



## WCRC deepens commitment in Middle East

The executive committee of the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) concluded its meeting in Lebanon by issuing a call to its churches for greater solidarity and action to help bring peace to the Middle East.

“This statement is a commitment. It’s a proclamation from the WCRC that they will walk the talk with us in this region,” said Najla Kassab, executive committee member from Lebanon.

“The news of the Middle East is all over the world in terms of the



conflicts and struggles. We were here firstly for solidarity,” said Jerry Pillay, WCRC president.

“Part of that solidarity was to listen and gain new understandings. Often the media do not tell the story that should be told,” said Pillay. “We have heard the stories of the people of the Middle East—from Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon—and all of these stories were able to inform us more accurately about what is happening.”

The statement summarizes what the executive committee heard and then presents this response:

- We call for global recognition of the suffering of all people in the Middle East.
- We call for violence to cease in Syria immediately and pray for peace to spread like ripples from there throughout the entire region.
- We urge our officers and secretariat to strengthen the bonds among our member churches in this region to consolidate their communion.
- We commit ourselves to tell the stories of our Middle East sisters and brothers to the wider world.

The statement also contains seven requests to WCRC member churches, including increasing solidarity, welcoming refugees and advocating for peace.

“This statement comprises a call to us to walk more closely with the churches of the region and to commit ourselves to support the Middle East Christians so that they stay, flourish and be peacemakers,” said Chris Ferguson, WCRC general secretary.

“What’s clear is our future here is also to be a global organization that can have an impact outside of the Middle East,” said Ferguson. “We must look at the root causes of conflicts here and call on world governments to change their propensity to look for military solutions.”

The World Communion of Reformed Churches’ executive committee meets annually to provide oversight to the work of the WCRC, both programmatically and financially. It held its 2015 meeting outside of Beirut, Lebanon.

### A note from the editor

Last issue we featured four languages in the Communiqué, repeating the same series of articles in each. This issue, instead of running the same article in four different languages, we’re featuring twelve different articles in seven different languages.

Not only is this a natural outgrowth of our new website—found at [wrc.ch](http://wrc.ch)—which features news and stories in over a half dozen different languages, but it also better reflects the diversity of our own Communion.

All the articles printed here are online in English, and several are available in other languages, as well, so please take a look at our website for these and much more.

Part of the “much more” is our restarted blog—[wrc.ch/blog](http://wrc.ch/blog)—which shares news and stories from our member churches. Updates are posted at least every Thursday. You can also receive a monthly eNews summary via email—just subscribe at [wrc.ch/news](http://wrc.ch/news).

*Phil Tanis  
Executive Secretary for  
Communications*

# Stories of strength

## The 2015 executive committee stewards



**F**our young stewards from Syria and Lebanon participated in hosting this year's WCRC executive committee held in Lebanon. Thanks to these young people the executive committee and WCRC staff were able to hear first hand accounts of the troubles the people of the Middle East are facing. They came from different walks of life: pastors, teachers, students, sons and daughters. They have similar aspirations and dreams to youth and professionals all over the world but the world that they live in—torn apart by war, rebellion and poverty—presents them with problems many others will not face.

Loujain and Paul shared their experiences growing in faith and earning an education in the face of tremendous circumstances in an interview with the WCRC. Nadia presented a powerful testimony to her church before the executive committee, illustrating her struggles living in such a violent time.

Loujain is 20 years old and lives in Homs, Syria. She is currently studying English at university. She was very excited to be a part of the executive committee meeting, saying: "I love this work! I get to meet people from all over the world, and I never would have thought to meet people like this before... This has been a good experience for me. It makes me happy."

Along with her fellow stewards she hopes to escape her war torn home. "When I finish studying I hope to go to Germany. Anything!" Loujain likes to go to church, even though the church was destroyed during the war. Syria is still a violent place for her and her family. Three months before this interview, she lost her cousin who was killed in an explosion at his university. Her mom's office was bombed as well.

"I think I never get the life I need. Because the war separated me from everything. I wish I could go with my family outside of Syria,

and when Syria becomes better, then we can come back. I cannot see my country in this shape, in this disastrous shape. These four years have been the most disastrous and ugly.

"I am afraid when I hear sounds because I think I should be taking my family and go under the table because I cannot stand another loss. I cannot think about it."

While the war in her country has taken its toll, Syria is still Loujain's home. "I ask God to stop the war in my country, in Iraq and in Yemen. Peace is more beautiful than war. We can achieve more things in peace than in war. The whole world is affected by this war, not just us. It is a world issue."

She shares this dedication to her home and wish for peace with fellow steward and resident of Homs, Nadia.

Earlier this year, in a personal testimony, Nadia described her daily life in Homs before the war. Listen-



ing to “the bells of the seven churches... They used to ring together, proclaiming the birth of Jesus, singing Halleluiah on Palm Sunday and rejoicing on the resurrection day.” The bells are broken and silent now. After a group of radicals took over Homs and drove most of the residents out of her neighbourhood, Nadia and her family stayed; they would not leave their home. Even after a rocket destroyed their home, Nadia and her family returned to Homs. “We feel that it is our duty to turn back to our house and encourage our neighbours to do the same.”

In the midst of all this drama Nadia graduated this year with a bachelor’s degree in computer science. “It did happen in the middle of the craziest period of my life. Yet, it showed that we did not give up; we did not lose our hope to the terror. We will never do because we are



still alive! As long as we have the gift of ‘life’ from God, we will have the power to live and move on.”

Paul, 35 years old, while from neighbouring Lebanon, shares many experiences with Nadia, including his bachelor’s degree in computer science. Paul is a gifted individual

who is not only an elder in the Presbyterian Church but also teaches computer, graphic design and website development. He also is a photographer in his spare time.

Paul is married to a fellow educator; his wife is also pursuing a master’s degree in school management. Their love for education as a couple is apparent. Together, they have two children, a three-year old and a two-year old.

It was this love for learning that attracted Paul to the stewardship opportunity: “I like to be in contact with people, explore and have adventures. I

have met a lot of people, from many different nationalities, and I have learned a lot. I feel rich in information. This increases my love for all of the world.”

Paul kindles his strong faith through evangelism and experiencing humanity. To him, his faith is like breathing. “I like to share my faith with people. Evangelizing is to witness, when you know the love of God: the unlimited love of God to all people.”

These stewards helped bring a different worldview to the members of the executive committee. They showed them the power of family and faith in the face of extreme adversity and illustrated the dire circumstances Christians operate in all over the world.

*Joanna Hipp contributed to this article.*



## Zusammenfassung über die Tagung des Exekutivausschusses

**D**er Exekutivausschuss der Weltgemeinschaft Reformierter Kirchen kommt jährlich zusammen, um die Arbeit der Weltgemeinschaft inhaltlich und finanziell zu beaufsichtigen. In diesem Jahr fand die Tagung zum Thema „Gott des Lebens, führe uns auf deinen Weg der Gerechtigkeit, des Friedens und der Versöhnung“, im Evangelischen Dhour Choueir Konferenzzentrum außerhalb von Beirut im Libanon statt.

### Engere Beziehungen zu den Lutheranern

Der Exekutivausschuss hieß Martin Junge, den Generalsekretär des Lutherischen Weltbundes (LWB), bei seiner Tagung herzlich willkommen. „Die Reformation, so haben wir es auf unserem Weg zum 500. Jubiläum im Jahr 2017 stets betont, gehört nicht ausschließlich den Lutheranern,“ erklärte er. „Wir als Reformierte und Lutheraner sind dazu aufgerufen die gemeinsame Beteiligung an der Reformation zu reflektieren und gleichzeitig die Unverwechselbarkeit in den jeweiligen theologischen und geistlichen Profilen zum Ausdruck zu bringen.“

Auf der Grundlage erfolgreicher Dialogreihen zwischen der Weltgemeinschaft und dem LWB möchte der Exekutivausschuss vom Dialog zur Umsetzung übergehen, um der sichtbaren Einheit Ausdruck zu verleihen und dem „Lund-Prinzip“ auf Weltebene Gestalt zu geben. Das sogenannte „Lund-Prinzip“ beinhaltet, dass Kirchen in allen Dingen zusammenarbeiten sollten, außer wenn tiefgehende Unterschiede in Glaubensfragen sie zwingen getrennt zu handeln.

Zwei Entwicklungen werden diesem Ziel dienen. Zum einen wird man auf das 500. Reformationsjubiläum zugehen und dem Exekutivausschuss bei seiner Tagung im Jahr 2016 konkrete Vorschläge unterbreiten. Zum anderen wird man sich mit der „Gemeinsamen Erklärung zur Rechtfertigungslehre“ befassen, die

zwischen dem LWB und dem Päpstlichen Rat zur Förderung der Einheit der Christen nach einer Reihe von Konsultationen vereinbart wurde.

### Ansprache des Präsidenten: Aktiv mit anpacken bei der Arbeit für Gerechtigkeit

In seiner Ansprache vor dem Exekutivausschuss stellte Jerry Pillay zwei besondere Herausforderungen heraus, denen sich die Welt heute stellen muss, nämlich die Ungerechtigkeit und die Zersplitterung. Er rief die Weltgemeinschaft auf, sich „für Gerechtigkeit, Frieden und die Einheit der Kirche und vor allem der Welt“ zu engagieren.

Pillay unterstrich, dass die Bekenntnisse von Accra und Belhar Dokumente sind, mit denen sich die Weltgemeinschaft für Gerechtigkeit und Einheit einsetzen kann. „Eine lebendige Einheit, wahre Versöhnung und fürsorgliche Gerechtigkeit gehören wesentlich zusammen,“ sagte er.

„Die Orientierung am Bekenntnis von Accra sollte uns helfen, unserer Berufung treu zu bleiben, indem wir die heutigen Missstände ansprechen,“ sagte Pillay. „Sie wird auch dazu beitragen, dass wir uns auf unseren Wunsch nach Einheit innerhalb der Gemeinschaft und mit anderen besinnen, und uns weiterhin um die Einheit der Christen bemühen.“

### Bericht des Generalsekretärs: Auf Gottes vehementen Aufruf reagieren

In seinem Bericht vor dem Exekutivausschuss hat Ferguson für eine Umorientierung der Arbeit der Organisation plädiert, die sich an ihrer Berufung zur Gemeinschaft und ihrem Engagement für Gerechtigkeit innerhalb eines strategischen Rahmens ausrichten sollte. Der strategische Plan der Weltgemeinschaft, der 2011 verabschiedet wurde, konzentriert die Arbeit der Organisation auf fünf Bereiche: Gemeinschaft, ökumenisches Engagement, Gerechtigkeit, Mission und Theologie. In seinem Bericht

nannte Ferguson mehrere Beispiele dafür, wie die Weltgemeinschaft dabei ist, ihren Plan zu erfüllen.

Der Generalsekretär sagte aber auch, dass die Weltgemeinschaft noch besser arbeiten kann und muss. „Wir haben eine Chance die Arbeit des Leitungsgremiums, der Mitarbeitenden, der Regionen und unserer ganzen Gemeinschaft neu auszurichten nach Gottes Ruf, zu vereinen, was getrennt ist, die Brüche zu heilen und in allen Dingen die Gemeinschaft reformierter Kirchen auszuleben in der Teilhabe an Gottes Mission, auf dass alle die Fülle des Lebens in Jesus Christus erfahren,“ erklärte Ferguson.

### Generalversammlung 2017: Ort und Termin stehen fest

Nach einer Überprüfung der Termine, Örtlichkeiten und voraussichtlichen Kosten für die kommende Hauptversammlung stimmte der Exekutivausschuss einer zeitlichen und örtlichen Veränderung zu. Die Hauptversammlung der Weltgemeinschaft Reformierter Kirchen wird nun im Jahr 2017 vom 27. Juni bis zum 7. Juli in Leipzig stattfinden, wobei Vortreffen für Jugendliche und Frauen in den ersten beiden Tagen abgehalten werden sollen.

### Nächste Sitzung: Kuba

Der Exekutivausschuss beschloss, die Einladung des Bundes presbyterianischer und reformierter Kirchen in Lateinamerika (AIPRAL) für ihre Tagung im Jahr 2016 anzunehmen, die voraussichtlich auf Kuba stattfinden soll. Nachdem die Weltgemeinschaft seit langem ein Ende des amerikanischen Embargos gegen Kuba gefordert hat, wäre die Tagung in diesem Land ein Zeichen der Solidarität und ein deutliches Zeugnis in einer Zeit des historischen Wandels.



# Grupo descubre que en la frontera EU-México abunda la explotación

**H**istorias personales de inmigrantes y de los que trabajan para ellos en ministerio en la frontera México-Texas dieron una imagen más vívida de los problemas enfrentados, en ambas partes de la frontera, a los miembros del grupo de trabajo de la Comunidad Mundial de Iglesias Reformadas que combate el tráfico de personas.

Profundamente conmovida por las experiencias compartidas, Yueh-Wen Lu, vicepresidenta de la CMIR y comoderadora del grupo nuclear encargado de los temas de justicia del comité ejecutivo, comentó, “Ver cómo las iglesias responden ante la problemática de tráfico de personas permitió al grupo de trabajo desarrollar perspectivas que dan pie a nuestra reflexión teológica sobre el problema de trata de personas.”

Durante la semana en la que se congregaron los miembros del grupo de trabajo, se reunieron con organizaciones dedicadas al ministerio en temas de tráfico de personas, inmigración y frontera. Los grupos incluidos fueron: Pasos de Fe, Casa Amiga, Annunciation House, Project Vida, Derechos Humanos Integrales en Acción y Center for Hope.

El grupo de trabajo viajó a Juárez, México, y se reunió con organizaciones que trabajan para erradicar la violencia de género, el feminicidio y la trata. Ahí mismo visitaron un memorial a las mujeres que han desaparecido por trata y feminicidio. “Las denuncias reafirman el análisis de la Confesión de Accra y la continua explotación de los derechos humanos por los sistemas económicos”, dijo Yueh-Wen.

En la iglesia University Presbyterian Church, que pertenece la Iglesia Presbiteriana (EUA), el grupo escuchó un conmovedor testimonio de una sobreviviente al tráfico de personas. Su testimonio, contado por primera vez, relata su viaje desde Centroamérica hasta los Estados

Unidos y sobre lo que tuvo que pasar al lidiar con contrabandistas, patrullas fronterizas, centros de detención y otros individuos que, finalmente, la ayudaron a ponerse a salvo.

La sobreviviente dijo finalmente, “Si no hablamos no habrá justicia.” Ella espera que al contar su propia historia otras personas sigan su ejemplo y den testimonio de que la violencia sigue cobrando víctimas.

Mientras tanto en El Paso, Texas, el grupo analizó

los recursos de Cuaresma anti-tráfico de personas “Broken for You” y reflexionó sobre la información que recopiló de la experiencia que vivieron los miembros del grupo en Juárez y El Paso. Gracias a lo anterior, identificaron que la violencia de género y racismo, dentro del marco de injusticia económica y patriarcado, son factores que contribuyen al tráfico de personas.

Dora Arce Valentín, secretaria ejecutiva de justicia y coparticipación de la CMIR, dijo, “El tráfico de personas es una cristalización de la violencia

sistémica que está enraizada en las estructuras patriarcales y económicas y es perpetuada por éstas mismas.”

El grupo de trabajo de la CMIR que combate el tráfico de personas se reunió del 20 al 25 de julio de 2015 en El Paso, Texas, EUA. La reunión tuvo como anfitriones a los colaboradores de misión de la Iglesia Presbiteriana (EUA) Amanda Craft y Omar Chan y José Luis Casal del Presbiterio Tres Ríos.



개혁주의 협력 기금

# 아크라 고백에 새롭게 참여하여 헌신으로 나아가다



**올** 해 초 세계개혁교회 커뮤니티(WCRC)의 남 아시아 지역 회원 교회 대표들은 아크라 고백서의 신념을 따라 심의회로 모였다.

아크라 고백서(Accra Confession)는 2004 년 당시 세계개혁교회연맹(WARC)에 의해서 작성된 경제·생태적 정의에 관한 예언적 선언이다. WARC 는 그 후 WCRC 의 일부가 되었다. 본 고백서에 대한 일련의 심의회들이 선언 10주년을 기념하는 2014 년에 개최되었다.

본 심의회는 참석자들은 교회의 구성원들 대다수가 이 지역의 "가장 소외되고 취약한 그룹들"에서 나온다는 사실에도 불구하고 이 지역에서 경제적 불의로 고통을 겪고 이들에게 별로 주의를 기울이지 않았다고 고백했다. 언급된 그룹들에는 시골 농부들, 무토지인들, 빈두리 소농들, 최하층민들, 부족민들, 여성들과 조직되지 못한 노동자 등이 포함된다.

또한 참석자들은 "우리가 전 피조계의 청지기로서 창조주께서 이 모태와 같은 지구 위에 …… 창조하신 만물들을 보살피는 게 마땅한"데도 불구하고 "우리는 환경 파괴가 거의 매일같이 우리 안팎에서 일어나고 있는 것에 대하여 많은 관심을 두지 않고" 오히려 천연 자원을 상품화한 "소비주의 문화" 에 굴복했다고 정리했다.

본 심의회는 해당 지역의 WCRC 회원교회들에게 다음 결의안을 재위탁했다:



1. 만물이 그 신음과 고통으로부터 놓임 받고 구속 받아 하나님의 영광을 목도할 때까지, 모든 인류와 피조물을 위한 하나님의 지상 선교를 지속하자 (로마서 8:18-19);
2. 하나님께서 당신의 사랑을 만물에게 확장하신 것처럼 우리도 사랑과 긍휼을 널리 베풀자;
3. 건강한 환경과 경제적 정의를 주저 없이 존중하고, 보호하고, 보존하고, 장려하자.  
(지구와 그 안의 모든 것은 다 주님의 것이기에 존중해야 한다 (시편 24:1); 우리는 주님의 청지기들이므로 주님의 것을 보호해야 한다 (창세기 2:15); 우리는 미래 세대로부터 이 지구를 빌렸기 때문에 그것을 보존해야 한다.)

본 심의회는 개혁주의 협력 기금(Reformed Partnership Fund)의 후원을 받아 인도의 첸나이에서 개최되었다. 남인도교회, 북인도교회, 인도 장로교회, 방글라데시 교회 및 인도 동북부 개혁장로교회의 대표들이 참석했다.



# بيان عن الشرق الأوسط

نحن اللجنة التنفيذية لشركة الكنائس المصلحة في العالم اجتمعنا هنا، في مركز ضهور الشوير الإنجيلي في لبنان، تحت موضوع "يا إله الحياة، قُدنا في طريقك للعدالة والسلام والمصالحة."

مستلهمين كلمات النبي إشعيا، نسعى لندعى "مرممي الثغرة، مُرجعين المسالك للسكنى" (إش 58: 12)؛ ولذا لا نجد مكاناً أفضل من هذا الشرق الأوسط لنلتقي.

كما سمعنا من أخواتنا وأخوتنا الذين يقطنون هذه النواحي، فإن مهّد المسيحية في خطر جسيم، والكثير من نواحيهم مدمرة مجازياً وحرقياً.

\* أخبرنا أخ من العراق أنه يحتفظ بسجلات كنيسة في سيارته، كونه لا يدري متى يُفرض عليه الفرار من هجوم القوى الإسلامية المتطرفة؛

\* قالت لنا أخت من لبنان إنه مضى على وجود الفلسطينيين كلاجئين حوالى عقود سبعة، وعانوا جذراً تشاد بين إسرائيل وفلسطين، بينما تهاوت في برلين؛

\* ناشطٌ شبيبي عبّر عن قلقه بخصوص الشبيبة، سلامتهم وانسداد أفق المستقبل أمامهم؛

\* أضح من سورية انتقل من الفاء المواعظ إلى تأمين الماء لرعيته وسواهم.

\* بالرغم من حرق الكنائس، فقد روى أضح من مصر قصة تُمسك بمجامع القلوب، كيف تآزر المسيحيون والمسلمون للتلاقي رمزيةً لقوة الرجاء في وسط الصراع المستمر.

ما هذه الصور إلا مختصر لواقع صورة المنطقة المرتبك. مسيحيو هذه المنطقة هم تلامذة كنيسة أنطاكية الأول، وقد قاسوا الكثير خلال ألفي سنة من الإيمان الصادق.

عاش المسيحيون والمسلمون عبر التاريخ جيراناً بمتعة حوار الحياة ومشاركة القيم من أجل صالح مجتمعاتهم. وكم نحزن للتدهور في العلاقات التي تسببه الحركات الدينية المتطرفة، ونعرب عن أسفنا العميق للطريقة التي يُستعمل بها الدين لأجندات سياسية!

إلى اليوم، وبالرغم من أعدادهم المتضائلة، ما زالوا ملحاً لبيبتهم ونوراً. لقد تأكد لنا حسيّاً أن دورهم وتأثيرهم في بيئاتهم يفوقان كثيراً عددهم. مثلاً، طالبو السلام وصانعوها في المنطقة هم خريجو المدارس "المسيحية"، بغض النظر عن ممارستهم الدينية الحالية.

لقد ذابت قلوبنا أمام حياة النعمة التي تحلّى بها مسيحيو الشرق الأوسط، وشجاعتهم، وتصميمهم على البقاء في بيئاتهم. إن المنطقة لتكون تعيسة من دونهم. فالمسيحيون واجبو الوجود من أجل شرق أوسط يتعم بالسلام والمصالحة.

لقد اصغينا إلى هذه القصص من أخواتنا وأخوتنا، مدركين تشابك المواضيع في الشرق الأوسط وخصوصيات الدول، بحيث يختلف موضوع في بلد ما عن الموضوع ذاته في بلد آخر.

لقد آمدنا قدومنا إلى هذه الربوع بفرصة جديدة للتعبير عن تضامننا مع كنائسنا الأعضاء في هذه المنطقة. ولا نروم أن تكون هذه خطوة منفردة، بل انطلاقاً للالتزام متجدد. كيف يمكننا، إذا، كشركة الكنائس

المصلحة في العالم، أن نستجيب لحالة أخواتنا وأخوتنا في الشرق الأوسط؟

ندعو إلى إقرار دولي بمعاناة شعوب الشرق الأوسط.

ندعو إلى وقف للعنف في سورية حالياً، ونصلي من أجل أن يعم السلام فيها ويمتد إلى كل أرجاء المنطقة.

كلجنة تنفيذية، نقوم بحثاً المسؤولين في شركتنا والموظفين على شدّ أواصر العلاقات بين كنائسنا الأعضاء في المنطقة لتمتين الشركة بينها.

كما نلزم أنفسنا بنشر قصص أخواتنا وأخوتنا في الشرق الأوسط في العالم.

**إننا نشجع كنائسنا الأعضاء حول العالم:**

\* للانخراط معنا، في حسّ متجدد، للتضامن مع مسيحيي الشرق الأوسط، والالتزام المستدام بسلام شعوب المنطقة ورفاهها؛

\* لأن نسمع إلى ما يقوله أخواتنا وأخوتنا في الشرق الأوسط، في مقابل ما نبتّه وسائل الإعلام السطحية؛

\* لأن نقبل اللاجئين كجيران، لا كمجرّد آخرين؛

\* لأن لا نقبل بعد اليوم، ولا نسمح، لحكوماتنا بتجاهل مناطق المعاناة الجماعية، وواجباتهم بهذا الخصوص.

\* لأن نرفع الصوت من أجل خير المسيحيين وغير المسيحيين في المنطقة؛ كما ندين العنف الذي يصنع كلّ هذا الدمار ويهين الكرامة الإنسانية؛

\* لأن نستلهم أخواتنا وأخوتنا في الشرق الأوسط، الذين يُظهرون محبة المسيح في وجه التحديات التي لا توصف وظروف المعاناة المستمرة؛

\* لأن نعيش ونصلي بروح إشعيا 58: 6، القائل:

النَّيْسُ هَذَا صَوْمًا أَحْتَارُهُ: حَلَّ قُيُودَ الشَّرِّ. فَكَّ عَقْدَ النَّيْرِ، وَإِطْلَاقَ الْمَسْخُوقِينَ أَحْرَارًا، وَقَطَعَ كُلَّ نَيْرٍ. أَلَيْسَ أَنْ تَكْسَرَ لِلْجَانِعِ حُبْزَكَ، وَأَنْ تُدْخَلَ الْمَسَاكِينَ السَّانِيهِينَ إِلَى بَيْتِكَ؟ إِذَا رَأَيْتَ عُزْبَانًا أَنْ تَكْسُوهُ، وَأَنْ لَا تَتَغَاضَى عَنْ لَحْمِكَ.

حِينَئِذٍ يَنْفَجِرُ مِثْلَ الصُّبْحِ نُورُكَ، وَتَنْبُتُ صَخْرَتُكَ سَرِيعًا، وَيَسِيرُ بَرُّكَ أَمَامَكَ، وَمَجْدُ الرَّبِّ يَجْمَعُ سَافَتَكَ. حِينَئِذٍ تَدْعُو فَيُجِيبُ الرَّبُّ. تَسْتَعِثُّ فَيَقُولُ: هَآنَذَا. إِنْ نَزَعْتَ مِنْ وَسْطِكَ النَّيْرَ وَالْإِيمَاءَ بِالْأَصْبَحِ وَكَلَامَ الْإِثْمِ وَأَنْفَقْتَ نَفْسَكَ لِلْجَانِعِ، وَأَشْبَعْتَ النَّفْسَ الدَّيْلِيَّةَ، يُشْرِقُ فِي الظُّلْمَةِ نُورُكَ، وَيَكُونُ ظِلْمَتُكَ الدَّامِسُ مِثْلَ الظُّهْرِ. وَيَقُودُكَ الرَّبُّ عَلَى الدَّوَامِ، وَيَشْبَعُ فِي الْجُدُوبِ نَفْسُكَ، وَيَنْشَطُ عِظَامُكَ فَتَصِيرُ كَجَنَّةٍ رِيًّا وَكَنْبَعِ مِيَاهٍ لَا تَنْقَطِعُ مِيَاهُهُ. وَمَنْكَ تُبْنَى الْخُرْبُ الْقَدِيمَةُ. تَقِيمُ أَسَاسَاتِ دُورِ قُدُورٍ، فَيَسْمُونُكَ: مَرْمَمِ الثُّغْرَةِ. مُرْجِعِ الْمَسَالِكَ لِلسُّكْنَى.

# Statement on the Middle East

**W**e the Executive Committee of the World Communion of Reformed Churches have gathered here at the Dhour Choueir Evangelical Conference Center in Lebanon under the theme: God of Life, Lead us on your Path of Justice, Peace and Reconciliation.

Inspired by the words of the prophet Isaiah, we strive to be “called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to dwell in” (Isaiah 58:12) and can thus find no place more appropriate to be than here, in the Middle East.

As we have heard from our sisters and brothers who dwell in these streets, the cradle of Christianity is in crisis, and many of their streets are shattered, both figuratively and literally:

- A brother from Iraq told us that he must keep the records of his church packed in his car, not knowing when he may have to flee from radical Islamic forces.
- A sister from Lebanon told of Palestinians living as refugees for nearly seven decades and commented on the irony as she watched walls erected in Israel/Palestine even as they were coming down in Berlin.
- Despite churches being burned, a brother from Egypt related a heartening story of Christians and Muslims standing side by side seeking change—a symbol of hope even in the midst of ongoing struggle.
- A youth worker in the region raised concerns for young people, for their current safety and of whether there is even any future here for them.
- The work of a brother from Syria has moved from writing sermons to supplying water to his flock and many others.

Yet these stories of struggle only hint at the complex picture of this region. Christians here are the first disciples of the church of Antioch and have endured much during their two thousand years of faithfulness.

Historically Christians and Muslims have often lived peacefully as neighbours, enjoying a dialogue of life and sharing common values for the good of their community. We lament the deterioration of relationships that has sprung

from radical religious movements and express deep regret concerning the way religion is used for political agendas.

Even today and despite their increasingly smaller numbers Christians in the Middle East remain the salt and light in their communities. We have seen evidence that their roles and impact in their communities goes far beyond their numbers. For instance, the peacemakers in the region are often the graduates of Christian schools, regardless of their present religious practice.

We are heartened by Middle East Christians’ demonstration of grace, courage and resolve to stay in their communities. The region would be seriously impoverished without their presence as a vital means to a peaceful, just and reconciled Middle East.

We have heard these stories from our sisters and brothers and realize that the Middle East is complex, and each country has its own specific context. The situation

in one country may be dramatically different than in another.

Our coming here has given us a renewed opportunity to express our solidarity with our members in this region. We do not want to see this as a single act but the beginning of a renewed commitment. How then can we as a World Communion of Reformed Churches respond to our sisters and brothers in the



Middle East?

We call for global recognition of the suffering of all people in the Middle East.

We call for violence to cease in Syria immediately and pray for peace to spread like ripples from there throughout the entire region.

We urge our officers and secretariat to strengthen the bonds among our member churches in this region to consolidate their communion.

We commit ourselves to tell the stories of our Middle East sisters and brothers to the wider world.

We encourage our member churches:

- To join us in a fresh sense of solidarity with Christians in the Middle East and a lasting commitment to the wellbeing of all people of this region.
- To hear anew the stories of our sisters and brothers, as opposed to simply accepting the rhetoric of the media.
- To welcome the refugees as neighbours rather than treat them as “others.”
- To not ignore or allow our governments to ignore the places of massive suffering or their contribution to it.



- To speak up for the wellbeing of Christians and all people in this region, decrying the violence that creates such destruction and dehumanizes people.
- To draw inspiration from our sisters and brothers in the Middle East who show the love of Christ in the face of incredible challenges and frequent calls to suffer.
- To live and to pray in the spirit of Isaiah 58:6-12, which says:

Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?

Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin?

Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly; your vindicator shall go before you, the glory of the Lord shall be your rearguard. Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am.

If you remove the yoke from among you, the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil, if you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday. The Lord will guide you continually, and satisfy your needs in parched places, and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters never fail.

Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to live in.

*Adopted by the Executive Committee on 15 May 2015.*

## Communiqué sur le Moyen-Orient

**N**ous, membres du comité directeur de la Communion mondiale des églises réformées (CMER), réunis ici au Liban, dans le Centre évangélique de Conférence Dhour Choueir, sous le thème : « Dieu vivant, conduis-nous sur ton chemin de justice, de paix et de réconciliation », inspirés par les paroles du prophète Esaïe, nous aspirons à être appelés « réparateurs de brèches, restaurateurs de rues fréquentées » (Esaïe 58,12) et, ainsi, nous ne pourrions pas être dans un endroit plus approprié qu'ici, au Moyen-Orient.

Comme nous ont dit nos sœurs et frères qui habitent ces rues, le berceau de la chrétienté est en péril et beaucoup de leurs rues sont détruites, littéralement et au sens figuré :

- Un frère d'Iraq nous a raconté, qu'il doit garder les registres de son église dans sa voiture, ne sachant

pas quand il faudra fuir devant les forces islamiques extrémistes.

- Une sœur du Liban nous a parlé des Palestiniens qui vivent en réfugiés depuis près de sept décennies et de l'ironie qui fait, qu'elle a vu la construction de murs en Israël/Palestine au moment même où ils furent détruits à Berlin.
- Bien que des églises soient incendiées, un frère d'Égypte nous fait le récit encourageant de Chrétiens et de Musulmans qui sont en quête de changement, côte à côte – un signe d'espoir au milieu des luttes continues.
- Un animateur de jeunes de la région fait part de ses préoccupations quant à la sécurité des jeunes gens, se demandant s'il existe pour eux un avenir.
- Le travail d'un frère de Syrie a changé, car au lieu de préparer sa prédication, il fournit de l'eau à sa communauté et à beaucoup d'autres.

Ces récits de situations difficiles ne laissent pourtant qu'entrevoir la réalité complexe de cette région. Les Chrétiens d'ici furent les premiers disciples de l'église d'Antioche et ont dû beaucoup endurer, pendant les deux millénaires de leur fidélité.

Au cours de l'histoire, Chrétiens et Musulmans ont souvent vécu paisiblement en bon voisinage, jouissant d'un dialogue de la vie et partageant les mêmes valeurs pour le bien-être de leur société. Nous déplorons la détérioration des relations causée par les mouvements religieux extrémistes et nous nous regrettons la façon dont la religion est utilisée à des fins politiques.

Encore aujourd'hui, et malgré leur nombre toujours plus réduit, les Chrétiens au Moyen-Orient sont toujours le sel et la lumière de leurs communautés. Nous avons vu les preuves, que leur rôle et leur incidence au sein des communautés dans lesquelles ils vivent, dépassent de loin leur nombre. Ainsi, les pacificateurs de cette région, quelle que soit leur pratique religieuse, sont bien souvent ceux qui ont été formés dans les écoles chrétiennes.

Nous sommes encouragés par les exemples de grâce et de courage parmi les Chrétiens du Moyen-Orient et par leur ferme volonté de rester dans leurs communautés. La région serait sérieusement appauvrie sans leur présence qui est un instrument indispensable pour la paix, la justice et la réconciliation du Moyen-Orient.

Ayant entendu ces récits de nos frères et sœurs, nous réalisons la complexité du Moyen-Orient et le fait que chaque pays a son contexte particulier. La situation peut différer considérablement d'un pays à l'autre.

Notre venue nous a donné une occasion de renouveler notre solidarité à l'égard de nos églises membres dans la région. Nous ne voulons pas voir ceci comme un acte isolé mais plutôt comme le début d'un engagement renouvelé. Comment pouvons-nous donc



répondre à l'appel de nos frères et sœurs du Moyen-Orient en tant que Communion mondiale d'églises réformées (CMER) ?

Nous exigeons que la souffrance de tous les peuples du Moyen-Orient soit reconnue mondialement.

Nous exigeons la fin immédiate de la violence en Syrie et prions que la paix s'étende de là à la région toute entière.

Nous exhortons nos responsables et notre secrétariat à consolider les liens entre nos églises membres dans la région afin que leur communion soit fortifiée.

Nous nous engageons à répéter les récits de nos frères et sœurs du Moyen-Orient au reste du monde. Nous encourageons nos églises membres

- à se joindre à nous dans un sentiment renouvelé de solidarité avec les Chrétiens du Moyen-Orient et dans un engagement durable pour le bien-être de tous les peuples de cette région,
- à entendre à nouveau les récits de nos sœurs et frères, au lieu d'accepter simplement ce que disent les médias,
- à recevoir les réfugiés comme des prochains, plutôt que de les traiter comme « autres »
- à ne pas ignorer ou permettre, que nos gouvernements négligent les lieux de souffrance massive ou y contribuent,
- à élever leur voix en faveur du bien-être des Chrétiens et de tous les autres dans cette région, dénonçant la violence qui détruit tout et qui déshumanise les personnes.
- à se laisser inspirer par nos frères et sœurs du Moyen-Orient qui témoignent de l'amour du Christ face à

d'incroyables défis et de fréquents appels à la souffrance

- à vivre et à prier selon l'esprit du prophète qui dit :

« Voici le genre de jeûne que je préconise: détacher les chaînes dues à la méchanceté, dénouer les liens de esclavage, renvoyer libres ceux qu'on maltraite. Mettez fin aux contraintes de toute sorte!

Partage ton pain avec celui qui a faim et fais entrer chez toi les pauvres sans foyer! Quand tu vois un homme nu, couvre-le! Ne cherche pas à éviter celui qui est fait de la même chair que toi! Alors ta lumière jaillira comme l'aurore et ta restauration progressera rapidement, ta justice marchera devant toi et la gloire de l'Éternel sera ton arrière-garde.

Alors tu appelleras et l'Éternel répondra, tu crieras et il dira: «Me voici!» Oui, si tu éloignes du milieu de toi la contrainte, les gestes menaçants et les paroles mauvaises, si tu partages tes propres ressources avec celui qui a faim, si tu réponds aux besoins de l'opprimé, ta lumière surgira au milieu des ténèbres et ton obscurité sera pareille à la clarté de midi. L'Éternel sera constamment ton guide, il répondra à tes besoins dans les endroits arides et il redonnera des forces à tes membres. Tu seras pareil à un jardin bien arrosé, à une source dont le beau n'arrête jamais de couler.

Grâce à toi, on reconstruira sur d'anciennes ruines, tu relèveras des fondations vieilles de plusieurs générations. On t'appellera réparateur de brèches, restaurateur de rues fréquentées. » (Esaïe 58,6-12)

*Décidé par le Comité Directeur de la CMER, le 15 Mai 2015*



# Les églises unies d'Amérique du Nord approfondissent leurs relations

L'Église Unie du Canada (UCC) et l'Église Unie du Christ aux États Unis (UCC-USA), toutes deux membres de la Communion Mondiale d'Églises Réformées (CMER) ont décidé d'entrer en pleine communion.

«C'est un engagement en faveur de tout ce que nous voudrions pouvoir faire ensemble en matière de mission et de ministère, pour consolider la vie de nos deux églises,» déclare Karen Georgia Thompson, la responsable des relations œcuméniques et inter-religieuses de l'Église Unie du Christ aux États Unis.

« Nous sommes enchantés de voir que ces liens sont fortifiés et approfondis de manière aussi concrète, » explique le pasteur Chris Ferguson, secrétaire général de la CMER et membre de l'Église Unie du Canada. « C'est un engagement envers l'unité et une action vigoureuse. Nous espérons, que ce sera un modèle pour nos églises membres à la recherche de voies communes. »

«C'est notre espoir œcuménique,» affirme la pasteure Thompson.



« C'est une façon de vivre l'unité chrétienne sans avoir à fusionner nos structures. »

La pleine communion permet à deux ou à plusieurs églises de reconnaître

mutuellement leurs sacrements et l'ordination de leurs pasteurs, ouvrant aux pasteurs la possibilité d'être nommés par une paroisse de l'autre église.

L'Église Unie du Christ aux États Unis est déjà en pleine communion avec plusieurs églises par les accords suivant: Un premier accord avec l'église presbytérienne des États-Unis et l'église réformée en Amérique ainsi qu'avec l'église luthérienne en Amérique, un autre accord avec la Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) aux États-Unis et un troisième accord avec l'Union des églises unies et réformées d'Allemagne (UEK) au sein de l'EKD (Église Évangélique en Allemagne).

« Nous croyons, que nos possibilités en vue d'un avenir commun sont illimitées, » dit le pasteur Geoffrey Black, le président sortant de l'Église Unie du Christ aux États-Unis qui a dirigé les efforts pour arriver à cet accord. « Seul le

Saint Esprit sait ce qui est possible, mais nous sommes certains, que le Saint Esprit est avec nous, qu'il nous conduit et nous donne la force d'envisager l'avenir ensemble. »

Les deux églises ont voté à l'unanimité en faveur de cet accord dans leurs assemblées générales. La signature, suivie d'un culte de célébration en commun de l'accord aura lieu en octobre.

*Jim Cairney, Kristine Greenaway et Anthony Moujaes ont contribué à cet article. Les photos avec l'aimable permission de l'Église Unie du Canada.*

At their own General Assembly this summer the Presbyterian Church in Canada (PCC) adopted a recommendation that affirmed "that ordained ministers of churches which are members of the WCRC are permitted to preside at the Lord's Table."

Stephen Kendall, principal clerk of the PCC, noted that "this decision reflects a will and reality within our church to express unity within the Reformed family and in particular to give some emphasis to the aspiration that we are now a 'communion' of churches."





## Youth event builds trust across nations

**T**he Starpoint Reformed Youth Festival saw 3,000 Reformed Christian youth from all over the world gather in Tata, Hungary, the third week of July to share their love for life, music, fellowship and God.

The international festival is organized by the Reformed Church in Hungary (RCH) every second year to bring together the youth of the RCH, as well as a selection of Reformed youth from abroad, including those from 15 WCRC member churches. Duncan MacLean This year the theme of the conference was “I Trust You.” Delegates spent the week contemplating trust in their peers and family, in themselves and strangers and above all else in God.

Duncan MacLean IV, who has been a communications intern at the World Communion of Reformed

Churches this summer, attended. Below is his report on the event.

I had the opportunity to represent my home denomination, the Reformed Church in America (RCA), as well as the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) at Starpoint.

The theme of “trust” preceded the festival by months. I was invited to attend while at the Kirchentag in June upon meeting Balázs Ódor and Dia Erdélyi. After a few minutes of conversation they saw in me a viable candidate to attend their festival as part of their international network of youth and a vehicle to communicate the reputation and action of the RCH to my home church and the WCRC. I put my trust in these people I had just met that they were

inviting me to a meaningful, well organized experience.

Six weeks later I boarded a train to Budapest, Hungary. A city and country I knew next to nothing about, to attend a festival I knew even less about, with people I had never met. The 27 international delegates found themselves in the same boat for the first time when we met to play ice-breaking games and began to get to know each other. We spent the night and following day trying to avoid having to use each other’s names, mixing up Lithuania and Latvia and desperately trying to understand the complex relationship between the delegates from England and Scotland.

Community developed quickly, however, despite our drastic cultural differences. “This started when



meeting Matthias in the bus to the dormitory and went on when discovering he and George were just as crazy as I was on the next day, so I could live and discover this side of me,” said Henrik Hille, a delegate from the Church of Lippe (Germany). “It was great to experience how fast I could become friends with the internationals, as well as with some Hungarians.”

It was apparent from the outset that cultural and national boundaries were not enough to divide this group of young people.

After getting a taste of Budapest and nearly being able to pronounce each other’s names we boarded a bus headed to Tata, Hungary, to meet up with the rest of the youth. The next three days were consumed by a whirlwind of fellowship.

Each day was led by a morning devotion and keynote address. The keynotes were delivered each day on a different “punctuation” of trust.

Trust. [period] touched on the importance of unconditional trust in family, friends and God, as well as trust in the rest of humanity. Taxi drivers, foreign leaders, drivers in the next lane over, cooks, assembly line workers. All these people play a role in each other’s lives and knowingly or not must rely on each other to do their job well. Society relies on trust.

Day two’s theme featured inflection: Trust? Life is not fair, horrible things happen every day. Despite war, poverty, broken hearts and death we still must trust in God, but how is this possible? Each delegate brought their own experiences and challenges with them to camp. While meeting with mixed discussion groups we had a chance to share our “despites.” “Despite these challenges in my life I trust in God.” Zoe Wu, hailing from the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, commented on the challenges of her newfound friends and the theme of trusting God under any circumstance:

What hit me most are those topics about what the RCH had to encounter, the war between Ukraine

and Russia, and the Roma people’s social status...I had no idea about those critical issues until the festival. Although situations may seem bad, still God is always in control. All I can do now is keep praying and let my church, my fellowship and my friends pray for them with such hope that God will fulfill our prayers.

The third and final full day of Starpoint programming drove home the theme with an exclamation:



Trust! By this point blistering heat, close quarters, exciting concerts and deep discussion had forged a bond between the delegates.

“I never had personal contact with Asian or American people before. It was great to realize in our conversations that we are very similar people with similar life and problems...I really hope that we won’t lose contact,” said RCH delegate Anna Hus.

“If anything summarizes my experience and something that will stay, it would probably be this network of trust!” said Hille.

For all intents and purposes the conference was a success, instilling a feeling of international fellowship in Christ unlike many of the delegates had experienced before and effectively communicating the intended message to trust in each other and God unconditionally.

On departure day from Starpoint the morning keynote ended with the largest instance of communion I have ever participated in. Three thousand youth and adults broke bread together, emphatically driving home the community we had developed over the week in Tata.

Like thousands of other retreats, conferences and festivals all over the world spirits and faith were high in the days following the final worship

session. Only time will tell whether this trust and global respect will stick or be washed away by the uninterrupted, tumultuous river that is youth.

The aftermath of Starpoint feels promising. The completely foreign setting, variety of programming and a theologically simple yet provocative theme set it apart from other Christian youth events I have been exposed to in the past. Starpoint did not end with an altar call; it closed with a call to the table and a community that will forever hold a place in my heart.

# Waldensian and Catholic churches move toward reconciliation

**M**essages of forgiveness and hope were exchanged between the Catholic and Waldensian churches this summer, creating new possibilities for the future relationship between the two.

For centuries the relationship between the Catholic and Waldensian churches has been defined by a violent history. The conflict stems from the 15th century when the Roman Catholic Church tried to exterminate the small Protestant movement, which survived to become the oldest Christian minority in Italy and a member of the WCRC.

In June Pope Francis paid the first visit by a pope to a Waldensian temple, saying in an address, “On behalf of the Catholic Church, I ask forgiveness for the un-Christian and even inhumane positions and actions taken against you historically. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, forgive us!”

The Waldensians in the region saw this plea for forgiveness as an inspiring and critical step forward in the healing of the two Churches’ relationship, and the Waldensian synod this summer responded positively, saying, in part:

“The Synod of the Waldensian Church (Union of the Methodist and Waldensian Churches in Italy) receives with profound respect, and not without being deeply touched, the request for forgiveness which you made, on behalf of your Church...

“We welcome your words as a repudiation, not only of many iniquities carried out but also of the way in which the doctrines which inspired such iniquities were lived out. In your request for forgiveness we further perceive the clear wish to



begin with our Church a new story, different from that which lies behind us, that we may work towards that ‘reconciled diversity’ which would allow us engage in a common witness to our common Lord Jesus Christ. Our Churches are willing and ready to write this story, which is new also for us.”

The relationship between the two churches extends beyond their homes in Italy; both also have large presences in Latin America. The vast expanses of the Atlantic Ocean were not enough to quell the rivalry. Vice Moderator of the Board of the Waldensian Church of the River Plate, Carola Tron, describes her experience growing up a Waldensian in the River Plate region of Argentina and Uruguay:

“Across the street it is the Catholic church. I remember very well... We named ‘mixed marriages’ to a Catholic and a Protestant couple. For many families this was not possible (from both sides). If a mixed couple married then conflict came later with the children, the baptism and Christian education. Another example is the cemetery...on the right side there are Catholics and on the left the Waldensians.”

While Tron never saw the relationship turn violent as it had done in Italy, she describes a very real divide between the two Churches, a breakdown in Christian fellowship.

After Pope Francis made his address, Tron was inspired and hopeful saying, “I felt a thrill in my body that I did not know for sure how to

interpret. And now I think it is the ancestors’ memories coming together to the present time after hundreds of years of persecution, pain, discrimination against, and the last years silence about it.”

This long awaited reconciliation comes at the intersection of a time of great celebration and dire circumstance for the worldwide church. The 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation is coming in 2017, an anniversary that brings the complicated and long history between the Protestant and Catholic Churches into the spotlight.

In the Waldensian’s and Catholic’s mutual home country of Italy the growing influx of migrants has reached crisis level. The Waldensians are already cooperating with other Churches around the country through the Federation of Evangelical Churches in Italy (FCEI) to combat inhumane conditions for refugees. Pope Francis briefly mentioned the crisis in his address. The Waldensians and the FCEI could greatly benefit from the massive Catholic Church’s aid in their “humanitarian corridor project.”

These are just the first steps in the healing of a long-standing rift among God’s people. Tron is optimistic about the future of the relationship. “We can respect each other in a new way, recognizing the strengths and diversities of each other in a new way and walking together side by side.”

*Duncan MacLean IV  
contributed to this article.*



## Mejía elegido como secretario general del CLAI

**E**n una reunión extraordinaria de la junta directiva del Consejo Latinoamericano de Iglesias (CLAI), llevada a cabo el 27 de julio, Milton Mejía fue elegido por unanimidad como secretario general del CLAI.

Mejía es miembro de la Iglesia Presbiteriana de Colombia, que por su parte es miembro de la Comunión Mundial de Iglesias Reformadas (CMIR).



*Milton Mejía*

“Como moderador de la IPC y como vicepresidente de la CMIR, para nosotros, la elección de nuestro compañero Milton Mejía como secretario general del CLAI es un hecho muy importante,” dijo Helis Barraza Díaz, “especialmente en el contexto de nuestro país, donde necesitamos que organismos ecuménicos estén muy pendientes de los resultados de estos diálogos de paz.”

“Para AIPRAL el fortalecimiento y el bienestar de CLAI es esencial,” dijo Darío Barolin, secretario ejecutivo de AIPRAL. “No concibo otra manera de entender la entidad reformada sino ecuménicamente. En tal sentido nos da muchas esperanzas que Milton, a quien conocemos

personalmente y que ha trabajado en muchos ámbitos tanto reformados como ecuménicos, haya sido elegido para acompañar desde la secretaria general el camino de las iglesias y organismos de CLAI.”

Chris Ferguson, secretario general de la CMIR, dijo, “Milton cuenta con el total apoyo y solidaridad de la CMIR en estos tiempos desafiantes por venir. Él es la persona indicada para estos tiempos kairós de crisis global.”

Actualmente, Mejía coordina el programa de CLAI Fe, Economía, Ecología y Sociedad. Ha sido fundador y miembro de la Secretaría de la Red Ecuménica de Colombia y del Diálogo Intereclesial de las Iglesias por la Paz en Colombia. Además, es profesor de teología de la Corporación Universitaria Reformada y profesor invitado de otras instituciones teológicas. Fue miembro de la Red Global de Trabajo con Desarraigados del Consejo Mundial de Iglesias en representación del CLAI, entre muchas otras responsabilidades.

## Teolog Reformed diangkat menjadi direktur komisi DGB

**W**orld Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) mengucapkan selamat kepada Odair Pedroso Mateus yang telah diangkat menjadi direktur komisi Iman dan Tata Gereja (Faith and Order) Dewan Gereja Dunia.

Menurut pengumuman dari DGD, “Komisi Iman dan Tata Gereja menyediakan sebuah forum dialog ekumenis terkait isu-isu teologis kesatuan gereja, khususnya dalam hal eklesiologi. Keanggotaannya melampaui keanggotaan DGD, termasuk perwakilan dari gereja Roma Katolik.”

Mateus memiliki kemampuan dan pengalaman dalam mengemban tanggung jawab ini, mengingat

ia juga pernah melayani selama tujuh tahun pada World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC, salah satu organisasi pendahulu WCRC). Ketika menjadi bagian dari staf WARC pada tahun 2000 sampai 2007, Mateus memimpin kantor teologi organisasi tersebut; mengkoordinir dialog dengan kelompok gereja Protestan lain maupun dengan gereja Roma Katolik; menerbitkan *Reformed World*, jurnal teologi tiga-bulanan; dan menjadi penghubung dengan gereja-gereja di Amerika Latin.

“DGD sangat beruntung mendapatkan visi dan kepemimpinan Odair, kedalaman pengetahuan dan pengalaman ekumenisnya, serta komitmennya yang kuat terhadap kesatuan gereja,” kata Chris Ferguson, Sekretaris Umum WCRC. “Memiliki seorang teolog Reformed dari wilayah selatan global sebagai direktur komisi Iman dan Tata Gereja sungguh merupakan sesuatu yang perlu dirayakan.”

Mateus adalah seorang pendeta dari Gereja Presbiterian Independen di Brazil (Independent Presbyterian



*Odair Pedroso Mateus*

Church of Brazil), salah satu gereja anggota WCRC. Ia adalah orang pertama dari wilayah selatan global yang menjadi direktur komisi Iman dan Tata Gereja.



Chris Ferguson  
General Secretary

## The emergence of hope

**S**ee, the home of God is among mortals. God will dwell with them, they will be his peoples, and God will be with them; God will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away.... See, I am making all things new. (Rev. 21:3-5)

The world is facing the largest refugee crisis in recorded history. The sheer immensity of the movement of people fleeing desperate situations of war, violence, persecution, disasters and economic oppression is only matched by the escalation of the conflicts, climate catastrophes and economic injustices themselves.

It is easy to feel overwhelmed by the enormity of the death, destruction and suffering and the poverty of the response of governments and world institutions. I attended the meeting of the Synod of the Waldensian-Methodist Church in Italy this summer, and when they announced there would be an information session about the refugee crisis I was prepared to feel overwhelmed—overwhelmed by numbers, the pain, the humanitarian need, the complexity of the causes, the lack of political will of those in power to address the root causes.

And sitting in that church hearing about the “Mediterranean Hope” initiative I was overwhelmed—but by the sheer power of love, compassion, action and prophetic anger of a small church that saw God among the people flooding to the small Italian island in the sea. They not only welcomed, embraced, fed, clothed and comforted those who arrived but lobbied, advocated and pressured so that the governments went into the sea and rescued those in peril. And not only that, this church is now insisting on safe passage: a humanitarian corridor so the refugees don’t fall prey to the human traffickers and risk death at sea. And not only that, this church insists in partnering with the churches in Africa and the Middle East to address root causes of the war violence and economic oppression that drive refugees from their lands and families.

And this small church—recalling their own past of suffering and displacement and rooted in their understanding of Reformed tradition—works with other sectors of the society not only to serve but to transform. Thinking way outside of the box. Called to do a new thing...

Faced with the avalanche of human suffering and injustice I was unexpectedly overwhelmed by HOPE, that the words in Revelation 21 were alive. God was dwelling among the people, and the covenant of justice and peace was pushing against exploitation, indifference, xenophobia, fear and death. I had expected to see crushing statistics and a grim scenario, but I also saw God doing a new thing.

And it wasn’t the first time this summer. In Lebanon seeing our member churches respond not just with compassion but in a transformative way to receive an influx of almost two million Syrian refugees in their small country and to live out the dwelling of God among the people...looking not only to serve but to transform.

This is not the stuff of Hollywood endings; this dwelling of God among the suffering people does not mean a happy ending. It means a compelling hope that situations created by human beings can be changed with and through God.

This overwhelming feeling of hope came to be this summer from another unexpected source, a book by Canadian writer Naomi Klein, *This Changes Everything*. Klein writes about the link between climate change and capitalism, a connection we know well in the WCRC as expressed in the Accra Confession. She demonstrates clearly her claim that the problem is “not carbon but capitalism.” That is not the unexpected part. The great surprise is that the book burst forth with hope. A secular journalist has captured the dynamic of God’s transformative dwelling among us and doing a new thing. Klein writes, “Climate Change is just a disaster but our best chance to demand and build a better world. We can’t change the laws of nature, but we can change our broken economic system.”

“See, I am making all things new”....and we can see...we see the emergence of hope as churches and other social actors look beyond the way things are and grasp that God is dwelling among us, and therefore through God with us things can and must be changed.

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