



World Communion of Reformed Churches

Called to communion, committed to justice

Persevere in Your Witness

Message from the Executive Committee of the World Communion of Reformed Churches “Persevere in Our Witness” May 2024

Therefore, since it is by God’s mercy that we are engaged in this ministry, we do not lose heart. But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies. For while we live, we are always being given up to death for Jesus’ sake, so that the life of Jesus may be made visible in our mortal flesh. So death is at work in us, but life in you. —2 Corinthians 4:1, 7-12

We, the Executive Committee of the World Communion of Reformed Churches, find ourselves returned to Calvin University, the place where the Uniting General Council was held in 2010—and into a U.S. reality which is troubling. Christian nationalism, rising authoritarianism, and the scourge of racism are tearing at the very core of this nation.

Deeply intertwined with each other, these three matters must be confronted with honesty and openness, a willingness to accept their hard truths and challenges. The U.S. strain of Christian nationalism is particularly virulent as it includes the supreme confidence that God is on the side of the U.S., that their “battles” are one. Authoritarian impulses bleed from this belief, with an unholy goal of restricting participation to the “chosen” few. Racism runs deeply throughout U.S. society, the unresolved repercussions of slavery and segregation most prominent, but the discrimination of all black and brown bodies who find themselves in the country or at its border must not be neglected.

The unresolved legacy and impact of the colonial project as it relates to Indigenous peoples continues to be a stain on many of our communities as does the lack of intention to engage in meaningful dialogue. This is a wound desperately in need of healing.

Within the broader Caribbean and North American region, the long-standing embargo on Cuba and its worsening food insecurity, high levels of crime and violence across the Caribbean nations, and the distressing unrest in Haiti all lend credence to a world space unravelling.

This distressing reality is seen around the world, with genocide in Gaza; continuing invasion of Ukraine; rising right-wing extremists in Europe; emerging neo-Cold War alliance between the US, Japan, and Republic of Korea further entrenching the division of the Korean Peninsula and creating a critical crisis of nuclear war; war in Sudan; conflicts in Congo; fragile peace in Colombia being undermined by politically manipulated armed factions; ever-growing power of the industrial-military complexes; the unprecedented movement of people across national boundaries caused by externally-created chaos; and the accelerating

climate catastrophe that is destroying God's creation and our home, as most recently seen by the flooding in Brazil and Kenya.

The technological revolution that has connected the world more tightly than ever before, driven by the market economy, has also spawned an empire of lies, fueled by ideologies such as patriarchy, which has commodified women's bodies, encouraged toxic masculinity, and imposed gender and sexual normative identities and Christian Zionism, distorting the understanding of the history of the people of God and justifying the massacre of the Palestinian people.

As a Communion we must confess that we and our members are complicit in all this. In a spirit of repentance, we commit to acts of reconciliation and reparation.

Thus, we must reinterpret perseverance as something not passive but rather active. It must be a witness space for focused prayer and action, a space where the realities of a situation or issue must be embraced. All of humanity and God's good creation must be considered in the light of Christ and his sacrifice for us and the world. In this, we call on the Holy Spirit as we reaffirm our faith in Christ with hope.

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We persevere with our witness, and we call on the members and partners of the World Communion of Reformed Churches to:

Pray

- For the upcoming synods and assemblies of our members in North America as they make important decisions about their future work and witness, most especially the Christian Reformed Church in North America, Presbyterian Church (USA), and Reformed Church in America
- For those working for truth and justice throughout the world, but especially for anti-racism activists in the United States, that they may speak truth to power and bring understanding and reconciliation to effect systemic changes

Act

- Petition your governments to:
 - establish an immediate ceasefire in Gaza
 - demilitarize the Korean Peninsula
 - cease arms sales to Israel
 - end the embargo against Cuba
 - enact measures to counter the climate catastrophe
 - develop humane immigration policies for migrants
- Consider contributing to the upcoming WCRC fundraising campaign
- Commit to engage in dialogues for deeper understanding of our responsibilities as witnesses to the liberating love of Jesus Christ

Prepare

- To gather together at the General Council in Chiang Mai, Thailand, in October 2025 by:
 - engaging in the Council's theme: Persevere in Your Witness
 - naming delegations that are representative and balanced
 - contributing financially so that all may attend
 - deepening discussions around programmatic priorities
 - raising issues of concern from your churches

The theme "Persevere in your witness" requests us to embrace the death-dealing reality with a kenotic (self-emptying) spirituality and love, reaffirming our faith in Christ at the Cross and envisioning a life-giving hope in action.