a catalyst to firstly hear, secondly collate, and thirdly share stories of what has happened. These could include reports of how the church has dealt with the sense of loneliness felt by members, questions that have been raised regarding the right to medical care, and possibly among the most important, the involvement of and pastoral work among young people.

An important comment from one Discernment Group was that consideration and analysis of the theme could lead to opportunities to develop not only ecumenism within the Christian community, but also at an interfaith level. Indeed, this latter discussion was contextualized in a role for the regions.

Given that no clear consensus on any changes to the wording of the theme emerged, the following action is placed before the Executive for consideration:

**The Executive Committee adopts “Persevere in Your Witness” as the theme for the 2025 General Council.**

### **On Planning Participation**

**Do you feel that the General Council Planning Committee effectively represents the Communion? What do you believe is missing?**

There was a general feeling across the Groups of a potential – albeit totally unintentional lack of transparency. It was felt that there was a lack of clarity on the interactive relationship between the Planning Committee, the Asia Consortium, and the working groups. Questions were raised regarding, for example, the representation of Asian churches, and the number of WCRC staff on the Planning Committee. Voices were also heard of the need to note and potentially work with the 2025 celebrations of the 1700th anniversary of the first Ecumenical Council at Nicaea (refer to Drafting Report 18.05.22) and the Centennial Anniversary of the United Church of Canada. It is considered imperative that there is, within the overall identity of the organising groups, representation of young people, and the voice of women. A question regarding regional representation was also raised.

**Who would you recommend to the Worship Committee and/or other working groups?**

There were numerous suggestions made – the more frequent comments being the need for the diversity of the Communion to be recognized not only culturally and nationally / regionally, but also in worship tradition, style, and direction. In summary, while appreciating the richness of the Asian worship tradition, and providing a platform for the Communion to experience this, the Worship Committee should also reflect the diversity and richness of who we are as a Communion – its spirituality,

presence, worship, customs, and culture. Some specific names were presented – these have been forwarded to the general secretariat.

### **On Member Church Engagement**

In what other ways could Asian churches, along with other member churches, be engaged in the support and planning of the 2025 General Council?

Not all groups reached this question in their deliberations. In one group the issue of environmental cost and carbon footprint was again raised, with the suggestion that Asian churches could show the way to international ecumenical bodies by making the General Council 2025 a hybrid (on-site and on-line gathering), thus possibly enabling some member churches to attend virtually if otherwise unable to be present.

It was also proposed that the realization that the Asian member churches are privileged with a generally younger congregation than in many other regions they should be encouraged to share their interpretation of faith, worship as much as possible with other member churches.

Taking into account the variety of discussions on representation and involvement, the following action is placed before the Executive for consideration:

#### **The Executive Committee establishes a General Council Planning Committee consisting of the following members:**

- **Dario Barolin (moderator)**
- **Najla Kassab**
- **Prawate Khid-arn**
- **Veronica Muchiri**
- **Gerardo Oberman (moderator of the Worship Committee)**
- **Victoria Turner**
- **Karen Georgia Thompson**
- **A representative of the Asia Consortium**
- **Collegial General Secretariat (ex officio)**

#### **And with the following mandate:**

**The General Council Planning Committee shall be responsible for the planning of the 27th General Council to be held in Thailand in 2025. Responsibilities include working with the WCRC staff to develop a detailed programme, timetable, budget, publications, discernment processes, and symbolic events of the General Council.**

**The General Council Planning Committee, in consultation with the Officers' Committee, may appoint other committees, subcommittees, or working groups.**

**The General Council Planning Committee shall work with representatives of the host committee in Thailand and member churches in Asia to establish and assure that the Council is rooted contextually.**

**The General Council Planning Committee shall report regularly to both the Officers' Committee and the Executive Committee.**

### **Conclusion**

In overall summary of the Discernment Groups' discussions, a general commendation of the work was conveyed with support expressed for those involved to proceed forthwith with planning the 2025 General Council. The Executive Committee does, however, ask the Planning Committee to take into consideration the various issues raised in the Discernment Groups (as summarized above), and, in particular, sharing explanation and clarification on development of the Council's theme and of membership of the various working groups.

## **Drafting Team Report: 20 May**

*Drafting Team:* Angela Martins, Dianna Wright, Hefin Jones, Antranik Manoukian (notetaker only)

Questions for the Discernment Session on 19 May 2022 focused on the Leadership Module

### **Questions and Summary Responses**

1. *The proposal presented an evaluation of the CGS model.*

- a. *Do you have any ideas on ways in which the CGS model can be refined to better serve the Communion during an extended interim period?*
- b. *How long do you feel an interim period can/should be sustained?*
- c. *What might the impact of adding a fourth executive secretary to the CGS be?*

It is noteworthy that across the Discernment Groups there was a strong feeling that the CGS model was a valuable and potentially effective model. The approach was referred to as an “experiment” and very much a new way of providing leadership in ecumenical organizations – and we should be excited by that. There was, however, also a general feeling that the terminology – “interim model” – was one that devalued the structure and that there should be appraisal of this term. There was a suggestion that we should use terminology such as “Collegiate Model” as this provides, at least to some degree, a sense of structure and stability.

It was accepted, albeit not entirely desirable, that setting a specific date for the “interim period” was not possible as this depends almost completely on WCRC finances. Concern was, however, expressed on the potential uncertainty this “interim” was creating at levels ranging from member churches to ecumenical bodies. Regional differences in perception of the CGS were also highlighted. This perception issue is something that must be considered and, although accepting that an Acting General Secretary was in place, the Communion is most likely weakened by not having a dedicated “leader” who can direct the Communion’s pathway – this is definitely not because of any lack of diligence in the current model, but essentially the role as is, is very much dedicated to maintaining rather than directing and leading.

A number of suggestions were made on ways in which the Collegiate General Secretariat model could be refined; some of these were based on what was perceived as current good practice others were desired goals. As examples:

- A general view that taking on a coordination role was a positive direction; this benefit was contextualized at both member church and regional level

- The need for clarifying this coordinating role at CGS level – mention was also made of the need to write-in that this coordination needed to be intentional around regional entities as well as with member churches within a region
- Assessing staff capacity and workload
- Defining member church roles with programmes, and clarifying the action they should be undertaking
- Assessing the model in the context of the WCRC constitution

Questions were raised regarding the funding of the fourth executive secretary. While we as Executive Committee members are aware that this funding is not from the core, operational budget and specifically assigned, it is important that we also consider what the perception, once again, may be from “outside” ... *“no money for General Secretary, but for this role.”* As one group noted – “there are psychological impacts that we must be aware of.” A fourth executive secretary would join the CGS – taking membership to four. Issues of decision-making, split views, etc. were raised as potential harbingers of unsettlement – how would decisions be taken when views were divided – highlighting again the need of a defined leadership face. Finally, while the new executive secretary would clearly have an independent remit, an associated benefit would be the sharing-out of some of the roles currently held by the current CGS – this would be a means of reducing workload.

*2. Are there specific items you feel the Committee (individuals from the General Secretary Search Committee, Sustainability Task Group, and Strategic Plan Programme Group, with the Collegial General Secretariat participating as ex officio members) should take up in their work?*

In some ways the discussion around this point was to a greater degree a development of the Question 1. The urgent need to decide on the future leadership structure was emphasized and the referring of the current structure as “interim” was again highlighted as being less than helpful to perception. Some interesting insights were made that suggested that the Communion needs to look carefully at the success of what has been deconstructed (via CGS) and how to rebuild (future structure). Reference was made to other ecumenical bodies and how deconstruction had been highly effective and beneficial.

The Committee should be charged to assess the accessibility of the CGS; and of the urgent need to reconnect with churches and regions. There is a need to rebuild trust with member churches, reassessing engagement space at church, region, and ecumenical body level.

With the challenges many churches currently face, it is important that the Committee review the relevancy of what the WCRC is doing – the global needs to be made relevant to the regional. Directed development also must be visible, without a

visible and active full-time general secretary not moving forward will be seen as the Communion being “stuck” in space. This must be avoided.

*3. Both the reports of the SPPG and Officers’ Committee noted a need to develop a new working model that shifts the secretariat from implementing programmes to providing strategic leadership in networking, coordination, collaboration, and communication. How might this positively or negatively impact the work and witness of the WCRC?*

This question appears to have catalyzed the fewest comments and statements – partly, we suspect, as much has already been stated. The concept embedded in the new model was thought to be a very distinct and defined way of making the secretariat more visible. Groups also commented that the WCRC had, and could, become much more accessible with a corporate CGS. There was, across the groups, and as mentioned above a commendation of the model. Reference was made to a view expressed in an earlier Drafting Team report (18.05.22) that within a region, local churches were very frequently very well networked, the CGS’s role should be very much at a global or central level.

*4. Both reports also noted the need to become more flexible in securing the necessary staff capacity for programmatic work. What are the positives and negatives of accepting seconded staff?*

There was a clear and succinct message from the groups on this. The answer was overwhelmingly positive across groups but with a caveat that secondment of staff for specific, directed and supervised projects and tasks usually proved extremely positive, secondment to more general tasks with possibly fewer clear outcomes was a risk! The means of appointment was also highlighted as something that needs to be wary of; as one group stated, volunteers from member churches are not, of necessity, the best personnel for appointment.

*5. Do you have any reactions to or comments on the specific proposals from the Officers’ Committee report?*

*The Officers’ Committee proposes the following actions for discernment and decision:*

- 1. The Executive Committee postpones the election of a general secretary until such a time when an election is feasible.*
- 2. The Executive Committee continues the interim period with delegation of the responsibilities of the general secretary to the Collegial General Secretariat (as defined in 2021 Executive Committee, action 22), and including the Executive Secretary for Mission and Advocacy upon her/his appointment, until a general secretary is installed into office.*

3. *The Executive Committee appoints a Committee that shall consist of individuals from the General Secretary Search Committee, Sustainability Task Group, and Strategic Plan Programme Group, with the Collegial General Secretariat participating as ex officio members.*

*This Committee is mandated to:*

- *focus on the short- and mid-term sustainability challenges described in this report;*
  - *explore ways in which the WCRC can develop a model that allows flexibility in cooperation with member churches and partners to pursue the vision and mission of the WCRC;*
  - *present a report with proposal(s) to the 2023 Executive Committee meeting on how the conditions can be created that would:*
    - a. *allow the election of a general secretary;*
    - b. *assure sufficient staff capacity to coordinate the work of the WCRC.*
4. *The Executive Committee welcomes additional staff capacity that is funded by programme grants or through cooperative agreements with member churches and partners, which may include a more decentralized working model.*

The comments referred to in responses for Question 1-4 above are applicable to Question 5. This is particularly so for issues related to the appointment of a general secretary, the use of terminology including “interim,” and the undefined period of time before the election of a general secretary. These comments apply, in particular, to statements 1 and 2 in the proposal above. It was also mentioned that while the financial situation may be the causal factor in explaining these statements, it needs to be recognized that the lack of a “front person” does influence “the level of trust” that exists between an organization and its members. In this context also, concern was expressed in two groups that without a general secretary the WCRC does not have a recognized (identifiable) identity in the global ecumenical and faith space.

On statements 3 and 4 it was noted that the Committee was mandated on three actions (statement 3). It was strongly advocated that these need to be prioritized. Concern was expressed that the concept of collaboration was not duly recognized along with coordination; and along with this in statement 4 a clarification and specification of what is and what is not centralized within WCRC strategy would be advisable. In this context it was also expressed in some groups that albeit eloquent, the Strategic Plan is a complex document and sets out targets and ambitions that, as an entity, cannot be achieved in the time frame available. It was also highlighted for statement 4, that while “a more decentralized working model” is to be applauded this must not be read as excluding the “Centre.”

**In summary, the consensus among the Discernment Groups includes the following:**

- There is a definite need for the World Communion of Reformed Churches to prioritize the appointment of a general secretary. The Executive Committee, however, fully appreciate that this possibility is dependent on finding and assuring sustainability of financial support. In such a situation, and reaffirming the decision taken at the Executive Committee in 2021 to establish the Collegial General Secretariat, the Executive Committee request that the role of the acting general secretary as the representational and visible front of the organization be further clarified and defined.
- Noting the potentially devaluing impression given by the term “interim” the Executive Committee recommend the use of “collegiate model” rather than “interim model” with immediate effect.
- The Executive Committee, with consideration to the above two proposals, the views expressed in the Discernment Groups, and the modifications highlighted below, recommend the following proposals for consideration:
  1. **The Executive Committee postpones the election of a general secretary until such a time when an election is feasible.**
  2. **The Executive Committee continues the interim period with delegation of the responsibilities of the general secretary to the Collegial General Secretariat (as defined in 2021 Executive Committee, action 22), and including the Executive Secretary for Mission and Advocacy upon her/his appointment, until a general secretary is installed into office.**
  3. **The Executive Committee appoints a Committee that shall consist of individuals from the General Secretary Search Committee, Sustainability Task Group, and Strategic Plan Programme Group, with the Collegial General Secretariat participating as ex officio members.**

**This Committee is mandated to:**

- **focus on the short- and mid-term sustainability challenges described in this report;**
- **explore ways in which the WCRC can develop a model that allows flexibility in collaboration with regions, member churches and partners to pursue the vision and mission of the WCRC;**
- **present a report with proposal(s) to the 2023 Executive Committee meeting on how the conditions can be created that would:**
  - a. **allow the election of a general secretary;**
  - b. **assure sufficient staff capacity to collaborate and to coordinate the work of the WCRC.**



- 4. The Executive Committee welcomes additional staff capacity that is funded by programme grants or through collaborative and cooperative agreements with member churches and partners, which may include a more decentralized working model.**

## Finance Report

### Operational Budget

#### 1. Income: Operations

The operations portion of the budget, which includes salaries, office costs, governance, communications, and other costs related to running the organization has four main sources of income: membership dues, administrative fees taken from grants to the programme activities, donations/grants, and investment earnings.

##### *1.a. Membership Dues*

Membership dues were at the lowest level since the relocation to Hannover in 2013, with 706,823 euro received as opposed to the 753,000 budgeted and 2020 actuals of 756,218.

In 2021, the total number of member churches paying their dues was reduced by about 20 churches compared to 2020.

Africa, CANAAC, and Europe had significant differences between budgeted figures and actuals:

<b>Regional Membership Fees</b>	<b>Budgeted EUR</b>	<b>Actuals EUR</b>	<b>Difference EUR</b>
Africa	23.000,00	14.630,84	-8.369,16
Latin America	2.000,00	1.052,00	-948,00
Caribbean and North America	230.000,00	203.301,48	-26.698,52
Asia	60.000,00	57.855,77	-2.144,23
Pacific	3.000,00	4.300,03	1.300,03
Europe	435.000,00	425.682,94	-9.317,06
<b>total</b>	<b>753.000,00</b>	<b>706.823,06</b>	<b>- 46.176,94</b>

*Africa:* Only seven churches contributed as opposed to 15 in 2020.

*Caribbean and North America:* A slight reduction in the total number of churches contributing was accompanied by a significant drop in the contribution from one member to the core budget.

*Europe:* While contributions were slightly lower than in 2020, they were higher than in other recent years. The decrease was due to a number of contributions from smaller member churches not being received.

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Africa	49,292	35,393	15,313	47,787	20,424	37,307	15,460	22,330	14,630
Latin America	4,784	8,488	4,149	5,521	8,441	1,245	1,052	2,034	1,052
CANAAC	228,394	230,028	275,951	265,268	290,047	260,383	270,350	231,357	203,301
Asia	60,770	53,901	59,909	56,378	68,230	76,870	49,450	60,493	57,855
Pacific	12,054	4,720	3,714	3,844	2,847	5,971	4,508	2,956	4,300
Europe	510,646	467,644	473,013	401,522	396,492	502,833	412,597	437,045	425,682
<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>	<b>706,823</b>

Since 2013, income from member church dues to the operational budget has declined by nearly 20% (around 160,000 euro, or the approximate annual cost of a general secretary). The drop in dues from 2020 to 2021 was 9%. This year-to-year drop may be due in large part to the ongoing impact of the pandemic. However, the long-term trend in the decline of revenue from member churches to the operational budget needs to be noted, and those member churches that have not paid for several years will need special attention.

### *Africa*

Churches that did not contribute in 2021:

#### Up to 5,000 individual members

- Dutch Reformed Church in Botswana
- Swaziland Reformed Church

#### 25,000-100,000 individual members

- *Igreja Evangelica Reformada de Angola*
- *Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika*
- Reformed Church in Zimbabwe

#### 100,000-300,000 individual members

- *Igreja Evangélica Congregacional em Angola*
- Evangelical Church of Egypt Synod of the Nile
- Lesotho Evangelical Church
- *Eglise presbytérienne au Rwanda*

- Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa
- Reformed Presbyterian Church in Uganda

Over 300,000 individual members

- Presbyterian Church in Cameroon
- Church of Central Africa Presbyterian
- Reformed Church of Christ for Nations

Churches that have not contributed for multiple consecutive years:

Up to 5,000 individual members

- *Eglise Réformée d'Alger*
- *Église protestante africaine (Lolodorf)*
- *Église protestante du Christ-Roi*
- Presbyterian Church of Liberia
- *Église évangélique de la République du Niger*
- *Église protestante du Sénégal*
- Presbyterian Church of Africa
- Reformed Church in Africa
- Sudanese Reformed Churches (SRC)
- Christian Reformed Church in East Africa
- Reformed Presbyterian Church of Africa

5,000-25,000 individual members

- *Association des Églises évangéliques réformées du Burkina Faso*
- *Iglesia Reformada Presbiteriana de Guinea Ecuatorial*
- *Igreja de Cristo Unida em Moçambique*
- *Volkskerk van Afrika*
- *Communauté protestante au Katanga*
- *Communauté réformée des presbytériens*

25,000-100,000 individual members

- *Igreja Presbiteriana de Moçambique*
- *Igreja Evangélica de Cristo em Moçambique*
- *Igreja Reformada em Mocambique*
- *Hadaddiyar Ekklesiyar Kristi a Nigeria*
- Evangelical Presbyterian Church in South Africa
- *Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Afrika*
- Maranatha Reformed Church of Christ
- *Eglise du Christ au Congo, Communauté presbytérienne de Kinshasa*
- *Communauté évangélique du Congo*
- *Communauté presbytérienne réformée en Afrique*

- *Communauté presbytérienne du Kasai oriental*

100,000-300,000 individual members

- *Église évangélique du Congo*
- *Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Ghana*
- Reformed Church of East Africa
- Christian Reformed Church of Nigeria
- Africa Inland Church Sudan

Over 300,000 individual members

- *Église presbytérienne camerounaise*
- *Église évangélique du Cameroun*
- Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus
- Presbyterian Church of Ghana
- Presbyterian Church of East Africa
- Church of Central Africa Presbyterian, Nkhoma Synod
- Church of Central Africa Presbyterian, Zambia Synod
- Presbyterian Church of Nigeria
- Evangelical Reformed Church of Christ
- The Universal Reformed Church of Christ (Church of Christ in the Sudan among the TIV)
- Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa
- United Congregational Church of Southern Africa
- Presbyterian Church of South Sudan/Sudan (\*to be verified)
- *Communauté presbytérienne au Congo, Eglise du Christ au Congo*
- Reformed Church in Zambia

*Latin America*

Churches that did not contribute in 2021:

Up to 5,000 individual members

- *Iglesia Presbiteriana de Chile*
- *Iglesia Presbiteriana de Venezuela*

5,000-25,000 individual members

- *Iglesia Presbiteriana de Colombia*

Churches that have not contributed for multiple consecutive years:

Up to 5,000 individual members

- *Iglesia Evangélica Presbiteriana en Bolivia*
- *Igrejas Evangelicas Reformadas no Brasil*

- *Igreja Presbiteriana Unida do Brasil*
- *Igreja Evangélica Árabe de São Paulo*
- *Iglesia Evangélica Presbiteriana en Chile*
- *Iglesia Evangélica Presbiteriana Costarricense*
- *Iglesia Reformada Calvinista de El Salvador*
- *Iglesia Cristiana Reformada de Honduras*
- *Iglesia Presbiteriana Asociada Reformada de México*
- *Comunión Mexicana de Iglesias Reformadas y Presbiterianas*

5,000-25,000 individual members

- *Iglesia Evangélica Congregacional*
- *Iglesia Evangélica Nacional Presbiteriana de Guatemala*

25,000-100,000 individual members

- *Igreja Presbiteriana Independente do Brasil*
- *Iglesia Presbiteriana Reformada de México*

Caribbean and North America:

Churches that did not contribute in 2021:

Up to 5,000 individual members

- Lithuanian Evangelical Reformed Church
- Guyana Congregational Union
- Presbytery of Guyana

5,000-25,000 individual members

- Cumberland Presbyterian Church in America

25,000-100,000 individual members

- Evangelical Presbyterian Church

Churches that have not contributed for multiple consecutive years:

Up to 5,000 individual members

- *Iglesia Morava en Cuba*
- Guyana Presbyterian Church

5,000-25,000 individual members

- Hungarian Reformed Church in America
- *Iglesia Evangélica Dominicana*
- Christian Reformed Church in the Dominican Republic
- *Iglesia Presbiteriana-Reformada en Cuba*

25,000-100,000 individual members

- Cumberland Presbyterian Church
- Korean Presbyterian Church Abroad

*Asia*

Churches that did not contribute in 2021:

Up to 5,000 individual members

- Presbyterian Church of Myanmar
- Reformed Presbyterian Church, North East India
- Christian Reformed Church of Sri Lanka
- Presbytery of Lanka
- National Evangelical Union of Lebanon
- Baraka Presbyterian Church

5,000-25,000 individual members

- Mara Evangelical Church (Myanmar)
- *Gereja Kristen Sulawesi Selatan*
- Presbyterian Church in Singapore

25,000-100,000 individual members

- Evangelical Church of Maraland
- Evangelical Church Association
- Church of Pakistan

100,000-300,000 individual members

- *Gereja Kristen Sulawesi Tengah*

Over 300,000 individual members

- Presbyterian Church of India
- *Gereja Batak Karo Protestan*
- *Gereja Kalimantan Evangelis*
- United Church of Christ in the Philippines

Churches that have not contributed for multiple consecutive years:

Up to 5,000 individual members

- Evangelical Reformed Presbyterian Church in Bangladesh
- Independent Presbyterian Church of Myanmar
- Christian Reformed Church in Myanmar
- Reformed Presbyterian Church of Myanmar

- Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Myanmar
- Evangelical Church of Iran
- Christian Reformed Church in the Philippines

5,000-25,000 individual members

- Church of Bangladesh
- Congregational Church of India (Maraland)
- *Gereja Protestan Indonesia di Buol Toli-toli*
- *Gereja Protestan Indonesia diDonggala*
- *Gereja Protestan Indonesia di Gorontalo*
- *Gereja Kristen Protestan Bali*
- *Gereja Protestan di Sulawesi Tenggara*
- *Igreja Protestant Iha Timor Loro Sa'e*
- Korean Christian Church in Japan
- *Hoi Thanh Tin Lanh Truong-Lao Viet-Nam*

25,000-100,000 individual members

- *Gereja Kristen di Luwuk Banggai*
- *Gereja Masehi Injili di Bolaang Mongondow*
- *Gereja Kristen Pasundan*
- *Gereja Kristen Sumatera Bagian Selatan*
- *Gereja Toraja Mamasa*
- United Evangelical Church of Christ

100,000-300,000 individual members

- *Sinode Gereja Kristen Indonesia*
- *Gereja Masehi Injili di Halmahera*
- *Gereja Kristen Jawi Wetan*
- *Gereja Masehi Injili Sangihe-Talaud*
- *Gereja Kristen Sumba*
- Presbyterian Church in Korea (Daeshin)

Over 300,000 individual members

- Church of North India
- Church of South India
- *Gereja Protestan di Indonesia*
- *Gereja Protestan Maluku*
- *Gereja Masehi Injili di Minahasa*
- *Gereja Masehi Injili di Timor*
- *Gereja Kristen Injili di Tanah Papua*
- *Gereja Toraja*
- Presbyterian Church in Korea (Hap Dong Chung Tong)



- Presbyterian Church of Pakistan

### *Pacific*

Churches that did not contribute in 2021:

#### Up to 5,000 individual members

- Congregational Federation of Australia & New Zealand

Churches that have not contributed for multiple consecutive years:

#### Up to 5,000 individual members

- Reformed Congregational Churches
- *Ekalesia Kerisiano Niue*

#### 5,000-25,000 individual members

- *Ekalesia Kelisiano Tuvalu*

#### 25,000-100,000 individual members

- Kiribati Uniting Church
- United Church of Christ - Congregational in the Marshall Islands
- United Church in Solomon Islands
- Congregational Christian Church in Samoa
- Congregational Christian Church in American Samoa
- Presbyterian Church of Vanuatu
- *Église évangélique en Nouvelle Calédonie et aux Îles Loyauté*

### *Europe*

Churches that did not contribute in 2021:

#### Up to 5,000 individual members

- *Den Reformerte Synode i Danmark*
- *Remonstrantse Broederschap*
- *Bond van Vrije Evangelische Gemeenten in Nederland*
- *Igreja Evangelica Presbiteriana de Portugal*

#### 5,000-25,000 individual members

- *Evangelische Kirche HB in Österreich*
- *Fiangonana Protestanta Malagasy aty Andafy*
- *Helleniki Evangeliki Ekklesia*

- *25,000-100,000 individual members*

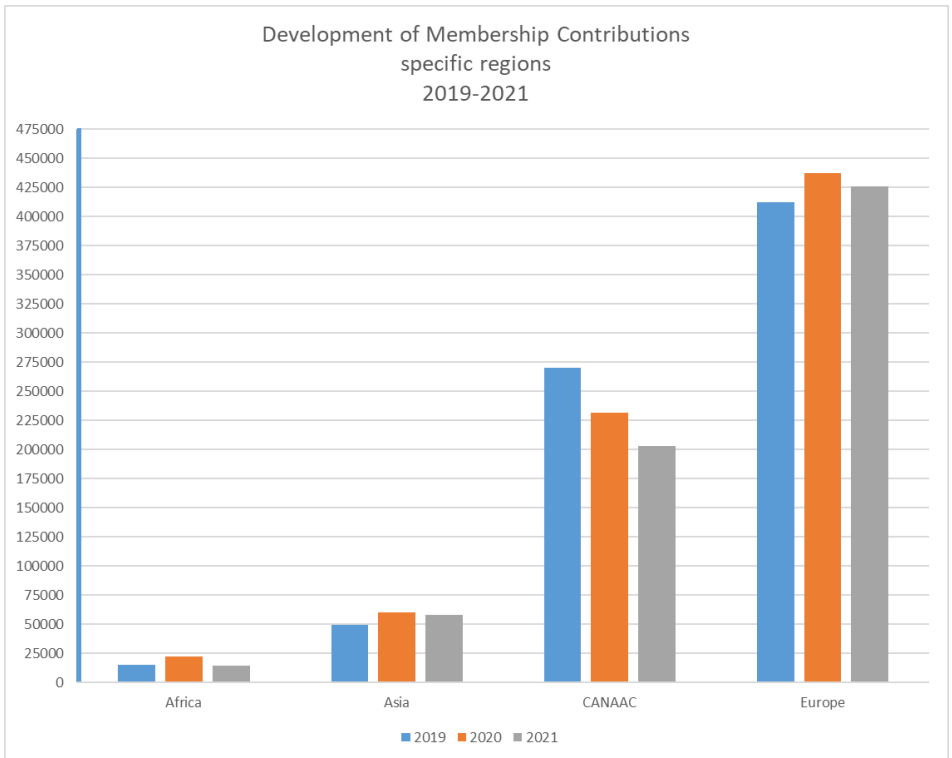
- *Église protestante unie de Belgique*

Churches that have not contributed for multiple consecutive years:

Up to 5,000 individual members

- Union of Evangelical Congregational Churches in Bulgaria
- *Reformatu-Bralu ev.-luth. Draudze Riga*
- *Lietuvos evangeliku reformatu bažnyčia - Unitas Lithuaniae Synod*

*\*membership figures as reported by member churches*



**1.b. Administrative Fees**

Thanks to considerable project donations by *Otto per Mille (OPM)*, *Evangelische Mission Weltweit (EMW)*, and the Church of Westphalia, as well as a number of smaller donations, approximately 66,300 euro were allocated to the core budget as administration fees.

### 1.c. Donations/Grants

Staff costs continue to be funded in a significant amount by three main partners:

- 1) The Church of Westphalia pays the main portion of the salary of the executive secretary for communion and theology.
- 2) As in previous years, a considerable percentage of the salary for the executive secretary for justice and witness as well as the assistant/administrator to the programme desks was covered thanks to a donation to the core budget from the Council for World Mission (CWM).
- 3) Costs for the internship programme, including their salaries, are largely borne by *Evangelische Mission Weltweit* (EMW).

The database project, funded by a grant from the *Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland* (EKD), contributed 30,000 euro to the 2021 operational budget, while grants from FAP and the Cantonal Church of Zürich covered special projects within communications, including a redesign of the style guide, introductory videos, and a new website (the latter two are still in progress).

### 1.d. Investment Income

Interest income is traditionally budgeted for very conservatively, as well as due to a downward trend being observed in 2020. However, while interest income was budgeted with 3,000 euro projected, the actuals were 44,600 euro, coming from the investments with KD-Bank and the collective investment of the Reformed Church in Germany.

Currency gains were also positive in 2021, with 20,000 euro (48,000 fx gain vs 28,000 fx loss).

## 2. Expenditures: Operational

The bulk of the operational budget is spent on staff salaries. In 2021, these totals were:

General Secretary: Year-End Figure: 118,500; Budgeted: 122,000; Balance: 3,500

Executive Secretaries: Year-End Figure: 302,100; Budgeted: 294,500; Balance: -7,600

Administrators: Year-End Figure: 231,600; Budgeted: 258,000; Balance: 26,400

It should be noted that costs for staff were lower in 2021 than in previous years for several reasons: 1) the general secretary completed service in August, the administrative staff moved from four to three individuals, 3) there were several months where there were only two administrators.

Other expenditures within the operational budget, including office costs, travel, and communications, all came in under budget, due in large part to remote work and the ongoing impact of the pandemic.

There was also a significant savings in 2021 due to the virtual Executive Committee meeting; this is being repeated in 2022.

### **3. Budget Risks**

There are several risks to future operational budgets that need to be noted:

- Inflation is at its highest in recent decades, up to 7%, which will impact staff compensation increases and operational costs.
- Staff costs:
  - In 2021, 30,000 euro came from EKD funds for the database project
  - Operating once again with a full staff complement of three administrators will increase expenditures.
- A downward trend is being observed for membership contributions, especially from a high number of smaller churches. (Post-)pandemic related cuts are still likely.
- A face-to-face Executive Committee meeting will increase expenditures by approximately 35,000 euro annually.
- A full-time general secretary would increase expenditures by around 170,000 euro per year, plus additional moving and any expat expenses.
- Funding for the executive secretary for theology and communion by his home church, the Church of Westphalia, has only been confirmed for the duration of the current term. It has not been confirmed whether this contribution will continue for a possible second term or should a new executive be appointed.
- Installation and removal costs for incoming/outgoing executive staff.

### **4. Year End Closing: Operational**

The 2021 budget year was closed with a surplus of 113,262 euro. To give a perspective to the amount, the total costs for a general secretary are approximately 170,000 euro per year.

This surplus was achieved in spite of careful budget planning due to a number of factors:

- Interest income was budgeted carefully with 3,000 euro projected vs. actuals of 44,600 euros (traditionally budgeted for very conservatively, as well as due to a downwards trend being observed in 2020) coming from the investments with KD-Bank and the collective investment of the Reformed Church in Germany.
- Currency gains of 20,000 euro (48,000 fx gain vs 28,000 fx loss).
- Expat expenses: expenditures are to be budgeted as per personnel policies, thus the installation of Philip Peacock's family in Germany was budgeted but unused in 2021 (9,000 euro).
- Underspending of approximately 10,000 euro in Communications outside of the website project (which itself is funded by grants).
- Underspending in a series of operational budget lines, in line with remote work (electricity, cleaning, office expenditures, equipment, training, hospitality, etc.) and invoices received in budget year 2022 (audit, human resource service providers, and other professional fees), expat expenditures for the outgoing general secretary.
- A standard buffer for personnel costs had been budgeted for.

The surplus, even if it were to be repeated each year, falls short of the full costs of a general secretary. Going forward, we cannot expect the surplus to be recurring.

While the financial situation appears stable at first glance, it is only stable because we are operating under extraordinary circumstances (pandemic-related cuts, temporarily reduced staff complement, one-time project donations). These temporary exceptions resulted in a balanced budget/surplus in 2021 and possibly in 2022, but there are not enough funds on an annual basis to carry out the constitutional business year after year under regular circumstances.

## **Programme Budget**

### **5. Income: Programmes**

As per policy, programmes may only be implemented when the necessary funds have been raised. Thanks to several ongoing partnerships, obtaining funding for programmes has not been a challenge in recent years. In fact, with the impact of the pandemic and the enforced move to virtual meetings, it has been a challenge to meaningfully expend the funds on hand, as much of the programme money has traditionally been spent on bringing people together for face-to-face meetings and activities.

*Evangelische Mission Weltweit* (EMW) contributed 220,000 euro as support for WCRC mission activities. A balance of 119,000 euro was carried over into 2022. EMW allows us to charge 15% in administrative fees of the total donation.

Carry over from 2020: 67,100

New income in 2021: 220,000

Subtotal in 2021: 287,100

*Otto per Mille* (OPM), from the Waldensian Church, contributed 350,000 euro in budget year 2021. 105,734 were carried over into 2022. Admin fees are charged at 8% out of actual expenditures.

Carry over from 2020: 86,000

New income in 2021: 350,000

Subtotal in 2021: 436,000

The Evangelical Church of Westphalia supports WCRC theology work with a special focus on the Reformed Partnership Fund. 24,575 euro were carried over into 2022. Admin fees are charged at 8% out of total donation in 2021.

Carry over from 2020: 7,800

New income in 2021: 29,000

Subtotal in 2021: 36,800

## **6. Expenditures: Programmes**

Programme costs continue to be funded in a significant amount by three main partners:

*Otto per Mille*, *Evangelische Mission Weltweit*, and the Church of Westphalia

Details of the actual programme activities and their impact can be found in the reports of the Collegial General Secretariat and Strategic Plan Programme Group.

### OPM Funds:

NIFEA: 34,500

RAN: 1,400

Reformed Partnership Fund: 183,700

Reformed Partnership Fund – Emergencies Projects: 72,300

Peace and Reconciliation – Colombia: 7,000

Peace and Reconciliation – Palestine: 28,500

Peace and Reconciliation – Cameroon: 2,800

(incl. 8% admin fees)

**TOTAL: 330,200**

Carry-over to 2022: 105,800

EMW Funds:

Internship Programme: 30,900\*

COVID & Beyond. 79,200

Regional Empowerment: 25,000

Admin Fees: 33,000

**TOTAL: 168,100**

Carry-over to 2022: 119,000

Church of Westphalia Funds:

Reformed Partnership Fund – Theological Projects: 9,900

Admin Fees: 2,300

**TOTAL: 12,200**

Carry-over to 2022: 24,600

Others Donors/Own funds:

Internship Programme: 10,400\*

Others: 6,600

(incl. 8% admin fees where applicable)

**TOTAL: 17,000**

## **7. Year End Closing: Programmes**

Excess funds carried over into the budget year 2022 were due to capacity reasons as well as COVID-related travel restrictions.

We are grateful to the continuing support of our partners toward our programme work and look forward to returning to more in-person meetings as pandemic travel restrictions lift.

## **8. Audit Report**

The EKD High Audit Office confirms that the budget and asset accounting of the WCRC in the accounting year 2021 occurred in due form and in compliance with the relevant principles of orderly (budget) accounting and regulations, the financial statement for 2021 conveys an accurate image of the budget implementation as well as the situation of assets, finances and results which corresponds to the actual circumstances.

The High Audit Office generally reports no objections against the approval and authorization of the annual accounts by the Executive Committee.

However, the High Audit Office's mandate within the German system goes further than that of ordinary auditors. The High Audit Office helps us to identify potential organizational risks.

We therefore welcome any comments to help improve our policies and processes. A process is in place to review, and implement where deemed necessary, by the proper WCRC authorities (be it management or governance) any such comments.

Within the scope of the 2021 audit, the High Audit Office deemed it timely to focus on policies and processes, especially regarding personnel and human resources.

The audit was finished and had been discussed orally, but the final audit report was not yet available at the Finance Committee meeting on 11 May. Therefore, the following recommendations were deferred to a meeting of the Finance Committee during the Executive Committee meeting.

Thus, the Finance Committee is to vote on the following recommendations prior to their formal presentation to the Executive Committee.



## 9. Reserves

Reserves	as of 31/12/2021
<b>WCRC Capital</b>	<b>1.740.807,81 €</b>
Reserve Fund	512.204,86 €
IT Provision	32.063,59 €
Fundraising Fund	31.012,44 €
Reserve for FX Fluctuations	100.000,00 €
Designated Core Funds	46.086,19 €
Pension Contributions Reserve	1.019.440,73 €
<b>Specific Asset Items</b>	<b>2.442.029,13 €</b>
General Council 2024 Fund	369.848,10 €
CWM Endowment Reserve	1.211.500,00 €
Endowment Contributions CWM	714.985,77 €
Mission and Advocacy	145.695,26 €
<b>Programmes</b>	
<b>P1 CULTIVATING A JUST COMMUNION</b>	<b>83.337,51 €</b>
Internship Programme	17.483,69 €
Internship Programme - Personnel Reserve	62.740,98 €
Reformed Partnership Fund	3.112,84 €
<b>P2 COVENANTING FOR JUSTICE</b>	<b>52.288,98 €</b>
NIFEA	5.343,37 €
Ecology	130,34 €
Gender, Leadership and Power	40.459,33 €
TESF	2.294,54 €
RAN	4.061,40 €
<b>P3 DOING THEOLOGY FOR TRANSFORMATION</b>	<b>81.697,60 €</b>
Global Institute of Theology (GIT)	77.102,28 €
Theological Networks	4.595,32 €
<b>P4 ENGAGING GOD'S MISSION IN THE CONTEXT OF CRISIS</b>	<b>10.829,48 €</b>
Mission	10.829,48 €
<b>P5 WORKING WITH ALL THE PARTNERS GOD GIVES US</b>	<b>249,04 €</b>
Catholic Dialogue	249,04 €
<b>Key Initiatives</b>	<b>249.310,35 €</b>
EMW	119.000,59 €
OPM	105.734,20 €
Ev. Church of Westphalia	24.575,56 €
<b>Special Project Reserves</b>	<b>146.463,13 €</b>
Justice & Partnership Office Support	50.902,07 €
Justice and Witness	13.017,80 €
Mission Fund	18.016,30 €
Publications Fund	47.200,75 €
UCC Death Penalty Consultation	5.175,70 €
Equatorial Guinea	4.218,09 €
Native American Project	3.164,33 €
Oikotree	4.768,09 €
<b>SUB-TOTAL</b>	<b>4.807.013,03 €</b>
<b>Trust Assets</b>	<b>191.079,26 €</b>
WCRC Europe	191.079,26 €
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4.998.092,29 €</b>

Compared to the previous year, these assets have increased by 166,393 euros (3.44 %). The reserves of the WCRC amount to a total of roughly 5 million euro as per 31/12/2021.

However, the large majority of these are earmarked funds for specific programmes and projects (including the carry overs from the main programme donations by OPM, EMW, and the Church of Westphalia) as well as the CWM special reserve and the pension reserve.

The general reserve fund is 512,205 euro with an additional 100,000 euro in a separate reserve for currency fluctuations, which is, however, not needed in this amount due to having withdrawn from all US investments and closed most foreign currency bank accounts.

The pension reserve contains 1,019,440 euro as of 31 December 2021.

## 10. Investments

<b>Investment</b>	<b>Funds Invested as of 31/12/2021</b>	<b>Value as of 31/12/2021</b>
OikoCredit	1,429	1,334
KCD-Union (KD-Bank)	406,993	428,388
Fair World Funds (KD-Bank)	409,940	468,452
Kinderzukunftsfonds (KD-Bank)*	697,892	720,688
Collective Investment Reformed Church in Germany	1,000,000	1,015,746
Collective Investment Reformed Church in Germany - Pension	1,019,440	1,019,440
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3,535,694</b>	<b>3,654,048</b>

*\*The table above shows the investment figures as per 31 December 2021, thus not showing the 2022 rates of the Kinderzukunftsfonds. The total invested in this fund is 1,215,266 as per May 2022.*

All investments are now in line with our guidelines on ethical and sustainable investments.

All in all, WCRC's investments amount to 4,000,000 euro, however, most are earmarked funds, including pensions in the amount of approximately 1,000,000 euro.

A newly set-up fund with the German KD-Bank was identified for final investment of the fund previously invested in the US: 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). The funds were invested in the *KinderZukunftsFonds* on a quarterly basis between 2021 and 2022.

A total of 2.03 million euro has been invested in three funds with KD-Bank. Prior to the war in Ukraine, results of all three funds with the German KD-Bank were favourable.

As of May, the total market value is 1.85 million euro with one out of three funds (Fair World Funds) still having a positive trend of +2.7 % since inception, and the other two showing declines of -6.2% and -13.8%.

However, there is no immediate cause for concern since these are long-term investments, the funds are expected to recover, and the WCRC does not foresee a need for a withdrawal for liquidity reasons.

The pension reserves are invested in farmland and are not subject to the abovementioned risks. Pension obligations for all departing employees (except one) have been paid out in full.

## **11. Budget Plan 2022**

The December 2021 extraordinary Executive Committee adopted the balanced 2022 budget.

It is not yet foreseeable whether a supplementary budget will have to be made in the course of the year. Should this be the case, it would be presented to the Finance Committee prior to approval by the Officers towards the end of the year.

The first quarter has not seen any unexpected developments.

The 2022 budget will require of us to be very careful stewards of our funds in order to achieve a positive result.

## **12. Budget Plan 2023**

The budget for 2023 will be developed in the latter half of this year, with the Finance Committee reviewing the figures before submitting a balanced budget to the Officers' Committee for preliminary approval before year-end 2021, as has been the traditional process.

## **13. Recommendations**

Based on all of the above, the Finance Committee recommends the following:

- **The 2021 Audit Report 2021 be accepted.**
- **The Acting General Secretary and the General Treasurer be exonerated for the budget, economic management, and asset administration of the WCRC for the accounting year 2021.**
- **The audit of the 2022 financial statement be carried out by the High Audit Office of the *Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland*.**
- **The officers be authorized to give preliminary approval to a balanced budget for 2023 subject to final approval at the 2023 Executive Committee meeting.**

#### **14. Thanks**

The excellent continuing work of Anna Krüger, now as administrator for finance and sustainability, and Gerhard Plenter, finance coordinator, should be noted with thanks.

Respectfully submitted,  
General Treasurer Johann Weusmann



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EVANGELISCHE KIRCHE IN DEUTSCHLAND  
OBERRECHNUNGSAMT

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(English version)

**REPORT**

ON THE AUDIT OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENT 2021

**WORLD COMMUNION OF REFORMED CHURCHES**

**(WCRC)**

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HANNOVER

## LIST OF IMPORTANT ABBREVIATIONS

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BSt.	Buchungsstelle (Booking account, classification level in the finance software KFM)
CWM	Council for World Mission / Rat für Weltmission
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 ECKD-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 12th November 1993 (ABl. EKD p. 513)
RAN	Racism, Authoritarianism and Nationalism - Empire
SB	Sachbuchteil (Booking account, classification level in the finance software KFM)

TVöD	Tarifvertrag für den öffentlichen Dienst (Collective wage agreement in public service)
TVPöD	Tarifvertrag für Praktikantinnen/Praktikanten des öffentlichen Dienstes (Collective wage agreement for interns/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)
WGRK-Haus- haltsordnung	WCRC General Finance Management Policies
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 10th/11th December 2014. The Standing Budget Committee of the EKD synod approved the acceptance of this audit assignment in its conference on 12th/13th March 2014.

### **Audit subject and aim**

The subject of the audit was the annual financial statement of the WCRC for the accounting year 2021. For this, it was precisely audited:

- whether the budget and economic management as well as the asset administration in the accounting year 2021 took place correctly and according to the relative principles and regulations (concerning the budget) and
- whether the annual accounts 2021 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),
- inspection of various single aspects of the HR department,
- inspection of partial aspects of the internal monitoring system of the HR department and
- inspection of the contribution funds.

If any action was taken against existing regulations in the case of single measures 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 2022.

The following documents, among others, were available for the audit:

- a) the 2021 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 2021 of 19th April 2022 (ZB closure no. 0219).

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 11th to 18th May 2014.

The information required on the occasion of the audit was provided by Ms. Anna Krüger (Administrator for Finance and Communication), Ms. Amritha Perumalla (Administrator for Projects and Programs) 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 2021. It was given by the Acting General Secretary Dr. Hanns Lessing within the scope of this audit dated 10th May 2022.

### **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 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 11th December 2012<sup>2</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 11th/14th April 2014. It was ratified by Federal Law on 10th December 2014.

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 organs of the WCRC are:

- the General Council (with President and General Treasurer),
- the Executive Committee and

<sup>2</sup> see announcement of the Ministry of Culture of Lower Saxony of 16th January 2013 (Nds. MBI 4/2013, page 67)

- 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. The position of General Secretary has been vacant since 1st September 2021. In substitution, the three Executive Secretaries have taken over as a “council”. Dr. Hanns Lessing is authorized to sign in a representational function.

The WCRC President is Rev. Najla Kassab (Lebanon). The office of General Treasurer was assigned to Dr. Johann Weusmann (Germany).

The current transactions of the WCRC are assumed by an office directed by the General Secretary. It is based in Hannover (Germany).

The accounting year (budget year) is the calendar year.

### III. ACCOUNTING / PRESENTATION OF THE ACCOUNTING RESULTS

The accounting was assumed by the Administrator for Finances of the WCRC and was carried out in the cameralistics 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:

<b>WGRK Annual Statement 2021</b>	<b>Revenues</b>	<b>Expenses</b>
	<b>EUR</b>	<b>EUR</b>
Budget appropriation according to budget	2.742.000,00	2.742.000,00
<b>TARGET COSTS 2021 (plan valuation)</b>	<b>2.742.000,00</b>	<b>2.742.000,00</b>
According to the annual financial statement the following amount to:		
The actual receipts	1.699.431,38	
Internal reallocations between programmes	588.312,09	
The transfers from program reserves	238.582,55	
The transfers from other reserves	286.726,59	
The actual expenditures		1.661.998,98
Internal reallocations between programmes		588.312,09
The allocations to program reserves		325.066,25
The allocations to other reserves		124.413,78
The surplus 2021 (allocation to General Reserve)		113.261,51
<b>ACTUAL COSTS 2021 (result)</b>	<b>2.813.052,61</b>	<b>2.813.052,61</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:

Identification	Opening	Expense	Revenue	Closing balance
	balance from			2021 carried
	2020	2021	2021	forward to 2022
	EUR	EUR	EUR	EUR
Permanent Advance AIPRAL	-1.283,44	772,85	380,00	-1.676,29
ACRC Membership	-2.579,93	0,00	885,22	-1.694,71
Opening balance from projects	2.339.129,36	2.344.570,74	1.633.111,86	1.627.670,48
<b>Total:</b>	<b>2.335.265,99</b>	<b>2.345.343,59</b>	<b>1.634.377,08</b>	<b>1.624.299,48</b>

#### Holding ledger

Identification	Opening	Revenue	Expense	Closing balance
	balance from			2021 carried
	2020	2021	2021	forward to 2022
	EUR	EUR	EUR	EUR
Transitory items	2.175,88	187.252,55	187.655,04	2.578,37
Deposit	-3.060,00	680,00	0,01	-3.739,99
Transitory items - downpayments	315.224,16	177.160,21	0,00	138.063,95
AIRPRAL- Regional Empower Erment	0,00	0,00	25.000,00	25.000,00
Interests	0,00	48.638,95	48.638,95	0,00
Asset	2.020.925,95	2.449.453,03	1.890.924,23	1.462.397,15
Balancing Accounts	0,00	2.805.539,29	2.805.539,29	0,00
<b>Total:</b>	<b>2.335.265,99</b>	<b>5.668.724,03</b>	<b>4.957.757,52</b>	<b>1.624.299,48</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 1,627,670.48 EUR and the position "asset" displayed under "transitory items" amounting to 1,462,397.15 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 2021 according to the documents presented for the audit is as follows:

Reserve assets (including trust assets, according to SB 92)	Opening Balance	Closing Balance	Annual
	01.01.2021	31.12.2021	Percentage
	EUR	EUR	Change
<b>WCRC Capital</b>			
Reserve Fund	640.237,31	512.204,86	-128.032,45
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
Designated Core Funds	0,00	46.086,19	46.086,19
Oikotree	4.768,09	4.768,09	0,00
Reformed World	6.972,92	0,00	-6.972,92
Pension Contributions Reserve	980.108,53	1.019.440,73	39.332,20
<b>Specific Asset Items</b>			
General Council 2024 Fund	224.489,45	369.848,10	145.358,65
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	18.765,00	17.483,69	-1.281,31

Internship Programme - Personnel Reserve	62.740,98	62.740,98	0,00
Reformed Partnership Fund D	0,00	473,00	473,00
Reformed Partnership Fund E	2.639,84	2.639,84	0,00
<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	40.459,33	-894,05
TESF	4.467,72	2.294,54	-2.173,18
RAN	2.033,86	4.061,40	2.027,54
<b>P3 DOING THEOLOGY FOR TRANSFORMATION</b>			
Global Institute of Theology (GIT)	77.102,28	77.102,28	0,00
Theological Networks	4.595,32	4.595,32	0,00
<b>Reserve assets</b>			
<b>(including trust assets, according to SB 92)</b>			
	<b>Opening Balance</b>	<b>Closing Balance</b>	<b>Annual Percentage</b>
	<b>01.01.2021</b>	<b>31.12.2021</b>	<b>Change</b>
	<b>EUR</b>	<b>EUR</b>	
<b>P4 ENGAGING GOD'S MISSION IN THE CONTEXT OF CRISIS</b>			
Mission	10.829,48	10.829,48	0,00
<b>P5 WORKING WITH ALL THE PARTNERS GOD GIVES US</b>			
Catholic Dialogue	249,04	249,04	0,00
<b>Key Initiatives</b>			
EMW	67.104,82	119.000,59	51.895,77



OPM	86.042,06	105.734,20	19.692,14
Ev. Church of Westphalia	7.795,56	24.575,56	16.780,00
<b>Custodian Funds</b>			
Database Project	32.916,07	0,00	-32.916,07
Mission and Advocacy	145.695,26	145.695,26	0,00
Justice & Partnership Office Support	50.902,07	50.902,07	0,00
Justice and Witness	13.054,01	13.017,80	-36,21
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>4.657.673,73</b>	<b>4.807.013,03</b>	<b>149.339,30</b>
<b>Trust Assets</b>			
WCRC Europe	174.025,11	191.079,26	17.054,15
<b>Total</b>	<b>4.831.698,84</b>	<b>4.998.092,29</b>	<b>166.393,45</b>

The total asset stock of the WCRC including the WCRC trust property amounted to 4,998,092.29 EUR for the year-end closing as of 31st December 2021. Compared with the previous year (4,831,698.84 EUR), this stock has increased by 166,393.45 EUR (3.44%) according to the accounting balance. However, this includes 408,023.41 EUR of earmarked funds consisting of the stocks of the EMW, Otto per Mille, the Ev. Kirche v. Westfalen, Mission and Advocacy and the Georges-Lombard Prize.

## **IV. AUDIT STATEMENTS**

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### **1. General statements**

#### **1.1 Applicability of the General Finance Management Policies**

At the conference of the Executive Committee from 11th to 18th May 2014 in Hannover, the General Finance Management Policies of the WCRC were formally put into effect by resolution. The determinations of the WCRC General Finance Management Policies have partially not been implemented. The main reason for the fact that various regulations cannot yet be implemented is due to the applied accounting style. In this regard, the WCRC General Finance Management Policies stipulates the extended cameralistics and is designed accordingly. However, the WCRC still keeps its accounts in the accounting style of cameralistic.

In this regard, in its audit report of the year 2015, the ORA already stated and pointed out, among others, that elements of the year-end closing required by the General Finance Management Policies, e. g. a balance with attachment, cannot be existent due to the system as they cannot be generated in the cameralistic.

Thus, the ORA was again only able to orient this year's audit mainly according to the general principles of orderly accounting and, at this, especially focus on the continuity of the accounting.

To the ORA, this seems to be exceptionally justifiable as the office has announced that a conversion to the churchly double bookkeeping is targeted for the year 2024 at the latest.

#### **1.2 Correctness of the 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.

#### **1.3 Correctness and completeness of the year-end closing**

The 2021 year-end closing of the WCRC was compiled dated 19th April 2022 (ZB closing no. 0219). It shows a volume of 2,813,052.61 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.

#### **1.4 Budget balance / Utilization of the 2021 surplus**

The balancing of the ordinary budget was induced by an allocation of the annual surplus amounting to 113,261.51 EUR to the General Reserve Fund (SB 92, BSt. 5110.00 UK 1).

#### **1.5 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.

#### **1.6 Exceeding and unscheduled expenses**

According to § 28 of the WCRC General Finance Management Policies, exceeding and unscheduled expenses can only be induced if their covering has been decided upon. The exceedance of the budget is only admissible if a legal and unrefusable obligation for the performance of the expenditures and an unpredictable and irrefutable need exist. Moreover, exceeding and unscheduled expenses according to § 28 paragraph 2 of the WCRC General Finance Management Policies require the prior consent of the President and General Treasurer.

So as to rule out exceeding expenses in the future, there is the instrument of covering comments. These are to be noted in the budget and considered correspondingly in the future.

According to § 20 of the WCRC General Finance Management Policies, it is possible to regulate so-called budget comments for budget means. Covering comments “ED” (einseitige Deckung = unilateral covering) and “GD” (gegenseitige Deckung = mutual covering) would create the possibility of operating more flexibly. Hereafter, single expense approaches in the budget can respectively be declared as coverable if there is an administrative or factual connection. This enables a compensation of additional expenses by means of corresponding additional revenues or lower expenses in another place.

So far, corresponding covering comments have not been regulated in the budget. The ORA recommends reporting the mutual coverabilities within the frame of the budget.

Within the frame of the management of the 2021 budget, the agreed budget was exceeded by 71,052.61 EUR. In the 2021 budget, the unscheduled expenses amount to approx. 66,900.00 EUR and are balanced by the corresponding reduced expenditures. The exceeding expenses, among others, result from the expenses for the "Communication Website Project" amounting to 27,785.62 EUR and currency losses from foreign currency conversions amounting to 28,193.66 EUR.

According to the ORA, there was an unpredictable and irrefutable need for the exceeding expenses. However, these expenses were not authorized according to § 28 paragraph of the WCRC General Finance Management Policies.

The ORA recommends collecting the neglected authorizations belatedly and, for the future, taking care that such authorizations are regularly collected before inducing exceeding or unscheduled expenses.

### **1.7 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. These non-required means amounting to 315,224.16 EUR were put on hold in the transit accounts in the budget years 2020/2021 and transferred into the budget year 2021 in full.

In this context, it is to be stated that of the remaining funds 138,063.95 EUR can be assigned to the UEK, 116,233.04 EUR to the EKD and 60,927.17 EUR to other donors. In the budget year 2021, all contributions were reimbursed except the means from the UEK. As to the knowledge of the ORA, the UEK has agreed for the means to remain with the WCRC and be used as the UEK share for the next General Assembly. From the ORA point of view, the means ought to be conveyed to a corresponding functional reserve.

## 2. Statements on the annual financial statements

### 2.1 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 2021, the program budgets are as follows:

	Opening Balance	Revenues	Expenses	Closing Balance
	EUR	EUR	EUR	EUR
<b>Programme Budgets 2021</b>				
<b>Main Structure 2</b>				
<b>THEOLOGY - GENERAL</b>				
Georges-Lombard-Preis	13.054,01	0,00	36,21	13.017,80
<b>Main Structure 6</b>				
<b>KEY INITIATIVES</b>				
Otto per Mille	86.042,06	350.000,00	330.307,86	105.734,20
EMW	67.104,82	220.000,00	168.104,23	119.000,59
Ev. Church of Westphalia	7.795,56	29.000,00	12.220,00	24.575,56
<b>Main Structure 7</b>				
<b>P1 CULTIVATING A JUST COMMUNION</b>				
<b>FULL AND JUST PARTICIPATION</b>				
Youth	18.765,00	39.991,37	41.272,68	17.483,69
Regional Empowerment	0,00	25.000,00	25.000,00	0,00
<b>REFORMED PARTNERSHIP FUND</b>				
Reformed Partnership Fund A	0,00	183.676,29	183.676,29	0,00
Reformed Partnership Fund B	0,00	9.900,00	9.900,00	0,00
Reformed Partnership Fund D	0,00	3.927,38	3.454,38	473,00

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Reformed Partnership Fund E	0,00	72.349,73	72.349,73	0,00
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**P2 COVENANTING FOR JUSTICE**

New Economic and Financial Architecture (NIFEA)	0,00	34.547,91	34.547,91	0,00
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Ecology	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00
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**GENDER, LEADERSHIP AND POWER**

Gender, Leadership and Power	41.353,38	0,00	894,05	40.459,33
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Ordination of Women	4.467,72	0,00	2.173,18	2.294,54
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Racism, Authoritarianism and Nationalism (RAN) - EMPIRE	0,00	3.587,57	1.560,03	2.027,54
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	Opening Balance	Revenues	Expenses	Closing Balance
	EUR	EUR	EUR	EUR
<b>Programme Budgets 2021</b>				
<b>P3 DOING THEOLOGY FOR TRANSFORMATION</b>				
COVID & Beyond	0,00	79.186,07	79.186,07	0,00
Global Institute of Theology (GIT)	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00
<b>P4 ENGAGING GOD'S MISSION IN THE CONTEXT OF CRISIS</b>				
Peace and Reconciliation	0,00	31.373,77	31.373,77	0,00
Theological Dialogues	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>238.582,55</b>	<b>1.082.540,09</b>	<b>996.056,39</b>	<b>325.066,25</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 2021.

- Five of a total of 21 programs showed no financial activities in the year 2021.
- 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.

## 2.2 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 2021 is as follows:

<b>Donor</b>	<b>Remaining funds 2020 EUR</b>	<b>Revenues 2021 EUR</b>	<b>Expenses 2021 EUR</b>	<b>Carry-over 2022 EUR</b>
Council for World Mission	0,00	130.371,00	130.371,00	0,00
Otto per Mille	86.042,06	350.000,00	330.307,86	105.734,20
Evangelische Misison Weltweit	67.104,82	220.000,00	168.104,23	119.000,59
Ev. Kirche von Westfalen	7.795,56	29.000,00	12.220,00	24.575,56
<b>Total:</b>	<b>160.942,44</b>	<b>729.371,00</b>	<b>641.003,09</b>	<b>249.310,35</b>

The non-required funds amounting to 249,310.35 EUR were carried forward into the budget year 2022 as earmarked or transferred to earmarked project reserves temporarily.

### 2.2.1 Council for World Mission

The contribution of the Council for World Mission was deployed for expenses for justice and witness as follows:

<b>Council for World Mission</b>	<b>2021</b>
	<b>EUR</b>
Remaining means 2020	0,00
Revenues 2021	130.371,00
Expenses 2021	130.371,00
<i>thereof Executive Secretary</i>	<i>84.232,60</i>
<i>thereof Administrative Assistant</i>	<i>46.138,40</i>
<b>Carry-over 2022</b>	<b>0,00</b>

A review of the program costs showed no indications for a misappropriated utilization of the funds.

### 2.2.2 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>2021</b>
	<b>EUR</b>
Remaining means 2020	86.042,06
Revenues 2021	350.000,00
Expenses 2021	330.307,86
<i>thereof NIFEA</i>	<i>34.547,91</i>
<i>thereof Peace and Reconciliation</i>	<i>38.350,21</i>
<i>thereof RAN</i>	<i>1.383,72</i>
<i>Thereof Partnership F und A</i>	<i>72.349,73</i>
<i>Thereof Partnership F und E</i>	<i>183.676,29</i>
<b>Carry-over 2022</b>	<b>105.734,20</b>

Concerning the funds from Otto per Mille it is to be noted that only 330,307.86 EUR of the total of 436,042.06 EUR available funds were deployed. The difference amounting to 105,734.20 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.

### 2.2.3 Evangelische Mission Weltweit

The contribution from the Evangelische Mission Weltweit for the missionary work of the WCRC was deployed as follows:



<b>Evangelische Mission Weltweit</b>	<b>2021 EUR</b>
Remaining means 2020 from reimbursement in the budget	67.104,82
Revenues 2021	220.000,00
Expenses 2021	168.104,23
<i>thereof lump sum administration</i>	<i>33.000,00</i>
<i>thereof Leadership Development</i>	<i>30.916,16</i>
<i>thereof Regional Empowerment</i>	<i>25.000,00</i>
<i>Davon Covid and Beyond</i>	<i>79.186,07</i>
<b>Carry-over 2022</b>	<b>119.000,59</b>

Concerning the funds from the Evangelische Mission Weltweit it is to be noted that only 168,104.23 EUR of the total of 287,104.82 EUR available funds were deployed. The difference amounting to 119,000.59 EUR was temporarily assigned to earmarked project reserves. At the time of the audit, a corresponding authorization from Evange-liche Mission Weltweit was not yet available. A review of the project costs showed no indications for a misappropriated utilization of the funds.

#### **2.2.4 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:

<b>Evangelische Kirche von Westfalen</b>	<b>2021 EUR</b>
Remaining means 2020	7.795,56
Revenues 2021	29.000,00
Expenses 2021	12.220,00
<i>thereof lump sum administration</i>	<i>2.320,00</i>
<i>thereof Partnership F und B</i>	<i>9.900,00</i>
<b>Carry-over 2022</b>	<b>24.575,56</b>

Concerning the funds from the Ev. Kirche von Westfalen it is to be noted that only 12,220.00 EUR of the total of 36,795.56 EUR available funds were deployed. The difference amounting to 24,575.56 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.

### **2.3 Membership fees**

The development of the WCRC membership fees within the audited period shows the following figures:

<b>Regional Membership Fees</b>	<b>Budgeted EUR</b>	<b>Actuals EUR</b>	<b>Difference EUR</b>
Africa	23.000,00	14.360,84	-8.369,16
Latin America	2.000,00	1.052,00	-984,00
Caribbean and North America	230.000,00	203.301,48	-26.698,52
Asia	60.000,00	57.855,77	-2.144,23
Pacific	3.000,00	4.300,03	1.300,03
Europe	435.000,00	425.682,94	-9.317,06
<b>Total</b>	<b>753.000,00</b>	<b>706.823,06</b>	<b>-46.176,94</b>

In its last audits, the ORA reported that member church fee backlogs, whose total had not been documented, had accumulated in the last years. 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.

#### **2.4 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 2021 can be summarized as follows:

<b>Expat Expenses</b>	<b>Budgeted EUR</b>	<b>Actuals EUR</b>	<b>Difference EUR</b>
111. Executive Secretaries	29.000,00	20.899,30	8.100,70
<b>Total</b>	<b>29.000,00</b>	<b>20.899,30</b>	<b>8.100,70</b>

The ORA carried out a revision of single cases and detected agreement with the regulations of the “personnel policies and practices.”

#### **2.5 Risks resulting from currency fluctuations**

Within the frame of its audit, the ORA determined that the WCRC was able to realize a gain from currency conversions amounting to 19,635.84 EUR (previous year: loss: 16,949.04 EUR) in the accounting year 2021.

<b>Fx Gain / Fx Loss</b>	<b>Budgeted EUR</b>	<b>Actuals EUR</b>	<b>Difference EUR</b>
Fx gain	-	47.829,50	47.829,50
Fx Loss	-	28.193,66	28.193,66
<b>Total</b>	-	<b>19.635,84</b>	<b>19.635,84</b>

To safeguard against the risks resulting from currency fluctuations, an earmarked reserve of currently 100,000.00 EUR is being maintained.

## **2.6 Awarding of contracts**

According to § 32 of the WCRC General Finance Management Policies, the WCRC is to award contracts in a transparent procedure corresponding to the principles of economy and thrift following the specifications of the WCRC procurement policies. According to § 58 paragraph 1 of the WCRC General Finance Management Policies, the Executive Committee passed a purchase order. However, this order is not existent so far. Thus, a more in-depth examination still lacks the benchmark.

The ORA points out that, in addition to § 32 of the WCRC General Finance Management Policies, the development of an own awarding and provisioning guideline with adapted thresholds is bindingly mandated and should be established promptly. At this, the following should be regulated: a classification for the free-hand awarding, a limited and a public tender offer as well as the required procedure which is to be documented including the persons resp. boards involved.

## **3. Audit focus HR department**

### **Preliminary remark**

Numerous and diverse laws, executional regulations, labor agreements and internal standards, whose validity is often short, form the basis of the HR department. Therefore, the processes are more error-prone than those in areas with a higher constancy. Due to the additionally high cost intensity and the thus resulting special relevance of errors in staff administration, which can be induced involuntarily but also consciously, the ORA reproduced the WCRC process flows of the staff administration areas. It analysed them as to whether and to which degree a sufficiently effective Internal Control System (Internes Kontrollsystem = IKS) has been installed. At this, the central focus of attention was laid on the following: the handling processes concerning the labor and public sector legislation in staff processing, the four main processes of staff accounting (basic data recording upon employment, accounting processing, alterations in the accounting basics, alterations after leaving), among others.

Within the frame of the on-site verification, the ORA carried out a revision of single cases concerning the payables processing of payrolls as well as other aspects of the

HR department and their risks. Should any statements have arisen in this context, they will be remarked in the following.

### 3.1 Staff / Job chart

The job chart is an indispensable instrument of staff planning and a corner post of financial regulation. It should reproduce the task fulfilment of the positions required by the WCRC to the full extent. As it is irrelevant whether the positions are taken or vacant, a job chart always has a so-called theoretical character. Thereby, it serves as an HR management instrument and also for the financial regulation of the WCRC.

Against the background of the fundamental significance and role of the job chart, it is to be ensured that the job chart contents have been determined thoroughly and that characteristics concerning the positions, such as priorities, have been determined correctly and comprehensibly.

In addition, monitoring the compliance with the job chart is to be ensured.

The submitted WCRC job chart is as follows:

Lfd. Nr.	Funktion	Tarifwerk	Vergütung	Stellenumfang (Soll)	tatsächl. Stellenbesetzung (Ist)
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	Assistant for Finances and Communication***	DVO.EKD	EG9/EG11	1.0	1.0
6	Assistant for Projects and Programs***	DVO.EKD	EG9/EG11	1.0	1.0
7	Assistant for the Reformed Partnership Fund****	DVO.EKD	EG 9	1.0	1.0
8	Assistant to the General Secretary*****	DVO.EKD	EG9/EG11	1.0	1.0
9	Cleaning staff	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>Gesamtsumme:</b>				<b>10,18</b>	<b>10,18</b>

\* The position was vacant from 1st September until 31st December 2021. The position is still vacant in the year 2022. The date of staffing is yet unknown.

\*\* The financing occurs proportionately by the Evangelical Church of Westfalia ; from 1st September 2021 onwards as the acting substitute General Secretary for constant remuneration.

\*\*\* The positions have been re-evaluated. January - Mai 2021: Assistenz mit EG 9 . from 1st Juni 2021 Administrator mit EG 11.  
\*\*\*\* The position was filled till 30th June 2021. The position was omitted from 1st July 2021 onwards  
\*\*\*\*\* vacant after 01/07. This position has been turned into Administrator for the General Secretariat  
\*\*\*\*\* EG 11, was filled from 01/08/2021 until 01/02/2022 and will be filled again in 05/2022.  
\*\*\*\*\* from 01/11 onwards

As made evident by the comments, there were several job chart alterations in the year 2021.

The position of General Secretary has been vacant since 1st September 2021.

The position “Assistant for the Reformed Partnership Fund” was no longer staffed from 1<sup>st</sup> July 2021 on. The ORA was not able to reproduce whether the position had been cancelled. A respective resolution of the Executive Committee was not submitted.

The tasks of the “Assistant for the Reformed Partnership Fund” were assigned to the positions “Administrator Projects and Programs” and “Administrator Finances and Communications”, which consequently had to be re-evaluated. The ORA gained the impression that the personnel capacities might be rather narrowly assessed in spite of the staff’s great commitment. Against this background, the ORA recommends keeping track of the staff’s strain situation.

Overall, the ORA comes to the conclusion that the agreed frame of the job chart was complied with. If the position “Assistant for the Reformed Partnership Fund” was cancelled, this should be recorded accordingly in the job chart.

### **3.2 Project position**

One employee was additionally temporarily hired as “Assistant for Organisational Pro-jects” for a project from 11<sup>th</sup> October 2021 until 30<sup>th</sup> June 2022. The classification occurred according to pay group 6. The financing occurs from donations of the member churches for youth work.

The job chart does not include this position.

As this is a project position refinanced by donations, it need not coercively be included in the job chart. However, the ORA recommends recording such temporary positions with a so-called ‘kw’ remark (künftig wegfallend – omitted in future) and identifying them in the job chart for reasons of general overview.

### **3.3 Description of work places and posts**

The position ratings are to be defined by means of work place and post descriptions with the tasks, responsibilities and competencies connected with the positions.

These descriptions are a mandatory basis of work place and post evaluations so that it is verifiable whether position ratings are according to pay scale or not. Furthermore, the staff's competencies are also to be regulated.

The ORA is aware of the fact that the subsequent generation of work place and post descriptions and the resulting work place and post evaluations produce considerable workforce and, possibly, financial effort. Nevertheless, they are indispensable due to their special significance in collective bargaining law and public services law.

In connection with the position ratings, it was stated that the tasks, responsibilities and competencies connected with the job chart positions are solely defined by work place and post descriptions for the three Administrator positions. However, as these descriptions are a compulsory basis of work place and post evaluations, it is currently impossible to trace whether and to what degree the position ratings of the other positions are according to pay scale or not.

The ORA states that currently not all alterations of position/ tasks and competencies as well as responsibilities of the staff are regulated and insofar there is need for action.

### **3.4 Monitoring of the salary statement**

The payslip processing especially comprises the four main processes basic data recording upon employment, accounting processing, alterations in the accounting basics, alterations after leaving.

After every salary pay-out, a monitoring step is to be embedded into the monitoring process. At this, it is essential to review the correctness of the contents of the basic data sheets (salary statements). According to the ORA, this is the only possibility to identify compilation bases wrongly transmitted by the own staff to the central salary accounting office of the ev.-ref. Church in Leer (ZGAST) on the one hand, but also erroneous actions of the service provider on the other hand.

In this context, it is strongly appreciated that the basic data sheets of WCRC staff are reviewed in the "online archive" as was stated by the administration. As such basic data sheet checks in the "online archive" are currently not yet documented by a digital remark and insofar untraceable, the ORA recommends carrying out a manual documentation of the monitoring activities.

Moreover, it is positively judged that the staff in the position "administration for Finances" check the accumulating staff costs by means of the budget positions on a monthly basis so as to identify staff cases which may unjustly be included in the gross staff cost list. Incidentally, this also reduces the risk of overlooking 'pseudo employ-ees', 'dummies' or other omitted or erroneous recordings.

### **3.5 Employment durations**

The employment duration determines the term of notice and the occurrence of irredeemability. Furthermore, it determines the duration of sickness benefit payments according to § 22 TVöD and the payment date of an anniversary gratuity.

For staff members, the determination occurs according to § 20 compensation regulation of the Evangelical Church in Germany (DVO.EKD) in connection with § 23 paragraph 2 TVöD.

While reviewing the staff cases, it was detected that the employment durations are not determined.

The ORA recommends determining the employment durations of all staff cases and informing the staff about the calculation and determination in writing.

### **3.6 Allocation of levels to pay groups**

According to § 9 paragraph 1 DVO.EKD, relevant work experience can be considered when allocating the levels to pay groups. Relevant work experience is a professional experience in the assigned task or a corresponding activity related to the task. This task mainly has to correspond to the new task in content and level.

Reports, employment certificates or, if applying a comparable collective bargaining law, certificates of salary are considered proof of the relevant work experience.

The determination of the allocation of levels when hiring WCRC staff is not recorded continuously. The ORA recommends documenting the allocation of levels in a remark when hiring new staff in future.

### **3.7 Remuneration of interns**

The job chart contains two positions for interns (trainees). The labor contract for interns (TVPöD) regulates the monthly remuneration.

When checking the remuneration amount, the ORA remarked that the remuneration paid does not correspond to the TVPöD. The remuneration was raised on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 and 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 according to the TVPöD.

The ORA points out that this instance is to be revised and, if applicable, adjusted retroactively.

### **3.8 Extra hours**

The position of "Assistant / Administrator to the General Secretary" has been vacant since 1<sup>st</sup> February 2022 and will be newly staffed as of 1<sup>st</sup> May 2022.

The position of Administrator to the GS has been vacant in the month of July 2021. It must be noted that the previous Assistant, though employed through 30th June 2021, was given compassionate leave from May 1st 2021 till end of employment.

Meanwhile, the tasks have been assumed by the "Assistant / Administrator for Justice and Communion." Extra hours have arisen due to the substitution.

According to § 7 paragraph 7 TVöD, extra hours are working hours performed by order of the employer which exceed the regular weekly working hours for full-time employees according to roster resp. customary working hours and are not balanced by the end of the following calendar week.

So far, no extra hours have been disbursed to the staff. The ORA recommends investigating whether balancing the hours by free time compensation is correspondingly possible or whether extra hours are to be ordered.

### **3.9 Validation of staff expenses**

The ORA observed the procedure for accounting the staff costs more closely and, in doing so, validated the accounted staff costs with the corresponding gross staff costs lists of the year 2021. A gross staff costs list is proof similar to a payroll journal. It contains detailed, selected accounting data for several employees, divided into "Employer's Gross (Arbeitgeberbrutto - AG-Brutto), "Social Security Gross" (Sozialversicherungs-AG-Brutto) and "Supplementary Benefits Gross" (Zusatzversicherungs-AG-Brutto). The gross staff costs lists are subdivided according to cost centers.

During the validation, the amounts of the gross staff costs lists must correspond to the accounted costs. At this, the ORA compared the accounted costs with the corresponding gross staff costs each time. No indications occurred.

### **3.10 Contract on the staff accounting**

The remunerations accounting and the payment of compensations is carried out by the ZGAST of the ev.-ref. Church in Leer. According to the administration, no agency contract has been closed between the WCRC and the ZGAST so far.

The ORA recommends contractually a new regulation of the business relations with the ev.-ref. Church in Leer in short. Within this frame, the factors significant for this business relationship, especially the utilized services, should be described in amount



and extent, and liability regulations in case of possible damages should be determined.

#### **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 OF THE YEAR-END RESULT 2021**

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Subject of the audit was the annual financial statement submitted by the WCRC for the year 2021. According to the result of this audit, the ORA can confirm that:

- the accounting of the WCRC in the accounting year 2021 occurred in due form and in compliance with the relevant principles of orderly accounting,
- the WCRC annual financial statement mainly conveys an image of the situation of results and assets which corresponds to the actual circumstances,
- the year-end closing 2021 was correctly developed from the WCRC accounting.

### **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 partially ignored to a considerable extent,
- An awarding and provisioning guideline is not available but compulsory according to § 58 paragraph 1 WCRC General Finance Management Policies. (See Tz. 2.6).

### **Remark**

When appraising the results, it must be considered that the WCRC General Finance Management Policies are furthermore observed only to a very limited extent. The main reason is that the WCRC General Finance Management Policies are oriented towards the accounting style of extended cameralistics whereas the WCRC applies cameralistics. The ORA points out that requirements for an entirely legally compliant way of acting are to be established (see Tz. 1.1), at the latest with the conversion to the churchly double bookkeeping announced for 2024.

### **Recommendation of discharge**

According to the dutiful discretion of the ORA, considering the above-mentioned confirmations and remarks, 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.

Concerning the exoneration, the ORA argues that it can be issued provided the temporary application of the accounting style cameralistics – on the part of the boards – is furthermore considered tolerable. In addition, it would also be conceivable, how-ever, to attach the exoneration decision to the condition that a legally compliant way of acting, as defined by the WCRC General Finance Management Policies, is ensured by the year 2024 at the latest.

Hannover, 16th May 2022



A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read "Gert Hattendorf".

(HATTENDORF)

OBERRECHNUNGSAMT DER  
EVANGELISCHEN KIRCHE IN DEUTSCHLAND



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