



*The WCRC office is located in the heart of Hannover's Old Town. (Photo: WCRC/Tanis)*

## World Communion of Reformed Churches dedicates a new home

The World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) has found a new home. On Sunday, 12 January, a service of welcome took place in the Reformed Church of Hannover, followed by a reception and the dedication of the new WCRC offices.

In his sermon, Jerry Pillay, president of the WCRC, told the congregation that “the decision to move out of Geneva was not an easy one” and that “fears, concerns and anxieties had been expressed during the time of decision.”

Pillay stressed that “God, the initiator of new things, was present with Abraham, who was dislocated from his place of familiarity and comfort and relocated to what was supposedly an unknown destination.”

He ended with the words: “I know in my spirit that as we see this as God’s new location for us now as we continue the work of the WCRC, it is only a matter of time that we will be able to say, ‘This is our home.’ This is the new

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WCRC home from which we will continue to write the new chapters in the life, work and witness of the WCRC.”

The sanctuary of the Reformed Church in Hannover was packed full with guests from far and near. Among those present were Olav Fykse Tveit, general secretary of the World Council of Churches (WCC), as well as German church leaders and government officials at federal, provincial and local levels.

In a symbolic act, representatives of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD), the German Reformed Alliance, the Evangelical Reformed Church of Germany

and the local Reformed Church presented bread and salt to the president, general secretary and executive staff of the WCRC, expressing their wish that the WCRC should never lose its saltiness (Matthew 5.13).

Warm words of greetings were given by the chairperson of the EKD Synod, Irmgard Schwaetzer, by Annette Kurschus on behalf of the Union of Protestant Churches of Germany and by Stephanie Springer on behalf of the Lutheran Church of Hannover, expressing their intention to co-operate closely with the WCRC.

The minister of culture of the State of Lower Saxony, Frauke Heiligenstadt, promised to be helpful in every possible manner, underlining the traditionally good

relations that exist between the State and the various religions in Germany.

The mayor of the city of Hannover, Stefan Schostock, invited the “brothers and sisters” to discover the international flavor of the city which hosts the world’s largest industrial fair and welcomes hundreds of thousands of guests from all over the world every year.

Tveit, who had come from Geneva to wish the WCRC a good start at its new location, noted that it was important both for the WCC and the WCRC to continue to be in close contact as the organizations need each other in their commitment to the causes of justice, peace and the quest for greater unity between Christians.

The dedication of the offices was led by Setri Nyomi, WCRC general secretary, and focused on the many new possibilities and perspectives at the new location.

While praying for God’s blessing at the beginning of a new chapter in the life, work and witness of the WCRC, officers and staff carried a candle, brought from Geneva, to symbolize that the light of Christ continues to shine, cannot be contained and must be shared with all throughout the world.

The WCRC offices are located in the Calvin Centre, owned by the Evangelical Reformed Church of Germany, which also houses the German Reformed Alliance and other ecclesial agencies.



*Jerry Pillay and Setri Nyomi accept the gift of bread and salt.  
(Photo: Reformierter Bund/Schenck)*



*Paul Oppenheim and Johann Weusmann carry the “light of Christ” into the offices.  
(Photo: Reformierter Bund/Schenck)*

# Communication Survey

Help shape our future communications. Please answer as many questions as you can below and return this form to us.

You may also complete the survey online here:

[www.surveymonkey.com/s/WCRC](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/WCRC)

Thank you!

1. What is your country of residence?

2. What is your primary language?

3. In what language do you prefer to receive communications from the WCRC?

4. If you have a second language choice for WCRC communications, what is it?

5. What is your age?  
 19 or younger       20-29  
 30-39                 40-49  
 50-59                 60 or above

6. When receiving communications from the WCRC, what would you prefer:  
 Email                       Printed mail

7. What is your preferred format for WCRC publications and materials?  
 Electronic (website, PDF, e-book)  
 Printed (brochure, leaflet, book)

8. How often do you visit the WCRC website (wcrch.ch)?  
 Daily    Weekly    Monthly    Occasionally

9. What is the primary reason you visit the WCRC website?

10. What 3 websites do you visit most often?  
 1.   
 2.   
 3.

11. Check any/all of the following social media that you use:  
 Facebook       Flickr               Google+  
 LinkedIn       Pinterest         Twitter  
 Vimeo            YouTube  
 Other

12. Of the social media you use, what is your favourite and why?

13. How often do you use your favourite social media?  
 Daily    Weekly    Monthly    Occasionally

14. On a scale of 1-5 rate the following (0=haven't seen, 1=useless, 5=priceless):  
 Reformed Communiqué    ①   ②   ③   ④   ⑤  
 Reformed World            ①   ②   ③   ④   ⑤  
 WCRC Annual Report      ①   ②   ③   ④   ⑤  
 WCRC Introductory  
 Brochure/Leaflet           ①   ②   ③   ④   ⑤  
 WCRC Website (wcrch.ch) ①   ②   ③   ④   ⑤  
 Other  (name and rating)

15. What, if any, WCRC communications do you find useful in your personal and professional life and why?

16. What, if any, WCRC communications are you likely to share with friends/colleagues and why?

17. If created, please check which of these you would use:

- Compiled member churches news feed
- Devotion book for seasons of the church year
- Liturgies and litanies
- Online WCRC bookstore
- Resources for the Reformation
- Videos of presentations at consultations
- A website devoted to creeds and confessions
- Other

18. How do you think the WCRC can communicate better?

19. Do you have other comments?

20. If you'd like to receive a monthly news summary by email, please provide your email address:

WCRC  
 Calvin Centre  
 Knochenhauerstrasse 42  
 30159 Hannover  
 Germany

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# WCRC joins delegation to United Nations

Dora Arce Valentín, the World Communion of Reformed Churches' executive secretary for justice and partnership, joined a delegation from the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) that advocated for gender equity with the 58th United Nations Commission on the Status of Women. This Commission is a functional commission of the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations and is the principal global policy-making body dedicated exclusively to gender equality and advancement of women.

"Our presence, as the WCRC, in this delegation will give us visibility as a Reformed family committed to gender justice and against gender violence," said Arce Valentín.

As a member of the Presbyterian delegation, Arce Valentín joined Christian colleagues from around the world partnering with Ecumenical Women, an international coalition of church denominations and ecumenical organizations. Groups concerned for gender justice from around the world participated in the Commission.

The priority theme for the 58th Commission was "challenges and achievements in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals for women and girls." Responding to the priority theme, Ecumenical Women advocated for four themes to be included in the outcome document of the Commission: 1) poverty and hunger; 2) access to quality education, employment and decision-making; 3) full access to health, including sexual and reproductive health services; and 4) transformational shifts in social norms in response to violence against women and girls.

"It is exciting to see Presbyterians from the United States and ecumenical partners from around the world come together in New York to advocate for four areas that are important parts of the development process in our journey towards gender equity," said Ryan Smith, Presbyterian representative to the United Nations and co-chair of Ecumenical Women.

Arce Valentín agreed: "Our presence at the United Nations is an important representation of our extended



community of churches around the world, caring for and supporting each other."

Both the WCRC and the PC (U.S.A.) hold special status with the Economic and Social Council, providing access for the church to engage with the Commission.

The Commission traditionally concludes with recommendations to the United Nations and world community intended to achieve gender equity. The meetings took place mid-March.

## Human trafficking workshop in Argentina lays groundwork for campaign

"Broken for You," a campaign against human trafficking which is being developed by the World Communion of Reformed Churches' Justice Network took another step forward at a meeting in Buenos Aires, Argentina, 29-31 January.

A small group of Justice Network members met with CAREF (*Comisión de Apoyo a Refugiados y Migrantes*), an ecumenical organization that works with migrants, refugees, and exiles.

Officials of CAREF shared their 15 years of experience on diverse aspects of human trafficking (including

sensitizing, prevention and victim assistance) and its links with international migration and sexual and labour exploitation.

The exchange contributed to the WCRC's upcoming "Broken for You" campaign, which will be launched later this year for use during Lent in 2015. The group developed a concept paper that will help guide the creation of the campaign.

The group was hosted by Iglesia Evangélica del Río de la Plata, a member of both the WCRC and CAREF.



*Setri Nyomi shares greetings  
after worship in Lebanon.  
(Photo: NESSL)*

## Thanks given for the witnesses of churches in Lebanon and Syria

On a three-day pastoral visit to Lebanon in February, Setri Nyomi, general secretary of the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC), learned first-hand of the challenges currently facing Christians in both Lebanon and Syria—and how they are responding.

“I give thanks to God for the witness of the churches in Lebanon and Syria,” said Nyomi. “It is very clear that in the midst of the challenges that face our churches in these two countries, our member churches are sacrificially making a difference.”

The conflict in Syria has accelerated Christian emigration, decreasing the number of Christians in the lands of its origin. Thousands of these Christians are refugees from Syria. The churches in Lebanon provide them care, even as some of them seek to continue their emigration westward.

“It is not enough to meet the immediate needs of the refugees,” said Najla Kassab Abousawan, a Lebanese member of the WCRC’s executive committee. “We must make every effort to break the cycle of violence and suffering.”

In his sermon at the Rabieh Evangelical Church in Beirut, Nyomi agreed, calling for Christians to trust the transformative power of God. “God continues to heal in our world today,” he said. “The powers of the day may scoff at us. Nevertheless, we are called to go and show ourselves to them. This is an expression of participating in God’s healing and transformative work.”

In addition to caring for refugees, the Lebanese churches are involved in providing food and medical aid to communities in Syria whenever conditions allow. They do this both from their own resources and from resources provided by ecumenical partners abroad.

*“It is very clear that in the midst of the challenges that face our churches in these two countries, our member churches are sacrificially making a difference.”*

—Setri Nyomi

“I was very much touched by the faithfulness and courage of many Christians,” said Nyomi. “For example, I was told of pastors who had opportunities to leave Syria but chose to stay and suffer with their people.”

Nyomi met with leaders of the WCRC’s member churches and also participated in a meeting of pastors and spouses called by the Supreme Council of member churches. He also visited a refugee camp in the Bekaa Valley.

“It is remarkable that as the churches in Lebanon engage in addressing the needs arising from the situation in Syria, they are at the same time effectively engaged in ministry in congregations and in many other actions which they have carried for many years,” said Nyomi.

“As we thank God for what the churches are doing in effectively witnessing under such challenging circumstances, we need to strengthen our journey with them,” said Nyomi. “It is important for all in the communion to be praying for our sisters and brothers in this region and to engage with them in practical actions that will make a difference.”

WCRC member churches in Lebanon and Syria are the National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon, the Union of the Armenian Evangelical Churches in the Near East and the National Evangelical Union of Lebanon.

# WCRC churches are on the frontlines of communal strife



Leaders from churches on the frontlines share their stories. (Photo: WCRC/Kóczyán)

Last year, the National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon spent over CHF 200,000 assisting Syrians internally displaced or otherwise affected by the worsening civil war in their country. The WCRC Partnership Fund made an emergency grant of CHF 10,000 to help the church's work.

Syria is one of the more obvious places where WCRC member churches find themselves embroiled in communal conflicts with religious dimensions. In November 2013, the WCRC office of theology, mission and communion brought together representatives of many of these churches for a consultation in the quiet setting of Christian Jensen College, Breklum, in the heart of North Friesland (Germany).

The meeting heard reports from churches on the ground in Kenya and Nigeria; Egypt, Syria and Lebanon; Myanmar (Burma), India, Indonesia and Malaysia. In many contexts, religious rights and freedoms are violated. Interreligious relationships are frequently poisoned by suspicion and mistrust, complicated by economic and social problems or undermined by differences in belief or ideology. Religious sentiments are often exploited for political domination or to control natural resources.

It also heard stories of how, despite all these difficulties, churches stand in mutual solidarity with communities of other faiths. Even in the midst of conflict, they pursue the mission of reconciliation and peace.

"Breklum 1 was the start of a journey," says Douwe Visser, executive secretary for theology, mission and communion. "It brought together only people from our own churches.

"Breklum 2 (24-29 November 2014) will allow us to meet also with representatives of other faiths, to explore how we can work for peace and reconciliation together."

The Evangelical Church of Egypt (Synod of the Nile) has already embarked on this second step. A grant from the Partnership Fund is helping this member church train pastors and laypeople in different cities and villages in dialogue with their Muslim neighbours.

The Partnership Fund is also supporting the Breklum process, which Visser sees as integral to the life of WCRC.

"Hearing from our churches on the frontlines and working out ways to help one another can enhance the value of our communion – making it visible and bringing it to life," he says.

From the National Evangelical Church of Syria and Lebanon, Mary Mikhael adds a heartfelt plea: "Please continue to pray with us for an end soon to this tragedy being inflicted on millions in Syria."

Applications to the Partnership Fund for grants are always welcome – especially from member churches that have not previously applied. For details of how to apply, visit [wcr.ch/partner-with-the-world-communion-of-reformed-churches-wcrc/](http://wcr.ch/partner-with-the-world-communion-of-reformed-churches-wcrc/) or write to [partnership@wcr.ch](mailto:partnership@wcr.ch)



# Consultation assesses state of the communion

The Consultation on Communion, drawing together 50 church leaders from around the world in wintry West Michigan in February, produced the first draft of a report on the state of the communion that will be presented to the World Communion of Reformed Churches' (WCRC) executive committee at its annual meeting in May.

Bridget Ben-Naimah summed up the consultation's work in her message at the event's closing worship service: "Sisters and brothers in Christ, halfway through the first phase of the life journey of the WCRC, we have gathered here in Grand Rapids trying to identify the various dimensions of our understanding of communion and assessing how we have fared on this journey both collectively and as individual churches.

"As we engaged in discussions together, quite a number of revelations were received," she continued. "I believe that these findings are not to discourage us or to divide us but rather to remind us that in spite of the fact that communion is a gift from God to us, we who are called to participate in the communion have a responsibility to work at it."

Communion as a "gift from God" was a recurring theme throughout the consultation.

"The unity for which we yearn is always unity in Christ. And there is no stronger way in which we can be united. It is given to us as a gift; it is not a thing we can achieve for ourselves," said Iain Torrance during open discussion.

"Christian unity is already given to us as a gift by God," agreed Setri Nyomi, WCRC general secretary. "Ours is to make every effort to maintain it."

How to maintain the communion, and how the communion should act both within and outside of itself, were other subjects discussed.

"The real task of the communion is to be a forum, a family, a body that holds together a variety of different perceptions and views—so that we can all talk together as members of the Reformed family," said Jerry Pillay, WCRC president, in opening remarks.

"One of the consequences of being a communion is to speak out in the world we live: to speak truth to powers and to speak sometimes with a prophetic voice," said Douwe Visser, WCRC executive secretary for theology, mission and communion, in his presentation. "The gift of communion is the reason why we should be deeply committed to justice."

Discussions also focused on how member churches can resolve to stay together in spite of difficult contemporary issues.

"Are we gracious enough to go this way around issues in which we have strong differences in views?" asked Kobus Gerber in a worship service message. "I think this is the



calling of this community. God gives third ways. Are we gracious enough? Are we Christ-like gracious enough to embrace everyone in this community with every point of departure and every convergent theology that I may find?"

"When we're in communion, we must trust each other. If I'm suspicious of another, then that will hinder my ability to be in communion. I must be able to trust you, and you must be able to trust me," said Yvette Noble-Bloomfield, WCRC vice-president, in a presentation. "To be in communion, I must respect you, and you must also respect me. There must be a mutuality in the level of respect with one another."

Nyomi emphasized that the "communion is more than the leadership and staff of the institution of the WCRC; it is you, the churches that are spread in the countries where we find ourselves. Our evaluation of how we are doing as a communion should include whether or not the action of churches in each context demonstrate our understanding that communion and justice go hand in hand."

Pillay was satisfied with the consultation's work, especially as a part of a larger process.

"What we have done here is absolutely good. We have looked at the state of the communion," Pillay said. "We will process this further from here. The information that has emerged from here is vital. And we have mechanisms to take it further."

Those "mechanisms" will include the WCRC's Office of Theology and Communion, continued participation by those present at the consultation and the Executive Committee of the WCRC, as well as the larger communion.



# Consultation on “faith declarations” opens future possibilities



*The state of the Communion was discussed in groups both large and small. (Photo: WCRC/Tanis)*

A consultation on “Ecumenical Faith Declarations” demonstrated a desire for continuing dialogue and action on issues that pertain to the role, purpose and function of statements of faith, including creeds and confessions, in the context of the church’s life and witness.

The consultation arose after the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA) decided to adopt the Belhar Confession and designate it as a document in a new category called “Ecumenical Faith Declaration.” The Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee of the CRCNA, in conjunction with the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC), invited approximately 50 representatives from WCRC member churches to consider whether this new category could serve a broader purpose within the Reformed family.

“I am encouraged that this gathering here in this room today is itself a demonstration of faith entering heads and inspiring hearts and moving hands,” said Joel Boot, CRCNA executive director, in his opening meditation.

In the course of the discussions, it became evident that the majority of the participants did not embrace the concept of a new category called “Ecumenical Faith Declarations.” However, additional dialogue explored other ways to address the identified complexities, challenges and opportunities regarding creeds, confessions, declarations and other statements of faith.

Despite the shift in course, or perhaps because of it, participants expressed confidence that the consultation

fulfilled a significant role in highlighting the need to seek further clarity and creative engagement on confessional issues.

The consultation also identified a wide range of possibilities regarding next steps in the discussion of confessions and their role in the life of the churches in the WCRC. Participants hope the result of this consultation will be a stimulant for further work.

“I want to express our thankfulness for this consultation,” said Jerry Pillay, WCRC president, “and to the CRCNA who has started this conversation with such gracefulness.

“This is precisely what being in communion is all about,” Pillay continued. “The biggest event of the WCRC is not when it meets every seven years for its General Council. The moments and work for the WCRC are when it meets and what happens within those seven years. The strength lies in those conversations. And these are the kind of conversations we want to encourage.”

“I think in the gathering of this group, representing your various home churches, it is the best of what the WCRC is about,” agreed Peter Borgdorff, CRCNA deputy executive secretary and member of the WCRC Executive Committee. “What binds us together is that we engage one another in what God has laid on our hearts.”

The document generated by the consultation will now be referred to the WCRC Executive Committee, as well as member churches, for further engagement and action.

The consultation met in Grand Rapids, Michigan, from 2-4 February, and preceded the Consultation on Communion.



*Iain Torrance makes a point to Sabine Dressler and Bridget Ben-Naimah. (Photo: WCRC/Tanis)*

# Learning by doing

*Through study and work together, Cuban seminarians embrace international, ecumenical ministry, says student body president*

In addition to the communications skills she is developing as a fourth-year student at *Seminario Evangelico Teologia* (Evangelical Theological Seminary, or SET) in Matanzas, Cuba, Marielys Cabrera Leal is getting lots of first-hand experience. The Presbyterian pastor-to-be is current president of the SET student body.

“My responsibilities are essentially to know and deal with the needs of students and to serve as liaison between students, faculty and administrators,” she said in a recent interview with Presbyterian News Service. “The main requirement, I think, is to have good communication skills and to deal with all sides.”

SET students don’t just have to pay attention to academics. All students have what Cabrera calls “a double function”—each Friday after morning classes they fan out across the island to serve out the weekend in congregations. “If they are not careful, they can become preoccupied with their work responsibilities,” she says of her schoolmates.

Unlike theological students in many parts of the world, church employment after graduation—the residential program leading to ordination as a pastor is five years—is not an issue, says Cabrera, “especially for the Presbyterian students. We still have so many churches without pastors.”

But the whole idea of being a pastor in Cuba “is not easy,” she adds. “Ministry is not a favorable vocation in Cuba. We have to work a lot on the theme of vocation.”

In addition, Cabrera continues, “the candidacy process is very long and arduous.” Candidates must serve a one-year internship before entering seminary. Cuba’s denominations are stricter than the seminary in accepting students. “Once the denomination approves, it is very rare for the seminary to say ‘No,’” she said.

Cabrera’s life has been leading up to ordination as a Presbyterian pastor since she was a 16-year-old in Villa Clara in central Cuba. “I worked as a lay leader but hadn’t really thought about becoming a pastor, but through more work and study I began to think more seriously about it. It was when I continued to see so many needs in my community that I became convinced to become a pastor.”

*Each Friday after morning classes students fan out across the island to serve out the weekend in congregations.*

—Jerry L. Van Marter



*Marielys Cabrera Leal balances many responsibilities as a student-leader. (Photo: Presbyterian News Service/Van Marter)*

Marielys Cabrera Leal will be participating in this year’s Global Institute of Theology (GIT), scheduled to take place in Costa Rica in July. She will join more than three dozen other participants from 17 countries. Institute participants will explore the theme of “Transforming Mission, Community, and Church” at the Latin American Bible College in San Jose. Further information can be obtained on the WCRC website ([wcrc.ch](http://wcrc.ch)) or the GIT website: [www.globalinstituteoftheology.org](http://www.globalinstituteoftheology.org).

# Real family values

*Cuban Presbyterians' program integrates religious, family, social and community values*

## Real family values

*Cuban Presbyterians' program integrates religious, family, social and community values*

The Presbyterian Reformed Church in Cuba (IPRC) is building a growing sense of trust and mutual respect with the Cuban government through a program that seeks to integrate religious, social, family and citizenship values in children and youth.

The program is the brainchild of Nelson Davila — a Cuban pastor and educator who earned his Master's Degree from McCormick Theological Seminary in Chicago and his Ph.D. from the University of Havana.

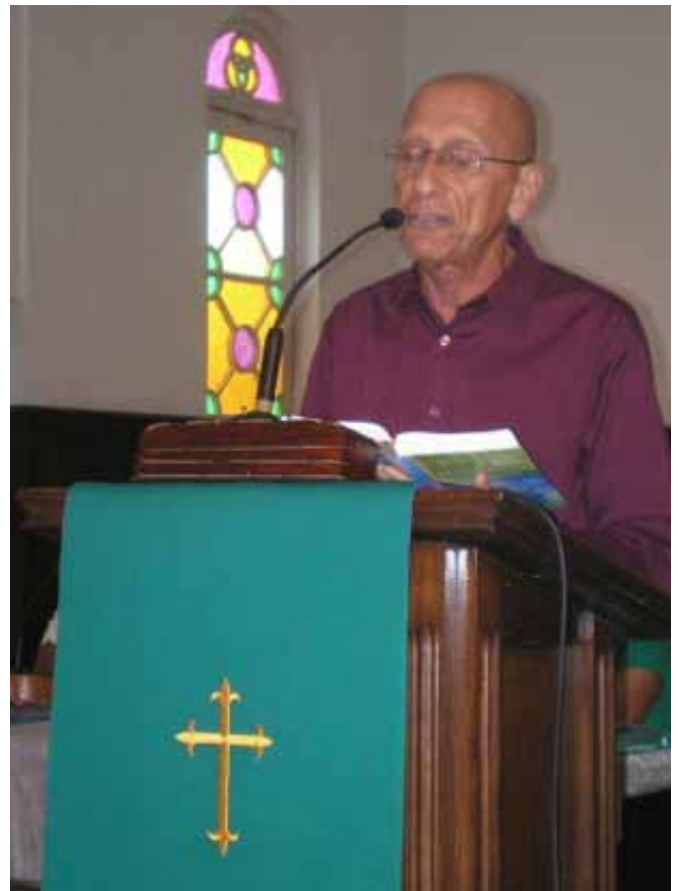
"My dissertation at the university was on how the church can help children be good family members, community participants and citizens," Davila told the Presbyterian News Service in a January interview. "It was the first time a church-based thesis was presented because the University of Havana has historically been an atheistic institution."

The government was impressed with Davila's research, he said, "because a big problem in our country is how to raise kids with good social and family values — the government sees a lot of kids being lost, so they are very interested."

He teaches a course at Evangelico Seminario Teologia (Evangelical Theological Seminary, or SET) on "The Church and Citizen Formation" and serves in the IPRC's department of mission.

Davila's — and the IPRC's — approach is quite simple: "The church cannot be separated from its communities," he said. "We have to be involved. Religious, family, social and community values are part of the whole human being."

*"The church cannot be separated from its communities. We have to be involved. Religious, family, social and community values are part of the whole human being."*  
—Nelson Davila



*Nelson Davila, professor of Christian education at SET, leads Bible study at the IPRC synod meeting. (Photo: Presbyterian News Service /Van Marter)*

The Cuban government has warmed to this integrated values-building approach, Davila said, and so have many communities in Cuba. "Sometimes the people don't understand the church, but they understand that we are all involved in developing healthy individuals and communities."

The program is built on Bible study that focuses on the real lives of children, Davila said. "We need to teach the whole life — that they are good Christians and good citizens, that they are good family members and good community members."

It's not glamorous work. "We have many churches in Cuba that are just trying to be in the headlines," Davila said, "but that is not the real gospel. The real gospel is humble and seeks to serve the least, to make them better human beings."



# Help whoever is in need

*Migrant center comes alongside women in South Korea*



*A summer marriage retreat helped migrants and their Korean spouses explore cultural differences and gain better understanding of each other. (Photo: RCA)*

Jezelyn moved from the Philippines to South Korea seeking a better life—and thought she had found one, falling in love and marrying a South Korean.

But then it all went wrong. Jezelyn's husband passed away when she was six months pregnant, and her Korean in-laws couldn't assume the obligations associated with a newborn, let alone a widowed daughter-in-law. They urged her to return to the Philippines, to her family there. But this would mean she would have to abandon her dream and lose Korean citizenship for her child.

That's where Pastor Jones Galang came in. Galang works with migrants through the Osan Migrant Mission Center, a part of the Presbyterian Church of Korea's ministry and a partner with the Reformed Church in America. The center provides extensive social services to migrant workers in Osan and the surrounding area.

"We have made much progress on immigrant issues," says Galang, "and have lately been shifting our focus to married migrants, especially those who marry a Korean."

Friends of Jezelyn who had received help from the center urged her to do the same. Galang, understanding the nuances of Korean family culture, knew that Jezelyn needed to demonstrate that she could support herself financially.

The center provided her with a place to stay until she gave birth. It then assisted in registering the baby as a Korean citizen and obtained a visa for Jezelyn so she could not only stay but legally work to support her child.

The help didn't end there. With additional assistance from the center, Jezelyn found a job in a factory, and the center continues to provide daycare for the child.

The result? Jezelyn is worshiping at the center's Sunday services, and her in-laws are getting to know their new grandchild.

"The Bible gives strict warnings against taking advantage of poor and downtrodden people: 'He who oppresses the poor shows contempt for their maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honors God,'" says Galang, citing Proverbs 14.31. "God's people are to help whoever is in need."

The Osan Migrant Mission Center helps migrants with labor counseling and mediation of wage claims and other benefits, health and medical assistance, domestic violence prevention and advocacy, education related



*Migrants gather for worship, Bible studies and consultations. (Photo: RCA)*



Advocacy work, including demonstrations, are a part of the ministry. (Photo: RCA)

to cultural awareness and integration, strengthening workers' associations, and coordination of social activities. It also hosts Bible studies and worship services.

According to Galang, nearly 1.5 million foreign nationals reside in Korea (as of September 2012). Almost two-thirds of these migrant workers are women (according to the Asia Pacific Mission for Migrants). The number of those women who marry Koreans has increased more than 8 percent in the past year, to nearly 140,000.

*“The Bible gives strict warnings against taking advantage of poor and downtrodden people. God’s people are to help whoever is in need.”*

—Pastor Jones Galang

the Presbyterian Church of Korea.

Galang’s past work focused broadly on the Filipino migrant community in Korea. That’s been shifting recently, both narrowing its focus and broadening its constituency. On the one hand, there is Hanfil, an organization for Filipina migrants married to Koreans; on the other is Teresa, an organization for women migrant workers, regardless of country of origin. Assistance is also being offered to migrants from Nepal, Vietnam, Sri Lanka and Indonesia.

“Let us continue the mission that God has entrusted to us,” says Galang. “Let us continue to work for peace and justice and to promote the welfare of all people.

Following the words of Matthew 25.40, we serve God most when we serve others.”

*(This article originally appeared in RCA Today. Reprinted with permission.)*

Ministry with and to immigrants is very important for the WCRC. Emerging immigrant churches around the world have been a great source of strength for the immigrants, as well as sparks of renewal for the established churches in those communities.

Through its collaboration with the John Knox Center in Geneva, the WCRC has participated in strengthening the mission of Swiss-based immigrant churches in particular. The WCRC continues to journey with immigrants and immigrant churches and is exploring additional ways of accompanying immigrant churches throughout the world.





*The Hannover-based staff (left to right): Viktória, Paul, Phil, Setri, Claudia, Dora, Anna, Douwe. (Photo: WCRC)*

## A brief introduction to our Hannover-based staff

We come from many lands—and all of us have come from somewhere, as no one on staff is an original Hannoverian (though one is close): Bavarian, Hungarian, Cuban, American, Lower Saxon, Ghanaian, Genevan and a Dutchman.

Our appreciations of our new home, Hannover, are wide-ranging: the beautiful Jugendstil buildings, being close to family, music and fireworks in the summer, a perfect public transportation system, the modest people, the train station (especially on the way home after work), a range of good museums, the city's international character, greenness and cleanliness.

Our tastes in food are diverse, as might be expected from such a group. Noodles may be as common a theme as there is but the flavours that flow over and through them range from Italian to Chinese origins. And then there are the *Kip op Jagers manier*, fried plantains, organic garden salad, green chile cheese burger, *rakott burgonya* and Mexican molé.

We come from several churches, both Reformed and Lutheran by tradition. Dora Arce Valentín, a Presbyterian minister from Cuba, and Douwe Visser, a theologian and minister of the Protestant Church of the Netherlands are the programme staff who moved with the organization from Geneva. Viktória Kóczyán of the Reformed Church of Hungary served as an intern in the Geneva office and is now one of the administrative assistants. Claudia Duval and Anna Krüger, both Lutherans, bring new gifts and energy to the organisation

as recently engaged administrative assistants. Paul Oppenheim, a retired German minister, is a volunteer whose presence in the staff team has been invaluable for the adjustment of the staff to their new home. Phil Tanis, the communications executive secretary, is the newest member of the team, coming from the Reformed Church in America. Setri Nyomi of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ghana continues to provide leadership as the general Secretary in his last year of service in this capacity.

We worship together, as an entire office, with our partners in the German Reformed Alliance a floor below, each Wednesday morning.

And we are dedicated, together as a team, to fulfilling the mission and vision of the World Communion of Reformed Churches. So we are here, together, from many places in this one place, prayerfully and mindfully doing what we can to further the fullness of life as found in Christ Jesus.



## New communications secretary named

Phil Tanis, a member of the Reformed Church in America (RCA), has been named the new executive secretary for communications for the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC). He began his duties on February 1.

“We thank God for Phil and the many gifts he brings to the Reformed family worldwide,” says Setri Nyomi, WCRC general secretary. “His ability to use both traditional means and modern technology to effectively enable the Reformed family to share our stories is an asset that will contribute greatly to strengthening our communion.”

For the past 16 years Tanis focused on electronic communication for the RCA, including managing their website and leading it through numerous redesigns. In 2010, Tanis created and managed the website for the WCRC’s Uniting General Council.

Tanis has created several other RCA-related websites including for *Perspectives: A Journal of Reformed Thought*. He also served on the board and as managing editor for *Perspectives*.

While attending Hope College in Holland, Michigan, Tanis served on the city council and was elected mayor shortly after graduating (with a degree in history), serving one term. He was also the founding manager of the college’s Knickerbocker Theatre, a venue highlighting a mix of films and live performances.



*Phil with wife Gretchen and children, M.E. and Jon.*

After retiring from elected office at the age of 25, Tanis obtained his M.A. in mass communication from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Tanis is married to Gretchen Schoon Tanis, an ordained minister in the RCA, a youth ministry instructor and former member of the World Council of Churches’ Central Committee. They have two children.

## Prayer Requests

Especially during this time of Lent, please pray for our sisters and brothers in various contexts in which life in its fullness is compromised by political challenges or weather related challenges. The list includes Taiwan, Syria, Lebanon, South Sudan, Venezuela, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, the United States, Malaysia, Thailand, Central African Republic and Nigeria.

Our prayers should always be accompanied by meaningful action in whatever way possible to journey alongside our sisters and brothers who are affected in these contexts.

Prayer needs are posted regularly on our website: [www.wcrc.ch](http://www.wcrc.ch).

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Setri Nyomi, General Secretary  
(Photo: WCRC/Tanis)

## FROM THE GENERAL SECRETARY

*So again Jesus said to them, “Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep ... The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it in fullness. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.” (John 10.7, 10-11)*

The season of Lent provides us with the opportunity to reflect on our walk with the Lord Jesus Christ who gave His life, so that we may have life in all its fullness. During these forty days our reflections can be merely ritualistic—or we can engage in a renewing walk to become more effective in God’s mission as God’s children, making a difference in our communities.

I hope our Lenten reflections and meditations renew us in every way so that we can walk closer to our Lord Jesus Christ and be more effective in the mission to which we have been called out of that sense of gratitude to God. In contrast to the thief, Jesus came—God incarnated in human flesh—suffered and gave His life so that we may enjoy life in fullness. This action of love is good reason for us to be filled with gratitude and to participate in the continuing mission of making possible the fullness of life.

Reflection on this passage in John’s gospel led us in 2004 to come up with the Accra Confession. Under the theme “That all may have life in fullness” the 24th General Council could not help but respond to a call to be instruments for transformation in a world in which economic and climate injustice is so rampant. This year the World Communion of Reformed Churches is marking the tenth anniversary of the confession. It is my hope that groups and congregations all over the world will set aside some time to go through the Accra Confession again and to renew our commitment to God in the mission of exposing and addressing injustice. The Accra confession asserts:

*We believe that God is a God of justice. In a world of corruption, exploitation and greed, God is in a special way the God of the destitute, the poor, the exploited, the wronged and the abused (Psalm 146.7-9). God calls for just relationships with all creation. Therefore we reject any ideology or economic regime that puts profits before people, does not care for all creation and privatizes those gifts of God meant for all. ... We know what the Lord requires of us: to do justice, love kindness, and walk in God’s way (Micah 6.8). We are called to stand against any form of injustice in the economy and the destruction of the environment, “so that justice may roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream” (Amos 5.24).*

Ten years later, the vicious forces of death and injustice that the Accra Confession exposes continue to be with us. As we reflect in this season, let us ask these questions:

- To what extent are we living out the Accra Confession?
- To what extent are we ready to expose and dismantle the forces of injustice as part of our walk with our Lord Jesus Christ?
- Who came so that we may have life in fullness?

Our Lord Jesus Christ came so that we may have life in fullness. The works of the thief who comes to steal, kill and destroy are so visible around us. Let this season of Lent be a time of reflection and renewal of our commitment to be God’s instruments through whom life in fullness is mediated for many more people in the communities in which we find ourselves.

- See the full confession here: [wrc.ch/accra-confession/](http://wrc.ch/accra-confession/)

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World  
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Churches

Called to  
communion,  
committed to  
justice