

Reformed communiqué

Articles in Bahasa Indonesia, English, Español, Français

Nyomi elected interim general secretary

Setri Nyomi is returning to the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) as its interim general secretary.

“Setri Nyomi is a dedicated leader who has been journeying with the Communion for a long time as a continued voice against global economic injustice, ecological destruction, and climate change,” said Najla Kassab, WCRC president. “His coming back will provide strength to the journey of the Communion that is alive in its programs. His pastoral approach and wisdom will deepen communion relations among the churches and secure trust in our ministry together, supported by a capable team in the head offices.”

An extraordinary session of the Executive Committee meeting virtually on 2 November elected Nyomi, who served as general secretary for the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) and WCRC from April 2000 through August 2014. He will begin his term in January 2024 and serve through the next General Council, to be held in October 2025.

The Collegial General Secretariat (CGS), composed of the WCRC’s executive secretaries, will conclude its responsibilities in providing leadership upon Nyomi’s return. The change in leadership was approved by the Executive Committee at its regular meeting in May 2023, based on a report from a select committee that



// Akpene and Setri Nyomi. //

noted the need “to enhance management, accountability, and capacity at all levels.”

“The WCRC has a major role to play in adding value to its member churches, regional councils, and the Reformed family as well as ecumenical partners more than ever before, especially as we see the world descending into further chaos at several fronts,” said Nyomi. “I am convinced that we have a good team of executive staff and administrative staff to build on the good work that the WCRC has done in the past, and through perseverance to overcome our challenges.”

Having served as general secretary through two General Councils, Nyomi brings extensive experience as the Communion prepares for the 2025 General Council.

Commenting on the potency of the Council’s theme—Persevere in Your Witness—Nyomi said, “This is a good mobilizing theme. Especially as the situation in the world is becoming worse and many people could lose hope, we are being called to trust God and be unwavering in fulfilling what God has called us to do. This is not

Continued on page 2

Nyomi elected*continued from page 1*

the time to lose hope, but to persevere in our witness to the Lord Jesus Christ who came so that all may have life in fullness.”

Noting that 2025 will be the 150th anniversary of the WCRC, Nyomi said he looked forward to joining the preparations already underway, “working as a team with staff colleagues, the officers and Executive Committee, leadership of our regional councils, and with the General Council Planning Committee to execute a very good General Council in Chiang Mai, Thailand, that will give us new marching orders into a future in which the WCRC is well placed to be a leader in the ecumenical movement especially in the area of justice.”

Nyomi was ordained in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Ghana in August 1980. After concluding as WCRC general secretary, Nyomi has taught in Princeton Theological Seminary (USA) and the University of Göttingen (Germany). He was also the chairman of the University Council of the Evangelical Presbyterian University College in Ho, Ghana, from 2015 to 2023. He is currently a senior lecturer in Trinity Theological Seminary, Legon, Ghana, and the district pastor of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Accra New Town, Greater Accra Region, Ghana.

He is married to Akpene Esther Nyomi; they have three adult children, two of whom are married. They have four grand children.

The Reformed Ecumenical Council and WARC came together at the 2010 Uniting General Council to form the WCRC.

Communion invited to Thailand

Members and partners of the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) are invited to gather for the 27th General Council in Chiang Mai, Thailand, in October 2025.

The Council’s theme, “Persevere in Your Witness” (inspired by Hebrews 12:1), will guide the gathering and is a strong biblical call to remain true to the faith held in Jesus Christ and continue to strive for the promise of an abundant life for all.

Postponed a year due to the COVID pandemic, the 2025 General Council comes in a year of significance for the Communion, the 150th anniversary of the founding of the “Alliance of the Reformed Churches throughout the World holding the Presbyterian System,” which has since evolved into the WCRC.

The Council will mark the anniversary while also moving the Communion into a post-pandemic world in which the challenges are as great as ever.

Special caucus groups for women, youth, Indigenous people, and people with disabilities will be more closely incorporated into the Council, rather than simply being pre-Council meetings.

Invitations have been sent to all member churches, with information also posted to a new section of the WCRC website: wrc.ch/gc2025

Registration for the Council will begin in 2024, but members have been encouraged to begin their planning to participate as preparations continue.

Much of the upcoming programmatic work of the WCRC will prepare the Communion for the Council, including incorporating the learnings and methods of the COVID & Beyond process; re-examining the meaning of the word “empire” as used in the Accra Confession; studying theologically what it means to be a “communion;” and developing resources based on the Council’s theme.



Questions? Please send an email to:
gc2025@wrc.eu.

If you are the leader of a WCRC member church and have not yet received an invitation, please send an email to gc2025@wrc.eu and include your name, title, denomination, and any other pertinent information.

New ecumenical liaison introduced

Tara Curlewis was introduced as the ecumenical liaison in Rome for the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) and installed as the new pastor in the St. Andrews Church on Sunday, 5 November.

“Tara is a valued minister in the Uniting Church in Australia, as is her ecumenical commitment. While we will miss the ministry she offered in the Uniting Church we rejoice that she is able to offer her gifts to the wider church through the roles she has in Rome,” said Sharon Hollis, president, and Colleen Geyer, general secretary, of the Uniting Church in Australia in a letter to the WCRC.

“We continue to value our membership of the World Communion of Reformed Churches and our partnership with the Church of Scotland and hope Tara’s appointment strengthens these connections,” they said.

Curlewis will take up her dual roles at the beginning of December. Her ecumenical liaison role is also supported by the Waldensian Evangelical Church.

“My ministry has always been to consider how to work with living stones so that they can be built into a spiritual house,” she said in welcoming remarks, citing 1 Peter 2.

Noting that initially she considered living stones to be parishioners, Curlewis said, “Living stones are equally churches with different experiences and stresses and strains they have had since the time of Christ.

“To be called to these positions in Rome—to the congregation with

people and as the ecumenical liaison working with churches and communions—is an amazing place for my ministry to wind up.

“I look forward to working with Reformed churches around the world and welcoming them to Rome, so that we can walk and speak and act together to become the church God desires,” she said.

“Tara’s appointment brings hope and new envisioning to our ecumenical role,” said Najla Kassab, WCRC president. “God provided the vision, the space, and the right person to live up to our ecumenical call, role, and commitment that inspire the church worldwide.”

In her sermon at the St. Andrews Church, Sally Foster-Fulton, moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, said, “I am excited about the adventure you are on and that Tara will join you—what a journey you will take together! So many challenges and so much to do, but look around you—the gifts are here, minds imagining, hearts pumping, hands holding. God has given you each other!”

The installation service at St. Andrews

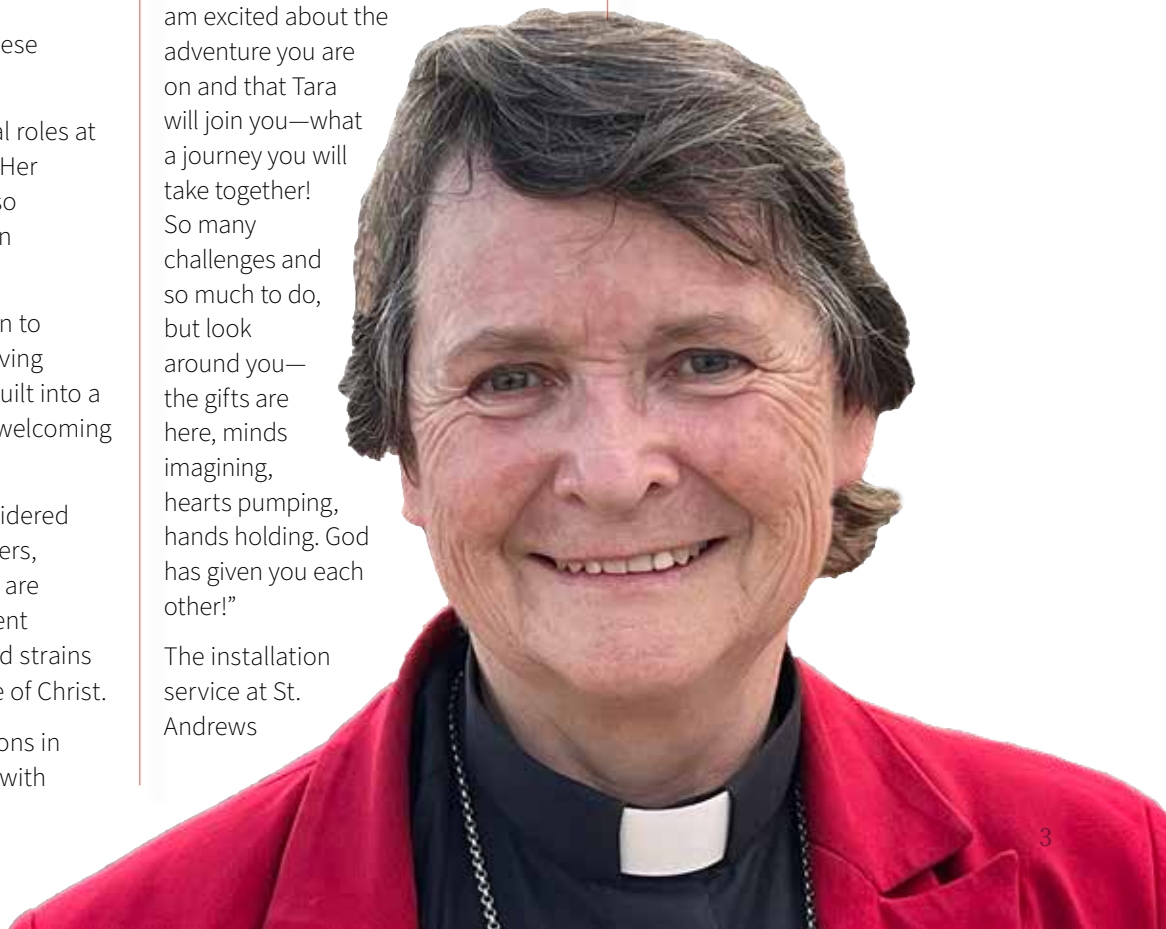
Church was conducted by the International Presbytery of the Church of Scotland the morning of Sunday, 5 November, while the service introducing Curlewis as ecumenical liaison was held that evening at the Waldensian Church at Piazza Cavour.

Curlewis’ work as WCRC ecumenical liaison in Rome will be guided by an advisory board composed of members from the WCRC, Church of Scotland, and Waldensian Evangelical Church (*Chiesa Evangelica Valdese*). This work will relate not only to the Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity but also engage with other global Christian communions with a presence in Rome.

Employed by the Church of Scotland as a mission partner on a fixed-term four-year contract, Curlewis will also cooperate with the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe, Conference of European Churches, and World Council of Churches.

(The Church of Scotland contributed to this article.)

» I look forward to working with Reformed churches around the world and welcoming them to Rome. «



Future of Ukraine focus of conference

“**T**he war in Ukraine has posed new questions, new challenges, and new ways of thinking about our mission as a church. We are challenged today to be a relevant church—an impactful church that dares to have a prophetic voice in the public sphere,” said Najla Kassab, president of the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC), at a conference in Budapest, Hungary, and Transcarpathia, Ukraine.

Initiated by the Reformed Church in Hungary (RCH) in cooperation with the Reformed Church in Transcarpathia, the “Ukraine Future Conference” was held 14-15 July, bringing together church and ecumenical leaders from around the world.

“We are together—sisters and brothers—from East and West, from the crisis zones, neighbouring countries—and together we have a clear position: we don’t know how to bring an end to the war, but we know what we personally and as churches must do: HELP,” said Zoltán Balog, RCH bishop.

The consultation included three different panels presenting perspectives and initiatives on peace, justice, and reconciliation from Europe, the Middle East, South Korea, and various churches in Ukraine. The second portion of the consultation included worshipping with the church in Transcarpathia and sharing words of support and prayer with the ministers there.

“The war in Ukraine urged us to handle the injustice and to be a church that relates directly to the suffering of the people. To serve the refugees and protect the dignity of the people,” said Kassab, who is also a minister in the National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon.

In her address to the conference—Christian Vision for Societies Affected



// President Najla Kassab: “The war in Ukraine urged us to handle the injustice and to be a church that relates directly to the suffering of the people.” //

by War: Restoration and Reconciliation—Kassab said, “As a church who has struggled for years in the Middle East with war and enmity, our concern has always been how to preserve our values and not to react merely to the violence that surround us. In the midst of war, we are tempted to react and get distracted from the principles that we lived in.

“To be a church of reconciliation we are called to hold firm to our beliefs even when that could mean to pay a price; even when our stand does not sound to be popular or appealing to many,” she said.

Drawing on recent experiences in Lebanon, Kassab said, “One of the challenges that we face today in understanding mission is the urgent need for the church to go outside the walls of the church. In the last years our church in Lebanon started a new ministry, opening schools for Syrian children refugees who were left on the streets with no education and with the threat of abuse. Going out to the streets and tents and bringing children from refugee camps transformed drastically our understanding of discipleship. It was a time where our Presbyterian church discovered a new

way of becoming the church, where the refugees around us taught us anew how to be the body of Christ in the world.

“When we discover meaning in the way we live, then we see the hope in the middle of our struggle. In living Jesus’ story, values and love we start to see glory that Jesus promised. We are not locked in the tomb of our suffering and believe that there will be a better tomorrow,” said Kassab.

The Ukraine Future Conference built upon the ongoing work of partner churches, church organizations, and the churches of Ukraine to build upon their relationships and allow for an ongoing precedent of open dialogue on just peace.

Participants came from churches in Belgium, Croatia, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Lebanon, Ireland, Poland, Romania, Scotland, Serbia, Slovakia, South Korea, Switzerland, Syria, the United States, and Ukraine. Besides the WCRC, church organizations represented were the Communion of Protestant Churches in Europe and the Conference of European Churches.

(The Reformed Church in Hungary contributed to this article.)

Grupo ecuménico diagrama el rumbo de la paz en Colombia

Un encuentro ecuménico realizado a mediados de agosto reunió a líderes y lideresas de iglesias de diversos lugares del mundo para diagramar los próximos pasos de su participación en el proceso de paz y reconciliación en Colombia.

"Creo que resulta importante que cuando pensemos en la paz, cuando trabajemos por la paz, tengamos en cuenta que la paz es algo urgente en muchos contextos, especialmente en Colombia, donde pudimos ver la sed de paz que tienen las personas, que la paz no es sólo un concepto sino una realidad ausente en la vida de la gente", expresó Muna Nassar, secretaria ejecutiva de Misión e Incidencia de la Comunión Mundial de Iglesias Reformadas (CMIR).

Organizado por el Diálogo Intereclesial por la Paz en Colombia (DiPaz), el encuentro convocó a representantes de la CMIR, del Consejo Mundial de Iglesias, de la Federación Luterana Mundial y de ACT Alianza, junto con representantes denominacionales,

entre quienes se encontraban la Iglesia Presbiteriana de Colombia, la Iglesia Presbiteriana (EE.UU.) y la Iglesia Presbiteriana Reformada en Cuba.

"El compromiso de la Iglesia Presbiteriana de Colombia con el proceso de paz y la valentía de ese compromiso inspira a nuestra familia reformada a comprometerse con ella no sólo en oraciones y en apoyo, sino con muchas y diversas formas de solidaridad. Mantuvimos, mantenemos y mantendremos nuestro compromiso con la paz y con la justicia para nuestros hermanos y nuestras hermanas en Colombia, así como para con su pueblo, mientras nos necesiten", manifestó Dora Arce Valentín, secretaria ejecutiva de AIPRAL, el consejo regional para América Latina de la CMIR.

"La importancia de desarrollar una tarea ecuménica por la paz y por la justicia en Colombia puede ser muy significativa, ya que permite potenciar las fortalezas de varias tradiciones cristianas, ofrecer un enfoque más integral en temas complejos,

promover la unidad dentro de la comunidad cristiana, brindar un testimonio al mundo y fomentar el aprendizaje y el crecimiento", compartió Valdir Franca, coordinador de área para América Latina y el Caribe de la Misión Presbiteriana Mundial.

Ocho años después del primer foro que dio origen a DiPaz, el grupo se reunió para analizar el estado actual del diálogo y del cese de hostilidades entre el gobierno y la guerrilla, así como para profundizar en las experiencias y todo lo aprendido a partir del acuerdo en marcha entre el gobierno colombiano y las Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC).

El encuentro incluyó reflexiones bíblico-teológicas, interpretaciones de la situación actual y análisis de diferentes aspectos de las instancias de reparación y de reconciliación que fueron acompañadas por DiPaz y sus organizaciones miembros. El grupo

Continúa en la página 13



// WCC/Marcelo Schneider //

Consultation theologically centers labour

A consultation concluded that labour is at the heart of critical concerns of faith.

The NIFEA (New International Financial and Economic Architecture) Consultation on Labour brought together theologians, church leaders, activists, and participants of the Ecumenical School on Governance, Economics, and Management for an Economy of Life in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 21-23 August 2023.

“If the Christian faith is related to all of life, labour is an essential part of it because life would not even exist without the cooperation of productive and reproductive labour of people, other-than-human nature, and the divine,” noted a theological communique produced at the consultation.

Recognizing that many faith traditions speak of the divine as being a worker, the consultation sought to recognize the centrality of labour to life and the dignity of labour as being essential of the fullness of life.

Stories and case studies from participants emphasized that under the present economic system labour continues to be exploited. Decades of neoliberal globalization have shaped labour migration within and beyond national borders as well as eroded wages, social security, and other hard-won rights. Among the most vulnerable groups of workers are racialized communities, youth, and women. In particular, women’s productive and reproductive labour is often unpaid/underpaid and unrecognized work. Climate change, as well as rapid technological changes reflected in the “gig economy,” have further deepened workers’ vulnerability.



// Workers producing clothing at the Pratibha factory, India (Life on Earth/Sean Hawkey). //

The consultation recognized that labour was not only a site of exploitation but was also a site of resistance and the location from where alternatives could emerge. From campaigns for decent work and just wages to promoting cooperatives, churches and faith-based organizations in Hong Kong, Korea, Malaysia, Philippines, and the United States have been witnessing for and walking with workers.

The theological communique the consultation produced states: “Places of work and labour are the places of greatest diversity, bringing together people of all races, genders, ages, and abilities, providing the ground for solidarity. In the words of the apostle Paul, ‘If one member suffers, all suffer together with it’ (1 Corinthians 12:26). The deep solidarity emerging here brings together diverse humanity, other-than-human nature, and the divine in new embodiments of unity-in-difference.”

As part of the programme, participants visited initiatives run by Myanmar and Afghani migrants and refugees. The exposure enabled the participants to recognize the vulnerability of migrant workers while at the same time account for the resilience and hope

with which they fight against the odds to survive.

The consultation called on the church, the wider ecumenical movement, and all to the task of conscientization that empowers people to identify unjust socio-political structures that prevents everyone from achieving their full humanity; to assist in organizing workers; to form solidarity with industrial and agricultural workers, migrant workers, and refugees; and to actively participate in the building of alternatives including worker cooperatives, community-based projects, and other projects of the solidarity economy.

Hosted by the Council of Churches in Malaysia, the meeting was held as part of the NIFEA initiative, co-sponsored by the World Council of Churches, World Communion of Reformed Churches, Lutheran World Federation, World Methodist Council, and Council of World Mission.

The NIFEA programme is supported by funds from Otto per Mille. The justice work of the WCRC is supported by funds from the Council for World Mission. The full statement can be viewed on the WCRC website.

Ties between faith, economy, and ecology focus of consultation

A gathering of theologians, church leaders, and activists deepened the understanding of the interconnections between economics, ecology, and theology as part of the World Communion of Reformed Churches' (WCRC) Decade for Climate Justice—noting that the starting point must be with “those who are left out and those who are being crucified,” including Indigenous people and non-human creation.

“Amid this devastating [environmental] crisis, we recognize that there is also an opportunity for the churches to engage in God’s mission to witness our faith. At the same time, there is a call for the Church to revisit our faith and practices to get into a covenant weaving the web of God’s life,” noted the introduction to a statement on “Faith, Economy, Ecology” produced by the participants.

“We need to build our capacity, partnering with theological institutions, social justice movements, and organizations, dialogue with scientists and grassroots leaders of Black and Indigenous peoples, women, small farmers, and the youth and others. Their voices will lead us to the systemic solutions necessary to avoid a climate and humanitarian catastrophe. They know the structures that oppress, destroy the system of life, and the changes that can make a positive impact on people’s lives and the Earth,” concluded the statement. “The gifts of the Spirit present in the Church today more than ever have a role to play in the healing of Creation.”

“The earth and the oceans are relentlessly mined, and forests are logged while the resultant pollution is released into the air, the oceans, the rivers, and the land. The ideologies of consumerism have legitimized this endless loop into the only way of



being, participation, and meaning. We are literally consuming ourselves and the rest of the planet to death!” said Philip Vinod Peacock, WCRC executive secretary for justice and witness, in an address at the consultation.

“We might be aware that wealthy nations and sectors are mainly responsible for historical green house gas emissions. But it is important to note that the wealthy contribute disproportionately to the climate crisis not only through their high-consumption lifestyles but also and especially as investors and wealth holders who own, control, shape, and financially profit from carbon-intensive production processes,” said Athena Peralta, programme executive for economic and ecological justice for the World Council of Churches.

In 2022, the WCRC Executive Committee declared a Decade for Climate Justice. A planning committee drew up a programme for the first five years under the theme, “Learning from the Earth: Witnessing to Climate Justice.” The consultation worked to provide for the theological and ideological underpinnings of the decade and to provide directions for the future.

“Religion, economy, and ecology are interwoven aspects of the production and reproduction of life. Every economic system brings a theological or religious understanding of human beings and society. The same can be

said about ecology. Then, deepening the mutually critical correlation between economic models and their impact on human subjectivity and spirituality is necessary,” noted the statement.

“In this time of grave emergency, Christian churches are called to imagine a new economy that privileges the life of the whole household based on a theology of enough. A theology of enough compels us to reconceive practices of household economics from the perspective of the most vulnerable within the household instead of the lord, thereby subverting colonial and patriarchal practices. This would ensure the integrity of the whole household will be sustained now and into the future. In the context of climate change this means just transitions to renewable energy, calling to account the insatiable greed of the economy of the Capitalocene, recognizing, confessing, and owning our complicity within the web of structural sin and accompanying with love communities who are already experiencing the grim reality of leaving and losing home,” said the statement.

The consultation was held in Depok, Indonesia, 19-21 October 2023. The full statement from the consultation can be found on the WCRC website.

The justice work of the WCRC is supported by funding from the Council for World Mission and *Otto per Mille*.

Persekutuan diperkuat di Indonesia

Menjalankan rumah sakit dan sekolah, reboisasi dan keadilan iklim, mempromosikan keadilan gender, menjangkau suku-suku terpencil, dialog antaragama, memerangi perdagangan manusia - pekerjaan dan kesaksian gereja-gereja anggota *World Communion of Reformed Churches* (WCRC) di Indonesia sama beragamnya dengan negara itu sendiri.

Menyusul beberapa konsultasi di Depok, Indonesia, staf eksekutif WCRC bertemu dengan lebih dari 12 orang pemimpin gereja di Indonesia selama dua hari sebelum mengakhiri kunjungan mereka dengan perayaan tahunan Ibadah Hari Reformasi WCRC di Gereja Kristen Jawa Jakarta, dengan penayangan langsung ke seluruh dunia.

"Kami bersyukur kepada Tuhan atas kesempatan untuk memperkaya dengan diskusi yang telah terjadi minggu ini - mengenai krisis iklim dan membaca tanda-tanda zaman - yang kami harap akan menyiapkan kerangka kerja untuk diskusi politik dan ekonomi Sidang Raya 2025," kata Najla Kassab, presiden WCRC. "Ini adalah waktu untuk mendapatkan kembali kekuatan dalam kemitraan kita. Sangat penting bagi kita untuk bersatu untuk melihat apa yang diminta Tuhan dari kita. Semoga ini menjadi awal baru dari kerja sama, kekuatan, dan harapan. Bersama-sama kita bisa membuat perbedaan."

Sylvana Maria Apituley, Wakil Presiden WCRC dan anggota Gereja Protestan di Indonesia Barat (GPIB), menyampaikan "betapa indah akhirnya dapat berkumpul kembali pasca-Pandemi."

Gereja-gereja anggota Indonesia mengorganisir diri mereka menjadi badan regional pada tahun 2012 sebagai WCRC-Indonesia, dan



mengadakan pertemuan terakhir mereka pada tahun 2018 tentang "membaca ulang pengakuan Accra dalam konteks geo-politik global terkini serta pengaruhnya terhadap gereja, masyarakat, dan alam."

Pandemi Covid mengganggu rencana dan peluang lebih lanjut untuk berkumpul. "Tujuan dari pertemuan ini adalah untuk merefleksikan kembali apa yang menjadi tujuan kerjasama kami," kata Apituley.

Para pemimpin gereja memberikan pembaruan tentang situasi mereka saat ini, termasuk keberhasilan dan tantangan yang mereka hadapi.

Staf WCRC -Hanns Lessing, Min-Woo OH, dan Philip Vinod Peacock- kemudian berbagi pekerjaan saat ini dan rencana WCRC selanjutnya, termasuk rencana untuk Sidang Raya yang akan datang, yang akan diadakan pada tahun 2025 di Chiang Mai, Thailand.

"Pertemuan di Indonesia sangat penting bagi kita semua. Ini adalah

waktu yang penting untuk menyuarakan keprihatinan dan kekuatan gereja di Indonesia dan Asia. Inilah sebabnya mengapa sangat penting juga untuk mengadakan Sidang Raya kita dalam konteks Asia," kata Kassab.

» Ini adalah waktu yang penting untuk menyuarakan keprihatinan dan kekuatan gereja di Indonesia dan Asia. «

"Ini adalah pertemuan yang sangat baik untuk mengintensifkan hubungan antara gereja-gereja Indonesia dan Persekutuan secara luas. Ini adalah langkah pertama yang baik," kata Lessing.

Para peserta setuju untuk terus memperkuat WCRC-Indonesia dan memulai kembali proses agar kelompok ini dapat diakui sebagai Dewan Regional resmi oleh WCRC.

Pertemuan dengan para pemimpin gereja Indonesia diadakan pada tanggal 26-27 Oktober.

GEM School explores how to make new economic world order a reality

Held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia—a city of socioeconomic contrasts—from 21 August to 1 September, the 6th edition of the Ecumenical School on Governance, Economics, and Management for an Economy of Life (GEM School 2023) gathered 24 participants to rethink economic systems for a more equitable, sustainable planet.

Participants came from more than 20 countries in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Europe, Latin America, Middle East, North America, and the Pacific and included church leaders, pastors, and theological students, as well as finance experts, economic justice advocates, and eco-activists with a view to promoting intergenerational and multidisciplinary dialogue and learning.

"The GEM School offers the possibility of capacity building of activists and theologians who attempt to link faith to social action. It offers a critical perspectives of both economics and theology and seeks to see how both can serve an economy of life," said Philip Vinod Peacock, executive secretary for justice and witness of the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC).

The programme explored the intersections between faith and economic justice through Bible studies, equipped participants with basic economics training and advocacy tools, and explored alternative economic thinking and policy recommendations.

"The GEM School reflected on the interrelated issues of gaping socioeconomic inequalities as well as the pressing question of sustainability. Among others, the lectures and discussions focused on the roots of inequality, the complex relationship between economics and the environment, and how new economic visions, indicators, policies, and economic governance structures are urgently needed and essential for co-building a more just and sustainable planet," said Athena Peralta, World Council of Churches (WCC) programme executive for economic and ecological justice.

At the end of the programme, participants, building on their exchanges and learnings over nearly two weeks, presented a range of project proposals. Karthik Sibanayam shared a plan for theological seminaries in Malaysia to reflect on issues of economic justice as part of the curriculum. Ampri Samosir, Patricia Mungcal, Chi-Kang Chiang, and Vavauni Ljalgajejan presented a joint idea focusing on network building, mutual learning, and advocacy on the intersections between climate and economic justice in Indonesia, the Philippines, and Taiwan.

Several proposals lifted up tax justice and reparations. Bruno Reikdal Lima shared a proposal for a communications project to overcome negative perceptions about tax, link tax justice to people's daily lives, and deepen the Zacchaeus Tax campaign for global tax justice in Brazil. Coming from the context of Belize—a climate-vulnerable small island state—Rudolph Dawson proposed to develop a campaign linking tax justice and reparations for climate-related loss and damage in the Caribbean.

Florence Iminza from Kenya also shared a proposal to initiate a survey as a base for churches' work for just taxation including of extractive industries in Africa. For Iminza, a key



// GEM School students play Monopoly to understand how the economic system serves those who have resources. //

learning from GEM School is that, "just taxation systems are mandatory for a new international economic order. There is need for the global community of churches to build solidarity for an alternative economy of life."

Wilfred Rigamoto, who is developing a project on alternative indicators supporting an Indigenous Pacific development narrative, could not agree more: "With solidarity and people power, we can together be and make the change we want to see in the world!"

GEM School was hosted by the Council of Churches of Malaysia and convened by the WCC, WCRC, Lutheran World Federation, World Methodist Council, and Council for World Mission as part of the New International Financial and Economic Architecture (NIFEA) initiative. NIFEA is supported with funds from Otto per Mille. The justice work of the WCRC is supported by the Council for World Mission.

(Article courtesy of the World Council of Churches.)

Consultation on Human Sexuality and Violence: Final Statement

Sexuality, a Gracious Gift of God

The consultation held in South Asia in 2023, which was attended by 35 persons from all parts of the life of the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC), views grace as the dispensation of undeserved favour of God to humanity. Sexuality is a gift from God which, therefore, ought to be accepted (in whichever form), appreciated, valued, and nurtured to flourish. Jesus's mission (among others) on Earth was to bring that divine grace to all humanity as well as the entire creation. Understanding that all life is sacred, the theology of sexuality must be rooted in this affirmation. God desires a just world and flourishing relationships. We, therefore, celebrate the gift of human sexuality.

At the consultation, all the interactions in worship, Bible studies, group works, testimonies, etc., have shown that some members of our communities have been denied their God-given right to enjoy life fully due to their non-normative sexualities and genders, traits, or expressions. Persons in WCRC member churches are among those who are survivors and are experiencing discrimination, persecution, and, in some instances, killing by persons who want to keep the status quo and exert control and authority. This denies the grace of God, which is for all. The church has often been slow in responding to the issues largely due to inadequacies in our theologies of sexuality. Ultimately, the purpose of the Church is to glorify God and love our neighbours. Therefore, a central aspect of the role of the Church is to uphold and defend human rights, for all are created in the image of God.

The Church being the body of Christ on Earth, has a divine duty to facilitate this grace, to make it practical, tangible, and experiential to all without prejudices and discrimination. The house of God should be a safe haven for anyone who experiences injustice, discrimination, abuse, or violence. For Christ came so that all may have life in its fullness (John 10:10).

Sexual Violence

Violence extends beyond the physical; it encompasses emotional, psychological, and neglectful aspects. One particularly egregious form is sexual violence. We agree that sexual violence is unacceptable in any form, in the Church and broader society. We grieve and acknowledge that the Church has not always set a helpful example, as we still see various forms of violence in the Church. Due to its complex relationship with colonization and existing power structures of empire, resulting in cultures of silence, shame, and erotophobia, the Church has knowingly or unknowingly become complicit with sexual violence rather than being a channel of grace.

In the history of the Church, however, we also remember groups who have been in solidarity with and seek justice for victims of various forms of violence. The Nazareth Manifesto (Luke 4:16-21), as one of the fundamental directions for the church, emphasizes that standing against violence is a lifelong mission rather than just a project.

But Scripture also contains accounts of appalling sexual violence; therefore, Christ, the living Word of God, commands us to discern and act. In response to the Word, we invite members of our Communion to read

scripture from the perspective from the margins.

Testimonies of Sexual Violence in the Church

At our gathering, we heard numerous experiences of violence. We witnessed these stories:

- A passionate young man was denied to be a minister due to his sexual orientation: violence in ministry.
- A same-sex couple could not become part of the leadership in the church because of heteronormativity: violence of opportunity.
- A transgender person was denied to partake in the Eucharist: violence of communion.
- We heard numerous cases of psychological violence from the pulpit due to the phobias and hatred of church leaders towards differences: emotional violence.
- A clergy abuses their spouse: domestic violence.
- A person in pastoral counselling is advised not to divorce even as abuse is present: spiritual violence.

We also heard about suicides and mental health issues that were caused by sexual violence and engaged with stories about honour killings, human trafficking, cyber and non-cyber bullying, intersex genital mutilation, female genital mutilation and conversion therapies.

The Church's Response and Call

We, as the Church, are called to be witnesses and advocates so that all can experience God's grace in feeling honoured in their human agency in different identities and sexualities.

La CMER soutient l'appel à la paix au Cameroun

However, many acts of sexual violence are hidden, silenced, and diminished. Just as Jesus went to the margins to understand the pain of victims of violence, this should be the Church's best approach. We believe that the Church is called to become an instrument of grace through listening to the voices of those who experienced sexual violence and by providing a safe space to secure sexual minorities. The Church must not ignore the violence in our societies but should start to talk about violence, stand in solidarity with the survivors, advocate for their rights, and establish support systems. The Church should stand up for human rights in cases where violence is sanctioned by the state or seen as culturally acceptable.

We urge the WCRC to initiate programs for member churches on the regional level and to conscientize member churches on a national level about sexual violence. Churches should give full support to their members who stand against sexual violence.

We call the WCRC to further develop the theology of sexuality that is based upon God's grace and produce resources for the use of the member churches.

We request that the WCRC produce online resources on the themes of human sexuality and sexual violence. These resources should include videos of personal stories and advocacy initiatives.

We close with a notion of lament. We are ashamed that only mass suffering made us pay attention to sexual violence. We have often failed to love our neighbours as ourselves.

La Communion mondiale d'Eglises réformées (CMER) soutient un groupe de leaders interreligieux au Cameroun dans leur appel à la paix.

En août, des dirigeants protestants, pentecôtistes, catholiques romains et musulmans ont tenu une table ronde sur le thème « Mieux comprendre pour une coordination efficace et une action collective en faveur de la paix au Cameroun ».

Les 27 millions d'habitants du Cameroun ont deux langues officielles, l'anglais et le français, mais les deux groupes linguistiques sont divisés, ce qui entraîne souvent des violences. Ils sont également confrontés à un autre problème : les extrémistes violents tels que Boko Haram. L'augmentation des conflits et de l'insécurité au Cameroun a forcé plus d'un million de personnes à quitter leur foyer.

Après trois jours de discussions, auxquelles a également participé la communauté œcuménique internationale, le groupe a publié une déclaration rappelant à tous les Camerounais leur responsabilité collective « de faire de [leur] pays un havre de paix en évitant les discours de haine ».

Déclarant qu'ils se consacrent à « la promotion de la justice, de la paix, de la cohésion sociale, de l'intégration nationale et du dialogue durable », les dirigeants ont appelé les groupes armés non étatiques à déposer les armes et les forces gouvernementales à faire preuve d'une plus grande responsabilité dans la protection des citoyens.

Ils ont exhorté le gouvernement à accélérer la mise en œuvre du plan présidentiel de reconstruction et de développement pour les régions du nord-ouest et du sud-ouest et à étendre ce plan aux régions du nord du pays touchées par Boko Haram.

« Le Saint Coran et la Sainte Bible nous rappellent que « tu ne tueras pas »... Les leaders interreligieux appellent donc tous les Camerounais à valoriser la vie humaine et à rechercher la face de Dieu par le biais de supplications et d'intercessions pour l'humanité. », peut-on lire dans la déclaration.

La CMER est membre du Forum œcuménique pour la paix et la justice au Cameroun. Les fonds provenant d'*Otto per Mille* (Eglise vaudoise d'Italie) sont utilisés pour promouvoir la paix et la justice au Cameroun dans le cadre du projet *Global Peace Initiative* de la CMER.

WCRC condemns violence in Pakistan

The World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) expresses grave concern over the violence against Christians and churches in the Punjab province of Pakistan.

Violence erupted on Wednesday, 16 August, after two Christians were accused of blasphemy and the desecration of the Holy Quran. In the resulting mob violence, three Presbyterian churches, a Catholic church, a Full Gospel Assembly church, and a church belonging to the Salvation Army have been burned.

According to local church sources, about five hundred houses in Basti Maharanwala (Jaranwala) are now empty.

The WCRC condemns the desecration of the Holy Quran but equally condemns the violence and the collapse of law and order in which a minority community has been attacked. According to *The Guardian*, “Christians make up about 2% of the population, occupy one of the lowest rungs in Pakistani society and are frequently targeted with spurious and unfounded blasphemy allegations.”

The Communion stands with its member churches in the region as they struggle to build back their communities.

It calls on the government of Pakistan to restore law, order, and security and, further, to offer protection to the minority Christian community.

The WCRC invites all people of good will and all faiths to work together for the peace and well-being of all and asks its members to join in prayer and advocacy on behalf of their sisters and brothers in Pakistan.

WCRC expresses alarm at the release of radioactive water

The World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) expresses alarm at the release of radioactive water from the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant in Japan.

The earthquake and subsequent tsunami in 2011 ruined the nuclear power plant, destroying its cooling system which resulted in its reactor cores overheating, contaminating the water within the facility with radioactive material.

This water, contaminated with the radioactive element tritium, is being released into the ocean. The tritium cannot be removed from the water because there is no technological means of doing so. Instead, the radioactive water is being diluted and slowly released into the oceans, affecting marine life and, by extension, life on the planet.

While some claim that the levels of tritium being released into the ocean are lower than acceptable standards, the fact is that the impact on the



ocean cannot be fully predicted. Environmentalists have suggested that the radioactive water can have direct consequences on plants and animals that ingest it. Even worse is that if this happens, there is no way of calling it back.

The release of radioactive water into the ocean threatens those that are already vulnerable in the Pacific Ocean, including the ocean itself. Already affected by rising CO2 levels and other toxic elements being

released, the health of the oceans is critical to the health of the planet. Further, communities that rely on the oceans, including fisherfolk and Pacific Islanders, are fearful of the impact this release could have.

The WCRC calls on the Japanese government to stop the release of radioactive water and the global community to continue in its commitment to ecological well-being.

La CMER appelle à la paix et à la justice

Recherchez la paix avec tous, et la sainteté sans laquelle personne ne verra le Seigneur. -Hébreux 12:14

La Communion mondiale d'Églises réformées (CMER) exprime sa profonde émotion face aux récentes hostilités entre Israël et la Palestine, qui ont fait de nombreux morts et encore plus de blessés des deux côtés du conflit.

Nous appelons nos Églises membres à la solidarité avec tous ceux qui souffrent des ravages de la guerre et demandons à la communauté internationale d'œuvrer pour la justice dans la région afin qu'il puisse y avoir une possibilité de paix réelle et durable.

Nous reconnaissons que la situation actuelle en Terre Sainte s'inscrit dans un contexte historique qui a pour origine une histoire complexe d'impérialisme, de colonialisme, d'antisémitisme et d'islamophobie.

Nous comprenons que le cœur du conflit est politique et non religieux, et que la communauté internationale est impliquée dans ce qui se passe actuellement. La communauté internationale doit agir pour résoudre le conflit, et Israël et la Palestine doivent respecter les accords internationaux et les accords des Nations Unies. La cessation de la guerre serait un premier pas vers la paix dans la région.

Nous revendiquons que cessent la militarisation et la fourniture d'armes à toutes les parties au conflit.

Nous demandons la libération immédiate de tous les otages et prisonniers politiques, en particulier les enfants.

Nous demandons le démantèlement des murs - au sens propre comme au sens figuré -, le rétablissement de la liberté de circulation et du droit d'accès à

Gaza, en particulier l'accès de l'aide humanitaire à toutes les zones touchées.

Si nous reconnaissons les racines politiques de la crise, nous ne pouvons pas pour autant minimiser l'implication des communautés religieuses, tant au niveau local que mondial. La Terre sainte est sacrée pour trois des religions du monde. Ces trois religions ne partagent pas seulement une géographie commune, mais aussi des récits et des écritures communes. À la lumière de ces points communs, nous exhortons les communautés religieuses du monde entier à faire passer notre humanité commune avant tout ce qui nous distingue et à œuvrer ensemble en faveur de la justice et de la paix.

Nous reconnaissons qu'en tant que chrétiens, nos conceptions théologiques et nos préjugés, historiques et actuels, ont légitimé l'oppression et la discrimination dans la région. Nous appelons nos Églises membres à repenser les théologies qui soutiennent la discrimination et la violence et à rechercher la justice et à défendre les droits de l'homme.

Nous appelons en particulier nos membres et la communauté œcuménique à écouter les voix des chrétiens palestiniens lorsqu'ils discernent et défendent la justice et la paix dans la région.

// Une section du mur qui sépare Bethléem de Jérusalem (Albin Hillert/Life on Earth) //

Grupo ecuménico diagrama

continúa de la página 5

también viajó a una zona remota bajo ocupación militar para percibir la realidad sobre el terreno.

"En la comprensión de la paz, es importante mantener la justicia como eje de todo el proceso; y estar en Colombia y escuchar desde el contexto local cómo la paz ha sido un camino, un desafío para muchas personas, ha empujado a quienes participamos a discernir y a pensar sobre lo que implica la acción concreta por la verdad y cómo es posible acompañar este camino hacia la paz, una paz verdadera y justa", añadió Nassar.

Al concluir el encuentro, DiPaz presentó sus planes estratégicos para los próximos cinco años para su revisión y respuesta, que continuarán su compromiso con "una agenda de paz a largo plazo para Colombia, desde el incremento de las capacidades socio-eclesiales para la paz y el acompañamiento a comunidades de fe, colectivos y comunidades que promueven procesos de reconciliación, y la incidencia en los procesos formales de diálogo entre el gobierno y los diversos grupos armados".

"Participar en el encuentro ecuménico de DiPaz en Colombia resultó una visita crucial para el trabajo de paz y reconciliación en el que siempre ha estado involucrada la CMIR", dijo Nassar. "La CMIR ha acompañado el proceso de paz en coordinación con AIPRAL, nuestras iglesias miembros y contrapartes, y así habrá de continuar".

Las tareas de paz de la CMIR en Colombia cuentan con el financiamiento del *Otto per Mille*.

(AIPRAL contribuyó a este artículo).

“El movimiento ecuménico ofrece esperanza”

El movimiento ecuménico crea "más formas de conocer a Dios", nos comparte Laura Gómez, la pasante recién arribada a la Comunión Mundial de Iglesias Reformadas (CMIR).

Gómez, cuya membresía está en la Iglesia Presbiteriana de Colombia, nos dice que "participar en el movimiento ecuménico es una oportunidad que todos las personas creyentes deberían aprovechar". "Ofrece un mensaje de esperanza a todas las iglesias para que dejen a un lado sus rivalidades y puedan entender lo que dice la palabra de Dios en Gálatas 3:28: 'Ya no hay judío ni griego, esclavo ni libre, hombre ni mujer, sino que todos ustedes son uno solo en Cristo Jesús.'".

Gómez ya tiene una amplia experiencia en el movimiento ecuménico, pues ha representado a su denominación varias veces ante el Presbiterio de Seattle (EE.UU.) y ha participado como ujier en la XI Asamblea del Consejo Mundial de Iglesias en Karlsruhe (Alemania). También es anciana en su congregación.

Su decisión de postularse al programa de pasantías de la CMIR fue una combinación de esta pasión con sus estudios de comercio internacional. "Trabajar para la CMIR pone en práctica mis conocimientos a nivel administrativo, me ayuda a aprender un poco más sobre cómo se mueven las iglesias y las entidades ecuménicas y, sobre todo y lo más importante para mí, da la oportunidad de realizar mi trabajo en nombre de Dios", afirma.

"Como mujer joven e integrante activa de una iglesia, me gustaría aprender un poco más sobre el quehacer teológico y económico en relación con la juventud y con las mujeres en el ámbito ecuménico/religioso", afirma.

"Soy consciente de las enormes dificultades que atraviesan hoy en día las iglesias a nivel global por la falta de jóvenes y por su desinterés por estos espacios que, para mí, son muy importantes a nivel espiritual porque ayudan a formar a las personas en cuerpo y alma", expresa Gómez. "Me

gustaría ver qué ideas innovadoras se pueden presentar para convocar a la juventud a las iglesias, para que sientan que están en un lugar seguro y para debatir temas tan importantes como las crisis económicas y el impacto que estas pueden tener en el futuro de las y los jóvenes, y cómo combatirlas."

En su año como pasante, Gómez espera "crecer profesional y espiritualmente" y que se le presenten "muchas oportunidades para seguir trabajando con este hermoso equipo sintiendo la presencia de Dios cada día, cada hora, cada momento."

Ya está planeando, además, los próximos pasos en su vida: "Cuando termine mi carrera en negocios internacionales, me gustaría estudiar teología para interpretar la Biblia de una manera más profesional, ampliar mis conocimientos sobre religiones y mejorar mi predicación para cuando tenga que asumir la predicación en la iglesia."

El programa de pasantías de la CMIR ofrece a personas jóvenes altamente cualificados la oportunidad de participar de una valiosa experiencia trabajando con una organización ecuménica internacional. Como parte de los objetivos de desarrollo de liderazgo del programa, las personas pasantes reciben una variedad de experiencias y responsabilidades dentro de la CMIR. Prestan asistencia a las oficinas de programas, participan de manera plena en los equipos de personal y se les asignan proyectos de nivel ejecutivo para su realización.

El programa está patrocinado por la *Evangelische Mission Weltweit* (EMW, por sus siglas en alemán), así como por donaciones de las iglesias miembros.



From Around the Communion

The WCRC's annual Reformation Day worship service, live-streamed around the world, was held at the Javanese Christian Church Jakarta (*Gereja Kristen Jawa Jakarta*), Indonesia, on 29 October.



GLOBAL WEBINAR
TUESDAY 5/12/2023

WITNESS FROM PALESTINE: Reclaiming Humanity Amidst Double Standards and Dehumanization

Kairos Palestine
A Ministry of Faith, Hope & Love

WORLD STUDENT CHRISTIAN FEDERATION

Muna Nassar
is a Palestinian Christian woman from Bethlehem, who advocates for justice for the Palestinian people and has worked as a project coordinator for Kairos Palestine. In 2021, she obtained an MPhil in intercultural theology and interreligious studies from Trinity College Dublin. In December 2022, Muna joined the World Communion of Reformed Churches based in Hannover, Germany, as executive secretary for mission and advocacy. As a writer, she aims to articulate and represent the diversity of Palestine and Palestinians, highlighting their voice and agency.

Muna Nassar, WCRC

Muna Nassar, WCRC executive secretary for mission and witness, was a presenter for the “Witness from Palestine: Reclaiming Humanity Amidst Double Standards and Dehumanization” webinar held on 5 December and co-sponsored by the WCRC, World Student Christian Federation, and Kairos Palestine. It can be watched at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jybbfi_dJOU



The Africa Communion of Reformed Churches (ACRC) held their assembly in Lagos, Nigeria, in November, following immediately after the All Africa Conference of Churches gathering. Amongst other business, the assembly re-elected the ACRC Executive Committee, shown here with the subregional coordinators.



Minwoo Oh, WCRC programme coordinator for gender justice (third from right), presented at the Council for World Mission's "A New Face" meeting in Taiwan in early November. A New Face is designed to equip participants with contextual biblical hermeneutics skills and to empower women's leadership within churches.



FROM THE COLLEGIAL GENERAL SECRETARIAT

Bethlehem on our minds

“But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.”

—Micah 5:2

The text from Micah 5:2 will be read in churches around the world this Advent. Even more so right through Christmas “the little town of Bethlehem” will reverberate in Scripture readings, sermons, and Christmas carols. Images of the manger of the first Christmas will be recreated in figurines and Christmas cards. Christmas brings Bethlehem to mind.

Yet, in Bethlehem this year there will be no Christmas celebrations. For the first time in a long time there will be no Christmas tree in the Nativity square, no parades, and no lights. Celebrations will be muted, and smaller prayer services and rituals will replace the normal festivities. At the Christmas Lutheran Church, a figurine of the baby Jesus lies in the midst of rubble signifying the number of children that have died. In Bethlehem it is not Christmas that is being remembered, it is the slaughter of innocents.

Many churches around the world are also calling for muted Christmas celebrations to advocate for justice in Palestine. The United Reformed Church has a campaign to not light the Bethlehem candle, the candle for the second week in Advent, as an act of solidarity.

Horrific violence has broken out in an already violent context in the last quarter of this year. 1200 Israelis have died since the attack on 7 October while more than 17,000 Palestinians have been killed. After a short ceasefire, the assault has once again begun with more lives being lost.

Unfortunately, the international community and the churches seem to have lost their moral compass in the light of what is being named a genocide by many. This lack of morality is coupled with a lack of imagination with no one being able to see beyond the binary of “a right to defense” on the one hand and “humanitarian aid” on the other. What is needed is to get out of this unholy loop and look for immediate and long-lasting alternatives that are embedded in justice.

Perhaps this Christmas it is time for us to turn to Bethlehem for answers. In the Bible—and from what we know from biblical history—Bethlehem, meaning house of bread, was a small and insignificant place, a point that is also made by the prophet Micah. Yet the prophets see great hope emerging from this insignificance. And perhaps this is a lesson for the world today: That answers to these terrible crises will not emerge from power, nor come from military might. Our hope is not to be found in horses and chariots (Psalm 20:7-8).

Christmas reminds us that hope for the world does not come from the locus of power, but instead it comes from sites of powerlessness. The glad tidings of Christmas do not come from the grand palace of Herod but from a lowly manger. The news of Christmas is not told to lords and princes but to shepherds in a field. It does not come from Caesar in Rome but from a child born in small, insignificant Bethlehem.

This Christmas as we remember the Christ child, we cannot but think of children in Gaza and the West Bank whose very existence is threatened. And it is the Christ child who calls us to recognize that we as the global community are accountable to these children.

This Christmas, more than ever, the call is to go to Bethlehem. It not only calls us to be in solidarity with those living there who are suffering from war and oppression who will not be celebrating Christmas, but also to learn from Bethlehem. That our salvation does not come from power, but will come from children.

Reformed
communiqué

December 2023
Vol. 14, No. 3

Reformed Communiqué is published three times a year by the World Communion of Reformed Churches.

Unless otherwise indicated, the writers for articles are alone responsible for the opinions expressed. Articles may be reprinted freely with acknowledgement.

To receive your free subscription, send an email to wrcr@wrcr.eu or send a request by post to:

WCRC
Calvin Centre
Knochenhauerstrasse 42
30159 Hannover, Germany

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

wrcr@wrcr.eu
www.wrcr.ch
facebook.com/worldcommunion

Editor: Phil Tanis
Layout: CRC Ministry Support Services.

Printed in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

