

WCRC 27th General Council General Secretary's Report

The World Communion of Reformed Churches is 150 years old — praise be to God. Marcel Pradervand, a past General Secretary of the then World Alliance of Reformed Churches, entitled his book on our history after 100 years “*A Century of Service.*” Fifty years later, we can now celebrate and give thanks to God for a century and a half of service. Allow me to begin my report with a quick recounting of some key features of our life from the beginning until this 150th anniversary, as such a history can undergird our response to God’s call to persevere in our witness.

In our first few decades, we were already making our mark as a confessional body dedicated to strengthening the Reformed family, especially the smaller, weaker churches that operate as minorities in their contexts, while also playing a role in Christian unity. It is this commitment to strengthening Reformed voices — and our understanding that to be Reformed is to be ecumenical — that led to our participation in various organs of the ecumenical movement, including the Edinburgh Missionary Conference in 1910, and our close collaboration with the World Council of Churches in its formative years and today. That same commitment has made us value the work we do together with the Council for World Mission and other Christian world communions.

It is this same commitment that led the Presbyterian Alliance to unite with the International Congregational Council in 1970 and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches to unite with the Reformed Ecumenical Council in 2010.

From the very beginning, our reading of the Word of God led us to the conclusion that we cannot sit quietly by when evil and injustice surround us. God stands with the weak, the marginalized, and the vulnerable, and the mission to which we are called includes being God’s agents of transformation in a world where powerful forces — through unjust political, economic, military, and religious systems — compromise the lives of many. Being God’s agents of transformation is a key element of our witness and our following of Jesus Christ.

Thus, in the 1880s, barely a few years after the formalizing of colonialism in Berlin, the Alliance began speaking out against the evils of colonialism. As other forms of authoritarianism emerged, the communion did not remain silent. We did not stay silent in the face of the Armenian genocide in the second decade of the 20th century.

At its General Council in 1925 in Cardiff, Wales, Swiss theologian Professor Karl Barth challenged delegates to take seriously the emerging Confessing Church in Germany. Through this challenge, and throughout the 1930s and 1940s, the Alliance took a strong stand for prophetic witness against the ugly face of Nazism and gave full support to the Confessing Church. Indeed, this stance led the Alliance to be the main source of popularizing the Barmen Declaration in North America. The Alliance stood with the victims of the Nazi genocide and made its voice heard clearly. Since the end of World War II, we have affirmed that such evil should never again be perpetrated — not against Jews, and not against any people group.

Our first steps toward being beacons for gender justice began in the 1920s and received a major boost at the 1954 General Council in Princeton. However, it was not until 1990, with the launch of

the *Programme to Act, Challenge, and Transform*, that we developed the current stance, culminating in a faith statement on gender equity and equality.

On racism and apartheid, the Alliance began reflecting and acting in the 1950s. A major turning point came at the 1982 General Council in Ottawa, Canada, which declared apartheid a sin and its theological justification heresy. Once again, as we did in 1934 and beyond with the Barmen Declaration, we positioned ourselves as the vehicle for the world to see and adopt the Belhar Confession, a gift from the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa.

In that same era, we reinforced our commitment to exposing the evils inherent in economic injustice and climate injustice. This culminated in the Accra Confession, adopted by our 24th General Council in Accra, Ghana. From this grew our program seeking a new international financial and economic architecture — now a joint program with our ecumenical partners WCC, CWM, and WMC.

These are just a fraction of the issues that have engaged our witness over the last 150 years. In each era, our stance has faced both affirmation and major challenges, yet we persevered. The communion is aware that standing with God as prophets is not an easy road. We persevered because we are called to remain faithful to God, who called the communion and its member churches to be witnesses and agents of transformation. And the Lord Jesus Christ is Himself the pioneer and perfecter of our faith.

Today, we are faced with even greater challenges. Some of our member churches are striving to be witnesses in contexts where churches face decline due to secularization and other forces. Others minister in settings where misleading theologies emerge from newer churches, threatening the identity of some of our congregations. Yet other churches confront major conflicts and divisions. How can we persevere in our witness at a time such as this?

When we read the signs of our times, the economic and ecological landscape that led us to develop the Accra Confession has worsened. People are suffering more than ever, while a large portion of the world's population remains marginalized. About 700 million people live below the poverty line, surviving on less than €2 per day. Due to human irresponsibility and neglect of our calling to be good stewards of the earth and its resources, we face a climate catastrophe: natural disasters are increasing, and some islands are disappearing. Greed and the worship of mammon have taken hold of many communities, while marginalized people within those communities continue to suffer. Do we give up and yield to cynicism, saying, "Let us live on; the poor we will always have with us"? In the midst of these challenges, we hear the call: **Persevere in your witness.**

We also face conflicts in which the senseless killing of tens of thousands of people is a reality, while the world's powers do not do enough to restore peace and, in some cases, are even complicit. Notable examples include the situation between Russia and Ukraine, and the ongoing conflict in the Middle East, particularly in Gaza. We are the same organization that joined forces with the Confessing Church in Germany a century ago, was inspired by the Barmen Declaration of 1934, took the lead in exposing the evil of apartheid, and hailed the Belhar Confession of 1986. This is a communion that affirmed: "**Never again should a people be subjected to annihilation.**" How can we remain silent when similar atrocities are happening today — when communities are being

targeted for forced migration or destruction? We maintain a firm stance against anti-Semitism and against any form of genocide, regardless of the perpetrators. How can we persevere in this witness? We gather in council at a time when these questions weigh heavily on our hearts. Delegates will be called upon to help discern what God is calling us to do in this moment. We will have differences in perspective and engage in robust debates. But what is not an option is silence or apathy. At the end of our time together, we can be thankful that we wrestled with these issues, discerned God's will, and made new commitments to persevere in our witness. We know we will succeed because we look to Jesus, the Pioneer and Perfecter of our faith — not to politically powerful actors, movers and shakers, or ideological blocs.

This is the context in which I give a report on our stewardship over the last eight years, since our 26th General Council in Leipzig, Germany. My report is a summary of this journey. To gain a comprehensive picture, three other channels of reporting to this General Council should be considered part of our accountability:

From Leipzig to Chiang Mai: Each of the General Secretary's reports in the Executive Committee minutes, together with the accountability report in the 2024 Executive Committee minutes.

Programme-related Listening sessions of this General Council, in which my colleagues, the Executive Secretaries, will echo aspects of our work.

This report, therefore, will not go into exhaustive detail.

I also acknowledge that this report covers work under three different sets of leaders. First, Rev. Dr. Christopher Ferguson, General Secretary from 2014 to 2021, led the WCRC in translating the decisions of the 26th General Council into strategies and program plans. He guided the organization even through the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic until the end of his term. Let us give thanks to Chris for his leadership.

Between the last quarter of 2021 and the end of 2023, the WCRC was led by the Collegiate General Secretariat: Hanns Lessing, Philip Vinod Peacock, Phil Tanis, and Muna Nassar. During those challenging years, this team held the organization together and ensured that it continued to make the impact we are called to achieve. I am grateful to God for their dedication and leadership, and I ask the General Council to join me in giving thanks.

I am grateful for the opportunity the Executive Committee gave me to return to this communion I love and to build upon what Chris and our leadership team have done to ensure our eight years between councils is meaningful. This report, therefore, reflects our journey under the multiplicity of leaders mentioned here.

Our work as a communion would not have been possible without the quality of governance provided by those elected in 2017 to lead the WCRC. My deepest thanks go to President Rev. Najla Kassab Aboussawan for her leadership. You provided the guidance this communion needed during a period of major financial and global challenges, including the COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing wars, even in your own region. I have seen firsthand the dedication and wisdom with which you have handled your presidency.

We give thanks to God for our Vice Presidents and General Treasurer, with whom we constitute the officers of this organization. We are also thankful to all members of the Executive Committee and

the leaders of our Regional Councils. These are the key leaders behind the successes we can point to in this report.

Shortly after the 26th General Council in Leipzig in 2017, we commissioned a strategic planning process. This process reviewed the action points from the Leipzig General Council, wrestled with them, and developed strategic plans adopted by the Executive Committee in 2018. These strategic plans have guided our work over the past seven years.

The WCRC grounded its **2018–2024 Strategic Plan** in its constitution and the vision of the 26th General Council. It affirms that the Communion is called to communion and committed to justice, seeking transformation through God's Word and Spirit. The WCRC strives for unity in diversity, renewal of the economy and the earth, and full human and ecological flourishing.

The Strategic Plan affirms one overarching goal: WCRC aims to be stronger and more effective in living out communion and justice as a global koinonia, marked by discerning, confessing, witnessing, and reforming together. Serving member churches and engaging with global partners, WCRC seeks transformation in a world marked by injustice.

In brief, the strategic plan summarizes our calling in **four verbs** and **five actions**.

The Verbs:

Discerning

Confessing

Witnessing

Being Reformed

The Actions:

Fostering a just communion

Covenanting for justice

Doing theology for transformation

Engaging in God's mission in contexts of crisis

Working together with all the partners God gives us

How we have carried out our calling and all our programming corresponds to these four verbs. The five actions are expressed through our five programmatic areas, with each program giving expression to the four verbs. A summary of each action follows:

Fostering a Just Communion

Communion begins in the Triune God, whose love creates, redeems, and enlivens all creation. To live in communion is to share in God's life of love, marked by equality, inclusion, justice, and unity in diversity. Communion is both gift and calling—sustained through worship, expressed in justice, and embodied in relationships that resist exclusion and division. It requires confession, discernment, and witness to God's reconciling love, affirming the WCRC's identity as **"called to communion and committed to justice."**

Youth: WCRC remains deeply committed to youth participation at all levels. Plans for a 2024 Youth Summit under the theme “*Shaking the Foundations: Youth and the Ecumenical Imperative*” aimed to energize the communion through young leadership. Although funding constraints prevented the summit, the process led to the formation of a youth network.

Global Institute of Theology & Interns Programme: These programs foster the ecumenical formation of young people. Every year since the last General Council, two young people are invited to spend a year in the Hannover office of the WCRC, contributing their gifts and learning practical skills for service in their churches or other expressions of the ecumenical movement. Currently, two young women from the Church of Scotland and the Presbyterian Church of Korea are participating.

George Lombard Prize: Essays were invited on “*Ecumenism from the Margins: Confessing a God of Life in a World Fallen among Thieves.*” Three prizes and one honorable mention were awarded, strengthening theological reflection on justice and marginalization.

Human Sexuality: Three consultations (2017–2025) addressed human sexuality, justice, and inclusion. The 2017 Chennai consultation focused on communion, while the 2023 Hyderabad consultation emphasized justice and affirmed sexuality as a divine gift. Participants condemned violence against LGBTQ persons and called the church to repentance, advocacy, and inclusion. A 2024 Bangkok writers’ workshop began producing a study resource for churches.

People Living with Disabilities: A 2022 *Reformed World* issue, “*The Intersections of Church and Disability,*” featured voices of people with disabilities and advocates. A working paper, “*Disability: A Mandate for the Churches,*” was prepared for the General Council.

Indigenous Peoples: WCRC advanced its commitments to Indigenous peoples through consultations in Asia (2022) and Newark (2023). Themes of repentance, reconciliation, and redistributive justice guided discussions, resulting in course syllabi, theological reflections, and a working paper for the 2025 General Council.

Reformation Sunday Worship: Global Reformation Sunday celebrations in Rome, Jakarta, and Grand Cayman fostered shared liturgy and communion across member churches through live-streamed worship.

Member Church and Regional Solidarity: Through visits and regional programs, WCRC strengthened relationships, promoted unity, and mediated church conflicts across Asia, Africa, the Americas, and Europe, reaffirming its commitment to justice, peace, and witness within the global Reformed family.

Covenanting for Justice

The WCRC is dedicated to justice, a legacy deeply embedded in the history of the Reformed Churches. This dedication is expressed in the Accra Confession, which advocates transformative reform in economic, social, gender, and ecological justice. Since the 2017 General Council in Leipzig, WCRC has reinforced its commitments to justice, addressing urgent issues such as the climate crisis driven by an economic system fixated on endless growth.

Economic and Climate Justice: WCRC emphasizes the destructive effects of capitalism, which turns all aspects of life, including labor and resources, into commodities. This system disproportionately impacts women, racialized communities, and Indigenous peoples. The Accra Confession links economic exploitation with ecological destruction, urging systemic change to combat these injustices.

Accra Plus Twenty Process: This process involves regional and global consultations to assess the relevance of the Accra Confession today. These consultations celebrate achievements, confess involvement in injustices, and commit to justice, culminating in resources such as booklets, academic publications, graphic novels, and study guides.

NIFEA Initiative: The New International Financial and Economic Architecture initiative, in partnership with other ecumenical organizations, develops fair and sustainable global financial systems, addressing issues such as taxation, debt, and economic governance. The GEM School, part of NIFEA, trains church leaders and activists on economic justice, equipping them to advocate for systemic change.

Campaigns and Advocacy: The Zacchaeus Tax (ZacTax) campaign promotes tax justice and reparations for social and ecological debts, including progressive wealth taxes, closing tax loopholes, and financial transaction taxes. The Turn Debt into Hope campaign, launched in 2025, advocates for the cancellation of unjust debts and reforms to the global financial system.

Gender Justice: The WCRC's Gender Policy, adopted in 2020, ensures full participation of men and women in church ministry. The 2024 Gender Audit highlighted significant gender disparities in church leadership. Regional consultations, such as the one in Lusaka, Zambia, advance women's ordination and leadership within the church.

Racism, Authoritarianism, and Nationalism: WCRC addresses racism and nationalism through consultations and academic reflections, connecting the experiences of marginalized communities, such as Dalits and Black theologians, to strategic ways of addressing injustice.

Empires and Genocide: A consultation in Namibia highlighted the ongoing fight for justice in post-genocide contexts, emphasizing the church's role in recognizing and opposing genocide and linking modern atrocities to colonial legacies.

Doing Theology for Transformation

WCRC has developed its theological work over the past eight years around perseverance, justice, and transformation, guiding the communion through the COVID-19 pandemic and global backlash against progressive movements.

Theological Education Conference: In partnership with the Lutheran World Federation, the Association of Protestant Churches and Missions in Germany, and later the WCC, WCRC co-hosted "*Pandemic and Pedagogy*" in Accra (2022). Eighty-one educators explored how COVID-19 reshaped theological education. The conference emphasized theology's role in addressing access, exclusion, digital inequities, and the balance between presence, absence, and hospitality in online

spaces. Transformative pedagogy requires re-educating educators, embracing diversity, and cultivating inclusive digital practices.

Freedom of Religion and Belief (FoRB): WCRC, in collaboration with the Lutheran World Federation, engaged Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights through consultations. While FoRB protects vulnerable communities, participants warned it can be misused for nationalist or racist agendas. The consultation highlighted that:

Frameworks must prioritize the vulnerable, recognizing intersecting identities of ethnicity, gender, caste, class, and sexuality.

Religion often becomes a marker for economic or political conflict.

Religious nationalism threatens FoRB, merging identity with authoritarian power.

The Nicaea Project

The 1,700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea inspired WCRC to revisit the Nicene Creed from a Reformed perspective. Rooted in Calvin's advice to test creeds against Scripture and context, WCRC initiated the book *Receiving Nicaea Today: Global Voices from Reformed Perspectives*. The volume includes contributions from 36 authors worldwide, half from the Global South, emphasizing decolonial theology. Its six sections address hermeneutics, empire, governance, witness, and worship. Rather than passive acceptance, Reformed hermeneutics treats creeds as opportunities for discernment and renewal. The anniversary is framed as a chance to re-encounter the triune God and to re-voice faith in light of wounded contexts.

Global Institute of Theology

Delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Global Institute of Theology finally convened in Suva, Fiji, in 2023 with the theme "*Unsettling the Word in an Unsettled World*." Twenty-seven students explored how preaching can challenge authoritarianism, politicized religion, and exclusion. Participants described the program as transformative.

The Reformed World Journal

In 2019, WCRC renewed the editorial board of *The Reformed World*, its theological journal. The journal provides a global forum for Reformed and ecumenical scholarship, art, and witness, aiming to transform contemporary realities. Recent issues have addressed church and disability, ecumenical dialogues, theological education, and tributes to key leaders. Despite pandemic-related delays, the journal continues to embody diverse, contextual voices and supports WCRC's mission of covenanting for justice.

Engaging in God's Mission in Contexts of Crisis

The WCRC is called into God's holistic mission and commissioned to seek new ways of engaging in mission. As a communion, WCRC strengthens mission in unity and stimulates reflections that make church mission effective and relevant in the 21st century. The call to proclaim the saving grace and love of the triune God and to be God's agents of transformation places mission at the heart of everything WCRC and its member churches do. God's mission transforms the church into a missional communion committed to renewal and transformation, especially through mission from the margins in contexts of crisis.

WCRC's approach to mission and advocacy responds to global crises and is rooted in confessional traditions like the Belhar and Accra Confessions, which declare God's special solidarity with the poor, destitute, and wronged.

Global Reformed Advocacy Platforms for Engagement (GRAPE): Following a "Local to Global to Local" (L2G2L) advocacy model, GRAPE empowers local churches to become effective advocates. This five-year training initiative in pilot countries (Kenya and South Africa) enables local teams to design and implement advocacy campaigns. In Kenya, the focus is securing access to clean water as a climate justice issue. In South Africa, the campaign advocates for a Universal Basic Income Grant to tackle extreme inequality. These national platforms unite churches, civil society, and faith-based organizations behind common goals.

Theology of Advocacy: WCRC understands advocacy as a core expression of faith, defined as "standing where God stands" with the wronged. A recent consultation emphasized decolonizing theology and advocacy practices, challenging Western-dominated frameworks that fail to confront systemic power imbalances.

Peace and Reconciliation Initiatives:

Palestine: Responding to a call from Palestinian Christians, WCRC adopted *Action 55* and produced *Focus: Palestine*, a comprehensive resource for education, theological reflection, and advocacy. It deconstructs imperial narratives, challenges Christian Zionist theology used to justify oppression, and promotes prophetic action in solidarity. WCRC partners with Kairos Palestine, a Christian movement advocating an end to the occupation.

Ukraine: WCRC formed a network to coordinate support for churches in Ukraine following the Russian invasion. Its position, grounded in the Accra Confession's analysis of "empire," critiques failures of the international order while advocating for a "third way" of active, nonviolent perseverance and peacemaking rooted in the hope of resurrection.

Working Together with All the Partners God Gives Us

Ecumenism is central to Reformed identity: the church is always reforming through engagement with others. The Christian landscape has shifted, with growth in the Global South, looser denominational ties, and the decline of Christendom structures. WCRC's mission requires working with all partners God provides; ecumenical openness is both a theological imperative and a practical necessity.

Major Partnerships:

World Council of Churches (WCC): Longstanding collaboration on Christian unity, justice, and witness, including joint advocacy in areas such as the NIFEA initiative. WCRC participated in the 2022 Karlsruhe Assembly and contributed the widely recognized publication "*Come Join the Circle.*"

Council for World Mission (CWM): Historic partnership grounded in shared mission and justice, collaborating on NIFEA, debt and cryptocurrency consultations, gender and militarization, and empire and genocide initiatives.

Reformed Ecumenical Office in Rome (est. 2022): Partnership with the Church of Scotland and Waldensian Church to strengthen Reformed presence in Rome and seek joint action for peace and justice. Activities include:

Liaison with the Vatican: participation in the Synod of Bishops, dialogue on synodality, women's leadership, and lay ministries.

Collaboration with DPCU and other Vatican dicasteries.

Regular cooperation with the Anglican Centre in Rome and the Methodist Ecumenical Office.

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity webinar and support for visiting leaders.

Second Reformed Ecumenical Symposium (2024) on migration, mobility, and their impact on theology and ecumenism.

Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ): WCRC joined in 2017 with Roman Catholics, Lutherans, Methodists, and Anglicans. The Reformed contribution includes:

Affirming consensus that justification and sanctification are inseparable.

Appreciating JDDJ insights on grace and sacraments.

Adding Reformed emphases: law as a guide for living, sanctification as gratitude.

Linking justification with justice: inseparable from addressing oppression and violence.

Five communions committed to joint witness, baptismal celebrations, and shared proclamation. Discussions resumed in 2024 with a new JDDJ Working Group of 10 theologians after COVID-19 delays.

Ecumenical Dialogues: Theological dialogues explore visible unity, mutual recognition, and common witness for justice and peace. Reports have stimulated discussions across WCRC and partner churches.

International Reformed–Anglican Dialogue (IRAD): Report "*Koinonia: God's Gift and Calling*" emphasizes communion as open, dynamic, and rooted in hospitality.

Pentecostal–Reformed Dialogue: Report "*Called to God's Mission*" adopted by the Pentecostal World Fellowship and WCRC Executive Committee, committing to unity in mission, discerning the Spirit, addressing injustice, and serving God together. A fourth round of dialogues will focus on understanding the church.

Mennonite–Reformed Dialogue: Statement "*Restoring Our Family to Wholeness*" confesses past persecution and commits to reconciliation. Adopted by both WCRC and Mennonite World Fellowship governing bodies. WCRC participated in the MWC Council meeting in Germany and the 500th anniversary of Anabaptist baptisms in Zurich (1525–2025), including symbolic acts of healing such as foot washing, which will be replicated at this General Council.

Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic, which struck globally in March 2020, profoundly disrupted churches, societies, and economies. Congregations faced illness, death, distancing regulations, and collapsing income, while health systems in many nations reached breaking points. The vulnerable were most affected, exposing the fragility of global solidarity. WCRC programs, meetings, and gatherings moved online, creating spaces for mutual care, solidarity, and reflection.

In response, WCRC launched the program "*What Does God Require of Us? Discerning, Confessing, and Witnessing in the Time of COVID-19 and Beyond*" (December 2020–November 2021). Built on Micah 6:8, it called churches to seek justice, practice kindness, and walk humbly with God during a time marked by the pandemic, racism, authoritarianism, and climate crises. This period was

described as a **kairos moment**—an unveiling of systemic injustice and an opportunity for transformation.

Beyond COVID-19 Program

The program was structured around the liturgical year: Advent/Epiphany (Discerning), Lent/Easter (Confessing), Pentecost (Witnessing), and Ordinary Time (Being Reformed). Each season featured plenaries, regional and network sharing, and discernment sessions. Churches and groups from across Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean, Europe, and beyond contributed experiences and theological reflections, highlighting both suffering and resilience.

The program was held in four cycles corresponding to the four verbs: The Discerning Circle, the Confessing Circle, the Witnessing Circle, and the Circle of Being Reformed. Theologically, participants reflected that baptism calls the church into a radical new community where otherness is embraced, justice is central, and all share a common table. To be reformed is to resist systems of death—racism, patriarchy, neoliberal capitalism—and embody a household of God where life and dignity are affirmed.

The Beyond COVID-19 program's working papers summarized the Communion's collective insights. COVID-19 was not the "great equalizer" but a revealer of entrenched injustices. It exposed how the poor, racial minorities, women, and marginalized communities bear the heaviest burdens. Experts warned that hunger, poverty, and gender-based violence linked to the pandemic may have claimed more lives than the virus itself. At the same time, the crisis reaffirmed the need for a confessing church—one that resists empire, embraces solidarity, and proclaims that justice is integral to faith. Witnessing requires prophetic action against systemic sin, while reformation calls the church to embody radical hospitality, inclusion, and care for creation.

In apocalyptic times, the task remains clear: resist global apartheid, lament and repent, witness to God's liberating Spirit, and live as a reformed community that seeks justice, loves kindness, and walks humbly with God.

Accompaniment by the Strategic Programme Planning Group (SPPG)

The Strategic Programme Planning Group (SPPG) accompanied the implementation of the strategic plan over seven years. They conducted evaluations and ensured accountability reports were submitted to the Executive Committee.

Some findings highlighted staff shortages, recommended program models involving regional bodies, emphasized online collaboration, and supported the Global Reformed Advocacy Platforms for Engagement (GRAPE), which began midstream during the strategic plan's duration. By the end of 2023, out of 60 planned programs, 54 were completed or ongoing. Despite challenges from COVID-19 and staff reductions, program quality was affirmed, with appreciation for creative approaches to building staff capacity through partnerships (e.g., new executive roles supported by PCUSA, CWM, and the Church of Scotland).

For ongoing and future work, SPPG advised deeper involvement of regional bodies and stronger communication between the Executive Committee and member churches. They stressed that communion depends on active regional engagement and urged attention to this in preparation for the 2025 General Council and beyond.

Regional Councils

The WCRC currently has five Regional Councils, each bringing the Communion closer to member churches.

Africa Communion of Reformed Churches (ACRC): Held two councils (2018, 2023) and developed a strategic plan engaging member churches in WCRC priorities and programs.

Alianza de Iglesias Presbiterianas y Reformadas de América Latina (AIPRAL): Responded to regional challenges and held its latest meeting in El Salvador in February 2025, commemorating the 20th anniversary of the Accra Confession.

Caribbean and North American Area Council (CANAAC): Held two councils since the last General Council, developed a process of shared devotions, and focused on WCRC priorities in the region. CANAAC highlighted the need for closer collaboration between the WCRC global office and regional bodies.

North East Asia Area Council (NEAAC): Historically active in theological reflection and program integration. Activity slowed after 2020 but is now beginning to recover.

WCRC Europe: Holds annual council meetings and engages member church representatives in theological reflection on WCRC priorities. The region consistently encourages closer collaboration with the global office and greater inter-regional interaction.

Finances

WCRC finances have been well-managed since the last General Council. Income remains a challenge:

About 10 member churches pay annual membership fees consistently, sustaining the organization. Around 60 churches contribute fairly regularly.

Approximately 100 churches pay sporadically, accumulating arrears, although some made payments in the last two years.

Some churches have not contributed at all. The Executive Committee recently deemed 60 of these inactive, revoking membership privileges until contributions are rectified.

A lasting solution to financial challenges is needed. The Executive Committee has launched a “Ten-Euro Campaign,” offering individuals in member churches the opportunity to invest in the life of the Communion. This campaign will be relaunched at the General Council.

Despite income challenges, fiscal discipline and responsibility remain strong. Programs have been executed on limited finances with prudence and accountability to funding sources.

Member Churches

Member churches are the owners of the Communion. WCRC values listening to them and journeying in their contexts. Visits by officers and staff have been limited due to COVID-19, resulting in only a fraction of member churches being visited during this period. Moving forward, WCRC intends to prioritize visiting member churches, praying with them, listening to their mission, and understanding how the WCRC and regional councils can best support them.

In the past, WCRC supported member churches in the Global South through the Partnership Fund, which provided small grants and responded to natural disasters and emergencies. This fund was terminated five years ago, but WCRC may explore reviving it as soon as financially feasible.

Recommendations

As I submit this report, I offer three specific proposals, which I have hinted at throughout this report:

Member Church Visits:

I recommend that the General Secretary delegate members of the new Executive Committee to visit all member churches within the first six months of 2026. These visits should be conducted in close consultation with the Regional Councils, where they exist. The purpose is to engage the churches, pray with them, and understand their priorities and challenges, ensuring that WCRC is better poised to serve its member churches and the broader public. Learnings from these visits will inform the next Strategic Planning process. Additionally, the visits will clarify the status of inactive members, who may choose either to renew their membership or step back from WCRC. These visits will also provide an opportunity to explore how member churches can play a more active role in the financial sustenance of WCRC. This is our communion to build together.

10-Euro Campaign:

I recommend endorsing the establishment of the 10-Euro Campaign, in which each member church covenants to encourage at least 1,000 members of their congregations to contribute the equivalent of 10 Euros or 10 U.S. dollars, either annually or monthly, to support WCRC's mission. This campaign will strengthen financial support and engagement across the Communion.

Reformed Churches' Partnership Fund:

I recommend exploring the possibility of reestablishing the Reformed Churches' Partnership Fund. If the 10-Euro Campaign reaches one million Euros per year, 20% of the proceeds could be allocated to the Partnership Fund. This would allow WCRC to resume granting funds for projects in the Global South and to contribute to disaster relief and emergency response efforts.

Gratitude

Earlier, I expressed my gratitude to the immediate past General Secretary, the Collegial General Secretariat, and the President, officers, and Executive Committee of the WCRC. As I bring this report to a close, I wish to reiterate those words of thanks.

I also express my deep gratitude to our staff team, who work tirelessly. We are a small staff of nine in the Hannover office, yet their dedication is remarkable. I continue to be amazed at what this committed group of colleagues has accomplished and continues to achieve in advancing the mission of the WCRC. To Muna, Hanns, Philip, Minwoo, Anam, Amritha, Linda, and Viet, I extend a heartfelt "Thank you for your dedication." This is complemented by Chelsea, co-pastor of the Reformed English Language Service in Hannover, whose part-time work in the office is invaluable.

We also thank our colleagues at the Evangelical Reformed Church offices in Leer, Germany, led by Gerhard Plenter, who manage our finances and accounting with diligence.

We are grateful to God for our member churches and partners around the world, particularly those who have journeyed with us and continue to give faithfully, ensuring that we have the resources to engage in the mission to which we are called. Your commitment sustains the WCRC. Even non-member churches, such as the Church of Rheinland and the Westphalia Church in Germany, have shown remarkable dedication. We also thank our many ecumenical partners—including CWM, EMW, BfW, EKD, Otto per Mille, and others not named here—for their support.

I am deeply thankful to God for the opportunity to serve the WCRC in this leadership role over the past few years. Thank you, President; thank you, officers; thank you, Executive Committee; and thank you, colleagues. And to my dear wife, Akpene, thank you for accompanying and supporting me when I was bold enough to say “Yes.”

It is now my singular pleasure and joy to introduce the person called to lead this organization as the next General Secretary, beginning February 1, 2026: my friend and colleague, the Rev. Philip Peacock. I have known Philip since we invited him to join the team reflecting on gender justice more than 20 years ago. I have long admired his passion for God’s work, for the communion, and for justice. All who encounter him will attest that Philip is the right person to lead this ministry, guiding WCRC to new heights. Just as you have supported me over the past 16 years, and supported Chris before me, I ask that you support Philip in prayer and in every way possible. I pray for God’s special blessings on him as he assumes this leadership.

Together, with all who form the crown of witnesses, we can say that despite challenges and occasional failures, we have come a long way in persevering in our mission. We will continue to heed God’s call to persevere in our witness. The road ahead may be difficult, but we can do no other. The good news is that we look to Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith.

Note: The translations of this document into other languages were made possible with the assistance of DeepL.